

The Problem of Evil in Ibn Sina's Philosophy

Masoumeh RajabNezhadian^a, Abdullah HosseiniEskandian^b

^a Bachelor Student of Theology, University of Farhangian, Iran
mrajabnejadian @ gmail.com
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0417-381X>

^b Master Student of Theology, University of Tabriz, Iran
Hoseeinieskandianabdullah @ gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2318-022X>

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Abstract: The problem of evil is one of the cases that has occupied the human mind for a long time and has caused thinkers to think about it. Ibn Sina, who is one of the best Islamic philosophers, explains the problem of evil and considers evil as a non-existent thing that lacks nature and essence, and on the other hand, the problem of evil can not challenge the goodness of the world of creation or divine attributes. Familiarity with Ibn Sina's thoughts and his solutions for solving the problem of evil is something that can acquaint us with his thoughts on this subject. In this article, with a descriptive-analytical method and using reliable references, the nature of evil, types of evil, as well as solutions to the problem of evil in Ibn Sina's book are discussed. Ibn Sina considers evil to be inherently non-existent, which, since it has no essence, cannot deny the existence of God.

Keywords: Ibn Sina, Evil, God, The Good World

1. Introduction

What is evil? Why does it exist? Couldn't the created world survive without evil? Why does man suffer from evil? and questions like these are among the questions that have always occupied the human mind and have caused the attention of thinkers to the problem of evil, which is still being discussed and pondered. Man suffers from difficulties and hardships as well as the loss of loved ones and death and things like this or war and disease always faces human mind the question like what is evil for and why should man endure these hardships and pains? This is what has made the problem of evil a hot topic in philosophy and theology from ancient times to the present day.

On the other hand, some atheists consider the problem of evil as an existential thing in the world of creation, by which they have argued against the existence of God, which has been met with a reaction from God-believing thinkers. Ibn Sina is one of the thinkers who has tried to explain the problem of evil in the world from an Islamic and philosophical point of view and to express solutions to solve it. According to Ibn Sina, evil is a non-existent thing that does not exist and because it does not exist, it cannot violate the divine attributes such as justice, benevolence and absolute knowledge, and on the other hand, it cannot challenge the good system of the universe. So far, no research has been written focusing on Ibn Sina's works to study and solve the problem of evil, and in this article, we try to examine Ibn Sina's thoughts about evil for the first time and we try to answer these questions with appropriate analysis;

What is Ibn Sina's account of evil? From Ibn Sina's point of view, is evil non-existent or existential? What division of evil has Ibn Sina stated? Couldn't the world of creation be without evil? What solutions did Ibn Sina state to solve the problem of evil?

2. Nature and Definition of Evil

Some things are permissible, their existence is free from any evil, corruption, and others, and others are things that may not be perfected, unless they are subjected to evil when the movements and collisions of the movements. Among these types, there are other matters that are either absolute or evil, and when pure God is the source of the existence of good and virtuous, the existence of the first type is obligatory, such as the existence of rational essences and the like. also the existence of the second type is obligatory, because in not creating much good, due to avoiding a little evil, there is a lot of evil (Beheshti, 2010, 360).

Ibn Sina believes that since the existing world was issued by God, who is the cause of causes, then the most perfect world will be possible, and since God is pure good, then the world is full of goodness. He states: "The essence of the Almighty is the cause of the export of things, not something outside of His essence, and His essence is the cause of the system of goodness, and everything that originates from His essence must be in accordance with His essence, and in order for God's essence to be good, it must be good. Therefore, everything must be regular and good because it does not contradict the essence of transcendence" (Ibn Sina, 1982, 159).

Ibn Sina in the definition of evil states: "Evil is inherently non-existence and not every non-existence. Rather, it is the absence of perfection to which something in its kind or nature is appropriate" (Ibn Sina, 1986, 670) And also in Shifah in the definition of evil, he states that evil is a non-existent thing that has no essence but is lack of essence or imperfection for essence (Ibn Sina, 1985, 381) Therefore, from Ibn Sina's point of view, evil is a non-existent thing that does not exist and its absence is the same as the lack of perfection that exists in the essence of every thing.

In addition to defining evil as non-existent, Ibn Sina analyzes his claim regarding some of its instances. In his view, evil is used in two senses: 1. To indicate imperfections such as ignorance, inability and imperfection in creation. 2. Things that do not exist externally but are perceived, such as pain and sorrow. There can be no existential aspect for the evil.

