John Hick's Theodicy of Moral and Spiritual Development and a Critical Examination of Theodicy [1]

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Abstract

John Hick is a significant philosopher known for his innovative ideas in religious thought and theology, particularly through his 'theodicy of moral and spiritual development'. He redefines human existence as a spiritual education process orchestrated by God, suggesting that the world is created for humanity's spiritual growth. Hick interprets pain and evil as integral parts of a divine plan, positing that these challenges allow individuals to develop through the exercise of free will. This perspective departs from traditional theistic views, framing evil as a necessary tool for spiritual advancement while maintaining the absolute goodness of God. However, Hick's theories face criticism, particularly regarding the notion that all human pain serves an educational purpose. Critics argue that experiencing evil can result in trauma, and not all suffering fosters spiritual development. This contention highlights the limitations of Hick's theodicy in addressing contemporary issues in religion, morality, and social trauma. Despite these criticisms, Hick's ideas remain influential, sparking discussions among theologians and moral philosophers about the relationship between suffering, spiritual growth, and the dynamics within these fields. His work continues to inspire new approaches to understanding religion and spiritual development.

Keywords: *Philosophy of Religion, John Hick, Evil and Theodicy, Moral development, Spiritual Development*

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John Hick'in Ahlaki ve Ruhsal Gelişim Teodisesi ve Teodise Üzerine Eleştirel Bir İnceleme

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Öz

John Hick, dini düşünce ve teoloji alanında özgün yaklaşımlar geliştiren önemli bir filozoftur. Özellikle 'ahlaki ve ruhsal gelişim teodisesi' ile kötülük problemi konusunda getirdiği açıklamalar, teoloji ve din felsefesinde yeni bakış açıları sunmuştur. Hick, insan varoluşunu 'Tanrı'nın bir ruhsal eğitim süreci olarak' anlamlandırır. Ona göre Tanrı, insanları ahlaki ve ruhsal olarak geliştirmek amacıyla dünyayı belirli bir şekilde yaratmıştır. Bu çerçevede, insanların karşılaştığı acı ve kötülük, ilahi planın bir parçası olarak yorumlanır. Kötülük, insanın özgür iradesiyle yaptığı seçimler aracılığıyla daha yüksek bir ahlaki gelişim düzeyine ulaşmasını sağlar. Hick'in bu teodisesi, geleneksel teistik yaklaşımlardan ayrılır. Kötülüğün varlığını insanın olgunlaşma sürecine katkı sağlayan bir araç olarak görmek, Tanrı'nın insanlara tam anlamıyla özgürlük verdiği ve bu özgürlüğün insanı ruhsal bir gelişim yoluna sevk ettiğini öne sürer. Bu yaklaşım, hem Tanrı'nın mutlak iyiliğini korurken hem de evrende kötülüğün varlığını anlamlandırmaya çalışır. Ancak bu görüşler, başta insan acısının ne kadar 'eğitsel' olabileceği sorusu olmak üzere çeşitli eleştirilerle karşılaşmıştır. Hick'in teodisesi, kötülüğün deneyimlenmesinin insanlar üzerinde travmatik etkiler bırakabileceğini ve her türlü acının ruhsal bir gelişime yol açamayacağını düşünen filozoflar tarafından eleştirilmiştir. Hick'in teodisesinin günümüze yansımaları ise özellikle din felsefesi ve ahlak alanlarında kendini gösterir. Kötülük ve acıların 'eğitici' yönünü vurgulayan bu bakış açısı, modern toplumda ahlaki sorumluluk, toplumsal travmalar ve bireysel acıların anlamı üzerine düşüncelere zemin hazırlar. Bunun yanı sıra, Hick'in fikirleri günümüz teologları ve ahlak filozofları arasında da tartışılmaya devam etmektedir. Onun geliştirdiği teodise, günümüzde din ve manevi gelişim alanlarında acı ve ahlaki gelişim ilişkisini anlamaya çalışan yeni yaklaşımlara ilham vermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Din Felsefesi, John Hick, Kötülük ve Teodise, Ahlaki Gelişim, Ruhsal Gelişim*

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Introduction

Everything that is bad, worthless, condemned and blamed, and that is against moral values and ethical will (Akarsu, 1998, p.120). It is also defined as anything that is considered bad, worthless, subject to condemnation and shame, or anything that is contrary to moral values. Evil is defined as the state of being bad, a harmful action, wickedness or evil (Yaran, 1997, p. 23).

However, it should be noted that there is no consensus on the answers given to what evil is in the history of thought. While some define evil as useless, unpleasant, and actions that should not be done, others define it as pain, ignorance, injustice, and something unwanted (Yasa, 2016, p. 18).

In the West, the main reference concept for evil is the English word 'evil'. This word is usually used in a broad sense. In philosophy, under this concept, moral evil in the sense of evil and non-moral evils such as diseases and natural disasters are distinguished. In German, the word 'übel' is a concept that encompasses both moral and immoral evils, but it is mostly used to refer to immoral evil. In French, the word 'le mal' is used to cover all types of evil (Hick, 1977, p. 12).

In the sense of evil, there are those who prefer to use the word 'bad' as the opposite of 'good' in the sense of good, instead of 'evil' when referring to both the behaviour and character of the perpetrators and their states and conditions (Swinburne, 1998, p. 4).

People question the bad events they encounter or somehow come into contact with, and endeavour to explain their causes in some way. This phenomenon of evil has preoccupied everyone from past to present, in every century, who has pondered on the nature of beings, where the world and human beings come from and according to what they are determined (Werner, 2000, p. 7).

Evil is an unwanted and quite frightening dimension of human suffering. Some theories that do not accept God's will try to explain evil by drawing attention to the meaning of the word and the frighteningness of this meaning rather than defining it. Accordingly, evil means physical pain, mental suffering and moral weakness. Moral weakness is also one of the causes of the first two. For much of human suffering is caused by the cruelty of other people. This suffering includes the great disasters that arise in societies, such as poverty, oppression, persecution, war, all kinds of lawlessness and inequality (Hick, 1983, p. 40).

Evil, a phenomenon that cannot be ignored, is a problem that occupies the minds not only philosophically but also in terms of faith. If the universe was literally created by a transcendent being of infinite power, where does evil originate? How can we explain the existence of a God of absolute power and the evil that exists? questions have always existed (Werner, 2000, p. 8).

John Hick, one of the 20th century's leading theologians and philosophers, *developed and* systematised Irenaues' ideas on the existence of evil. His ideas developed within the framework of the 'theodicy of moral and spiritual development' point to an important ground for discussion in the philosophy of religion and theology.

In this article, the main outlines and philosophical foundations of Hick's theodicy of spiritual development will be discussed and the criticisms directed at the philosopher will be addressed. The role of moral and spiritual development in human experience and the contemporary reflections of this understanding will also be the topics we will try to examine in our study. However, firstly, it will be useful to briefly examine how the problem of evil is handled in the history of philosophy.

Literature Review

Heraclitus, one of the ancient philosophers, thought that the existence of good and evil was possible with their coexistence and said that good and evil are one. If people deny some things as bad and do not realise the good, this would be extremely wrong. Because bad things are the final conditions that realise the good. According to Heraclitus, it is not correct to look at this issue from a human perspective. When the created things are considered from the point of view of the real and eternal, it will be seen that everything is good. For God, everything is beautiful, good and right (Werner, 2000, p. 13).

