

## Dewi Zephaniah Phillips' Critique of Theodicies

Dewi Zephaniah Phillips'in Teodise Eleştirisi

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### Dewi Zephaniah Phillips' Critique of Theodicies

**Abstract:** The problem of evil, which is one of the important issues of contemporary philosophy of religion, is one of the important arguments expressed in the context of objection to the existence of God. This argument, which we can trace back to Epicurus, is by D. Hume, "Is God willing to prevent evil but not able to? Then He is powerless. Does he have the power but does not want to prevent it? So he wants evil to happen. If he is both able and good, then where does this evil come from?" It has been put forward in a question format that leaves a dilemma in the form of a question. Contemporary philosophers such as J. L. Mackie, on the other hand, argued that God's absolute goodness, might and existence of evil contradict each other, and argued that the three premises mentioned cannot coexist, and therefore the theistic God conception would be contradictory within itself. The problem of evil has been discussed by various philosophers from different aspects within the framework of the analytical philosophy tradition, which is one of the important philosophical schools of the modern period. In this context, logical positivism, which represents the first period of the analytical philosophy tradition and found its expression in Wittgenstein's first period work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, found all fields of knowledge meaningless, except verifiable factual propositions, on the grounds that they are metaphysical. Therefore, since the general issues of theism, especially the problem of evil, fall within the scope of the aforementioned metaphysical field, it has been declared as a meaningless and non-factual type of knowledge by logical positivism. However, in the process, the principle of strict verification fell out of favor and the theory of language games and the basic issues of theism of the second Wittgenstein period began to be evaluated within the "types of knowledge that can be talked about". According to the theory of language games, just as different games (there are different language games and each of them) have their own rules, language also has its own rules. Anyone who does not know the rules of football will have difficulty in understanding the game played, and someone who does not know the rules of the language will have difficulty in understanding the subject. D. Z. Phillips, one of the Wittgensteinian philosophers, also radically adapted the theory of language games to the philosophy of religion. He argues that religious belief is a language game of its own and has no relation to the factual field (non-realism). According to him, evaluating propositions such as "God is good" or "God is mighty" in philosophical or scientific contexts leads us to the wrong path. Since the language of the context in which they are expressed is different, it cannot be discussed within thought systems that have different language games such as philosophy, which has a unique language world. The problem of evil should also be evaluated in this context. In a statement that "God is good", "God" no longer refers to a particular object or person. Here, only a feeling of "trust" can be mentioned. Again, when it is said that "God has infinite power", "a feeling of refuge" can be mentioned. However, this does not indicate the existence of the "God" object. According to Hick, these statements of Phillips are expressions of atheism in a different way. Therefore, this is unacceptable from the point of view of theism, as it denies the very idea of god. Phillips criticizes the philosophical solutions to the problem of evil, especially Swinburne. In this context, he criticizes the free will defense of Phillips Swinburne and Plantinga from various perspectives. Again, he deals with the views that the existence of evil and the existence of God can be defended together, that is, theodicies one by one, and tries to show that they are not successful. He also criticizes the theodicy, such as "spiritual maturation theodicy", "atonement theodicy", "defense of cognitive limitation", which were put forward to respond to evil from the theist perspective, in

the context of different types of evil such as the holocaust, mental and physical suffering. Thus, he tried to evaluate and support the claim that the theism's statements about the problem of evil should not be seen as philosophical propositions from the perspective of Wittgensteinian language games.

