

Arguing Religion

Disagreement, Recognition, and the Reach of Argumentative Debate

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Metaphysical Realism as the Proton Pseudos of Theodicism: A Pragmatic Critique of the Argument from Evil

Sami Pihlström, University of Helsinki

I have argued in some previous work that we need a thoroughgoing philosophical articulation and defense of antitheodicism, a way of thinking about evil and suffering that firmly rejects the pursuit of theodicies allegedly justifying evil and suffering (Pihlström 2014; Kivistö & Pihlström 2016a, 2016b). That is, we need to emancipate the problem of evil and suffering – including its traditional theological articulations – from theodacist assumptions that lead to a chronic non-acknowledgment of the sufferers' experiential point of view. This also entails emancipating the problem of evil and suffering from the need to consider the so-called argument from evil. In the argument "from" evil, evil and suffering are seen as pieces of empirical evidence against theism. This presupposes understanding theism as a hypothesis to be tested in an evidentialist game of argumentation. Such a presupposition fails to acknowledge the depth and variety of both religious and non-religious approaches to living with evil and suffering. Therefore, I will suggest in this paper that the entire argumentative discourse around the problem of evil ought to be pragmatically reconsidered from the perspective of the ethics of recognition (acknowledgment). In particular, this entails the need of a pragmatic critique of one of the key presuppositions of theodicism, viz., metaphysical realism that seeks to reduce away the perspectivalness of individual human suffering.