Ibn Sina states: "Based on the fact that the beings of the universe are created according to the knowledge of God, absolute good, naturally the system of existence will be the best possible system but this world has been questioned due to its shortcomings and evils, and doubts have arisen in the minds of human beings about the goodness of this system. On the other hand, among the attributes of God, two attributes, which are justice and wisdom, have been confronted with doubts due to the existence of evil. God's righteousness means that He does not neglect the merits of any creature and gives everyone what s/he deserves, and the meaning of being wise means that in the system of creation, there is a good and righteous system and the best system is possible. Common problems about God's justice and wisdom, the existence of misery, and in other words, the problem of evil, how evil is issued from pure good" (Ibn Sina, 1993, vol 2, 95). According to the proposition that God is absolute good and always wants good for His servants, the impression is created in the mind of man that he should be in absolute joy and happiness, but when he looks at his situation and looks at his true state, finds that in the true sense of the word is not in absolute happiness and blessings, and has a life of ups and downs, and this has led to the questioning of the good system and has caused doubts about it. In the meantime, the two attributes of justice and divine wisdom have become very suspicious in spite of human misfortunes in this world, because some people consider the existence of these misfortunes and misery to be contrary to divine wisdom, and on the other hand, the existence of all these problems has been avoided. Knowing justice, and this has caused doubt and objection about the divine attributes, the source of which is related to the problem of evil in the world, and in fact this evil has required discussion of

divine attributes and has attracted the attention of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Farabi, Ibn Sina and etc.

According to Ibn Sina, God is the pure giver, the giver is the one who expresses and deserves what he deserves, without expecting any change or reward, and a being who is pure good is impossible to create evil or export evil, so evil cannot be attributed to God.

Ibn Sina does not consider man's view of evil to be true, and believes that it is the desirability of an object in the eyes of man that determines whether it is good or evil for man, and if the object is beneficial to man, it is good, and if has a loss, considers it evil. Therefore, the existence of evil depends on the reputation of man, and the desirability of the object determines its goodness or evil, and this idea of man often encounters errors and problems and makes mistakes in cognition.

Ibn Sina states: "All the creations of the almighty Creator are inherently good, and God, who is the absolute good, has created them inherently good, and there is no evil in the creations of the Almighty God, but it is the superficial view of human beings that considers things evil" (Ibn Sina, 1985, 419). Therefore, from Ibn Sina's point of view, the world has abundant goodness from the absolute good, and all the goodness of the world is created by Him, and it is the mind of man who fails to identify correctly and considers things evil.

3. Evil Types

What is evident from Ibn Sina's system of thought is that evils are not on the same level and have different types according to the method of issuance and the source of issuance. Whether God, man or nature, can take different theological and philosophical approaches and provide a basis for discussion.

Ibn Sina states: "Evil has types that are sometimes called evil and it means a defect, and examples of this defect are: ignorance, weakness and ugliness and sometimes it is referred to as evil and it means pain and sorrow, of course, pain and sorrow that to have that knowledge. Whether the cause is incompatible with good or the absence of good causes good and sometimes it is different from good and the one who suffers does not realize it like a cloud that casts a shadow and prevents the sun from shining on the creature in need of light. (Ibn Sina, 1986, 649).

Ibn Sina considers evil to be limited to two parts, relative non-existence and essentially lacking in essence, and has said things about each of these types of evil that are an estimate of the specific ideas of his philosophical school.

Relative evil means the relation to being real; that is, it is a comparison in which the reality of an object depends on a series of conditions, and the meaning of being absolute is to be freed from a series of conditions. If we consider relativity in this sense, all material and natural things are relative in that they depend on a series of finite temporal and spatial conditions, and only in those conditions and depending on those conditions, they have their own reality (Ibn Sina, 1985, 358). According to this view, evil is a relative thing and may be a phenomenon of evil for some people and the same phenomenon may seem good to others, and we should note that relativity is opposite to the truth.

It is clear from Ibn Sina's words that there is a logical difference between these two statements; the statement that "evil is not in the world" is a negative abstract proposition of the simple type, while the statement that "evil in the world is of the type of non-existence" is a positive proposition of the compound type, and Ibn Sina means that evil is non-existent but it does not remove evil from the context of the system of possibility, because when he says evil in essence, it is non-existence, and its content is that evil is a phenomenon, but not from the type of existence, but from the type of non-existence, from the context of the world system through service. (Sadeghi, 2013, 9) It was said that evil

is non-existent, but could God have created this thing in such a way that it does not have this non-existent aspect? In response, it should be said that this non-existent aspect is inseparable from its essence. If fire wants to be fire, it must be melting, otherwise it is no longer fire.

Ibn Sina states: "If it is separated from this non-existent aspect, then it has become different from itself, as if fire has become non-fire (Alizamani and Sadat Hashemi, 2015, 103 -104; Ibn Sina, 1993, vol3, 328).

