Phil. 114 2/17/2016

**“Playpen” objection** (from Lewis, sect. III, pp. 153-155)**:** God could have had what God wanted without any real harm resulting by putting us in a playpen: by allowing us to act freely (and hopefully to do good), but in situations where our going wrong wouldn’t result in any substantial harm

**Reply:** God wants us acting freely in situations of *great moral significance*. But we can add to what we mean by that …

-“Plantinga, after he notes that free choice of breakfast is insignificant, goes on to define significant freedom as freedom with respect to an action such that either it is wrong to perform it and right to refrain, or else *vice versa*. That is too weak, if we hope to explain all the evildoing that takes place.” (Lewis, 153.6)

-So Lewis beefs up the term to mean free choice in situations with consequences. We can take this in stages. First, let a “playpen” be an environment where we are free, but we never have options that will result in significant harm to others (and perhaps to ourselves?). Then we can meet the objection …

**Horrendous evils objection:** Yeah? Well, what about the truly horrendous evils? Why does God allow those?

-… by weakening our notion of a “playpen” to one where we just have no opportunities to visit any really bad suffering on others (and perhaps ourselves), and beefing up the notion of “significant freedom” to include freedom in situations of great consequence, including where we can visit really horrible suffering on people.

-The plausibility of this account of horrendous evils has its limits, especially when applied to certain ranges of horrendous evils, but it can perhaps be combined with other treatments of horrendous evils, so it’s worth considering what positive appeal it can add to an overall account

-For this, Hick-style thought experiments can well motivate the thought that there are some important values that would be missing in a world of a weak playpen.

**“Defeat” and Horrendous Evils**

-“defeat (which cannot occur by the mere addition to the whole of a new part of opposing value, but involves some 'organic unity' among the values of parts and wholes, as when the positive aesthetic value of a whole painting defeats the ugliness of a small colour patch)” –MMA, p. 299.6

-The basic idea: some good wholes are better for containing bad parts

-Leibniz and aesthetic analogies