

Introduction

The existence of evil, to some, is reason enough to reject the notion of God's existence. Those who reject God's existence or the idea of worshiping him are considered atheist. Modern psychology claims evil is manifest in the human psyche, which could be another form of atheism. I will mainly focus on the main types of atheism and evil manifest in the human psyche, but will specifically explore what it means to have a Shadow and the problems it potentially poses. In addition, I will discuss whether or not the evil human psyche allows atheistic views to help or hinder God's existence in relation to evil and will conclude that it does neither.

Atheism

There are three types of atheists: practical, speculative and protest. Practical atheists are those who don't bother to contemplate the existence of God and conduct their lives as if there is no God (this is highly "speculative" though because it is not clear if Vardy and Arliss are merely referring to people who just don't go to church and don't pray or if there are other qualifications to gain this label). Speculative atheists, on the other hand, have given this issue much thought and have decided there is no God (this type is typically paired with philosophers). A protest atheist is one who thinks that "whilst there may be a God, to trust in him is a mistake." (Arliss, 2003), pg. 109. Various speculative atheists have concluded that God does not exist either because (a) we ought not believe in miracles (the laws of nature breaking kind) on the testimony of others, which is what religion is based on—miracles (Hume); (b) we can't realistically define it and/or verify it (A.J. Ayer) and, (c) claiming God is good is an ambiguous statement because "good" could mean varying things and there is no way we can realistically measure (i.e. compare/contrast) what a good God actually is (Bertrand Russell). And, many protest atheists concede to the existence of God, but argue he is not worthy of our worship because there is so much evil in the world, especially

suffering of children—“...NOTHING can justify the suffering of young children.” Ref. The Bros. Karamazov by Dostoyevsky, (Arliss, 2003), pg. 115.

The Evil of the Mind

Modern psychology doesn't need God, demons, devils or cosmological good and evil because it deals strictly with the mind and/or human behavior and would consider behaviors that are labeled as evil to be correctible with medication and/or behavior modification (as opposed to prayer, purification or exorcism). This places the human squarely at the center of responsibility for evil. Behaviorists believe that humans are “...defined entirely in terms of their actions and behavior...” and do not focus on what may go on inside the mind because “Social conditioning is central...” to them and see humans as easily “...manipulated by creating the right social and psychological conditions for human development.” (Arliss, 2003), pg. 128. Sigmund Freud, on the other hand, gives the “human psyche” (the mind) all the credit when it comes to the idea of evils. Freud thought evil was something that could be “...explained in terms of the subconscious mind.” (Arliss, 2003), pg. 128. And for Freud, as most of us are now aware, the human psyche focused mostly upon sexuality (e.g. women have penis envy because they don't have one and women who behave outside their behavior box were considered to have this “condition.” Or, the infamous Oedipus Complex where a male child secretly wants to castrate his father because the child desires the mother). For Freud these deep-seeded, subconscious, issues were the central piece for causing evil despite the fact that “sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.” (Freud).

Carl Jung, like Freud, believed the subconscious mind is the culprit for evil, but is not as centrally focused on sexuality, and believed that with self-reflection individuals can overcome those obstacles and it is psychology's job to help them process this, including realizing the negative aspects of themselves they wouldn't normally want to admit or may not realize is there. For Jung,

there are two sides to every human—one in which they are consciously aware (Freud called this the ego) and one in which they are unaware which Jung calls the Shadow. It is this Shadow where evil resides, representing the dark side of the human psyche, and is “...all the unrecognized and unfulfilled sides of every person’s character...” that can also include positive things we don’t even know about ourselves. The shadow only gains power and can dominate our lives when we do not give it recognition. (Arliss, 2003), pg. 139.

Psychological Atheism and the Shadow Puppet?

Some would ask what atheism really has to do with the idea of evil. After all, atheism is just a rejection of God’s existence; however, many atheists reject God’s existence, or just reject the idea of worshipping him, because evil exists in the world. Modern psychology determines certain thoughts and/or behaviors that were once attributed to evil and believed to be the fault of the devil or certain demons (cosmological forces of evil) to be either all in the mind or, according to behaviorists, the responsibility of pure human behavior. This could arguably be construed to mean modern psychology is an atheistic movement because God is not considered a factor when the evil psyche is in the equation. If the existence of evil is attributed to human behavior or the mind, God is potentially absolved of responsibility and protest atheism could be correct in claiming God is not worthy of worship because he allows the evil to go on. This could also mean that speculative atheism is even more correct because it poses a problem for two of God’s defining characteristics—being all-good and all-powerful. If God has nothing to do with the evil (because it’s all in the mind) he may very well not be all-good because he allows it to go on and/or he may not be all-powerful because he is not the creator of evil and if evil resides solely in the mind and/or within our behavior, God is apparently powerless to stop it (considering nothing has stopped evil,

we can only assume that God either won't or can't). Therefore, it would be reasonable to deny the existence of God based on these psychological findings.

