Explain Leibniz's Approach to Solving the Problem of Evil

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Abstract: The problem of evil is one of the cases that has always occupied man throughout the history of thought and has been confronted with various explanations by religious thinkers.Leibniz is one of the thinkers who has tried to explain the problem of evil in a way that does not contradict the existence of God and also the goodness of the world of creation.Explaining the problem of evil in Leibniz's thought and getting acquainted with his solutions for explaining the problem of evil, in addition to introducing us to his thoughts on it, can be the answer to many questions about the problem of evil.In this article, an attempt is made to study what evil is, the types of evil and the solutions to the problem of evil in Leibniz's thought by using descriptive-analytical method and using library resources.Leibniz not only does not consider evil to be in conflict with theism, but also believes that by understanding it correctly, we can believe more in the existence of God.

1. Introduction

What is evil and why does it exist and what is the benefit of evil for man and the creation of the world?these are questions that have always been the place of thought and thinking for man throughout history and have been confronted with various interpretations and answers by thinkers.This issue is even more difficult and challenging for theists because it has always been an excuse for atheists to deny the existence of God and that is why the problem of evil has been named as the "base of atheism".

Leibniz is a contemporary Christian thinker who has tried to explain evil in his works and believes that evil has no contradiction with God and with the correct understanding of the problem of evil, it is possible to better understand the existence of God, and most of the realized evil is the result of human will.

So far, no research has been written that specifically examines the problem of evil in Leibniz's works and ideas, and the initiative of this research is that for the first time, it discusses this issue with the focus on Leibniz's thoughts and in this research, an attempt is made to answer these questions;

What is Leibniz's definition of evil? Is evil non-existent or existential? What are the types of evil?From Leibniz's point of view, is evil in conflict with the existence of God or a follower of His attributes? Can evil challenge the goodness of the created world?What solutions has been proposed by Leibniz to solve the problem of evil?

2.The Nature of Evil

Leibniz acknowledges the existence of evil, but argues that the evil that exists is the minimum necessary for the existence of good and far less than the existing good. Evil is therefore a cost that is paid for the many benefits of good.In this theory, it is assumed that good can exist only in opposition to evil, but what is true about phenomena that require opposite aspects, is not true about good and evil (Eskandaridamaneh and Nasri, 2014, 47)

Leibniz states:"The problem of evil is in fact the most important, the most difficult and the most stubborn problem that has always offended human thought and ultimately has not found a decisive and convincing answer "(Leibniz, 2005, 202).

According to Leibniz, the world system has an orderly and efficient mechanism, and the evils can not disrupt this complex and good system.He states:"Since evil is necessary for the existence of greater goodness, God has given consent to their existence. God has never willed evil but has consented to its existence" (Leibniz, 1985, 160).

Leibniz believes that evil arises from a kind of limitation because monads are all created and limited to the central monad, and that is why metaphysics is the limitation of evil, and other forms of evil that are moral and natural evil are somehow rooted in metaphysical evil. According to Leibniz, the existence of this limitation is necessary for the harmony and order of the world of creation.

According to Leibniz, anything created by God is good, and although we may consider them evil given our weak perceptions, their existence is necessary for the world, and this world has a true system and this world has a real system that cannot be considered crooked or wrong, because this real system is the best system.

According to Leibniz, God is able to create evil, but evil is never issued from Him. On the other hand, the good spirit of God must be considered obligatory.Thus the special possibility of existential propositions will ultimately be based on the premise that God's goodness is not necessary.According to Leibniz, the goodness of God focused his will on creating good, his knowledge revealed the best possible thing to Him, and His power enabled Him to create it (Russell, 2012, 82).

Leibniz believes that God is good and nothing but good comes from good, in the sense that there are many possible worlds for God, and since God encompasses all of them scientifically, the good and evil of each are same and so clear to God.And since God is the absolute good, he can not choose except the best.The absolute good, nothing but good is issued, and therefore God's choice has been the best. So this world is also the best possible world (Eskandaridamaneh and Nasri, 2014, 33).

According to Leibniz, God has done what is best for the world, and this universe is the best system that God has created in the most perfect and beautiful way, and there should be no small evil that is in fact the introduction of charity in the world and evil should not be considered in conflict with some divine attributes such as justice and benevolence.

