

Analysis and Critique of Theodicy of John Hick's Soul Cultivation with a Theological Approach

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ABSTRACT

The problem of evil is one of the most important theological cases that has always been the subject of discussion among thinkers with different religions and schools of thought for centuries. John Hick is one of those who in Christian theology sought to defend theism against atheistic suspicions on the basis of evil. Although John Hick was able to dispel many of the atheistic suspicions of the likes of William Rowe and J.L. Mackey in resolving the problem of evil to a large extent, nevertheless, his theodicy faces criticisms and deadlocks that are sometimes at odds with theism. Reviewing and Criticizing John Hick's theology of soul cultivation in addition to introducing us to his lectures on solving the problem of evil, it can also acquaint us with his theodicy deadlocks and the criticisms leveled at them. It can provide a correct and logical defense of theism. In this article, an attempt is made to study and analyze the problem of evil in the theodicy of soul with a descriptive-analytical method and to critique it with a theological approach. Although John Hick was able to dispel some of the suspicions surrounding the problem of evil, the existence of such things as transgression and excessive evil diminishes his theodicy power in defending theism.

Keywords: The Problem of Evil, John Hick, Theodicy of Soul Cultivation, Theological Approach

INTRODUCTION

Divine wisdom and providence require that the good system exist with the greatest perfection and charity, but the existence of evil in it is undeniable. Therefore, many philosophers and theologians have studied the problem of evil in the universe. John Hick is one of the people who, in the theodicy of soul cultivation, which is known in the West as a solution to the problem of evil, has considered the existence of evil necessary in a good system created by a benevolent God. But when the theories of John Hick's theodicy are placed alongside theological propositions, flaws in the theology manifest for which no rational reason is given; among these defects, we can mention the exaggerated and endless evil in Hick's view, which according to the teachings of the Holy Quran, no endless thing happens in the world. Therefore, examining and comparing the theodicy of John Hick's soul cultivation with a theological approach can acquaint one with Hick's thoughts and theological teachings about evil, and by criticizing it, an effective step can be taken to remove some doctrinal doubts.

Research Background: The problem of evil is one of the topics that has been considered in the heavenly book of divine religions, especially the Holy Quran, and correct and logical reasons for their emergence in the world have been presented. Also, since the time of Aristotle until now, various opinions and theories about evil have been presented by various thinkers, among whom people such as J.L. Mackey and William Rowe have used this subject to deny the existence of God and His absolute attributes. Of course, it has not remained silent in the face of theistic philosophers such as Farabi, Ibn Arabi, John Hick, etc, and some, such as John Hick, have developed a theodicy to prove the compatibility of evil with the burden of transcendence but sometimes they are short-sighted in this way and have not been able to provide a correct reason and solution for the occurrence of some evils.

So far, no work has been written that has comprehensively examined the theodicy of the soul cultivation has identified its shortcomings with reason and logic, and has dealt with theological propositions and this is the first work to critique John Hick's theodicy with a theological approach. Previously, in works such as "The Theology of John Hick's Spiritual Cultivation" written by Amir Abbas Ali Zamani and Akram Khalili "or" A review and critique of the metaphysical foundations of John Hick's theodicy with a view to Augustine's views" written by Leila Roustaei Patpeh and Mohammad Mohammad Rezaei" they have merely examined the theodicy of John Hick's or studied his theodicy alongside the views of other philosophers and none of them has done a thorough analysis and critique of John Hick theodicy with regard to a credible source, which in all the sciences of constructive criticism can be a step forward. However, none of these articles have paid attention to this case and this point can be the difference between this research and other researches in this field.

Research Statement: The problem of evil is one of the rare cases that has occupied the human mind for a long time and has confronted him with many questions and doubts. Therefore, God in the Holy Quran, which is the most complete divine book, and in which all the basic questions that man faces are answered, provides a logical reason for the evil of the universe and all the evils in the universe to reach man has considered happiness and perfection necessary. Although the Holy Quran has explained and analyzed the problem of evil correctly and logically, Islamic and Western philosophers have also studied this case due to the spread and abuse of the existence of evil in the material world and have tried to analyze it. John Hick is one of the philosophers of Christianity who has studied and analyzed the problem of evil in the theodicy of soul cultivation and has tried to solve this problem as much as he can and offer solutions to solve the problem of evil. But in this way, although he has been

somewhat successful and has come to the conclusion that the existence of evil in the material world has no contradiction with the existence of God and also the existence of evil is essential for a good system; however, in some details related to evil, such as the epistemological distance between God and man, which leads to the commission of sin by man, the belief in the existence of some exaggerated and aimless evil has made statements that are not correct according to theological propositions.

