Transcript - Short

Keith Ward:

If you think that God is the creator of everything in the universe, then I think you just have to bite the bullet and say God created evil. So evil, if it's real – and it is, I think – it's created by God. So the notion of creation involving evil is not a problem. Because you just say, well, that's it. God created evil. But it's the notion of goodness and omnipotence that cause the problems. The way I'd approach it is this. That I think looking at the idea of God, you're looking at the idea of goodness as perfect beauty, perfect worthwhile, perfect value. And that such a being creates a universe which is not in the same way without imperfection. So the goodness of God doesn't consist in that God is kind to everybody. Goodness doesn't equal kindness. Goodness is just inherent perfection. If you think of it that way, it's helpful by saying from the perfect imperfection can spring. Why? Well, because imperfection might be necessarily implicated in different sorts of perfection. The obvious example is if I were to go mountain climbing, part of the reason I enjoy that is that it's got a risk. If it didn't have any risks, I wouldn't enjoy it. Now, I take into account the fact that that risk means somebody is ultimately going to be killed somehow. And so why should people like dangerous sports? Well, the point here is there's something intrinsically good about that sort of existence that you wouldn't get in an existence without any risk at all.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Well, we would have to assume that God is not capable of creating a world with all of the things that are good without having all of this enormity of evil?

Keith Ward:

Yes. Let's put the enormity to one side for the moment. But just say that, yeah, I think God is incapable of creating a world roughly like this with us in it without creating quite a great deal of suffering. For example, if you take the evolutionary account of humanity, then destruction is involved essentially in that account. I mean, unless animals die, you're not going to get new sorts of animals evolving. So evolution presupposes death. When I die, I'll say, well, I'm making room for somebody better I hope, or at least somebody different. So in that way, a certain amount of evil seems to be acceptable.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Well, let's now deal with your quantitative analysis in terms of the amount. If it is too large, how would you compensate?

Keith Ward:

Well, on the hypothesis, there is a good God whose will is good, then I think what you have to say is take the suffering of human beings who are conscious that they suffer and are conscious of suffering and conscious of their continuing existence, then I feel that a belief in God has to say there is a life beyond the life on this Earth. That the victims must be given a good which is overwhelmingly outweighing the evil they have suffered. And their oppressors must have some way of coming to term with the evil they have done and learning how to overcome that.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

How did God in the pre-existence of the universe conceptualize evil?

Keith Ward:

Well, I think that evil is necessarily implicated in the being of God. I don't mean that God is evil. I mean if you think that God contains the idea of every possible world in the divine mind, and that's the traditional idea, then a lot of those possible worlds are incredibly evil. So God must conceive, as well as all the good worlds, every evil world. Then the question is ...

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Which does he actualize?

Keith Ward:

Which does he actualize? And I think that God is justified in actualizing any world in which no individual suffers evil which cannot ever lead to good. But be followed by it, compensated by good. I don't mean that evil is a means to good. I mean, once they've suffered evil, their lives will achieve goodness. So creatable universes are universes which may contain a great deal of evil. But that evil is never unredeemable. And I think myself that our universe is just about on the edge of a creatable universe.