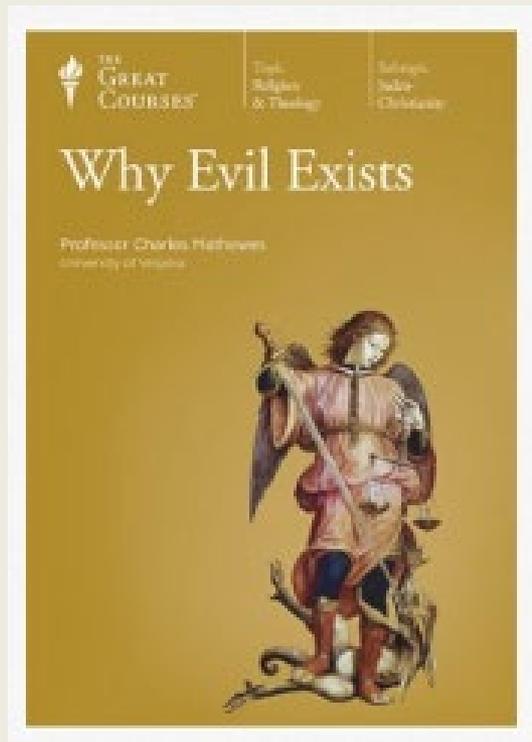


Are You a Robot? Brain, Mind, Soul

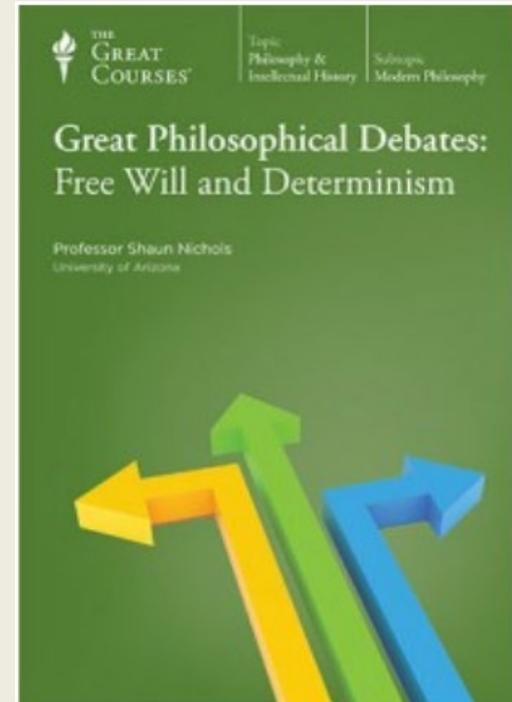
Evil: Is Anyone Responsible?

(A mostly intellectual approach)



Gerry Wood
July 24, 2019

GerryOWood.com



Evil as an Emotional Judgment

Discussion of Evil can't be a purely intellectual exercise.

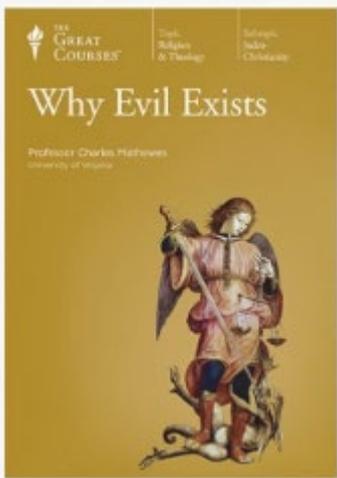
Take half a minute to reflect on an evil you have experienced or heard about and identify the agent(s) responsible.

How does this memory make you feel?

Evil as an Emotional Judgment

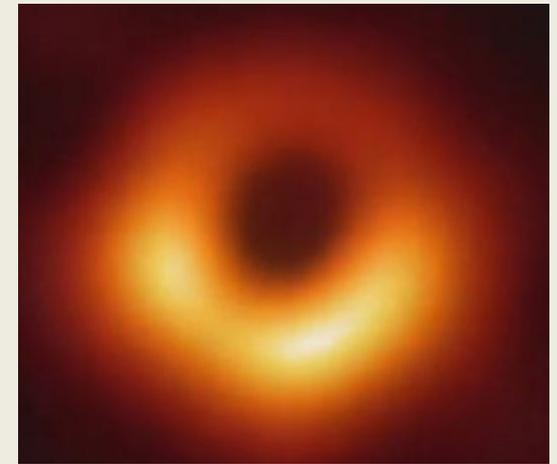
Evil Emotionally Defined:

