



Title: Theodicy in Monotheistic Religions: Exploring Theological Responses to the Problem of Evil

Abstract

Theodicy, or the problem about of evil, or theodicy, concerns if and how the presence of evil and suffering in the world can be reconciled with the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God. This issue poses a fundamental confrontations of fundamental importance in theology, and even moreso especially in the monotheistic monotheistic regions e.g., Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Accordingly, this article reviews the literature texts about scholarship which has analysed theodicy and examines various theological responses that are seeking to reconcile the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent, God with the presents of evil and suffering in the world to the problem of evil. Also, the article The article also discusses presents on-going challenges and research directions for future work in the study of future directions for research into theodicy the problem of evil within the context of monotheistic religions.

Introduction

Theodicy, or the problem of evil, is a cardinal concern deeply significant issue in the theology ical discussions, especially in for monotheistic religious traditions such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism that which posit an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God (Plantinga, 1974). That God possesses such traits The existence of while evil and suffering exist in the world elevates raises questions about Gods' his nature and intentions, leading to an apparent contradinction-tension between the his divine attributes and the reality of Human human experience. Theological scholars have attempted to address the problem of evil has been addressed by various theological responses in various ways,

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<https://www.miamioh.edu/hcwe/handouts/chicago-style-16th/index.html>

Commented [CP2]: I believe that omnibenevolent is more appropriate in this context than benevolent, so have changed the use here accordingly. It matches the 'omni-' structure of the other aspects of God, and more strongly emphasises the far reach of the love than 'benevolent' on its own does.

Commented [CP3]: In structuring paragraphs, it is generally preferable to introduce and clarify new information at the top of a paragraph. This helps immediately orient your readers in a perhaps unfamiliar concept, and demonstrates your understanding of a term or concept. You can then go on to present the question or issue under discussion relating to this term or concept.

Commented [CP4]: While I appreciate that the word limit in abstracts is usually fairly tight, I recommend briefly explaining why theodicy is such an important theological concern. Setting up why an issue is important helps clarify the scope, content and argument of your paper, because it establishes a clear subject which you can respond to and elaborate upon.

Commented [CP5]: For these two sentences, I recommend briefly providing some examples of the arguments which you make, as well as the problems and directions which you identify. An abstract should capture the main points of a piece of work and make it clear to the reader what the main conclusions of that work are. So, this abstract currently defines the issue and broadly establishes what your paper will do, but I believe it could do more to demonstrate what specifically you will argue.

Commented [CP6]: If possible, please cite a specific page or page range demonstrating where exactly or found this information in Plantinga's work, according to the following structure: (Smith 2006, 5-7). The same applies for your other notes; to reference thoroughly, please provide as much information as possible.

Please note in particular that Chicago style does not include a comma between the author and page number. ... 1

Commented [CP7]: I recommend making this point more explicitly, because it is of crucial importance to the subject and hence to your paper. What kind of questions are these, for instance? What kind of tension? I believe it is worth making it clear what the problem of evil is (for instance, how and why does an all-loving, all-powerful and-all knowing God allow suff... 2

including like the free will defense/defence, the greater good theodicy, and the appeal to divine mystery (Swinburne, 1998). This article probes the literature on theodicy in the context of christianity, islam, and judaism, and discusses the ongoing challenges and future directions to the study of the problem of evil in monotheistic religions. This article discusses these theories in turn by probes analysing the relevant theological scholarship, assessing the logic and merit of each defence. It goes on to explore the literature on theodicy in the specific contexts of Cchristianity, Iislam, and Jjudaism. Finally, the article, and discusses/presents the ongoing challenges and possible future directions to the study for research on of the problem of evil in monotheistic religions.

The Free Will Defense/Defence

The free will defense/defence is a prominent/significant theological response to the problem of evil, avowing/holding that evil is a necessary consequence of human free will (Plantinga 1974). According to this view, God allows evil to exist in order to preserve human autonomy & and moral responsibility, because genuine moral goodness by necessity/necessarily requires the freedom to choose between good and /evil (Hick, 1966). Scholars have extensively debated and refined the free will defence. has been extensively debated and refined in the literature. While s/Some theologians argue that it successfully reconciles the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent God with the presence of evil and suffering (Plantinga 1974). {Plantinga, 1974}, while ot/Others, conversely, contend that it fails to account for the extent and the severity of evil in the world (Mackie, 1955).