Leibniz states:"God has three attributes of goodness, knowledge and absolute power, and considering these three attributes, we conclude that God has done the best possible in the world, because, if otherwise he does not want to do his best and lacks good will, his goodness and benevolence will be limited and if he does not have the necessary knowledge to know and distinguish the best or has knowledge but does not have enough power to do it, his wisdom and power will be questioned; then the existing system is the best system" (Leibniz, 1985, 190).

Murray states:"According to Leibniz, the fact that God created the best possible world does not mean that the world is absolutely perfect and there are no defects in it. Although he speaks of the various perfections of this world, he is convinced that this world is only a part of Absolute perfection benefits.In order to be a creature, this world must have a perfection less than the perfection of God, because otherwise it will not be different from God. That is why he considers metaphysical evil as the essence of every creature.However, according to Leibniz, although there are some evils in the world,but it is the best possible world.Different views have been expressed about Leibniz's criterion for the supremacy of this world; some consider the best world to be a world that has the maximum virtue for rational beings.Some have considered the existence of maximum nature as a criterion of superiority" (Murray, 2005, 28).According to Leibniz, according to the attributes of goodness, knowledge and divine power, the existence of evil can not be considered a defect for God, and this view does not contradict the divine attributes.In this regard, he states:"From the attributes of goodness, knowledge and divine power we conclude that God has done the best possible thing, because otherwise if he does not want to do the best and lacks the will of goodness, his goodness and benevolence will be limited, and if he does not have the necessary knowledge to know and recognize the best, his wisdom and power will be questioned" (Leibniz, 1985, 190).

Leibniz considers evil as an opportunity for a person to take advantage of goodness and recognize charity. In his view, the existence of some evil is the beginning of the descent of charity and the existence of evil in this regard is obvious and necessary. Leibniz, on the other hand, considers evil to be inherent in the world, and it is obvious that his statement is more focused on physical evil or natural evil.

3.Types of Evil

Each type of evil in Leibniz's thought has its own nature and characteristics that make it different from other types of evil. Based on his specific philosophical ideas as well as being inspired by the ideas of St. Augustine, he has divided and presented his views on the types of evil and divides the evil into three categories: metaphysical, physical and moral evil.

Although Leibniz divides evil into three categories, he considers them to be completely related to each other.Leibniz acknowledges that evil cannot be a real thing against God's goodness, but even if evil is nothing but a lack of goodness, it still seems to contradict God's perfection and needs to be explained (Eskandaridamaneh and Nasri, 2014, 31).Leibniz's answers generally consist of the Augustinian method, which consists of three parts;

A. Evil as the absence of good;

B. Human beings have the will and authority (justification of moral evil)

C.God can remove good from the will of evil (Bahreini, 2011, 20).

One of the types of evil categorized by Leibniz is metaphysical evil. Metaphysical evil is actually the evil that lies at the root of people and objects and has a potential in them.

Metaphysical evil is the absence of absolute perfection, which is inherently devoid of it.Broad argues that it is metaphysically necessary that every created world must contain some kind of metaphysical evil, because in the created world there is a monad, and every monad has a degree of ambiguity and therefore a degree of metaphysical evil (Broad, 1975, 160).Metaphysical evil is a mere defect; that is, evil is a defect that requires a finite existence in itself. The existence of the creature is necessarily finite, and the finite being is necessarily imperfect, and this defect is the root of the possibility of error.Where should we look for the source of evil when we derive our whole being from God?The answer is that the source of evil must be found in the nature of the creature's soul, since this nature is contained in the eternal truths which are in the knowledge of God independent of his will, because we must note that there is an initial defect in the creature before committing sin and what creature is limited to its essence and as a result can not know everything and may be misled and make other mistakes (Nowrouzi and Berenjkar, 2014, 103- 104).

Metaphysical evil means the absence of absolute perfection that is woven into the mite of the whole possible world. Metaphysical evil is necessary for the creation of the universe of possibility.The evil that pervades the universe is the limitation and imperfection of the universe relative to the infinity of God.In other words, metaphysical evil is the evil with which all possible beings and creatures of God are affected and cannot be separated from them, and it means limitation and in Mulla Sadra's words "existential poverty" of all possible beings in front of God's infinite perfection. Because every limitation is considered a defect and weakness and every defect is considered as a kind of evil; therefore, limitations are poverty and the possibility of the existence of evil (Alizamani and Sadathashemi, 2014, 98).The metaphysical evil of the universe has occupied both possibility and matter, and the reason for this is the limitation of the universe to the infinite God. In Islamic philosophy, this evil is called absolute imperfection, which is like non-existent evil.

