



Evil and the Mystics' God: Towards a Mystical Theodicy

Michael Stoeber

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Theodicies are systems of philosophy that attempt to rationalize the existence of evil in a God-centred world. They do not normally take into account the responses to evil by mystics, those who claim that truth can be attained by spiritual as well as by intellectual experience. Michael Stoeber analyses the contribution that mystical thought makes to establishing a reliable theodicy. Among the authors whose works he discusses are Dostoevsky, Leibniz, Voltaire, Hume, Kant, Meister Eckhart and Evelyn Underhill.

The problem of evil is given an effective religious explanation only by arguing that evil is necessary in fulfilling some divine telos or purpose. But the best non-mystical teleological responses possess serious defects, difficulties which are overcome in theology that proposes a mystical telos. This teleology involves evidence which justifies theodicy, as well as a strong pastoral thrust. Moreover, it explains the impulse to evil in human nature in terms of a divine theogonic process which distances God from evil and accounts for evils which do not serve the mystical telos through the doctrine of soul-making rebirth. Stoeber holds that mystical theodicy provides a coherent and cogent response to the problem of evil.

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