This article critiques John Hick's theodicy of soul cultivation and answers such questions with a theological approach;

What does John Hick think of the purpose of evil creation in the theodicy of soul cultivation? What is the philosophy of evil? Are there evils? Who created evil? Was God's purpose in creating man to endure suffering? Do all the evils in the universe have a purpose? Can evils benefit humans? How many evils are there from John Hick's point of view? What was the purpose of God's evil creation? Can a person repent after committing a sin? What are the criticisms of John Hick's theodicy of soul cultivation based on theological approach?

The Theodicy of Soul Cultivation: John Hick has been influenced by St. Irenaeus more than anyone else in his theodicy, but this does not mean that he is a complete imitation of St. Irenaeus, but that he has made new and innovative comments about evil in his theory, and this has caused his thoughts to become different in some aspects from St. Irenaeus. John Hick revived the long-overlooked St. Irenaeus soul cultivation theodicy and with its expansion, he founded his theodicy based on the theodicy of soul cultivation of St. Irenaeus.

In the second century AD, Irenaeus formulated a very crude and primitive theory of the problem of evil, which can be considered a kind of rival to Augustine thought. But it remained in the first centuries until it reappeared in the nineteenth century, and then Hick expanded it in his theodicy to introduce God's purpose for the creation of evil as the transcendence and spiritual and moral growth of man. (Khalili, 2011, 24). Hick begins his theodicy of the soul cultivation by mythologizing the original sin expressed in Christian sources and man's descent from heaven. In his theodicy, he considers evil as the result of man's free will in its misuse, and on the other hand, he states that not all evil is bad, but the existence of some evil is necessary in order to acquire moral virtues. Hick on the extent and severity of evil, the seemingly aimless, exaggerated and endless evil, and some other defects, in addition to the relative reading of that evil, to the issue of resurrection, purgatory, successive lives and reincarnation of their choice, unlimited and compensatory future good of all indicates the types of evil as well as the secret of pollution in some sections. Therefore, in advancing the theory, it resorts to various theological, cosmological, anthropological and otherworldly elements. (Alizamani and Khalili, 2010, 81).

Hick believes that evils are necessary for the development and exaltation of the human soul, and if they were not evil, man would not be able to increase his existential capacities and his spiritual upliftment but when a person faces hardships and difficulties; with patience, endurance and such moral values, he tries to solve the problem and in fact provides the ground for his exaltation,

and therefore the evil should be called the nurturer of the human soul and on the other hand, it is in spite of evil that man attains many moral virtues and adorns his soul with them.

Hick states that man is a creature with a tendency to commit sin but at the same time can attain greater levels of perfection in a world mixed with evil. One of the cases that John Hick addresses in his theory is the independence and choice of human beings. In his theory, John Hick seeks to explain that man, in the face of God's infinite existence, must come to the realization that the Creator of the universe has created him free to turn to God. He believes that it is with this self-awareness that human beings can play their real role creatively in the field of life. (Hosseini et al. 2017, 55). And that is why the discussion of human will and free will is one of the main pillars of Hick's theodicy, and he uses this topic to explain the relationship between God and man in order to create evil, and considers human will as the main factor in creating evil. Hick tries to show in his theodicy that God's purpose in creating man was not to immerse him in blessings and happiness and to be constantly immersed in joy, because if that were the purpose, God had already created the angels and they were always obedient to his orders and had no authority. But God created man with will and authority and placed him in a world outside the world of angels, in contrast to which the world is mixed with evil and good. Placing man in a world steeped in good and evil is to test him, to measure his faith and affection for himself, and finally to give him the opportunity to choose his own path, and man between good and evil, select and finally see the result of his selection.

Definition and Nature of Evil: According to Hick: "Instead of trying to define evil based on the type of theological theory, for example, as something that is against the will of God, it is better to define it without veiling, that is, by showing what these words mean; evil means suffering, this suffering refers to physical pain, mental pain and moral evil" (Hick, 1993, 89). He also states: "The word evil, if used in a comprehensive sense, can be distinguished in two ways; 1. Moral evil caused by human evil 2. Immoral or natural evil such as disease and natural disaster. Moral evil is created by human beings; it is cruel, unjust, vicious, and misguided thoughts and actions, or in other words, moral evil refers to those evils in which the human factor has a direct role in its emergence. But natural evil arises independently of human actions such as disease, flood, earthquake, storm, drought, tornado, etc." (Hick, 2007, 265).

Hick defines an example of evil and says: "Instead of trying to define evil based on some kind of theological theory, it is better to define it without arguing, by showing what the word means. Evil refers to physical and mental suffering as well as moral evil" (Hick, 1990, 39).

