

In the name of God



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Finding Purpose in Darkness: The Necessity of God amidst Evils Betül Akdemir Süleyman¹

The problem of evil, a perennial challenge in theology and philosophy, grapples with the coexistence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and morally good God and the existence of suffering and malevolence in the world. William James, a pioneering figure in American pragmatism, offers a provocative perspective on this age-old dilemma. Departing from traditional theistic arguments, James reframes the discourse by emphasizing the pragmatic significance of belief in God rather than attempting to reconcile God's attributes with the reality of evil. Central to James' thesis is the assertion that belief in God serves a vital function in human existence, particularly in confronting the existential angst and moral ambiguity inherent in a world, which is marked by suffering and injustice. Rather than engaging in metaphysical debates about the origins or necessity of evil, James shifts the focus towards the transformative power of faith in shaping individual agency and moral decision-making. In this presentation, I will explore James' assertion regarding the interdependence of belief in God and the problem of evil, highlighting the pragmatic implications of his philosophy for navigating the moral landscape of existence. Furthermore, I will mention that James adopted a monist conception of God. It will be underlined that this vision contributes to dealing with evil in two main ways: It lends meaning to the demand for good alongside evil and fosters an attitude of embracing life with vitality and vigor rather than merely adhering to dogma or rules. In conclusion, I will evaluate the significance of James' pragmatic approach within the broader context of theistic thought. While acknowledging James' emphasis on the practical benefits of belief in God offers a compelling alternative perspective on the age-old problem of evil, enriching the ongoing dialogue on faith, reason, and the nature of divinity in a world fraught with moral ambiguity, I will also consider theism to be more successful than monism in dealing with evil. Thus, the relationship between the concept of God and this problem will be revealed.

Keywords: The Problem of Evil, William James, Belief in God, Monism, Theism.

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What is Evil? How Do We Recognize its Examples?

Hamidreza Ayatollahy¹

The problem of evil is expressed in the form of a syllogism, which consists of two premises, and its major premise is usually like this: "God, who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, should not allow evil." The minor premise is the fact that "evil exists". In this paper, it is intended to analyze the minor premise. The question is how something must be to be called evil. That is, on what basis are the evil examples called evil? Natural evil and moral evil are judged based on "adversities" or disagreeables, that is, factors that cause a fixed and natural routine of people's lives to deviate from its course. Earthquakes, floods, cancer, war, murder, theft are such. Death must be the hardest of these villains. These judgments are made not only for our own problems but also for those who are like us. The more similar a being is to us, the more serious these judgments are about it. But when the number of our judgments about the things that we first considered evil but later found to be good after a wider examination becomes more and more, more and more skepticism comes to us and we doubt any of our judgments as being evil. But if we say that what we can have a correct judgment is that from my point of view, what prevents me from continuing the natural course of my life is evil for me. This evil is different from the previous evil, and my judgment of its being evil is correct for me. There is another type of judgment about the evilness of a thing for each person (not in the collections of the world) that we can call evil, and that is when each person points out the shortcomings he has in relation to other fellows, such as blindness for a man. In this paper, we will show that the first type of evil is completely doubtful, so we should be silent about it. Regarding the evil of the second type, we will point out the inappropriate expectation of each person for no change in his blessings, and in the third type, we will emphasize the essentials of the existential limits of individuals and the inappropriate comparison of each individual and the impossibility of changing the existential identities of each individual.

Keywords: Problem of Evil, Judgment, Existential Limits, Individual.

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Does Evil Actually Exist? An Evaluation of the Views of Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas

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From the earliest times, the relationship between God, who is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good, and the existence of evil has been a subject of debate in Islamic and Western thought. Theodicy, which argues that there is no logical contradiction between God's necessary essential attributes and the existence of evil in the world and that both can be rationally reconciled and counterarguments, which claim that God with absolute attributes and the existence of evil cannot be reconciled, have been developed. In Islamic thought, Avicenna, following the Neoplatonist tradition, addressed the issue of evil at the ontological level in the context of his doctrine of metaphysics and cosmology. In the context of his understanding of providence, which he developed with reference to the theory of emanation, he identified goodness with existence by stating that what is essential is goodness and identified evil with non-existence by stating that the essence of evil is non-existence. He distinguished between per se evil (al-shar bi al-dhāt) and accidental evil (al-shar bi'l al-'arad) in order to justify that evil has no absolute reality. Evil per se is the lack of perfection in the sublunar realm and the lack of a form it can take. Accidental evil is that which occurs outside of the nature of things and is to be found in the natural active causes that prevent the perfection of things. Avicenna's thesis that goodness is essential and predominant in the world, while evil is accidental and deficient, was also seminal for Thomas Aquinas. Like Avicenna, he dealt with good and evil at the ontological level. Following Augustine and Avicenna in the Neoplatonic tradition, Aquinas argued that the evil experienced in the world does not have an existence of its own. Accordingly, evil is merely the absence of goodness and a means to the knowledge of goodness. In Aquinas' words, good is known through evil, just as light is known through darkness. Goodness, which is essential, and evil, which has no absolute reality, should therefore be explained within God's grace. Aquinas' attempt to explain the existence of moral evil in terms of free will was similar to that of Avicenna. In this study, I will compare Avicenna and Aquinas' understanding of whether the evil observed in the world has an essential reality and whether it can be explained in a way that is consistent with the existence of God with absolute qualities.

