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A Brief History of The Problem

If there is a Just God why, is there so much evil. There is death, war, earthquake, hunger, bitter conditions of life etc. The argument then follows that either there is no God or there is a cruel God, who like a monster enjoys seeing us suffer.

This question has been answered in many ways in different ages. Some of them are as follows and we shall have a brief look at them:

1. God is the Perfect Being, and justice is part of perfection. Therefore, God is Just. So whatever of injustice we see in the world, will be rectified eventually. In other words, He has no needs, and injustice is either from ignorance and fanaticism or from need, and none of these are conceivable for the Perfect Being. Imam Husayn, in the deserts of `Arafat, before being martyred by the enemy, said:

"God, you are so needless that you yourself cannot benefit yourself. How hen, can we give anything to you?!"

- 2. Evil is necessary for the greatest good 1.
- 3. Man's freedom2 is the cause of evil. This view can explain wars and social injustices, but cannot explain earthquakes, death, illness, etc.
- 4. Evil is a negative thing.
 - 1. Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari, the living Persian philosopher, thinks that this view was first proposed by `Umar Khayyam in his al-Kawn wa't-taklif (Existence and Responsibility). In page 390 he says: "Refraining from thousand goods for the sake of one evil, is itself a great evil" i.e. evil is necessary for greater goods.
 - 2. Freedom not in the political sense, but being able to do good or bad. It is only man who has this possibility. He can be kind or he can be cruel. He can be a humanist or he can be an oppressive tyrant and killer. "Leibniz," the seventeenth century philosopher, is one of those who believe that man's freedom is the cause of evil. He wrote: "Free will is a great good, but it was logically impossible for God to bestow free will and at the same time decree that there should be no sin. God therefore decided to make man free, although he foresaw that Adam, would eat the apple, and although sin inevitably brought punishment." (Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1974, page 570).

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