

Mackie's Argument from Evil
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31 October 2006

Here is J. L. Mackie's argument from evil:

1. "[A] good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can."
2. "[T]here are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do."

Therefore,

3. "[A] good omnipotent thing eliminates evil completely" (from 1 and 2).
4. "[E]vil exists."

Therefore,

5. There is no good omnipotent thing (from 3 and 4).

Mackie calls 1 and 2 "quasi-logical rules," which suggests that they are necessary truths. He also thinks that the two inferences are valid. So if the theist rejects 5, as he or she must to remain a theist, he or she must reject 4 (the only other premise); but that's painful. What to do?

Theistic strategies:

- a. Give a counterexample to 1. That would show that it's not a necessary truth. Or go further and show that it's *false*.
- b. Give a counterexample to 2. Ditto.
- c. Bite the bullet and reject 4. Ouch!
- d. Reject the first inference.
- e. Reject the second inference.