**Keywords:** Philosophy of Religion, D. Z. Phillips, Evil, God, Omnipotent, Language Game.

### Dewi Zephaniah Phillips'in Teodise Eleştirisi

**Öz:** Çağdaş din felsefesinin önemli konularından biri olan kötülük problemi, Tanrı'nın varlığına itiraz bağlamında dile getirilen önemli argümanlardan biridir. Epiküros'a kadar izini sürebildiğimiz bu argüman, D. Hume tarafından, "Tanrı kötülüğü önlemek istiyor da, gücü mü yetmiyor? O halde O güçsüzdür. Gücü yetiyor da önlemek mi istemiyor? O halde kötülüğün olmasını istemektedir. Hem gücü yetiyor, hem de iyi ise, o zaman bu kötülük nereden geliyor?" şeklinde ikileme bırakan bir soru formatında ortaya konulmuştur. J. L. Mackie gibi çağdaş filozoflar ise Tanrı'nın mutlak iyiliği, kudreti ve kötülüğün varlığının birbirleriyle çelişki arz ettiğini ileri sürerek bahsi geçen üç öncülün bir arada bulunamayacağını, dolayısıyla teistik Tanrı tasavvurunun kendi içerisinde çelişkili olacağını ileri sürmüşlerdir. Modern dönemin önemli felsefi ekollerinden biri olan analitik felsefe geleneği çerçevesinde kötülük problemi farklı veçhelerden muhtelif filozoflarca tartışılmıştır. Bu bağlamda özellikle analitik felsefe geleneğinin ilk devresini temsil eden ve Wittgenstein'in birinci dönem eseri *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* ile ifadesini bulan mantıksal pozitivizm, doğrulanabilir olgusal önermeler dışındaki tüm bilgi alanlarını metafiziksel olduğu gerekçesiyle anlamsız bulmuştur. Dolayısıyla başta kötülük problemi olmak üzere teizmin genel konuları bahsi geçen metafizik alanın kapsamına girdiği için mantıksal pozitivizm tarafından anlamsız ve olgu dışı bilgi türü olarak ilan edilmiştir. Ancak süreç içerisinde katı doğrulamacı ilkesi rağbetten düşmüş ve ikinci Wittgenstein döneminde ait dil oyunları kuramı ile teizmin temel meseleleri de "hakkında konuşulabilir olan bilgi türleri" içerisinde değerlendirilmeye başlamıştır. Dil oyunları kuramına göre değişik oyunların (değişik dil oyunları vardır ve bunların her birinin) kendine özgü kuralları bulunduğu gibi, dilin de kendine özgü kuralları vardır. Futbol kurallarını bilmeyen kimse oynanan oyunu anlamakta güçlük çekeceği gibi, dilin kurallarını bilmeyen kimse de bahsedilen konuyu anlamakta güçlük çekecektir. Wittgensteinci filozoflardan D. Z. Phillips de dil oyunları kuramını radikal bir şekilde din felsefesine uyarlamıştır. O, dinî inancın kendine özel bir dil oyunu olduğunu ve olgusal alanla ilişkisi bulunmadığını (non-realism) ileri sürmektedir. Ona göre "Tanrı iyidir" veya "Tanrı kudret sahibidir" gibi önermelerin felsefi ya da bilimsel bağlamlar içinde değerlendirilmesi bizi yanlış bir yola sürükler. Bunların ifade edildiği bağlamın dili farklı olduğu için kendine özgü bir dil dünyasına sahip olan felsefe gibi farklı dil

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oyunlarına sahip düşünce sistemleri içerisinde tartışılmaz. Kötülük problemi de bu bağlamda değerlendirilmelidir. “Tanrı iyidir” şeklindeki bir ifadede artık “Tanrı” belli bir nesneye veya bir kişiye işaret etmez. Burada ancak bir “güven” duygusundan söz edilebilir. Yine “Tanrı sonsuz güç sahibidir” denildiği zaman “bir sığınma duygusundan” bahsedilebilir. Ancak bu “Tanrı” objesinin varlığına işaret etmez. Hick’e göre Phillips’in bu ifadeleri, ateizmin farklı bir şekilde dile getirilmesidir. Dolayısıyla bu, teizm açısından zati tanrı tasavvurunu yadsıdığı için kabul edilemez. Phillips başta Swinburne olmak üzere kötülük probleminde felsefi olarak getirilmiş çözümleri eleştirmektedir. Bu bağlamda Phillips Swinburne ve Plantinga’nın benimsediği özgür irade savunusunu da çeşitli açılardan eleştirmektedir. Yine o, kötülüğün ve Tanrı’nın varlığının birlikte savunulabileceğine dair görüşleri yani teodiseleri teker teker ele almakta ve bunların başarılı olmadıklarını ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır. “Ruhsal olgunlaşma teodisesi”, “kefarete teodisesi”, ““idrak sınırlılığı savunması” gibi teist perspektiften kötülüğe bir cevap verme amacıyla ileri sürülmüş olan teodiseleri de holokost, zihinsel ve fiziksel acılar gibi farklı kötülük türleri bağlamında ele alarak çeşitli açılardan eleştirmektedir. Böylece o, teizmin kötülük problemi ile ilgili ifadelerinin felsefi birer önerme olarak görülmemesi gerektiği iddiasını, Wittgensteinci dil oyunları perspektifinden değerlendirmeye ve desteklemeye çalışmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Din Felsefesi, D. Z. Phillips, Kötülük, Tanrı, Kadir-i Mutlak, Dil Oyunu.

