

# John Hick Evil And The God Of Love

John Hick Evil And The God Of Love john hick evil and the god of love The problem of evil and the nature of divine love have long been central themes in philosophical theology and religious studies. Among the most influential thinkers to grapple with these issues is John Hick, a renowned philosopher of religion whose ideas have shaped contemporary debates. Hick's exploration of how an all-loving and omnipotent God can coexist with the existence of evil is particularly notable. This article examines John Hick's approach to the problem of evil and his conception of the god of love, providing insights into his philosophical framework and its implications.

**Understanding the Problem of Evil** Before delving into Hick's perspective, it is essential to understand the classical problem of evil. The problem questions how an omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and omniscient God can permit evil to exist in the world.

**Types of Evil** Evil is generally categorized into two types: Moral Evil: Evil resulting from human actions, such as murder, theft, and cruelty. Natural Evil: Suffering caused by natural phenomena, such as earthquakes, diseases, and floods.

**The Logical and Evidential Problems** Philosophers distinguish between: Logical Problem of Evil: Asserts that the existence of evil logically contradicts the1. existence of an all-powerful, all-good God. Evidential Problem of Evil: Argues that the amount and types of evil make the2. existence of such a God improbable.

**John Hick's Theodicy: Soul-Making and Eschatological Hope** Hick's approach to the problem of evil is primarily articulated through his soul-making theodicy and his eschatological view of divine love.

**The Soul-Making Theodicy** Hick contends that: Evil and suffering are necessary for spiritual growth and moral development. 2 Humans are free agents who must face challenges to develop virtues such as courage, compassion, and patience. This process of moral and spiritual growth is akin to the development of a soul, which requires overcoming adversity. In essence, Hick believes that a world without any suffering would be a "dangerous world" where virtues could not flourish. The presence of evil provides opportunities for individuals to develop character and moral strength.

**Eschatological Fulfillment and Divine Love** Hick's conception of divine love is rooted in the idea that: God's ultimate purpose is to bring about a world where free beings can fully realize their moral and spiritual potential. He envisions an eschatological (end-time) eventuality where all souls are given the opportunity for salvation and perfection. This process involves a "soul-making"

journey that is completed in the afterlife or in a future world, where divine love ultimately triumphs over evil. Through this lens, evil is not an obstacle to divine love but a necessary component that makes the eventual realization of divine harmony possible.

### Free Will and the Persistence of Evil

A cornerstone of Hick's thought is the importance of free will. He argues that:

- Genuine love and moral virtue require free choice.
- A world with free agents inevitably includes the possibility of moral evil.
- Divine omnipotence does not entail the ability to create creatures who are incapable of choosing evil, as such creatures would lack genuine free will.

Hick emphasizes that:

- The existence of evil is a consequence of free moral agency.
- God allows evil to persist because it provides the context for moral and spiritual growth.

### Responses to Common Objections

Hick's theodicy faces several objections, which he addresses as follows:

Why does God not intervene to prevent all evil? Hick argues that:

- Doing so would undermine free will.
- It would also prevent the soul-making process, which depends on the existence of challenges and suffering.

Doesn't evil cause unnecessary suffering? Hick concedes that:

- Some suffering may seem unnecessary from a human perspective.

3 However, the overall purpose of evil is to facilitate spiritual development, which outweighs individual suffering.

What about natural evil and suffering beyond human control? Hick suggests that:

- Natural evil can also serve as part of the larger divine plan for soul-making.

Ultimately, the hope of eschatological fulfillment provides meaning to suffering caused by natural disasters.

### The God of Love in Hick's Philosophy

Hick's conception of the god of love emphasizes several key attributes:

- Divine Love as the Ultimate Reality** - God is understood as an infinitely loving being whose love seeks the moral and spiritual perfection of creation.
- This love is not coercive but persuasive, allowing free beings to grow and choose goodness.
- Divine Patience and Compassion** - God patiently endures the presence of evil, working within creation's free will to bring about eventual harmony.
- Divine love is characterized by compassion, allowing for redemption and transformation even in the face of suffering.
- Universal Salvation and Inclusivism** - Hick advocates for the idea that ultimately all souls can be redeemed or perfected.
- No individual is beyond the reach of divine love and grace, fostering an optimistic view of universal salvation.

### Implications of Hick's View for Theology and Ethics

Hick's ideas influence various areas within religious thought:

- Reinterpretation of Divine Omnipotence** - Omnipotence is understood as the power to actualize the best possible world, not to eliminate all evil instantly.
- God's power is compatible with the existence of free will and natural laws.
- Ethical Implications** - Emphasizes moral responsibility and the importance of developing virtues.
- Encourages compassion and patience in

the face of suffering, recognizing its role in spiritual growth. 4 Interfaith and Pluralistic Perspectives

- Hick's universalism fosters dialogue among different religious traditions.
- His view supports the idea that many spiritual paths can lead to divine fulfillment.