Keywords: Avicenna, Aquinas, Evil, Providence, Emanation.

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Evolutionary Theodicy in Why the Problem of Moral Evil

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Traditional theistic schools believe that God is the creator and sustainer of creations and the simultaneous cause of all actions that proceed from them. On the other hand, moral evil is hidden in the essence of a conscious living being and it more or less becomes actualized and is issued from it. So, is God involved in the moral evil of humans? If so, God is beyond sanctity. A solution must be found to solve this serious philosophical problem. The fact that natural humans are free-willed beings and act freely based on reason and innate desire to survive in performing any voluntary action is incompatible with God's longitudinal intervention in human actions. Is the vast universe out of the scope of divine revelations in the details of affairs, material, and non-material actions, as well as the actions of humans? If so, will there be any damage to God's omnipotence, omniscience, benevolence, and sanctity? According to the view of monotheism and the principle of absolute divine benevolence, God does not fail in creating this world because this world is the best possible world, but just as there is no greatest number, there is no best possible world either. Now, in order to correct and modify the monotheistic view, I propose the hypothesis of God's use of the mechanism of "Becoming". In other words, in a dynamic movement, a better world is being formed gradually and continuously. One of the requirements for the implementation of this evolutionary process is to create "opportunity". Perhaps the moral villain provides grounds for the gradual rule of rationality and the formulation of social laws for the betterment of human collective behavior. Natural selection can be considered a driving force that by selecting adaptive and optimal behaviors on one hand and eliminating incompatible behaviors such as moral evil on the other hand, in a completely gradual process, moves human society towards sustainable social survival. Therefore, in the grand plan of creation, God has put His power to do impossible things, His holy wisdom and absolute benevolence to the fore, and while not interfering in the details, by delegating the two elements of free will and awareness to man, God has allowed the alignment of the physical evolution of the body to Elevate the immaterial aspect of existence. Necessary for such growth are the opportunities that moral villains can create. That's why villains exist.

Keywords: Evolutionary Theodicy, Moral Evil, mechanism of "Becoming"

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Analysis of the concept of evil in the discourse of Islamic philosophy in a dialogue with the semantic sphere of the Qur'an

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The stable or semi-stable ideas of Muslim philosophers about evil have had an important influence on their way of reading the state of evil in the universe and also their perception of the relationship between evil and God. Ignoring these ideas before any propositional and logical analysis may lead to a misunderstanding of their opinions and prevent accurate criticism of the issues related to the subject of evil. In this article, based on the importance of perception over confirmation, we analyze the concept of the meaning of evil in the discourse of Islamic philosophy and compare it with the Quranic application of this concept. The present research tries to answer this main question: to what extent have Muslim philosophers paid attention to the Quranic application of this concept and its semantic components in providing solutions for the problem of evil? Our intended conceptual analysis method began with the analysis of the ideas of Muslim philosophers and this process continued until all three types of ambiguity in the studied works were resolved: linguistic ambiguity, mental ambiguity, and objective ambiguity. Linguistic and mental ambiguity are respectively related to the word evil and the concept of evil, and objective ambiguity is related to the position of identifying the example of evil. Then, by studying the semantic network of evil in the structure of the Qur'an and analyzing the semantic achievements made in this matter, we have compared the Qur'anic application of this concept with the idea of Muslim philosophers on the issue of evil. The results show that contrary to the general concept of evil in the philosophical discourse—that is, something that they do not desire—the Qur'anic meaning has been conceptualized in a new way in the context of the double scheme of "unlikable-likable" versus "evil-good". This conceptualization can lead to a review of the previous categories of evil (natural evil and moral evil) and suggest a new category of "real and imaginary evil".