The first traces of philosophical evaluations of the problem can be found in Plato. However, Plato never saw God as the cause of evil. Because God is good and in goodness there is no hatred for anything. Therefore, he wanted everything to be like him and created the world in the most beautiful way possible (Platon, 1989b, p. 42). Therefore, according to Plato, both God and the world he created are perfect. God is not only good and just, but also a God who intervenes in the world and protects it (Platon, 1990, p. 90). Plato criticises the idea that God is inferior to the artisans among men and that He is a workman who is concerned with the whole and neglects the parts (Platon, 1992, p. 32). Plato, who thinks that the world created by God in his own image is good, thinks that matter is not fully suitable for the 'idea' based on the fact that this life is inferior to that in the world of ideas. According to him, matter, which is essentially evil, is also the cause of evil. Desires, passions, fears and delusions are found within the human being and all disharmonies originate from the body (Platon, 1989a, pp. 19-20).

We see that the radical dualism advocated by Manichaeism was similarly defended by Plato. According to Plato, there are forces of good and evil in the universe. These two forces are in struggle throughout the history of existence. The source of goodness in the world or the universe is the idea of 'goodness' and the source of evil is the idea of 'evil'. This conception of radical dualism contradicts one of the fundamental claims of classical theism, which is that God is the one and only cause of everything that exists. Radical dualism bases the reason for the existence of things that are considered evil on the idea of 'evil' (Werner, 2000, p. 76). However, if one of the attributes required by the concept of 'God', the attribute of 'being the creator of all things', is eliminated, this would be to ignore the true nature of God, and therefore it is not possible to reconcile this understanding of dualism with theism's understanding of God (Werner, 2000, p. 78).

The fundamental problem with evil is the idea that if there is an infinitely good God and He is capable of doing everything, He should not have allowed evil. However, there is an undeniable reality of evil in the world. In this case, the conclusion is reached that a good and powerful God could not have existed. Epicurus was the first to ask the question of how an omnipotent, omniscient and infinitely good God, the eternal source of all beings, can coexist with the evil in the universe? (Yaran, 1997, p. 11-12). Epicurus, who dealt with the problem in a systematic way, established a relationship between the all-powerful creator who created everything and the evils that exist in the universe, and discussed the possibilities of whether God wanted to intervene in these evils and whether He was unable to do so. Epicurus said that God would be powerless if He wanted to prevent evil but could not do so, and that this would be incompatible with God's power. If He can prevent it but does not want to do so, this, according to the philosopher, is incompatible with His mercy and justice. In both cases, Epicurus says that God is not God, so he continues to question what is the source of evil and why God does not eliminate evil (Brown, 2001, p. 86; Hick, 1977, p. 5).

It is clear that the existence of evil is incompatible with the traditional understanding of God. Accordingly, the idea that evil is caused by God's will does not seem possible. For God is 'good' above all perceptions. On the other hand, it is inconceivable that evil exists despite God's will, because God's power is above all things (Werner, 2000, p. 9). David Hume also thinks that there is a problem between God's attributes of justice, goodness and mercy and the existence of evil. Hume believes that Epicurus' old question still retains its validity. In his work *On Religion,* the philosopher discusses the problem of evil in dialogues between Philo and

Cleanthes. According to Philo, there is an inconsistency between the theists' conception of an omnipotent, omniscient, absolutely good, merciful and just God and the evil that exists in the universe. To support this view, Philo draws attention to some phenomena experienced in the external world. He mentions events in nature, especially the attack of the strong on the weak. If God's power is unlimited, why can't the beings in the world live happily and harmoniously? If God wanted the beings to live happily, He could eliminate the evil in the world with His unlimited power. But God does not do this. Therefore, He does not want His creations to live happily. Hume, who makes such questions and discussions through the mouths of the heroes in the work, thus reaches the conclusion that the questions put forward by Epicurus have still not been answered (Hume, 1995, pp. 204-209).

Philosophers have also offered a number of solutions to the problem of evil, which was tried to be outlined above. Accordingly, defending God's justice and righteousness in the face of evil is called 'theodicy'. This concept, which is formed by combining two words meaning 'God' and 'justice' in Greek (Hick, 1977, p. 6), was first used by the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. There are also those who define the concept as an effort to show that Divine justice will continue without being jeopardized by many evils in existence (Aydın, 2002, p.156; Ormsby, 2001, p. 15; Yaran, 1997, p. 79).

In theodicy, which is different from theistic defense, an attempt is made to determine exactly why God allows evil and to show that God is right in a sense. In defense, the aim is to show that God's goodness, power and the existence of evil are essentially consistent. In other words, there is no aim in defense to determine the divine causes of evil (Plantinga, 1977, p. 26). Therefore, theodicy is an attempt to explain negativities such as evil, suffering and injustice by placing them within the order of divine justice (Okumuş, 2003, p. 92). When we look at the history of thought, we see that various theodicy approaches have been put forward regarding the problem of evil. Let's briefly touch on these now.

In the approach based on freedom of will, evil is a result of the choices made by man with his free will. Augustine argues that evil occurs when angels and humans abuse their free will despite God's creation. Alvin Plantinga argues that evil is related to man's free will, not God's power (Plantinga, 1977, pp. 30-32; Yasa, 2016, pp, 63, 72; Hick, 1983, pp. 43-44;).

The view that evil is necessary to understand the existence of good is also widespread, because evil reveals the value of good and gives it meaning. According to the perspective based on artistic analogy, evil is seen as an element that completes the aesthetic integrity of the universe (Yasa, 2016, pp. 50-54).

Process philosophers argue that God's power is limited and that He cannot eliminate evil from the universe. God uses a persuasive method to guide beings to do good actions (Whitehead, 1979, p. 345; Peterson, 1998, p. 101).

Ghazali and Leibniz argue that the present universe is the best possible world because it was created by God's perfection, and they state that evil plays an important role in maintaining the balance of this universe (Gazali, 1975, p. 474; Leibniz, 1997, p. 21; Leibniz, 1999, p. 79; Ormsby, 2001, pp. 249-251).

In Islamic thought, the focus is generally on the spiritual and moral development of man, the difficulties he faces, and his relationship with God during this process. In particular, the idea of this world being seen as a testing ground is a thought directly included in the Qur'ân. In fact, the concept of testing in Islam is a fundamental element that ensures the spiritual maturation and development of man. Evils are seen as a tool to test people and their level of patience. The expression in the Qur'ân, *"We shall surely test you with fear and*

hunger, and loss of property and lives and crops; but give glad tidings to the steadfast" (Qur'ân, 2/155) shows that this test is inevitable and that people's ability to cope with these tests will be measured. Accordingly, it can be said that worldly tests provide an opportunity for individuals' spiritual and moral development. In other words, in Islamic thought, the difficulties people face teach them to be patient, to endure, and to trust in God. In this context, it can be evaluated that in Islam, the evils encountered are actually educational elements that contribute to the maturation of a person.

In addition, in Islamic theology, it is emphasized that life is temporary and the main purpose is preparation for the afterlife. In this context, the existence of evil is evaluated as a test tool in worldly life. Evil and pain have an impact on people's actions that will determine their situation in the afterlife. The verse in the Qur'ân, *"And whoever does good an atom's weight will see it then. And whoever does ill an atom's weight will see it then"* emphasizes the importance of the reckoning in the afterlife (Qur'ân, 99/7-8).

Of course, in Islamic thought, the free will of man and the consequences of the choices he makes with this will are of great importance. In this context, man's free will is one of the most important factors affecting his moral development. The Qur'ân emphasizes that people have the ability to choose between good and evil (Qur'ân, 2/286). In addition, man must establish a balance between good and evil with the choices he makes. This is a reflection of people's moral responsibilities. The expression in the Qur'ân, *"Say: '(It is)) the Truth is from your Lord. Now Whosoever will, may believe, and whosoever will, may disbelieve.' Fort he wrongdoers We have prepared a fire…"* emphasizes that people must bear the consequences of the choices they make (Qur'ân, 18/29). Because Islam sees man as a being who bears moral responsibility. This responsibility requires that a person assume the consequences of his actions. The expression in the Qur'ân, *"Each soul is held in pledge for what it earns"* (Qur'ân, 74/25), reinforces the idea that man is responsible for his actions.

