



EVIL - AN INEVITABLE NECESSITY

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Abstract

Man's sense of Mystery -Emergence of the concept of evil in his life - Definition of evil -Kinds of evil -Natural and Moral Evils -Origin of moral evil traced to psychological and metaphysical aspects -Atheist's argument for the dismissal of theist's views - Hume's skeptic views on Theist's conception -Theodicee's answer to the question - Freewill Theodicees -Greater good theodicees and best possible world theodicees -Evil as a discipline and necessary means to Good -Effect of the shock of Evil.

What distinguishes man from other living beings in this universe is his 'sense of mystery'. For him, this universe itself is a mysterious one. As G. Marcel points out, it is a mystery, because, 'it is neither pure ignorance nor complete knowledge that man has, but a blend of both.' Hence, he tries to respond to this mystery through mythology, religion, poetry, science and philosophy. While speculating about mysterious concepts like 'Self', 'Being', 'Existence', 'Transcendence' etc, he noticed the existence of 'Evil' and its effects.

'Evil' is present everywhere -in our society, in the environment around us and even inside us. In other words, one is surrounded by the presence of evil, which is posing a great challenge to one's very existence. Hence, the issue exercised a

genuine interest of inquisitive minds in all spheres of life - laymen theologians and philosophers of both east and west.

'Evil' is a bad thing which happens either due to natural reasons or due to deliberate human action. But the question is - Does it really exist? Because - an event which was considered as evil at the time of occurrence, may later appear as a good thing and vice versa.

According to St. Augustine, "evil is not a thing at all and complete evil is simply non-existent."

In Spinoza's opinion, "Knowledge of evil is an inadequate knowledge of the Substance - God".

A. C. Broadley affirms², "Evil belongs to the world of appearance. In the end, it will somehow be merged or neutralized in the "Absolute". Indian Philosophers are of the opinion that ignorance is the cause of all evil and one's liberation from it lies in attaining the real knowledge. This results in the dilemma - whether evil is an illusion or a temporary one. The two kinds of evil are:

- a. Natural Evil
- b. Moral Evil.

Evils, which are involved in the course of nature and affect both the human and animal world alike, are 'Natural Evils'. Earthquake, flood, cyclone, volcanic eruptions etc. are not caused by human beings. Hence, he is in no way responsible for them. The evils that human beings cause either to themselves or to each other are 'Moral Evils'. They spring directly from the exercise of human will and are made possible purposefully by the activity of the conscious beings. Hence they are regarded as 'Intellectual Evils'. Murder, Theft, Rape, Lack of Conscience, etc result from the actions of free-will and out of a selfish motto. The anti-social spirit of man is the cause of this moral evil for which he himself is responsible. Sometimes it is the natural evil like hunger, pain, suffering etc that gives room for the development of the moral evil, as they stimulate man to a distinctive activity. It is not an accidental one but a willful action. Though it is a difficult thing to trace, that at what point that natural evil is transformed to moral evil, undoubtedly, it has a social significance.

The origin of moral evil can be traced to two aspects-

- a. Psychological
- b. Metaphysical.

When a man is consciously breaking the social rule to which he ought to conform then, emerges the moral evil and this can be traced to the psychological aspect. Theists, who deal with the metaphysical aspect, try to reconcile the existence of evil as consistent with the well being of the universe, which is the object of Divine-Will. But Atheists do not accept this view and argue that, the existence of evil causes suffering. Suffering is the punishment given for evil deeds or say to evil-doers. But in actuality, it is not the evil-doer that gets punishment but the other. Then, Is God's justice an exact opposite to our conception of justice? So they argue that 'God' and 'evil' are incompatible. David Hume³, a great skeptic argues that -If God is omniscient and omnipotent; he must prevent the existence of evil in this world. If He is not able to do so, it means that He is.

If He is able, but not willing then, He is malevolent. Thus it is an irrational, logical impossibility in believing the existence of both a Good, All-powerful God and in the reality of evil and suffering.

Theodicees⁴ try to answer the atheistic and the skeptic arguments that why a totally Good -God is not preventing the evil but in a way permitting it to occur. Different Theodicees present different views with regard to the explanation, solution and for the removal of the existence of evil. Important among them are

- a. Free-will Theodicees
- b. Greater Good Theodicees
- c. Best possible World Theodicees.