Keywords: Conceptual analysis; Quranic conceptualization; problem of evil.

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Critical analysis of Schellenberg's hiddenness argument as an instance of the problem of evil based on philosophical foundations of Avicenna

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Nonbelievers have always put forth arguments against the existence of God and challenged the claims of believers. Among them, J. L. Schellenberg has introduced an argument known as "divine hiddenness," which has gained attention in the sphere of philosophers of religion today. Some thinkers have interpreted his argument against theism as essentially another rendition of the problem of evil and its manifestations. Hence, one aspect of the relationship between these two arguments can be seen in the formulation of divine hiddenness as a special instance of evil. Schellenberg does not deny the similarities and connections between the two; among these similarities and connections, according to him, are the ability to present both arguments logically and inductively, highlighting the conflict of certain matters with the attributes of God, focusing on matters indicative of human suffering, and so forth. The present paper aims to evaluate the success or failure of this argument in refuting theism based on the philosophical foundations of Avicennian, as one of the greatest philosophers of theism and a prominent figure in Islamic philosophy. Using an analytical-attributive approach, the paper first establishes the rational possibility of connection with the transcendent and then, in the second step, proves the occurrence of this connection in the form of religious and mystical experiences, based on the foundations of Avicennian's philosophy. As a result, through the examination carried out in the first step, it becomes clear that according to Avicennian's foundations, the possibility of an active intellectual union with human souls and the emanation of intellectual truths from them is demonstrated, and the establishment of such a connection by the created beings with the transcendent matters and unseen truths, based on the possibility of human awareness of these matters, is explicable. The argument for this proposition, based on Avicennian foundations, relies on two conditions: the readiness of human souls to receive them and the absence of obstacles. Regarding the second step, what can prove the reality of these experiences and their inclusion in connection with transcendent matters is the discussion of the frequency and unanimity of opinions among mystics; it indicates that the occurrence of religious and mystical experiences

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recurrently in various religious traditions and for the masses of humanity suggests that the possibility of a connection with God and the transcendent in the form of these experiences has at least reached the stage of actuality for some humans. This point can be considered as the first premise of an analogy, the second premise of which is the philosophical foundations of Avicennian regarding frequency, and he also considers frequency as part of the principles of evidence leading to certainty. Ultimately, the conclusion reached is that in his philosophical view, not only is the possibility of the relationship between God and transcendent matters with humans and vice versa in the form of religious experiences present, but also, based on logical inferences and relying on the certainty of frequent occurrences, the occurrence of this relationship is also definite and reliable. Therefore, divine hiddenness and consequently the denial of God are refuted; hence, the argument of divine hiddenness as another interpretation and manifestation of the problem of evil is not successful in refuting theism.

Keywords: Divine Hiddenness, Schellenberg, the problem of evil, belief in God, atheism, religious experience, mystical experience

Radical Evil: Kant's Explanation of Intention and Awareness in Immoral Action

Yassaman Hoshyar¹

Evil is divided into two main categories: natural evil and moral evil. Natural evil refers to suffering and pain that humans do not have a role in causing, but that result in a kind of non-existence (such as death, disease, etc.). In contrast, moral evil is suffering and pain that is caused by humans intentionally. Kant does not believe in natural evil. Natural events, although they lead to non-existence and suffering, he does not consider them evil. He does not even consider natural inclinations to be the source of evil. If he does not consider evil to be the result of natural activities or even the result of the natural aspect of man, then the source of evil must be sought elsewhere, namely in the aspect that distinguishes human actions from nature, which is their voluntary nature. This is what makes these actions worthy of praise or blame. A human action that is in harmony with reason and moral law is a moral action. Whereas an action that is contrary to these two is morally wrong, which Kant calls radical evil. The main question of this paper is whether humans knowingly and intentionally engage in immoral acts. In other words, do they engage in an act that they know is morally wrong and bad? To answer this question, it is necessary to answer more preliminary questions: What is the main characteristic of a voluntary action? What human talents and inclinations are there that form the subjective basis of voluntary action? Finally, how is the choice of a morally wrong action made? With these preliminaries, we are in a position to answer the main question of the paper: Does a person knowingly engage in an act that he knows is wrong? If the answer is yes, then man possesses a demonic evil that Kant does not accept. If the answer is no, then how is it possible that the action in question should on the one hand have the character of a voluntary action and on the other hand that the moral agent should not be aware of the wrongness of the action? How humans can knowingly engage in morally wrong actions without considering those actions to be morally wrong themselves? This apparent contradiction lies at the heart of Kant's concept of radical evil, which he explores in his work *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*

Keywords: Kant, moral law, voluntary action, natural evil, moral evil, subjective grounds of action, radical evil, demonic evil.