Commented [CP8] : Similar to my points about the abstract, please provide some specific examples of what you will argue. What are your main arguments and conclusions? What would you like your reader to take away from the piece? An introduction should clearly guide your reader through the structure and content of an essay, and you should not be afraid to explicitly state what is coming up. This introduction is currently a good start to what you will be doing, but not what you will actually be arguing. Please, therefore, review the arguments presented in the body of the paper and in the conclusion, and present some of these conclusions here in the introduction.

For future work, a helpful thing to do is to make the introduction the last thing you write in a paper. That way, you know exactly what the content, structure and flow of that paper is, and you can write your introduction accordingly. Readers will be more receptive to your arguments if they are aware from the outset of what those arguments will be. One of your jobs as a writer is to make it as easy as possible for the reader to follow what you are saying, and the best starting point for this is a clear introductory section which spells out not just the broad theoretical background, but also your own approach and arguments.

Commented [CP9] : I would recommend citing some further literature here, if possible, to present a bit more of the background of the free will defence. What, for instance, is the intellectual history? Who are some important proponents of the view?

Commented [CP10] : I have a few comments which apply to this paragraph which I believe will help strengthen your argument and analysis. First of all, I recommend elaborating on the perspectives of the two sides of this debate. How do the scholars present their views for the merits (or otherwise) of the free will defence? What evidence do they use? Is it convincing?

Secondly, and building on this previous point, what is your opinion? An essay, article or paper of any kind should ideally advance an argument. This will almost necessarily draw on primary and secondary evidence, such as the arguments of theologians. However, it is also crucial to advance your own perspective, building on these different kinds of evidence and previous arguments. By commenting on how far you agree or disagree with other scholars, and by explaining why, you go a good way towards advancing and defending your own argument, which is at the nub of a paper.

Finally, I do not think that the evidence cited (two scholars) quite defends your claim that this is an important debate which has been wide

The Greater Good Theodicy

The greater good theodicy posits that evil and suffering serve a higher purpose such as spiritual growth, ~~or~~ character development, or the manifestation of God's justice (Adams, 1999). ~~This~~ Holders of this view assume that God allows evil to occur in order to bring about a greater good ~~that which~~ ~~wouldn't~~ would not have been possible without the presence of ~~this~~ evil (Hick, 1966). ~~As with the free will defence,~~ The greater good theodicy ~~have been subjected to mixed~~ has been the subject of varied critiques/criticisms. ~~with some~~ Some scholars argue ~~ing~~ that ~~it's not sufficient to~~ the argument is inadequate in justifying the magnitude and distribution of evil and suffering in the world; (Rowe, 1979). ~~While~~ others question the moral implications of a god who permits evil for the sake of a greater good (Adams, 1999).

The Appeal to Divine Mystery

A final theological response to the problem of evil which this article explores is ~~t~~The appeal to divine mystery ~~is one more theological response to the problem of evil.~~ ~~It~~ According to this argument, ~~says that our reduced~~ human understanding is finite, limited and constrained, ~~human understanding~~ and can not ~~therefore~~ fully comprehend the reasons behind evil and suffering: ~~God's wisdom,~~ and that ~~G-d's wisdom~~ is beyond our grasp (Swinburne, 1998). This approach is often grounded in the notion of divine transcendence ~~t~~ and the epistemic gap between human and divine knowledge. (Alston, 1991). ~~Some scholars challenge t~~The appeal to divine ~~misery~~ ~~mystery~~ ~~has been criticized by some scholars as~~ just simply an evasion of the problem of evil. ~~while o~~Others argue that ~~it~~ the appeal represents a legitimate ~~acknowledgment~~ acknowledgement of the ~~boundaries~~ ~~limits~~ of human reason in the face of divine mystery (Alston, 1991).

Commented [CP11]: Contractions such as 'wouldn't' are informal and so are generally inappropriate for academic writing. I have therefore expanded this and other contractions to their full form.

Commented [CP12]: Please expand on this point; I do not believe that the causative logic is currently clear here. Namely, how does the existence of evil lead to the greater good? Who precisely brings about this greater good, and how and why do they do so?

What, furthermore, counts as a greater good? I think it would be helpful to spend some time expanding on the concepts here, defining them and showing clearly how they relate to one another.

As above, please also consider naming some theorists behind this view. It is not clear, for instance, whether Adams and Hick are simply defining this position, or whether they themselves believe it. By naming scholars in the text, it helps you present the field more clearly, which in turn should help you make your position more strongly.

