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Stewart, THE GREATER GOOD DEFENSE: AN ESSAY ON THE RATIONALITY OF FAITH

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but they did have the concept of the natural powers of things. So an event which we might describe as transgressing a law of nature they might describe as exceeding the natural powers of the creatures involved.

9. In his fullest example of how a reported miracle might be assessed (on p. 161), he makes use of a pattern of supposed miracles. (The example is contained in the offset material above in the text.)

10. In his example on p. 161, Houston speaks of "well-attested reports" and "reports of some weight." Moreover, part of his reason for discounting miracle reports in other religions is the poor quality of their attestation (204-205).

11. Of course, if God continued to perform highly public miracles today to confirm revelation, the quality of the documentation of biblical miracles would not matter. But God does not do this either. To be sure, some people do claim that God is performing miracles today, but most people never experience anything which seems to be a candidate for being a miracle; moreover, those who claim to experience miracles usually are already believers, so they have far less need for the confirmation than does the neutral, open inquirer to whom Houston proposes his methodology.

12. The tension between attributing a revelation-confirming purpose to miracles, on the one hand, and the pattern of occurrence of purported miracles and the quality of their documentation, on the other, is explored in my article "A Moral Argument against Miracles," *Faith and Philosophy*, 12 (January 1995).

The Greater Good Defense: An Essay on the Rationality of Faith, by **Melville Y. Stewart**. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. Pp. xi and 202. \$55.00.

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Stewart's text should become a standard on reading lists for students of philosophical theology. As a classroom text, it offers an accessible introduction to the dominant trends in contemporary Christian apologetics. This is not meant to imply that Stewart's treatment is in any way superficial, but that he elucidates in a straightforward manner such complexities as Plantinga's "transworld depravity" and Molina's "middle knowledge." As a precursor to primary sources, this text lays out with precision and clarity the basic conceptual problems and lines of defence to be studied in greater depth.

Stewart's thesis is that much of Christian theodicy can be subsumed under a general category of defence, viz. the greater good defence (GGD). He then focuses on several specifications of that defence: the free-will specification; the growth to moral maturity/soul-growth defence specification; and the redemption specification (related to the *O Felix Culpa* approach). In consideration of each of these specifications Stewart presents a concise review of the works of Keith Yandell, Alvin Plantinga, John Hick, and refers to Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. He offers a knowledgeable account of the important critiques each of the three contemporary thinkers have attracted, and provides some able rescue attempts for each account. Stewart, however, does not attempt to provide a theodicy himself. In the end he offers his own specification of the GGD, the R-specification (R = redemption), as a prop for the claim that belief in God is rational despite the existence of evil. Rational justifi-

cation of belief is Stewart's goal.

Stewart begins the work with a thorough statement of the problem the existence of evil presents for those who believe in the God of Christian theism. He then presents an analysis of the claim that God does not exist, or the claim that God probably does not exist. Though Stewart does not stress the distinction, he focuses on the *argument* from evil against God's existence, rather than the *problem* of evil, which is perceived by some theodacists to be a pastoral rather than a philosophical issue.

Stewart's first chapters begin, as do many theodicies in the Christian tradition, with a discussion of the divine attributes, viz. omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence. The question considered is whether the existence of evil implies that the God of Christian theism simply does not exist, or that any god who may exist could not possibly fit that description?

The familiar issue raised by this question pertains to whether any limitations upon the actions taken by God would imply that God is limited. For instance, if God cannot do something that is logically impossible, or which is logically inconsistent with a compossible set of events, does that reality impugn the omnipotence of God? Stewart concludes, after citing the responses of Aquinas, Abelard, and Plantinga, that it does not. "These understandings of the divine predicates in question [omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence], are not viewed as logically incompatible, so they can belong to one and the same being. . . We will assume that there is a coherent sense that can be given to each and that the attributes are logically compossible. Whatever problems remain are judged to be minor, needing only minor revisions at most." (54-55).

Though this may sound like Stewart accepts the divine predicates traditionally associated with Christian theism, it also appears that he does allow some weakening with respect to omniscience (Chapter Two), if one includes divine foreknowledge as an integral part of omniscience. Stewart provides a simple (though not simplistic) explanation of the relation between truth and counterfactuals, and how knowledge of counterfactuals depends upon when those counterfactuals become actual. If it is reasonable to say that neither God or anyone else can know that *p* is true, until it is true, then God's foreknowledge of *p*'s truth may be impossible. Stewart accepts that such an impossibility does not limit God's omniscience. Though stalwarts may insist that omniscience include God's knowledge that *p* will be true rather than *not p*, Stewart's argument seems to prevail because his account of counterfactual 'knowledge' is conjoined with his account of the freedom of moral agents. The longstanding objection that God's foreknowledge that *p*, rather than *not p*, would impinge upon some agent *A*'s freedom to do *p* rather than *not p*, seems to be the real thrust of the argument, rather than the counterfactual strategy. The question is not whether God or anyone else could know that *p* before *p*, but whether knowledge of *p* before *p* would obviate *A*'s freedom to do *p*.