Similar ideas to the theodicy of moral and spiritual development have also been expressed in Islamic thought by various philosophers and thinkers. For example, Farabi believes that evil is within God's will and created for a purpose; however, from a holistic perspective, evil is accidental. According to him, God is infinitely powerful and absolutely good. He is uncreated and free from all imperfection. For there is no matter in God's existence. The source of all imperfection and evil is matter. Therefore, it is impossible for God, who is free from matter, to be evil. According to him, while goodness and order are meant in the universe itself, evil is meant indirectly. According to Farabi, the evils that exist in the universe are incidental and are actually necessary and useful because of their role in the formation and continuity of goodness (Farabi, 1989, pp. 69-70; Aydın, 2002, pp. 154-155; Özgen, 1997, pp. 38-39).

Another Islamic philosopher, Ibn Sina, has important views on spiritual development and human moral responsibility. He argues that humans have the capacity to learn and apply moral values through their intellect and will. According to Ibn Sina, evil is the result of man acting involuntarily or wrongly. In this context, the difficulties and evils that man encounters provide an opportunity for his spiritual and moral development. Ibn Sina emphasizes that man has the ability to choose between good and evil. These choices are important factors that affect the spiritual development of the individual. Evil occurs as a result of the individual not using his mind or acquiring bad habits, and this increases the moral responsibility of the person (İbn Sina, 2017, p. 449, etc.).

In addition to these examples of theodicy, there is also the theodicy of moral and spiritual development, which is the subject of our study. Before moving on to Hick's views, it would be useful to provide information about this approach.

Irenaeus' approach attributes a positive meaning to evil and argues that it serves God's purpose. According to Irenaeus, God did not create man perfect at the beginning, but provided him with free will and challenges so that he could achieve perfection. Man must embark on a journey to achieve perfection, and the evils he encounters in this process are necessary to increase his moral value. Irenaeus emphasizes that God created man with the ability to choose good or evil with free will, and thus man can develop from a biological being to a human level. Evils are a means for man to reach a perfect level. This approach has been defended and developed in recent centuries by thinkers such as Friedrich Schleiermacher and F. R. Tennant (DeVries, 2004, p. 311; Yaran, 1997, pp. 97-98).

In Schleiermacher's explanation of evil, an important element from the perspective of Christian thought is the concept of 'original sin'. Refusing to understand the Bible's passages about creation literally, Schleiermacher sees the fall as a metaphorical expression of evil resulting from Adam's sin. According to him, the fall is considered as moral alienation or separation from God. Schleiermacher argues that man has no original power against God and that sin is a deviation in the human-God relationship, but he does not accept that sin has a final character (Christian, 1979, pp. 112-113).

Schleiermacher's understanding of sin sees it as connected to the concept of salvation. Sin is necessary for salvation and forgiveness to be possible, but this does not mean that man escapes responsibility. Schleiermacher accepts that sin, although it is eliminated by forgiveness, corrupts human nature. According to him, sin is necessary for divine mercy to exist and must be known by God. However, the fact that sin is created by God does not mean that it is inevitable for man. What determines the value of sin is the good it can bring. God is both the creator of sin and the guarantor of salvation; therefore, the function of sin is not final but purposeful (Hick 1977: 224; Christian 1979: 116-117).

Hick's Theodicy of Moral and Spiritual Development

Evil is the frightening aspect and depth of human suffering. Some theories that do not accept God's will try to explain evil by showing what the word means rather than defining it. Accordingly, evil refers to physical pain, mental anguish, and moral evil. Moral weakness is the cause of the first two. This is because most human suffering is caused by human cruelty. This includes the great calamities that occur in societies, such as poverty, oppression, persecution, war, all forms of lawlessness and inequality (Hick, 1983, p. 40).

Hick opposes the idea that evil is not real, that it is an illusion. According to him, evil itself belongs to the Bible, and in a religion based on the unadulterated truth of the Bible, it is impossible to say that evil is an illusion in the human mind. The pages of the Bible reflect the characteristic mixture of good and evil in human life (Hick, 1983, p. 41). Therefore, according to Hick, dealing with theodicy is natural and necessary. He thinks that people are subjected to a wide variety of pain and suffering throughout their lives. Much of human pain and suffering comes from the abuse of human freedom. But this is not enough to show the source of all suffering. This is because there are other sources of suffering such as bacteria, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, storms, floods, droughts, etc. that occur outside of the human will. However, it is not possible to draw a clear line between the suffering caused by the abuse of one's freedom and the suffering that occurs against one's will and directly affects human beings. Because both are intertwined with human life (Hick, 1983, p. 46).

Hick challenges the claim, as some critics do, that there is too much pain and suffering in the world. He argues that it is an even greater mistake to see and portray the world as full of evil. For him, there is far more contentment, happiness, love, respect, loyalty, friendship, joy and hope in the world than there is suffering (Hick, 1977, pp. 318-321). So, in general, there is more good than bad in people's lives, just as in a city there are more ordinary houses full of peace and happiness than prisons (Werner, 2000, p. 35).

Dividing the creation of the human race into two stages, Hick says that in the first stage, human beings were brought into existence endowed with an infinite capacity for moral and spiritual development. At this stage, human beings were not the perfect Adam and Eve of Augustinian theodicy. He was still immature and imperfect in a long process of development. The second stage is one in which people, of their own free will, can gradually rise to become the human beings they are now. Perfection lies in the future, not in the past. By exercising their freedom, people develop towards moral perfection. Questioning why man was initially created as an immature and imperfect being instead of a perfect being, Hick states that he focuses on the positive value of human freedom. In this line of thought, he puts forward two ideas that support each other: 'a contested evolutionary environment' and 'epistemic distance'. The first is based on the intuitive judgment that a good that emerges from making free and moral choices in situations of real hardship and provocation is in fact far more valuable than a good that is created out of nothing without human free participation. This intuition emphasizes the imperfect, rather than perfect, creation of the human race, which points to the possibility that human beings can progress towards becoming fully perfect human beings through moral effort (Hick, 1983, p. 45). For man is in the process of becoming the perfect being that God created him to be. While there has not been a complete improvement in the moral condition of the whole world, millions of souls throughout human history have achieved moral perfection through the bitter-sweet experiences of earthly life (Hick, 1977, p. 256).

The second idea, expressed as 'epistemic distance', is this: In order to become a human being, by experiencing true freedom, the creature is brought into the realm of existence at a certain distance from the Creator, instead of being brought directly before the Creator. In order for man to be a completely free being, he had to be created at an epistemic distance from God. Only then is it possible for him to act naturally and not be overwhelmed by the reality of God. Thus, man would come to know and love God by his own choice. It is not logically possible to force people to love God or to always act righteously. A being who is forced to love cannot truly love, and a being who is forced to act righteously cannot be a moral person. Only by being free, by suffering, and above all by being at a distance (epistemic distance) from God can one become the person God wants one to be. If man and woman were originally created in the presence of God, who is infinitely powerful, good and knowledgeable, they could not be truly free from the Creator. They were created at a certain distance from God so that they could be completely free beings, personally and morally. This distance between God and human beings is not a spatial distance, but an 'epistemic' distance with a knowledge dimension. Thus, the answer of Hick's theodicy to the question of the source of moral evil is that it is a consequence of man's creation at an epistemic distance from God. In this state of disconnection, man has true freedom his Creator and, in response to God's non-coercive presence, can freely develop towards self-realization as a child of God, as a child who believes in God and loves Him (Hick, 1983, pp. 45-46).

In this respect, free will is an essential element of moral development. In order for people to make moral decisions, they must have the capacity to make choices independently of the external and internal factors that affect these decisions (McGrath, 2004, pp. 87-90). Since Hick sees moral development as a process that individuals direct through their own decisions, the existence of free will also forms the basis for moral responsibility. For example, when a person makes a decision to do good, this choice increases their moral maturity and sense of responsibility.

