

Liberty University Department of Philosophy

**The Problem of Evil and the Probity of Doing Theodicy from William Rowe's Evidential
Argument from Evil**

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of
Philosophy Department of Liberty University

In Partial Fulfilment

Of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts in Philosophical Studies

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May 2016

Abstract

In this research, we discussed the types of evil: moral and natural, which are cited by atheistic philosophers as evidence against the existence of God. The so-called evidence from evil has been used by the atheistic and other non-theistic scholars to raise hypothesis on evaluating the possibility or likelihood that an omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good God exists in a world that is littered with evil. Moral evil is evil that arise from the misuse of free will by moral agents, while natural evils are natural disasters such as: earthquakes, famine, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes etc. We discussed moral evil and Plantinga's free will defense. We also discussed the natural evil and how it poses threat to theism. The logical and the evidential arguments from evil are the forms of arguments developed from moral and natural evils. While many scholars have agreed that Plantinga's free will defense adequately responds to the problem of logical evil, the same consensus does not necessarily apply to the evidential argument from evil. We also examined William Rowe's evidential argument which he developed from cases of intense animal and human sufferings considered by him to be pointless or gratuitous with no known reasons or goods for which God should have allowed the visceral experience of such sufferings. The work of Rowe and other non-theistic philosophers have made evidential evil a relevant and predominantly modern argument, addressing real life cases of animal and human sufferings, thereby making a case for atheism and also creating an awareness for not just the irrationality of theism but also the problem of the probity, morality, or rightness of doing theodicy. We also considered the works of other atheistic, and even some theistic scholars, who argue against the morality and rightness of doing theodicy. Some of these scholars consider theodicy to be a failed enterprise simply

because, according to them, it ignores or suppresses the effects of horrendous and terrible evils that human beings and animals experience. Many theistic scholars on the other hand reject the notion that theodicy ignores suffering by developing various positively moral reasons to support not just the plausibility of theism but also to demonstrate that theodicies have successfully provided answers to problem of evil. The thesis of this research examines various problems associated with evils and the effects of Rowe's instances of intense suffering on the enterprise of theodicy. It challenges the act of theodicy and questions its morality on the basis of its purposes, goals, attitudes, problems, truth, and accomplishment. This research concludes that theodicy is not a failed enterprise, but it is the only rational explanation to the problem of evil and the only option that gives hope and comfort with respect to the effects of various intense and horrendous evil in our world.

APPROVAL SHEET

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE PROBITY OF DOING THEODICY IN
THE LIGHT OF WILLIAM ROWE'S EVIDENTIAL ARGUMENT FROM EVIL

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Background to the Study

The problem of evil, pain and suffering, preserves the ancient question of why God could have allowed evil in our world. There have been several arguments from both theistic and atheistic scholars on the causes of evil in relation to God and how animals and human beings suffer as a result of these evils. While they both seem to have good reason to make sound arguments, the problem of pain and suffering apparently continues to be an important issue in the field of philosophy and theology.

It is important for theistic, and especially Christian scholars to actively participate in this ongoing discussion on the problem of evil because evil seems to be a major motivation for anti-theistic worldviews such as atheism, skepticism, agnosticism, and other postmodernism worldviews. People's inability to get answers to their experiences raise more doubt, skepticism, and unbelief in a postmodern world. Where is God when evil happens, is the question everyone asks. An attempt to answer this question over the years brought about the concept to theodicy which is all about presenting a justification for the actions of God in the world of evil. Literally, theodicy is a narration or a defense that seeks to explain the reasons why God permits evil in the universe. As John Milton puts it, "theodicy is the attempt to justify the ways of God to men."¹

The meaning of theodicy leads to the question of what it attempts to achieve. Nick Trakakis suggests that the aim of theodicy is to "vindicate the justice of or goodness of God in the face of evil and suffering found in the world."² He further explains that this

¹ Nick Trakakis, "Theodicy: The Solution to the Problem of Evil, or Part of the Problem?" *Sophia* 47, no. 2 (07, 2008):162 and Milton (1667/2000), Book I, v.26.

² Trakakis, "Theodicy: The Solution to the Problem of Evil, Or Part of the Problem?" 162.

vindication depends on the plausibility of the explanation given to why God would permit evil in the first place.

William Rowe, an atheistic philosopher, in his evidential argument from evil, argues that there cannot be an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good, and loving God with the amount, types, and kinds of evil that exist in the world. He argues that:

1. There exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
2. An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
3. There does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.³

In his argument, he focuses on instances of “intense human and animal suffering” which is in abundance in the world and also occurs on a daily basis.⁴ Rowe wonders, if the omnipotent God exists, then he should be able to stop the intense suffering that humans and animals experience. According to Feinberg, Rowe’s concern is about the quantity of evil, the intensity of evil and animal suffering in the universe.⁵

³ William Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism,” In Adams, Marilyn McCord, and Robert Merrihew Adams, *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 126-127. Also see, William Rowe, “An Exchange on the Problem of Evil” in *God and the Problem of Evil*, edited by William Rowe (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2001): 130, and Rowe, William. “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism.” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1979): 335-340.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil* (Ill: Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2004), 217.

Rowe has been vehemently criticized by various theistic scholars, but the impact of evil to human existence cannot be overemphasized. Most of Rowe's critics do not seem to address the question of the probity, morality, or rightness of doing theodicy. While theodicies attempt to give an explanation for the mystery of disastrous events that question the existence of a loving God, they also open another area of intellectuality, and religious confusion of the rightness and wrongness of giving any form of defense for the occurrences of evil.

Given that theism is true, the concept of God is of a morally perfect being. The understanding of this moral perfection could be in the light of his goodness, holiness, and love for his creatures. From an atheistic perspective, the all-powerful God should have created a world that will have a minimum amount of evil as compared to what exists in the world. Rowe as an atheist asks why there is such an amount of suffering in the world created by God. He emphasizes that some of these sufferings may be pointless or gratuitous.⁶

John Hick explains that some evils are for the purpose of experiencing spiritual development but the fact is that a lot of people (children, adults, and even animals) have died mysteriously without even having the opportunity of having any spiritual transformation.⁷ Wykstra also explains that the good for which God is allowing some intense suffering to take place is beyond our knowledge. Although this good may be beyond human knowledge, the suffering is not beyond human knowledge.

⁶ Nick Trakakis, *The God Beyond Belief: In Defence of William Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil* (Netherlands: Springer Netherlands, 2007), 38.

⁷ John Hick, "Soul Making and Suffering," In Adams, Marilyn McCord, and Robert Merrihew Adams, *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 126-127.

Is the good that is beyond human knowledge justifiable given that the amount of suffering seems to be overwhelmingly out of proportion? If this good is truly beyond human knowledge, then what is its importance to those who suffer and do not even benefit from this good? The intense pain that human beings suffer is obvious, observable, and experiential, while the good can best be viewed as a product of skepticism. So, is it a moral enterprise, especially on the part of theist critics that critique Rowe? Although they do not know the reasons why God could have allowed evil, but yet they still propound theodicies that will justify the act of God. Rowe asks if an omnipotent God has to allow human beings and animals to experience such an amount of evil for greater good. He appears to insist that his answer is no. While his argument is not immune to revision, it appears that theistic scholars also have more explanations to make especially with regard to the morality of doing theodicy.

Rowe does not seem to question the merits of doing theodicy but to question the existence of an omnipotent God. There are enough arguments to prove that God exists, so that will not be the focus of this work, but the focus of this work will take a step further beyond the problem of evil discussed by Rowe. This is because this work will be an enquiry into the probity of doing theodicy with the presupposition that God exists. The work will mainly look into the problem of theodicy from the perspective of the importance of justifying the allowance of evil in the face of intense suffering.

Statement of the Purpose

The central aim of this thesis is to make an inquiry into the probity, merit, or morality of doing theodicy. In other words, it is to ask the question of whether it is right to justify the fact that people and animals are experiencing pain and suffering. Could it be

that theistic philosophers conceive the occurrences of evil as possibly an act of goodness from God?

The word theodicy was coined by Leibniz. Before Leibniz, philosophers like Irenaeus and Augustine had made remarkable contributions responding to the natural and moral evils respectively. More recently, Alvin Plantinga rejuvenated the free will defense as a response to the problem of evil. He believes that the problem of evil constitutes a challenge to theism. Obviously, the amount and types of evil around us make some people think that the existence of God is unreasonable, irrational, and even unacceptable.⁸ There are also philosophers that have attempted to contribute to the discussion on problems of evil like John Hick, Richard Swinburne, John Feinberg, Stephen Wykstra, and Alston to mention a few. Despite their contributions, there is need for more deliberation on the discussion. There is need for more discussion because evil is part of existence and we deal with it on a daily basis. Also, this could be the only way to provide answers to various questions that are being asked as a result of evil, pain, and suffering. Human beings and animals feel pain and experience suffering regularly. Atheistic and other non-theistic philosophers have raised relevant questions while some have also used this problem of theodicy to question the reason why a good God will permit evil. This research work will not mainly address the various types of evil, it will consider the concerns and questions asked by critical scholars on the morality of doing theodicy.

Constructing theodicies could be a path to resolving a lot of problems that evil has raised; however, it could also be part of the problem. Trakakis, a theistic philosopher, comments about theodicy as an enterprise that attempts to justify God's permission of evil by searching for some greater good. In his analysis, he believes that the enterprise of

⁸ Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 9-12.

doing theodicy has failed systemically.⁹ The major challenge that theodicians face is the problem of providing morally sufficient reasons that God “might have for creating a world littered with evil.”¹⁰ Theodicy becomes a problem when morality is lacking in relation to the suffering and pains that evil brings to human beings.

Some anti-theodical views posit that given what theism stands for, it is expected that it rejects its commitment to justifying God’s permission of evil. Some have also asked some meta-theodical questions on the legality of theodicy as a response to the problem of pains and suffering. Theists could have reasons to be tolerant or persevere in times of evil based on their worldview, but it would be unfair to force this thinking on those that are not theists or who want to make theodicy a generic answer to the problem of evil.

It appears that theodicy is most often built around not just greater good but epistemic distance and eschatology without which the concept of theodicy will collapse. Theodicy may appear to be ineffective when considering some specific cases. Feinberg explains that most theodicies follow more or less the same strategy. They begin by first attempting to adopt a notion that omnipotence God can do only what is logically possible.¹¹ Secondly, they argue that for God to create the actual world, he had to choose between two good options. Where one is that, he either creates a world with moral evil along with morally free agents or creates a world without evil and also create agents that are not morally free. For example, Plantinga in his free will defense, argues that for God to actualize this actual world, he has to create a world where agents are

⁹ Trakakis, "Theodicy: The Solution to the Problem of Evil, Or Part of the Problem?" 160.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 489.

incompatibilistically free. For Hick, the second option was for God to create a world with evil that can build the souls of humans. For instance, in his Soul Making theodicy, there is a notion that there is need for spiritual growth and other forms of development. Therefore, evil and other forms of human experience is mainly for the purpose of knowing God better and also becoming better humans with the ultimate benefit of having a communion with God in the afterlife. Finally, most of these theodicies present evil as a necessary condition for good. This last strategy seems to be common to most of the Christian theodicies along with the benefit of the afterlife. But how about those that die young, or, according to Trakakis, find themselves in regress due to “terrible adverse circumstance” in which they find themselves that could not even allow them to experience any form of development, as in the case of the soul making theodicy? The difficult questions for all theodicies is that: must evil be a necessary condition for God to achieve some greater good or for him to actualize this actual world?

One of the theistic arguments for why evil exists in this actual world is that, man as a moral agent misuses his free will there by resulting into moral evil. If man is to be blamed for moral evil, who is to be blamed for natural evil? Unlike moral evil, man does not seem to have any involvement in the cause of natural evil because it is believed that natural evil happens as a result of the circumstances at which the universe itself is sustained (although some theistic scholars believe that man could still be the cause of natural evil either remotely or proximately). If God created the universe, then he must have created these circumstances and therefore could be connected to the causes of natural evil. In other words, God sustains the universe. Since man does not seem to have been responsible for the cause of natural evil, why would God permit such types, kinds

and amounts of evil that both man and animal suffer from? And since suffering is now part of human life, is it even more justifiable to do theodicy or is it justifiable to justify any reason for which man should suffer? Could justifying the reason why God permits evil also be part of the evil?

Finally, this work will look into the significance of doing theodicy, especially to the sufferer. Theodicy gives hope to both theists and the sufferers. Although there are a lot of questions to ask when it comes to theodicy, theism and the problem of evil, the fact remains that theodicy could be doing more good than otherwise.

Statement of Importance of the Problem

The question of morality of doing theodicy creates the platform to assess the purpose, importance, and value of theodicy. Since theodicy is meant to solve part of the problem of evil, a probity of this enterprise will address the possibility of this activity becoming a moral problem.

Statement of Position on the Problem

1. Evil exists.
2. There are morally justified reasons why God permits evil (Theodicy).
3. Therefore, God is morally justified for permitting evil, (Theodicy is moral).

The idea of making an enquiry into the probity of theodicy will want to question the three parties involved; a) God b) Theodicists, and c) Critics. For God to be morally justified, the theodicists have to give some reasons why God could permit evil. If God shares the same moral community with humans, then, there must be a greater good that

can overwhelm the amount of intense suffering that human's experience. And this good must be such that it is greater than the evil and suffering human beings experience.

The position of this research is that God is morally perfect and not guilty of permitting evil in this world. From the dilemma of God either removing evil or permitting free will, it seems that creating free agents is a morally perfect decision. Moreover, it will be logically contradictory and morally against God's nature to remove evil and permit free will at the same time and in the same sense. For human beings to be morally free agents seems to be a type of good that overrides the effect of evil. Also, it will be immoral to hold man morally responsible for his actions if he is not morally free.

Furthermore, this work will argue against Rowe's claim that some evils could be considered pointless. From the literal meaning of pointless, Rowe's instances of pointless evil are not necessarily pointless. For Rowe to be able to use those instances of evil as objects of argument means that the events are neither pointless nor gratuitous. We might be ignorant of God-purpose goods for which he permits evil, however, we do not have enough reasons to deny them.

It is the theodist's responsibility to give a defense for theism. While Rowe could have argued that a world without evil could have been a good world, a theodist would argue that a world with free will is a better world. And if God exists, then it is within the theodist's epistemic right to make an argument for theism on the basis of having a limited scope of knowledge to comprehend all the good reasons for which God could have allowed evil. In other words, if God is infinite, then there is no ways human being's finite mind can know all the ways of God.

It is expected of a sufferer to find it very difficult to grasp the concept of theodicy in the midst of pain and suffering, but the truth of every narration of theodicy could really be of help at this time. If God exists then it is not unreasonable to think of the possibility of having an eternal intimacy with God at the after-life. Secondly, the misuse of free will also contributes to the amount of evil that there are. The sufferer should be educated on not just the cause of types of evils but all the probable causes and reasons for which God could have allowed evil.

Finally, theodicy should be continually criticized by both theistic and atheistic scholars. A critical approach from a theistic scholar is appropriate because he believes in the existence of God. A criticism of this nature is not an anti-theodical view, but from a perspective of empathy. For theists who have an expanded view of God, the purpose of making such as inquiry or having a critical approach to theodicy may be to show concern about the amount of pain and suffering humans pass through. Evil is intrinsic into human nature and a critical approach from a theist will not just want to justify, but will also want to distance himself from the notion of taking pleasure in justifying human suffering and pain, hence the need for inquiry into the probity of this activity of justification.

