

Article

Assessing a Revised Compensation Theodicy

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Abstract: Attempts to resolve the problem of evil often appeal to a greater good, according to which God's permission of moral and natural evil is justified because (and just in case) the evil that is permitted is necessary for the realization of some greater good. In the extensive litany of greater good theodicies and defenses, the appeal to the greater good of an afterlife of infinite reward or pleasure has played a minor role in Christian thought but a more important role in Islamic thought. In a recent article, Seyyed Jaaber Mousavirad invites us to reconsider the greater good theodicy of compensation. He contends that not only are all evils justified in that God compensates the sufferer in an afterlife, but because the evils experienced produce some good, God has reason for bringing about or allowing evils in the first place. In what follows, I argue that this modified compensation theodicy is flawed in its premises, faces serious problems with its concept of justice, treats people as means only and not as intrinsically valuable, and ultimately fails to show that an afterlife compensation, along with some good produced here and now by evil, justify God bringing about or allowing evil.

Keywords: theodicy; problem of evil; justice; compensation; animal suffering



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1. A Problem of Evil

"By the way, a Bulgarian I met lately in Moscow", Ivan went on . . . 'told me about the crimes committed by Turks and Circassians in all parts of Bulgaria through fear of a general rising of the Slavs. They burn villages, murder, outrage women and children, they nail their prisoners by the ears to the fences, leave them so till morning, and in the morning they hang them—all sorts of things you can't imagine. People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty, but that's a great injustice and insult to the beasts; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel These Turks took a pleasure in torturing children too; cutting the unborn child from the mothers' womb, and tossing babies up in the air and catching them on the points of their bayonets before their mothers' eyes. Doing it before the mothers' eyes was what gave zest to the amusement". (Dostoyevsky 2009, Book 5, chp. 4)

Theisms of all stripes face the problem of reconciling the existence of a good, almighty, and omniscient God with what has been termed "evil", such as suffering and physical and mental dysfunction. David Hume, citing the ancient philosopher Epicurus, put it this way: "Is [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?" (Hume 1980, p. 63). Given God's properties, he goes on, "Might not God exterminate all ill, wherever it were to be found, and produce all good, without any preparation or long progress of causes and effects?" (Hume 1980, p. 70).

Traditional discussions of the problem of evil have distinguished two kinds of evil. Moral evil is all the instances of pain and suffering—physical and mental—and all states of affairs significantly disadvantageous to organisms that are caused by actions for which human agents can be held morally accountable. Natural evil, on the other hand, is all instances of pain and suffering—physical and mental—and all states of affairs significantly disadvantageous to organisms that are caused by actions for which human agents cannot

be held morally accountable. A host of causes of natural evils include natural calamities, animals and insects, diseases, and genetic malfunctions (Reichenbach 1982, p. xi).

The problem of evil is often structured as either a logical problem or an evidential problem. According to the logical version, the theist affirms an inconsistent set of propositions, namely, that God exists, God has a particular set of properties including goodness, omnipotence, and omniscience, and evil exists. J.L. Mackie wrote that these contentions, supplemented by “some quasi-logical rules connecting the terms ‘good’, ‘evil’, and ‘omnipotent’”, (Mackie 1955, pp. 201–2) and one of the rules being an analytic, ethical principle, will establish the self-contradiction. Mackie proffers the following ethical principle: “A good omnipotent thing eliminates evil as far as it can”, and since it is omnipotent, it can eliminate all evil¹. As has been frequently pointed out, this principle is inadequate (Plantinga 1974, pp. 17–24). The principle that Mackie needs to make his case is that “An omnipotent and omniscient thing can eliminate every evil state of affairs without losing a greater good or producing a greater evil” (Reichenbach 1982, p. 6). For our purposes, what is important is that this principle appeals to a greater good—what is termed a morally sufficient reason—and appeals to greater goods have been made to counter Mackie’s claim².

According to the evidential or inductive argument, “the variety and profusion of evil in our world . . . provides rational support for the belief that the theistic God does not exist” (Rowe 1979, p. 86). The argument here is that, given God’s properties and the quantity and quality of evil in the world, it is unlikely or improbable that a God who is good, omnipotent, omniscient, and loving exists. This also raises the issue of whether all evil has a justification in terms of a greater good or whether there is pointless or gratuitous evil.

Seyyed Mousavirad, along with many theists, contends that there is no gratuitous evil and that all evil has a purpose and can be justified by appealing to a greater good³. A good and powerful God would eliminate all gratuitous evil, and a greater good would be served. Again, then, the appeal to a greater good serves an important role in addressing the problem of evil.