Having thus explained the issue of human freedom, Hick moves on to the next question. Why did God create a world in which evil exists? What is God's purpose in creating such a world? According to Hick, the skeptics' answer to this question is as follows: Since God is good and loves his creatures, the environment he would create for human life would naturally be as pleasant and comfortable as possible. In other words, the place that God, who loves His creatures, will create for them will be a paradise suitable for hedonism. Their argument is akin to a person building a hen house for his pet. Since there are countless sources of pain, suffering and danger in the world, it follows that this world could not have been created by an omnipotent and infinitely good God.

According to Hick, however, God's purpose is not to create a paradise where those who live there will feel the greatest pleasure and the least pain. For him, the world is a place of 'soul creation' and 'personality formation' (Hick, 1983, p. 47).

Hick's spiritual development theodicy is based primarily on the idea that the world functions as a 'testing ground'. According to Hick, the difficulties and evils in human life allow individuals to mature spiritually. This approach offers an alternative view of traditional theodicy problems. Although the existence of evil seems to contradict the existence of God, Hick argues that this contradiction can make sense in the context of human free will and spiritual development. In his work *Evil and the God of Love,* Hick develops a theodicy that explains the existence of evil in terms of spiritual development, and in this context, he states that the world is a 'spiritual education center' for people to reach moral and spiritual maturity. According to Hick, God desires humans to be morally independent beings with free will. This is only possible with the existence of evil and suffering. Rather than placing humans directly in a perfect world like heaven, God chose to create them in a world where they would have to make moral decisions and develop spiritually. This means that God did not choose to create humans in a way that automatically made them good; rather, God wanted humans to achieve moral maturity through their own choices (Hick, 1977, pp. 265-270, 280). According to Hick's idea, the world being a testing ground allows people to evaluate the moral difficulties, evil and pain they encounter with free will as a positive learning process. This approach takes the traditional theodicy approaches developed by theologians such as Augustine and Irenaeus even further and suggests an educational process that enables people to strengthen their willpower and moral structure in the face of difficulties (Trakakis, 2018, pp. 35-40).

Hick's view assumes that not only individuals but also societies as a whole are in the process of moral development. The evils experienced at the social level are also accepted as part of this test, and such experiences are evaluated as an educational process that directs people to solidarity, patience and sacrifice. Accordingly, in Hick's theodicy, the world is understood not only as God's creation but also as a school that teaches moral values to people. From this perspective, evil and pain cease to be negative experiences and become tools for reaching a higher level of spiritual maturity (Swinburne, 1998, pp. 90-95).

Again, the divine purpose behind the world, according to the philosopher, is the purpose of 'soul creation'. Hick thinks that this purpose is also compatible with God's justice (Hick, 1977, p. 308). In such a world, free beings can become 'children of God' and 'heirs of eternal life' by struggling with the trials and tribulations of existence in an ordinary environment. The world, with all its harsh aspects, is the space where a second and more difficult creation process takes place (Hick, 1983, p. 47).

Hick argues that it is the sense of selfishness that man must overcome. In the age we live in, people try to live their lives individually. In such an environment, selfishness is the real moral evil (Hick, 1977, p. 307). On the other hand, man has the ability to choose his own actions with his free will. Moral beauty comes from overcoming one's own selfishness. History shows that man has not only tried to overcome individual selfishness, but has also dealt with the far greater sins of institutionalized collective selfishness, such as colonialism, slavery and many other complex forms of social injustice. Such a world, however much pleasure it may increase, would be unhealthy for the development of moral values in the human personality. In fact, for this purpose, such a world would be the worst of all possible worlds. Therefore, an environment in which the development of the personal qualities of the free human being is aimed at must be characterized by general and reliable laws and must include the possibility of danger, hardship, pain and sorrow. This suggests that the world is not well organized to minimize pain and maximize pleasure, but for an entirely different purpose, 'soul-making' (Hick, 1983, p. 48). Therefore, the structure of this world, which contains goodness and pleasure as well as pain and sorrow, is the most appropriate structure for this purpose Hick 1977, p. 309).

In addition, suffering and the spiritual pain and suffering caused by it are also suitable for the purpose of soul-building. This is because physical pain can sometimes have a biological protective function as a warning about an emerging illness or disease. Animals and humans often learn methods of self-protection with the help of physical pain. Pain is therefore a biological imperative as a teacher of self-protection (Hick, 1977, pp. 299-301).

Hick sees evil as an opportunity for man to know himself, overcome his inner conflicts and develop his spiritual values. This is a process that enables man to embark on a spiritual journey in the world that Hick describes as a 'natural habitat'. According to Hick, humans are created as morally free and self-improving beings; for this developmental process to occur, the world must be a place that is 'natural enough' that humans do not directly sense God's presence or intervention. According to this view, God created an environment in which people can make choices. God's presence in this environment is not clearly visible or felt through constant miraculous intervention. The reason for this is to enable people to make decisions with free will and take responsibility. Hick describes this situation as people living in 'epistemic distance'; that is, living at a distance from which they do not fully sense God's presence, enabling them to make moral choices independently (Hick, 1983, pp. 75-80).

The natural and social conditions in which human beings live are designed in such a way as to contribute to the development and perfection of their souls, to help them go through painful and difficult stages. In fact, human beings need certain things in order to survive. One of these basic needs is to eat. Man needs to cultivate the land in order to meet his food needs. It is reasonable and understandable that they should make an effort to meet their most basic needs. But there have been millions of disasters throughout history. According to Hick, what is essential in all these experiences is that the spirit that struggles against adversity becomes more and more perfect *(Hick, 1993, p. 58)*.

Emotional causes such as lack of love and regret, as well as hunger, illness, poverty, etc., can also affect the suffering of a person. There is a general belief that wealth and prosperity can save people from many troubles. Although there are many examples that confirm this view, the opposite is also true. For example, substance abuse, which is thought to be caused by a lack of love, and suicide, which is giving up one of the most basic human desires, the will to live, are more common in rich countries (Hick, 1977, p. 320).

In short, having material means is not enough to avoid suffering. If it were not for evil, suffering and calamity, one would not know what the opposite of goodness, that which gives pleasure and satisfaction, is in the present sense. Without danger and hardship, courage and bravery would not be understood. From this, it can be concluded that this world is the best of all possible worlds for Hick, who concludes that evil must exist for good and right things to exist and their value to be known *(Hick, 1983, p. 48)*.

As can be understood, Hick thinks that every human suffering can have one or more causes. According to him, evil sometimes results from the misuse of human free will, while other times it may occur against human will, such as natural disasters or bacteria. However, it is very difficult to determine the boundaries of which evil is caused by human free will and which evil is caused by human free will. What is certain is that living with evil is inevitable and complex in terms of human destiny. Therefore, the only plausible explanation for the bad things that happen to people and from which they cannot escape is the idea that they happen for a 'divine purpose' (Hick, 1983, p. 46).