Physical evil is the same as the events of the world of nature, such as floods, earthquakes, storms, tsunamis, etc, which may always occur in different parts of the world and their existential roots go back to nature, although human manipulation should not be ignored in their creation.

Physical evil is one of the characteristics of the natural world that is always happening and happens many times in different places. It seems that this group of evils have an inseparable existence with the system that rules nature. Some believe that physical evil is the same It is a manifestation of metaphysical evil in the natural world.

Leibniz states:"Concerning physical evil, it can be said that God sometimes intends it to punish sin and sometimes as a means to an end, that is, the source of greater evil or the attainment of greater good.Punishment is also a source of correction and lesson. Evil often makes us better understand good, and sometimes it contributes to the development of the person who endures it. It is a beautiful parable used by Christ himself" (Leibniz, 1985, 140).

Regarding natural evil, Leibniz believes that pain is a part of the natural system, and that in the whole natural system, natural good is much greater than natural evil; in addition, many natural evils are the result of human moral evil, and at the same time for achieving good ends is useful (Wall, 1991, 81).Leibniz says that natural good in the world is more than natural evil. In addition, natural pain is the result of moral evil and is a useful way to reach many ends, because they serve as a punishment for sins as well as a means to complete good.(Copleston, 2009, 417).

According to Leibniz, the last type of evil is moral evil, which is the source of the creation of a person who commits sin by following his whims and avoiding divine commands. In fact, moral evil is the same as man's obedience to It is the devil inside and out that causes evil among human beings.

According to Leibniz, moral evil depends on the will of human beings, and its emergence requires that a person will do evil, for example, lie, commit murder, or commit any other evil. In fact, as long as one does not want to, no moral evil does not occur and the appearance or non-appearance of such evil depends on man and his action.

Leibniz, however, divides evils into three categories; in practice, he considers them to be quite related to each other.In his view, moral evil often causes physical evil, and many of the sufferings that are caused to man are due to selfishness and improper human actions.Like Augustine, he considers many natural disasters to be the result of man's sin and his disobedience to God almighty.Leibniz also believes that metaphysical evil is an unlikely cause of moral evil and therefore physical evil (Fathtaheri, 2010, 111).

On the other hand, sometimes some evil is a combination of physical and moral. For example, if we cut down trees, as a result, when it rains, the probability of flooding increases, or if an earthquake occurs due to rockets and the pressure to hit the ground, it can not be considered as a perfect example of phisical evil, but also the human factor has been involved in it and in fact it has been a combination of moral and physical evil.

Leibniz believes that the types of evil, despite their differences, are quite related to each other, because on the one hand metaphysical evil for moral evil is an unlikely cause that is related to man's relationship with God and potential affairs, and on the other hand the result evil is physical and natural.

4.Solutions to the Problem of Evil

In dealing with the problem of evil, thinkers fall into two categories; some, such as Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, Leibniz and all Islamic philosophers, have tried to make the problem of evil a violation of attributes by recognizing the existing system and offering various solutions and arguments and tried to solve the evil problem.On the other hand, thinkers like J.L. Mackey and William Rowe, considering the evil as irrational, have stated it as a reason for denying the existence of God and have made the problem of evil a refuge for their atheism (HosseiniEskandian and Rajabnezhadian, 2020,117).

According to Leibniz, in his "Theodicy of Divine Justice", he has proposed four solutions to solve problem of evil;

1-4 Evil is Non-Existent: Leibniz's first solution to the problem of evil, which is based on the pre-Christian foundations and is rooted in Augustine's thoughts, is that evil is non-existent.According to this

solution, there is no evil at all for which titles such as "disrupting the good system" or "violating the divine attributes" can be considered, and evil is a non-existent thing to which there is no existence.

