



My God, Where Are You? : A Philosophical Exposé of the Problem of Evil

Eyo Okon Ebiefie
Department of Religious and Cultural Studies
Akwa Ibom State University
Obio Akpa Campus
eyoebiefie4@yahoo.com (08027683431)

&

Associate Professor Dominic Umoh
Department of Religious and Cultural Studies
Akwa Ibom State University
Obio Akpa Campus
dominicumoh@aksu.edu.ng

&

Asukwo Edet Oko, Ph.D
Department of Religious and Cultural Studies
Akwa Ibom State University
Obio Akpa Campus
asukwooko@aksu.edu.ng

Abstract

The topic of our paper tends to suggest the cry of distress of an aggrieved creature, most probably a believer. The address, “My God”, says it all. The individual in question very obviously seems to be a trustful, but disillusioned believer in God’s merciful help, but from whom, unfortunately, God appears to have hidden His face. The believer’s hope and sincere whole-hearted trust seems to have been dashed on the rock. In the face of some human miseries in the world He created and found to be good, God’s silence and inaction seem totally and irredeemably unjustifiable and unacceptable. Blatant injustice between humans, violation of human rights with impunity and other social injustices, brutalities of wars and natural disasters as well as atmospheric calamities, are provocative to the human rationality and injurious to his faith whose eyes and heart are always fixed on the Lord, especially in moments of utter helplessness. The silence of God in the face of such calamities becomes more excruciating than the problems themselves. In the nutshell, this is



the problem of evil. It concerns the believers more than the non-believers who can simply capitalize on such divine nonchalant attitude to pronounce God non-existent. Why should the nations say: “Where is their God?”. Our methodology is critically explorative.

Keywords: God, Human Suffering, Silence, Existence

Introduction

One of the best ways to introduce this write-up, I think, is to consider the frame of mind of someone in the hands of kidnappers in the middle of an unknown jungle, littered with corpses. The individual spontaneously exclaims: “Jesus!” and in response he receives a machet-cut on the back, with a pistol pointed at his head, together with the threat that any more mention of that “foolish name” will bring an end to his infidel life on earth. More often than not, at such moments, the expected swift intervention of the Almighty and all-loving God seems very illusive. At such enigmatic point, God tending to turn deaf ears to the plies of presumed beloved son or daughter, is to say the least most distressful and troubling to a philosophic mind.

Human Suffering is a day-to-day experience, especially in today’s Nigeria. This suffering is intensified by corruption, crime, social disorder and the weakening of traditional and moral systems of regulation in Nigerian society (Edem & Udom, 2024). But in general, human suffering varies in types and intensity depending on the epoch in history, geo-political location, social context, race, religious and cultural inclinations. Sufferings can also be classified in terms of their brutality, the worst of which is a torturous and excruciating massacre. The whole of these goes by the philosophical name: The Problem of Evil. The problem of evil is the philosophical dilemma of reconciling human suffering and the existence of evil with the silence of an omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient God. In the nutshell, it brings into focus the apparent non-existence of God insinuated by His inaction in the face of the sufferings of His innocent creatures; helpless victims in the hands of heartless, barbaric fellow human beings and infernal natural calamities. Philosophically, the problem of evil has no justifiable answer. Logically, an adamant atheist would argue right away: “If at all God exists, he is guilty.” The problem is an omnipotence and suffering paradox.

Concepts



On the principal key words in our write-up, “evil” stands out conspicuously. The term “evil” is equivocal in meaning and therefore has an extensive applicability of meanings that cannot be brushed aside, depending on the milieu.