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Problem of Evil as a Case Study on the Distinction between Muslim Theology & Neoplatonism

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Within Islamic thought, the interface between theology and philosophy has been both rigorously as well as passionately debated. The nature of this interface is contested with varied conceptions of both theology and philosophy. This proposed paper aims to delve into the problem of evil to showcase as to how certain fundamental differences emerge between Muslim theology (in general though in particular restricted here to Sunni Ash'ari tradition) and the Muslim philosophers (particularly the Neoplatonist figures). Central to this debate, this paper hopes to argue, is the priority ascribed to either the nature of God or the freedom of God by either of the camps. Muslim Neoplatonist philosophers place the priority on the nature of God such that the "creation" is not understood as a teleological act of freedom in which case the central hermeneutic for the problem of evil becomes a soul-making process for a certain teleological end, as held by theologians; rather, the present existence is seen as a "logical" emanation of God's nature and thus the recognition of this truth i.e. liberation or enlightenment attains central importance vis à vis the problem of evil. God's nature as infinite (all possibilities) is prioritized by Neoplatonists such that the disequilibrium of creation marred by evil & suffering, becomes a logical necessity; the recognition of this truth, consequently, attains central importance. Moreover, the fact that humans are able to know this truth shows the continuity between Divine intellect and human intellect – another feature of Neoplatonism. Theology, in contrast, posits a radical rupture or discontinuity between the Divine & the creation, a result of complete Divine freedom & thus ultimately a belief in God's (hidden) doings becomes a possible response to the problem of evil. Therefore, the problem of evil as an axis throws in relief two ways of approaching it: one approach tries to solve it via theodicies and the other tries to dis-solve it through metaphysical truth such that on the one side we have Divine freedom, creation ex nihilo & theological truth and on the other side we have Divine nature, emanation, logic & metaphysical truth.

Key Words: Evil, Neoplatonism, Theology, Freedom, Absolute.

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Possible Worlds and Divine Justice and Mercy

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This paper intends to address the problem of evil as it appears to exist within a specifically Islamic framework, taking into account the central doctrines of the three main schools of Muslim theology: the Mu'tazila, Asha'ira, and Maturidiyya. The main problem appears to be whether God can and will resolve all the disbalances in justice and goodness in the afterlife, given that the hoped-for realization of justice does not occur in this worldly life. Here, a possible world semantics appears necessary to explore how justice and goodness can be realized. We will base our presentation on theories of possible worlds and transworld significance as presented by Saul Kripke and W.L. Craig alongside theories of divine justice in Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), Qādī Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), and Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). It is generally held that people are awarded according to their intentions. However, there are many different possible lives that a person could have lived based on different possibilities of social and economic background, physical and intellectual abilities, education, and life experiences. Given these variables, each person could have lived many, perhaps countless, different lives to the one that they did, actually, live, each with its particular accumulation of good and bad deeds and intentions. There does not appear to be an answer to explain the divine choice for the realization of one from the infinite number of possible lives that would make it anything other than a form of religious luck rather than justice. If, alternatively, God must judge us based on all possible lives, this seems impossible due to the near-infinite number of ramifications they will entail. Based on this observation and the fact that the human condition in this world appears to make conflict of all kinds inevitable and the avenues of religious and moral success difficult, this paper will offer the answer that divine forgiveness and mercy will abound to radical degrees such that the expectation for justice is encompassed and transcended in God's boundless grace.

Keywords: Divine Justice, Divine Grace, Divine Forgiveness, Possible Worlds.

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Privatio Boni instead of Free Will Defense

