

tual beatific intimacy with God would ensure that the participant's life was a great good to him/her on the whole, Divine *goodness to* creatures would not only balance off but *defeat* horrendous evil, and defeat it not simply within the context of the world as a whole but within the frame of the individual's own existence.

Stout-hearted Hickians might argue that this condition is likewise met over the long haul of many lifetimes. For participation in horrors that remains undefeated within the individual's antemortem career contributes to the sense of mystery that makes a positive contribution to the soul-making of others. Since one is at least a cause, sometimes even an agent-cause of the willy-nilly sacrifice of one's antemortem good, participation in horrors would constitute some sort of shift from self-centeredness to other-or God-centeredness. Even if this putative positive dimension of participation in horrors is swamped by its negative aspect when considered within the framework of the individual's antemortem career, retrospectively, from the vantage point of the end of the journey, the person one eventually becomes would be glad to have made the sacrifice. Participation in horrors can thus be integrated into that overall development that gives positive meaning to his or her life, and so be defeated within the context of the individual's existence as a whole.

I respect the resourcefulness of this reply and do not find it altogether untenable. Nevertheless, my sense of the depth of horrendous evils drives me to demand more. Would not Divine Love focused on created persons lend positive meaning, not only to the individual's life as a whole, but also to any careers in which he or she participates in horrors? The sacrifice of participation in horrors is pedagogically inept as a first lesson because it can damage the person so much as to make much further antemortem progress from self-centeredness to other-or God-centeredness virtually impossible. This combines with the delay in gratification to another life—or perhaps many other lives—later so as to de-emphasize the importance of this life, leaving the impression that it would have been better skipped by those whose spiritual development was significantly set back through participation in horrors. To give this life, or any career involving participation in horrors, positive significance, some parameter of positive meaning for horrors other than “educational” benefit must be found!

8. A Methodological Moral

Many philosophers of religion insist that the problem of evil can be solved only if we can identify some (logically possible) morally sufficient

reason why God would (though omnipotent and omniscient) permit evils. Pressed to meet this demand, many seize on considerations that may plausibly play some role in God's creative choices—for example, the desire to make a world of the highest possible overall excellence, the desire to people it with incompatibilist free creatures and allow them choices of moral and perhaps eternal significance, or the fact that suffering can have pedagogical value and figure in complex goods—and elevate these considerations to the status of “morally sufficient reasons why” or reasons why sufficient by themselves to render the permission of such evils compossible with omnipotent, all wise, goodness.

In my judgment, this has proved a bad idea, first because trying to make these considerations do all the work of explaining why God permits evils in the amounts and of the kinds and with the distributions found in this world, often only adds to the problem of how a being thus motivated could be good in the relevant sense. Such attempts show rather that where horrors are concerned, not only do we not know the *actual* reasons why of Divine permission; we can scarcely think of any candidates for a complete explanation. I do not say that God has no reasons why; on the contrary, God is personal, and so the sort of agent that can act for a reason. Moreover, if good to created persons, we may suppose that, in permitting individuals to experience horrors, God would act for a reason—and not capriciously—in matters so momentous for them. Nor do I want to say that we cannot know or think of any *partial* reasons why God might permit horrendous evil, in the sense of considerations that could have some weight or other in God's creative choices. On the contrary, I assume the desire to have personal creatures who have some free play and the desire to have a very good world on the whole are among God's reasons. And I have already stipulated an unwillingness on God's part to permit any horrors God couldn't defeat within the context of the individual's life. I am about to add a more specific partial reason why in the next section. Nevertheless, I agree with Anselm, that any reasons why that we may discover are only partial, and that for any disclosed to us, there are and always will be deeper ones we cannot fathom. I also concur with Anselm that the mystery of Divine goodness is permanently inexhaustible by us and permanently partially inaccessible by us; exploring it will keep us fascinated for eternity.⁴¹

41. I was originally tempted to think that explaining how God could defeat horrors within the context of an individual's life and insure to each participant a life that was a great good to him/her on the whole would be enough, apart from any suggestion of partial reasons why, to defend the logical compossibility of the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly good God with the existence of evil. Against this, Keith De Rose insisted that the

If our knowledge of reasons why is only partial, how can the problem of evil generally, and of entrenched horrors in particular, be solved? My suggestion is that we can explain the compossibility of God and evil (even the evils of entrenched horrors) if we can offer a (logically possible) scenario in which God is *good to* each created person, by insuring each a life that is a great good to him/her on the whole, and by defeating his/her participation in horrors within the context, not merely of the world as a whole, but of that individual's life.

fact that God could defeat horrors was itself a partial reason why (a necessary precondition) of Divine permission of them. His arguments have persuaded me to modify my position.