Since World War 11, moral, political, and legal philosophers have become increasingly interested in the concept of evil. This interest has been partly motivated by ascriptions of “social scientists, journalists, and politicians as they try to understand and respond to various atrocities and horrors, such as genocides, terrorist attacks, mass murders, and tortures and killing sprees by psychopathic serial killers. It seems that we cannot capture the moral significance of these actions and their perpetrators by calling them ‘wrong’ or ‘bad’ or even ‘very, very wrong’ or very, very bad.’ We need the concept of evil.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/concept-evil> (Retrieved March 30 2023)

In general, and from the above citation, evil stands out as something exceptionally obnoxious. It can be considered as something pernicious, undesirable, causing repulsion and therefore offensive. Evil is disagreeable, wicked, life-threatening and awful. In morality it is something morally reprehensible and sinful. It is the facts of suffering, calamity, distress, sorrow, adversity and villainy. “Evil is usually thought of as that which is morally wrong, sinful, or wicked; however, the word *evil* can also refer to anything that causes harm, with or without the moral dimension”.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/definition-of-evil.html>

There are two concepts of evil: the broad and the narrow concepts. The broad concept concerns any bad state of affairs, wrongful action, or character flaw. Examples in this category of evil can be a simple stomach upset, sleepless night or even harmless lie. Evil in the broad sense includes all natural and moral evils, which tend to be the sort of evil referenced in philosophy and theological. Such is the onus of our discussion in this write-up.

In contrast to the broad concept of evil, the narrow concept of evil picks out only the most morally despicable sorts of actions, characters, events, etc. As Marcus Singer puts it “‘evil’ [in this sense] ... is the worst possible term of opprobrium imaginable” (Singer 2004, 185). Since the narrow concept of evil involves moral condemnation, it is appropriately ascribed only to moral agents and their actions. For example, if only human beings are moral agents, then only human beings can perform evil actions. Evil in this narrower sense is more often meant when the term ‘evil’ is used in contemporary moral, political, and legal contexts.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/concept-evil> (Retrieved March 30 2023)



An important remark about evil in any of the above senses is that evil is not “a thing”, an ontological entity as man or a palpable substance like a tree or an animal; it is not a “Being” in the metaphysical sense of the world. That means one cannot see evil taking a walk on the road. This was an epochal breakthrough of St. Augustine which set him free from the error of Manicheanism, the stance that there were two warring forces in the universe: one good the other evil. (Saint Augustine’s *Confessions*). Evil in a general sense is defined as **the opposite or absence of good**. It can be an extremely broad concept, although in everyday usage it is often more narrowly used to talk about profound wickedness and against common good. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evil. Evil is real, but it is not *a real thing*. It is not subjective, and yet it is not a substance.

The Omni-Qualities of God

Of all religions in the world, none claims total ignorance of its deity. All religions claim to know its god, no matter how minute the knowledge is. Such knowledge emanates from the self-disclosure of the Sacred, such disclosure is popularly called revelation. Revelations lead to encounters with the deity or what is called in philosophy of religion religious experience. Religious experience occurs because the deity has made itself available. Hence religious experience reveals not only the deity to the extent that the deity decides to divulge itself, but his nature: the qualities or characteristics of its being. These qualities are what are called the divine attributes, which must touch on what the deity is, what it likes or dislikes from adorers; what believers and worshippers stand to benefit from such relationship with the deity. This relationship is what is called “Religion” in philosophy of religion. Attributes are therefore “the perfections of God ... according to what we are capable of conceiving, (which) flow necessarily from God’s essence.” Bouyer (1963:87)

If all these awareness about the deity were not assured, then religion would be a sheer empty, profitless adventure and those involved in it would be the most unfortunate and pitiable of men.

Under this heading, we undertake to expose the attributes of the Christian God, but with great emphasis on those qualities that concern our topic, The Problem of Evil. The attributes of God are the qualities or characteristics that describe His nature and being. Different religions and traditions may have different views on what these attributes are and how they are expressed. A W.