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Responding to complaints/charges towards God because of evil, we could adopt the judiciary style of a hypothetical lawyer. Three defenses are not open to God's defense attorney: 1) that he is not omnipotent; 2) evil is not real; 3) at least some evil is caused by the free will of people and not by God. On the other hand the attorney wants to argue: 1) everything good in the world is brought about by God; 2) some evil – 'evil suffered' - is a necessary concomitant of a material natural world, which is good, and so God has brought it about in the sense that he brought about that good ; 3) 'evil done' (sin) is not brought about by God in any sense: he could have prevented that, but he is not guilty of neglect. We could criticize traditional Christian theology, because of the exaggerated importance it gives to human 'free will' as the main cause of moral evil, without taking into account 'structural' evils, both unconscious and super-personal, moreover, he underlines how the typical Manichean metaphysical dilemma (evil matter/good spirit) should not be taken into account at all, because evil is something which concerns only our experience of human life (psychological issue), which is an indissoluble unity of so-called 'matter' (the human body) and so-called 'spirit' (the human soul). The main argument should be, instead the "privatio boni" one. 'Evil' does not mean "wickedness", but 'badness', like in the sentence 'this washing machine does not work well, it is a bad one'. 'Badness' is not a thing such as milk or plastic, something which a cow or man or God can make, it is a characteristic of things. So God is not accused of having made badness (which does not exist) but of having made bad things just as he made red things. However, badness is not like redness because it varies from thing to thing, e. g. the chair and the grape when you sit on them. Let us observe that badness is less specific than goodness, that is, there is just one kind of good washing machine, whereas there are many kinds of bad ones (those that leak water, those that do not start the cycle, those that give electric shocks).

Keywords: Free will, Privatio boni, Badness/redness

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The Divine Hiddenness Argument against the Divinity of the Qur'an, a Formulation and Critique

Yaser Mirdamadi¹

While the divine hiddenness argument is typically raised against the justification of believing in the existence of God, I will suggest a new version that can be taken up to challenge the divinity of the Qur'an. It can be called the divine hiddenness argument against the divinity of the Qur'an (DHAQ for short): Introduction 1: The Qur'an asserts its divine origin. Introduction 2: Assuming its divine nature, the Qur'an has to contain true claims. Introduction 3: Implicit in the Qur'anic claim of divine origin is the promise of providing clear (*mubīn*) guidance. Introduction 4: A book of guidance should offer unambiguous direction to all. Introduction 5: However, the Qur'an is fraught with ambiguity and enigmatic passages and, hence, has been subject to irreducibly diverse interpretations. Conclusion 1: The Qur'an cannot fulfill its role as a guiding scripture due to its persistent lack of clarity. Conclusion 2: The assertion that the Qur'an serves as a guiding light must be denied. Conclusion 3: Since the Qur'an systematically fails to guide as claimed, its divine origin must be denied. I will argue that DHAQ is a new problem of evil. God (of Abrahamic monotheism), if he/she exists, is expected to guide humanity, but the persistent lack of clarity of the Qur'an systematically hinders the promise of guidance. The result is systematic misguidance, which is evil. I will argue that DHAQ can be critiqued by challenging its underlying assumption that unambiguity proves perfection while diversity is seen as a flaw. One could argue to the contrary, as Ibn Arabi did, that the diversity of understating the Qur'anic verses is an esoteric blessing pre-requisite of guidance. Furthermore, unveiling, needed for divine guidance, comes in absolute and conditional forms. No revealing, not even revealing via sense perception, is unconditional; all revealing is subject to certain conditions for their comprehension. This principle also applies to revealing the required guidance that the Qur'an offers. I will then argue that absolute unambiguity could be the source of much more evil than conditional ambiguity. Finally, I will argue that although *mubīn* in the Qur'an means 'clear,' it does not mean 'clarifying.'

Keywords: Divine Hiddenness, the Divinity of the Qur'an, Problem of Evil.

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Human Freedom, Sovereignty, and Moral Evil

Daniel Molto¹

I have defended (2022) a response to James Sterba's (2021) recent version of the logical problem of evil. Sterba's argument depends heavily on an analogy between the actions of a just God and the actions of a just state. In contrast to a substantial number of published objections to Sterba's argument (eg Almeida 2020; Atfield 2021; Hasker 2020, 2021), I think that this analogy is at least somewhat appropriate. Rather than attack the analogy in principle, my objection to Sterba turns on the hypothesis that God's relationship with humanity is justly circumscribed by the sovereignty of the latter. In the same way that a just state does not intervene in the affairs of a sovereign entity, even where they could have done so to the benefit of the latter, God's interventions are circumscribed by considerations of what I call "human sovereignty". In this paper, I set out some of the advantages of the account I began to develop in response to Sterba. I argue that it has several notable advantages over the traditional Free Will theodicy, including that it explains why a just God would not intervene for the benefit of the innocent victims of moral evil when doing so does not take away human free will, and that it is compatible with Sterba's understanding of the "Pauline Principle". In the final section of this paper, I consider one worry I have with my own solution, namely that it does not cohere well with the Islamic tradition particularly the doctrine that sovereignty belongs to Allah alone. I consider how I might modify my proposal, by analyzing the conception of 'sovereignty' that is required to make it work. I compare what I'm saying with some of the writings of the Mu'tazili theologians.