### Introduction

The existence of distress and suffering in the world is a fact. While some of these sufferings affect individuals, some of them affect society, such as the genocide in Bosnia. Countless pains and troubles caused by natural disasters, or man-made evils such as violence and cruelty lead people to certain feelings and thoughts. While the person who is exposed to these disasters is trying to get rid of them, he tries to mentally question everything that is happening (Yaran, 1997, 8). These “evil” events are also questioned and evaluated in terms of belief in God. Discussions about the problem of evil are very old in the history of thought. However, it was D. Hume who systematically stated that the claims of theism on the subject were not logically consistent (Hume, 1979, 165). For Phillips, the Epicurean objections cited by Hume have yet to be answered. Hume who maintains that defending God’s goodness, power, and the existence of evil together will leave people in a dilemma, argues by questioning: Does God want to prevent evil, but he is not able to? If so, then he is powerless. Does he have enough power, but he does not want to prevent evil? Thus, he wants evil to happen. If so, then he is both able and good, then why do evils occur? (Hume, 1979, 165)

Following Hume, one of the contemporary philosophers J. L. Mackie poses the problem as follows: a) God is omnipotent, b) God is wholly good, and c) yet evil exists. Mackie and other thinkers who object to theism

see that there is a contradiction between these two propositions (Mackie, 1982, 150). Since a rational person cannot defend both contradictory propositions, he must either accept that his beliefs are contradictory or give up one of these propositions if he does not want to commit a logical error. It would be unreasonable to defend two propositions in question at the same time. Atheistic thinkers argue that the existence of phenomena and events that can be called “evils” cannot be denied by someone who remains within the boundaries of logic and experiment, and therefore, the claim that “God is almighty” should be abandoned (Yaran, 1997, 38–39). In addition, theist philosophers maintain that the existence of evil and an omnipotent and wholly good God can be defended together.

According to Phillips, a philosopher who has views of Wittgenstein's philosophy with regard to the subject we will examine, propositions about God should not be evaluated as philosophical propositions. Rather, they should be addressed within their own “language game” because religious statements cannot be evaluated like philosophical and scientific propositions. However, if theism is seen as a philosophical theory, as theists claim, then defending the existence of evil together with the existence of God will create a contradiction (Phillips, 2005, 197). After briefly mentioning Phillips' views on why theism is not a theory, we will try in this study to address and scrutinize his claims about what kind of logical inconsistencies would arise if it were seen as a theory.

### **The Nature of Religious Propositions**

In the 20th century, a movement called “logical atomism” has emerged from the teachings of philosophers such as Berkeley, D. Hume, Bertrand Russell, and L. Wittgenstein. Following Hume's thought, they divide propositions into “propositions about relations between ideas” and “propositions about factual situations”. Propositions in the first-class consist of a priori propositions of logic and mathematics. The propositions in question are accepted as necessary and certain since they are analytical. Nonetheless, it is argued that empirical propositions about facts and events are “possible” but imprecise (Ayer, 1988, 9; Turgut, 1989, 73). To demonstrate the validity of these propositions, the principle of “verification” has been accepted. Propositions that do not comply with this principle are labeled as metaphysical.

In his first work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein put forward views close to the ideas of philosophers belonging to the “verificationist” school. To the descriptive theory of meaning, he argues that we should be silent about what we cannot describe (That whereof we cannot

speak, thereof we must remain silent). Thus, according to this approach, we can say nothing about religious and theological matters (Wittgenstein, 2008, 171–173). Religious expressions become subjects that are “not even worth talking about.” Wittgenstein mainly abandoned these views in the second part of his intellectual life. During this period, he wrote his *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein talks about “language games” here (Wittgenstein, 2005, 32). Accordingly, just as different games (there are different language games and each of them) have their own rules, the language also has its own rules. Anyone who does not know the rules of football will have difficulty in understanding the game played, and someone who does not know the rules of the language will have difficulty in understanding the subject.

Dewi Z. Phillips was a follower of Wittgenstein and adapted his ideas to the philosophy of religion. For him, the meaning of the predicates attributed to God in the propositions “God is the almighty” and “God is good” should be questioned first (Phillips, 2005, 103). For him, the evaluation of religious beliefs in general philosophical or scientific contexts leads us astray, because religious beliefs have a framework of their own, and are independent of other fields. Consequently, they are not open to justification or rejection (Phillips, 1970, 48).