Pink outlines about eighteen attributes of the Christian God in his renowned mouthpiece: *The Attributes of God*, which was first published in 1930 and reprinted in 1993. His work outlines the following attributes among others as appertaining to God in the Christian religion: “Solitariness, decree, Knowledge, foreknowledge, supremacy, sovereignty, immutability etc. <https://www.chapellibrary.org/pdf/books/aogo.pdf>

Of all those qualities attributed to God, three are outstandingly relevant to our paper and they are always expressed in their superlatives. They are in the superlative because such characteristics are equally found in human beings, but in a lesser and distorted measure. They concern divine power expressed as Omnipotence, divine knowledge christened Omniscience and God’s goodness which is above all other loves, named Omnibenevolence. These are what gave rise to our sub-topic: “The Omni-Qualities” or “Omni attributes” of God. The first part of the word is omni-, which simply means all, of all things, in all ways, in all places. The most common objection to the assertion that God is omnibenevolent, as well as omnipotent and omniscient, is the problem of evil. If God is all-knowing and all-powerful and perfectly good, why does evil exist? Philosophers debate this question endlessly. [slife.org/omnibenevolence/](https://www.life.org/omnibenevolence/)

Omnipotence

Divine omnipotence implies that more than all other world authorities and might; God is above all and superlatively powerful. The word “omnipotence” is a compound, consisting of the prefix “omni,” meaning all, and the root “potent,” meaning powerful. Put together, one has the literal meaning of the term: God is omnipotent; meaning, He is all-powerful. He is “God Almighty”, God has all power. His power is infinite, and unlimited. He can do “all things” and “everything”. As Margaret Minnicks would contend: Omnipotence signifies the power to do anything at any time. That quality belongs to someone who has unlimited power. We watch superheroes and admire their strength and ability to do incredible things, but we know that power as fictitious. The power of God is real. Therefore, God can be described as omnipotent. Embedded in the definition of omnipotent or omnipotence include the following things: i) God is able to do anything that he chooses to do. ii) God is not prevented from doing what is in accordance with His



own nature.iii)God has the power to do all things.iv). Humans cannot compare to the power of God.

letterpile.com June, 22 2018

Omniscience

The omniscience of God refers to the immeasurable knowledge, wisdom and intelligence of God. God knows everything. This attribute covers the intelligence of God as unlimited; his awareness of past, present and future events. It is in this regard that God is called the *Eternal Now*; because nothing escapes his grasp and grip in knowledge.

Omniscience describes God who knows everything there is to know without any restrictions when it comes to knowledge. Only God has that attribute. Omniscience is the theological term that refers to God's superior knowledge and wisdom. God knows what we think even before our thoughts are formed in our mind. God knows what we will say before the words are on our tongue, according to Psalm 139:1-6 and 13-16.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

In the history of academics, many thinkers are described as geniuses and wisdom incarnate. Yet they do not know everything about everything and so none claims to be omniscient like God who is not limited in any area of knowledge. King Solomon considered as uniquely wise even by the Bible and Albert Einstein were geniuses, yet not omniscient. Omniscience means “maximal knowledge”. However, note must be taken that as with other omni- qualities, *maximal* here does not mean unlimited in the literary sense of the word. It rather means “limited “in the sense of “God knowing what is knowable”. This is the position of the twenty-first century *Freewill Theism* by scholars like William Hasker, according to whom, God cannot know the impossible. Within this view, future events that depend upon choices made by individuals with free will are unknowable until they occur. An assertion that there is something God cannot know, will certainly crack the brains of modern charismatic’s. At any rate, this is beyond the scope of this present paper.

Omnibenevolence

This divine perfection portrays God as a Father of infinite goodness, rich in mercy and abounding in love.



*The word **omnibenevolent** comes from the Latin word **omni**, meaning “all,” and the word **benevolent**, meaning “good” or “charitable.” When we say that God is omnibenevolent, we are saying that God is absolutely good and that no action or motive or thought or feeling or anything else about Him is not purely good. He is “all-good.”*

slife.org/omnibenevolence/

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Omnibenevolence is defined as **unlimited or infinite benevolence**. The term is a technical word primarily used within academic literature on the philosophy of religion, mainly in context of the problem of evil even though within the said contexts the phrases "perfect goodness" and "moral perfection" are often preferred because of the problems in defining what exactly makes up “infinite benevolence”.

