



BRUCE LICHT

FOUNDER OF *MY ELEVATOR PITCH FOR GOD*, ENTREPRENEUR, AND AUTHOR

Bruce grew up in Lafayette, California and received a BA in Political Science from UCLA as well as a Graduate Gemologist degree from the Gemological Institute of America. After graduating, Bruce operated his family's 100 year-old retail fine jewelry business for twenty-two years. Bruce had a passion for computers and graphic arts, so he changed careers and joined his best friend at a national technical publishing company for seventeen-years as the company's Publisher, where they invented the modern labor law poster industry, including the first "All- On-One Labor Law Poster" and "Labor Law Poster Compliance Plan."

Aside from being the Founder of this website, *My Elevator Pitch for God*, Bruce was the co-editor of the book titled, *Elevator Pitches For God: Volume 1*, and author of the cookbook titled, *Immediate Chef: No Previous Experience Required*.

Bruce's goals for this website are: To introduce more people all around the world to God and strengthen the faith of those who already believe in a non-political and non-religious way, to bring people together, find common ground between different faiths, create meaning in people's lives, and start to move the world in a better direction.

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Reconciling Evil and Suffering with a Benevolent God

BRUCE LICHT

The existence of widespread evil and suffering in our world supposedly governed by an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God presents a weighty philosophical and theological challenge known as the *Problem of Evil*.¹ This conundrum is often framed as a logical dilemma: If God is willing and capable to prevent evil and suffering, why do they persist? To address this perplexity, philosophers and theologians have proposed various explanations to reconcile God's benevolent character with the reality of evil and suffering.

One well-known response is the *Free Will Defense*,² which argues that moral evil—evil arising from human actions—is an unavoidable consequence of genuine human freedom. According to this view, God granted humanity true autonomy, including the capacity to choose wrongly. The resulting evil, therefore, reflects human failure rather than divine deficiency. Proponents maintain that a world containing free moral agents is more valuable than one populated by morally neutral “robots,” even though such freedom inevitably allows sin, suffering, anguish, and injustice. Critics, however, argue that this defense does not adequately account for *Natural Evil*—like earthquakes, diseases, and other natural disasters—which are not a consequence of human choice.

To address Natural Evil, philosophers including John Hick³ proposed an alternative explanation known as the *Soul-Making Theodicy*. This perspective suggests that God intentionally created an imperfect world as a setting for moral and spiritual development.⁴ Hardship and suffering, in this view, provide conditions necessary for cultivating virtues such as courage, compassion, humility, patience, perseverance, integrity, and wisdom—qualities that could not meaningfully exist in a world devoid of struggle.⁵ The character formed through enduring adversity is considered more valuable than virtues merely “gifted” without effort or experience.⁶

Another approach appeals to a *Greater Good*, suggesting that evil may serve purposes beyond human comprehension and ultimately contribute to broader, benevolent outcomes that outweigh the suffering involved.⁷

Additionally, the *Afterlife Perspective* holds that the finite suffering experienced in this life is insignificant compared to the infinite joy and fulfillment of an eternal afterlife. This view believes our earthly pain is temporary, and our eventual everlasting bliss with our communion with God far surpasses any present trials and tribulations.⁸

Some also speculate that we are here to complete a previous lifetime’s unresolved mission. That mission or purpose can even be accomplished in the initial, brief, finite moments of one’s life. The events can be excruciatingly painful, horrific, and unimaginable. People say, “How can God exist when an infant dies of cancer, or a mother gets hit by a bus?” In truth, no one knows God’s plan. These events may be intended for ourselves, others, or even those living in a future era to have to grapple with the reasons or consequences.⁹ The impact of seemingly meaningless tragedies often forces the living, or future generations, to confront their own mortality, re-evaluate their priorities, and potentially catalyze profound personal and societal growth. It may be that these so-called “victims” have fulfilled their purpose, are now more than comfortable and content, and are by God’s “side” for eternity.

Footnotes:

- 1) The *Problem of Evil* concept, that the coexistence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God with actual evil is logically contradictory, is a classic philosophical challenge, widely discussed in introductory philosophy texts and online resources like the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (Fall 2024 Edition).
- 2) The *Free Will Defense* argument is associated with philosophers like Alvin Plantinga. Plantinga's book, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, first published in 1974, is a key text for the Free Will Defense, which is a standard response to the problem of moral evil.
- 3) John Hick was born in Scarborough, England in 1922. He was a highly influential philosopher of religion and theologian, who taught throughout the world, before his death in 2012.
- 4) The *Soul-Making Theodicy*, explaining evil as necessary for spiritual growth, is prominently associated with John Hick, who advanced it in his modern theological classic, widely viewed as the most important work on the Problem of Evil titled, *Evil and the God of Love*, first published 1966.
- 5) Genesis says that God cursed the Earth, because of Adam's sin, and that he would henceforth have to work by the sweat of his brow to sustain himself. He may have done this not only as a punishment for sin, but also as a means of protecting or growing mankind through adversity. In Genesis / Parshas Bereishit / Chapter 3 / Verses 17-19, it says, "To Adam He said, 'Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate of the tree, of which I commanded you saying, 'You shall not eat of it,' accursed the is the ground because of you, through suffering shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread until you return to the ground, from which you were taken: For you are dust, and to dust shall you return.'"
- 6) "The story of the struggling butterfly" is a popular parable about personal growth, where a person helps a butterfly emerge from its cocoon, only to find it can't fly because the struggle to escape was essential for its wings to develop strength and pump fluid into them. The moral emphasizes that adversity, challenges, and "struggle" are necessary for building inner strength, resilience, and character, preventing shortcuts that hinder true development. This parable serves as a powerful metaphor for overcoming personal obstacles, teaching that breaking through our own "cocoon" of difficulty is essential to spreading our "wings" and achieving our potential. There isn't one single definitive source for "the story of the struggling butterfly," as it's a popular parable, but it's often found in various motivational writings.
- 7) The *Greater Good* perspective (also known as the "Irenaean Theodicy") addresses the Problem of Evil by arguing that evil and suffering are necessary parts of a world designed to facilitate human moral and spiritual development. From this perspective, the existence of evil is justified not as an end in itself, but as a means to a greater end: the creation of virtuous, mature, and perfected human souls who achieve true fellowship with God. It suggests that qualities like courage, compassion, and perseverance could not develop in a world devoid of challenge and suffering. This perspective is a common theme across various theodicies and is not attributable to a

single specific citation or individual as the sole originator. Rather, many different thinkers and sources employ this concept to explain how evil, suffering, and inequity might be justified in the context of an all-powerful and all-loving God.

- 8) The *Afterlife Perspective* (also known as the “Compensation Theodicy”) addresses the problem of evil by arguing that the suffering in this life is temporary and will be compensated by eternal happiness and justice in the afterlife. A foundational text introducing the broader concept of *theodicy* is Leibniz's *Essais de Théodicée* published in 1710.
- 9) Case in point—The Holocaust— the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi German regime and its allies and collaborators between 1933 and 1945.