By adapting Wittgenstein’s “language game” theory to the philosophy of religion, Phillips argues that religious belief is a language game peculiar to itself and has no relation to the factual field (Phillips, 2005, 197). Claiming the opposite, by trying to justify religious expressions on different levels of meaning, reveals a situation in which the uttered expressions cannot be understood at all. For him, it is not appropriate to compare religious expressions and claims with expressions used in other language games. To be able to talk about the existence of contradiction, there must be some conditions that are known since the time of Aristotle. However, it is not possible to talk about such a thing as the subject is in question. A conflict between two people can be valid if they are playing the same language game. For example, whether it is illegal to pick up the ball during the game depends on the game being played. If people who argue over this and claim that “the act of handling the ball” is illegal are doing this for the same game, there is a contradiction then. In addition, if there are different rules for different games, then, it cannot be mentioned that there is a contradiction (Phillips, 1986, 243).

Phillips maintains that the propositions of theism do not have cognitive content, since making discussions about the problem of evil in a philosophical context may lead us astray. According to him, the discussion

of religious beliefs in a philosophical context is doomed to be inconclusive. They must be understood in a different “language game”. As Turan Koç stated, to Phillips, a religious language game is an activity that has no logical relation with any other language game, and religious people get carried away. Consequently, the expressions in question do not have common reference areas with other language games. To make sense of religious expressions, it is necessary to know the time, place, and purpose of their use very well. Although these thoughts of Phillips emphasize the importance of the context, which has been emphasized in the tradition of tafsir in understanding the text, he stands in a very different angle. (Koç, 1995, 245)

No longer does the phrase “God is good” refer to a particular object or person as “God”. Yet only a feeling of “trust” can be mentioned. Again, when we say, “God has infinite power”, we can talk about “a feeling of refuge”. On the contrary, this does not indicate the existence of the “God”. In this case, there is no “person” whom we can rely on and trust. Therefore, these claims are expressions of atheism differently, as stated by J. Hick (Hick, 2007, 433–441). To sum up, while Phillips is expressing the importance of religious language, the time, place, and purpose of use, he wants to emphasize the importance that it ascribes to which emotion of the person it reflects. He states that religious expressions should not be seen as propositional expressions, but as expressions of feelings, attitudes, and intentions.

These claims of Phillips have been criticized in several ways. First, seeing propositions about religion and God as empty, non-objective statements that reflect people’s feelings, at least, is inconsistent with the religious experience of religious people. These people maintain that they enter a relationship with a being who is “personal” in their experiences and prayers. This understanding ignores the experiences of these people. Philosophers belonging to theistic tradition, especially Semitic religions, think that we can talk about God without falling into anthropomorphism. In other words, they think that we can use predicates such as “good”, “wisdom”, and “knowledge” in the sense that it is used for people, even if not in the same sense. Secondly, this claim of Phillips contradicts the observations and research in the field of social sciences today. People write books about God, others read and react to these books, and somehow a dialogue process takes place. Similarly, discussion sessions on God are held and philosophers come together to discuss this issue. Another aspect is that people change their religion. If one religious community cannot understand the other, or everyone expresses “his feelings and wishes” if the

propositions about God do not mean anything, how will we explain the cases of conversion?

### **The Problem of Evil and the Consistency of Theodicy**

Phillips states that Anglo-American analytical thinkers divide the problem of evil into logical, existential, evidential, and practical, yet he is against this division and sees this division as a false distinction. According to him, the “logical” is based on “existing”. Thus, if we logically talk about something being inconsistent, we need to be able to show it in real life. Phillips argues that in this way it can be shown that the claims of theism that God is omnipotent and wholly good are contradictory.

Phillips mentions Swinburne’s views on God’s omnipotence, which he sees as the representative of classical theism and criticizes them for being logically inconsistent. For Swinburne, God is omnipotent. He can do whatever he wants. God’s power is not limited by the laws of nature. If it chooses to do so, it may modify or suspend them as well as keep them in effect. However, having power does not require being able to do logically impossible things (Swinburne, 1993, 153–166). For Swinburne, this is not because God is weak, but these expressions do not describe something that has meaning, such as making a shape that is both a circle and a square at the same time. Saying that something is a square includes saying that it is not a circle. The inability to make a square-shaped circle cannot be claimed as an objection to the might of any being. Because making a square circle does not describe anything consistent to do (Swinburne, 1996, 8).