Limitation

Rowe's argument is to promote atheism and also to question the existence of God. Although this work raises concern on the reality of intense suffering, it will not promote the course of atheism like Rowe. It will be limited to literally using a prima facie interpretation of Rowe's argument about intense suffering to ask relevant questions about the rightness and wrongness of doing theodicy.

The concept of morality to be used in this work will be based only on the general principles of ethics that evaluates or distinguishes between the rightness and wrongness of an action or event. There will be no detailed discussion on the theories or types of ethics. Any question on whether an act or event is moral, will literally want to determine the extent to which that action or event is right or wrong in relation to the values of the person or views being discussed.

Definition of Terms

Four words will be defined from the title of this work. They are; evil, theodicy, pointless, and probity.

Saint Augustine was the first to define evil as the privation of good. This simply means that evil cannot exist on its own but rather feeds on good that already exists. In other related definitions, evil has been defined as the “antithesis of good with the intentional effect of precipitating destruction and harm, and is perceived to be morally objectionable, distasteful and/or malefic.”¹²

Theodicy can be defined as the righteous act of God among men.¹³ The word theodicy was first coined by Leibniz. In Leibniz’s explanation, God necessarily exists despite the existence of evil in this world. His act is righteous even with the existence of evil.

¹² Michael Obanla, “The Problem of Evil, Modern Calvinism and the Doctrine of Free Will: Is John Feinberg’s Theodicy a Coherent Resolution to the Problem of Tragic Evil?” *Master’s thesis* (Liberty University, 2012): 9.

¹³ Trakakis, "Theodicy: The Solution to the Problem of Evil, or Part of the Problem?" 162.

Probity is synonymous to morality, but it literarily means a “quality of having moral principles.”¹⁴ It can also be associated with integrity. The quest to investigate the probity of theodicy also means to investigate into the morality or rightness or wrongness of doing theodicy.

Pointless according to Merriam Webster Dictionary, is something that have “no meaning, purpose or effect.”¹⁵ Pointless or gratuitous evil is a description of intense evil that William Rowe introduces in his evidential argument from evil. From this definition, there is probably no evil that could be pointless since it will definitely have an effect, either positively or negatively.

¹⁴ *Merriam-Webster Dictionaries*, “probity” accessed March 24, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/evil>.

¹⁵ *Merriam-Webster Dictionaries*, “pointless” accessed March 24, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pointless>.

CHAPTER TWO

Critical Appraisals of Problem of Evil and Problem that Emerges from Doing Theodicy

The existence of evil in the universe poses some epistemic questions to all beings. Although it is not convenient to give a generally acceptable definition for evil, it seems to represent any form of negativity or anything that inhibits pleasure while at the same time causing pains. The questions that are being asked end up evaluating the reasonableness and rationality of believing in God. God remains the most important subject matter of the problem of evil. Why is there evil in the world created by a good God? Can the existence of evil make theism irrational?

From the perspectives of atheism, God does not exist and all their contributions to the problem of evil is to prove that their position on the existence of God is true. This atheistic position also questions the character of God. In simple terms, if God exists then it should be impossible for evil to exist. But since evil exists then God does not exist.

A theist position would be a direct opposite of an atheist. Theistic philosophers argue or make their cases on the problem of evil by establishing their points on the fact that this is a theistic universe. Whenever there is a discussion on any issue concerning evil, the theists have always taken the position of defending God by attempting to reconcile their beliefs with the reality of the human experience. Chin Tai explains that the reason while theistic philosophers will always take a defensive position is simply because of the God they believe in. A defensive position requires them to have the ability to reconcile the goodness, love, and power of this Omnipotent God with the reality of evil

which also brings about defects to the universe.¹⁶ He questions if the theistic worldview was constructed with the consciousness of the evidence of various experiences that emerge from evil and if it does, then why does it still find it so difficult to resolve the knot of contradiction between their belief in God and various occurrences of evil?¹⁷

Although the existence of evil is not enough to prove theism to be irrational, it is interesting to know that this problem has brought about proliferations of varieties of theism. Before considering William Rowe's varieties of theism, some medieval philosophers have their conception of the ultimate reality. For Plato, his demiurge is omniscient, free good, but not omnipotent in the light of Christian theism. Matter and forms are completely separate from Plato's God and they rather respond to natural and mechanical necessity which places limit on God's omnipotent. Aristotle has a different conception of God although his own God does not seem to be omnipotent either. He explains that God is completely separate from the cosmic universe and God's main responsibility is to cause motion, whereas, he himself is not moved.¹⁸ Rowe explains that one could be a theist either in the narrow sense or in the broad sense.¹⁹ In his varieties of theism and atheism he explains that someone who is a narrow minded theist believes in the all-powerful, all-knowing and the all-loving God. The broad minded theist simply have a conception of a divine reality.²⁰

¹⁶ Kim Chin-Tai, "Problem of Evil in Theistic and Non-Theistic Framework: Ways of Sense Making," *International Journal of the Humanities* 8, no.9 (December 2010): 169-172.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," 126.

The relevance of these varieties of theism is to help understand various theodicies and various theodical responses to the problem of evil. Like other theories, this responses are to be evaluated against data in concurrence with reasonableness, rationality, consistency, accuracy, actuality, explanatory power, and both theoretical and practical applications. Every theodicy seeks to solve the problem of evil by explaining the place of human beings and the role of God in the epistemic structure of existence.

Problem of Evil, Types of Evil, and Varieties of Theodical Responses

Evil and suffering is not a recent discovery in philosophy but what makes it to continually get attention is the un-deniability of its experiential evidence. Arguments have changed and positions have been adjusted on this issue, but the problem and consequential experiences from it, remain constant with no hope of ending soon. As this evil continues to occur, human beings continue to respond to it.

In an attempt to understand the problem of evil by definition or distinction, there are some potential challenges to understand. Problem of evil is not homogeneous in nature and according to Feinberg, “there is no such thing as the problem of evil,” simply because it is multidimensional.²¹ As Feinberg has explained it, there are a lot of issues, questions and problems that could be discussed in relation to God and evil. Feinberg prefers to make two distinctions of problem of evil out of which the various types will be analyzed. His two distinctions are religious problem of evil and philosophical/theological problem of evil.²² The religious problem of evil arises when a person *experiences* a particular or an instance of evil which results in the sufferer wondering why God did not

²¹ John Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2004), 21.

²² Ibid.

prevent the suffering. The theological/philosophical problem of evil has to do with the *existence* of evil in general which results in the difficulty of reconciling the possibility of these types of evil co-existing with God. Feinberg summarizes this theological/philosophical problem of evil into the other varieties of evil which are moral, logical, natural, evidential, and the problem of hell.²³

It will be necessary to admit that there could be more problems in attempting to identify all the varieties of evil that various scholars have opinionated, but for the purpose of this work, we shall focus on moral and natural evils as the types of evil. Moral evil is the type of evil whose negative impact can be traced to a human agent. This type of evil arises from human actions. It is believed that these types of evil are the ones that occur as a result of human beings misusing their freewill. Natural evils on the other hand might not be as a result of human activities at least to a very large extent. Examples of natural evils are: earthquakes floods, hurricanes, famines, pestilences, and other naturally induced pain and sufferings.²⁴ There are arguments that have been developed from the evidences of evils that exists. Some of these arguments will also be examined.

Moral Evil and the Free will Defense

Of all of the most commonly talked about evils, moral evil seems to be the most humanitarian, anthropological, ethical, and theologically challenging. Plantinga describes moral evil as the evil that “results from human stupidity, arrogance, and cruelty.”²⁵

²³ Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*, 21-22.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 8.

Plantinga believes that the existence of moral evil is one of the causes of atheology.²⁶

Atheological discussion begins with the question of why God permits evil. If God exists, then he is all-powerful, benevolent, loving and caring. Atheists and those who probably have doubts about the existence of God expect that God should have been able to either create a world without evil or stop evil from existing at all. It appears that the emphasis sometimes is been taken away from the free human agent who inflicts the world with moral evil. But much emphasis seems to be directed towards the problem that arises from the evil which is reconciling the existence of God with evil.

Why is there Evil?

Hume, Mackie and other atheists have used the moral evil to raise the argument from evil. They argue that

1. God is God because he is believed to be omniscient, omnipresent, and omnibenevolent.
2. If God is omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent, then the world will not contain moral evil that exist.
3. Moral evil exists in the world.
4. Therefore, God does not exist.

²⁶ Plantinga describes the cause of moral evil as one of the reasons why people have atheological discussion. Atheological discussions probably means a theology against the existence of God, see Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 8.

Hume, in his *Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion*, insists that “if God is perfectly benevolent and omnipotent, or almighty, why is there any evil in the world?

Why does he permit it?”²⁷

He writes:

Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not by chance, surely. From some cause, then. It is from the intension of the deity? But he is perfectly, benevolent. Is it contrary to his intension? But he is almighty. Nothing can share the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive, except we assert that these subjects exceed all human capacity..... if we preserve human analogy, we must forever find it impossible to reconcile any mixture of evil in the universe with infinite attributes; much less can we ever prove the latter from the former.²⁸

Hume seems to be very concerned with what he perceives to be contradiction in the infinite attributes of God and the reality of evil that humans experience. Any reply to this problem will be able to give a rational reason why God could have permitted evil in the universe. In other words a response to the problem of evil brought about theodicy.²⁹

Theodicy is more than a response to an extent, it could also be perceived to be not just an argument but a responsibility or religious obligation.³⁰ Christian apologetics

²⁷ David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion: The Posthumous Essays of the Immortality of the Soul and of Suicide* (Parts X) 2nd edition, ed. by Richard Pokin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998), 63.

²⁸ Hume, *Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion*, 66-67.

²⁹ Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 10.

³⁰ Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011). Giving defense for one’s faith is a biblical requirement and responsibility. Christian religion has always faced different type of extender and internal aggression since its existence. There were different types of heretic teachings and doctrines that rose against the church but the church has always survived all these aggressions. Apostle Peter encourages believers to be prepared to give a defense for their faith at any time. This admonition is as important the gospel itself. It is as important as the gospel because the gospel might have cease to exist if not for those who defended it since first century. The work of early church fathers and scholars have helped to prevent the gospel as this act of providing defense for one’s faith ought to continue among Christians.

make effort to defend the Christian faith even in the face of evil. This is because they believe that it is their responsibility to make this defense even when they do not seem to understand the reason why God could have permitted some evils.

For instance, William King, an eighteenth century Christian apologist and scholar, although admits that there is evil in this world, he also argues that there is abundance of good than evil.³¹ Kraal Andre objects to King's claim and believes that this argument is unconvincing, however, King's claim seems to have some amounts of correspondence to reality because the amount of evil in the world has not caused the world to cease to exist. Despite the evil in this world, human beings naturally have the instinct to survive.

Some philosophers prefer to always blame God for the evil that exists in the world without giving attention to the abundance of good that also exists or even blame human

³¹Andre Kraal, "A Humean Objection to Plantinga's Quantitative Free Will Defense," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 73, no. 3 (June 1, 2013): 221-233, and William King, *An Essay on the origin of Evil* (1732). King was a prominent Anglican Scholar of the eighteenth century. He believes that the amount of good in this world is more abundant than the amount of evil. He writes, "it is manifest, that though Good be mixed with Evil in this life, yet there is much more good than evil in nature" Kraal Andre in his own objection to the work of Alvin Plantinga on moral evil, claims that King's argument is unconvincing. King intends to make his own argument from a scientific point of view. For him, despite the amount of evil, every animal has the instinct of good that is sufficient to keep them alive. King further argues, "Every animal provides for its preservation by instinct or reason, which it would never do, if it did not think or feel its life, with all the evils annexed, to be much more preferable to Non-existence. This is a proof of the wisdom, goodness, and power of God, who could thus temper a world infested with so many Miseries, that nothing should continue in it which was not in some measure pleased with its existence, and which would not endeavor by all possible means to preserve it" (King, *An Essay on the origin of Evil* 1732, 78). Kraal finds King's argument to be logically invalid. This is because even if sentient creatures seem to experience more good, it is not enough reason to admit that there is more good than evil in this world. He also argues that an animal's instinct to survive could have any motivation and that preference for life does not necessarily mean that they prefer life over non-existence. This instinct he claims could be non-derivative and basic. Finally, he argues that preference for life could basically be as a result of fear of the unknown or an unintentional hope of a better life. Kraal calls King's argument, an Abounding Goodness Assumption, and it is not a valid argument against evil. I have some objections here against Kraal. Firstly, his objection King's claim of natural instinct to survive does not seem to be forceful enough. This is because, biologists have explained that any living organism (Plant or animal), have to a natural instinct to survive. Secondly, if the amount of evil in this world is not proportionate or above the amount of evil, it is possible that this world could have been destroyed or even cease to exist with an abundance of evil. Although there is evil, there is not enough reason to think that the amount of good is lesser than the amount of evil. Finally, according to Augustine, evil is a privation of good. In other words, evil does not exist on its own but rather feeds on the good that is available. Therefore any existence of evil is an evidence that good, indeed exists.

being's misuse of their free will. Others even believe that it is inconsistent for both God and evil to exist. Like Hume, J.L. Mackie argues that the theistic claim that God exists in this world is inconsistent given the amount of evil that exists, and also positively irrational.³² He writes:

.....Not that religious beliefs lack rational support, but that they are positively irrational, that the several parts of the essential theological doctrine are inconsistent with one another..... In its simplest form the problem is this: God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; yet evil exists. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions, so that if any two of them were true the third would be false. But at the same time all three are essential parts of most theological positions; the theologian, it seems at once must adhere and cannot consistently adhere to all three.³³

Mackie's argument for evil is what is referred to as the logical problem of evil. His position is that if evil exists at all, then it is impossible for God to exist. Plantinga's work has been considered to have resolved this problem.

The logical problem of evil poses the question that: "is the existence of some or all of evil in this world logically consistent with the existence of the theistic God?"³⁴ The components of this question are:

1. God exists.
2. Evil Exists.

Given that evil and God exist, what does it mean for two propositions to be logically inconsistent? According to Plantinga, sets of propositions are said to be inconsistent³⁵ only if:

³² John Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 92, and Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil*, 12.

³³ John Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) P.92, and Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil*, 12.

³⁴ Dr. Martin. "Problem of Evil," (Personal Communication from Class), spring 2015.

- a) They are either explicitly inconsistent or implicitly inconsistent.
- b) Two statements are explicitly inconsistent if one statement is the negation of the other.

For instance: i) James' phone is blue. ii) James' Phone does not have color. This two propositions are inconsistent because if something is blue, then it necessarily has color. It can be logically deduced that these two propositions are inconsistent. Two propositions are inconsistent once they can be joined with a third statement that is necessarily true to make it logically deducible that the first two statements are explicitly inconsistent.

From the conditions given above for which two propositions can be inconsistent, it is probable that Mackie's position that the existence of both God and Evil are inconsistent could be false. Firstly, from b, one can argue that 2 is not the negation of 1. Unlike the example given above in i and ii, 2 is not a negation of 1, i.e., evil exists is not a negation of God exists.³⁶

Plantinga argues that Mackie's logical problem of evil fails. Mackie's position is that if any evil exists at all then God does not exist but Plantinga objects that Mackie's claim is false. According to Plantinga, there is no inconsistency in the possibility that Omnipotent, all-powerful, and wholly good God could permit evil in the world he has created. He explains that God has moral reasons for allowing or causing any evil in this world.³⁷ With this submission, Plantinga was able to argue that it is not improbable that God exists given that evil co-exists with Him.

³⁵ Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 12-13.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 12-13.