Keywords: Problem of Evil; Logical Problem of Evil; Free Will theodicy

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Virtue Epistemological Considerations on the Problem of Evil Mohammad Amin Mostajir¹

The enduring problem of evil poses a prima facie rational tension with theistic belief in an omnibenevolent, omnipotent deity. The tension arises from the general idea that faultless disagreement about an alethic claim constitutes higher-order evidence against the claim. This is because neither party involved in the disagreement seems to have made a mistake. (Wright, 2021) So, if the theistic belief purports to be truth-valuable, it should be rationally assigned less credence in the face of faultless disagreement about the problem of evil, hence, (at least) suspension of judgment. I aim to argue against this line of reasoning. In particular, I aim to show that the rationally appropriate doxastic stance towards this paradox for the religious believer is not one of suspended judgment, as it might initially seem demanded. Such a response neglects the psychologically and existentially saturated nature of religious commitment. For the religious believer, belief in the divine is not just a philosophical proposition but an integral thread woven into her whole perspective, including her overall cognitive and value system. To bracket the belief would be to carry out a radical refactoring of her rationality itself, as it were, which could have significantly negative upshots. Moreover, the potential cost of missing out on important truths as a result of bad suspension can be as significant as falsely believing. Drawing from William James (1896), I argue that there are dual epistemic duties – not just to avoid false belief, but also to gain truth. Over-emphasizing either duty through an excessive tendency to suspend judgment, just as an obdurate commitment to beliefs, reflects bias, and thus threatens to develop epistemic cowardice. According to Ichikawa’s definition of epistemic cowardice, easily abandoning belief exhibits epistemic cowardice: a disposition ‘to suspend judgment when one ought to believe, allowing one’s beliefs to wither too quickly in the face of challenges’ (Ichikawa, 2024: 33). Of course, recognizing philosophical challenges like the problem of evil mandates some revision and attenuation of confidence, yet it does not require an outright suspension of judgment. The believer, in her pursuit of epistemic virtue, must not be entirely insensitive to the higher-order evidence constituted by a sustained lack

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of widespread agreement regarding the problem of evil. Some nuanced self-awareness and confidence diminution are, therefore, not just recommended, but epistemically obligated. This is a sign of intellectual humility, essential for a balanced and informed belief system. But the point is, that giving up on one's belief, on the other hand, is a sign of epistemic cowardice whose counterpart (i.e., epistemic courage) is equally essential for one's belief system. Thus, an ideally virtuous stance charts a mean between the vices of unwavering dogmatism and unnecessary concession. The former corresponds to epistemic stubbornness and is demanded by the recognition of faultless disagreement. The latter corresponds to epistemic cowardice, which is the critical focus of the present piece. So, what is the epistemically virtuous response for the believer to the (seemingly) faultless disagreement about the problem of evil? Here are some suggestions. She could develop theodicies (or defenses); rely on an account of the problem in which existential and practical stakes prioritize truth adherence over skepticism; or, acknowledge the disagreement – acknowledging that her religious beliefs, however rationally held, could be nevertheless mistaken – but attest to her cognitive limitations as a finite human inquirer regarding the infinite/divine. In conclusion, the concept of an 'epistemically virtuous stance' suggests that the believer should update the strength of her religious belief in the face of faultless disagreements, such as the problem of evil. However, this does not necessitate a complete abandonment of their belief, which would be a significant personal and existential cost. Instead, they had better maintain their belief but with a recognition of its potential fallibility that their belief is open to revision in the face of future evidence or arguments.

Keywords: The Problem of Evil, Virtue Epistemology, Impartial Observer.

An Objection ad hominem Against the Argument From Evil: Why the Proponent of the Argument From Evil Against the Existence of God Cannot Criticize the Teleological Argument for the Existence of God?