In response to the problem of evil, some philosophers have chosen to offer a defense. A defense shows that there is no contradiction or inconsistency because a possible greater good might be invoked to defuse the antitheist argument⁴. In contrast to a theodicy, which seeks to suggest a plausible, justifying reason for God bringing about or allowing suffering, a defense does not make any claim regarding whether this is an actual reason or not; only a possible defusing reason is offered. Often this is given in terms of a greater good such as free will (Plantinga 1974, pp. 29–34), although skeptical theists offer an alternative reasoning, contending that we would have no way of knowing what God’s reasoning might be⁵. Mousavirad does not adopt a skeptical theist or cognitive limitation defense but rather develops a greater good theodicy by appealing to a morally sufficient reason. His proposal is that traditional greater good theodicies have failed and need to be supplemented by giving a reason for there being evil in the world in the first place. The greater good he invokes is that evil will be compensated in the afterlife⁶.

2. Compensation Theodicy

Addressing a compensation theodicy, Dostoevsky writes through his character Ivan,

“Yet, . . . in the final result I don’t accept this world of God’s and, although I know it exists, I don’t accept it at all. It’s not that I don’t accept God, you must understand; it’s the world created by Him I don’t and cannot accept. . . . I believe like a child that suffering will be healed and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage, . . . that at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the cries of humanity, of all the blood they’ve shed; that it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify all that has happened with men—but though all

that may come to pass, I don't accept it. I won't accept it". (Dostoyevsky 2009, Book 5, chp. 3)

Ivan can understand the compensation theodicy, maybe even think that it makes sense, at least from a child's perspective, but he cannot accept it. And why not?

"Tell me. I challenge you—answer. Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making me happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at least, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—a baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance—and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions?... And can you admit the idea that men for whom you are building it would agree to accept their happiness on the foundation of the unexpiated blood of a little victim? And accepting it would remain happy for ever?". (Dostoyevsky 2009, Book 5, chp. 4)

Ivan rejects a justification for suffering that appeals to a compensating greater good in an afterlife. Addressing the instances of evil that we have already mentioned, Ivan says, "I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote infinite time and space, but here on earth, and that I could see myself". Happiness in the afterlife cannot be constructed on the back of suffering in this life.

Although he does not reference Dostoyevsky's presentation (and although there is some doubt that Ivan's reflections reflect Dostoyevsky's own view (McCullough 2018, pp. 206–7)) but rather derives his view from a Muslim theological background, in a recent article, Seyyed Mousavirad invites us to reconsider a greater good theodicy of compensation, one that attempts to address Ivan's concern with placing the justification for evil in the afterlife. Mousavirad contends that not only are all evils justified in that God compensates the sufferer in an afterlife, but because the evils we experience produce some good, God has reason for bringing about or allowing evils in the first place (Mousavirad 2022, p. 211).

3. Weak and Strong Versions of the Compensatory Theodicy

Mousavirad distinguishes between what he terms weak and strong versions of the compensation theodicy. According to the weak version, natural and moral evils experienced are justified because God compensates for them in an afterlife of bliss. God provides the sufferer such an abundance of "pleasure and bounties in heaven that [the sufferer] feels that these pleasures and bounties are far greater than the pain and suffering he endured in the world" (Mousavirad 2022, p. 212).

This theodicy is present in Islamic thought.⁷ For example, Suleiman Hani writes, "One facet of Islamic theodicy is that one second in Paradise eliminates an entire lifetime's worth of hardship and suffering, and the first moment in Paradise is so overwhelmingly blissful that it *erases* the potent memories and pain of prior adversity Suffering is never absolute and suffering certainly never outweighs the good that is rewarded to the one who suffers" (Hani 2022)⁸.

Victor Shammas advances a similar compensation theodicy. "The problem of evil withers away once we frame earthly evils, plentiful as they may appear, within their proper context of a potentially limitless, eternal bliss in Heaven [It is] a sort of optical illusion, a deceptive sleight of hand forced upon us by sensuous earthly reality and our corporeal state of being" (Shammas 2019). For him, the very weightiness and enormity of eternal bliss tip any scale that compares earthly suffering to the afterlife—a grain of sand compared to the vast expanse of the Sahara. Paradise is the great reward for the heroic struggle.

