

I have indicated a bit in previous posts on why the Problem of Suffering is a “problem.” Here I want to explain just a bit further, before going on, in later posts, with the question about how and why it became a problem for me personally, in my movement away from Christianity to agnosticism. Here is what I say about “the problem” as it is classically understood, by philosophers who wrestle with the issue of “theodicy,” in my book [God’s Problem](#).

Theodicy is a word invented by one of the great intellectuals and polymaths of the seventeenth century, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who wrote a lengthy treatise trying to explain how and why there can be suffering in the world if God is all powerful and wants the absolute best for people. The term is made up of two Greek words: theos, which means “God,” and dikē, which means “justice.” Theodicy, in other words, refers to the problem of how God can be “just” or “righteous” given the fact there is so much suffering in the world that he created and is allegedly sovereign over.

As philosophers and theologians have discussed theodicy over the years, they have devised a kind of logical problem that needs to be solved to explain the suffering in the world. This problem involves three assertions which all appear to be true, but if true appear to contradict one another. The assertions are these:

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