- Whatever causes me distress whenever I think about it.
 - Holocaust
 - 9/11
 - _____
- Whoever is responsible for it.
 - Hitler
 - Osama Bin Laden
 - _____



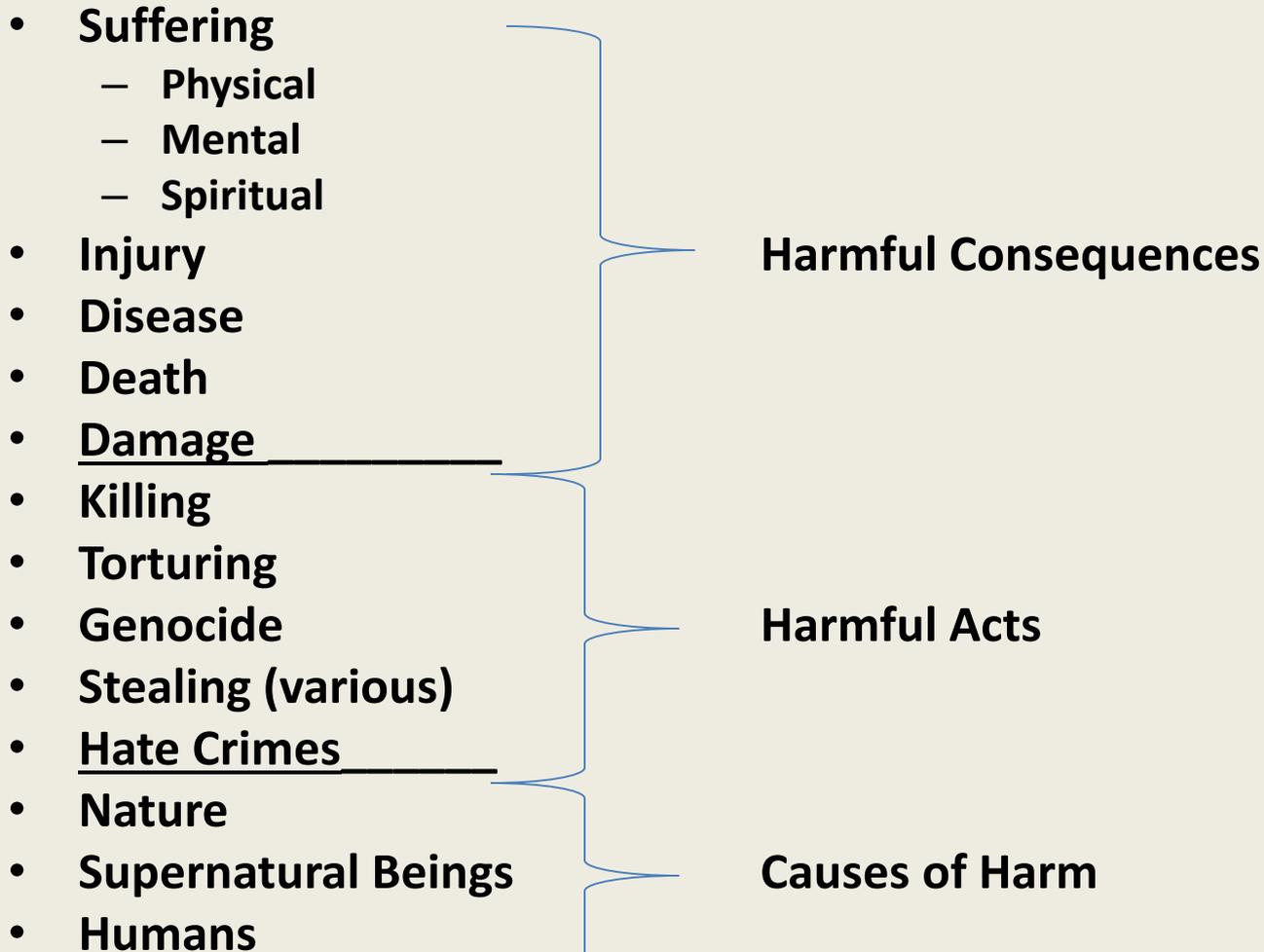
Characterizations of Evil

Charles Mathewes
University of Virginia
The Great Courses



Evil As	Reality?	Versus Good	Darkness Analogy
Nothingness (Plato, Augustine, Pascal)	No	Absence of Good	Absence of Light
Natural (Aristotle, Nietzsche, Freud)	Yes	Another Form of Good (Reality)	IR, UV Light vs. Visible
Necessary (Irenaeus, Hegel)	Yes	Leads to Good	Separation → Order
Negative and Bad (Moses, Jesus, John Paul II)	Yes	Destructive of Good	Blocked Light → Darkness

Evil is Best Defined by Examples (3 Categories of Harm)



Questions About Evil as Harm

- **Harm to whom/what?**
 - **Conscious being (Leaves out plants, inanimates).**
 - **Human being (Leaves out other animals).**