Mousavirad rejects this weak version of the compensation theodicy on the grounds that it fails to provide a reason for God bringing about or allowing evil in the first place. Instead, he constructs what he terms a strong compensation theodicy, according to which all evils are justified in that God compensates individuals for them in an afterlife and they produce some good here and now. Producing good here and now provides a reason for God bringing about or allowing evils in the first place: evils are necessary for there to

be good (Mousavirad 2022, p. 216). It is not that the evils necessarily produce good for the individual sufferer or that the good outweighs the evil. Rather, in this life, each evil produces some good, and consequently, God's allowance of the evil is thereby shown to be purposeful. This version of his compensation theodicy thus invokes a version of the greater good argument in that the goods produced here and now and the eternal goods dispensed in the afterlife together justify the presence and experience of evil in this life. In effect, he holds that this theodicy preserves both God's *justice* in that evils are compensated for in the Hereafter and God's purposefulness and *wisdom* in bringing about or allowing evil in that evils produce some good in this life (Mousavirad 2022, pp. 213–14).

4. Premise 1: All Evil Produces Good

In defending his theodicy, Mousavirad invokes three premises. First, he contends that “Evils have some good, and the existence of these evils is necessary to attain these goods; thus, these evils are not futile, even if the good within evils do (sic) not outweigh evils” (Mousavirad 2022, p. 214). I take this to be a universal claim about evils; otherwise, evils that fail to produce good would be gratuitous, and, on his account, there are no gratuitous evils.

For Mousavirad, it is good (and necessary for there to be good) that there be evil in this world, for good cannot be realized without evil. “The existence of evils is required for some goods” (Mousavirad 2022, p. 215). However, though this is true, from thinking that “the existence of evils is required for some goods” it does not follow logically that *all* evils produce some good, such that no evil is futile, as Mousavirad claims (Mousavirad 2022, p. 221). Although Mousavirad assumes that all evil is meaningful, such a contention is not obviously true; indeed, I think it is dubious. However, whether gratuitous evils exist is a contentious issue that we cannot pursue here (Wykstra 1984, pp. 73–94).

5. Premise 2: Compensation as Justice

For his second premise, Mousavirad contends that “Since the suffering and harms of evils will be compensated in the afterlife, they are just and fair” (Mousavirad 2022, p. 214). He contends that compensation produces justice, such that God is justified in bringing about or allowing evils because God compensates sufferers for the evils in the afterlife.

Premise 2, whereby compensation establishes “justice and fairness”, invokes a problematic concept of justice in terms of consequences. Suppose that A kidnaps B, subjecting B to painful torture and other forms of degradation. At the same time, A promises B that when A releases B, A will compensate B for B's pain and suffering. One surely cannot contend that A's treatment of B is just and fair on the grounds that A compensates B for the evil done to B. No matter how A compensates B, the actions of A are morally unjustified. To see this, one might ask how much should A pay B for the maltreatment: one thousand euros; one hundred thousand; one million? The abducted and tortured B might rightly reply that nothing can compensate him for what A did to him⁹.

Mousavirad considers this objection and replies that the above example applies to the weak compensation theodicy but not to his strong compensation theodicy, for, as he notes, by adding to compensation in the afterlife by producing some good in this life, the evil is shown to have purpose and thereby is justified. The good need not exceed the evil. All that is required for the evil action (and evildoer) to be fair and just is that the sufferer be compensated *and* that some good in this life result from the evil action (Mousavirad 2022, p. 216).

It might be remarked that this still is suspect since A might intend evil for B and only incidentally or accidentally produce good out of the evil. That is, although A actually intends evil and by chance some good results (since all evil, according to Mousavirad, results in good), for Mousavirad A's actions would remain justified. It would seem that intentions should matter in determining the justice of actions.

Suppose, however, we add both the intention to produce good and the production of some good to our above story. Suppose that A says that what A is doing in this kidnapping

and torture is giving B the opportunity for soul-building. A kidnaps B, subjects B to painful torture, and tells B that he is doing B a favor because A's intent is to improve B's character. For when A is finished with his torture, B will have the opportunity to develop more fortitude, patience, and empathy with other sufferers, and indeed, B will be able to see the good that this made possible. And not only that, A will compensate B for his troubles. Thus, both of Mousavirad's conditions are met: the action produces good, and B is compensated.

Again, however, it is clear that adding good intentions, the possibility of soul-building, and the good of B being able to make a free choice in responding to the torture does not make the painful acts A inflicts on B "just and fair". No matter how A compensates B, the actions of A are morally unjustified, if for no other reason than that B never gave A consent to attempt to improve B's character. Meeting these two conditions of producing some good and providing compensation fails to justify A's actions toward B.

