

Universalism and mental illness

One of the most difficult cases to make for universalism is that God does not hold our sins against us. Our sense of justice requires that sin be punished and righteousness be rewarded. God saves us by grace (ie. unmerited favor), but the decision to reject God's grace must also be punished, in the interest of justice. The greatest sin of all, according this line of reasoning, is rejecting God's grace. Either way, as the argument goes, God is just in condemning people to everlasting torment in Hell to satisfy the demands of justice.

The only exception to this would be in the case of mental incompetency or mental illness. Most Christian evangelicals believe that children and mentally ill people will be going to Heaven when they die because they are not mentally competent to make informed moral decisions. Well, I personally would extend that exception to include the entire human race, regardless of age or mental condition. All of us are sinners and have been born with a sin nature or tendency to do both good and evil. We can't help ourselves. In Romans 3:23, the Apostle Paul insisted that "all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God." The reason some sin more than others is that their brains work differently. The decisions we make in life result from the way our brains processes an infinitely complex set of life events and human interactions.

Those of us who choose to become Christians and follow the teachings of Christ to the best of our ability do so because our brains process information differently than those who don't. If we back up the chain of causation, we must conclude that none of us should be held liable for our sins in God's court of justice. Our sins result from mental defects which were not of our own choosing. Our good deeds result from unique thought processes occurring in brains that we ourselves did not create.

Does this mean that we should not be held accountable for our sins? Of course not! However, for reasons stated above, the purpose of both human and divine justice should be guidance and correction, not retribution.