In Phillips’ view, Swinburne’s explanation that “God is omnipotent, that he can do anything that is not logically contradictory” is not at all clear-cut (Swinburne, 1998, 126). Starting from Wittgenstein, he argues that this would mean “in practice, it is possible to do anything without contradiction.” To him, many questions must be properly asked in this situation. For example, can God ride a bicycle? Can he lick ice cream? Can he hit his head on the ceiling? Can he have sexual intercourse? Can he learn a foreign language? It is paradoxical to think that God would do all the above mentioned because he is bodiless. The body is needed to perform these actions. Consequently, the proposition that God is “omnipotent” is self-contradictory (Phillips, 2005, 13). Phillips formulates it this way:

a) To say that God is omnipotent means that he can do everything that is not contradictory in himself.

b) There are innumerable acts that are not self-contradictory, but that God cannot do.

c) Then God is not omnipotent (Phillips, 2005, 13).

As regards Phillips, we need to have a good grasp of the meanings of words and symbols for they are used in place of something that has a corresponding value. If we say  $2+2=4$ , we are saying something meaningful. Nonetheless, if we say  $2+2=5$ , it is not different from saying  $2+2=$  round-square (Phillips, 2005, 9). If we do not consider the propositions about God in their own "language game", then we can easily talk about God's eyebrows and nails, although theists do not accept them (Phillips, 2005, 18). In addition, Phillips refers to Rush Rhees and expresses his objection: The attribute "power" used for God is also used for the devil. On the contrary, we do not have any measure to reveal what kind of difference there is between the two powers (Phillips, 2005, 25).

It doesn't seem right to me that Phillips cites a statement by Swinburne on the subject and criticizes the statement in question as if the claim of theism consisted of just that. After all, Swinburne, after the sentences cited by Phillips, emphasizes that things other than God's power are not just these. According to him, some logically possible actions are outside the power of some situations. For a couple to be divorced, they must first be married. To be able to sit one must have a body (Swinburne, 1993, 154–166). Accordingly, Swinburne does not see the matters asserted by Phillips within the limits of his power. From a theistic point of view, the points that Phillips put forward are attributives that cannot be considered for God. To put it in Islamic theology, God is above all these. In addition, the point that Phillips does not want to see here is that "it is one thing to be omnipotent, it is another thing that he does not do some things - not that he can't - due to his majesty and divinity.

Phillips maintains that "God is good" is contradictory, just as "God is mighty". To him, how can we talk about an omnipotent and wholly good God when there is so much suffering in the world? Stating that theists argue that God has some reasons to explain this, he argues that "free will defence" comes first among these reasons (Phillips, 2005, 34). The free will defence has been put forward in the contemporary philosophy of religion by some philosophers such as Plantinga and Swinburne. In addition, the free will defence has been discussed by many philosophers earlier. For example, Yaran states that, according to Augustine, God is not responsible for the existence of evil because God has given humans free will. Evil arises when people do not use this will in the right direction (Yaran, 1997, 92).

Plantinga and Swinburne reformulate the “free will defence” (Plantinga, 1967, 118; Swinburne, 1996, 84). With his “free will defence”, Plantinga counters the assertion that God and evil cannot be defended together. He states that the existence of God and evil can be defended together for an atheist. In this regard, Plantinga claims the following ideas:

A world containing creatures who are sometimes significantly free (and freely perform better than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal than a world containing no free creatures at all. Now God can create free creatures, but he cannot cause or determine them to do only what is right. For if he does so, then they are not significantly free after all; they do not do what is right freely. To create creatures capable of the moral good; therefore, he must create creatures capable of moral evil, and he cannot leave these creatures free to perform evil, and at the same time, prevent them from doing so. God did in fact create significantly free creatures, but some of them went wrong in the exercise of their freedom: this is the source of moral evil. The fact that these free creatures sometimes go wrong; however, count neither against God’s omnipotence nor against his goodness; for he could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by excising the possibility of moral good. (Plantinga, 1974, 166–167)

Plantinga argues that the occasional evil done by human beings does not harm God’s power and goodness because the possibility of moral evil necessitates the limitation of the possibility of moral good. In other words, if God were to create people who would always do good, these people would not have done what they did freely. But if these people are to be free, it is out of the question to expect them to always do good without doing any evil (Plantinga, 1967, 148; Phillips, 2005, 95–96). Swinburne, who shares similar thoughts with Plantinga, relates this to the situation of a father who takes his child with a toothache to the dentist, knowing that he will suffer a little. The child will inevitably suffer some pain, but it is necessary for treatment and recovery (Swinburne, 1998, 10; Türkben, 2009, 93). Consequently, to him, the evil in the world is a price to be paid for something better.