Unlike Augustine, Hick believes that although evils are non-existent, their existence in the world of creation cannot be denied. He considers the non-existence of evil and on the other hand offers solutions to solve the problem to be contradictory and believes that providing solutions to solve the problem is contradictory; he believes that providing a solution to solve the problem of evil is one of the reasons for proving the existence of evil in the universe because no rational human being for a non-existent

assumption states a solution to solve the problem, and if the solution is expressed, it means that the problem already existed that the solution to the problem is now stated (HosseiniEskandian and Rajabnezhadian, 2020, 108).

From Hick's point of view, the existence of evil in the universe has no contradiction with the attributes of God's benevolence, wisdom, and absolute justice; because God is absolute good and no good is issued except good, and evil cannot be attributed to God because it is contrary to the divine attributes and God cannot be considered as the creator of evil. On the other hand, he believes that the existence of evil is necessary to achieve charity, and their minimal existence in the world can be identified, and obtaining knowledge about charity is obvious.

From Hick's point of view, the existence of evil in the world has no contradiction with the goodness of this world, because the existence of evil in this world is an integral part of it, and without them, this good system of the world cannot be imagined; despite this evil, the world is called as the creation of the best system.

The Relation of Evil to God: Hick, with a great deal of influence from St. Irenaeus, connects this concept with the existence of God by expressing moral evil, and he believes that man, although he has many limitations physically and mentally, is ultimately adorned with an ornament that God has only adorned him among His creatures, and that is the power of "will and free will".

Hick's view is based on three stages. In the first stage, he examines and negatively defines the concept of absolute power: absolute omnipotence does not mean that God can create everything, even contradictory things. Hick believes that it is possible for God to create things that are possible and not impossible, and that in no way implies a limitation of divine power; triangles, squares or circles, rectangles can never be formed, because they do not fit in the range of possible things (Hick, 2010, 265). In the second stage, he emphasizes the direct relationship between authority and human identity and personality. Man needs free will to establish a clear relationship with his Creator. Having a human identity is fundamentally dependent on having authority and freedom, which is a fundamental and important factor in the formation of human personality. In other words, the will and authority of the existing essence is distinct. These two stages in Hick's thought are a kind of defense of the argument of non-contradiction between the existence of God and man, which shows that the relationship between the existence of God and the existence of evil is not contradictory. The third stage indicates that because no authority other than man directs and supervises the gift of authority, it includes two sides and two forms of action (Parsa et al, 2009, 51).

Hick is trying to attribute evil to man, and the source of his inspiration in this theory should be considered Augustine, because Augustine also believes that moral evil is created by man and natural evil is the result of human punishment and punishment in the direction of creating moral evil. Moral evil, then, goes directly to the human will, and natural evil indirectly to it. Hick also considers man's will and free will as the main factor in creating evil and believes that if a person acquires the necessary knowledge and reduces the distance of knowledge between himself and God; as a result, he suffers less from moral evil. From

Hick's point of view, God is pure and absolute good and nothing but good is issued from pure good; therefore, God cannot be considered the creator of evil, and since God cannot be the creator of evil, then this is the person who commits sin by not using his will and authority properly and causes evil in the world.

Hick's goal in his theodicy is to establish man's relationship with God and the main point of reliance is establishing a personal relationship with God and the wisdom of human creation in the evolutionary process, it is necessary to create the necessary conditions to achieve the divine goal of soul cultivation and to achieve soul cultivation, humans must have sufficient freedom to communicate with God (Vahidi, 2012, 111).

In explaining the relationship between God and evil, human free will is an essential element and it is based on this free will that no one deprives God of creating evil and attributes it to man because from his point of view, man has free will and it is he who, by choosing evil, causes evil in the world, and the existence of God must be considered free from the creation of evil.

Pain Is the Cause of Suffering: John Hick, in justifying natural evil and proving that it is not inconsistent with God, has taken the approach of evil, what effect does suffering have on the lives of living beings? According to John Hick, functional suffering is from a human point of view, for limited example, very severe pain is possible, so Hick points to the importance of the biological value of pain to justify the natural evil that is one of its symbols and he considers it as a factor for the survival of the generation because pain is like a teacher who teaches us the way to deal with the short causes of life (Noushabadi 2016, 135).

John Hick believes that most of the evils of the universe are the result of the intrusion of the human will and his actions in evil; because our world is a good world, and this is the person who, by exercising his authority in evil deeds, causes evil and causes hardship for himself and others and evil is in fact nothing but the product of human action. Hick believes that for some, the pain that animals suffer is the most confusing aspect of the problem of evil, because the assumptions that may clarify the problem of evil are the positive value of moral freedom in the face of its dangers and the need for a world that should be the scene of the creation of the soul, which includes real challenges, hardships and mysteries, does not apply to lowly animals.