Leibniz believes that evil is non-existent and without causes, because in his view, cause belongs to things that exist, and evil, since it is non-existent, does not exist so that it can have a cause. The essence of the object returns that evil lacks the essence and existence to which the cause is based.

Leibniz, recognizing the necessity of metaphysical evil and basing it on physical and moral evil, concludes that evil and sin are purely negative and non-existent, because they arise from metaphysical evil, and this kind of evil is also non-existent (Broad, 1975, 159). Evil is not a productive reality but a loss, just like the hole inside a cake which is only the absence of a cake. Therefore, evil has no active cause and is a kind of loss(Leibniz, 1985,222).

Knowing that evil is non-existent, rather than trying to solve the problem of evil, seeks to disprove the duality.According to this view, because evils are non-existent, they do not need a creator. Therefore, because there is one type in the world that is charity, then we have only one creator and the idea of polytheism and dualism is false (Motahhari, 1983, 154).

Copleston says :"According to Leibniz, God previously willed only good, but since imperfection is not related to divine will but to the nature of the creature's soul, it was not possible for God to create at all without creating imperfect beings.Nevertheless, God has created the best possible world, and if the problem of evil itself is taken into account, the divine will ,wills only the good;but later, when the divine will for the creation of the universe became certain, it wills the best possible; but it was not possible for God to will the best without the will of imperfect creatures; even in the best possible universe, there must be defects in beings (Copleston,2009, 416).

2-4 The Necessity of Evil to Achieve Good: This view has an ancient history among the philosophers of the West and the East like the Stoics. Adherents of this theory, by accepting and acknowledging the existence and establishment of evil in this world, consider it necessary and inseparable from the world, which includes many superior and many good things, to the extent that the small evil of the world was to be ignored. The creation of the principle of the existing universe must also be abandoned.Proponents of this solution cite examples to prove their claim;for example, the existence of fire, which no one doubts is good, sometimes causes a lot of harm and evil, yet no one objects to its existence.Therefore, God's main purpose in creating fire is its innumerable benefits, but the harms and evils that result from it are intended by God. This view is composed of the following three pillars and introductions;

A. The multiplicity of good and the smallness of evil

B. Do not separate evil from charity

C. Equality of leaving many good with many evils (Swinburne, 2009 , 101).

Leibniz's other solution to the problem of evil is that it is necessary to achieve good. In other words, the existence of some charity requires the existence of evil, and that charity cannot be achieved unless it is evil.From Leibniz's point of view, there is a lot of charity in evil, and when that evil occurs, we realize that charity.

Ross states :"If it were not possible for sin to be overcome in the moral realm, our character would be weakened.In the realm of nature, too, the absence of calamities, sufferings, and hardships required such irregularities in causal laws that prevented the possibility of science and engineering; just as in the realm of aesthetics, the whole should not be judged by looking at a small part of it.Looking at a painting, it may seem that a bunch of colors are ugly and meaningless put together, and also in music, a particular instrument may be a scratch on its own, but its existence is necessary for the overall harmony "(Ross, 1984,104).

Leibniz believes that the good of the world is much greater than its evil, but there are two reasons why human beings consider evil more than good

1.Evil attracts our attention more while we do not pay so much attention to the existence of charity, and when we lose that charity, we realize their value. He states that evil attracts our attention more than good, and that is why that proves evil is rarer.

2.Man is a holistic being, and if he sees evil, he includes it in the whole universe, arguing that the whole universe is full of evil and misery, while carrying only its own difficulty and hardship over the whole universe (Leibniz, 1985, 43).

Leibniz believes that with a superficial view, we should not consider every seemingly evil thing to be harmful to us, because in its essence it may be full of goodness for us and we may be unaware of its nature.The same trend continues in the universe, and natural phenomena, although they may cause harm to us and to nature itself, but the benefits of that natural evil far outweigh the harms to us humans and nature.

3-4 Eliminate Evil: Leibniz's third solution to the problem of evil is to eliminate evil in the universe and replace it with good. Leibniz's view has been criticized by some thinkers as very optimistic.