- **Is intention required?**
 - **No: Natural evil**
 - **Yes: Moral evil**
- **Is intention important? Yes.**
 - **Murder (1st or 2nd degree) vs. Manslaughter vs. Accident vs. Self-defense**

- **Are exceptions allowed? Yes.**
 - **Judicial (Incarceration; Executions)**
 - **Martial (War; Public Safety)**
 - **Medical (Surgery; Chemotherapy)**
 - **Greater good**

Working Definitions of Evil (not all will agree):

Evil = Harm to human being(s)

plus

Evil = Those responsible for it, if anyone.

(with exceptions).

Who's Responsible for Evil?

Cause = That which results in an effect.

Responsibility = cause, not necessarily intentional.

“The earthquake was responsible for the tsunami.”

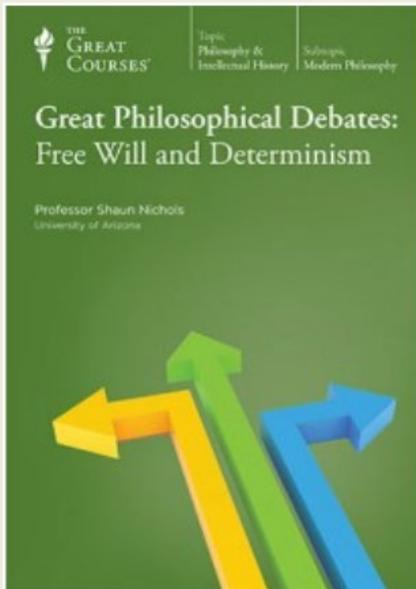
Cause Options:

1) Natural causes producing natural effects by the operation of natural processes only (Determinism).