Hick states that there is no moral character who can take advantage of the dangers of freedom or the challenges of a harsh environment, so why should we ask whether the Almighty, the Merciful Creator, has allowed pain and killing in the lives of animals? Of course, the issue of pain in animals must remain a ground for reflection and theoretical change. We cannot enter into the consciousness of an animal or even prove that they are conscious (Hick, 2010, 319).

Hick believes that all the evil that is realized in the universe is in fact the result of our own actions, and that we are the ones who create evil by creating evil and oppression in this world, and this evil is either the punishment of our own deeds or the sins of our parents that are taken from us by the forces of evil.

Hick believes that human vulnerability is the cause of culture and civilization, which is due to pain and suffering,

and believes that the existence of pain is an environment that encourages human beings to prosperity and happiness. In this way, if a person is overwhelmed with joy and happiness, he no longer sees the need to strive for happiness and gives up trying, but the pain caused by evil causes him to strive for happiness and peace. Therefore, he considers the existence of pain and suffering in life as the beginning of human endeavor to obtain charity. As for the natural evil, Hick believes that the pain and suffering caused by it will lead to the progress and advancement of man in the field of science and technology, and if it were not for diseases and physical pain, we would never have witnessed the progress of medical sciences and if natural disasters such as droughts, earthquakes and floods did not occur; dam construction and water optimization activities or other related improvements never took place.

Excessive and Endless Suffering: Sometimes it happens that some religious thinkers and sages have stated that one of the ways to solve the evil problem is the result of human rewards and sins in the past, but what about an innocent baby who is born with a defective temperament or suffers from incurable diseases? Should this suffering be considered as evidence of his sins and rewards? Obviously, this suffering is not because of the sins of these infants who are now suffering, but because it has another prejudice, and John Hick has referred to these types of evils as excessive suffering and he finds it mysterious and vague, not all aspects of which are clear to comment on. Hick mentions in his theodicy excessive suffering, which means suffering that accidentally and meaninglessly, seemingly unjustly destroys human life, and may be due to one's sins or the reward of one's sins due to the existence of demonic forces.

Misbah Yazdi states: "From the point of view of the Qur'an and the intellect, there is no exaggerated evil and wisdom. When it is proved by conclusive proofs of the existence of God and His attributes that if in some cases we could not understand the wisdom of some things, it is not wise and logical to give up a rational reason and we must try to understand its wisdom or leave its action to its people; on the other hand, we know that the influence of material beings on each other and change and conflict are inherent features of the material world, in such a way that if these characteristics did not exist, the material world would not exist; so either the material world must come into being with the same system or it does not come into being at all, while the divine bounty requires its creation, and leaving it is against wisdom, because the good of the world is more than evil but only the existential perfections of perfect human beings are superior to all evils" (Misbah Yazdi, 2010, Vol2, 456-457).

Throughout history, millions of people have died from malnutrition or unknown diseases, and many have been brutally murdered in war or massacre. Hick considers these kinds of sufferings to be exaggerated and endless, and while still using the idea of cultivating the soul to rationally justify them; he also admits that they are secretive. Hick does not explain the secret of contamination of this evil. Perhaps it is his belief in the mystery of pollution that keeps him from explaining further, and it seems that his response in this regard reflects his faith-based approach. Of course, considering this aspect of evil as mysterious is not against

rational efforts to justify them, and basically presenting the theodicy of soul cultivation is also an effort in this direction (Noshabadi, 2016, 21). In examining such evils, he first refers to the answer of traditional Christianity and considers this answer as a descent from the garden and does not accept it; then, after denying this answer, he tries to apply the idea of cultivating the soul to such evil people and eliminates the mentioned problem from a theological point of view. (Hick, 2010, 128) but according to him, the secret of excessive and endless suffering is real and with rational and logical analysis, no way can be opened to it. (Mohammad Rezaei and Roustaei Patpeh, 2018, 178-179).

Traditional theories based on the reward of a person's sins and the reward of his parents' sins with the presence of demonic forces and their malice and evil domination over the world can not be a reasonable and acceptable justification for the existence and necessity of these sufferings; for example, the suffering that some sick children or infants suffer, while these children are not at the age when suffering and illness cause them to grow and excel. It is also about people who have spent their whole lives with hard work and effort to live life and have faced exhausting hardships to go through every stage of life and finally die in the form of pain and suffering caused by a severe disease. Also, sometimes natural events such as severe earthquakes and severe storms not only do not lead to any construction, but also cause the loss of faith and the loss of superior human and moral characteristics (Vahidi et al, 2012, 105).