Conclusion: The Legacy of John Hick's Theodicy

John Hick's approach to evil and the god of love offers a hopeful and morally compelling framework. By framing evil as a necessary component of spiritual development and emphasizing divine love's patience and universal scope, Hick provides a way to reconcile the existence of evil with a benevolent deity. His ideas continue to influence debates on the nature of divine justice, free will, and salvation, inspiring both theologians and philosophers to explore the profound relationship between suffering and divine love. Whether one finds Hick's theodicy convincing or not, it undeniably enriches the discourse on one of humanity's oldest and most profound questions: How can a loving God allow evil to exist? His insights invite ongoing reflection and debate, encouraging a nuanced understanding of divine love's role in a world marked by suffering and hope.

Question Answer How does John Hick's theodicy address the problem of evil in relation to the loving nature of God? John Hick's theodicy suggests that evil and suffering are necessary for spiritual growth and soul-making, allowing humans to develop virtues like compassion and courage, which aligns with the idea of a loving God who permits evil for a greater good. What is Hick's 'soul-making' theodicy, and how does it reconcile evil with God's love? Hick's 'soul-making' theodicy posits that experiencing evil provides opportunities for moral and spiritual development, thereby making the existence of evil compatible with a loving God who desires humans to grow into morally and spiritually mature beings. Does John Hick believe that evil disproves the existence of an all-loving God? No, Hick argues that evil does not disprove God's existence; instead, it is compatible with an all-loving God who allows evil as a means for humans to develop virtues and attain higher spiritual states. How does Hick's view differ from Augustinian theodicy regarding the origin of evil? While the Augustinian theodicy attributes evil to human original sin and the fallen state of creation, Hick emphasizes that evil is a necessary part of the soul-making process in a world created by a loving God, focusing on moral and spiritual growth rather than original sin. What role does free will play in Hick's understanding of evil and God's love? In Hick's view, free will is essential for genuine moral development; evil results from human misuse of free will, and God's love allows humans the freedom to choose, thereby enabling meaningful moral and spiritual growth.

5 How does Hick address the problem of natural evil, such as disasters and diseases? Hick contends that natural evil serves as a backdrop for moral and spiritual development, and that

such suffering can lead to growth and character-building, fitting within his broader framework of soul-making in a loving universe. What criticisms are commonly raised against Hick's theodicy concerning the problem of evil? Critics argue that Hick's soul-making theodicy may justify suffering excessively and that it doesn't adequately account for the intensity and seemingly gratuitous nature of some evil, raising questions about the justice and omnipotence of a loving God. In what ways does Hick's perspective influence contemporary debates on religion and the problem of evil? Hick's emphasis on soul-making and the development of virtues through suffering continues to influence theological discussions, encouraging a view of evil as a necessary component of spiritual growth and challenging simplistic interpretations of divine omnibenevolence. John Hick's "Evil and the God of Love" is a seminal work in the philosophy of religion that grapples with one of the most enduring and challenging questions: how can an omnipotent, omnibenevolent God permit evil and suffering to exist? This comprehensive analysis delves into Hick's nuanced approach, examining his theodicy, philosophical arguments, and the broader implications of his thought. --- Introduction to John Hick's Theodicy John Hick, a prominent 20th-century philosopher of religion, is renowned for his attempt to reconcile the existence of evil with the belief in a loving God. His work "Evil and the God of Love", published in 1966, is considered a cornerstone in modern theodicy. Hick's central thesis is that the existence of evil can be understood within a framework of divine purpose, human free will, and soul-making. Key themes in Hick's approach include: - The idea that evil is necessary for moral and spiritual development. - The notion that this world is a "vale of soul-making." - The concept of a "soul-making theodicy" that justifies the presence of suffering. --- Understanding the Problem of Evil Nature of the Problem The problem of evil is often articulated as a logical contradiction: - If God is omnipotent, He can prevent evil. - If God is omnibenevolent, He would want to prevent evil. - Evil exists. This leads to a paradox: how can these three statements all be true? Hick engages with this problem by challenging some of the underlying assumptions and exploring a broader context for understanding evil. John Hick Evil And The God Of Love 6 Types of Evil Hick differentiates between: - Moral Evil: Evil resulting from human choices (e.g., murder, theft). - Natural Evil: Suffering caused by natural processes (e.g., earthquakes, disease). Both types pose challenges, but Hick focuses especially on moral evil as it relates to human freedom and moral development. --- Hick's Theodicy: The Soul-Making Argument Core Concept Hick's "soul-making" theodicy posits that the existence of evil is instrumental in cultivating virtues such as courage, compassion, patience, and forgiveness. Without challenges