Free-will Theodicees claim that man who is endowed with freewill, might have used it in a way contrary to his making just to land himself in error and sin. Thus he becomes the author of evil. In other words, if man has freewill, then there is always a chance that he may use it to do evil also. Hence evil is the result of misuse of freewill. So they argue that it is ridiculous to ask God to create a world in which we have genuinely free creatures, with no possibility of doing wrong as it is to ask Him to create a square-circle. The task of creating a square-circle has nothing to do with His strength. Man has free-will means the freedom to do good and evil. According to William James, "Man is the 'self with a definite content and he determines himself. So the responsibility is on the individual himself. Individuals free will is responsible for all good and evil consequences.

Greater Good Theodicees are of the opinion that God has permitted evil to bring about a greater good, which could not have come about, without the existence of

evil. Leibniz⁵ remarks that finite beings are inherently imperfect. Hence the cause of evil. But they derive their perfection from the influence of God. So, evil is a necessary constituent in the complex whole of experience, not willed as ends, but as means to a greater good. So these evils have a purpose to serve and are not inconsistent with the development of 'good' in the long run. Hence "Truth is the whole and partial view of this truth is evil" says Hegel⁶. As one cannot be understood without referring to the other, so also the knowledge of good depends on the knowledge of evil. In other words, evil is a partial or incomplete good because, the partial misunderstanding of good is named evil. That means, 'complete' presupposes the 'incomplete'. There cannot be the 'Whole' without the 'Parts'. Understanding of the 'whole' needs the awareness of the 'parts' involved in it. In a way, the whole and part are organically related. When such is the inseparable relation between - the part and the whole, it may not be correct to say that part is evil and the whole is good.

Best Possible World Theodices explain the same view in a different manner. They claim that God has created this world best suited for bringing about some greater or otherwise unattainable good. They say that we are an integral part of God's creation. According to Hick,⁷ "... in essence we have not reached the 'final day' of creation. God is still in a way creating humanity to be shaped perfectly. This earth is seen as a factory for making perfect souls. Hence the creation requires the possibility that we suffer in order to provide incentive for improvement. A paradise without suffering would be the worst sort of world for motivating people to learn and to advance morally."

"Evil is not everlasting. God can stop it one day-forever. Until then He allows evil to exist in our world, for our benefit-in order to preserve our freedom of will and to use it as an instrument in our relation." ⁸

"God has ordained evil in order to display to all creation, in particular to humanity- His glory, in a way otherwise impossible. He has ordained man's fall resulting evils to demonstrate His righteousness, justice, grace and mercy as fully as possible." ⁹

Hence the theologians are of the opinion that evil is caused because of spiritual deficiency or lack of divine glory and evil is there to awaken him from the spiritual lethargy produced by sin¹⁰.

According to Augustine "Evil is to be understood as merely lack of good". In other words, evil is just the absence of some corresponding good. So good and evil, virtue and vice-are the two ideas that imply one another.

According to Stoics [Greeks]¹¹, "Evil is a necessary means for the realization of good. Virtue is impossible without its counterpart i.e vice." So they consider evil as

a necessary means to achieve good. That means the path to the realization of good involves a struggle with evil. As health cannot be restored without a bitter medicine, so also good cannot be attained unless the aspirant passes through the stages which involve the struggle with evil. According to Royce¹², evil or suffering is only due to our limited partial standpoint. From the perspective of the Absolute Self, there is no evil at all because; there is so much of Good and perfection in the Absolute self that the partial evil becomes neutralized. That means it will exist only as a 'fact' but its nature of being an evil is overcome, because of the over-whelming good prevailing in the Absolute self. Zoroastrianism considering the gulf between 'Ahirman' - the pioneer of all-evil and 'Ahura Mazda' - the creator of all goodness, says that ultimately it is the Good which triumphs over the evil. The same is the main theme of Hinduism 'Satyameva Jayate' - Truth always Triumphs. Leo Tolstoy says it as "God sees the truth, but waits."

The essence of all religion is that in the long struggle between the two - the good and the evil, the ultimate success is for the Good. Religion is a realistic action of experiencing the good by conquering evil and practices its own disciplines in realizing the 'Good-God'. Thus, though no religion can answer satisfactorily to the question why evil exists considering it as an inevitable necessity, stresses on how we can lessen the actual amount of evil. Hence it is the shock of evil that makes man religious.

Reference

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