Hick believes that God's goal is the salvation of all human beings, and that these vast and endless evils, with their mysterious nature, will finally be answered by God with a great goodness in another world and what is important is that man try to reduce his knowledge distance from God and always obey His command so that he can successfully get out of the clutches of this evil.

It should be noted that many of these evil hands also occur due to human misconduct, of which mass murder is an example. On the other hand, by harming and manipulating nature, man has disrupted environmental cycles and caused its disruption.

Evil Division: Hick considers evil to be unique in both moral and natural forms. Moral evil is the result of man's evil and his evil will create evil, and natural evil includes natural things in the universe, such as floods and earthquakes. About this category, he states: "Moral evil is created by human beings. Oppressive, unjust, and misguided thoughts and actions, or in other words, moral evil is the kind of evil that the human factor has a direct role in its emergence but natural evil is independent of human will and human will does not play a role in its creation" (Hick, 2010, 265).

Hick considers moral evil to be the result of human will and will be caused by the human factor. Hick considers human selfishness as one of the factors that cause moral evil. In other words, it has been the selfishness and superiority of human beings throughout history that has led to wars and killings, because as long as there is no greed for the land and capitalism of another land, no war would have taken place and blood has not been shed for no reason. Hick considers that another factor causing moral evil is the ignorance of a person who suffers from evil in

knowing good and evil, which leads him to choose evil since he is unable to distinguish between good and evil. Accepting and surrendering to fleeting desires and committing moral vices stem from human ignorance in committing and creating evil.

Hick says: "There is a deep connection between moral evil and human free will, and human free will plays a major role in creating moral evil" (Ibid263). When Hick confronted with the question of why God, the absolute benefactor, does not prevent the creation of moral evil, he pointed to man's free will and stated that if God prevented man from creating moral evil, then man's free will would not be valid, then, man would become like the creatures that God had already created; one of the differences between man and the angels is man's freedom to do good deeds and sins.

Hick believes that if a person realizes that God, the Holy Father, is always watching him and wants him to give up evil and walks towards him, he will then never commit moral evil. But since man's tint is occupied with passion and lust, and he does not consider God as he deserves; he suffers from evil and evil creation.

In the case of natural evil, Hick also considers suffering as one of its symbols. John Hick mentioned natural evil to be one of the tools of human progress in science and technology and believes that if it were not for natural evil, many of today's inventions, tools, and instruments that play an important role in human life would not have been created. Hick, however, believes that natural evil can sometimes cause great harm to humans and animals, but he considers the charity resulting from this evil to be much greater than its losses, and he considers the losses resulting from natural evil to be insignificant in comparison to its charity.

Critique of the Theodicy of the Soul Cultivation by a Theological Approach: Although John Hick, in contrast to the proofs of the godliness of people like J.L. Mackey and William Rowe, was able to offer a theology in defense of theism and respond to many of their arguments that denied the existence of God, yet John Hick himself in his theodicy has faced challenges and contradictions. John Hick has used various theological, philosophical and cosmological elements in explaining his theodicy with a comprehensive approach, but the existence of all these cases cannot solve the dead ends of his theology and make a correct and principled defense of the existence of God and His absolute attributes.

Definition of Evil: The first critique of the theodicy of John Hick's of soul cultivation is his definition of evil. In addition to contradicting his definition of evil with Islamic principles, this definition is contrary to the definitions of the Church Fathers, such as Augustine and Aquinas. Contrary to the prevailing practice in Christian theology, John Hick considers evil to be an existential thing and acknowledges that evil cannot be denied, and that the existence of all kinds of pain and suffering are examples of evil in human life that can in no way be denied (Ibid45). According to Islamic theological principles, evil is non-existent and does not exist, and what one thinks is evil is not in the true sense of the word evil, but is either good or the prelude to achieving good. For example, enduring hardships to achieve career or academic success, which enduring these

hardships is not considered evil, but these hardships are necessary to achieve success, otherwise everyone could have achieved success easily and these hardships cannot be considered evil, and on the other hand, whatever becomes the means of achieving good is good itself, and with this assumption, there will be no more evil.

The existentialism of evil reinforces the logical interpretation of evil, which violates the absolute divine attributes such as wisdom, power, and absolute benevolence. On the other hand, despite knowing evil, the argument of people like Hume is strengthened in the expression of the godliness of evil, and despite knowing evil, John Hick actually created the first theological impasse in his theodicy.

