

Idea of evil in christianity and buddhism

Religion



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Introduction

Evil can be seen through an example of the World War II. " Nazi persecution, arrests, and deportations were directed against all members of Jewish families, as well as many Gypsy families, without concern for age. They faced starvation, illness, brutal labor, and other indignities until they were consigned to the gas chambers". The death caused is unbearable, with experiments, concentration camps and torture chambers. Doctor Josef Mengele, whom is so obsessed in doing experiment and is known to be the angel of death that created a tangible hell in Auschwitz. His actions have caused a lot of men, women and children to suffer his evil desire. Victims were put into pressure chambers, tested with drugs, castrated, frozen to death. Children were exposed to experimental surgeries performed without anesthesia, transfusions of blood from one to another, isolation endurance, reaction to various stimuli. The doctors made injections with lethal germs, sex change operations, removal of organs and limbs." Another evil case, is Edmund Kemper. Whom is an American serial killer and necrophilia who carried out a series of brutal murders in California in the 1970s. He is known as " The Co-ed Killer". " He murdered his grandparents when he was 15 years old then later killed and dismembered six female hitchhikers in the Santa Cruz area. He then murdered his mother and one of his friends before turning himself in to the police days later. He was found guilty in November 1973 of eight counts of murder. He asked for the death penalty, but instead received life imprisonment without the possibility of parole".

Evil is defined to be " morally reprehensible, arising from actual or imputed bad character or conduct". Generally, evil connotes with negativity, however

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it is defined to be an unmoral doing or action. The word "evil" itself is absolute, it is a senseless action and is beyond reason. The case of Doctor Josef Mengele and Edmund Kemper is what you call evil. Their actions of murdering, torturing, experimenting innocent lives is an act that cannot be tolerated, for it causes suffering and pain to the victims. Anything we find wicked, ungodly, unrighteous, relates to crime, murder, killing and results in negative impacts to people are contorted to evil. Seen from tragedy after tragedy of mass murder caused by concentration camps to ongoing evil like child molesting, human trafficking, serial rapist and murder. The most frequent question thought by a person if they are given the chance to ask is "Why is there pain and suffering in the world?". This question raises the issue of "The Problem of Evil" by the philosophers. A acclaimed novelist named Michael Peterson said that "Something is dreadfully wrong with our world. A crazed cult leader pushes eighty-five people to their deaths in Waco, Texas. Millions starve and die in North Korea as famine ravages the land. Horrible things of all kinds happen in our world - and that has been the story since the dawn of civilization" Michael Peterson. The world offers a universal thought that it would be one thing if the only people who suffers are the people who deserves them, like Hitler, Stalin or some brutal terrorist. But reality offers the opposite, those who are innocent, kind hearted are the ones who is experiencing the ravages of violent crime, terminal diseases and tragic losses. Suffering can be viewed in different perspectives depending on the belief someone carries. An interesting response towards the term suffering could be taken two very different religions: Christianity and Buddhism. The purpose of this essay is to examine further how Christianity and Buddhism view the work of suffering caused by evil.

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Body

Christianity and Buddhism both had impacted the world in many different ways with its own teachings and worldview. Buddhism comes from the original teachings of Hinduism and is distinguished as a Dharmic religion, where its teachings centered based upon the life and the actual teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama: creator of the religion and all of the teachings and the foundation of Buddha. On the other hand, Christianity comes from Judaism which is an Abrahamic religion which centres on the Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ. Christianity believes in a supreme being that they know by the calling of God, which makes them a monotheistic religion. Buddhism and Christianity have a different view of the world and the origin on suffering. Buddhism sees life as a never-ending cycle of reincarnation, whereas Christianity see life as a progression towards final judgement. Thus, Buddhism see evil as a part of life and suffering is not morally bad. It just is. However, with the concept of judgement in a fallen world, Christianity clearly sees evil and suffering in terms of good or bad. Evil in Buddhism teachings is to be related to science, suffering and genetics. However, suffering is a definite outcome of evil. There are four noble truths that are believed to be the foundation of Buddhism. The truths read as “ Life is suffering”, “ Cause of suffering is greed and desire”, “ The cessation of craving” and “ Eightfold Path”. All this is the cause of the never-ending cycle of life. Suffering is the cause of experiences and emotion of human being, as it is simply stated in the book of Samyutta Nikaya entitled “ The Noble Truth of Suffering” (dukkha) is this: “ Birth is suffering; aging is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering; association with the unpleasant is suffering; dissociation from the

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pleasant is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering – in brief, the five aggregates of attachment are suffering”.