Commented [CP13]: As with the previous paragraph, please provide some more detail to these criticisms, and then weigh in on them with your own opinion. Do you agree with the challenges to the theodicy? Do you think that it is a convincing or morally defensible position? You could introduce some other theories here to help strengthen either the theodicy or the challenges to it. For example, moral utilitarianism could be an appropriate way of examining the notion of the greater good; does the existence of evil for some outweigh the existence of a greater good for others or not, for instance?

... [4]

Commented [CP14]: Please clarify - understanding of what? 'human understanding of morality'? 'human understanding of the divine'?

Commented [CP15]: This sentence quickly covers two quite complex and important ideas in broad terms. I recommend that you take each of these concepts and explain them in turn: please define them and explain more clearly and in more detail how they relate to the divine mystery, citing relevant scholarship in doing so.

Commented [CP16]: As with the previous two approaches to the problem of evil, please go further into explaining and assessing the merits and drawbacks of the different scholarly responses to the appeal to divine mystery. Who is advancing these claims? What evidence and arguments do they use in doing so? How convincing do you find their positions? What is your own opinion?

... [5]

Having surveyed general responses to the problem of evil, this article turns now to the nature of theodicy in Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

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The Problem of Evil in Christianity

In the Christian tradition, the problem of evil raises questions about God's divine attributes: God's omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence. Various theologian responses have been proposed. Theologians have proposed various ways to assuage these doubts, including the free will defence; the concept of divine suffering; and the idea of redemptive suffering. The free will defence, cited above, argues that evil is a necessary consequence of human free will, but the concept of divine suffering posits that God shares in humanity's pain and sorrow. The idea of redemptive suffering, finally, considers that suffering can serve a salvific purpose by bringing humanity closer to God.

Commented [CP18]: Please supply a sentence or two after this one explaining how the problem of evil challenges these attributes. That is, rather than leaving it to the reader to infer your argument, it is worth explicitly stating something about how Christians have to reconcile the idea of an all-knowing, all-powerful and all-loving God with the existence of evil.

The Problem of Evil in Islam

As in the Islamic tradition, scholars of Islam have posited several solutions to the problem of evil. These are

addressed through sundry theological perspectives, including the conception of divine decree (*Qadar*) and the notion of trials and tribulation (Ibn Taymiyya, 2005). According to the Islamic idea of *Qadar* teachings,

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everything that occurs in the world—both good and evil—is preordained by God and serves a purpose within hHis divine plan (Leaman, 2000). By the notion of trials and tribulation, eEvil and suffering are often regarded should be understood as tests of faith, patience, and perseverance. Such tests, havewith the ultimate aim of refining believers' character and fostering their spiritual growth (Murad, 2009).; Some Islamic st Scholars scholars, furthermore, argue that the existence of evil does not n't contradict God's attributes (of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence. This is) becauseas these attributes are understood within the specific theological framework of it (Leaman, 2000).

Commented [CP20]: According to the Chicago Manual of Style, 'he/him/his' are not capitalised when referring to God.

Commented [CP21]: In your list of references, Leaman has written a book about Jewish, not Islamic, philosophy. Is your citation of him here correct? For this section on Islam, I recommend referencing works which focus specifically on Islamic theology.

Commented [CP22]: Please replace 'it' with a specific noun or noun phrase to clarify what you mean, and explain clearly how the attributes can be reconciled with evil.

Commented [CP23]: As before, please state whether you find these positions convincing or morally defensible. You could also lend some nuance here by explaining how these ideas explain evil. Do they present evil as necessary, for instance, or just excusable? There seem to be different ways implicit here of reconciling God's nature with the existence of evil, and I think you could go further into unpacking why evil is present. By these arguments, for example, does God simply allow evil, or actively encourage it as a source of moral cultivation?

A literature review should not only describe the state of the field, but should analyse and assess it, exploring scholarship in detail and offering some degree of judgement.

Commented [CP24]: Please expand on this point. How does the Book of Job use suffering as this exploration of divine justice? How, and how far, does this address the problem of evil specifically?