In order to prevent this theological impasse and contradiction, Islamic theologians emphasize its non-existence in defining evil, and on the basis of this lack of understanding, they try to confront atheistic doubts and interpretations. In addition to Islamic theologians, Christian thinkers follow the same practice, such as St. Augustine, Aquinas, Leibniz, and many others who have declared evil to be non-existent. This ontology of evil creates other contradictions in John Hick's theodicy of soul cultivation and ultimately his tendency to reincarnate and dualize.

Excessive Evil: In justifying the evil, Hick is confronted with a confusion called "excessive suffering" and endlessness. Excessive suffering means suffering that has accidentally and meaninglessly and seemingly unjustly destroyed the lives of some people, is beyond imagination and traditional theories based on the reward of parental sins or presence and existence. The forces of evil and malice and their evil domination over the world can not be a reasonable and acceptable justification for their existence and necessity. For example, the suffering that some sick children or infants suffer, while these children are not at the age when suffering and illness cause them to grow and excel, or people who have spent their whole lives with hardship and difficulty and to go through the stages of life. They endure excruciating hardships and eventually endure the pain of suffering from a serious illness and leave the world. Also, sometimes natural events such as severe earthquakes and severe storms not only do not lead to any construction, but also cause the loss of faith and the loss of superior human and moral characteristics (Mohammad Rezaei and Roustaei Patpeh, 2018; Hick, 2007, 322- 332).

But from the point of view of the Quran and the intellect, there is no exaggerated evil and wisdom. When it is proved by definite and certain proofs of the existence of God and His attributes that if in some cases we could not understand the wisdom of some things, it is not wise and logical to give up the definite reason, but we should try to understand the divine wisdom or leave the action to its people; on the other hand, we know that the influence of material beings on each other and change and conflict and contradiction are inherent features of the material world, so that if it were not for these features, the material world would not exist. So either the material world should come into being with the same characteristics or it should not come into being at all, while the divine bounty requires its creation and leaving it is against the divine wisdom because the goodness of the universe is more than its evil,

but only the existential perfections of human beings like prophets, is superior to all evils.

On the other hand, the existence of exaggerated and aimless evil, according to John Hick, is contrary to divine wisdom, because God Almighty is Wise and no vain and aimless action is issued from Him. Thus, in spite of the exaggerated evil in John Hick's theodicy, he not only failed to solve the problem of the contradiction of evil with the divine attributes, but also his very principles are in contradiction with some attributes of God Almighty (HosseiniEskandian and Rajabnezhadian, 2021b, 1700).

Pain is a Symbol of Life: According to John Hick, suffering is a symbol of human life and these things are necessary for human life, but it should be noted that although suffering exists in human life and life is mixed with hardship and misery, but these hardships, no matter how much and big, it can not be a symbol of human life and in fact, these hardships and pains are a kind of means for a person to be afflicted and tested by God and to measure His faith and belief in God Almighty.

Thus, in a radical view, Hick only pays attention to the suffering of human life, while there are many blessings and joys in life that one is unaware of and only when he loses them does he realize the spoils and the value of their existence, he does not pay attention and he has considered suffering as a symbol of human life, but he is unaware that according to the theological principles of Islam, the symbol and purpose of human life is to strive for divine pleasure and to follow divine commands and to avoid the prohibitions that God has specified. And the symbol of the life of a believer is that his life gives a divine color and smell, and suffering and hardships are among the natures of material life, and the believer must rely on God Almighty and be patient during these hardships; because the existence of these difficulties sometimes causes trials and tribulations, and a person who can proudly come out of these divine tests can increase his existential value in the sight of God Almighty.

Transmogrification: The important point in Hick's theodicy of soul cultivation is that he not only does not believe in the principle of life after death, but also considers successive lives as a prerequisite for all human beings to achieve the promised good. Of course, he discusses successive lives in a very general way and does not elaborate on it. In describing natural evil, Hick states that if God's purpose in creation is to nurture the soul, then that purpose will naturally determine the kind of world he has created (Hick, 2010, 13). While according to the theological principles of Islam and even Christianity, which John Hick follows, reincarnation and whatever is called successive life is unacceptable and irrational, and many verses and hadiths indicate the rejection of this view and instead discuss the resurrection and the hereafter. Therefore, Hick's view to express reincarnation to solve the problem of evil is an unreasonable solution that the intellect does not accept and can not be given to man consecutive lives, including human, animal and vegetable life, and reincarnation itself in this situation is contrary to divine justice and the end of the world is the creation and the good system (HosseiniEskandian and Rajabnezhadian, 2021a, 1710).