According to Ibn Sina, evil is a non-existent thing for which no essence or existence can be imagined. So evil can not exist and the things we consider evil are in fact the estimation of our own thoughts and not the truth and essence of those things and if time pass it or if we pay attention to those matters with a deep look, we will realize its charity. The non-existence of evil was first discussed in ancient Greek philosophy and later in Islamic philosophy by philosophers such as Farabi, Ibn Sina and Mulla Sadra.

Ibn Sina, on the other hand, considers evil to be a relative thing that is different for each person and may be a good phenomenon for one person and the same phenomenon as evil for another person.

In another classification, Ibn Sina has divided evil into essence and non-essence. In his view, evil in essence is the same as non-existence, but not every non-existence, but imperfection that is necessary for the type and nature of a thing, and evil without essence is something that destroys or deprives the deserving of these perfections (Ibn Sina, 1985, 416). In fact, evil is a kind of obstacle to achieving perfection, and because it prevents a person from achieving charity, it is considered evil. It should be noted that any factor that prevents a person from achieving good, whether it is sin, lust, malice and anything else, is considered evil from Ibn Sina's point of view.

Evil either joins matter from the beginning, or matter is exposed to evil in later stages due to a side effect. Evil, which is related to matter itself, is evil that is attached to a particular substance in the first stage of creation, in such a way that some external factors join evil and replace it with a body or state that prevents the perfection of the specific talent of matter and it suffers from the proper evil of the said perfection like a substance that comes from a human or a horse, whenever this substance is exposed to the causes and factors that make its temperament and its essence undesirable, it will no longer accept the shape and form appropriate to it, and as a result it will cause defects and ugliness in creation, and it is not that the actual cause causes deprivation, but the material and the acceptor lack the talent of acceptance (Soultan Al-Qaraei et al, 2010, 96; Ibn Sina, 1985, 416).

Ibn Sina considers evil in essence to be almost the same as non-existent evil, which means the lack of goodness in a phenomenon or thing, and considers non-essential evil as a factor that prevents man from acquiring goodness and reaching perfection, and this the kind of evil can be the same evil that has been created as a pretext for the lack of goodness of God for man and the lack of a good system in the created world

4. Solutions to the Problem of Evil

Ibn Sina, as a Muslim, avoids dualism and the arguments surrounding it in justifying evil, and justifies evil in terms of its non-existence and relativity. On the other hand, Ibn Sina has stated that bestowing good on many is another evil solution. Ibn Sina believes that God is omniscient and that nothing is beyond the scope of His knowledge and power, and that His power dominates everything, and that if He wills, He creates everything and everything is created according to His wisdom. On the other hand, the existence of evil does not contradict the divine attributes such as omnipotent, pure benevolent, worldly and just, but the existing evils in the world are a means to achieve the many and necessary good deeds of this world. Ibn Sina's solutions to solve the problem of evil are;

1-4 Evil Is Non-existent: Ibn Sina considers evil to be non-existent and does not attribute any essence to it. He says that evil has no essence, but evil is the lack of substance or lack of goodness for the state of substance (Ibn Sina, 1985, 355).

Shahid Motahhari states: "This solution seeks to disprove the duality rather than to solve the problem of evil; according to this view, because evils are non-existent, they do not need a creator, so because there is a species in the world that is charity, then only a creator we have and the idea of polytheism and dualism is false" (Motahhari, 1983, 162).

According to the above definition, all evils are non-existent. When we say "evil is non-existent" we do not mean that there is no such thing as "evil". As we know, there is blindness, deafness, disease, oppression, ignorance, disability, death, earthquake, and etc, and there is no denying the existence of these, and because every situation is good and not bad, then the status quo must be satisfied. Ibn Sina considered it the best possible situation. Rather, the point is that all of these are of the type of "non-existences" and "absences", and the existence of these is of the type of the existence of "deficiencies" and "gaps", and they are evil because they themselves are destruction and non-existence or deficiency and vacuum, or they are the source of destruction, non-existence, scarcity and emptiness, and the role of man in the essential evolutionary system of the world is to compensate for the shortcomings and fill the gaps (Soulтан Al-Qaraei et al, 2010, 95- 96).

Those who have considered evil not as non-existent but as existential, have often used it to deny the existence of God. On the other hand, considering evil as non-existent, this view is rejected and can not be a reason to deny the existence of God.

2-4 Evil Is Relative: Ibn Sina considers another justification of evil in its relativity and believes that evils are not absolute and are relative, because a phenomenon may be useful for one person or object and the same phenomenon may appear as evil for another person or object. As a result, evil is relative and not absolute, and may appear different in different situations.