Plantinga's Free Will Defense

It appears that Plantinga's view of moral evil is that it is necessary for God to permit evil in order to bring about some kind of good. For that reason he considers it consistent for evil to exist in this world. Some of this type of good is man's freedom. In his free will defense, he argues that there is a state of affairs that is good but this state of affairs cannot be achieved unless God permits some evils.³⁸ This state of affairs that is good entails that man must be free to use his will freely.

Plantinga begins his free will defense by stating his perception of freedom. His perception of freedom is from an indeterminist position. He writes, "If a person is free with respect to a given action, then he is free to perform that action and free to refrain from performing it; no antecedent conditions and/ or causal laws determine that he will perform the action, or that he won't. It is within his power, at the time in question, to take or perform the action and within his power to refrain from it."³⁹

Plantinga suggests that a world that contains free creatures is better than a world that contains creatures that do not have free will. God's creatures are free but he cannot cause or compel them to do only what is right. He believes that if God compels them to act in a certain way, then they are not free at all. God created human beings with the ability to be morally good. Although God is omnipotent, it is not within God's power to create a world that will contain moral good without moral evil. Plantinga concludes that,

³⁸ Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 92-93, and Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 29.

³⁹ Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 12-13.

if human beings are significantly free as defined, then which world becomes actual is partly up to the free will agents and not up to God.⁴⁰

It does not seem literally consistent that God is all-powerful and omnipotent, yet having somethings that he cannot do. Some philosophers have rejected the fact that although God is omnipotent, there are somethings that he cannot do. They suggest that if God is truly all-powerful then he should be able to do anything. Does omnipotence means God's ability to do anything even if it is immoral? A theistic response to this is that God can do all that is able to be done. C.S. Lewis and other theistic scholars argue that God's omnipotence does not negate rationality. Mackie among others rejects this submission.

Natural Evil and Unattached Natural Evil

There are different definitions of natural evil but the simplest clarification is that, it is any type of evil that does not involve human activity. Natural evil is sometimes called non-moral evil because it cannot be traced to any moral agent.⁴¹ It remains a major challenge to theism and especially Christian theism that holds that, God is omnibenevolent and all-powerful. From Plantinga's free will defense, it is understandable that God cannot be blamed for moral evil but natural evil seems to be different because by its nature, it seems to be avoidable. The critical question to ask is what could be the possible causes of natural evil? What is responsible for the causes of these types and kinds of evil? Does this evil have any good? What is the role of God in natural evil? These are some of the questions that many believe not to have been justifiably answered.

⁴⁰ Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 12-13.

⁴¹ Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 198.

One major important thing to note is that natural evil is a product of natural laws. In simple terms, the same laws that preserves the world, seems to be the causes of these natural events. In other words, for natural evils to stop, the natural laws that govern the world have to cease to exist. Logically, it is impossible for the laws of nature to cease to exist because these are the same laws by which the universe is sustained. If it not possible for these laws to cease to exist, then it is logically impossible for natural evil to stop.

Feinberg explains that, although there are lots of unattached natural evils, God is not to be held responsible for these evils neither is he obligated to eliminate this category of evil from the world.⁴² He attributes natural evil to be the result of a fallen world and that God has been gracious to have preserved this world.⁴³ Although he believes that natural evil is as a result of fallen world, he still believes that some categories of this evil are not product of human activities but events that naturally occur given the way the universe is designed. He writes:

[Unattached natural evil] are evils that are attributable to processes in the natural order outside of human beings. The earth and its atmosphere are made in such a way that any of the natural evils in this category can occur. For example since there is rain in our world, there can be too much rain (floods result and crop failures can stem from those floods) or too little rain (drought results, and from drought there may come crop failures which cause famine). Since the earth's crust can move, it can move enough to cause an earthquake of any magnitude. God can get rid of these problems by ridding our world of these natural processes, but why would he want that? We do need rain, sunshine, and the like to survive in our world. Most of the time when there is rain, wind, sunshine, etc., it isn't harmful. Moreover, not even every earthquake or flood is harmful to us or to other life forms. So why should we expect God to remove these processes altogether? We need them to sustain life as we know it, and there is no guarantee that life as we know it could survive with different natural processes.⁴⁴

⁴² Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 13 and Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 198.

⁴³ Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 196. Feinberg's reference to fallen world in this instance is to the Genesis record of how man fell in the garden of even. For Feinberg, the fallen world is as a result of sin.

⁴⁴ Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 197.

Feinberg's position on natural evil is similar to that of Reichenbach. They both argue from a perspective that does not attribute the evil to either God or human beings. They conceive of it to be part of why the universe exist altogether. Just as Yancey explains that a minimum amount of pain is needed in the human body for anyone to be alive or survive,⁴⁵ similarly, there has to be an amount of natural evil for this universe to exist.⁴⁶

Reichenbach argues that for God to remove natural evil he will have to remove natural laws and if he removes natural laws, then the world will be completely different from what it is. He seems to suggest that not just the evil will be eliminated but the good that is in it will cease to exist. The creatures that are existing will have to cease to exist and God will have to create another form of creatures. He argues that requesting for such a natural processes is not a solution to the problem of natural evil. In his book, "Evil and a Good God," he writes:

The introduction of different natural laws affecting natural beings order to prevent the frequent instances of natural evil would entail the alteration of human beings themselves. Human beings are sentient creatures of nature. As psychological beings they interact with nature; they cause natural events and in turn are affected by natural events. Hence, insofar as humans are natural, sentient beings constructed of the same substance as nature and interacting with it, they will be affected in any natural system by lawful natural events. These events sometimes will be affected in any natural system by lawful natural events. These events sometimes will be propitious and sometimes not. And insofar as man is essentially a conscious being, he will be aware of those events which are not propitious and which for him constitute evils. Therefore to prevent natural evil

⁴⁵ Philip Yancey, *Where is God When it Hurts?* (MI: Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997), 29-35.

⁴⁶ Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 196-8. He believes that natural evil is a necessary event. He uses an example of bacteria to illustrate that although bacteria causes diseases in the body, however, an amount of bacteria as micro-organism is still needed to keep any human being alive. He explains that bacteria help to break down injected food and also help in other area of digestion (198). He writes, "For us to expect God to remove these micro-organism, then, seems somewhat unreasonable, especially since we don't know how the positive functions they serve would be accomplished in a different world." He believes that this world has fallen because of sin. Sin then makes this world to be what it is. Then for human beings to survive, the world has to be the way it is and that God is not obligated to remove this evil.

from affecting man, man himself would have to be significantly changed, such that he would be no longer a sentient creature of nature.⁴⁷

Reichenbach and Feinberg hold a similar position on why natural evil cannot cease to exist. Feinberg then concludes that since it is unreasonable to ask God to remove the good that the natural order brings, then it is also unreasonable to ask God to remove the evil that the natural order brings.⁴⁸ In other words, natural evil also brings natural good. This sounds like another version of the greater good defense and it does not seem to answer the problem of why God who is omnipotent and all-powerful would not create a world that is free of evil.

Feinberg's response seems to be an argument of faith or rather a theological response. This is because he started his argument on the theological basis of a fallen world and that the world is the way it is because of sin. His argument does not seem to address the problem of natural evil as being unattached to an agent. If natural evil is as a result of the fallen world or sin, then it is not correct to define unattached natural evil as a type of evil that does not involve human activity. Since it is man that committed sin and not animals or other creatures like plants, trees and rocks, then evil can be traced to human activity which is sin, either directly or remotely. He seems to be correct that

⁴⁷ Reichenbach, *Evil and a Good God*, 75-76, cited in Feinberg 198-9.

⁴⁸ Feinberg summarizes his argument on the reason why evil exists and why he thinks that God is not obligated to remove it by using F. R. Tennant's suggestion that natural evil also brings natural good. Tennant explains that water has a lot of good components that serves the universe good. From rain to drinking water, to sewage, factory water and other good things that water brings to this world. It is also true that the same water causes humans to drown. Can we then ask God to remove water from the earth just because there are instances of water causing drowning? This sounds reasonable but it does not seem to solve the problem of evil. Tennant writes: "to illustrate what is here meant: if water is to have the various properties in virtue of which it plays beneficial part in the economy of the physical world and the life of mankind, it cannot at the same time lack obnoxious capacity to drown us. The specific gravity of water is as much as necessary outcome of its ultimate constitution as its freezing to any substance an arbitrarily selected group of qualities from which all that ever may prove unfortunate to any sentient organism can be eliminated especially if ...the world...is to be calculable cosmos." (F.R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1928), cited in Reichenbach, *Evil and a Good God*, 75-76.

natural evil is not as a result of human sin but his theological explanation for the problem of evil seems to be lacking, because it does not explain why God could have created a world in which he permits natural evil.

Evidential Argument from Evil and Theism

William Rowe has made very tremendous contributions to the argument on evil from evidence. In this chapter, Rowe's evidential argument from evil will be briefly mentioned since it will be the main focus of the next chapter. However, various contributions from other scholars on this topic will be given adequate attention.

God remains the subject matter of all discussion in the problem of evil. The understanding of the character of God especially from a monotheistic perspective or western philosophy will be highlighted. The conception of God from this perspective is from the orthodox theistic conception, which Rowe calls the broad sense of theism. God in the broad sense is conceived as omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, wholly good, and all powerful. The problem of evidential evil arises from Rowe's inductive argument on the logical incompatibility between the omnipotent all powerful, wholly good God, with the amount, kind, type and particular evil that exist in this world. Rowe's aim was to make an argument for atheism. The evidential argument of evil seems to pose more problem for theism than the logical problem of evil, and it is clearly different from it.

Plantinga on Evidential Evil

Plantinga believes that it is properly basic for theists to believe in God despite the challenge that the problem of evil poses and that it is within their epistemic right to do so.⁴⁹ Evidential argument from evil being an inductive argument, to some extent, relies

⁴⁹ Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford, 1974), 193-194.

on probability. The main questions are: Does the amount, type, kinds, and distribution of evil in this world make God's existence improbable? Does the totality of these evils make it improbable or reduces the probability that God exists? Plantinga's response to these questions is negative.

Plantinga believes that his freewill defense can be used to respond to the problem of evidential evil. He explains that his defense against moral evil can go for evidential evil since all evils can still be traced to one agent or the other.⁵⁰ He argues that it is not within God's power to create a world with much moral good without moral evil, and that the amount and distribution of evil is not also enough to confirm that God does not exist. Since evil cannot even be measured or ascertained, the probability that God exists or not cannot be determined by the amount of evil that exists in this world.

Plantinga believes that all types of evil in this world are either as a result of some creature's activities or they are just as a result of the way *Kronos*, that is, the actual possible world works.⁵¹ Despite the existence of this evil, an atheist does not even seem to have a better argument to use against the existence of God. This is because the majority of the evil that exist is moral evil, and perhaps, not just from human creatures alone, even from non-human agents.⁵² In his conclusion, he submits that "the free will defense however, shows that the existence of God is compatible, both logically and probabilistically, with the existence of evil; it solves the main philosophical problem of evil."⁵³

⁵⁰ Plantinga, *God, Evil, and Freedom*, 62-64.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵² Plantinga, "The Probabilistic Argument from Evil" *Philosophical Studies* 35, no. 1 (1979): 2-3.

⁵³ Plantinga, *God, Evil, and Freedom*, 64.

Rowe's evidential argument from evil is an inductive argument that is based on probability. Plantinga describes Rowe's argument as an argument that does not give the atheist a strong argument against theism, and it is not also sufficient enough to affect the faith of a theist.⁵⁴ He maintains that the existence of evil cannot disconfirm the existence of God and that evidential evil does not make God's non-existence to be more probable than His existence. If the logical problem of evil could solve the problem of moral evil, then it should also raise the probability that God exists and that theism is more probable than atheism.

Plantinga's response to the evidential argument attracts a lot of criticism. Chrzan criticizes Plantinga's argument describing it as a flawed argument. Chrzan writes:⁵⁵

Even if Plantinga could show that God's non-existence isn't more likely than God's existence, given evil's existence, he still wouldn't have shown that evil doesn't disconfirm God's existence. That is, given evil's existence, God's existence might be less than .5 probable, even if his nonexistence is even less probable than his existence. So long as God's existence is less than .5, evil apparently disconfirms God's existence...⁵⁶

Bruce Langtry does not accept Plantinga's argument but also sees Chrzan's criticism as weak. Langtry submits that although the amount of evil can raise questions of doubt about the existence of God, it is not clear how it can tell or affect the probability of God's existence. He concludes that the totality of all the evils we know, does not make it improbable that God exists.⁵⁷ Finally, a critical appraisal of Plantinga's argument should

⁵⁴Alvin Plantinga, "Degenerate Evidence and Rowe's New Evidential Argument from Evil," *Nous* 32:4 (1998) 531.

⁵⁵ Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 283.

⁵⁶ Plantinga, "Degenerate Evidence and Rowe's New Evidential Argument from Evil," 531-535.

⁵⁷ Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 283.

demonstrate that although the free will defense seems to be effective against moral evil, it does not seem to be sufficient enough to respond to all natural evils or the evidential evil.

Evidential Evil and the Scope of Human Knowledge

Theistic philosophers have made a lot of effort to respond to atheistic philosopher's denial of God. But given the complexity and diversity of nature in relation to God, it is probable that the elusiveness of God could be as a result of the limitation of the scope of human knowledge. Human beings are bound by space and time. The greatest limitation to human existence is the reality of the limit of human knowledge. The epistemic question is, how much do human beings know about the universe and the ways of God?

Atheistic philosophers have asked the question of why an all-powerful and wholly good God should create a world littered with evil. It is critical to admit that the scope of our knowledge of the universe is limited.

Could the question of scope of human knowledge lead to skepticism? Apart from the possibility that human knowledge is limited, most religions still hold to the claim that no one can really know the purpose for which God could have done whatever he did. The fact that we cannot know all the reasons behind God's actions is not to be taken as a form of philosophical response but rather as a true response that corresponds to reality.

Gratuitous Evil

Gratuitous evil is also known as pointless evil. It plays a big role in determining the rationality of theism, especially in an atheological evaluation. Some theistic scholars such as William Hasker and Daniel Howard-Synder among others, refute the notion that gratuitous evil is pointless or purposeless. Hasker even describes what Rowe calls

pointless evil to be a necessary evil that is required for the sustenance of the universe. It is contradictory for gratuitous evil to be both pointless and necessary at the same time.

Hasker strongly argues that gratuitous evil is a necessary evil that if God eliminates, He could as well undermine what should have been the standard of morality.⁵⁸ In his response to Alan Rhoda, in his article “Gratuitous Evil and Divine Providence,” Hasker agrees with Rhoda on his analysis of the gratuitous evil, but opines that his formulation of the theological basis as a response to this evil is weak.⁵⁹ They both agree on the importance of redefining gratuitous evil. Firstly, Rhoda, suggests that using the word ‘permit’ may not be appropriate and that he would rather use the word ‘ordained.’⁶⁰ In his words, Rhoda explains that the word ordained means that God could have either weakly or strongly actualized an event.⁶¹ The difference between the two words is that one (strongly) gives sufficient condition for the event to happen, while the second (weakly) “actualizes conditions knowing for certain that they will lead to the event.”⁶² Rhoda’s clarification between these words opens up the argument in such a way that elucidates the general meaning of evil hereby making it more realistic and human, than the way the atheist normally present the act of God in the midst of evil. It is probable that redefining these words could further illuminate the meaning of gratuitous evil.

⁵⁸ William Hasker, "Defining 'Gratuitous Evil': A Response to Alan R. Rhoda," *Religious Studies* 46, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 303-309.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Alan R. Rhoda, “Gratuitous, Evil and Divine Providence,” *Religious Studies* 46, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 281.