and suffering, these virtues could not develop meaningfully. Main points include: - The world as a “vale of soul-making” rather than a “vale of comfort.” - Evil as a necessary condition for moral and spiritual growth. - The idea that humans are free agents, and genuine free will entails the possibility of evil. The Process of Soul-Making Hick suggests that: - Life’s hardships serve as opportunities for moral character formation. - Suffering tests and refines moral virtues. - The development of virtues is akin to physical training—challenging but ultimately beneficial. Comparison with Other Theodicies Unlike Augustinian theodicy, which attributes evil to original sin and human fallenness, Hick’s approach sees evil as a necessary part of the divine pedagogical process. --- Free Will and Moral Responsibility The Free Will Defense Hick emphasizes the importance of free will: - Genuine love and moral goodness require free choice. - Evil results from misuse of free will. - Without free will, moral agents would be mere puppets. Implications: - Evil is a byproduct of a world in which free beings can choose good or evil. - The potential for evil is a necessary risk for the possibility of genuine moral love. Limitations of Human Understanding Hick argues that: - Human beings cannot fully comprehend God's reasons for permitting evil. - Our perspective is limited; what seems unnecessary or pointless to us may have a divine purpose beyond our understanding. --- John Hick Evil And The God Of Love 7 The Eschatological Solution Post-Mortem Justice and Theodicy Hick introduces a crucial aspect: the ultimate resolution of the problem of evil lies in eschatology. - The Final State: A future life where all souls are perfected. - Universal Salvation (Universalism): The idea that ultimately all beings will be reconciled with God. - Moral Growth Continues Beyond Death: The soul’s development is ongoing, and suffering in this life contributes to eventual spiritual maturity. The Role of Heaven and Hell Hick interprets heaven not as a reward for the righteous but as the natural culmination of moral and spiritual growth. Conversely, hell is seen as a state of separation from God, which can result from persistent moral failure. Implication: - The apparent injustices of this life are compensated for in the next. - The process of soul-making is ongoing, and divine justice ensures eventual moral rectification. --- Criticisms and Challenges to Hick’s View Objections from the Problem of Gratuitous Evil - Critics argue that Hick’s theodicy does not adequately account for seemingly gratuitous or excessive evil, such as the suffering caused by natural disasters or diseases with no apparent moral purpose. - Some suggest that the scale and intensity of certain evils seem unjustifiable, even within a soul-making framework. Questioning the Necessity of Evil - Detractors contend that it’s possible to conceive of a world with moral virtues without extensive suffering. - The “best possible world”

argument challenges the necessity of evil as a part of divine planning. Universalism and Salvation - The idea of universal salvation is controversial; many argue it undermines moral responsibility and the seriousness of choosing good. - Critics question whether divine justice would truly be satisfied with eventual universal reconciliation. Limited Human Perspective - While Hick emphasizes divine omniscience, critics argue that human beings cannot accept or verify the divine reasons for permitting evil, leading to skepticism about the John Hick Evil And The God Of Love 8 efficacy of his solution. --- Philosophical and Theological Significance Impact on Theodicy and Religious Thought - Hick's soul-making theodicy has significantly influenced modern Christian theology and philosophy of religion. - It offers a hopeful perspective that suffering has meaning and purpose, aligning with a loving, just God. Broader Implications - The emphasis on free will and moral development encourages a view of life as an opportunity for growth. - It promotes an optimistic outlook on the coexistence of evil and divine goodness. Relation to Other Religious Traditions - While rooted in Christian thought, Hick's ideas resonate with broader religious notions of spiritual evolution and the purpose of suffering. - The concept of life as a journey towards ultimate reunification with the divine is common across many faiths. --- Conclusion: Evaluating Hick's Contribution John Hick's "Evil and the God of Love" remains a profound and influential exploration of one of theology's most pressing dilemmas. His soul-making theodicy presents a compelling narrative that frames evil as an essential component of moral and spiritual growth, ultimately pointing towards a divine plan that culminates in universal reconciliation. Strengths of Hick's Approach: - Emphasizes the importance of free will. - Offers a hopeful and optimistic resolution to the problem of evil. - Integrates eschatology into theodicy, providing a future-oriented perspective. Limitations and Criticisms: - Struggles to justify gratuitous suffering. - Relies heavily on human epistemic limitations. - The universal salvation aspect remains controversial. In sum, Hick's work invites believers and philosophers alike to reconsider evil not as a mere obstacle but as a vital element in the divine pedagogical process. While not without challenges, his "soul-making" theodicy provides a nuanced and compassionate framework that continues to inspire debate and reflection within the philosophy of religion. --- Final Reflection: Engaging with Hick's "Evil and the God of Love" encourages a deeper appreciation of the complexities surrounding divine omnibenevolence and omnipotence. It underscores the importance of viewing life's hardships through a spiritual lens—one that sees suffering as an integral part of the journey towards moral and spiritual maturity, ultimately leading to a divine purpose that transcends our

immediate understanding. John Hick Evil And The God Of Love 9 John Hick, evil, theodicy, theodicy of love, free will, soul-making, divine justice, religious suffering, process theology, the problem of evil