It is also believed that all kinds of evil, pain, distress and sorrow, and everything created, including human beings themselves, will come to an end. Holy books inform people about the existence of heaven as a place where evil does not exist. In this sense, evils have also led people to adopt the idea of heaven instead of despairing. At this point, Hick questions why people cling more tightly to the idea of heaven in the face of the evils they experience. He says that people may think this way because of the hope that the pains, sorrows, troubles, troubles, etc. they have experienced throughout their lives will be rewarded in heaven. Because the

thought of paradise may lead people to conclude that their troubles and sufferings have a purpose and meaning. Thinking otherwise may negatively affect one's enthusiasm for life. However, according to the philosopher, it is very difficult to give a complete and definitive answer to such questions even if such answers are given (*Hick, 1977, p. 350*). Suffice it to say that man was not created in divine perfection, but as a being with his own characteristics, flaws and limitations. According to Hick, human behavior and destiny cannot develop independently of his nature and the choices available to him. The fact that every human being, no matter how he or she lives, will eventually attain salvation, i.e. have the saving will of God, does not render the choices that human beings freely make meaningless. Humans are both conscious and dependent on God. At first glance, these two seem contradictory, but in fact there is no contradiction between them. That is, the fact that man is conscious shows that he has a unique nature, while his dependence on God shows that he was created by a power superior to him. If man did not have a nature that encompasses certain and special situations, it would be meaningless to hold him responsible in a divine order. From this point of view, it is assumed that the created human being is free within the limits of the world. The point about free will is not that man is created, but that he is created free *(Hick, 1994, p. 255).*

For a theist, the world was created by God in a divine order. So everything that happens is seen from this perspective. Even evil, which is seen as extreme and senseless, can actually have a good side when seen from different perspectives. It may take a calm approach to see things from different perspectives. This is why there is often a need to distance oneself from the event. However, when one experiences evil in the heat of the moment, it is not easy to distance oneself from the event. Bad situations can also create a positive bond between people through cooperation (Hick, 1993, p. 59).

The Role of Moral and Spiritual Development in Human Experience and the Current Relevance of Hick's Theodicy

Spiritual development is a concept that refers to the maturation process of individuals' inner and spiritual aspects. This process is shaped by the person's self-awareness, deepening of moral values, developing virtues and progressing in search of meaning in life (Armstrong, 2006, pp. 123-125). With this development process, individuals gain inner resilience against life's difficulties and attain the capacity to look at humanity, the universe and life from a broader perspective (Frankl, 2006, pp. 58-60). Spiritual development aims to help a person transcend himself, reach a higher level of consciousness, and internalize qualities such as empathy, tolerance, and love (Wilber, 2001, p. 75). Therefore, spiritual development is considered not only a process that transforms the individual's inner world, but also a maturation process that contributes to social well-being (Jung, 1933, pp. 240-243).

The process of spiritual development involves deepening one's inner self, developing virtues, and finding a greater sense of purpose in one's life. According to Robert Mulholland, spiritual development is a process for individuals to be shaped in the image of God and envisions that a person contributes to society by developing not only for himself but also for others (Mulholland, 2016, pp. 22-24). Mulholland defines this process as 'being open to God's grace' and considers spiritual development as a process in which the individual is shaped in the hands of God. According to him, in modern society, individuals' self-sufficiency and search for quick satisfaction hinder the process of spiritual development. Therefore, the individual must move forward on the path of unity with God by shedding his ego (Mulholland, 2016, pp. 47-50). Continuing a similar view, Thomas Merton states that spiritual development has the potential to transform not only the individual's inner journey but also their relationships with other people. According to Merton, the process of inner development helps individuals live a life in harmony with both themselves and society (Merton, 2007, pp. 45-48). While these

approaches consider spiritual development as an individual's journey of inner peace and search for meaning, they also draw attention to how this process affects the broader social context. In accordance with these definitions, Hick also evaluates spiritual development through the relationship that individuals establish with God.

In this context, spiritual development is the process of understanding oneself, finding inner peace, and establishing a deep connection with spiritual values. Hick argues that spiritual development helps people understand themselves and their environment better. According to him, this process prepares the ground for individuals to become at peace with themselves and to be more empathetic towards others. In his work *Philosophy of Religion,* he discusses the importance of spiritual development in the context of the necessity of evil and pain in order to ensure the moral and spiritual maturation of man. According to Hick, the spiritual development of man is one of the ultimate purposes that God aimed for when creating humans. According to this understanding, it can be said that God preferred to create humans as beings capable of moral development rather than simply creating them as happy beings. Therefore, spiritual development is considered a central element of God's purpose in creation (Hick, 1983, pp. 63-66).

Hick defines the concept of spiritual development as a way for people to develop character and virtue beyond simply being able to make morally correct choices. This process brings people closer to 'God-like' qualities, and this development process also requires people to make meaningful choices using their free will (Hick, 1983, pp. 67-70). According to Hick, a world where God is not intervening and people can make their own moral decisions independently provides the challenges and tests necessary for spiritual development. Spiritual development occurs within a framework that Hick describes as 'epistemic distance'. That is, God remains distant from people so that He is not directly felt by them, so that people can go through the process of moral development on their own (Hick, 1983, pp. 73-75). This distance directs people to find the truth and cope with difficulties through their own choices, rather than to follow a moral guidance based on God. This perspective also makes the existence of evil meaningful as a process that encourages people to mature. According to Hick, the process of spiritual development is important not only for the individual to transcend himself and reach a higher spiritual maturity, but also for the society to adopt moral values in general and to raise virtuous individuals. Therefore, spiritual development has an important place at the individual and social levels. The difficulties that people experience and the evils they encounter are seen as a necessary and instructive part of this development process (Hick, 1983, pp. 78-80).

As can be seen, in Hick's theodicy, spiritual development provides an important context for illuminating the meaning of difficulties and evils in human experience. Evil and suffering are viewed as opportunities provided by God for the purpose of developing individuals spiritually. (Plantinga, 1977, pp. 103-105). Hick states that spiritual development is not only an individual experience, but also a social responsibility. Individuals' spiritual development processes are shaped by their interactions with other people. Hick emphasizes the role of human experiences in the process of moral and spiritual development. This process paves the way for individuals to become at peace with themselves and to be more empathetic towards others. Evil and suffering allow individuals to question their moral values, improve themselves, and reach a deeper spiritual understanding (Kierkegaard, 1987, pp. 150-152). In this context, facing adversity provides individuals with the opportunity to develop strength of character and help others. For example, going through a difficult time can make a person more sensitive to the suffering of others, thus strengthening their spiritual maturation.

Moral and spiritual development is shaped not only by individuals' inner experiences but also by their social relationships. Society contributes to the moral and spiritual maturation of individuals (Tillich, 1952, pp. 35-40). Social values, especially justice, equality and solidarity, enrich the development processes of individuals.

The struggle for social justice is an important element that encourages the spiritual development of individuals. In this context, Hick's theodicy comprehensively addresses the development of humans at both individual and social levels.

Hick's spiritual development theodicy has a certain originality in modern thought. While traditional theodicies generally try to resolve the contradiction between the nature of God and his evil existence, Hick addresses this contradiction through the spiritual journey of man. This approach allows religious beliefs to be reconciled with a broader understanding by emphasizing the individual's experiences and free will (Hick, 1989, pp. 215-220). This approach encourages reflection, particularly on moral and spiritual development, and allows individuals to examine their personal experiences in depth. Hick's view provides a meaningful philosophy of life for many people. The idea that evil can lead people to a better moral standard has gained acceptance in many faith communities (Adams, 1999, pp. 110-115)

Hick's theodicy can be addressed in various dimensions in terms of contemporary societies. This approach paves the way for in-depth discussions at both philosophical and societal levels. Below, some evaluations are presented about the effects and reflections of this theodicy on contemporary societies.

Individual and Collective Spiritual Development

Another important dimension of Hick's theodicy is that it reveals the relationship between individual spiritual development and development at the societal level. The difficulties experienced by individuals can also indicate social problems. For example, problems such as social inequality, discrimination or poverty can affect the spiritual development of individuals. In this context, the spiritual maturation of individuals can contribute to the solution of social problems (Palmer, 1993, pp. 45-50).

Modern psychology provides important findings on how individuals' spiritual development processes are shaped by difficulties. Hick's theodicy supports the understanding of spiritual development in this context and argues that individuals can develop their ability to cope with psychological difficulties. However, the effects of these processes on social structures and systems are also evaluated in terms of social change and transformation, going beyond individual spiritual development in modern societies. Discussions continue on how individuals adapt to these changes and what values they adopt. Hick's thesis can help individuals understand how their empathy, solidarity and sense of justice evolve in this process (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, pp. 67-70).