⁶¹ Rhoda, “Gratuitous, Evil and Divine Providence,” 281-292.

⁶² Rhoda, “Gratuitous, Evil and Divine Providence,” 281-292.

In Rowe's definition, he defined gratuitous evil as "an instance of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater or permitting evil equally bad or worse."⁶³ In Rowe's analysis of evidential evil, he uses some special instances of cases that appeal to emotions. Rhoda suggests that this method might not be the best for this work. He argues that in defining gratuitous evil, a general sense of evil should be used. His own definition of evil in the general sense is that "evil is an event-token which is such that, in relation to the good it is objectively better that it not occur, than it occur."⁶⁴ Before making his argument for theism, Rhoda simplifies the complexity of problem through definition.

Using Rhoda's refinement, Hasker revises Rowe's definition. Firstly, Hasker explains that omniscient means that God could have had an antecedent knowledge of the event. Secondly, he could have prevented the event. Thirdly, preventing the event could have made the world better. In the light of this, God had an antecedent knowledge of instance of some intense evil that he could have prevented to make the world a better place. But the purpose of Rowe's definition was to argue that, God does not exist given the instances of intense suffering that he could have prevented, if he exists. Hasker argues that contrary to Rowe's argument, gratuitous evil only exists if God exists because there would not be a God to prevent an evil he knew of if he does not exist in the first place. He opines that the core of the evidential argument is in its definition. He modifies Rowe's definitions and writes: "a gratuitous evil by definition is a token or type of evil which God, if God exists, could antecedently know He could prevent, in a way that would make

⁶³ William Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism" in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) 335, and also see Rowe, "Problem of Evil," edited by Adams and Adams, 130.

⁶⁴ Rhoda, "Gratuitous, Evil and Divine Providence," 302.

the world overall better.”⁶⁵ He revises the definition and decides to negate the possibility of tokens or instances of negating the existence of God.⁶⁶ If God exists, then there occurs no tokens or types of evil which God, if God exists, could know He could prevent in a way that would make the world overall better.⁶⁷

He then concludes that:

[Hasker] Contends that the theological premise undermines moral motivation and so should be rejected by theists. Thus, if God prevents all gratuitous evil, then every evil that occurs is either necessary for a greater good or such that the world would be overall worse unless something comparably bad occurs in its stead. But if so, then all successful efforts to prevent evil are counterbalanced by additional evils (or loss of goods) elsewhere. Hence, we can't do anything to make the world overall better. If we believe this, contends Hasker, it will undermine our moral motivation. So if God wants us to take the demands of morality seriously.... God must permit gratuitous evils.⁶⁸

As earlier stated, Hasker's position on gratuitous evil is that it is a necessary evil and not pointless if morality is not to be undermined. Rhoda clearly does not agree with his conclusions. Rhoda prefers to differentiate evils that could be prevented by God from evils that could have been prevented by moral agents. Apart from the division on evils that could be prevented, there are evils whose harm could outrageously be more than their good, and this requires more moderation on Hasker's position.

What makes the difference between the two arguments of both theists and atheists in this context will be the purpose of the evil. The basic elements of the argument is that there is evil that is perceived to be preventable. God is the only perfect being that could have prevented this evil. Instead of preventing it, he allowed it. Why could he have

⁶⁵ Rhoda, "Gratuitous, Evil and Divine Providence" 305.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

allowed it? Hasker suggests that the reason why God could have allowed it was to uphold morality. Others like Swinburne say it is for the purpose of knowledge. Atheists on the other hand argue that if God is omnipotent, all-powerful and also exists as the theist claims, then he should have prevented it and since he has not prevented it, then he does not exist. Is the atheistic argument from evil in view here sound? It is rational to think that the fact that God did not prevent evil does not imply that he does not exist. From all the various reasons that have been offered by the theistic philosophers, there are a lot of reasons for which God could have not prevented instances of this evil, which could be on the basis of morality, knowledge, or a purpose that is probably not known to humans.

Feinberg explains that some of the solutions that theists have suggested could want to allow atheists to raise concern that theism is compatible with gratuitous evil. He agrees with other scholars that redefining gratuitous evil is the first step to resolving it. Some theistic scholars even argue that Rowe's definition is fallacious and that there is a better way to define gratuitous evil such that, it will not count against theism.⁶⁹ However, theists should be careful about giving the atheist an opportunity to use the notion that theism is compatible with gratuitous evil.⁷⁰

Theodical Views, Anti-Theodical Views, and the Importance of Theodicies

John Hick's Soul Making

Borrowing from the traditions of Augustine and Irenaeus, Hick constructs his theodicy. In his theodicy, he believes it could be part of God's plan to bring man from his

⁶⁹ Feinberg agrees with Jane Trau that it is question begging for an atheist to argue that some sufferings have no purpose. Starting an argument on the definition of an evil as being pointless is "a fallacy from ignorance, and an error of arguing from an inductive to a universal claim." Also see Jane Mary Trau, "Fallacies in the Argument from Gratuitous Suffering," *New Scholasticism* 60 (Autumn 1986): 486.

⁷⁰ Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 382-383.

image to his own likeness.⁷¹ Hick analyzes Augustine's tradition on the cause of evil with an attempt to relieve God of being responsible for the cause of evil, but rather blames human beings for their misuse of the free will that God had given them. Since God cannot give man free will and debar him from using it, He cannot be blamed for the evils that come as a result of that. On the other hand, Hick seems to agree more with the tradition of Irenaeus where God created man in his image but man will have to pass through the imperfections of the world to get to the state of perfection that will eventually take man to the likeness of God.⁷²

Augustine defines evil as a privation of good.⁷³ He believes that God created man and the universe as good and man fell into sin, but with the hope of being reconciled with God. Hick's criticism of Augustine is that sin is a moral issue and not a metaphysical issue, therefore sin should be viewed in the light of morality.⁷⁴ Hick believes that God created man in the universe that requires man to look unto God for perfection. The state of imperfection in the universe is meant to prepare man, which he calls *the soul making theodicy*.

Hick believes that atheistic argument for evil could be misleading because life should not be measured from the amount of pains or pleasure but by its purpose which is soul making. Not many philosophers agree with Hick but Robert Brown writes on his (Hick) soul making theodicy explaining that the goal of God for allowing evil in the

⁷¹ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Harper and Row, 1996) 337.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 38.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

world is to develop good character in humans and other meaningful traits that are not in human's natural attributes. Brown further writes:

..... choosing to face hazards steadfastly is what makes one actually brave rather than untested or cowardly. A suitably challenging environment and free will are requisite for character development and free will requisite for character development to occur. The physical environment must be governed by uniform natural laws, though their operations sometimes result in mishap, suffering, even death for us or for others..... If I do you deliberate harm, God will not erase the injury so that I escape guilt feelings or legal action or the moral disapproval of others. Hick held that our actual world is, on average, suitably challenging, but overly so, for "soul-making" to occur..... Therefore the natural and moral evil of our actual world are no disproof of a good and powerful God.⁷⁵

Greater Good Defense

A long time theistic defense is that although there is evil in the world, there are probably good reasons for which God could have allowed some particular evils. In other words, it is possible that some goods could never have been achievable, if those evils were prevented from ever happening. This form of defense could also be referred to as the greater good defense.

Theodical and Anti-Theodical Views

The main subject of discussion in the problem of evil and theodicy seems to be the existence of God and God at the center of various questions being asked, makes philosophical enquiry very important. Although atheistic philosophers take for granted that God does not exist, their criticism and denial of the existence of God at the same time, implies a sharp contradiction in their positions. Without laying emphasis on this contradiction, it will be assumed that once an atheist decides to contribute to the discussion of the problem of evil, it could be taken for granted that God exists.

⁷⁵ Robert Brown, "Theodicy," *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed by Eerdmans. (Brill. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2008), 355-356.

In other words, if God does not exist then the problem of evil does not exist. Similarly, if the problem of evil does exist as it is obvious to our everyday living, then God exists.

In explaining this argument, we will appeal to G.E. Moore shift.⁷⁶ G. E. Moore shift is an indirect procedure that can be used to counter an argument. Using a general example of this procedure,

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| I. | p | II not-r |
| | q | q |
| | r | not-p |

The first argument there is p, q, therefore, r. We can observe that this argument is a valid argument. Instead of arguing against this first argument directly, we can argue indirectly against it, and it will result into what we have in (II) above: not-r, q, therefore, not-p: which is also a valid argument. It simply begins with the denial of the conclusion of the first argument, keeps its second premise, and then denies the first premise of the first argument. The denial of the first premise of the first argument, becomes the conclusion of the second argument. The law of logic supports that if the first argument (I) is valid, then the second argument (II) is valid as well.⁷⁷

We started an argument (before considering the G. E. Moore shift), that the atheist uses the problem of evil to argue against the existence of God. The atheist begins by arguing that God could have prevented instances of intense suffering. A being that does not exist

⁷⁶ Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion: an Introduction*, 128. The Moore shift is an indirect procedure that can be used to counter a valid argument. Rowe explains that “the procedure is called G.E. Moore in honor of the twentieth-century philosopher G.E. Moore, who used it to great effect in dealing with the arguments of the skeptics Skeptical philosophers such as David....who have advanced ingenious arguments to prove that no one can know the existence of any material object.... Instead of arguing directly against the premises of the skeptic’s argument, he simply noted that the premises implied” Moore directly against the premise hereby making it possible for him to have a counter conclusion which also makes a valid argument. For example, I. P, Q, therefore R II. not-R, Q, therefore not-P.

⁷⁷ Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion: an Introduction*, 128.

cannot be accused of not preventing an event. There is problem of evil because of what the atheist perceived to be either God's action or his nonintervention. If God does not exist, then there will be no need for the problem of evil. Although the atheistic scholars deny the existence of God in reality, they could have conceived of his existence in understanding.⁷⁸ Applying this to the argument we started above, we can use the problem of evil to make an argument for the existence of God and afterwards, apply the Moore's indirect procedure to it:⁷⁹

1. God does not exist because the problem of evil exists.
2. The Problem of evil exists.
3. God does not exist.

Our second argument can then be:

- 3.* God exists.
2. The Problem of evil exists.
- 1.* God exists because the problem of evil exists.

It appears that the first premise of the second argument (3*) is the denial of the conclusion of the first argument (3). The second premise remains the same for both arguments, while the conclusion of the second argument (1*) is the denial of the first premise of the first argument (1). From the example given above: p, q, therefore, r and not-r, q, therefore, not-p; our arguments above are valid.

⁷⁸ Anselm argues that to deny the existence of God means that he has been conceived of in the understanding. If he exists only in understanding, then he could have also existed in reality. He concludes that God could have exist in reality as well as in the understanding. See Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion: an Introduction*, 41-42.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Summary

In this chapter, we have critically examined the types of evil and the various arguments forms of evil. From the discussion so far, we have discovered that it is possible for both God and evil to exist. The conclusion that both God and evil can exist, corresponds with Plantinga's free will defense, where he argued for the compatibility of God and evil. We have discovered from this chapter that, firstly, if theistic scholars can argue for the compatibility of both God and evil – which Plantinga has demonstrated- the logical problem of evil will be resolved. Secondly, we can use the G.E. Moore shift to argue for the existence of God, even from the fact that the problem of evil exists. However, Rowe does not necessarily argue against the compatibility of both God and evil. His evidential argument from evil is against the probability of God's existence, given the amount, types, kinds, distribution, and intensity of evil. In the next chapter, we shall consider the three stages of Rowe's argument (early, middle, and latter), some theodical responses to this argument, and the problems that emerge, when theistic scholars respond to the problem of evil with theodicy.

CHAPTER THREE

Should the Theist Respond to William Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil with a Theodicy?

William Rowe believes that the logical problem of evil failed because Alvin Plantinga was able to prove that it is consistent for God and evil to co-exist. Since it is neither contradictory nor inconsistent for both God and evil to exist, then the free will defense is valid and sound. While Rowe agreed with the success of Plantinga's argument, he presented the evidential argument for evil, where he argue that the types, kinds, amounts, and cases of particular evils that exist are worrisome, and might be sufficient enough to argue that God does not exist. Before systematically and analytically considering Rowe's argument, it is important to give a brief development of the work of Rowe with three major periods: early, middle and latter.

Rowe's Argument against Theism

Early Period of Rowe's Writings

The beginning of Rowe's argument can be traced to his paper on the problem of evil he published in 1978 as *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*, and this period is believed to have lasted till 1986.⁸⁰ Before this publication, he had made some contributions to the problem of evil in general, and then introduced the evidential argument, but admits that he does not have enough reason to justify that "cases of severe, protracted, and involuntary human pain which are not necessary for any greater good" exist, and at the same time, does not think that it is unreasonable for theist to think that

⁸⁰ Nick Trakakis, *God beyond Belief: In Defence of William Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil*, (AA: Dordrecht, Springer) 1997, 48.

his proposition is false.⁸¹ At this stage, he accepts the evidential evil, but he cannot defend it. But in his subsequent publications, he argued that there could exist possible worlds where things could have been done differently, in such a way that there would be no Hitler, and moral agents could have made better judgements. Based on his speculation of this possible world, he suggests that there is a reasonable ground for atheism because there could have been a better world that could be apparently different from this actual world. His classical analysis of the evidential evil began to take a more sophisticated shape from 1979 with series of publications: *The Problem of Evil and Varieties of Atheism*, *Evil and the Theistic Hypothesis: A Response to Wykstra*, and *The Empirical Argument from Evil*.

In his work: *The Problem of Evil and Varieties of Atheism*, he writes:⁸²

1. There are instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
2. An omnipotent, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
3. Therefore, there does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.

Rowe believes that this argument is valid and therefore there is rational grounds for believing atheism.

The second premise of this argument is known as the *theological premise* because it addresses what God can either do or not do, and what he could have done should there be a case of intense suffering. Calling the intense suffering *s1*, Rowe writes:

⁸¹ Rowe. *Philosophy of Religion*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1986; (a review of Plantinga's work).

⁸² Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," 127-128.

- 2' "either there is some greater good, G, such that G is obtainable by OG only if OG permits s1
- 2'' or there is some greater good, G, such that G is obtainable by OG only if OG permits either s1 or some evil equally bad or worse.
- 2''' or s1 is such that it is preventable by God only if OG permits some evil equally bad or worse."

From the given propositions, 2' states that preventing E1 could amount to losing some GG (greater good) while 2''' reveals that if E1 is prevented, then there could be "equally bad or worse evil."⁸³ The distinction just made reveals that 2' is different from 2''' and leads to an assumption that even if a good is lost, it does not necessarily mean that a bad state of affairs is available.⁸⁴ In the same vein, 2'' is quite different because God preventing E1 will lead to some evil. From the following propositions, it seems that God could not be blamed for E1.

Rowe's position on premise 2 is true, given that God could have prevented E1 only for the reason that it would either permit greater evil or lose some greater good. He suggests that this position of premise 2 is held by atheistic and some theistic philosophers. It is possible that some scholars might want to argue that, no amount of good could justify the permission of innocent children suffering, and that it is morally justifiable that evil is permitted, simply because some greater good outweighs the evil. Some critics of Rowe agree that premise 2 is not the main problem of his argument but the *factual premise*, premise 1 seems to be the problem.

Most criticisms of Rowe comes from the first premise. This proposition is about the possibility of an instance of intense suffering which Rowe calls 'gratuitous or

⁸³ Trakakis, *God beyond Belief: In Defence of William Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil*, 51.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

pointless evil.’ Gratuitous evil is a type of evil that Rowe believes that God could have prevented without thereby permitting some equally bad or worse evil or losing some greater good. Logically speaking, it is gratuitous because it is pointless and no worse evil will happen and also, no greater good will be achieved.