Phillips opposes Plantinga’s idea that is “a world with freewill beings is worthier in the same circumstances than a world without free-will beings” as follows: Gain or loss are thoughts about us. What beings are we asked to envision as having no free will at all? Are we? This being can never be human. For him, the defence of free will appeals to us first and then takes a strange shape. He asks us whether the world we are in is more valuable than the world we are not in. Both the second alternative and

the first alternative fail to appeal to us because we cannot say that the free will we have is good without relying on any evidence or fact. What we consider good or bad is what we choose to do or not. He also adds the following to these objections: Since your God gives freedom to people, he can give them an opportunity that he did not give to non-human beings. Would not it be more plausible for him to create a less painful world for humans? (Phillips, 2005, 96)

Phillips thinks that the example given by Swinburne is also inappropriate. Swinburne's explanations cannot be accepted if the criteria we set for humans are also valid for God. To Phillips, when we consider an event like the Holocaust, it is quite astonishing that it is compared to a "tooth extraction" and try to justify it (Phillips, 2005, 38). In the case of tooth extraction, the father does not feel any remorse while taking his child to the dentist, and he does not attribute any crime to the dentist. Is it possible to maintain the same for concentration camps? Phillips argues that, up to our moral knowledge, the "holocaust" and "tooth extraction" are in no way comparable. Phillips continues to argue whether God is afterthought about the evils he has allowed or not. For him, if we say that "God has to do evils for our own good and therefore does not have to evaluate them afterwards", then, it follows that God is rigid and insensitive. If God evaluates the bad situations that occur later and feels pain, it means that he accepts that he has a share in the evil that occurs. This is also an indication that the "perfect good God" claim is contradictory. If either case is contested, it must be admitted that our talk about God differs from our talk about normal morals (Phillips, 2005, 41).

Phillips accuses Swinburne of distorting the truth in a sense. In addition, I think that he also distorts Swinburne's statements because Swinburne thinks that the opposite of "free man" is a "robot man". In Swinburne's view, if we accept that the free human is better than the robot-human, we must also accept the possibility of the existence of pain because pain is a necessary cause of freedom. Phillips deliberately tries to interpret Swinburne's explanation differently.

Phillips argues that theists try to justify evils with the "defence of free will." J. Hick states that Phillips expressed an understanding such as if God is wholly good, then, he must intervene in all evils. Hick believes that this criticism is unfounded because the people who committed the Holocaust or those who committed other great disasters (e.g., Stalin) did not say that "I have free will", hence I have the right to do evil. Such a thing is out of the question. However, what Phillips has trouble accepting is that free will is the basis of human existence. We cannot speak of our

humanity without free will. If God intends to create good free individuals, it is impossible or worthless for humans to realize that freedom with “ready-made” goodness. It is inevitable for people to have free will to develop and realize themselves. When this happens, unfortunately, there will be some undesirable painful events. These will occur not because God willed them, but because people are free (Hick, 2007, 433–441). If God had intervened in one of these events, he would have been expected to intervene in other major calamities as well (Hick, 2007, 433–441). However, this means interference with people’s free will.

However, in Phillips’s view, Hick’s explanation is not satisfactory. It is like the case of someone who says, “I can not save everyone; then, I will not save anyone” (Phillips, 2005, 107). He also maintains that the idea that people will develop through their free will with the attitudes they will adopt in the face of some bad situations is not true. When we encounter some bad events, those events already determine our reaction. Thus, talking about free will here seems contradictory to Phillips (Phillips, 2005, 58).

For Phillips, all these considerations show that the assertion of Plantinga and others that “a free man is better than an unfree man” is not valid. Moral freedom also distinguishes personal from impersonal beings. Therefore, it is necessary to disagree with the statement that “for a person to have a personality, he must be able to choose good or bad.” Phillips believes that people can choose constant good when they have moral freedom, but they still have to make a choice (Phillips, 2005, 98; Flew, 1972, 152). To him, God could have created humans to be always inclined to choose the good, or he could have naturally caused them to act selflessly. Responding to Phillips’ similar objections, Swinburne argues that if God had created humans this way, he would not have given them so much freedom. In other words, parents who always treat their children well or who have the opportunity to do as little harm as possible are not considered free. More freedom is good, and that freedom makes the possibility of inflicting pain unavoidable (Swinburne, 1996, 92).

Phillips considers the theodises one by one, that is the views that evil and the existence of God can be defended together, and he tries to establish that they are not successful. At the top of these theodicies is the “soul building theodicy.” For Swinburne, humans are not born as programmed like animals, but on the contrary, they reach a certain maturity by evolving through education. Their maturation will largely depend on their reactions to events happening around them. If there is no pain around people, how will they learn benevolence, generosity, and compassion?