There are two types of evils; evils that are non-existent and evils that are existential and are bad because they are the source of a series of non-existent things. Evils that are non-existent, such as ignorance, helplessness, poverty, are real but non-existent attributes, but existential evils are bad because they are the source of non-existent things, such as floods, earthquakes, stings, and germs, which are undoubtedly relative badness. (HosseiniEskandian and Rajabnezhadian, 2020, 109).

God's intention and purpose are, first and foremost, attributed to existence, which is the aspect of the goodness of things, but from these evil beings arises that which is not the main purpose of God, but second and breadth, is the purpose of God. The goodness of a bee is that it has a sting to defend itself and the evil of its sting is for humans or other creatures (Khalili Noushabadi, 2016, 22).

The relativity of evil places more emphasis on the analogy of a phenomenon and an object that is considered evil; if considered with other phenomena and objects, it is considered good. For example, a bomb blast in the mountains for mining, although it may destroy ants and some surrounding animals, can ultimately reveal a large amount of mineral reserves for humans, which is not a case of discovering mineral reserves for humans. And on the other hand, because it destroys some animals and creatures, it is evil. Therefore, evil is a relative and comparative thing that may always vary in different situations.

3-4 Evil Is a Necessity of the Natural World: Ibn Sina considers evil to be a necessity of the natural world and believes that this world would not be a novel world without the existence of evil, because the world without evil was already created by God. Therefore, in his view, the existence of evil is an inherent feature of the present world.

Ibn Sina states: "If all the subsequent evils of the beings of the material world are removed, they will become the beings of the first kind, that is, the beings of the world of intellects, while the intellectual and celestial beings, who are pure good and pure light, were created before. They must be created, otherwise the burden of transcendence will be questioned. Therefore, either these creatures should not have been created or they should have become the first type, and both cases require the non-issuance of existential grace by the absolute grace, and this is not worthy of the almighty God" (Ibn Sina, 1986, 675). He also states: "If the material world, which is inextricably linked with evil, was created in such a way that no evil is realized at all, it would no longer be a material world, but another world that is purely good" (Ibn Sina, 1985, 421).

In Ibn Sina's view, the evil in the world is not only a violation of the good system; on the contrary, it is an inseparable feature of the current world system.

4-4 Evil Is Few and Good Is Great: One of the most important arguments that has been made as a response to evil is the dominance of the charitable aspect over the evil of the universe. According to this idea, although there are some evils in the world and some of them, such as earthquakes and floods, are the product of nature and some, such as murder and slavery, are the result of human malice, but it should be noted that the good of the world is more than its evils.

Ibn Sina is also among those who consider one of the ways of evil to be the spread of abundance and charity to the evil and says: "Although the sum of evils, such as diseases in the universe, is many, it is not a majority, and domination is still with charity. It is evil that damages the primary perfections" (Ibn Sina, 1982, 422).

Ibn Sina also considers the evil that is considered as a defect for secondary perfections, although it is maximum, but he considers this evil not as an act of the doer but as a lack of action of the doer, which is due to lack of ability and talent, and believes that such an evil, it does not indicate a complete lack of good.

5. Conclusion

The problem of evil is one of the topics that has always occupied the human mind and has caused his discussion and thought about it. Ibn Sina is one of the thinkers who in his works has tried to solve the problem of evil with arguments and arguments. According to Ibn Sina, evil is a non-existent thing that has no existence and essence and can not be considered as a nature. He believes that evil means the lack of perfection in the essence of the object, which if it has perfection, is good, and if it does not have it, it is considered evil.

Ibn Sina also divided the evil into non-existent and relative, and on the other hand into essence and breadth. According to Ibn Sina, evil is a non-existent thing that does not exist, and by presenting this solution, he has intended to eliminate the issue of duality in evil. He also described evil as a relative thing, which may be one phenomenon for one person be evil and the same phenomenon for another be good. On the other hand, he considers evil to be few and good to be many, which is based on Aristotle's views that the amount of evil in the world is very small compared to its goodness. On the other hand, Ibn Sina considers evil as a necessity of the world of nature, which means that it is good, because he believes that this world would not be good without the existence of evil, and it is with the presence of evil that the world is good and the world of all goodness belongs to the world of angels, which God had created before. Ibn Sina also considers such evil to be the result of man's sins that he may suffer in this world and the hereafter.

Finally, Ibn Sina does not consider the problem of evil to be in conflict with the existence of God or the adherent of His attributes, and he has expressed this by offering solutions. On the other hand, he believes that evil is necessary for the world of creation and can not violate the goodness of this world.

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