Critics of Rowe doubt if there is any evil such as gratuitous evil in the first place. They believe the key to accepting or rejecting this premise rests on the meaning of gratuitous evil and the possibility of its existence.

Rowe’s hypothetical explanation to support his claim of gratuitous evil.⁸⁵

- a. Let’s assume that a fawn was caught in a fire and horribly got burnt but suffered for several days until its death.
- b. Omnipotent God could have either prevented the fire or even ended the fawn’s life, without letting it pass through such horrible suffering.
- c. As far as we know of this tragedy, it is pointless since we could not see any greater good that the fawn’s suffering could have brought.
- d. We can then conclude that “there exists at least one instance of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.”⁸⁶
- e. It is unreasonable to think that all instances of intense human and animal sufferings are not pointless. These instances could have being prevented by an omnipotent and wholly good God.

⁸⁵ Rowe, *The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism*, 127.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Ambiguity to Rowe's Argument

From a-c above, Rowe seems to be arguing for the instance of the fawn but his latter conclusion seems to be of general claim. His argument is that the instance of a fawn was to be an example of types of pointless evils that occur that an omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good God could have prevented. Rowe claims that there is an enormous amount of evil in our world that provides support for the first premise.⁸⁷

Rowe arguing for the quantity of evils could reveal his intention to extend his argument from a particular case to a general conclusion. The case of the fawn could have given reasons to think that there are several other cases. His claim is that, there are instances that intense animal and human sufferings occur around the world in large quantity with reference to the case of the fawn. Rowe wants to ground his argument on the fact that the case of the fawn makes it probable that there could be several other instances of pointless suffering in great number. In other words, since the case of the fawn reveals that an intense pointless suffering is possible, it is then possible that there are several other pointless sufferings around the world.

Jane Trau argues that Rowe's move from one instance of inductive argument to a universal claim in his conclusion is a fallacy and an error. Also, she opines that Rowe's use of the word 'Gratuitous' is fallacious. She made four submissions:

- a. To argue that an event is genuinely gratuitous is to affirm that there is no purpose to it. Rowe would not have used a purposeless event to make an argument. Therefore to argue that some evils are purposeless is question begging.

⁸⁷ Michael Bergman, "Skeptical Theism and Rowe's New Evidential Argument from Evil," *Nous* 35:2 (2001) 278-96, and Jane Mary Trau, "Fallacies in the Argument from Gratuitous Suffering," 486.

- b. Rowe's evidential argument is a fallacy from ignorance.
- c. For Rowe to move from an instance of intense suffering to a general conclusion is an "error of arguing from an inductive to a universal claim."⁸⁸

Middle Period of Rowe's Writings

Nick Trakakis prefers to give a second division of the development of Rowe's argument from evidential evil to be from 1988-1995.⁸⁹ He suggests that this period is an era that is completely different from the previous work of the early period, but rather a continuation, only with a difference that seems to be that Rowe decided to use a "more precise and systematic manner than the earlier one."⁹⁰ The second era can be traced from Rowe's paper on "Evil and Theodicy" in which he designed another version of the same argument by revisiting the *factual premise*.

Rowe decides to use a human example in his argument recounting on a real life event, where a five year old girl was beaten, raped and then killed by strangling in Michigan in 1986, by her mother's boyfriend.⁹¹ Rowe names the fawn 'Bambi' (E1) and named the five year old girl 'Sue' (E2). His goal is to present cases of both natural and moral evils, that will be difficult for theistic scholars to defend as not being pointless, for which God would have allowed for some greater goods.

Rowe restates his argument this way:

⁸⁸ Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 379 and Jane Mary Trau, "Fallacies in the Argument from Gratuitous Suffering," 486.

⁸⁹ Trakakis, *God beyond Belief: In Defence of William Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil*, 57.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ William Rowe, "Evil and Theodicy," *Philosophical Topics* 16 no2 (1998): 121.

(P) No good state of affairs we know of is such that an omnipotent, omniscient being's obtaining it would morally justify that being's permitting E1

Therefore,

(Q) No good state of affairs is such that an omnipotent, omniscient being's obtaining it would morally justify that being in permitting E1 or E2.⁹²

From the argument above, Rowe inferred P from Q. It is good to know what each of these propositions seek to assert. Both propositions begin with a concept of good state of affairs that we know. The claims intend to show that no good state of affair that we could probably know of in this actual world could have justified an omnipotent God to permit E1 and E2. Rowe could probably want to clarify the theistic good of afterlife from the good we know of in actuality.

Consequently, P will be true if there is no good we know of, for which God could have permitted E1 or E2. In other words, one condition under which P could be true is, if we do not know any such good in the actual world for which God could have permitted E1 and E2. Even if the good will be for the afterlife, we do not know if sufferers or victims will share in the bliss of the afterlife (since both Sami and Sue are dead) and this could probably make P true.

Another condition for which P could be true is if God does not exist.

- a. "(P') No good we know of would justify God (if God exists) in permitting E1 and E2." (If we decide to negate P by way of differentiating it from P')
- b. "(not-P) there exists a good we know of and that good justifies God in permitting E1 and E2, and that God exist." Making a disjunction from P:

⁹² William Rowe, "The Evidential Argument from Evil: a Second Look" in *The Evidential Argument From Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) and Trakakis 52.

- c. “(P”) Either God does not exist, or God exists and no known good justifies God in permitting E1 and E2”
- d. And this will make Rowe arrive at the same conclusion that, there does not seem to exist a good state of affairs that could morally justify an omnipotent God to permit E1 and E2.

What condition could make Q true?

- a. Firstly, Q asserts that no good could justify the permission of E1 and E2.
- b. Just like P, an assured condition for Q to be true is if God does not exist.
- c. From b, if God does not exist, then there would not be anyone to accuse of permitting E1 and E2.
- d. Similarly, a negation of Q will then lead to the inference that Rowe made from P to Q, which then reveals that Q entails P, although Rowe also states his inference from P to Q (inductive form) is similar to inferences from known to unknown.⁹³
- e. “(not -Q) God exists and there is a good that justifies God in permitting E1 and E2.” (Soon, we shall see that Rowe thinks that negating Q will make a false proposition).
- f. Rowe’s argument shows an inference that given P, Q is the case.
- g. In other words, given that P (no good at all would justify an omnipotent, omniscient being in permitting E1 and E2), then Q (No good state of affairs is such that an omnipotent, omniscient being’s obtaining it would morally justify that being in permitting E1 or E2) is the case.

⁹³ Trakakis, *God beyond Belief: In Defence of William Rowe’s Evidential Argument from Evil*, 60-61.

- h. Similar to f above, let's assume that "we are justified in believing Q on the basis of our belief that P." Since we see from e above that Q would be false if omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good God exists, "we are (therefore) justified in believing that omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good God does not exist."⁹⁴

Latter Period of Rowe's Writings

In this period, Rowe's work started from 1996 to 2014. Rowe responded to William Alston on skeptical theism. Michael Bergman explains that in this latter Argument, Rowe intends to present a 'better' argument that will provide answers against some theses of theistic skepticism,⁹⁵ and this almost makes Rowe's argument look completely new. He began by stating the main component of the last argument P, Q and also introduced G (which is a proposition that God exists), as well as a probability [(K1) Pr (G/K)], to establish his claims. He seems to abandon the last two arguments where he argued for 'goods that we know' and 'the goods that are.' And by doing that, he bypasses Q to G.

Restating Rowe's claim for new and old variables:

⁹⁴ Rowe, *The Evidential Argument from Evil: a Second Look*, 61.

⁹⁵Bergman in his paper, "Skeptical Theism and Rowe's New Evidential Argument from Evil," presents an argument to support theistic skepticism. He writes a preamble to Rowe's new evidential argument from evil. Rowe's work focuses on these theses: "What is skeptical theism? It has two components—a skeptical component and a theistic one. The skeptical theist's theism is just the traditional monotheistic view that there exists an omniscient, omnipotent and perfectly good being. It is the skeptical theist's skepticism that (NOÛS 35:2, 278) needs explaining. Rather than attempt a precise definition of her skepticism, I'll simply list here some of the skeptical theses that are plausibly associated with it. We can call these 'the skeptical theist's skeptical theses': ST1: We have no good reason for thinking that the possible goods we know of are representative of the possible goods there are. ST2: We have no good reason for thinking that the possible evils we know of are representative of the possible evils there are. ST3: We have no good reason for thinking that the entailment relations we know of between possible goods and the permission of possible evils are representative of the entailment relations there are between possible goods and the permission of possible evils."

- a. “(P) No good state of affairs we know of is such that an omnipotent, omniscient being’s obtaining it would morally justify that being’s permitting E1.”
- b. “(Q) No good state of affairs is such that an omnipotent, omniscient being’s obtaining it would morally justify that being in permitting E1 or E2.”
- c. Not -G: **There is** no omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good and perfect being.
- d. K: represents knowledge of the amount of evil that exists such as E1 and E2, and the knowledge of some goods that occur and those that do not occur. It does not however include the knowledge or claim of God’s existence or not.

Using Bayes’ Theorem, Rowe continues his argument giving values to his probabilities. The work is meant to provide equal probabilities to both theism and atheism to ensure a level ground for both. Let the P (G/k) and P (~G/k) be 0.5. Rowe’s intension is to determine if someone who has the knowledge of E1 and E2, after learning about P could reach a conclusion like ~G. This could be made possible by also determining if the probability of (G/P&k) is less than the probability of (G/k). In an instance where Probability of (G/P&k) is less than probability of (G/k), then P could be a reason for ~G “since P makes G less likely than it would be otherwise.”⁹⁶ Bayes’ Theorem becomes one means of determining how one probability could be more or less than the other:⁹⁷

$$\frac{\Pr(G/P\&k)}{\Pr(G/k)} = \frac{\Pr(P/G\&k)}{\Pr(P/k)}$$

From the above, it appears that the probability of (P/G&k) is less than the probability of (G/k). If Pr(P/G&k) is less than Pr(G/k), it will then be possible for us to

⁹⁶ William Rowe, “The Evidential Argument from Evil: a Second Look,” 61, and Michael Bergman, “Skeptical Theism and Rowe’s New Evidential Argument from Evil,” 278.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

think that P could be a reason for $\sim G$. The main difficulty is how to determine that $\Pr(P/G\&k)$ is less than $\Pr(G/K)$. To determine that $\Pr(P/G\&k)$ is less than $\Pr(G/K)$, we have to note that P is the reason for $\sim G$. If God does not exist, there will be no P, that is, there will be no good we know that would justify God for permitting E1 and E2, since He does not even exist. Similarly, if $\sim G$ entails P then the probability of $(P/\sim G\&K)$ equals 1.

Stephen Wykstra's Argument

Of all the various criticisms of Rowe's argument, Wykstra's response seems to be among the few that Rowe accepted, although not without a counter argument. Wykstra developed the CORNEA (Condition of Reasonable Epistemic Access) arguing that we might probably not accept what we cannot see. In a better way, CORNEA's purpose is to argue for the seeability of an event. He argues from "we see no 'X' to 'there is no X' only when X has 'reasonable seeability' - that is, is the sort of thing which, if it exists, we can reasonably expect to see in the situation."⁹⁸ Wykstra uses an illustration of two living things which exist but can be determined by their size and seeability. He argues that if a dog is on his garage, he cannot deny not seeing it, but it is very possible for a noseum, which is a type of flea, to be in the garage without having any seeability and someone can claim not to have seen it. The flea, has a very low seeability, and even if present, it is not unexpected to not have seen it. In a similar way, Wykstra argues that we expect to see God's 'good' but given the disparity between God's vision and ours, he argues that cannot be. And for this reason, Rowe's argument failed the CORNEA seeability test.

In Rowe's response, he accepts the CORNEA but he also believes that his argument passed it. He posits that there will be no reason to think that God's good, for no reason, should lack the necessary or required seeability.

⁹⁸ Stephen Wykstra, *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, 126.

In the fawn's argument, he writes:⁹⁹

- a. "We see no good for which God would allow E1."
- b. "There appears to be no good for which God allows E1."
- c. "Therefore, there is no good for which God allows E1."

Rowe uses the principle of credulity to ground his claim on the 'appear mode.'

That is, if something is perceived to be X, one is epistemically justified in believing that it is X, until there is a counterexample to prove otherwise. He uses this claim because, one is believing in X only if it is something that one will have epistemic access to. For one could be justified in believing that he could not see any God-purposed good for which he could have permitted the suffering of the fawn, given his cognitive faculties. If there is any good for which God had permitted the suffering, it would most likely not be seeable, especially when there is defeater to prevent him from doing so. For this reason, he would have to defeat the defeaters. Similarly, if Rowe already had reasons why any good reason for God permitting evil will not be seeable, it is not unreasonable for him not to see the good, because he would most likely not see it.

Wykstra maintains that the disparity between God's vision and our vision plays a big role. This is because, the best analogy for this disparity could be the vision of a mother to that of her infant child. There appears to be a big gap between these two visions. It is possible that most of our discerning could be likened to that of the infant, who is expected to discern the purposes of his parents. This is most unlikely given the disparity between both visions. Similarly, God's purpose for the permitting the fawn's suffering will likely lack seeability by humans.

⁹⁹ Stephen Wykstra, *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, 127-8.

Summarily, Rowe insists that it is not possible that all God's good would not be seeable. If CORNEA provides answer for instances of suffering like that of the fawn, would the CORNEA then serve all purposes of suffering? Wykstra suggests that if God exists, it takes only the reasonability to know that God-purpose good overwhelms the evil, and that these good purposes are beyond our ken. However, the CORNEA seems to face more difficulty when subjected to some critical counterexamples.

Theodical Response to Rowe

Rowe's inductive argument in support of atheism could want to pose a threat to theistic belief, but it is just on the surface. Some theistic scholars argue that since the argument is based on probability and lacks certainty, the question of whether a theistic philosopher should respond with a theodicy becomes relevant. The response begins by wanting to redefine what Rowe meant by pointless. His concept of pointless has to be defined from a theistic perspective. Secondly, it is necessary to note that arguments on probabilities and statistics are based on degrees of possibilities and cannot completely remove any chances of having an exempting logical or metaphysical possibilities. Furthermore, Rowe's explanation for background knowledge only favors his argument. From a theistic perspective, a background knowledge or information should not just comprise of evil and good alone, but it should also include the existence of God. The call for this inclusion seems appropriate since it is believed that this good comes from God. Therefore, if the good will be given any form of consideration at all, then its source must also be included. And lastly, if God exists, then it is not unreasonable to accept the fact that there are greater goods that outweigh the cases of suffering for which God could have permitted evils in this world.

How can evil be quantified? How did Rowe come to the conclusion of giving an account of the quantity of evil that there are? Despite the amount of evil, it is still probable that there are greater amount of goods that outweigh evil. For two reasons: firstly, evil is a mere privation of good and it cannot exist on its own, therefore, evil is not a substance. It literally feeds on good that exists. Secondly, there are reasons to believe that good in the universe outweighs evil. And for this reason, the universe is still sustained. If evil is to be in greater proportion, then it is most likely that the universe would have ceased to exist or collapsed into chaos.

Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil and the Probity of Doing Theodicy

We have considered the logical problem of evidential evil according Rowe. One could ask, of what relevance is Rowe's argument to the probity, morality, or rightness of doing theodicy? While theistic scholars may not agree that Rowe's argument is enough to deny the existence of God, everyone would agree that his examples of specific evils (E1 and E2), his logic, and sequential narrations, reveal or correspond with the reality of the intensity of pains and sufferings in our world. In this research work, we hold a theistic position that God exists, but we are not in any way denying the reality of pain and suffering, and for this reason, we are using, at least, the examples of evils in Rowe's argument and the emphasis he added to the narrations to discuss the visceral quantum of experiencing pain and suffering.