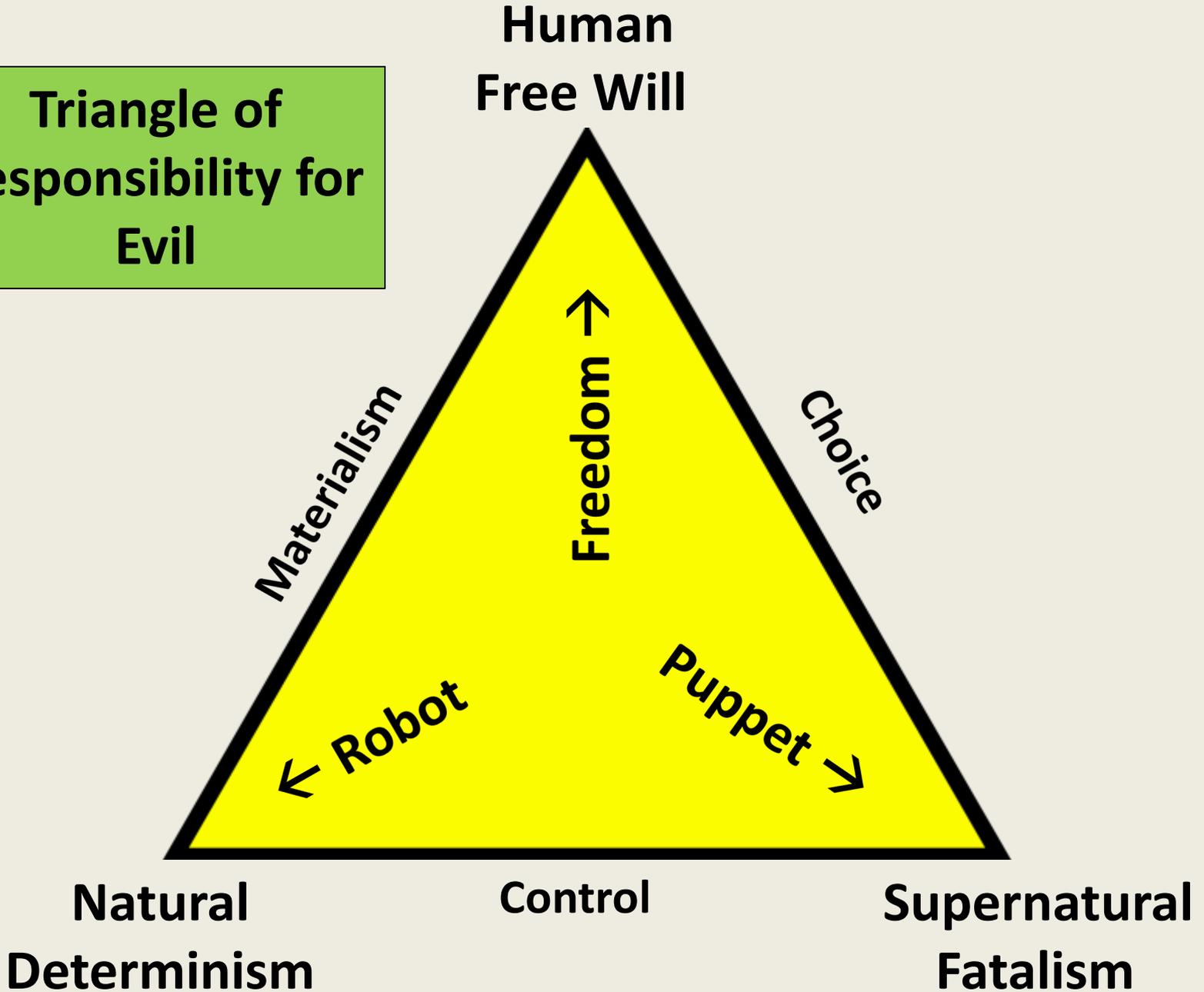
2) Supernatural causes (Fate, Satan, demons, gods).

3) Free-willed human actions.

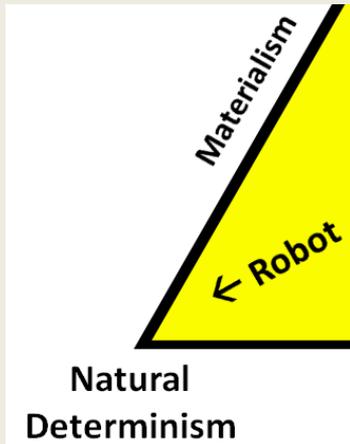
4) The All-Good God acting by His will.



**Triangle of
Responsibility for
Evil**



Natural Determinism



Natural effects (evils?) are produced by natural causes through the operation of natural processes (properties of matter and energy and the reproducible laws of physics, chemistry, and biology) **ONLY**.

Law of Causality (Basis of Natural Science):

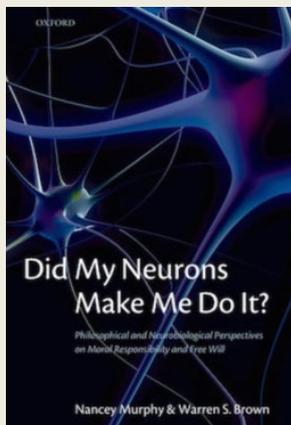
Natural Cause → Natural Effect(s)

Philosophy: “Because natural determinism works so well for science and technology, it must be all the explanation there is and all we need.”