The main factor that led John Hick to tend to express reincarnation is his definition of evil, which, since he considered evil to be an existential thing, inevitably faced the problem of excessive evil, and when faced with the problem of excessive evil, he attributed them to reincarnation and previous lives. By reincarnation, John Hick tried to solve the problem of excessive evil, such as the suffering of innocent infants, and attributed their suffering to their sins in their previous lives, but unaware that his view contradicted one of the fundamental tenets of religions and on the other hand, reincarnation is intellectually void and unreasonable. Thus, another impasse of John Hick's theodicy of soul cultivation is based on theological principles, the belief in reincarnation, and successive lives. This critique of John Hick's theodicy has also been voiced by his colleagues, and people like Brian Davis have criticized John Hick in this regard.

Epistemological Distance: In order to explain and solve the problem of moral evil, Hick uses a solution called the epistemological distance, which links the creation of moral evil by man to his distance from God. Because he is far from God, who is absolute good, he will be less able to obtain good and will inevitably suffer from evil. In defining the epistemological distance, Hick states: "The epistemic distance refers to the distance that exists between God and enables man to be free and independent of God" (Hick, 2007, 203).

Hick believes that the starting point of man's epistemological distance from God is when God blew His spirit into man and man turned away from God, widening this distance by immersing himself in the concerns of material and worldly life. And this epistemological distance causes man to commit sin because man is far from God; that is, it is far from good and all that is good, and as a result, he suffers from evil and evil. However, it should be noted that the epistemological distance expressed by Hick does not correspond to the Islamic discourse, because in Islam, the principle of "repentance" has always been emphasized and that no matter how much a person has committed a sin, denial or haram, but repents and regrets what he has done and seeks to atone for those sins, God forgives him and there is no distance of epistemological. In Islam, the principle is emphasized that God is with man at all times and this companionship is not only for virtuous and good people. It is also for sinful and criminal human beings and God is always aware of their condition so that they may return to God and God will open the doors of His mercy and forgiveness on them.

John Hick's epistemological distance is also in contradiction with the verses of the Holy Quran, in which it is explicitly emphasized that God is always with man and is closer to him than the jugular vein: "And we are closer to him (man) than the jugular vein" (Surah Qaf, 16) and there is no distance of epistemological and expulsion from heaven and sin and the like can never turn man away from God; rather, God's general mercy is upon all human beings, and there is no epistemological distance and if man repents and follows the divine path, the special divine mercy also includes his condition. Hence, John Hick's epistemological distance can be crossed from both perspectives.

John Hick's epistemological distance is also in contradiction with the basic principles of Christianity, and it is the same principle of mysticism that a person is forgiven despite many sins, but because of his confession and good deeds. But John Hick attributes sins and moral evil to an epistemic distance, which widens with each sin, and as a result, return is not possible.

Contradiction of Divine Will and Human Free Will: Hick believes that God, because of His infinite and indescribable love for human beings, nurtures their souls with His will to ultimately bring all human beings to ultimate perfection and in this case there is no question of man's will and free will, and at the same time he believes that most of the evil realized in the world is the product of man's evil will and committing sins, and only a small amount of evil is realized by nature.

In fact, this duality, on the one hand, and attributing everything to the divine will for the love He has for man in order to perfect him, and on the other hand, the evil out of the will and action of man, are contradictory points in John Hick's theodicy. According to the verses of the Holy Quran, man, while being introduced as free and possessed of free will, in some other verses, compulsion is mentioned, and this has led to the expression of the theory of Amr bin al-Amr by Islamic theologians. However, in terms of doing ugly and good deeds, it should be said that according to the Quranic verses, a person is responsible for his actions and words, and he will be held accountable for his actions and deeds on the Day of Judgment and will be held accountable and there is no compulsion on the part of God to perform an action on a person, and contrary to Hick's view, it is not the case that God wills a person to do only good in order to reach perfection; rather, God has given man the authority to consciously do good deeds and do good and reach perfection in the light of his will and authority, and this perfection and happiness is superior to perfection and forced and unconscious happiness. On the other hand, this view of John Hick also contradicts the principles of the divine religions, which speak of hell and paradise, and if we attribute human actions to God, there will be no place to judge actions, and heaven and hell will have no meaning. While in the verses of the Holy Quran and other books of the divine religions, the resurrection has been explicitly and repeatedly mentioned and the existence of these matters cannot be denied.

Evil Cause of Perfection: John Hick in theodicy of the soul cultivation has stated that absolute evil is the cultivator of the soul. But when we look at the truth of the lives of some people, we see that the existence of hardships and sufferings not only did not nurture their souls and strengthen their faith, but also caused their disbelief and led them to the abyss of disbelief.

