

## 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.

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**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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n t wright explores all aspects of evil and how it presents itself in society today fully grounded in the story of the old and new testaments this presentation is provocative and hopeful a fascinating analysis of and response to the fundamental question of evil and justice that faces believers

a world renowned author and scholar grapples with the problem of evil in a world supposedly ruled by a god who is all loving and all powerful

the problem of evil has preoccupied world religions for centuries the old testament contained no uniform dogma on evil powers launching a fierce debate that has dominated theological and philosophical thought through the centuries to this day evil and the devil brings together contributions from leading inter national scholars to chart that debate tracing the history of evil from its origins in the old testament through early judaism and the new testament to the thought of origen and one of the topic s most influential theologians augustine what role did evil adopt in ancient judaism what impact did the association of miracles with demons have upon matthew s gospel evil and the devil examines such questions resulting in a fascinating and comprehensive exploration of portrayals of evil and its power and influence on religious thought

one of the most perplexing problems facing believers in god is the problem of evil the words of epicurus put the point concisely either god wants to abolish evil and cannot or he can but does not want to if he wants to but cannot he is impotent if he can but does not want to he is wicked if god can abolish evil and god really wants to do it why is there evil in the world this is a difficult problem to unpick and it remains an issue that continues to concern people and inspire debate the problem has taken a variety of forms over the centuries in fact there are numerous problems of evil problems for theists but perhaps surprisingly problems for non theists as well evil a guide for the perplexed explores in a rigorous but engaging way central challenges to religious belief raised by evil and suffering in the world as well as significant responses to them from both theistic and non theistic perspectives

recent formulations of the inductive continual problem of evil require us to consider new responses to the charge that there is something irrational about believing

in god given the type and amount of evil in the world furthermore fresh approaches to the problem of evil offer suggestive ways to enter a new line of inquiry in regards to both theistic defences against various articulations of the problem of evil and also theodicy finally developments in contemporary theology especially analytic philosophical theology likewise require new treatments of the problem of evil this volume on the problem on evil presents a series of essays that incorporate responses to these developments the articles fall into three broad sections the first critiques and examines the analytic inductive problem of evil on the basis of its modal underpinnings the discourse of possible worlds and issues related to hiddenness and vagueness the second part presents a narrative response to the problem of evil its approaches attempt to show the way in which peculiar features of narrative such as dramatic irony verisimilitude and distinctions between person type propositions offer fresh ways to encapsulate our feelings about evil and our response to the theological problems raised by encounters with evil such existential concerns are valuable for our thinking about these matters the third section relates the problem of evil to developments in contemporary analytic theology such as open theism idealism and the felix culpa theodicy

all human beings indeed all creatures experience evil in various forms how can the hurtful and harmful aspects of life be understood and faced what differing perspectives on evil can be gained from behavioral science and psychology biblical faith and the history of christian thought contemporary thinkers religious traditions of the east in a constructive conclusion schwarz assesses the pervasiveness of evil human freedom in the face of evil the personification of evil and the hope for the end of evil this book provides the basis of hope for a just and humane life it is a book for our time evil is neither a primeval decree nor an inescapable fate but has its origin in a power that always denies or negates while we are all caught in the dragnet of evil we are not helpless victims as if evil were simply an imperious it we can fight evil and indeed should do so from the preface evil is a comprehensive treatment of a complex and currently interesting subject the historical and theological treatment will be as competent as everyone who has read a schwarz book before will expect in the final chapter schwarz concludes that evil exists as opposition to god in our natural world humans participate freely in evil and morally transgress a price is paid for choosing wrongly evil will not necessarily continue in order to highlight the good by contrast the liberated christian bears good fruit amidst this evil and god has set boundaries for evil that it cannot overstep pastor ronald e c grissom st paul evangelical lutheran church bridgeport ohio hans schwarz provides a kind of textbook history of the ways thinkers in our time have tried to account for evil the book is succinct fair to its subjects and helpful to those who want introductions to these hypotheses the christian century hans schwarz is professor of systematic theology and contemporary theology at the university of regensburg germany he is the author or editor of more than two dozen books

why do bad things happen even to good people if there is a god why aren t god s existence and god s will for humans more apparent and if god really does miracles for some people why not for others this book examines these three problems of evil suffering divine hiddenness and unfairness if miracles happen as

believers claim to explore how different ideas of god's power relate to the problem of evil keller argues that as long as god is believed to be all powerful there are no adequate answers to these problems nor is it enough for theists simply to claim that human ignorance makes these problems insoluble arguing that there are no good grounds for the belief that god is all powerful keller instead defends the understanding of god and god's power found in process theism and shows how it makes possible an adequate solution to the problems of evil while providing a concept of god that is religiously adequate

a rigorous study of the problem of evil in islamic theology like their jewish and christian co religionists muslims have grappled with how god who is perfectly good compassionate merciful powerful and wise permits intense and profuse evil and suffering in the world at its core islamic theology and the problem of evil explores four different problems of evil human disability animal suffering evolutionary natural selection and hell each study argues in favor of a particular kind of explanation or justification theodicy for the respective evil safaruk chowdhury unpacks the notion of evil and its conceptualization within the mainstream sunni theological tradition and the various ways in which theologians and philosophers within that tradition have advanced different types of theodicies he not only builds on previous works on the topic but also looks at kinds of theodicies previously unexplored within islamic theology such as an evolutionary theodicy distinguished by its application of an analytic theology approach to the subject and drawing on insights from works of both medieval muslim theologians and philosophers and contemporary philosophers of religion this novel and highly systematic study will appeal to students and scholars not only of theology but of philosophy as well

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## FAQs

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