Hick's theodicy also focuses on the ways individuals cope with difficulties. In modern societies, stress, anxiety and other psychological problems have become common. It is important for individuals to develop different strategies to cope with these difficulties in their spiritual development processes. Methods such as meditation, mindfulness practices and psychological support can support the spiritual development of individuals (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, pp. 72-75).

Reconstruction of Moral Values

Today's societies are increasingly questioning moral values. Hick's spiritual development theodicy can provide a framework for the development of moral values. Difficulties can lead individuals to attach more importance to moral values. In this context, ethical and moral education programs can be designed to support the spiritual development of individuals (Nussbaum, 1997, pp. 126-130).

Hick's theodicy provides an important perspective on how moral values develop through adversity. In the modern world, increased awareness of social justice, equality, and human rights has led individuals and communities to place greater emphasis on these values (Young, 1990, pp. 150-155). In this context, Hick's thesis shows that it remains valid today, arguing that difficulties encourage the formation of these values in individuals.

The development of technology is another important factor affecting the spiritual experiences and development of individuals. In modern society, individuals can influence the spiritual development process by sharing their own experiences and learning from the experiences of others through the internet and social media. Hick's theodicy can help individuals understand the ways to overcome difficulties and support mechanisms by addressing the effects of these new dynamics on spiritual development (Carr, 2010, p.170).

Postmodernism and Cultural Change

Hick's theodicy offers the opportunity to question the meaning of evil. Today, the search for justice and social criticism are important elements that affect the spiritual development of individuals. Individuals' struggle for social justice can positively affect both individual and collective spiritual development. This can also contribute to the transformation of social structures (Rawls, 1971, pp. 235-240).

In the modern age, phenomena such as natural disasters, wars, and social injustices deeply affect people's lives, causing them to question the meaning of this pain. In this context, Hick's thesis provides a framework that can help individuals better understand the processes of personal and spiritual development through pain and hardship. However, it is important how the tragedies experienced by innocents in particular will be evaluated by critics who question this theory (Plantinga, 1977, pp. 50-55).

Postmodern thought questions universal truths and moral norms, while highlighting the different spiritual experiences of individuals. Hick's theodicy of spiritual development emphasizes that each individual and culture must find their own unique path of development. This increases the importance of accepting the existence of different belief systems and philosophies of life within the diversity of modern societies. Related discussions focus on how individuals define their spiritual development based on their own life experiences (Rorty, 1979, pp. 15-20).

Difficulties can reshape the cultural norms and values of societies. In the process of coping with difficulties, societies can develop new values and understandings. This accelerates social change and cultural evolution (Giddens, 1991, pp. 102-110). Hick's theodicy argues that this change contributes to the spiritual and moral development of individuals.

Criticisms on the Theodicy of Moral and Spiritual Development

One of the cornerstones of Hick's theodicy is the idea that evil is a necessary tool for the development of the human soul. Although this idea has an important place in philosophical and theological discussions, it has been questioned by critics from various perspectives. Below, we will try to examine the main criticisms of Hick's theodicy and the reflections of these criticisms in the philosophical context.

Emotional and Psychological Effects of Evil

Hick argues that evil should be seen as a means to promote spiritual growth, but some critics argue that this approach falls short in explaining suffering and trauma, especially on a large scale (Rowe, 1998, pp. 125-128).

The claim that evil exists to promote spiritual growth ignores the fact that the traumas experienced by many people lead not only to personal growth but also to profound spiritual destruction. For example, situations such as wars, natural disasters, and systematic oppression can create existential crises rather than spiritual growth. Traumatic events, far from contributing to the development of individuals, can have a serious negative impact on the psyche of humanity. This calls into question Hick's theodicy's view that the difficult conditions experienced by individuals are essential to moral and spiritual maturation (Haught, 2000, pp. 150-155; Wykstra, 2005, pp. 101-107). This inconsistency in Hick's theodicy suggests that only certain forms of evil contribute to spiritual growth, while other forms can cause serious harm. Furthermore, some people may become spiritually withdrawn or insensitive to social problems after experiencing evil (Adams, 1999, pp. 70-75).

The idea that spiritual maturity can only be achieved through suffering and hardship ignores the different life experiences of each individual. Moral development can be the product of positive experiences, not just negative ones (Stump, 2010, pp. 115-118). Although Hick's theodicy attempts to justify evil in terms of spiritual development, it can also have practical consequences. Viewing evil as a necessity can also encourage individuals and societies to accept and normalize these bad situations. It can cause people to be less empathetic toward pain and loss. Hick's theodicy may convince people that suffering and hardship are inevitable and should be seen as a form of education. However, this cannot be considered a moral solution, because the desensitization of individuals to suffering can weaken the moral fabric of society. Each individual's experiences affect their spiritual development in different ways, and this argues against the view that 'every evil is an opportunity for moral growth' put forward by Hick's theodicy. In real life, for some individuals, past suffering can limit or hinder their future potential (Plantinga, 1977, pp. 103-105).

In Hick's theodicy, moral development is defined as the result of individuals' lived experiences, while the potential for future moral development is also important. However, some critics argue that the suffering individuals have experienced in the past may not be decisive for their future development (Mackie, 1955, pp. 93-96).

As a result, while Hick's theodicy emphasizes the importance of moral development, criticisms are raised on the concrete results of this development. The impact of evil, social consequences, the objectivity of moral development and the future potential of individuals are the main elements that reveal the weak points of this theodicy. This situation shows that Hick's theodicy of moral development needs further research and questioning both philosophically and practically.

The Relationship Between Free Will and Evil
Central to Hick's theodicy is the concept of free will, but this may fall short of justifying the existence of moral evils. Critics point out that if God gave humans free will, then this leads to confusion about whether God can be held responsible for evils committed with that free will (van Inwagen, 1995, pp. 189-190). The claim that God's creation of humans with free will is independent of the consequences of their choices has been questioned by many philosophers and theologians. While free will brings moral responsibility for many, the fact that God, in His wisdom and power, does not intervene in the consequences of these choices raises new questions about the nature of God (McCormick, 1995, pp. 355-357).

Social Impacts

In Hick's theodicy, the reflections of individuals' spiritual development on a social level should also be questioned. Instead of enabling individuals in societies to be more understanding and empathic towards each other, the existence of evil and pain can in some cases lead to emotional cooling and indifference. In particular, individuals who constantly encounter bad experiences can become insensitive to pain over time. This situation can lead to the weakening of social relations and the emergence of a social structure that is insensitive to social problems (Haught, 2000, pp. 150-155). While Hick's theodicy addresses evil from the perspective of spiritual development, it does not provide an in-depth analysis of the causes of evil. Evil cannot be considered as a phenomenon that only serves the spiritual maturation of individuals. Social injustices, power dynamics, and the complexity of human nature require evil to be understood within a broader framework. This situation reveals the criticism that Hick's approach may be inadequate when considered independently of social and political contexts (Young, 1990, pp. 150-155).

The Relativity of Evil and Moral Development

Hick's approach is based on the assumption that evil has a specific meaning, but the concept of evil varies across cultural and social contexts. Different societies and individuals define and experience evil in different ways. In this context, Hick's proposal for a universal theodicy of spiritual development falls short of reflecting the diversity of the real World (Taylor, 1985, pp. 35-40).

The acceptance of moral development as an objective reality in Hick's theodicy has been questioned by critics. Moral development is based on the personal experiences and choices of individuals; therefore, each individual's spiritual journey is unique and difficult to measure by a general standard (van Inwagen, 1995, pp. 191-192). This raises important questions about the universality of moral development, as moral values and norms vary across cultural contexts. Moral development is shaped by the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which individuals are situated, an argument that questions the universal view of development offered by Hick's theodicy (Ratzinger, 2008, pp. 213-216).