Everyone has unique epistemic right or intellectual apparatus to form justified beliefs or use whatever evidences they have to form their justified beliefs. In the light of this, theists believe in God while atheists do not believe in God either for lack of or for

insufficient evidence for the existence of God. Atheists also sometimes use the evidences of evil to support their denial of God's existence.

H.J. McCloskey, an atheistic scholar, in his article, "On Being an Atheist," explains that atheism is not only true but that it provides more comfort than theism.¹⁰⁰ In his response to the cosmological, teleological, and design argument for the existence of God, he argues that what theists claim to be an evidence to support the existence of God is so inadequate and groundless, that it probably leaves theists miserable.¹⁰¹ From his perspectives, the evidence from nature and the evidence from evil is enough to show that the universe does not have a designer contrary to what the traditional theistic argument holds. He writes on the existence of evil and the theistic claim of a creator that:

The world we know does not reveal itself to us as the handiwork of an omnipotent, all-perfect being. . . . The world we know is a world containing great deal of evil, in particular, avoidable suffering endured by innocent human beings and animals. If we argue from the existence of this world to its creator, we must endow this creator with attributes which explain how he came to create such a world. We must conclude that he is either a malevolent powerful being or that he is a well-intentioned muddler, that the creator and the ruler of the universe is either not a God but an evil spirit or a well-intentioned finite being whose limitations result in very disastrous consequences. A belief in the existence of either is hardly a source of strength and security.¹⁰²

Although his argument was to prove that what theists hold to be a proof for the existence of God is not sufficient and can even be used against theism itself, his position is similar to that of any atheist that the existence of evil, pain, suffering, count against the belief in God. From his article referenced above, the avoidable suffering that innocent human

¹⁰⁰ H.J. McCloskey, "On Being an Atheist," Question1, February 1968, 51-52.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

beings and animals endure make him even reduce God to a finite being. That is, perhaps, the extent at which he considers evil to impact how God could be conceived.

William Rowe who is also an atheist gave some specific examples of evils which we have considered earlier. These examples are the instances of intense suffering where a fawn was caught in the fire, lingered for several days, suffered and died, and also a 5 year old girl was raped tortured and strangled to death. The 5 year old girl been murdered in such a horrific way was a real life event which took place in Detroit Michigan and it demonstrates how true it is that terrible events happens in our world. Rowe explains that intense human and animal suffering could sometimes be justified but it remains an evil nevertheless.¹⁰³ The visceral experience and intensity of suffering in our world is a real and persistent problem for humanity and theism in particular.

In Rowe's earlier writings, the focus of his argument was that God could have created possible worlds where things could have been done differently; which could have made things different from what they are. These possible worlds will be such that there would be no Hitler or other intense, severe, protracted, voluntary and involuntary human pain which he considers to be purposeless or unnecessary in our world; at least in some instances. It is important to note at this juncture that there are lot of evils that occur in our world almost at every second. Some are actually very similar to the example of the fawn that was caught in the fire in a long distance while others are similar to the example of an innocent five year old girl that was raped and strangled to death. One could imagine millions of people on sickbeds suffering from cancer, stroke, different heart diseases, viral and bacterial infections etc. How about people that have suffered from human agents involving in sufferings like kidnap, rape, torture or even death and not to mention

¹⁰³ Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*, 118.

various instances of natural evil that are regularly and consistently occurring. One could also imagine applying different theodicies to all these instances of sufferings and then wonder how morally right it is to actually justify that billions of people all over the world are having different types of pains and sufferings. Rowe is aware of the strategies of theodacists and that was the reason why he continued his 1979 argument by stating that: “no good we know of justifies an omnipotent, a perfectly good being in permitting E1 and E2. No good at all justifies a perfect being in permitting E1 and E2. Therefore, there is no perfect being.”¹⁰⁴ As earlier stated, while we may not agree with him that God does not exist, we cannot deny the fact that there are instances of horrendous evil in our world.

Rowe could possibly respond further that: even if there are instances of suffering that are necessary conditions for good, must they be in the quantity in which they are? For the amount of evils in the world, even if they are all justifiable, there is need to question their causes, sources, benefits, and good, if they exist. Secondly, if the good for which God could have allowed these evils is not seeable, it is reasonable to think that all the goods for which these intense sufferings occur cannot all have low seeability. There should be some occasions, at least, where the reasons will not all have low seeability. Thirdly, what could probably be the purpose or greater good for the fawn’s death? Even if we do not agree that it is purposeless, what could probably be the good for which the fawn had to suffer for seven days before dying? The fawn would have at least, died at the moment in which the fire began. Or better still, it could have died either the first day to reduce the suffering. Or either the second, third, fourth, fifth, or even sixth day. Why the prolonged suffering? And lastly, some theistic scholars believe that God would allow us

¹⁰⁴ Rowe, *The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look*, 61.

to experience some evils which could serve as or represent an unglorified state, in order for us to appreciate the glorified state which will be free of evil. The unglorified state is the state when someone is experiencing suffering or any type of evil, while the glorified state is the state that can be described as the post-suffering state when someone has learnt from evil, or even any state when the particular evil that was experienced would have stopped. Perhaps, another way to understand the glorified state might not be limited to when evil stops, ceases to exist alone, it could also be the hope of the afterlife. One could ask, what glorified life, either when evil ceases to exist or afterlife, would compensate the pain in which the mother of the five year old girl? Apart from the possibility that the evil could serve as a warning for those that might want to commit similar evil, what greater good does the girl's death brings to her or to her mother? After all, the innocent girl is dead and she could not have experienced any character development or any other post-suffering benefit in this life.

These responses and many other similar reasons would be why this research is important. The purpose of this work is to investigate the probity, morality, and rightness of doing theodicy. How relevant could theodicy be to the mother of the 5 year old girl? What is the rightness of justifying the reasons why God could have allowed the death of the innocent 5 year old girl? To several women that have been raped in this world today, how should we justify the reasons why such evils exists? What purpose does theodicy serve to the victims of various instances of intense suffering? According to Rowe, for the fact that one instance occurred, probably implies that there are many other instances that could have also occurred all over the world. From the questions we have asked above and

many others that we have not asked, it is obvious that there are lots of problems that emerge from doing theodicy. In the following chapter, we shall focus on these problems.

Should Theism Respond to Evil with a Theodicy?

No matter how passionate, emotional, or realistic we might be about horrendous evil, it is a simple fact that it will be difficult for theists not to do theodicy. If we decide not to do theodicy, what could be a better replacement for it? If theists decide not to respond to Rowe's evidential argument from evil, what could be a better response? While there are problems associated with theodicy, we are not certain of what could probably be a better a response. It appears that theistic scholars are left with limited options once theodicy is out of the equation.

The good thing about the enterprise of theodicy is that even theists acknowledge some of the problems that could probably emerge from it. It is this acknowledgement that probably makes theodicists even criticize each other's work. In John Hick's response to D.Z Philips' book, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*, he (Hick) acknowledges the problem of doing theodicies and also expresses the importance of criticizing other theodicists.

One of the good purposes of theodicy that Hick wrote about and in which Philips agrees with is his presupposition of the virtues that evil bring which are more valuable than virtues that are naturally created in people without effort. Hick writes, "one principle of my approach is ...the principle that virtues that have been formed within the agent as a hard-won deposit of right decisions in situations of challenge and temptation are intrinsically more valuable than ready-made virtues created within her without any effort

on her part.”¹⁰⁵ Hick claims that Philips agree with him that “the idea of ready-made virtues is incoherent.”¹⁰⁶ However, Philips’ critique of Hick’s theodicy and other theodicies is that, it “suppresses or ignores obvious examples of the disastrous effects suffering has had on human beings; the way in which it has marked them.”¹⁰⁷ This criticism that Philips made of Hick’s theodicy, is similar to Rowe’s submission earlier stated that, intense human and animal suffering could sometimes be justified but it remains an evil nevertheless. In other words, theodicists might justify reasons why God could have allowed various evils but that does not remove the effect that these evils have on human beings. The concern of atheistic scholars like Rowe and Philips or other scholars that criticizes theodicy is that even if there are rational reasons or valid arguments to support theism, the intense and horrible effect of evils on human beings and animals cannot be denied. On the act of justifying reasons for the existence of evil, Philips wonders if anyone in their right mind would say the holocaust is justified.¹⁰⁸

However, Hick disagrees with Philips that, theodicists ignore the effect of evils on human beings. In fairness to Hick, it is necessary to commend his criticism of theodicy in his book *Evil and the God of Love*.¹⁰⁹ Hick spoke of effects of evil as “purely dysteleological and destructive.”¹¹⁰ He further writes on the effects of evil:

¹⁰⁵ John Hick, “D.Z. Philips on God and Evil” *Religious Studies* 43, no.4 (December 2007): 433.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ D. Z. Philips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 67.

¹⁰⁸ Philips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*, 70.

¹⁰⁹ Reasons why we should not do Theodicy, see Marilyn McCord Adams, foreword to *Evil and the God of Love*, by John Hick, xvi-xviii. Although John Hick is a theistic scholar who has written in defense of theism on many topics and especially on the problem of evil, he also writes on some basic problems that could emerge from doing theodicy. The first problem with theodicy is that theism presents God as the perfect being who has a personal relationship with his creatures, (both humans and angels) and sin is as a result of breach in this relationship. Then the problem that emerges from doing theodicy is not

They can break their victim's spirit and cause him to curse whatever gods there may be. When a child dies of cerebral meningitis, his little personality undeveloped and his life unfulfilled leaving only an unquenchable aching void in his parent's lives: or when a charming, lively, and intelligent woman suffers from a shrinking of her brain which destroys her personality and leaves her in an asylum, barely able to recognize her nearest relatives, until death comes in middle age as a baneful blessing; or when a child is born so deformed and defective that he can never live a proper human life, but must always be an object of pity to some and revulsion to others.... When such things happen we can see no gain to the soul, whether of the victim or others, but on the contrary only a ruthlessly destructive purpose which is inimical to human values.... Instead of ennobling, affliction may crush the character and rest from it whatever virtues it possessed.¹¹¹

From the passage quoted from Hick's theodicy, it is obvious that Philips criticism of Hick and other theodicians might not be as he claims. Hick apparently did not ignore or suppress the effects of horrible and horrendous evil on human beings. Hick explains that Philips made a wrong assumption when he argues that the holocaust was justified. As far as Hick is concerned, the holocaust was not in God's plan. It was human agents who exercised their free will to commit the monstrous evil. He writes on the holocaust:

just because of the occurrences of evil but it is the problem that evil brings to the integrity of the personal relationship that God has with his creatures. Secondly, he writes on the general conception of a human being as a free agent and self-determined. He believes that the theologies that presents man as a perfect creation in a perfect environment is not correct. This is because at creation, if man was created perfect and was put in a perfect environment, there is likely hood that man will chose right even as a free agent. Such a condition will make it almost impossible to choose against God. He prefers to argue that man required ignorance at creation and as free agent, was free either to choose the awareness of God or not. Hick criticizes theodicies that intend to find the origin of evil from the fall of Adam; he considers it to be "philosophically unintelligible." Thirdly, he choose to keep side with liberal theology. This type of theology is compatible with science and evolution against some other types of theologies such as Augustine's theology that is incompatible with natural science. Hick admits that "if Augustinians posit a scientifically impossible beginning, his own soul making theodicy seems to require a scientifically incredible end. For human happily-ever-after intimacy with God is mostly, if not exclusively, post-mortem" (p. xvii). He had earlier appealed to compatibilism between religion and science where he argued that "evolution proves that evil- nature, red in tooth and claw- antedates the emergence of humankind and so cannot originate in human sin." Finally, Hick wrote on the "divine goodness and the morally outrageous," where he demands to know "how God could love created persons and still locate them in an evil-strewn world such as this." He argues that his "choice of love signals that he will not rest his theodicy on any claim that God has no obligations to treat creatures one way rather than another." He rejects Augustinian-doctrines of "hell and/or double predestination, which imply that God after all does hate something that God has made."

¹¹⁰ Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 330-331.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

What does that ultimate purpose mean for Auschwitz and Belsen and the other camps in which between 1942 and 1945, between four and six million Jewish men, women and Children were deliberately and scientifically murdered? Was this in any sense willed by God? The answer is obviously no. These events were utterly evil, wicked, devilish and, so far as the human mind can reach, unforgivable; they are wrongs that can never be righted, horror which will disfigure the universe to the end of time, and in relation to which no condemnation can be strong enough, no revulsion adequate. It would have been better – much better – if they had never happened. Most certainly God did not want those who committed these fearful crimes against humanity to act as they did. His purpose for the world was retarded by them and the power of evil within it increased...¹¹²

By way of concluding this chapter, it is obvious that Rowe's observation of intense human and animal suffering is true but his submission that they are purposeless remains debatable. If these evils are not necessarily purposeless, then it means that the first premise of his argument is not true. Furthermore, contrary to Philips' submission that theodicians make effort to justify evil hereby making them neglect the effect of evil on human beings may not be necessarily true. It is not necessarily a true submission because the act of attempting to provide answers to people's problem, which is what theodicy stands for, may not necessarily be an attempt to ignore the effects of these evils. The only condition in which theistic scholars and theodicians could have neglected human beings and animal suffering is if they had denied the occurrences of these evils.

¹¹² Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 365.

CHAPTER FOUR

Is Theism Justified in Doing Theodicy?

Theodicy is a theistic enterprise which attempts to infer reasonable framework or narration to the purpose for which God might have permitted evil. Although it is most often misrepresented with defense, it differs from defense in its framework or narration. Defense looks for a logical reason to serve as a response to the problem of evil. Before responding to the question of whether it is moral to do theodicy or not, it is necessary to address the significance of theodicy in our modern world.

The problem of evil is mainly a logical problem that atheistic philosophers use to question the existence of God. Like Rowe's evidential argument from evil, it is mainly a logical problem that represents instances of real life situations. From the distinction made between theodicy and defense, a defense seems appropriate to respond to the logical problems of evil since both share some essential properties of logic. However, theistic philosophers have sometimes used theodicy and defense interchangeably. For the purpose of this chapter, defense and theodicy will be used interchangeably as a theistic response to the problem of evil.

Importance of Theodicy in a Contemporary World

Since 9/11 attack, there has been need to put more attention into the theorization of theodicy. A day after this attack, R. Albert Mohler Jr, President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, presents a puzzle about the narration of theodicy and the experiential reaction to the reality of evil. In his address to the SBTS alumni, he writes:

We dare not speak on God's behalf to explain why he allowed these particular acts of evil to happen at this time to these persons and in this manner. Yet, at the same time, we dare not be silent when we should testify to the God of righteousness and love and justice who rules over all in omnipotence. Humility

requires that we affirm all that the Bible teaches, and go on further. There is much we do not understand. As Charles Spurgeon explained, when we cannot trace God's hand, we must simply trust his heart.¹¹³

Like many other tragedies or evils in the last two centuries, 9/11 raises the question of why a good God should have allowed that type of evil to happen to those people, and in that manner. Most of the theodicies that have been considered earlier in this work such as: free will, soul making, greater good, degree of happiness, theistic skepticism etc. will provide some form of answers to the Mohler's puzzle. But the question of the morality of doing theodicy itself remains unanswered.