Furthermore, Mousavirad claims that his theory has an advantage over other greater good theodicies in that, on his consequentialist theory, the good produced by the evil in this life not only need not be equal to or greater than the evil experienced, but it also need not be experienced by the person suffering the evil. He takes this as a virtue over other greater good theodicies, which he says often struggle to show that evil results in a greater good for the sufferer. This option, I suggest, is pernicious. Suppose, in our example, that A says to B that A's actions toward B are justified because A wants to improve the opportunity for D, E, and F to improve their character by developing empathy and that B will be compensated in the end. When A posts pictures of the torture on the internet, D, E, and F will be outraged and thus choose to strengthen their moral character. However, such a scenario, even when combined with compensation, in no way justifies the actions of A, for now B is being treated only as a means to the end of goods for C, D, and E.

In short, Mousavirad's second premise is seriously flawed. Compensation in the afterlife, no matter how great, even combined with producing some good here and now, does not show that the evils imposed are "just and fair".

6. Confusing Compensation with Justice

Mousavirad considers an objection raised by Maitzen that there is a difference between compensation and justification. Maitzen writes, "Without such a [necessary] connection [between the suffering experienced and the compensation], the good may *compensate* for the suffering but can't *morally justify* God's permission of it. Consider an analogy to our ordinary moral practice. My paying you money after harming you may compensate for my harming you, but it doesn't justify my harming you. Only something like the necessity of my harming you in order to prevent your harming me or an innocent third party has a chance of justifying my behavior: some necessary connection must hold between the harm and the benefit" (Maitzen 2009, p. 110).

In reply, Mousavirad contends that this objection holds against a weak compensation theodicy but fails to affect his theodicy since the evils experienced produce some goods in this life (Mousavirad 2022, p. 224). But this reply fails to answer the objection, for although, in his view, evils are necessary for there to be good, he does not establish that a particular evil is necessary for there to be a particular good. Although there may be a connection between specific evils and particular goods with regard to some cases of soul building (the virtue of resisting temptation occurs in the context of temptation), he does not establish any universal, necessary connection between specific evils suffered and specific compensation. Evils produce goods on their own account, but they may do so *per accidens* or as a by-product. In the present, the goods that result could have been achieved in other ways than by the evil action or event, especially if they affect other persons or are natural evils. In our example, D, E, and F could have had the opportunity to become more empathetic without B having to suffer torture. Moreover, regarding the afterlife, he gives us no reason to think that there is a necessary connection between the pleasure given and the evil suffered. He writes that "God gives him so much pleasure and bounties in Heaven that he feels that these pleasures and bounties are far greater than the pain and suffering

he endured in this world” (Mousavirad 2022, p. 212). For example, in Muslim accounts, the believer’s death is rewarded in the afterlife with verdant gardens, trees bearing fruits, brocaded couches, and the pleasure of virgins (“Ar-Rahman: The Merciful”, *Qu’ran* 2022, chp. 55). But there is no necessary or organic connection between the pleasure and bounty and the evil suffered; at most, it is a quantitative connection¹⁰. Moreover, a benevolent God could provide the bliss that Mousavirad describes without the person experiencing any suffering at all. In short, if compensation or the goods to be realized are to be justified, they must be connected necessarily and organically to the wrong done to the individual.

In short, Premise 2 fails to provide an adequate account of justice and fairness and thus does not provide the needed justification for the evil suffered.

7. Premise 3: Evil as Beneficial and Thus Good

In premise 3, Mousavirad contends that “Since evils are neither futile nor unjust, they are good and beneficial for all humans . . . In reality, there is no evil in this world” (Mousavirad 2022, pp. 215, 217). This, however, confuses the quality of the act or experience with its consequences. Evils are neither good nor made good by what might result from them. They can be the means by which the good is realized, as in a soul-building theodicy, but they remain evils that must be justified. The torture and degradation inflicted by A on B remain evil, regardless of any fortitude or courage B develops or any compensation B receives. An evil may be justified (as when the surgeon inflicts pain to remove a cancerous tumor), but the evil of the pain and suffering remains evil. That suffering is evil is shown by the fact that we avoid it (and the surgery) if possible¹¹. What evil actions may produce or bring about should not be equated with their character as being evil actions. In utilitarian ethics, the end justifies the means, but the quality of the end should not be confused with the quality of the means.