One of the cornerstones of Hick's theodicy is the acceptance of adversity as a universal educational tool, but the fact that not all people face the same kinds of adversity calls this approach into question (Nussbaum, 2001, pp. 85-90). Some individuals are systematically exposed to persistent evil, while others are immune to such experiences. This suggests that the challenges necessary for spiritual development are not equally present for everyone, and undermines the universality of Hick's thesis.

God's Will, Soteriology, and Evil

Another important theological reflection of Hick's theodicy is his understanding of salvation. How does the existence of evil affect God's plan of salvation? Hick argues that the process of moral development of people is a necessity for their salvation. However, this perspective contradicts traditional soteriological understandings. Some theologians argue that salvation is based solely on God's grace and that human effort has no place in this process (McGrath, 2011, pp. 298-300). Hick's emphasis on moral development may seem to many theologians to mean that salvation is dependent solely on moral virtue, which may be seen as ignoring God's grace. Hick's theodicy also questions how God's plan relates to evil. Accepting that evil is part of God's plan can cause problems in many faith communities (Haught, 2000, pp. 200-205). If evil is seen as a reflection of God's will, this raises serious questions about God's justice. God's ignoring of evil in the world or using it as a tool in his plan would contradict God's mercy and justice. Theologians may have to rethink God's relationship with humans in this context (Adams, 1999, pp. 127-130).

Hick's theodicy is based on the idea that God must give humans free will for moral development. However, this perspective leads to debates about the nature and will of God. Hick argues that God requires humans to accept the existence of evil in order to promote spiritual development, but this calls into question God's mercy and justice. Theologians have asked why God, as a good and powerful being, allows so much suffering to occur to humans. Portraying God as a being who pushes humans to make bad choices raises questions about his nature (McGrath, 2011, pp. 305-310).

Hick's arguments about God's need to encourage human spiritual development have been criticized by many theologians. For example, Hick's theodicy's claim that God must allow evil by granting free will has been considered by some to question God's mercy (Plantinga, 1977, pp. 90-95). If God's giving people freedom means allowing them to make bad choices, then this contradicts the belief that God is a good and just being (Adams, 1999, pp. 127-130).

Another point of criticism is the suffering that is experienced unjustly. The suffering of children or innocent individuals is a situation that questions the credibility of Hick's theodicy. The fact that evil is seen as a means of education does not change the essence of the situations that cause individuals to suffer unjustly. This leads to the questioning of the theodicy of spiritual development from a moral perspective (Lewis, C. S. 1940, pp. 104-107).

At the center of Hick's theodicy are discussions of the existence of evil and its relationship to the nature of God. In the modern era, tragic events in human history, natural disasters, and man-made catastrophes have become important factors that question the validity of Hick's theodicy. Critics have questioned the significance of the suffering of children and innocents, in particular, in terms of spiritual development (Rowe, 1998, pp. 125-130).

The Impact of Postmodernism and the Change of Moral Values
Postmodern thought has led to the questioning of absolute truths and universal values. In this context, Hick's theodicy has been criticized for claiming that spiritual development is based on a universal understanding. The postmodern perspective emphasizes the limitations of Hick's theodicy by suggesting that individuals and cultures may have different paths of spiritual development (Lyotard, 1984), pp. 23-27).

In the modern world, the constant change of moral values has led to a re-evaluation of Hick's theodicy. It is questioned what role difficulties and pain play in the development of moral values. In particular, the ethical dilemmas and social pressures experienced by individuals in modern societies are another dimension of discussion that questions the applicability of the theodicy of spiritual development (MacIntyre, 1981, pp. 134-140).

The impact of technology and scientific advances on our lives is also an important factor affecting the applicability of Hick's spiritual development theodicy. While technological developments can change the difficulties and pains in human life, they also create different effects on spiritual development. In this context, the question of how people shape their spiritual experiences through technology deepens the discussions of Hick's theodicy in the modern world (Carr, 2010, pp. 170-175).

Conclusion

John Hick's theodicy of moral and spiritual development is based on the idea that God invites humans to moral and spiritual development through the freedom He has given them. According to Hick, evil and pain are indispensable tools for this development. When confronting evil in the universe, humans use their will, mature

spiritually, and develop themselves in accordance with the divine plan. Since life is a continuous birth, that is, a place of development of the soul, in this process of development, people become centered in truth. This is the function of the existence of evil and suffering. Every experience is a means by which man approaches God and becomes more like Him. Because a conscious man matures and reaches perfection only when he focuses on protecting himself by avoiding sins, even if only consciously. Thus, man, who is epistemologically estranged from God, will eventually meet his Creator in a perfect way. This perspective, especially by departing from traditional theological approaches, suggests that evil can be explained without contradicting the absolute goodness of God. Hick's thought has also formed a strong foundation in terms of moral maturation, individual suffering and social trauma in today's academic studies and society.

However, this theodicy is not free from modern criticism. In particular, assuming that human suffering, wars, natural disasters or injustice always provide an educational process is far from convincing for individuals who have experienced pain. Hick's theodicy, with its view that pain is inevitable and instructive, does not include the lasting effects that deeply traumatic experiences have on the individual. Thus, Hick's approach does not distinguish between 'reasonable pain' that is conducive to moral development and devastating traumas, which leaves theodicy limited in terms of contemporary social sensitivities.

These criticisms do not completely overshadow the philosophical merits of Hick's theodicy. On the contrary, his approach provides an important framework for rethinking deep theological issues such as pain and evil, for making sense of the process of moral development, and for discussing the problem of free will in philosophy of religion. Today, Hick's ideas form the basis of new studies examining the ways individuals cope with pain and evil in their spiritual development processes. His theodicy creates a wide area of discussion, especially in academic studies that consider issues such as spirituality and personal development in post-modern societies.

In conclusion, although Hick's theodicy of moral and spiritual development is partially inadequate in explaining the complex religious, moral and social issues of our day, it leaves a very valuable intellectual legacy for research in the philosophy of religion and ethics. This theodicy paves the way for new questions and discussions in understanding the relationship of individuals and societies with pain and the processes of making sense of this pain. Future research can address the shortcomings in Hick's model and present a more powerful interpretation of the spiritual development theodicy in a moral and spiritual sense in contemporary society.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Amaç

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, John Hick'in ahlaki ve ruhsal gelişim teodisesini derinlemesine incelemek, onun kötülük problemi karşısındaki çözüm önerisini felsefi, tarihsel ve toplumsal açılardan değerlendirmektir. Hick, insanın acı ve kötülükle yüzleşmesini manevi gelişimin bir parçası olarak görür ve bunu ahlaki olgunlaşma süreciyle ilişkilendirir. Bu bağlamda, çalışma, Hick'in teodisesinin teistik inanç sistemlerindeki kötülük ve acı problemini nasıl ele aldığını, bu çözümün modern etik ve ahlaki değerlerle ne ölçüde uyumlu olduğunu analiz etmeyi hedeflemektedir.

Araştırma, ayrıca Hick'in teodisesinin günümüz toplumlarındaki yansımalarını ve geçerliliğini sorgulamaktadır. Özellikle bireylerin travmatik deneyimlerinin ahlaki veya manevi gelişime katkı sağlayıp sağlamadığı ve toplumsal acıların anlamlandırılması bu çalışmanın önemli odak noktalarıdır. Böylece, Hick'in teodisesi, hem bireysel manevi gelişim hem de modern toplumların ahlaki dinamikleri açısından yeniden ele alınmaktadır.

Yöntem

Bu araştırma, nitel analiz yöntemi kullanarak din felsefesi ve ahlak alanındaki yaklaşımını anlamayı ve günümüz sorunları bağlamında bu teodisenin geçerliliğini sorgulamayı hedeflemektedir.