In short, how will they take responsibility for their environment? As a result, suffering is inevitable (Swinburne, 1996, 96).

Phillips strongly opposes seeing pain as an occasion for people to mature. To him, the claim that troubles to make a person strong, teach him to share the feelings of others, open his soul to beauty, and elevate him spiritually is not true, because we know from our observations and readings that pain makes people selfish, mean, narrow-minded, and suspicious (Phillips, 2010). In Phillips' view, just as evil does not cause good, goodness can sometimes cause evil. For example, a person's deep love for his wife can lead to the fact that he will kill another person who loves his wife. If this person's love was mediocre, nothing like this would have happened. Love can lead to good things as well as bad things. (Phillips, 2010).

Phillips describes Swinburne's defence of "responsibility" as "obstinacy". According to him, Swinburne does not analyze responsibility here. He analyzes a so-called responsibility and vulgarizes the concept (Phillips, 1977, 112). Based on the fact that we cannot have a sense of responsibility without being responsible for something or someone, Phillips argues that we cannot deduce from this that someone should be seen as an opportunity for our own sense of responsibility. If we remind someone of his responsibilities, we are directing his attention not on himself but on someone else. Phillips argues that Swinburne's analysis enslaves "interest" (Phillips, 2010). In other words, it means that instead of taking responsibility for the suffering of others, we see their suffering as an opportunity for responsibility. Phillips argues that proponents of theodicy ignore the obvious examples of catastrophe that affects people (Phillips, 2005, 67). For Phillips, great disasters like the Holocaust cannot be justified because a few people will resist the events and thus evolve spiritually, or because a few people will have the opportunity to help the suffering people there (Phillips, 2005, 70). None of the people who suffered in the genocide will excuse this situation. Accordingly, the events in question are incompatible with theism's claim that God has infinite mercy (Phillips, 2005, 76). By bringing up great disasters such as the Holocaust, Phillips wishes to point out that they will not lead to any spiritual maturity.

Phillips brings up major disasters such as the Holocaust in his evaluations on the subject and asks what purpose they serve. In addition, in Hick's view, this question is not a justified one. Because, if the evils that are called the worst are eliminated, someone else will take their place. Then it would be questioned why they existed, and it would go on like

this. Hick emphasizes that the concept of “great disaster” is relative (Hick, 1990, 48).

As for Phillips’ claim that people become selfish and suspicious when faced with pain, it can be partially accepted that this is true based on observations. However, it is clearly seen that people are more compassionate and helpful towards each other in the face of events that arise both from humans and as a result of natural disasters in difficult times in history and today. The selfishness of some people is something that theists will not object to. Theists see all this as part of the “test”. Thus, it is not alleged by them that everyone will pass the test.

Another theodicy that Phillips discusses and opposes to concerns related to physical and mental illnesses. As in Phillips, some philosophers, such as Swinburne, explain the existence of physical and mental disorders by their contribution to the person’s moral development. With regard to them, people are addicted to some extreme passions from time to time. If they are not made to feel these discomforts for a certain time, these passions can cause more trouble for them. For example, someone who is fond of excessive sexuality may suffer from a urological disease for a certain time. Similarly, some damage may occur in the mental faculties of a drug user. These painful events and illnesses will remind him and others who observe him to take control of their passions (Phillips, 2005, 62–63).

Phillips states that the thinkers who put forward these views only see the side of the truth that suits them whereas these events do not always occur as described. It is always possible to find examples to the contrary. It is seen that the situation of people who are addicted to something as a result of their passion, not only does not improve but also worsens. Hence, for Phillips, this defence falls short of explaining such suffering (Phillips, 2005, 62–63).

Another understanding that Phillips criticizes is the “cognitive limitation theodicy”. Peterson cites Stephen Wykstra as the representative of this thought. According to him, when making a judgment about a fact, we should have reasonable grounds to show that the accuracy of that judgment can be demonstrated by us. However, we have a limited perspective and justifications. God, nonetheless, may have causes that we do not know. God’s works are beyond the grasping power of limited minds. In other words, it does not mean that evils whose purpose we do not fully grasp have no purpose (Peterson et al., 2009, 187).