The Problem of Evil in Judaism

In Judaism, In the Jewish tradition, the problem of evil is also a central concern, with various theological responses which address the issue to which theologians have again responded in various ways; the problem remains, however, deeply complex and ultimately unresolved. One very noteworthy/significant early response is found in the Hebrew Bible's Bbook of Job, that—which presents—uses the suffering of an innocent man as an exploration of a way to explore the nature of divine justice (Hartman, 2007). Rrabbinic tradition offers several further explanations for the presents—existence of worldly evil and suffering.; including the concept of moral agency (i.e., human free will); the idea of collective responsibility (i.e., the consequences of the actions of the previous generations); and the notion of divine chastisement (i.e., suffering as a form of punishment or correction) (Kushner, 1981).

In the Jewish tradition, the problem of evil stays an unresolved and complex issue, with variegated theological perspectives offering separate insights and interpretations (Hartman, 2007).

Commented [CP25]: I recommend that you treat each of these explanations in turn, providing more detail on the background, content and strength of each of these arguments. You could then explore the nature of each explanation and the implications they have for the nature of evil. Again, for instance, do they present evil as a necessary cost of human existence, or as a useful tool for punishing or correcting sin?

Conclusion

The problem of evil, ~~i.e.,~~ ~~theodicy~~ is a perennial issue within ~~the field of~~ theology, ~~particulary~~ ~~particularly~~ ~~for the~~ monotheistic ~~religions like~~ Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

This article has surveyed ~~the state of the literatures~~ ~~scholarship~~ on theodicy, examining various theological responses to the apparent ~~contraindication~~ ~~contradiction~~ between ~~existence of~~ an omnipotent, omniscient, and ~~omni~~benevolent God and the presence of evil and suffering in the ~~world~~.

~~The ongoing challenge and future direction for the study of~~ The problem of evil in the context of monotheistic religions ~~presents both complex challenges and the rich potential for further research.~~ ~~Scholars could further explore~~ ~~would include further exploration of the relationship between the Divine~~ ~~divine~~ attributes and the nature of ~~Evil~~ ~~evil~~; ~~the refinement of~~ There is, moreover, scope for refining existing theodicies; ~~and~~ ~~Finally, research into these themes could~~ ~~the aim to develop~~ ~~ment of~~ new theological perspectives ~~that which can~~ ~~would offer~~ ~~refreshing~~ ~~useful~~ insights into this ~~unending~~ ~~constant, complex and important~~ issue.

Commented [CP26]: The conclusion is the space to bring together your various bits of evidence and argumentation to synthesise your overall position. Can you bring together the different strands of this paper, perhaps comparing and contrasting the different themes you have explored?

Here are some questions which considering would help you present some deeper analysis than just reiterating what the paper has done:

- What are some common themes across the responses to the problem of evil in the different religions?
- How far is evil presented as an unfortunate, necessary side-effect of human existence and free will, and how far is evil presented as a useful phenomenon (for instance, in punishing wrongdoing or correcting morality)?
- Are the different responses to the problem of evil persuasive or morally defensible? That is, do the responses actually convincingly or usefully solve the problem?
- What, in your opinion, generally typifies scholarly responses to the problem of evil, and scholarly responses to attempts to address the problem?

Commented [CP27]: Please go into a bit more detail about what these avenues could look like. What would be the subject and point of exploring the relationship between the divine attributes and evil, for instance? How could scholars do so? Likewise, how and why could research refine existing theodicies? What exactly do you mean by 'existing theodicies' in this context? I think just a bit of expansion on these points would make it clearer where you have identified future cause for research, which in turn would help you make conclusions about the merits and gaps in existing scholarship.

References

- Adams, M. M. 1999. *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*. [Place of publication]: Cornell University Press.
- Alston, W. P. 1991. "The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition." *Philosophical Perspectives* 5: 29-67.
- Hartman, D. 2007. *The God Who Hates Lies: Confronting and Rethinking Jewish Tradition*. [Place of publication]: Jewish Lights Publishing.
- Hick, J. 1966. *Evil and the God of Love*. [Place of publication]: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ibn Taymiyya, A. I. 2005. *The Decisive Criterion Between the Friends of Allah and the Friends of Shaytan*. Translated by [name of translator]. [Place of publication]: Darussalam.
- Kushner, H. S. 1981. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. [Place of publication]: Schocken Books.
- Leaman, O. 2000. *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mackie, J. L. 1955. "Evil and Omnipotence." *Mind*, 64 (254): 200-212.
- Murad, A. 2009. *The Lives of Man: A Guide to the Human States: Before Life, In the World, and After Death*. [Place of publication]: Quilliam Press.
- Plantinga, A. 1974. *God, Freedom, and Evil*. [Place of publication]: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Rowe, W. L. 1979. "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism." *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 16 (4): 335-341.
- Swinburne, R. 1998. *Providence and the Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ~~Swinburne, R. (1998). Providence and the Problem of Evil. Oxford University Press.~~
- ~~Adams, M. M. (1999). Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God. Cornell university press.~~
- ~~Alston, W. P. (1991). "The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition." Philosophical Perspectives, 5, 29-67~~
- ~~Hartman, D. (2007). The God Who Hates Lies: Confronting and Rethinking Jewish Tradition. Jewish Lights Publishing.~~
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- ~~Murad, A. (2009). The Lives of Man: A Guide to the Human States: Before Life, In the World, and After Death. Quilliam Press.~~
- ~~Plantinga, A. (1974). God, Freedom, and Evil. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.~~