Krzysztof Piętak¹

I shall argue that these philosophers who criticize the teleological argument for the existence of God from a naturalistic point of view, by pointing out that from the fact that the world seems to be designed by an intelligent agent, it does not follow that the world was designed by an intelligent agent, deprive themselves of the possibility of formulating the crucial premise for both the logical and the evidential version of the argument from evil against the existence of God. The premise in question consists of two intertwining theses: firstly, that experience of evil exists, and secondly, that we can infer from this experience that real evil is instantiated in the world. If my argument is sound, it will turn out that the proponent of the argument from evil who at the same time criticizes the teleological argument in the way described above, is inconsistent when he tries to move from the first thesis (experience of evil exists) to the second thesis (evil exists). Therefore, he is unable to provide a justification for the crucial premise in each version of the argument from evil, namely that evil exists. The main idea underlying this argument ad hominem goes as follows: in order to make plausible the crucial premise in the argument from evil we have to assume that it is inadmissible to distinguish the appearance from essence in the case of the experience of evil: if I experience evil it implies that evil exists, which means – in other words – that an illusion of evil is metaphysically impossible. But the thing is that in other polemical contexts, the proponent of the argument from evil explicitly denies the validity of this assumption. For instance, when he criticizes the teleological argument, he usually attempts to show that it is possible to distinguish the appearance from the essence in the case of teleological experiences. This implies that an illusion of teleology is metaphysically possible. Therefore, the proponent of the argument from evil is either inconsistent or has to choose between the defense of the argument from evil and the critique of the teleological argument.

Keywords: problem of evil, teleological argument, argument ad hominem.

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John Hick's Soul-Making Theodicy

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This paper explores John Hick's soul-making theodicy, as detailed in his seminal work, *Evil and the God of Love*, presenting an inquiry into the reconciliation of evil's existence with the Christian concept of an Omnipotent, wholly Benevolent God. Central to Hick's argument is the notion of evil as a necessary condition for the moral and spiritual development of human beings, thereby addressing the classical problem of evil. Hick posits that human existence is characterized by an "epistemic distance" from God, a state that enables free will and the authentic development of virtues such as compassion, patience, and courage. This distance does not indicate divine absence but serves as a stage for the soul-making process, where individuals grow toward God's likeness through their responses to life's challenges. The paper examines Hick's dismissal of the traditional Augustinian theodicy, which attributes evil to the Fall of Man and Original Sin, arguing instead for a reinterpretation of human imperfection and free will within the evolutionary process as integral to God's plan for humanity's development towards divine likeness. Furthermore, Hick's eschatological perspective suggests that the injustices and sufferings of this life find resolution in the afterlife, positing a future-oriented understanding that aligns earthly suffering with the ultimate realization of God's Kingdom. This approach not only justifies the presence of evil as instrumental to soul-making but also underscores the significance of free will in achieving genuine moral and spiritual growth. The paper engages with Hick's exploration of human autonomy, the inherent "fallenness" of humanity not as a lapse from divine Grace but as an essential starting point for the journey towards spiritual fulfillment. By integrating theodicy with anthropological insights and biblical narratives, Hick's soul-making theodicy offers a compelling framework that respects human freedom while upholding divine Benevolence, challenging readers to reconceptualize the problem of evil within a broader theological and existential context.

Keywords: Problem of Evil, Soul-Making Theodicy, Free Will

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A Comparative Theology on the Problem of Evil in Islam and Buddhism: Exploring the Doctrines of al-Ibtala' and Dukkha

Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli¹ & Mohamed Ashath²

This comparative theological investigation critically examines the Problem of Evil within the specific religious contexts of Islam and Buddhism. The perennial inquiry into the existence of evil and its reconciliation with the benevolent attributes attributed to the divine has been a central theme in theological discussions across diverse religious traditions. Employing a qualitative methodology grounded in comprehensive library research, the study scrutinizes primary religious texts, such as the Quran and Hadith in Islam, and the Tripitaka in Buddhism, along with seminal works by influential scholars from both traditions. This research reveals distinct perspectives on the nature and origin of evil, with Islam, rooted in monotheism, addressing the intricate interplay between divine justice and human free will. In contrast, Buddhism, founded on non-theistic principles, shifts its emphasis from why evil exists to how one should respond to it, focusing on the contemplation of suffering and pathways to liberation. The findings underscore disparate theological trajectories, concluding with recommendations for fostering interfaith dialogue and understanding. The study advocates for a nuanced appreciation of the diverse responses to the Problem of Evil within these significant world religions.