Phillips, who disapproves of the allegation that we do not see the whole picture and therefore we should not rush to judge, argues that

these assertions cannot be made, at least, for major disasters such as the Holocaust (Phillips, 2005, 78). Such an explanation would mean the collapse of our mental faculties. For this reason, we have to evaluate events and facts to our own “reasons” (Phillips, 2010). It is possible to make such a claim on any subject. Then we will not be able to make any judgments about anything. Phillips’ objection that the evils in some major disasters are obvious, thus an explanation that “we cannot see the whole picture” cannot be accepted, is very strong. Nonetheless, Semitic religions, their followers, and theist philosophers think that although human knowledge is limited, God’s knowledge is infinite. God is “first” as well as “last”. Thus, people with limited knowledge can only make an assessment based on their own point of view. However, God with unlimited knowledge will better judge what is “better.” As a result, to them, this also applies to major disasters.

Phillips notes that some theists assert that “God will not allow unlimited suffering.” For these thinkers, says Phillips, man has the power to endure pain. The pain that happens to a person is not unbearable. The final point of these sufferings is death. This is not something that people cannot tolerate. After all, there is no “limitless” pain (Phillips, 2005, 79). Phillips states that it is not possible to agree with these thoughts. For him, Swinburne, who stated this claim, understands the concept of “unlimited” as 2, 4, 6, 8... (Phillips, 2005, 80). In this case, should the parents of a person who has been stabbed in 10 places thank “the God of infinite goodness” by saying that “it is good that our son was not stabbed to death in 20 places?”

Phillips finally deals with the “atonement” theodicy. According to the atonement theodicy, even though some people suffer in this world, God will make up for it in the hereafter. For Phillips, the phrase “compensation after death” is self-contradictory, like previous statements of theism. The expression “when I die” means “when I lose consciousness.” If I am still conscious, then we cannot speak of death. Phillips states that he does not believe in the existence of an afterlife, saying “I will die and there will be a corpse left behind that people have to clean up and remove” (Phillips, 2005, 85). To Phillips, the theodists’ taking refuge in the “other world” in this way is an indication of how weak their previous defences were. Moreover, it is not understandable in what form the atonement or “compensation” will take. Some lose their unborn child in this world while others lose their money in the stock market. Some lose their lives in war whereas other people suffer from genetic diseases that do not originate from them, and some have to live as schizophrenic. How to compensate for all

this and what will be given in return? All this remains unanswered. Phillips maintains that the theodists -referring to John Hick- try to explain the existence of evils in this world by moving the maturation process of man “to the other side”, and they cannot find any other way out (Phillips, 2005, 84). Hence, it cannot be accepted as a justification that the suffering of those who suffered greatly will be compensated in the next world. Phillips states that Christians are talking about that one day the merciful God will come down to earth and share the burden of people to alleviate their suffering. In addition, Phillips says that our hotel does not have a room for such a guest. We won't be at home when he comes. If asked, do you want this guest or someone else? We will say, “Give us Prometheus” without hesitation (Phillips, 2010). Thus, Phillips arrives at pure atheism, as Hick states (Hick, 2007, 433-441).

This theodicy, which Phillips criticizes, has an aspect that complements other theodicies. Because man is free, as Plantinga states, God does not prevent them from doing some things. After all, some people inflict pain on others when exercising their free will. Naturally, some are also exposed to pain. If the hereafter life and redemption are not accepted, theists' defences about evil will be incomplete (Zilzal 99/7-8). As Phillips states, the afterlife and the belief that justice will be manifested there is not a point of escape or refuge from the discussion, but rather a theodicy that complements other theodicies.

### Conclusion

Phillips maintains that theism's statements about the problem of evil should not be seen as philosophical propositions. He argues that if it is seen like this, accepting the existence of evil together with God's omnipotence and infinite goodness will lead to a contradiction. In Phillips's view, the theodists' core views are process, order, and optimism that work as they should. In this world, people develop their characters in the order established by God and with the opportunities given to them. In addition, Phillips argues that the world we live in and know is not such a place, so the theodicy put forward by theists has failed. Instead of putting forward theodicy against the problem of evil, he states that it is more correct to accept that this issue is outside of human understanding, that is, philosophical and scientific understanding.

Phillips accuses theists of being detached from reality and states that their reason is based on metaphysical principles that have no equivalent. In other words, he states that they put forward ideas that are not related to reality. However, it does not seem possible to agree with his claims

because a significant part of the defences made by theists is based on the attitudes and behaviours of believers in the face of “pain”. In daily life, it is witnessed that people who lost an organ still give thanks, and people whose houses were destroyed in the earthquake and who lost a child pray to God for protecting themselves from a greater disaster. In short, Phillips lists all the criticisms that have been directed against theism by atheist thinkers regarding the problem of evil. Nonetheless, the defences of Swinburne, Plantinga, and Hick show that the existence of a good and powerful God and evil can be consistently defended together.

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