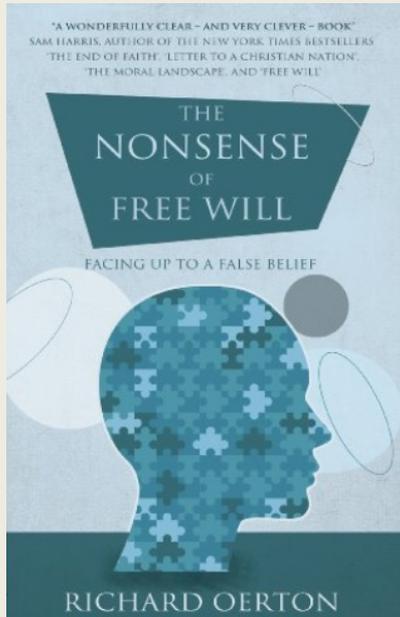
“My brain made me do it.”

“S&*t happens!”

“Que sera, sera. Whatever will be, will be....”



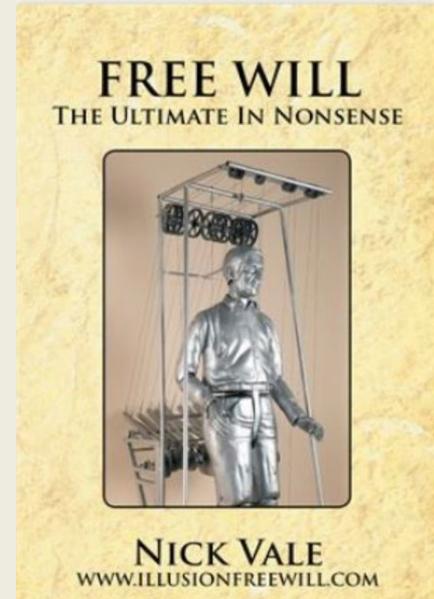
Natural Determinism (continued)



Religious Position:

Determinism

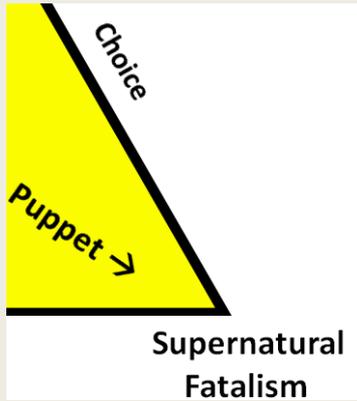
(not necessarily Atheism, Deism,
Naturalism, Materialism, or Scientism)



Consequences:

- 1) We are like robots with no free will.
- 2) Evil doesn't exist.
- 3) No human or supernatural responsibility for evil.
- 4) Guilt is not necessary.
- 5) Human punishment for evil is not warranted.
- 6) Despair: No hope for anything better
(only increasing entropy and evil) .

Supernatural Fatalism



Fatalism = Impersonal, unchangeable, arbitrary destiny. (Early Greek philosophy, Homer)

Supernatural Fatalism = capricious control of or influence on life and destiny by a supernatural being:

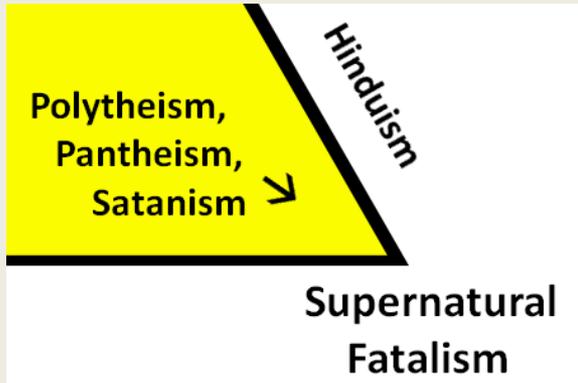
- 1) The three Fates, gods of later Greek philosophy.
- 2) Arbitrary, often evil, gods of various religions (Greek, Roman, etc.)
- 3) Satan (the Devil) of the Abrahamic religions.
- 4) Demon possession

Philosophy: “That’s just fate, no reason behind it.”

“The Devil made me do it!” – Flip Wilson (‘70s)

“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” – Eve

Supernatural Fatalism (continued)



Religious Positions:

- Polytheism, Pantheism, Satanism, etc.
- Hinduism: “My situation and destiny are determined by Karma, the good and the evil I did in past lives.”