Mind and Body

Dukkha is a term used by Buddhism to defined deeper the word suffering. Dukkha is grouped into 3 different kinds of suffering consisting Dukkha dukkha, Sankhara dukkha and Viparinama dukkha. Firstly, Dukkha dukkha arises in response to physical and mental pain we are experiencing that are often defined to unpleasant feelings and sensation. It does not literally define evil as an act of brutality, but more to the feeling we experienced. An example, if a person were to broke his or her wrist they would need to live with the circumstances of unpleasant physical pain and if a person were to lost his or her friend due to murder they would need to live with circumstances of unpleasant mental pain. However, Dukkha dukkha is actually the aversion to the unpleasant feelings and pain. It is originated from the craving or longing for our lives circumstances to be different. It only arose when I responded with aversion to the physical and mental pain, that is, when I longed for them to go away and be replaced with pleasant sensations and feelings. In an analogy Dukkha dukkha is like a painfully inflamed boil that makes contact with salt water (ocean).

The second category is Sankhara dukkha, where it talks mainly on mental formations, or in other words it is the engagement of unpleasant physical or mental experiences that resulted in anxiety thoughts. Returning to the example, if a person were to broke his or her wrist, Sankhara dukkha kicks in when the persons respond is added with mental formations like “ This will not heal correctly” or “ I do not like the situation I am at”. In an analogy <https://assignbuster.com/idea-of-evil-in-christianity-and-buddhism/>

Sankhara dukkha is when the pain turns into pleasure when cool water is applied to the inflamed boil which makes the feeling of pain to fade and pain reasserts. Lastly, Viparinama dukkha, this explains a never-ending satisfaction or craving in response to the things we love. In response to that concept, if a person were to really enjoy his or her food they will be eating too much because they know it won't last forever. That action resulted in leaving craving unsatisfied. In an analogy Viparinama dukkha is the moment where the inflamed boil is not in contact with soothing nor irritating substances.

To live you must simply suffer that is simply the concept of life taught in Buddhism. Enduring physical suffering like sickness, injury, tiredness, old age and eventually death also together with psychological suffering like loneliness, frustrations, fear, embarrassment, disappointment. Although, suffering also comes in the form of craving, wanting and desire it's not just wanting something that is possible or needed, but wanting what is impossible for one to have. Ego is what drives them into doing the act immorality. Having the "want" to have anything you don't have is considered suffering. He described it as a "wish to possess wholly, to cling to," as something that we want "to remain as it is at that moment". "Enjoy what you have now but accept that is already changing. Do no harm to living beings, including yourself. Learn to control your mind by being aware of things as they are, now."

In a life of reincarnation, suffering is seen as something that has already been given. However, they believe in a method of meditation as one way to prevent suffering. "A way to get rid of suffering is to meditate in order to

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ease their minds. This can lead them to Nirvana". However, this idea of meditation does not work with a destined life that is given through their previous doings, this is what people would call karma. Due to karma, a person must be destined to live in a certain life situation or the worst scenario to suffer. Karma is a simple concept used by Buddha to describe the idea of cause and effect. A simple illustration of karma is a boy were to be born into a poor family, in the teachings of Buddhism they do not have to try to improve his living conditions because he is already destined and put into that life. They believe that the boy's life situation right now is the cause of his old doings. This led to spiritual ignorance that are seen through reincarnation processes, once a person is born or reincarnated and live a downgraded life this must be the cause of his or her previous life. If they are not ignorant, they would have lived with good accommodations. Christianity, however expresses somewhat similar worldview towards evil and suffering but the underlying origin and worldview of suffering is completely different.

Christianity's doctrine teach that the origin of suffering is caused by sin. Sin is caused by human miss-using their given free will. John Rittenhouse, a professor of Biblical Studies and Theology said in one of his lecture on the Problem of Evil that " Thus, the source of moral evil is found in the creature's aberrant exercise of freedom." That man's corrupted nature is the cause of much evil. Written in the bible, book of Genesis 3: 1-19, where Adam and Eve's suffering started when they committed the sin that has been warned by God. Adam and Eve were righteous but able to sin and their sin, brought suffering to themselves and to the rest of human beings.

God did not create human to suffer, but for them to prosper. God's love for human being is shown through free will, which is defined as the ultimate goal of love. That love is when you are actually given choices, because love means nothing without a choice. Christianity believes in the Bible, which writes that God cannot lie taken from. Because the God of Christianity is a God of goodness, it makes lying impossible; contradicting with His own nature.