Therefore, it was necessary for John Hick to express his theodicy as a kind of relativistic theory for some people in the face of the problem of evil, and to think that hardships and sufferings lead to the perfection of all human beings is a false notion. Hence, John Hick's theodicy of soul nurturing is a relative theodicy and cannot be considered true of all individuals.

On the other hand, hardships and problems are not always supposed to cause human growth and excellence, and many people have reached high spiritual positions by

following their pure nature, as well as relying on God Almighty and using Him and sometimes God bestows cheap blessings on some of His worthy servants so that those servants can reach perfection by using those blessings and using them correctly and in principle, and bring goodness to others in this valley. An example of this is the Prophet Solomon (pbuh) who was blessed by God Almighty with all kinds of material blessings and he used those blessings to guide and do good to others to the extent that these things led the people of Belqis to believe.

CONCLUSION

The problem of evil is one of the complex theological cases that has always occupied different thinkers well, despite belonging to different religions and schools of thought, and has been the source of questions for human beings about God Almighty and the good system. One of the factors that has led to the problem of evil being repeatedly discussed and occupying an important place in theological discussions, is that some atheists based on this theological problem deny the existence of God Almighty. They have also provided arguments to deny the divine attributes.

In the divine religions, God Almighty is described in three attributes: omniscient, omnipotent, and pure benevolent, but some have used the problem of evil to come up with arguments that challenge these divine attributes: in such a way that the existence of the evil is in contradiction with the existence of a God who is omniscient, omnipotent, and nothing but good is issued from Him, and in spite of such statements, the existence of such a deity cannot be believed. Most people who have made such arguments in order to deny the existence of God and to challenge the divine attributes have turned to Christian theology and this has led, on the other hand, to theodicies for the defense of the existence of God and theism by committed and devout Christian theologians, such as Swinburne theodicy of Divine Justice, John Hick's Spirit Cultivation, and Plantinga Theodicy.

John Hick stepped into the valley of the Irenaeus theodicy with his soul-cultivating theodicy, reinforcing the weaknesses of the Irenaeus theodicy and reviving this neglected theodicy for centuries. In his theodicy, John Hick has tried to show the existence of a God with these attributes compatible with the existence of evil. In fact, contrary to the prevailing practice of the Christian tradition, John Hick considers evil to be something that exists in the world and their existence cannot be denied.

Inspired by the church tradition and thinkers such as Irenaeus and Augustine, John Hick also points out contradictions in the Christian and ecclesiastical tradition in his theodicy and examples include the belief in reincarnation, the existentialism of evil, exaggerated evil, the contradiction of predestination and delegation, and other theological challenges that are not only at odds with Islamic theological teachings, but also with Christianity beliefs. On the other hand, some of the ideas expressed by John Hick in the theodicy of soul cultivation is the basic tenets of the divine religions, including Christianity, such as reincarnation, which is a belief in Buddhism and Hinduism and is not compatible with the dominant spirit of the divine religions. Of course, the reason why John Hick suffers from such theological contradictions goes back to the same

definition of evil that he has expressed as an existential thing and because he has tilted the first brick, which is the very existence of knowing evil, he suffers from the problem of excessive evil, and when faced with the problem of excessive evil, he has no choice but to resort to reincarnation in his theodicy.

It should be said that John Hick is one of the thinkers who, although influenced by the ideas of Christianity and Christian theologians, especially St. Augustine and Irenaeus, nevertheless paid attention to the problem of evil with a logical and reasoning look and he did not pay attention to this case only with the Christian approach, for example, rejecting the admission of original sin and attributing an evil generation to a man who considers it a myth, which is contrary to logic, as well as divine justice and wisdom. Despite the criticisms of the theodicy of soul cultivation of Hick according to the verses of the Quran as well as the Islamic theological approach to the subject of evil, it should be noted that his views on evil are committed by man and that evil is necessary for happiness and perfection. It is also approved by the verses of the Holy Quran.

Of course, not in the way that John Hick stated, but simply one of the philosophies of evil according to the Quranic verses is to reach perfection, and there are other cases such as divine testing, torment, thanksgiving, and so on. In addition, John Hick's step in the orthodox theology to critique the ecclesiastical tradition, such as attributing evil to original sin, which is nothing more than a myth, or man's descent from heaven, are other thought-provoking and positive points of John Hick in the orthodox theology. Given the above and the criticisms leveled at John Hick's enlightened theodicy, it can be argued that this theodicy cannot be a complete and comprehensive defense of the existence of God and the absolute attributes of God and of course, this does not mean that there are no positive aspects of his theodicy, especially the critique of the old church tradition.

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