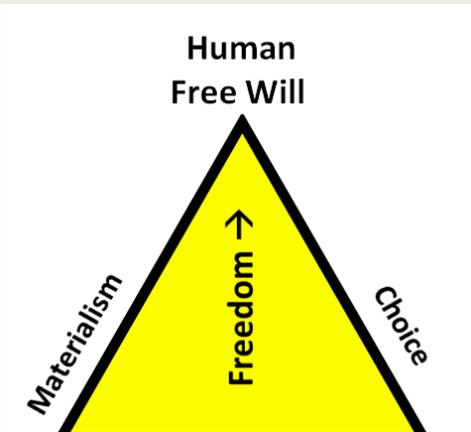
(Morgan Freeman’s The Story of God: Search for the Devil)

- Consequences:
- 1) We are puppets with no (or little) freedom.
 - 2) Evil is real.
 - 3) No human personal responsibility for evil.
 - 4) Guilt is unnecessary.
 - 5) Human punishment for evil is not warranted.
 - 6) Despair over lack of control.

Free Will-ism

Free Will = Conscious beings make free choices from among options, choices that affect conditions of the future.

Free will includes choices that result in evil. And it includes choices made or influenced by the subconscious and experiences.



Philosophy: “The evil that men do lives after them....”

– Shakespeare (Julius Caesar)

“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” – Apostle Paul (Gal. 5:13)

Basis of Our Culture: Laws, democracy, religious freedom

Free Will-ism (continued)



Religious Positions:

Buddhism: The demons within me can be purged by (free-will) meditation and ceremony.
(Morgan Freeman's The Story of God: Search for the Devil)

Abrahamic Faiths: Judaism, Christianity, Islam

"You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die." – God (Genesis 3:3)

"Choose this day whom you will serve,..." – Joshua (24:15)

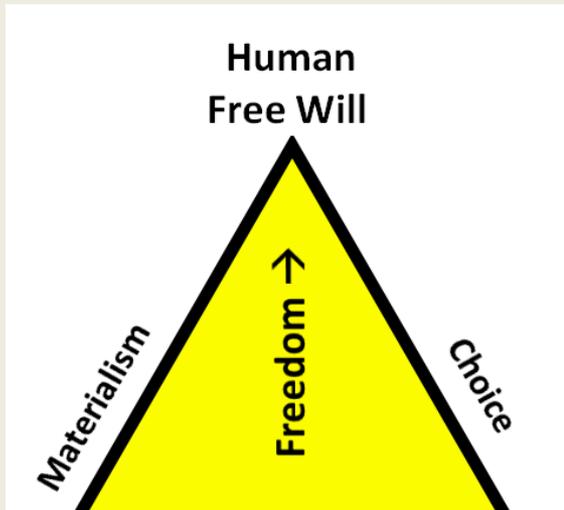
"The soul who sins will die." – God (Ezekiel 18:4)

"The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil." – Jesus (Matt 12:35)

"Whoever does righteousness – it is for his [own] soul; and whoever does evil [does so] against it." (Quaran 41:46).

Free Will-ism (continued)

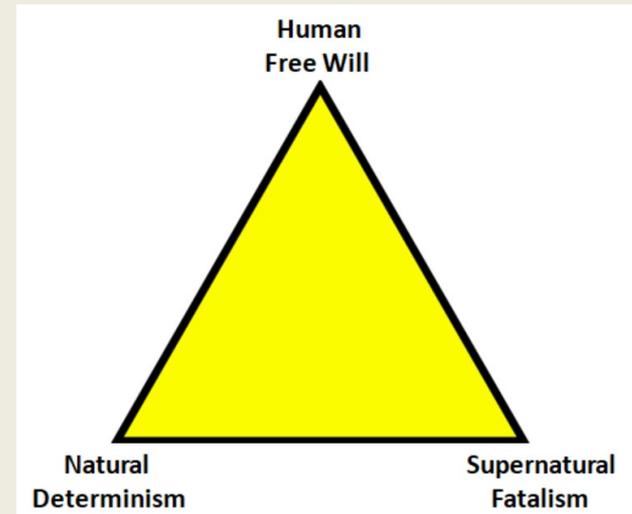
- Consequences:
- 1) We have freedom to make choices.
 - 2) Evil is real.
 - 3) Personal responsibility for evil we cause.
 - 4) Guilt is preventative; Confession is healing. Forgiveness is available.
 - 5) Punishment for evil is OK.