Çalışma, literatür taraması yaparak dini tecrübe ve teodise üzerine yazılmış akademik kaynakları incelemiştir. Hick'in teodisesinin kavramsal temellerini açıklamak için onun ana eserleri ve bu konudaki felsefi yaklaşımlar analiz edilmiştir. Ayrıca, din felsefesi ve dini tecrübe üzerine yazılmış eserlere de başvurulmuştur. Bu eserlerin analizi, Hick'in düşüncelerini daha geniş bir tarihsel ve felsefi çerçevede değerlendirme imkânı sunmuştur.

Araştırmanın bir diğer yöntemi, eleştirel analiz yaklaşımı olmuştur. Hick'in ahlaki gelişim teodisesinin güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini ortaya koyabilmek için Hick'e yönelik eleştiriler ele alınmıştır. Bu eleştiriler, özellikle kötülüğün eğitici doğası ve travmatik deneyimlerin bireysel üzerindeki etkilerini dikkate alan güncel çalışmalardan elde edilmiştir. Bu sayede, Hick'in teodisesinin modern etik ve ahlaki değerler açısından tatmin edici olup olmadığı araştırılmıştır.

Bu yöntem doğrultusunda, çalışmada sadece felsefi kaynakların analizi değil, Hick'in görüşlerinin günümüz toplumsal ve bireysel gelişim süreçlerine etkisi de tartışılmıştır. Acı ve kötülük problemi, çağdaş anlam arayışı ve ahlaki sorumluluk çerçevesinde yeniden değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışma, Hick'in teodisesinin tarihsel kökenlerini ve modern felsefi tartışmalardaki yerini ele alarak kapsamlı bir çözümleme sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bulgular

Yapılan incelemeler, John Hick'in ahlaki ve ruhsal gelişim teodisesinin, insanın manevi gelişimini açıklamak için geniş bir çerçeve sunduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Hick, kötülüğü insanın ahlaki olgunlaşmasını sağlayan bir araç olarak ele almakta ve acıyı ruhsal gelişim için gerekli bir unsur olarak kabul etmektedir. Bu bağlamda şu bulgulara ulaşılmıştır:

İlk bulgu, Hick'in teodisesinin klasik teistik kötülük problemlerine özgün bir çözüm sunduğudur. Özellikle kötülüğün Tanrı'nın iyiliğiyle nasıl bağdaşabileceği sorusuna yeni bir bakış açısı getirmektedir. Hick, Tanrı'nın insanlara verdiği özgür irade ve ahlaki gelişim amacı doğrultusunda acının zorunlu olduğunu savunur. Kötülüğün yalnızca olumsuz bir unsur olmadığı, aksine insanın manevi olgunlaşmasına katkı sağladığı görüşü, acının eğitimdeki rolünü yeniden değerlendirmemize olanak tanır.

İkinci bulgu, Hick'in teodisesinin çağdaş eleştiriler ışığında bazı sınırlılıklar taşıdığıdır. Özellikle büyük felaketler, doğal afetler ve adaletsizlik gibi olaylar, acının eğitici rolünü sorgulamaktadır. Hick, belirli acı türlerinin ahlaki gelişime katkı sağladığını savunsa da, yıkıcı ve travmatik deneyimlerin bireysel ruhsal gelişime katkı sunup sunmadığı konusunda yeterli çözüm önerisi sunamamaktadır. Bu durum, modern toplumların ahlaki hassasiyetleri açısından Hick'in teodisesine yönelik önemli eleştirileri doğurmuştur.

Üçüncü bulgu, Hick'in teodisesinin günümüzde bireysel ve toplumsal manevi gelişim süreçlerine önemli katkılar sunduğudur. Kötülükle ilgili soruları teistik bir bağlamda yanıtlayan Hick, bireylerin acı ve zorluklarla başa çıkmalarına yardımcı olabilecek dini bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Ancak, tüm acı türlerinin gelişim sağladığını iddia etmek teodisenin sınırlı bir yorum çerçevesine sıkışmasına yol açmaktadır.

Genel olarak bu bulgular, Hick'in teodisesinin güçlü yönleri kadar zayıf yönlerinin de olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu durum, teodisenin bireysel manevi gelişim ve toplumsal ahlaki değerler açısından yeniden düşünülmesi gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Sınırlılıklar

Nitel analiz yöntemini temel alan araştırmamızda, psikolojik ve sosyolojik boyutların bilimsel verilerle incelenmesi mümkün olmamıştır. Acı ve kötülük karşısındaki tepkilerin manevi gelişim üzerindeki etkilerini açıklamak için daha fazla ampirik çalışmaya ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır.

Çalışmadaki bir diğer sınırlılık, güncel din felsefesi ve ahlak literatürüne tam olarak ulaşılmamıştır ve yalnızca önemli eleştiriler ele alınmıştır. Bu da çalışmanın kapsamını daraltmaktadır.

Toplumsal ve etik referanslar modern toplumların değerlerine dayanmakta olup, farklı kültürel bağlamlarda yapılan yorumlamaların yeterince ele alınmaması da araştırmamızdaki eksikliklerdendir. Bu durum, çalışmanın evrensel geçerliliğini sınırlamaktadır.

Son olarak, psikolojik derinlik eksikliği de bir sınırlılıktır. Hick'in teodisesi bireysel deneyimler üzerinden incelenmiş olsa da, travma psikolojisi ve insan doğasının kırılganlığı gibi konuların etkileri daha ayrıntılı şekilde ele alınmalıdır.

Öneriler

Bu çalışmada gelecekteki araştırmalara yönelik bazı önerilerde bulunulabilir. Öncelikle, araştırma konusunun bireysel ve toplumsal etkilerinin anlaşılması için psikoloji, sosyoloji ve etik gibi alanlarda daha fazla disiplinler arası araştırma yapılması gerekmektedir. Bu sayede, teodisenin travma, uzun süreli acı, adaletsizlik hissi ve toplumsal iyilik ve dayanışma üzerindeki etkileri daha kapsamlı incelenebilir ve psikolojik temelleri güçlendirilebilir.

Modern eleştiriler ışığında, farklı kültürel ve dini bağlamlarda kötülük probleminin değerlendirilmesine yönelik karşılaştırmalı çalışmaların yapılması da alana katkı sağlayacaktır. Hick'in teodisesinin kültürler arası geçerliliği ve uygulanabilirliği üzerine yapılan çalışmalar, teodisenin evrensel geçerliliğini artırabilir.

Ayrıca, acı ve kötülüğün eğitici rolüne dair güncel etik değerler ışığında yeni tartışmalar başlatılmalıdır. Özellikle insan hakları ve bireysel refah gibi konuların ön plana çıktığı çağdaş toplumlarda, Hick'in teodisesinin acıyı anlamlandırma kapasitesinin sınırları yeniden ele alınmalıdır. Bu bağlamda, aşırı veya yıkıcı acıların ahlaki gelişime olan etkileri üzerine yeni teoriler geliştirilebilir.

Bu öneriler, Hick'in teodisesinin ahlaki ve toplumsal sorunlara yanıt verebilme potansiyelini güçlendirecektir.

Özgün Değer

Bu çalışma, John Hick'in ahlaki ve ruhsal gelişim teodisesinin felsefi ve teolojik temellerini günümüz perspektifinden değerlendirerek önemli bir katkı sağlamaktadır. Çalışma, Hick'in teodisesine yönelik günümüzdeki eleştirileri, kültürel ve toplumsal geçerliliğini tartışarak evrensel uygulanabilirliğini sınar. Aynı zamanda, bireysel ve toplumsal düzeydeki etkilerini farklı bir bakış açısıyla ele alarak Hick'in görüşlerinin günümüz ahlaki ve manevi sorunlarıyla nasıl ilişkilendirilebileceğine dair yenilikçi bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, çalışma teorik ve pratik düzeyde değerli bir katkı sağlamaktadır.

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