

Introduction to the Special Issue: Theodicy and Challenges of Science: Understanding God, Evil and Evolution

Piotr Roszak ¹  and Sasa Horvat ^{2,*} 

¹ Faculty of Theology, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 87-100 Toruń, Poland; piotrroszak@umk.pl

² Department of Social Sciences and Medical Humanities, Faculty of Medicine, University of Rijeka, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia

* Correspondence: sasa.horvat@medri.uniri.hr

In these “pandemic years” a number of scientific and humanistic questions arise. Some of them are entirely new, while others are already well known. However, in the theological and philosophical realm, a question almost as old as the disciplines themselves is emerging with full force: If God is infinitely good, how can there be so much pain and suffering in this world? The goal of this Special Issue was to address this challenging question of theodicy, but with a special emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach to this problem—taking into account perspectives not only from theology and philosophy, but also from evolutionary theory, biology, medicine, anthropology, cognitive science, and many other related fields. This allowed our thirteen (13) authors to reflect on the intertwining of fundamental concepts such as evolution, nature, suffering, pain, values, evil, and good. Of course, the studies included cannot and did not aim to address and answer the theodical question once and for all in this interdisciplinary mission. The new challenges that will come to humanity will provide a new framework for addressing this ancient question. Therefore, the valuable studies presented here are an interdisciplinary contribution of our own *sitz im leben* to the theodical question.

The first contribution is by Georg Gasser, who discusses the question of animal suffering through reflections on a Darwinian image of nature and on God as a moral agent, taking into account the Book of Job.

The second contribution is by Lluís Oviedo and Josefa Torralba, who consider the field of cognitive science of religion (CSR) in relation to compassion, spirituality, and scandal before unjust suffering through a survey with an exploratory questionnaire.

Lari Launonen and R. T. Mullins also address the field of CSR in their paper by taking up the hypothesis that open theism is natural and classical theism is not.

In the fourth paper, Franjo Mijatović tries to show how Christianity, which describes suffering and pain as physiological fact and subjective experience, can be gathered to form a meaningful whole and a powerful sense of the *(in)active* God.

In their article, Martyna Koszkało and Robert Koszkało reflect on two concepts of the sources of morality in evolutionist traditions and on a modal argument against the evolutionist theory of morality based on the history of the fall of angels in classical theism.

In the sixth article, Krzysztof Krzemiński reflects on advances in technology and their impact on theological anthropology and whether cyborgs can be recognized as an image of God. In this way, the author defines the relational distinctiveness of the human being who is able to know God as Trinity, which is the criterion for further debates.

A more general view of the relationship between contemporary science and religion is developed by David Torrijos-Castrillejo in his paper on divine Providence and free will. His critique of determinism as implicitly contained in Molinism leads him to recognize the alternative approach in Thomism, which seems better suited to understanding Providence and cosmic contingency.

Another way of approaching the anthropological theme is presented in the paper of Arkadiusz Gudaniec, who analyzes man’s intention to go beyond contingency as a way of



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discovering the presence of God as an object of hope. This is related to the experience of someone who loves and gives meaning to transcendent reality. It seems a very promising way to include the metaphysics of the person in theodicy.

Michał Oleksowicz and Tomasz Huzarek take issue with cognitive science of religion and its naturalistic explanation, which dominates contemporary discussion. The case of forgiveness and reconciliation offers an interesting starting point for reflection on religion that takes into account the complex patterns of thought and behavior.

In the tenth paper, James D. Madden considers the evolution of suffering, epiphenomenalism, and the phenomena of life. He develops arguments for the conclusion that the facts of pain present at least as great a challenge (if not greater) to the atheist as they do to the theist.

The problem of evil, which runs throughout evolutionary history, is the subject of the eleventh contribution, in which Matthew J. Ramage recalls Ratzinger's approach to evil as the means by which the love of God is manifested. Once again in this Special Issue, hope for a new heaven and a new earth appears as an explanation for human suffering, but with an emphasis on the meaningful embrace of suffering as shown in the kenosis of Christ and in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In the twelfth article, Hans Van Eyghen addresses the issue of biases for evil and moral perfection in the field of cognitive (neuro)science, arguing that deeply ingrained dispositions to do evil do not make moral perfection impossible.

In the final, thirteenth article, Enrique Martínez argues for the importance of the notions of truth and the person as indispensable tools for theodicy. Metaphysical reflection, based on analogical reasoning, can provide a complete theoretical framework for detailed questions raised by contemporary scholarship.

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