Although the problem of evil remains, we cannot undermine the solutions that various theodicies have brought to our world. The simple truth to accept is that, no defense or theodicy can permanently answer the problem of evil. As many theistic scholars still agree, the problem of evil is a persistent problem for theism. Despite these problems, theism and theodicy are the available solutions to the problem of evil. Philosophers who argue against theism do not seem to explain the mystery, they only analyze the problem or create the awareness that the problem of evil exists. Theistic scholars on the other hand, make efforts to provide probable answers, solutions or probable explanations to the problem.

Theodicy provides more than logical propositions or explanations, it also gives hope to the sufferer, and care to those in need of epistemic or intellectual response to the problem of evil. Other effort from theism and theistic scholars includes: searching for moral grounds for doing theodicy, introducing the concept of God's love, as well as

¹¹³ R.A. Mohler Jr., "Truth-Telling in a Time of Tragedy: What Words Dare we Speak When we Dare not be Silent," (paper presented at the Alumni meeting of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, September 12, 2001).

focusing more on sufferers. Plantinga calls this aspect of theodicy pastoral care. With pastoral care, attention should shift from providing reasons, to offering narrations or frameworks that can heal the wounds of sufferers that either believe in God or not.

Problems Associated with Theodicies

Theodicy remains a problem as much as it could be a solution. Some philosophers argue that theodicy tends to bring more problems to the problem of evil than solution. Marilyn M. Adams and D.Z Philips seem to agree on the idea that theodicy is a failure.¹¹⁴ Gleeson Andrew writes that, “Marilyn McCord Adams agrees with D.Z Philips that instrumental theodicies is a moral failure, and that skeptical theists and others are guilty of ignoring what we know now (in this life) about the moral reality of horrendous evils to speculate about unknown ways these evils might be made sense of.”¹¹⁵

Adams rejects some instrumental theodicies. These theodicies are considered failed because they only serve the purpose of treating evil as “a logically unavoidable conditions of greater good.”¹¹⁶ Adams also argue that some instrumental theodicies only aim to justify God’s act of creating a world that is littered with horrendous evils. In his philosophy, God prefers to allow horrors of evil as a required price for good, although he also agrees with Nelson Pike on the morality of God’s actions. Adams concludes that horrendous evil that humans suffer is for a greater good, and that this experience will

¹¹⁴ Andrew Gleeson, “On Letting Go of Theodicy: Marilyn McCord Adams on God and Evil,” *Sophia* 54, no. 1 (April 2015): 2.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Adams, M. M., Ignorance, Instrumentality, compensation and the problem of evil. *Sophia*, 52(1) (2008): 7.

bring about an eternal intimacy with God.¹¹⁷ This good will even make sufferers appreciate their suffering. Gleeson rejects Adams conclusion. He believes that his conclusion is disconnected from his argument for the failure of theodicy.¹¹⁸

There are instances where theodicy is only for scholarly purpose and it falls short of meeting the need of a sufferer. For instance, of what good is theodicy to a woman who has lost her only child or to a father whose teenage girl was raped in a Christian camp? These examples of evils do not only bring an unquantifiable pain to the heart of those involved but even betrays the very standard that religion seems to uphold.

Possible concerns that theodicy raises are:

1. Theodicy seems to ignore the pain and suffering of the sufferer in cases where evil is justified as a necessary condition for good.
2. Theodicy is distanced from sufferer's real experience.
3. Theodicy raises moral questions based on the visceral experience of pain and suffering.
4. It is sometimes relevant as an academic enterprise and lacks any real life solution.
5. It does not seem to advance the purpose of theism.
6. Theodicists are merely responding to an obligation to defend their faith.
7. It sometimes presents evil as good: an example of this problem is an instance where theodicists intend to give reasons why evil could serve a good purpose.

¹¹⁷ Adams, Ignorance, Instrumentality, compensation and the problem of evil. *Sophia*, 52(1) (2008): 25.

¹¹⁸ Andrew Gleeson, "On Letting Go of Theodicy: Marilyn McCord Adams on God and Evil," 2

Theodicy is part of most world religions. This is because most religions look up to a saving God, personal or impersonal, who could give hope of a better life and who is also powerful enough to prevent suffering. It becomes a problem when a situation arises where the existence of evil or suffering becomes irreconcilable with the character of God whom they worship. But to really do justice to the evaluation of theodicy, some clarifications needed to be made. Firstly, it is the responsibility of every living religion to give explanation to why the world is the way it is. This is important because every religion appears to be sufficient enough to give an account of the past (beginning of life), present (why the world is the way it is), and the future (how the world will continue to be). Failure to cover these periods or areas of human curiosity, might undermine the plausibility of that religion, especially to its adherents or followers.

Secondly, thoughts of theodicy have to be differentiated from the act.¹¹⁹ Thoughts of theodicy “consist of fixed arguments and knowledge claims that are often abstracted from personal experience- from the act of theodicy.”¹²⁰ The act of theodicy is “the dynamic, deliberate, and conscious cognitive actions individuals undertake to reconcile their religious beliefs with experience of suffering.”¹²¹ From the distinctions made, the ‘thought’ evolves from the ‘act.’ The thought seems to be an outcome of the act and it (thought) provides a theoretical understanding of how an individual can accomplish the act of theodicy, and why theodicy is the way it is.

¹¹⁹ Shane Sharp, “Monotheistic Theodicy as Imaginary Face-work.” *Sociological Forum* 29, no. 4 (December 2014): 873-875.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Theodicy as a Face-work: A Scientific/Psychological Approach to Theodicy

Using Goffman's "face and face-work" Shane Sharp argues that theodicy has an imaginary dimension for the purpose of performing face-work which he believes is for the purpose of saving other people or imagined person's actions and performance.¹²² Applying this to theodicy, he explains the reasons why believers who are victims of various evil, seem to develop a face-work for God. From an analysis and interview with victims of various evils, he concludes that their idea of God combines with a sense of responsibility to defend their faith. With the general idea of God, notion of free will and sin, and the knowledge of Satan, believers tend to present God as a morally perfect being, usually exempting God from the cause of any evil, hereby making God innocent of their sufferings.¹²³ This face saving account provides a cognition that helps reconfirm believers' consistency and relief from cognitive imbalance incited by their pains and sufferings. Sharp interviewed Christians who were victims of various forms of evil and he concluded that these believers' fall in either of the three categories: "fidelity to a higher principle, ultimate benefit, and shifting blame."¹²⁴ When believers suffer, they bear the burden to defend God hereby making them look for other places or reasons why the evil could have befallen them. They believe that God is morally perfect and good, and cannot be the cause of their problems. They also believe that since God has allowed the evil to happen to them, there would be an ultimate benefit that will accompany their

¹²² Sharp, "Monotheistic Theodicy as Imaginary Face-work," 876.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

suffering. Lastly, some believers prefer to blame themselves or perpetrators of these evils as the cause of their sufferings.

What does Theodicy Intend to Accomplish?

Since theodicy is a probable reason why God could have allowed evil, theodicy could be useful to respond to the problem of evil either in its logical or evidential form:

- a. A theodocist should begin by defining the character of God to remove any form of ambiguity. This includes the need to clarify the fact that God being omnipotent and omniscient does not imply that God can do anything whatsoever even if it contradicts his nature, but that he can do that which is not contradictory to logical possibility. God will not do something that is logically contradictory to his character.
- b. God has to create a world with moral evil where morally free agents can also express their freedom. God would not have created a world with free agents without moral evil.
- c. If he removes evil, there would not be an actual world where human beings will be functional. One case logically makes it impossible for the other case to be possible.
- d. The concept of morality makes it possible to discuss the deontological framework of ethics in relation to human free will. The principle of morality makes it such that one cannot be held responsible either for what he did not do or from what the antecedent condition could not have allowed him to refrain from doing. God has made it possible for human beings to make choices, perform an action or do otherwise; hereby making them morally accountable for their actions.

- e. If God has created free agents, one might want to ask if God is free. God is not bounded by any laws or antecedent conditions, but he cannot create a world where there will be free agent without moral evil.

Evils from Theodicy

D. Z. Philips is a major anti-theodical scholar who sees theodicy as worse than the known evils. He believes that theodicy betrays those who suffer from evil. He argues that theodicy does not make any moral sense. This is because there is no justification of any form for God to allow his creatures to suffer in order to achieve any purpose. Philips's position is that theodicy is an instrument of oppression that deliberately suppresses and ignores the disastrous impact or effects of suffering on human beings.¹²⁵ He believes that God lacks any form of moral perfection or goodness. This is because the theodicist explains that God had to inflict, allow, or permit evil in order for him to bring about some good which in turn redeems the evil. If God shares the same moral community with humans,¹²⁶ then there is no justification for him to allow disastrous effects of suffering on his creatures.

Philips argues that those that would have allowed events that brings pain and suffering are callous and insensitive to the human suffering. He also explains that evil seems to be “an unavoidable consequences of God’s purposes.” And that without evil, God cannot simply achieve good. He posits that this is a major problem for theism because theodicists use the platform of theodicy to present evil as good or to make evil

¹²⁵ D. Philips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God* (London: SCM press), 63-71.

¹²⁶ There is a conception that God shares the same moral community with humans. And it this conception that accounts for how we draw our moral standards from God and God is our symbol of moral perfection. See Trakakis, “Theodicy: The solution to the problem of Evil or Part of the problem,” *Sophia* 2008 47:161.

look like good. For him, justifying evil is another type of evil. The work of theodocists where by evil is been described as a necessary condition for good had made evil look morally familiar with us. Terrence Tilley also writes that “I have come to see theodicy as a discourse practice which disguises real evils while those evils continue to afflict people. In short, engaging in the discourse practice of theodicy creates evils.”¹²⁷

Philips is especially critical of John Hick’s “Soul Making Theodicy,” saying that Hick’s theodicy is self-defeating and lacks character. He writes:

We are told that in allowing evils to exist, God is providing the conditions needed to give us the choice of moulding our characters in one direction or another. This offer of God’s morally sufficient reason suffers from a fatal objection. To make the development of one’s character an aim to ensure that the development will not take place. This is because the endeavor so conceived is self-defeating: it lacks character.¹²⁸

Hasker objects to Philips’ criticism and submits that his (Philips’) argument fails out rightly, and that the God he refers to is not the same as the Christian God. To begin with, Hasker explains that God cannot be “subjectable to our moral judgement.”¹²⁹ He also objects to the notion that God is a member of our moral community. This is because if God is considered to be a member of our moral community, then he would be like any other moral agent that can be subjected to moral evaluations. Hasker explains that God does not have moral limitations, is not limited in knowledge like humans, and his wisdom is infinite, it follows that it does not make sense for a human mind to want to judge him.

¹²⁷ Terrence Tilley, *The Evils of Theodicy*, 3 and 219.

¹²⁸ Philips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*, 57 and Philips, D.Z. “William Hasker’s Avoidance of the Problems of Evil and God (or: on Looking outside the Igloo,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 62, no. 1 (August 2007): 33-42.

¹²⁹ William Hasker, “D.Z. Phillips’ problems with evil and with God,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 61(3) (2007), 156.

The human mind cannot possibly understand his ideas. Like Pike, Hasker also argues that God has morally sufficient reasons for his actions.

Morality of Theodicies

Soul Making Theodicy

In his soul making theodicy, Hick explains that man is created in such a way that his moral character will be developed through experience. Man is created in God's image but for him to reflect God's likeness, he has to develop, which can only come from experiences. This experience however, can only be derived from the existence of evils in the world, hereby making evil a necessary condition for soul making.

The soul making theodicy is for the development of God's children. According to John Hick, God has created us in his image. But the sufferings, evils and harsh nature of the world is meant to give us an experience for character development in such a way that will take us to the position of God's likeness. Hick agrees that the major problem to the theodicy consists in "the fact that instead of serving a constructive purpose, pain and misery seem to be distributed in random and meaningless ways, with the result that suffering is often underserved and often falls upon men in amounts exceeding anything that could be rationally intended"¹³⁰

Life beyond the grave seems to be an integral part of Christian theodicy. If there is any resolution to the interplay between good and evil or the reason why God permits evil, it has to be beyond this world. God has a purpose for good and evil and this purpose is beyond the grave. If the Christian theodicy is mostly for life beyond the grave then the

¹³⁰ John Hick, "The Soul Making Theodicy," in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*. 3rd edition, edited by William L. Rowe and William J. Wainwright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 256.

purpose of evil in this world is for life beyond grave. Therefore, the purpose of evil in this world is life beyond grave.

The main problem in the argument is that the soul making theodicy seems to be an explanation or solution to the problem of suffering in this world but this solution is reserved for afterlife alone. The argument itself does not guarantee afterlife and if it does not, there is possibility that some people's suffering will be in vain. This is because the requirement to be in God's likeness is not to suffer alone. Also, there are instances of intense suffering that might even not fit into Hick's description of soul-making. Evil is unevenly and randomly distributed in the universe. What make some people deserve some types of suffering than others (kidnap, rape, holocaust, war, famine, etc.)? How will suffering be quantified? Theodicy is meant to be an explanatory solution to the problem of evil but the problem that arises from theodicy necessitate the need to make an inquiry into the morality of the art of doing theodicy.

Skeptical Theism

Skeptical Theism as a type of theodicy, comprise of two components: skepticism and theism.¹³¹ The main idea of skepticism is to mainly explain the possibility that we cannot think that we are aware of all the possible goods and evils that exist.¹³² Similarly, we should not think that there exists an entailment relationship between the possible goods that there are, and the permission or prevention are representatives of the possible evils and goods that there are.¹³³ The theism component holds to the traditional

¹³¹ Peter Van Inwagen, "Modal epistemology," *Philosophical Studies*, 92, 67–84. 1998 and Scott Coley, "Skeptical Theism Incompatible with Theodicy." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 77, no.1 (February 1, 2015): 53.

¹³²Coley, "Skeptical Theism Incompatible with Theodicy," 54-55.

¹³³ Coley, "Skeptical Theism Incompatible with Theodicy," 54-55.

understanding of theism that portrays God's power, wisdom and love. The skeptical component provides the theistic component with the philosophical tools of skepticism in such a way that the skeptical theist can still maneuver the concept of theodicy with skepticism.

The idea of skeptical theism provides a platform that could probably make theodicy less worthy of serving its purpose.¹³⁴ For instance, let's assume that a skeptical theist argues that there are no reasons to think that the possible goods that there are, might not be the only goods for which God could have permitted E1 and E2, however, we should not also think that God is justified in permitting E1 and E2. The same reasoning that produce the thought that there are probably more goods than we think there are, could be the same reasoning for which God is not justified for permitting E1 and E2. As much as this could be a probable response to the problem of evil, it does not seem to correspond or track with the reality of what theodicy stands for.

Skepticism is known for providing a result whose domain makes its induction less probable than what could have been justifiable a priori, given the possibility of our intuitive introspection. It could also imply that what skepticism could probably justify is a subset of what is considered to be impossible hereby making it inconsistent with what theodicy stands for. Theodicy's main goal is not to provide more platforms or state of affairs for doubt or the unknown, but rather to provide answers to some problems that have to do with the reasons why God could permit evil.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Is God Morally Guilty for Permitting Evil?

In Atle Sovik's response to critics of theodicies, he begins by stating that moral judgement is dependent on what is true.¹³⁵ He argues that if theodicies' main purpose is to search out for what is true, then "a moral dismissal of all theodicies for moral reasons is even less substantiated since it fails to recognize the difference between searching for the truth and communicating the truth. In his argument, he believes that searching for the truth about God is not immoral."¹³⁶ If theodicy is all about searching for truth, then it is a moral enterprise.

