Research Paper

Replacement Theory as a Solution for the Existential Treatment of Evil

Zahra Mirzakarimi[*1] iD   Mehdi Azimi[2]
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Abstract

The problem of evil, which is considered one of the most challenging philosophical-theological issues, is specifically considered as a way to challenge the essence of God's existence or God's perfect attributes. For this reason, philosophers with different religions have tried to respond to different interpretations of the problem of evil in its natural, moral and existential aspects. Although the existential aspect of the problem of evil has been neglected in most of the answers. In the meantime, Muslim theologians have tried to show the compatibility of evil with the doctrine of divine justice by presenting and cultivating the theory of compensation. In this research, after examining some types of answers to the problem of evil, and mentioning the views of some theologians, especially the elders of Imamiyyah, the basics of the compensation theory are analyzed, as well as the rational and narrative evidence of the theory. Also, the theory of justice, which tells about the right of the oppressed from the oppressor by God, is presented as a complement to the theory of compensation. This theory does not ignore the existential aspect of the problem of evil, therefore, in this research, it has been read as a solution to the existential aspect of evil. Also, in comparison with Yalom's psychotherapy theories, it is shown that the compensation theory becomes meaningful in the light of an authentic and real relationship between God and man, and it can be seriously considered as a therapeutic solution for people affected by suffering.

[*]**Corresponding Author:** Zahra Mirzakarimi
Address: Click or tap here to enter text.   **Email:** zahramkarimi22@gmail.com

Zahra Mirzakarimi, Mehdi Azimi. Replacement Theory as a Solution for the Existential Treatment of Evil

127

Explorations in Philosophy and Religion

Volume 2. Issue 1. Spring and Summer 2023. Pages 127 to 147.

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The problem of the nature of evil and finding the cause of its occurrence is considered one of the most challenging issues among philosophers and theologians, both Islamic and Western. Atheist philosophers cling to the problem of evil and try to undermine the essence of God's existence or limit his attributes. Hume (1776-1711 AD), William Roe (1931-2015 AD), and Michael Martin (1932-2015 AD) considered God's attributes of absolute goodness, absolute power, and absolute knowledge to be contradictory to the existence of evil and challenged religious claims by citing them. This incompatibility of religious beliefs is referred to as the logical problem of evil (Martin, 1978, p. 133, 2001, p. 74; Rowe, Hume, 2007, p. 86). Whitehead (1861, 1947 AD), by limiting some attributes of God, including his absolute power, introduces God as subject to the basic laws of the universe, which itself is a part of this universe (Plantinga, 2016, p. 42). John Stuart Mill (1806-1873 AD), by removing evil from the domain of divine power and limiting his power to charity, loses faith in divine absolute power (Saeidi Mehr, 2016, p. 209). In this way, these thinkers try to answer the problem of evil by defining divine attributes. The existence of evil in the world is used as an argument against the existence of God, which is referred to as the relative problem of evil (Peterson & Raymond, 2004, p.5). Regardless of the logical and philosophical angle, if one looks at the problem of evil from an emotional lens, then the philosophical and logical answers to the problem of evil become ineffective; because a person is psychologically unable to continue his romantic relationship with God and worship him by observing evil in his life. In this emotional atmosphere, man is not looking for a rational justification for the existence of evil or the incompatibility of God and evil; rather he needs to heal his heart and restore his relationship with God. The existential problem of evil looks at the evil in the world from this angle (Pourmohammadi, 2012, p. 19).

In this study, by rereading the replacement solution, an attempt is made to address the often neglected aspect of the problem of evil, which is its emotional dimension.

2. Method

The approach used in this research is a library method. Comprehensive software is also used as a tool in this study.

3. Findings

The problem of evil, which is considered one of the most challenging philosophical and theological issues, is specifically considered as a way to challenge the essence of God's existence or the attributes of divine perfection. For this reason, different thinkers have tried to respond to different interpretations of the problem of evil in its natural, moral, and existential dimensions; nevertheless, the existential aspect of the problem of evil has been neglected in most of the answers. In the meantime, Muslim theologians have tried to show the compatibility of evil with the doctrine of divine justice by presenting and cultivating the theory of substitutions. This theory does not neglect the existential aspect of the problem of evil; therefore, in this research, it has been read as a responsive solution to the existential aspect of evil. Moreover, in comparison with Yalom's psychotherapy theories, it is shown that the replacement theory becomes meaningful in the light of an original and real relationship between God and man, and it can be seriously considered as a therapeutic solution for people affected by suffering.

4. Result

What is concluded from this study is that if one assigns a share to God in creating

128

Zahra Mirzakarimi, Mehdi Azimi. Replacement Theory as a Solution for the Existential Treatment of Evil

Explorations in Philosophy and Religion

Volume 2. Issue 1. Spring and Summer 2023. Pages 127 to 147.

evil directly and indirectly, or at least considers him capable of preventing the creation of evil, then the question will be raised as to how he consents to the creation of this evil. In this way, the simultaneous belief in the existence of evil and his existence seems to indicate the incompatibility of religious beliefs, or the existence of evil can be considered proof against his existence and perfect qualities. In addition, the emotional connection of a suffering person with God is damaged and he finds himself in a psychological situation where he does not have the desire to worship God. The psychological dimension of the problem of suffering and the impact it can have on challenging the meaning of life doubles the importance of finding a suitable answer to the existential aspect of this problem. Muslim theologians, by presenting the replacement theory and by insisting on the rational foundations that prove God's justice, assure the suffering person that God is responsible for this evil and compensates these sufferings in a good way. This accountability of God indicates the existence of a genuine and real relationship between him and man; because if this relationship was unreal, God would not consider himself obligated to answer. Also, when a person, as a being in love with God, looks at this evil, the problem of evil is completely eliminated for him and the two-way relationship between him and God will not be damaged; a relationship that, according to Martin Buber's interpretation, is me-thou, and Mulla Sadra has referred to it with a more precise and subtle interpretation as the existence of a connection; a being whose existence is the same as belonging to and needing God and has such strength that the evil does not bother him and on the contrary, makes God accountable to the evil.

Conflict of interest
In relation to the publication of the presented article, the authors have completely avoided plagiarism, misconduct, falsification of data, or double submission and publication. There is no conflict of interest and the authors received no funds for presenting their work. The corresponding author signs and confirms this form on behalf of other authors and declares the originality of its content. The corresponding author also declares that this work has not been published elsewhere and has not been submitted to another publication at the same time. Also, all rights to use the content, tables, images, etc. It has been assigned to the publisher.

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Zahra Mirzakarimi, Mehdi Azimi. Replacement Theory as a Solution for the Existential Treatment of Evil

129

Explorations in Philosophy and Religion

Volume 2. Issue 1. Spring and Summer 2023. Pages 127 to 147.

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Zahra Mirzakarimi, Mehdi Azimi. Replacement Theory as a Solution for the Existential Treatment of Evil

131

Explorations in Philosophy and Religion

Volume 2. Issue 1. Spring and Summer 2023. Pages 127 to 147.

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132

Zahra Mirzakarimi, Mehdi Azimi. Replacement Theory as a Solution for the Existential Treatment of Evil