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Please note particularly that the reference list in Chicago requires a place of publication to be provided for books. I have left placeholders to indicate where this information needs to go.

Please also note that authors are written with a full given name, rather than just an initial (for instance, 'Smith, Jane.' rather than 'Smith, J.'). Therefore, please replace the initials of these author's given names with the full names wherever possible, following the name with a full stop before the date. I am afraid that it is out of scope for me to provide this information myself. If you would like to double-check exactly what services we can and cannot offer, please contact info@cambridgeproofreading.com.

For a helpful guide to Chicago which has informed my edits and requests, please see this webpage: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

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Alston, [first name]. 1991. "The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition." *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 ([number]): 29-67.

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- Rowe, W.L. (1979). The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 16(4), 335-341.
- Leaman, O. (2000). *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.
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Please note in particular that Chicago style does not include a comma between the author and the date, but does include one between the date and the page number(s).

I recommend making this point more explicitly, because it is of crucial importance to the subject and hence to your paper. What kind of questions are these, for instance? What kind of tension? I believe it is worth making it clear what the problem of evil is (for instance, how and why does an all-loving, all-powerful and-all knowing God allow suffering?) so you can go on to clearly present responses to this problem.

I have a few comments which apply to this paragraph which I believe will help strengthen your argument and analysis. First of all, I recommend elaborating on the perspectives of the two sides of this debate. How do the scholars present their views for the merits (or otherwise) of the free will defence? What evidence do they use? Is it convincing?

Secondly, and building on this previous point, what is your opinion? An essay, article or paper of any kind should ideally advance an argument. This will almost necessarily draw on primary and secondary evidence, such as the arguments of theologians. However, it is also crucial to advance your own perspective, building on these different kinds of evidence and previous arguments. By commenting on how far you agree or disagree with other scholars, and by explaining why, you go a good way towards advancing and defending your own argument, which is at the nub of a paper.

Finally, I do not think that the evidence cited (two scholars) quite defends your claim that this is an important debate which has been widely debated and refined. Please consider including a greater range of literature here, as well as preferably some scholarship which is more recent than 1974.

As with the previous paragraph, please provide some more detail to these criticisms, and then weigh in on them with your own opinion. Do you agree with the challenges to the theodicy? Do you think that it is a convincing or morally defensible position? You could introduce some other theories here to help strengthen either the theodicy or the challenges to it. For example, moral utilitarianism could be an appropriate way of examining the notion of the greater good; does the existence of evil for some outweigh the existence of a greater good for others or not, for instance?

By analysing the theory of the greater good theodicy and its challenges, rather than simply describing them, you can put together a stronger, more persuasive argument of your own.

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As with the previous two approaches to the problem of evil, please go further into explaining and assessing the merits and drawbacks of the different scholarly responses to the appeal to divine mystery. Who is advancing these claims? What evidence and arguments do they use in doing so? How convincing do you find their positions? What is your own opinion?

By approaching scholarly opinions in more detail and more critically, you can articulate your own position, which helps provide a central argument or standpoint for the paper as a whole. One conclusion could be, for instance, that the problem remains fiercely debated with persuasive arguments on either side, if that is what you believe the scholarship represents. Or, you might find that the problem has been satisfactorily resolved. Whatever your opinion is, it is important, please, that you state it clearly. A reader should leave a paper with a clear position of what has been argued, and this needs to move beyond just describing what scholars have said.

Please also provide a reference for the scholars who consider the appeal to be an evasion.