Stewart's chapter (3) on the greater good defence (GGD), presents the GGD as derivative of the Ends Justifies the Means principle (EJM). He then reviews the standard discussions on deontological versus teleologi-

cal justifications for the existence of evil. I was disappointed that Stewart stopped short of the conclusion I reached (Trau, *The New Scholasticism*, 1986) about gratuitous evil. He does go so far as to say,

...the critic of theism cannot know that E1 [any evil] lacks the properties (P)[Being morally allowed by God, if God exists] and (P**) [Being morally allowable by God] without also knowing that God does not exist, just as it is the case that a theist cannot know that E1 has the property (P*) [Being morally allowed by God] without knowing that God does exist. (77)

I have put the case as follows:

One cannot move from the claim the

p: This instance of evil *E* has no apparent purpose (which is an epistemological claim, to the claim

*p*2: This instance of evil *E* in fact has no purpose (which is an ontological claim),

For it might be the case that

*p*3: There is some non-apparent purpose to *E*

I claim that the theist, at least some theists, believes *p*3 because she believes that God does exist and may have some purpose for *p*3 known only to God. Faith in God precedes the willingness to grant the hidden purpose to *E*. The nontheist assumes that *p*3 could not be true because the most reasonable context in which *p*3 could be true, viz. that God exists and has some purpose for *E*, has already been rejected. Thus I conclude, though Stewart does not, that the most reasonable position with respect to gratuitous evil, for both the theist and the non-theist, is epistemological agnosticism; and the most reasonable approach for theodicists and apologists is to reduce the weight given to instances of apparently gratuitous evil in their deliberations.

Stewart's chapter (4) on derivations of the greater good defence, concentrating on the work of Keith Yandell, is quite good. I do take exception to Stewart's analysis of Yandell's account only because Stewart fails to defend it against the presumption that an ultimately favorable balance of good over evil relies upon human persons occupying a privileged or superior position within creation. It is possible to hold that the creation of moral beings necessitates freedom, which establishes the possibility of moral evil, without believing that the exercise of that freedom or the creation of beings who possess that freedom is the greatest good within that creation. One could simply say that a universe which includes morally free beings is **on the whole** preferable to a universe in which there are no moral agents (assuming that moral agency requires freedom); and that a universe which includes human beings as equals with other kinds of beings within a created environment fulfills that preference.

Stewart's chapter on the free will specification of the GGD offers a splendid account of Plantinga's overall approach. This chapter would be ideal as an introduction to the corpus of Plantinga's work. The same com-

ment applies to the chapter on the growth to moral maturity and soul growth, focusing on the works of Yandell and Hick respectively. One disagreement I have with Stewart regarding his understanding of Hick carries more weight when Stewart attempts to develop his own R-specification.

Stewart believes that redemption is the most promising aspect of Christian theism in light of the GGD; best satisfies the logical requirements of GGD. He argues that redemption is the most promising aspect of Christian theism in light of the GGD. Redemption requires a Fall; and that Hick's theodicy does not necessitate redemption. Thus Stewart rejects Hick's theodicy as a candidate for the R-specification of the GGD. If redemption is the greater good which justifies, in fact requires moral evil, then (Stewart claims) there must be a Fall. Stewart's claim rests on his understanding of redemption as 'restorative.' If there were no prelapsarian state from which human persons fell, then there would be no need for restoration, and redemption would be gratuitous. Stewart is willing to discard Hick's theodicy because it does not support Stewart's R-specification of the GGD.

An alternative interpretation of redemption, viz. one which does not imply restoration, could be used to establish the R-specification as consistent with Hick's theodicy. For instance, one could argue that the 'immature' state and imperfect environment in which human persons are created is admittedly and essentially distinct from the likeness into which they are called. 'Redemption' is the transfiguration from the creaturely state, i.e. *bios*, into the spiritual state, i.e. *zoe*. This notion of redemption could satisfy the GGD, without introducing the Fall. Of course Stewart would have to allow that restoration is not analytically necessary to the concept of redemption. He is unwilling to grant that Hick's account of 'epistemic distance' could function the way that the Fall does in a specification of the GGD.

Stewart's construction of the R-specification is an attempt to fortify the rational ground for belief in the God of the Christian tradition. He concludes that moral evil has positive instrumental value, and is necessary for redemption. Redemption is the greater good which counterbalances or overbalances actual moral evil. Though his attempt is well done, those who side with Hick will not easily grant Stewart the point about the Fall. Other readers may experience a degree of discomfort with Stewart's use of male pronouns when referring to God. On the whole, it is an excellent and valuable contribution to the current obsession with making belief in God 'respectable.' Though it is not intended as a work of conversion or passion, Stewart's work conveys a conviction of belief which underlies his significant analytic enterprise. All students and specialists of the field should take note.