Most critics of theodicy take for granted that God exists and yet argue against that submission. But If God exists, then some conditions should follow. For instance, if God exists then he is the being than which nothing greater can be conceived, and he is also an infinite God. If he has all those characters, then he cannot be judged. He is infinite and we cannot understand his ways with a finite mind.

Secondly, God could do either of two things. He could have either created moral agents that have free will and hereby permitting evil, or not permit evil by not creating morally free agent. Feinberg argues that God cannot remove evil without removing some other positive goods along with it. For God to accomplish some good, the existence of evil in the world is inevitable. On this ground, God cannot be said to be guilty of permitting evil in this world. He permits evil in order to achieve some more morally good purposes. Feinberg writes:¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Atle O. Sovik, "Why Almost all Moral Critiques of Theodicies is Misplaced," *Religious Studies* 44 no. 4, (December 2008): 479-481.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*, 490.

..... God isn't free both to remove evil and to accomplish the other positive goal in our world. Hence, he isn't guilty for failing to do both. For example, God can either remove evil or give us free will. If he removes evil, he isn't guilty for failing to give us free will. If he gives us free will, he isn't guilty for failing to remove evil. He can't do both conjointly, so he isn't guilty for failing to do both.¹³⁸

A state of affairs where God will remove evil and give free might lead to a contradiction. Although he is omnipotent, he will not do things that are contradictory. It could be reasonable to conclude then that God is morally justified for permitting evil in our world.

From the point of investigating the probity of theodicy, the role of God comes first. From Feinberg's argument, God is morally not guilty for permitting evil. Considering Rowe's evidential argument from evil, God could not have brought about a contradictory state of affairs in order to prevent instances of intense suffering. It is one thing for an instance of evil to be pointless, and it is another for God to have allowed it. The idea of pointless could mean that the event is without purpose, which is probably not the case. That we do not know the purpose does not mean that it is purposeless. We probably do not know this purpose. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, something or an event is pointless if that particular thing or event has "no meaning, purpose, or effect."¹³⁹ From this definition of what pointless is, there is no such thing as pointless when it comes to evil. The instance of evil (E1 and E2) that Rowe inferred in his argument, counters what the word pointless means. E1 and E2, have meaning, have purpose, although we might not be aware of their purposes, and it also has effect and this effect could be the outcome of the evil. This could imply that Rowe was begging the

¹³⁸ Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*, 490.

¹³⁹ *Merriam-Webster Dictionaries*, "pointless" accessed March 24, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pointless>.

question by definition from his argument against theism on his evidential argument. He could have also committed the fallacy of sweeping generalization by making an inference from an instance of evil to a general application. His argument consists of some form of ambiguity when he moves from one instance of what he perceived to be an intense suffering to a general application where he concludes that God does not exist, based on one instance of occurrence of evil.

While some might agree that God is not guilty for permitting evil, another aspect of the argument is: why did God make the option to give free will and not the option to remove evil? How would a world without evil look like? If God had removed evil and free will, there is a high probability that the same question will still be asked that, why did God remove free will? A theistic response could be that it would have been a good world without evil but it is probably a better world with free will. The good present seems to overbalance or counterbalance the evidential evil that Rowe propounded and all other forms of evil that there are. Therefore, God's judgement of permitting evil probably brought about a better world and this option is a morally perfect option. Hence, it is moral to do theodicy. Nelson Pike posits that God has a "morally sufficient reason for his actions."¹⁴⁰

Evaluating the Morality of the Theodicy

If God is morally perfect and is justified in permitting evil, how could we evaluate the theodicy who defends God? Since we have justified God's decision to allow evil as a morally perfect decision, it is the religious and intellectual responsibility of a theodicy to make a defense for God, by arguing that despite the existence of all forms of evil, God is

¹⁴⁰ Nelson Pike, "Hume and Evil" in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Adams, M. M. and Adams, R. M., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 41.

omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good, perfect, and loving. God cannot remove evil and still achieve this actual world. He had probably provided the best possible actual world. He cannot remove evil and not remove free evil at the same time and in the same way. Since he cannot do both, he is not morally guilty nor does he cease to be God for not bringing about a contradictory state of affairs. Summarily, the theodicy only uses theodicy as an instrument to justify the act of God.

Victims of Evil and Theodicy

It is very difficult for a sufferer to grasp the importance of encouragement, consolation, or theodical explanations as to why God could have permitted the evil that might have occurred. This could be that the sufferer is hurt, shocked, disappointed, or discouraged. At this point, the whole message of theodicy is of little or no relevance to a sufferer. It is to this end that we argue that theodicy should be able to offer more than rational arguments for the acts of God. When tragedy or evil occurs, most of the time, the people involved are not interested in knowing that God could have allowed the evil for him to achieve a greater good. It usually requires some time of reflection and encouragement for a sufferer to be ready to know the cause of such tragedy or other probable causes.

Although God might have performed his responsibility to ensure that he creates an actual world where there are moral agents, the effect of occurrences of evil make some people to question the goodness of God. Some victims of evil live with pain and suffering, while some even die horrible deaths.

At this juncture, we might have to put all the theodicies together in order to formulate a reasonable response. The hope of afterlife from Hick's *Soul Making*

Theodicy, could be one of the answers. If there is an afterlife, then God would probably meet the needs of victims of different evil. Adams argues that theodicy is used as an instrument to serve as logical compensation in order to vindicate God and present him as morally perfect.¹⁴¹ In her final analysis, she explains that the assurance of the eternal intimacy with God in the afterlife serve as defeaters to the various evils that exist, hereby preserving the conception of God's goodness and love.

Secondly, since the misuse of free will can account for some instances of evil, moral agents are to be blamed for such evils. Perhaps, if some victims of intense suffering are given the options of reviewing God's decision to grant free will or remove evil, they could have probably preferred to be agents that can make free choices, rather than not experience evil but also not have freedom to choose. The good of freedom seems to override the problem of evil. Perhaps this could be one of the reasons why Adams argues that, there will be a time when the victims of evil would stop wishing that they had never suffered.

Thirdly, it is possible that the maxims of morality could be traced to the existence of some instances of evil. Hasker argues that God could undermine morality if he completely prevents evil. To what extent this argument is valid cannot be verified. But there are instances where some occurrences of evil have served some positive goods for those that were spectators or witnesses of such evils. Spectators or witnesses of such evil cannot be limited to those that were present at such events. With writing, modernization, civilization, information technology, and the internet, the scope of spectators have greatly expanded. The world is now a global village and information is being reported and

¹⁴¹ M. M. Adam, *Horrendous evils and the goodness of God*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press 1999), 32-38.

preserved in different micro-components of technological appliances. Information can go around the world in less than one minute. So, God could allow the occurrence of an evil to serve a purpose of cautioning, and character development for others. Even instances of evil that have been recorded thousands of years ago are still being preserved today, and billions of people learn from it. While this argument might not serve any good for some victims, Hasker may be correct in arguing that morality is being preserved.

Finally, the universe has sustained itself even with the amount and types of evil that exists. The amount of evil that exists could have necessitated the problem of evil, but the universe has not collapsed into chaos or ceased to exist. Scientists explain that there is a minimum amount of pain the body needs for the human nervous system to be active. Some people even suffer from their inability to experience a minimum amount of pain. According to Hasker, evil remains a necessary factor for the universe to continue to exist.

Christian Reflection: What could be the Moral Basis for Theodicy?

Let's assume that God permitting the crucifixion of Jesus is such a unique trauma and evil, which comprise of an example of horrendous pain and suffering. Why should God have permitted or even ordained such evil? Could it be that the outcome of this evil was meant to bring a greater good? Is God justified in permitting this evil? Whatever the answers to these questions, it was a type of evil that Christian theism justifies its purpose. This purpose is conceived to be of a greater good. From the perspective of Christian theism, this was a great evil from which the entire humanity was going to be saved. It brought about salvation and regeneration. From this illustration, we can build an argument for the morality of theodicy, since God is morally perfect and his reasons for

permitting evil should be considered morally perfect, even if we do not have a clear understanding of it.

The probable moral base upon which theodicy can be built is the goodness and love of God. Although there is evil in this world, God did not create evil. Evil is simply the absence of good or the privation of good. Therefore, it is not appropriate to think of God as the author of evil, pain, and suffering. At the same time, God is never overwhelmed by the damage done by evil. He can also turn it around and use it for the advantages of his creatures. Suffering can as well be an opportunity for God to work, as he uses these evils to bring about greater goods.

It is also important to point out that there is no pointless or gratuitous evil in the Christian theodicy. Everything has purpose and could be for a better outcome. Using an instance of Rowe's example of a fawn that suffered and died, it appears pointless in an atheistic argument but a theistic scholar believes that God could have allowed it for a greater good that we are probably unaware of. Evil as an outcome of a cause could not have happened without a sufficient reason why it should occur. One could ask for what probable good the fawn could have suffered and died? It is not going to be accurate to give a specific reason, but it is not unreasonable to say that it could have been for a greater good in the animal kingdom. Perhaps, its death is necessary for other animals to survive. Perhaps, the fawn was going to cause a bad or worse evil to other lower animals. The point to be made here is that, no event is pointless.

Rowe could argue that the death of *Sue* (E2) was undoubtedly pointless, since it is of no good for her or her mother, or other members of her family. Of what good could the death of an innocent girl possibly be? There is no doubt that the death of *Sue* caused a lot

of pain, and even cause some people to doubt the existence of the omnipotent God. But no one can claim to come close to the wisdom of God. If God exists, then it is possible that he has all the qualities ascribed to him: goodness, love, wisdom, patience, power etc. Since God exists and he allowed it, then it is for a greater good that we may not know of. Probably it is not for the perpetrator or the victim herself, it could be for someone or a group of persons other than those involved.

For what reason or good could God have permitted the biblical suffering of Job? Those that lived during the time of Jesus, probably do not have access to the prophecy that Jesus was going to be crucified. They could have imagined why such a unique trauma and a terrible suffering could have happened to those peaceful and blameless people, like Job and Jesus. Perhaps if Rowe had lived in the time of Jesus, he could have also called it a pointless suffering. But it turns out not to be pointless in the real sense of it. Probably, Christians today believed that Jesus suffered such an underserved death for billions of people to be saved from sin. Christianity could make the claim today, simply because of the bigger picture we could see, that was probably not available to those that lived before us. Perhaps if we could see the greater picture of the entire narration of human suffering and instances of evil, we could conclude that the bigger picture could provide better answers for us.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary

The probity of theodicy is simply an investigation into the morality of doing theodicy. This research work is not to reject or criticize any particular theodicy but to investigate the morality of the act. We have discovered that theodicy is both a religious duty and a moral responsibility that can be used to unveil the mystery of evil and the existence of God. It presents a rational and logical reasons why God could have permitted evil. God permitting evil is not just a moral act but it also a necessary good. It is a moral act for God to create moral agents that could make free choices. It is also a better decision for human beings to be morally responsible for their actions.

Plantinga's free will defense presents a defence against the logical problem of evil which holds that the co-existence of evil and God is not contradictory. Plantinga appeals to the definition of omnipotent which explains that God being omnipotent does not imply that God can do anything, but that he can do things that are not contradictory to his nature. In the light of this, he explains that God cannot both create morally free agents and also remove evil. Moral evil is as a result of the misuse of free will. From the perspective of morality, God is a morally perfect God and his option to create human beings as free agent is a morally perfect decision. The free will defense is considered to be a successful argument.

Another type of evil is natural evil. This type of evil does not necessary involve the activity of moral agents. Critics of theism believe that even if free will defense is successful against logical problem evil, it seems to be inadequate for natural evil. Natural evils are natural disasters and the moral agents cannot be held responsible for its

occurrence, although some theistic scholars argue otherwise. This type of evil poses threat to theistic belief. But we briefly responded in this research that natural evils are effects of natural laws. They exist because of the natural laws that sustain the universe. Natural evils will cease to exist only if natural laws cease. But natural laws cannot cease because those laws are the reasons why the universe or nature exists. The laws of gravity, motion, heat, gaseous laws, kinetic laws, magnetic laws, etc. are the reasons why the earth rotates, we have rainfall, the wind can blow, there is change and time etc. All these laws serve good purposes but they are also responsible for earthquakes, flood, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc. Although these evils occur, it is probable that the good that the laws of nature brings supersedes the effects of natural evils.

Rowe argued against the likelihood of theism using an argument from the evidence of evil. In his evidential argument, he uses an instance of moral evil and another instance of natural evil. His inductive argument was meant to demonstrate that the probability that God exists is very low, hereby making theism most unlikely. His intention was to use some instances of suffering to make a general case against theism, given the types, amount, particulars, and distribution of evil in the world. He argues that there are no good reasons why God could have permitted evil. The first instance was a case of a fawn that was caught up in fire and suffered for some days before it later died. While the second case was that of a 5 year old girl that was raped and strangled to death. Rowe's argument is that these are instances of intense suffering and that there are no good reasons we know for which an omnipotent and omniscient God could have allowed them to have happened. Rowe concludes that there is a high level of probability that God does not exist. Theistic scholars respond to Rowe's argument in several ways. These responses are either

theodicies or defense. But a common response is that there are probably God-good purposes for which he could have allowed those intense suffering and that we probably could not comprehend or know these good reasons. That we could not see these good does not mean that they do not exist, perhaps, they have low seeability. If God prevents some evils, and allows some, how will he draw the line between evils to prevent and those to allow? God's purpose for allowing evils are for good purposes, although these purposes could be beyond our ken, they serve good reasons.

Theodicy helps to explain the reason why evil is in the world in relation to our understanding of God and His character as an all-powerful and wholly good God. The whole problem of evil is an attempt to ask the questions of why evil exists in the world and how it relates to human and animal suffering.

Theism teaches that God is a personal God, at least in monotheistic religions. This implies that God is both transcendental and immanent. He relates with his creatures and also interacts with the world in such a way that he intervenes in their affairs or at least, had intervened at some point. Therefore, God is justified for whatever happens in the world for many reasons:

- a. The human mind is limited or finite and cannot claim to know all the reasons for which God might have permitted some or all cases of intense suffering.
- b. The goods for which God permitted some sufferings may not correspond or resonate with human conception or understanding of good.
- c. Purposes for which God might have permitted evil may be far beyond the ken of human beings' knowledge.
- d. God's judgement is perfect.

From this conception of God's perfection, it is not reasonable to want to judge God or question his judgment since human knowledge is limited. However, there are still a lot of unanswered questions, especially in regards to why there is so much suffering. Since we do not know enough to judge the reason why there is so much suffering, why do theistic scholars think they know enough to do theodicy?

Some critics of theodicy believe that theodicy is a failed enterprise. Their main argument is that given the character of God from theistic perspectives, there could not be any justifiable reason for defending God. They believe that the orthodox understanding of the character of God betrays the enterprise of theodicy.

Conclusion

Philosophers who criticize theodicy believe that God could have created a better world, either with minimum amount of evil or even without evil at all. But our overall evaluation shows that there cannot be a better option than for God to create this world where free agents can indeed act freely, even if it can also make them commit moral evil. However, it would not have been a better option for God not to create this actual world with its natural laws, and in which free agents are free to make free choices. By so doing, God acted morally and provided the best possible world for his creatures. It is also a moral responsibility for theodicists to provide probable reason for which God could have allowed evil. Theodicists who construct theodicy should endeavor make their explanations with love, compassion, empathy, and humility. By so doing, theodicy will not appear to be at a distance from the visceral experience of the sufferer, and it will not also appear to ignore the effect of evil on the sufferers.

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