The most important critique of Leibniz's optimistic view is that the existing world could not be the best possible world, because figures such as Hitler and other prominent human beings have made the face of this world ugly. It is natural that God could have created a better world by eliminating evil. Why didn't God create kinder figures like Mother Teresa instead of creating Hitler?Here it is thought that figures like Hitler can be removed from the world without major change in the world.This means that this world can be the same without Hitler, but according to the above principles, it is impossible to remove Hitler from this world and replace him with a better person like Mother Teresa, because a part of Mother Teresa's concept is that she dies 52 years after Hitler's death.Anyone who does not carry this burden will not be Mother Teresa. Therefore, if Hitler is somehow removed from this world, Mother Teresa will not be Mother Teresa, and from here a clear contradiction is needed, because Mother Teresa dies 52 years after Hitler's death.As a result, Hitler could not be removed from the world without being changed by Mother Teresa or anyone else.With the removal of Hitler, this world is neither the previous world nor Mother Teresa the same as Mother Teresa, and this is also true of any other person or event in this world (Fathtaheri, 2010, 122- 123).Leibniz believes that with the elimination of evil, no major change will take place in the world, but it should be noted that the universe, despite this evil and its solidarity, is next to charity, which means and without them can not be many Charity was achieved.

4-4 Evil is Necessary for a Good System: Many thinkers believe that the evils in the world are not only a violation of the good system, but on the contrary are an integral feature of the current system.The world is in spite of evil, which forms the same good system, otherwise the world without evil was created by God before the creation of this world, and if this world was created without evil, there would be no better place for this world and the existence of evil. In this world, it is a kind of groundwork for the exaltation of man in the correlation between good and evil, so that he can be charitable despite this natural need and avoid creating evil.

The vast majority of Islamic thinkers and some Western scholars believe in the researcher of the "best system" and the best possible world, which means that all the worlds that God has created and the existing material world are the best possible worlds.In other words, the world we see, which consists of charity and evil, is one of the best products of the factory of divine creation, which is better than it can be imagined in terms of quantity and quality. The reason for the proponents of this view is summed up in the statement that since God is wise, omnipotent and absolutely benevolent, He has no claim or motive to create evil, and everything that is imparted from an infinite source is all good.But what we see from the evils and misfortunes in the mirror of the world are all the consequences of the movements and contradictions of the material world, which, whether we like it or not, endanger the interests of some and cause the loss of others. But in order to study the innumerable benefits of this world, there is no escape from this evil (Swinburne, 2009, 112).

Leibniz states this in explaining the theory of the good system :"In fact, "A" alone can be possible, as can "B", but not all possible things can happen because not all of them are possible together.The set of possible ones together form a possible world, and infinite possible worlds can be assumed but among them, God chooses only the world in which the greatest good is for most people, and this will be enough to make that world a reality. By definition, the world may be a world that does not contain

contradictions.That is, there should be a possible relationship between its components, not a refusal relationship, and that world will be the best world in which the largest group of "possible" have gathered, because God has created as much as possible and created a world that to the fullest extent possible.Thus the present world is made up of the largest group of " both possibilities" " (Russell, 1984, 184).

5.Conclusion

The problem of evil is one of the oldest issues in philosophy and theology, which has always caused different attitudes and views between thinkers with different religions and schools of thought.Meanwhile, Leibniz, one of the great philosophers of Christianity in recent centuries, has paid special attention to the problem of evil in his works.He has tried to explain the problem of evil based on Christian teachings.According to Leibniz, evil is necessary for the existence of good, and with the existence of evil, many perfections can be achieved, and God is not the creator of evil, but it is man who creates evil by abusing his will.According to Leibniz, there are three types of evil; metaphysical evil, moral evil, and physical evil.Metaphysical evil is the evil that lies at the root of people and things and has a potential in them.Moral evil arises from man's free will to commit sins, oppression and transgression, and physical evil is called the evil of the created world, such as floods and earthquakes.In expressing the solutions to the problem of evil, Leibniz also believes that evil is necessary for the material world, and it is in spite of evil that this world finds meaning, and without the existence of another evil, this world would not have an identity and nature.He also believes that evil is non-existent and has no existence and nature, and on the other hand, he has stated the solution to remove evil from the scene of the universe, which has been criticized.Finally, it must be stated that Leibniz considers evil to be a necessity of the material world, with the proper use of which man can attain many treasures of divine mercy and blessings and he believes that evil can not deny the existence of God or limit his attributes because evil is non-existent and non-existent can not deny the existence of God.

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