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today the majority of humankind worships a single god although this god is said to be all loving and wanting peace for his worshippers there is very little peace among the three religions based on common theology judaism christianity and islam all foster hatred for one another causing millions of deaths and untold suffering for hundreds of years this book explores the mythic historical and archaeological record to illustrate the history of these conflicts the gods of man also

looks at how monotheism eventually dominated and destroyed the ancient and peaceful goddess traditions that had existed for thousands of years before is the god of today simply used to enforce government edicts justify war and to control society gary r varner has written several articles and books on ancient religions folklore and mythology he is a member of the american folklore society and the foundation for mythological studies

all the majesty and mayhem of greek mythology springs to life once more in the powerful second novel based on the bestselling and critically acclaimed god of war franchise once the mighty warrior kratos was a slave to the gods bound to do their savage bidding after destroying are the god of war kratos was granted his freedom by zeus and even given the ousted god s throne on olympus but the other gods of the pantheon didn t take kindly to kratos s ascension and in turn conspired against him banished kratos must ally himself with the despised titans ancient enemies of the olympians in order to take revenge and silence the nightmares that haunt him god of war ii takes the videogame s action to electrifying new heights and adds ever more fascinating layers to the larger than life tale of kratos

we are told to pray to god worship god and do god s will but who is this god the god of jesus god is not the angry wrathful vengeful bigoted intolerant task master some religions would have you believe god is perfectly true beautiful good loving merciful and fair god is the father of all people all people jesus is the father brother friend of all people in all the world of ever race nation culture and religion our beliefs may be different but our faith in god is the same too many times the religions of the world have portrayed god to be man like when our goal is make man god like people are spiritually created in the image of god in this book we first look at how our concepts of god have changed through the centuries from an angry tribal god to the loving merciful god of jesus god does not change but our concepts knowledge and experience with him does if you get anything from this book know that god loves you no matter what you have done or how you have failed god is on your side and cheering for your success he loves you and wants you to love him the rewards of discovering the truth about the god of jesus is hope joy love peace and comfort in the knowledge that you are never alone that god is helping you and the knowledge that the resurrection demonstrated by jesus is also available to you rest assured that god loves you even before you come to know and love him the god of jesus is also the god of you

offering deeper insights into the critically acclaimed god of war franchise this novel returns us to



the dark world of ancient greek mythology explored in the heart pounding action of god of war i the bestselling video game a brutal warrior kratos is a slave to the gods of olympus plagued by the nightmares of his past and yearning for freedom the ghost of sparta would do anything to be free of his debt to the gods he is on the verge of losing all hope when the gods give him one last task to end his servitude he must destroy ares the god of war but what chance does a mere mortal have against a god armed with the deadly chained blades of chaos guided by the goddess athena and driven by his own insatiable thirst for vengeance kratos seeks the only relic powerful enough to slay ares a quest that will take him deep into the mysterious temple borne by the titan cronos from the black depths of hades to the war torn city of athens to the lost desert beyond god of war sheds a brutal new light on the bestselling video game and on the legend of kratos

with each passing day magu chan s domain of influence slowly but surely expands at first he may have only had one simple girl for a follower but now he has a whopping four students however with naputaaku and now uneras in the mix magu chan s got a bit of competition when it comes to gods in the neighborhood that is until magu chan comes down with a cold who even knew gods could catch colds will ruru and the gang be able to cure magu chan of this plague viz media

this book will let you see god in all his attributes his greatness his holiness his love his forgiveness his power and his judgment

kasper is a master synthesiser and his display of erudition alone makes this book a worthy read and an invaluable resource for questions of god and trinity using admittedly polemical language he calls for a theological theology which makes the explanation of the confession of the triune god its first priority not only for speculative but also for pastoral reasons this is the reissue of a theological work of considerable importance for which cardinal kasper has written an entirely new introduction taking modern developments in theology fully into account

kratos god of war has returned his war on the gods of olympus long past kratos builds a new life for himself in the remote norse wilds seeking to put the rage that defined most of his life behind him kratos inadvertently sparks a feud with a mysterious cult of berserkers after attempting to save a stranger being mauled by a monstrous bear but for the former ghost of sparta no good deed goes unpunished a brand new story set in the world of sony s hit video game god of war over 5 million copies of the god of war game sold

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