Suffering first entered the world through direct result of sin, as it is written in Romans 2: 9, 3: 9-20, where personal sin brought suffering. Sin is driven from ego that humans have, motivating them to sinned. Every sin causes somebody to suffer. It may be the sinner who suffers, it may be a direct or indirect victim of the sinner, it may be society at large, but somebody is going to suffer for every sin that they commit. God's perfect creation is cursed, Gen 3: 17-18 shows that there was a curse placed on creation because of the fall. God removed man from the protective garden of Eden and forced him to live in the world where animals now ate people. This explains how suffering does not come from God but through sin. Biblical scripture attributes concluded that anything that causes suffering is evil, therefore sin is too.

Christianity believes in three premises that promotes God to be all powerful, all loving and all knowing. Many other religions confront Christianity that if so, God should be able to get rid of suffering. The truth however proposes that if God erases evil, He will have to erase humanity's free will, which in turn erase love, which will be a greater evil. " God can create free creatures but He cannot cause or determine them to do only what is right". So, by not <https://assignbuster.com/idea-of-evil-in-christianity-and-buddhism/>

removing suffering he is doing a greater good, thus pertaining to his original character as an all-good God. Christianity believes that if so, there will be consequences or ripple effect. This ripple effect could happen due the perfectness of the world according to Christianity. God and suffering walks in two separate paths, they do not come together. An all loving God, is believe to want to bring the greatest good from evil, an all-knowing God is believed to have the wisdom to bring that greater good and an all-powerful God has the ability and power to bring that greater good. All in all, these premises promote the idea that the greater good will come through suffering.

The greater good is sometimes defined to be God ' s purpose to discipline His people. " suffering happen to shape our character" (Rittenhouse) and he supported his statement with a bible verse taken from Hebrew 12: 6 " The Lord disciplines everyone He loves. He severely disciplines everyone He accepts as His child". He said that disciplining believers does not happen overnight, and that suffering does not end in a just a day but it could gradually happen for a very long time. God is shown through the doctrine of Christianity that God is a loving God, and that He loves all of His people seen in John 3: 16 and therefore he disciplines everyone. This

happens due to the spiritual ignorance of human being that is susceptible and insensitive. Written in Ephesians 4: 17-19 that spiritual ignorance is a very serious matter. The bible said that many people choose to be willingly ignorant of the word of God, that they ended up committing sin.

A way out of suffering is given through the concept of salvation. God gave His people salvation. He is willing to give free salvation for human to accept

Him as their savior and through that mankind can have a special relationship with God. Christianity believes in personal relationship with God, which then God could give what is called discernment: The ability to differentiate what's good and what's evil. As they have grown in relationship, the implication is that man will be able to overcome the suffering. Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 5: 8-10 that we need to " Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" Christians are asked to keep themselves from temptations and to be aware of the final judgement. Their doctrine believes that through relationship they built with God they would be able to know which temptation comes from the devil. Christianity believes in John 17: 5-15 that after He is risen from the dead Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to provide human guidance. Christianity and Buddhism both consider evil as the effect of spiritual ignorance and shares common diagnosis of evil which is driven from human ego. The common knowledge proclaimed by Buddha is that reality of human existence is the all-pervading reality of suffering that is the cause of never ending reincarnation. Buddhism promotes the idea that suffering is caused by evil, and it is an illusion. What we experienced now is a result of what we did in our lives previously. It tells us strongly that we shall not fall into the habit of thinking of ourselves and others as intrinsically good or bad. They believe that ultimately, there is always an action and the reaction (cause and effect). However, according to Christianity, evil is neither created nor a natural

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element. It is the illness of beings that are no longer in communion with God. Christianity strongly tells us that suffering “evil,” is a condition where Christians must go back and seek God for help and refuge. Suffering and evil is a way for to seek the purest and most genuine heart. In order to fulfil the need of the final judgement, suffering is seen clearly in light of good and bad.

Conclusion

The case of Dr. Josef Mengele and Edmund Kemper are both acknowledged by Christianity and Buddhism to cause suffering. However, both religion view the cause in different light. Buddhist sees it as just a part of life, whereas Christianity points to moral evil as the cause. Therefore, Buddhism will say that Ed Kemper and Dr. Josef Mengele causes suffering but not necessarily evil, whereas a Christianity points at Ed Kemper and Josef Mengele that because they misused their given free will they create suffering.