

Why is there evil? Do humans have free will?

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The Problem of Evil and Human Free Will

If one has to pick what might be the most common yet difficult concept to grasp, it would most definitely be why there is evil in this world if there is a God. This is a perennial question that [still exists](#) and people, even philosophers, and scholars have had a hard time grasping the concept and finding the answer. The article 'Why is there evil? Do humans have free will?' touches the same subject of God, evil, and free will (Renick, 2002).

Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil

The author presents the arguments of a revered philosopher and Christian Priest, Thomas Aquinas, regarding the subject of God and the evil that exists in this world. Thomas Aquinas studied Aristotle and Plato in-depth and applied their teachings along with the Bible to give some cogent reasoning to some of the difficult questions in theology (McInerney, 2014). The article is very articulate, and it explains every point in a very simple way. The questions that the author seems to tackle are arguably the toughest and hardest to comprehend. Still, he gives very strong yet simple arguments that do not allow people to accept that God is all-powerful and all-knowing. God is not the [source of evil](#) that exists in this world or that God has given us free will, but to make us decide ourselves and to elucidate the most difficult questions in a very lucid and limpid way.

Evil as the Absence of Goodness

The author presents the explanations of Thomas Aquinas that were given in response to these questions: if God is Al-mighty, then why does He let evil pervade our society, and if evil and suffering exist, why does He not do anything about it? Thomas Aquinas argued that it is not that God is evil but that there is an absence of goodness. He said that God has made everything beautiful and good, and His purpose of creating everything was pure, but it is the removal of the goodness in things that we appear to see as basic. It is the same as this concept: cold does not exist, it is the absence of heat, or darkness does not exist. It is the absence of light. The author gave the example of a flower, and how it is beautiful in the spring, but when a person comes back a week later and sees the flower, its beauty is not the same as before. It seems logical that if someone takes a bath, he is clean, but after a week goes by and he does not wash, he will have dirt on his body, and he will smell awful. The question then arises that if God is not the source of evil, then it might be Satan who is causing all the evil in this world, and the problem comes back to the point where we have started it: God created Satan, and Satan is causing all the evil, so if one trackback this problem, it is God who created Satan,

so God is the first instigator of the evil. Thomas Aquinas tackles this question by presenting the argument that whatever God has made, it is out of pure intention, and He does not want to inflict harm on anyone. He created Satan with great abilities. Now, it is up to Satan to live up to those potentials and do good things with the power he has been endowed with. Satan can choose to do beneficial things with those abilities, and he can choose to do evil. It is not of God but of Satan himself.

Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom

The concept of why it is evil is very well explained by Thomas Aquinas, and one can be satisfied with the reasoning he presented, but that leads to another question. If God is not the source of evil, then it means we have free will. We can do whatever we wish, but one of God's attributes is that He is all-knowing, which means that whatever has happened, whatever is happening, and whatever will happen, God knows everything about it. This concept does not sit well with many philosophers, let alone common people. These two concepts are not coherent when put together. On the one side, we say God is good and whatever He created is anything but evil; it is the will of a person that decides what to do and what not to do, and the concept of God knows everything that goes around in this world. He has all the knowledge of the past, present, and future. If we can accept that Hitler was not evil when he was created, but he chose to do evil in this world and committed atrocities through his own will, then God must have known that He was creating this person who was going to wreak havoc on this world. There is no concept of free will exists if we combine the two concepts of God's all-knowing ability with free will. Thomas Aquinas also had a hard time figuring out this problem. He said that if we are walking on the road, we can only see what is in front of us and what is behind us, only to some extent. Our eyes do not have the vision to see things far enough. He says that God is like a person who is standing on top of a hill and looking at everything. He knows what is going to happen at the next curve. Thomas Aquinas gave the concept of contingency. One thing is dependent on the other. Aquinas argued that we can look into this problem from two perspectives. One is that when God wants something to happen, it happens. God willed to create the planets and stars, and they came into being. He willed to create the earth, and it came into existence. The other aspect is that God knows what the person will do, but He wishes that he would do good things. Aquinas distinguished will and wish. There are things that are out of the control of man, but there are things that man chooses. The author says Hitler could have used his ability to do good things, but he chose to inflict harm on others.

Later Theological Views on Free Will

The concept of free will with God's ability to know everything is still confusing, and many of the philosophers who came after Aquinas could not comprehend the logic and accepted that humans do not have free will. Martin Luther, a German theologian, said that there is no free will for humans (Luther, 2008). Similarly, John Calvin, a French philosopher, also held this view (Calvin & Uyl, 2016).

The case is that either we are not able to grasp this intricate concept, or there has not been any cogent reasoning presented to us that we can accept these two concepts. The concept of the abilities of God, that He is all-powerful and all-knowing, and that what He has created in this world is pure, is acceptable to some degree, but then again, the problem arises with the free will concept. Aquinas presented an analogy of the rolling of the dice. Hypothetically, if God is playing Monopoly and He needs two sixes to win, He can either wish that the two sixes appear or He can wish for the appearance of those sixes by letting the dice roll naturally. Aquinas argued that God has the ability to do both will and wish at the same time. These are extremely difficult and complicated questions that lead to different questions in theology. One question leads to another, and the process continues. In order for someone to comprehend these concepts, one has to study different concepts and philosophies. A superficial knowledge cannot help anyone achieve the goal of finding out about these questions. One should always strive to gain knowledge about these concepts, and one should not stop until he or she is satisfied with the reasoning.

References

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