8. Animal Suffering

In addressing gratuitous evil, Mousavirad refers to William Rowe’s widely referenced case, wherein a fawn caught in a forest fire suffers terribly before it dies. He contends that although this suffering may seem pointless, some good comes from it now and that it will be compensated for in the afterlife. It is “inevitable and necessary” (Mousavirad 2022, p. 219). Indeed, “more evils are necessary to achieve more goods”, such that more evils (and correspondingly more goods) are better than fewer evils and fewer goods.

The suffering fawn is a case of natural evil and creates some specific problems for a compensation theodicy. First, will the fawn be compensated in an afterlife? If not, a compensation theodicy might account for human suffering but would not account for animal suffering, and hence not all evil, including much natural evil (McCullough 2018, p. 210). One could reply that non-humans do not suffer, but this would be a dubious contention that Mousavirad does not propose. If the fawn will be compensated (and later Mousavirad hints in a footnote that this may be so (Mousavirad 2022, p. 222)), how would a fawn be compensated in an afterlife? Would it be aware that it was being compensated for the suffering it underwent? If the fawn is unaware that it is being compensated for its suffering, in what sense would compensating for the fawn terrible suffering be a case of justice and fairness? Is not awareness of compensation a necessary condition for justice to be served for an individual? When a family is compensated for a wrongful death in an airplane crash, it is the family and not the victim that gets compensation for the loss. In short, a compensation theodicy is problematic when it addresses nonhuman suffering or natural evil.

9. Creating More Horrendous Evils

Even more problematic is Mousavirad’s contention that God not only is morally permitted to bring about horrendous evil, but God also ought to do so since “the more horrendous the evil, the more good will be produced (even if this evil does not lead to the greater good as a whole)” (Mousavirad 2022, p. 220). He says that “the theory of

compensation works only when severe and horrendous evils are unavoidable, but I believe that there is this inevitability and necessity” (Mousavirad 2022, p. 219). For one thing, Mousavirad contends that supposing there are two worlds, W1 where 60% evil produces 40% good and W2 where 30% evil produces 20% good, God should bring about W1 because it results in more good. We are again presented with a pernicious account of justice when he says that we should do a greater quantity and quality of horrendous evil so that more good will result. Moreover, on his theodicy, the good need not equal or surpass the evil; all that is necessary is *some* good result. But then the amount or intensity of the horrendous evil has no connection with the quantity and quality of the good that results. So long as some good results and the sufferers are compensated, evil is justified. But if all that is necessary is that *some* good result, horrendous evil is likely unjustified, for less evil might do just as well to create some good.

However, not only would this view be a miscarriage of justice by justifying the various horrendous genocides of the last centuries on the grounds that they (allegedly) produced more good and that the victims will be compensated in Paradise, but it would imply that there should have been even more of these horrendous evils and their kin, that an increase would be just and fair. Doing more and worse evil so that (some) good results for the victims or maybe only for others is morally unacceptable. It would mean, for example, that A would be justified in making things worse for B so that B (or someone else) has the opportunity to develop a bit more patience, fortitude, and courage. Bringing about more non-equivalent good does not justify creating more evil.

10. Treating People as Means Only and Not as Ends

Finally, as we have already noted, Mousavirad’s theory is objectionable in that it treats people only as means and not as ends who are intrinsically valuable in themselves. Consider Mousavirad’s example where “God creates a disabled infant for a parent to be tested and spiritually perfected through their free will” (Mousavirad 2022, p. 221). Mousavirad justifies this on the grounds that “it is not cruel to the infant, since God will compensate all of its hardships and sufferings” (Mousavirad 2022, p. 221). This follows from his two points regarding justification: for justification, so long as evil will be compensated, just some good in this life is enough, and this good need not be for the individual sufferer (Mousavirad 2022, p. 211). But in this instance, the infant is treated solely as a means for the good of the parent. Surely, the parents could develop some good without the infant being disabled, for example, by being given the privilege of raising a child with all its usual challenges.

In fact, inflicting unwilling and underserved suffering on one person to benefit another violates the central Kantian principle that one should never treat people merely as means but also as intrinsically valuable ends in themselves. Mousavirad does not reference Kant, but it would seem that even with reference to Kant aside, this moral principle should play a significant role regarding how we morally should treat people. Mousavirad indirectly affirms this when he argues that God must compensate in the afterlife the very individuals who have suffered and not others (Mousavirad 2022, p. 212). Indeed, if treating people merely as means were acceptable, we would not even have to construct a theodicy to establish or protect God’s goodness. Any (mis)treatment of humans brought about or allowed by God would not have to be justified at all, for we could treat people however we wanted so long as some good (and not necessarily superseding good) resulted and they eventually got rewarded.