Considering we didn't always understand the inner workings of the mind, or even our own natural behavior, I'm inclined to think that what once was attributed to some cosmological force has now been attributed to something real—non-cosmological—and tangible. The Shadow is a metaphor for that dark side of the psyche no one wants to talk about or admit (perhaps because it would be admitting we are animals). This would give an earthly reason for why evil exists and may support the argument that humans are sinful and God gave them free will to sin or not to sin. However, it still doesn't explain whether or not God exists; nor does it really support that he doesn't exist, despite the responsibility of evil attributable solely to humans. What it does create is psychological atheism's Shadow Puppet.

Some could argue that even if we know for sure that there are two sides to a human (one that is consciously aware and one that is not (which is the darker side of us) it does not remove the possibility of some metaphysical force or being we cannot be aware of with our conscious senses. After all, the Shadow is what Jung considers as unaware (or subconscious); thus, if our dark side is unaware on a conscious level there is no way we would be able to be aware of something manipulating it. The Shadow could be the part of us we stuff deep down inside so as to fit into societal norms that is much more susceptible to the manipulation, like a puppet, and still allow for evil cosmic forces to be the master of that Shadow puppet.

If we consider this, something strange arises—the idea that if evil people are unaware that they are evil or conducting evil actions and the Shadow is the unconscious level of our dark side that is being manipulated by some cosmic force we are unaware of, because it is at the unconscious level, all of society could potentially be evil without actually knowing they are; they might actually

think they are good and those who do not conduct themselves as the whole of society does would be considered the evil ones. What was thought to be evil (as least when we are referring to societal norms and plain-old, regular daily morality—like rock-n-roll, for example) would be good and what was good would actually be evil (e.g. chastity).

The problem with evil switching sides and turning it upside down is that if we simply state “what was evil is really good” events such as the holocaust would be a good thing and that seems ridiculous! But, if we qualify the statement we can remove the acts that are so heinous they could be nothing but evil and those things would, perhaps, be considered “pure” evil (because it is evil in and of itself and needs no help from an outside cosmic force or otherwise), as opposed to the Shadow being manipulated.

However, a major issue with discussing evil in general is that the choices seem to be either good or evil which seems to insinuate that what is bad is evil. So, if I get a bad taste in my mouth are we to consider that evil? That, too, seems ridiculous. When a child does something we don’t want them to or “misbehaves” (e.g. snuck a cookie from the cookie jar) is this evil because it’s bad in the sense that being good requires one to follow explicit instructions or rules? It doesn’t seem to fit that good and evil are so black and white. Speeding is bad because (1) it’s legally prohibited, (2) it can put your life in danger, (3) or the life of someone else in danger. Every single one of us has sped at some point in our lives. Does that make us evil for the day? Evil for a lifetime? Or, are some actions just bad because they are against the rules society places upon us? I’m not arguing that speeding should be legal or good here—it can be dangerous and is probably better for us not to; I am, however, trying to point out that we cannot call all bad actions evil.

Conclusion

On the one hand, atheism seems to gain some weight when modern psychology pins all responsibility of evil on humans because it brings more light to the question of whether God is all-good and/or all-powerful by his absence in ending evil or the role he plays in either creating it or allowing it. And, suggests that God has nothing to do with it at all because evil is created by humans either by their actions or purely in their mind. It could be said that modern psychology helps atheism. Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on perspective), it does not. While modern psychology may have found where evil manifest itself, it does not remove the possibility of cosmological forces manipulating the psyche which would in turn modify our thinking and our behaviors (political propaganda?). So long as we have a subconscious that is unaware there is no way we could possibly know if dark forces can or do manipulate it because we would be unaware of it. If there could be dark forces manipulating our shadow-selves then, despite the fact we may have located where evil resides with modern psychology, it makes no difference because we haven't eliminated the possibility of God, his involvement with evil or found a way to lay all blame of evil completely on humans. And, none of it takes into account what some would call natural evils. Humans cannot control the weather (at least not that I know of or not yet anyway) and therefore cannot choose to create an earthquake or tsunami in a particular region because they want to wipe a culture out. These natural evils cannot reside in the human psyche and are not a product of direct action/behavior from humans (where the psyche is concerned). Therefore, not all evil is a product of the human psyche and is not completely all our fault—there are just some things we cannot control.