Keywords: Comparative theology, Islam and Buddhism, theodicy, problem of evil, religious philosophy

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The Correlation between the Concept of Evil and the Idea of God

Mahdi Saatchi¹

All arguments from evil against the existence of God presuppose that evil is incompatible with the triple concept of God: omniscience, omnipotence, and absolute good. I claim that not only is there not such an incompatibility, but we can also find a correlation between the concept of evil and the idea of God if we analyze the concept of evil as it entails the so-called problem of evil. As I see it, the concept of evil can be used in evil arguments if and only if it is considered a protest to a kind of deprivation from a subjective point of view. I name this concept "Subjective Evil". So, the subjective concept of evil is the genuine concept of evil, and by the genuine concept of evil, I mean that only this kind of evil can be used in the form of the problem of evil. After that, I will argue that any protest to a type of deprivation from the first person presupposes at least the idea of richness of that kind, if not the existence of it. All types of evils could be categorized into three kinds of deprivation: ignorance, impotence, and malice. So, all protests of these deprivations presuppose the idea of their opposite richness, i.e., omniscience, omnipotence, and absolute good. So, the subjective concept of evil presupposes the idea of God. Because of that, it seems that the so-called problem of evil will never be solved due to the correlation between the two concepts, subjective evil, and God. In opposition to the subjective concept of evil, there is an objective one, based on it there are things that are evil in themselves, regardless anyone believes them as evil or not. From my point of view, it is the wrong concept of evil because there are no such things. Based on the distinction between subjective and objective concepts of evil, I maintain that the so-called problem of evil will arise when the genuine concept of evil, which is subjective, is considered objective.

Keywords: Subjective evil, Objective evil, Problem of evil, Idea of God

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The Problem of Evil and Theodicy in Babanzâde Ahmet Naim

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Babanzâde (1872-1934) continues the general line of Islamic thought in both the detection and solution of the problem of evil. He addresses the problem of evil from a religious and moral perspective. He tries to solve the problem of evil by taking verses and hadiths as references and frequently quoting them. The concepts of human will, intentions, trust in God and Allah's way of dealing (*Sunnatollâh*) in Islam come to the fore in his methodology. Babanzâde does not have a pessimistic perspective on the problem of evil. He criticizes sects such as Mutezile, Kaderiye, Cebriye, and Determinism in relation to the problem of evil. He notes that there are extremes or shortcomings in their attitudes. Although he occasionally deals with evils in nature in the context of the concept of *Sunnatollâh*, he focuses on human-induced moral evils rather than metaphysical evils. He does not think that there is any metaphysical evil. He thinks that the evil in human actions does not result from God's compulsion, and that man is not inherently in some kind of evil swamp. He follows a line that claims that evil mostly originates from the individual or society and that the person experiences the consequences of his own choices. He accepts that people should first put their trust in God and use their partial will for good, instead of blaming God for the evil that occurs. He thinks that people are not victims of fate, like a leaf in the wind or a knife in the hand of a murderer. He adopts a sensitive idea that a Muslim must be purified from evil not only in his actions but also in his mind, heart, and intentions. He also sees it as necessary to fight against evil both individually and socially. He thinks that the family, school, and state are responsible for this issue. Finally, the validity of Babanzâde's theodicy for today will be discussed.

Keywords: Babanzâde Ahmet Naim, Problem of Evil, Human Freedom.

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**Theory and Practice in Dialogue;
Approaching the Evidential Problem of Evil in Islamic-Christian
Comparative Theology**

Lukas Wiesenhütter¹

A strong moral argument against the endeavor of theodicies is the suspicion that they declare evils to be good and, by doing so, participate in upholding unjust structures. Therefore, Johann Baptist Metz has argued for abandoning the discourse about God's possible reasons for allowing suffering. Instead of asking "why", theologians should repeatedly demand God's own eschatological answer to the question. Similarly, Terrence Tilley has argued for the immorality of theodicies by means of speech-act theory. The paper will argue that these critiques present strong points against certain types of responses to the logical and evidential problem of evil. It will, however, not accept the conclusion that attempts of theodicies must be abandoned altogether. While many of the critical points raised might also face Morteza Motahhari's approach to the problem, his overall approach to Divine justice can inspire Christian attempts of linking theoretical and practical approaches to the problem of evil. While the emphasis on God's eschatological power (Metz) is a necessary part of a Christian response to the problem of suffering, it should also be asked how God's justice is conceived as already present here and now. It will be argued that a broad view on the notion of Divine Justice, as put forward by Motahhari, helps to achieve this. If Sharia is perceived as "God's justice among his servants" (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya), it can inspire Christian attempts at theodicies. As such, it can be regarded as a practical answer to the problem of evil by "embodying" the very attribute that is put into question: God's justice. This is connected to the 'theoretical' problem and provides a careful answer to the evidential problem of evil, because it is the embodiment of Divine Justice or the lack thereof that renders faith in a Just God plausible or implausible. Not only might this help Christian theology to find an appreciative way of approaching Sharia. It might also be an inspiration for the way law and ritual are interpreted: as the symbolic representation of God's justice that is still awaiting its eschatological fulfillment.

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