Caveat: Free will does not preclude some determinism (earthquakes, storms, fires, aging, etc.) and some supernatural influences (Satan and his demons) that we have to deal with.

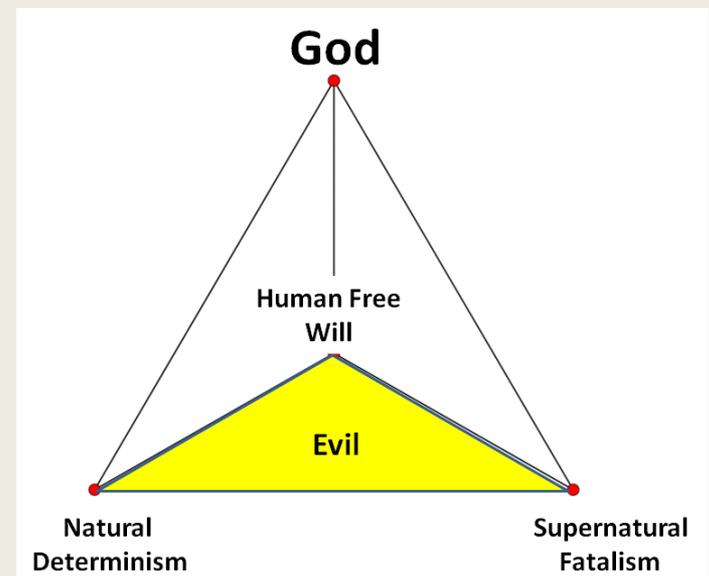
So, Where is God in the Triangle of Responsibility for Evil?

- **The God of the Bible and Abrahamic Faiths:**
 - All-Good
 - All-Mighty
 - All-Knowing
 - All-Loving
 - Free-Willed
 - Creator of All,
including nature, free will, and supernatural beings.
- **How can such a God allow suffering and evil?
(Theodicy Question)**



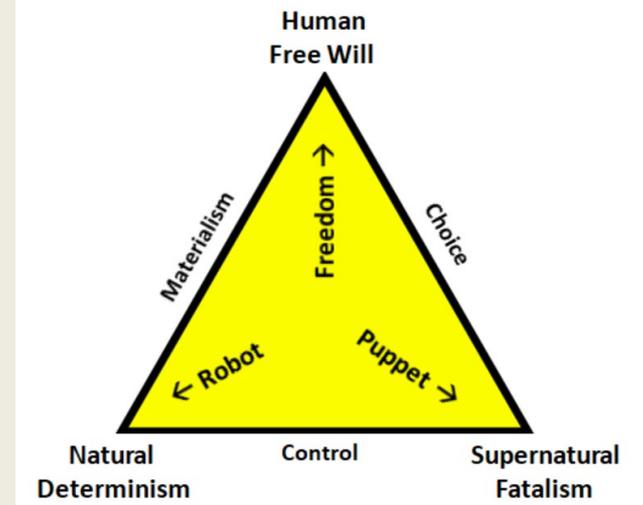
Answer of Faith: “God isn’t in the Triangle of Responsibility for Evil—God is above it.”

- “Even if I can’t explain how such a God can allow suffering and evil, I choose (by free will) to believe in His All-Goodness and All-Lovingness.”*
- God is above all evil:
 - “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God;’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.” (James 1:13)
- God is Love [Agape]. (1 John 4:16)
- God provides relief:
 - “Deliver us from evil...” (Matthew 6:13)
 - “Put on the full armor of God,...” (Ephesians 6:11)



*Just like cosmologists can't fully explain Black Holes, they believe in their existence and infer some of their properties. Someday they may understand. So may we someday understand evil better.

Discussion Suggestions



- Where in the Triangle of Responsibility for Evil do you find the best balance: An apex? A side? Inside it? Explain if you wish.
- Is it OK to “pretend” Naturalistic Determinism is the only reality while doing science, even if you believe in supernatural realities?
- Is it OK to ask God, “Why evil?” and “Why did this happen to me?” (Hint: Job)
- What about insanity as an excuse for evil?
- Can evil be fixed? How?
- What solutions to the theodicy question (good God & bad evil) have you heard?