11. Conclusions

Although Mousavirad has made an advance on a weak compensation theodicy, his strong compensation theodicy is fatally flawed. Not only are his premises and his treatment of justice objectionable, and not only does compensation not justify the evils done, but the additional justification given in terms of goods, lesser than the evils, that may be produced even for people other than the sufferers leads to totally unacceptable ways of treating people only as means to produce goods.

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Notes

- ¹ J. L. Mackie writes, “These additional principles are that good is opposed to evil, in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can, and that there are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do. From these it follows that a good omnipotent thing eliminates evil completely” (Mackie 1955, p. 200).
- ² Paul Draper writes, “Although logical arguments from evil seemed promising to a number of philosophers in the 1950s and 1960s, . . . they are rejected by the vast majority of contemporary philosophers of religion” (Draper 2011, p. 335). However, James Sterba recently argued that the matter of an anti-theist deductive argument is not settled and presented a supporting case (Sterba 2019).
- ³ For a sampling of the debate, see Hasker (1992); Durston (2000); Trakakis (2003); and Gellman (2017).
- ⁴ The appeal to a greater good has a long lineage. Augustine writes, “If man is a good, and cannot act rightly unless he wills to do so, then he must have free will, without which he cannot act rightly It is sufficient for our question, why free will should have been given to man, to know that without it man cannot live rightly” (Augustine 1964, Bk. 2, 1). “St. Thomas’s philosophical answer to the problem of evil in its relation to God can be summed up in the two statements, first that God did not will moral evil in any sense whatever but only permitted it for a greater good than could be attained by preventing it, that is, by making man free, and secondly that though God did not will physical evil for its own sake, He may be said to have willed certain physical evils *per accidens*, for the perfection of the universe” (Copleston 1962, p. 93). For recent, among many, affirmations, see Alvin Plantinga’s free will defense (Plantinga 1974, pp. 28–32) and Hasker (2008, chps. 5–6).
- ⁵ For a thorough treatment of skeptical theism, see Dougherty (2022). For an Islamic perspective, see Hani (2022).
- ⁶ “Regarding His exalted attributes, our reason judges that He ought to pay a greater amount of reward that leads to the sufferer’s complete satisfaction in the sense that if the sufferer initially had two options; namely not to undertake the pain and to suffer it with acquiring the compensation, he would prefer the second option without the slightest hesitation” (Saeedimehr 2021, p. 30).
- ⁷ Mousavirad notes that “though this theory is not considered to be a profound solution for the problem of evil in contemporary philosophy of religion, it has been widely accepted by many Muslim theologians and some medieval Christian theologians” (Mousavirad 2022, p. 211; Saeedimehr 2021, p. 32).
- ⁸ See also (Saeedimehr 2021, p. 34): “The compensation theodicy, developed by Shiite theologians, addresses that version of the problem of evil which claims that the presence of evils in the world is inconsistent with Divine justice The response of the compensation theodicy is that for every underserved suffering for which God is responsible two conditions should be, and actually are, fulfilled. First, God bestows [on] the sufferer a compensation (either in this world or in the hereafter) which far outweighs the suffering to the extent that brings about the overall satisfaction of the sufferer. Second, the suffering involves a case of Divine *lutf* [mercy]”.
- ⁹ It might be objected that our example is irrelevant to Mousavirad’s theodicy, since presumably God would not intentionally engage in torture or evil acts. However, intention is irrelevant given Mousavirad’s consequential ethic (Mousavirad 2022, p. 213). For him, the outcome of the evil action—that it produces good—and not the intention matters and justifies the action. Nonetheless, since it is inconceivable that God acts out of evil intentions, we will consider intentions in our subsequent examples.
- ¹⁰ See Marilyn Adams, who argues that for God to permit horrendous evils, there should be an organic rather than an additive unity between the evils experienced and the goods one receives (Adams 2000, pp. 28–29).
- ¹¹ As William Rowe writes, “Such intense suffering is a clear case of evil. Of course, if the intense suffering leads to some greater good, a good we could not have obtained without undergoing the suffering in question, we might conclude that the suffering is justified, but it remains an evil nevertheless. For we must not confuse the intense suffering in and of itself with the good things to which is sometimes leads or of which it may be a necessary part” (Rowe 1978, p. 335).

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