<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/>

Some philosophers have argued that it is impossible, or perhaps improbable, for a deity to exhibit such a property alongside omniscience and omnipotence, as a result of the problem of evil. If one may ask: Why the prefix “Omni-” before the attributes of God? Dondonie Debord explains that

Since God is a se or independent in his existence, perfect, simple, and infinite, then he must have all good attributes without measure and without weakness. These foundational doctrines of God’s nature form the foundation of the more familiar attributes such as omniscience and omnipresence. The omni—ness of God is the result of his perfection, infinity, and simplicity. Since God is without composition, then the divine nature is indivisible. Since God’s simple nature is infinite, then God is infinite in every way in which he might be described. Finally, God’s simple infinity is also perfect. Therefore, it is only logical to expect God to be omnipresent, omniscient, and omni benevolent. These “omnis” are present in everything God does because they describe everything that God is.

<https://dlldogmatics.com/author>

Statement of the Problem

The problem of evil has its relevance in Philosophy, mostly though not limited to, Philosophy of religion. This is because it features equally in ethics, theodicy and theology. It is a challenging issue to philosophers, who face the uphill task of reconciling the silence of a well-meaning, all-powerful, all-loving and all-knowing God in the face of human sufferings and



miseries. This problem has a long tenure in the history of philosophical thought, as it dates back to Epicurus, St. Augustine and the empiricist David Hume in the Modern period.

The problem of evil is an ancient question with renewed horrifying intensity. Its renewed intensity in Nigeria is connected to recurring violence, terrorism, kidnapping, poverty, injustice and the apparent failure of institutions to protect vulnerable citizens. It would be a great omission in philosophical scholarship if in the face of the gigantic escalation of cruelty, evil and suffering, no alarm is raised about God's existence. Such questions as: "Why did God do this to us? Or if He is not the author of evil, at least why did he allow this to befall his children?" "Where was He when his faithful were murdered with impunity?" We are forced by awkward circumstances to ask like the atheists: "Does God really exist?" This is what is called "Crisis-generated atheism".

Umoh (2012:53) expresses this age-long problem in these lines so accurately: "Is he [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but unwilling? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing, whence then is evil?"

A close look at the above reveals a whole stream of reality on the issue at stake. A god that is determined to undertake a project of disbanding evil but is unable, is not a God according to theistic dispensation, for he is incapacitated in some form. And such a god can therefore not be Almighty. On the other hand, a god who is capable to eliminate human fatal burdens, but is unwilling, is also not the God proclaimed by Christianity. Now these two claims refuted about our God leaves us with a poignantly enigmatic question "Then Why Evil?"

This is the very heart of the problem; well captured here in this book by Richard Koenig: *If God is God...* The full title of this book would read: *If God is God, He is not good; if God is good, He is not God.* A little analysis of the title will surprise believers with its logic. Yes, if God is God with all his potency, glamour and goodwill, there would be no evil or human suffering in the world, for God would be more than able to eliminate all. But there is abundance of evil in the world. Therefore his "godliness" is questionable; it is on trial. If God is good, then he is not God. A good God coexisting with the horrific abundance of evil is a contradiction. Hence the problem persists.

W. Williamson's excellent exposition, crowns the crux of the matter:



Either God would remove evil out of this world, and cannot; or he can, and will not; or he has neither the power nor will; or, lastly, he has both the power and will. If he has the will, and not the power, this shows weakness, which is contrary to the nature of God. If he has the power, and not the will, it is malignity; and this is no less contrary to his nature. If he is neither able nor willing, he is both impotent and malignant, and consequently cannot be God. If he is both willing and able (which alone is consonant to the nature of God), whence come evil, or why does he not prevent it? Williamson (1984:270)

In the film *The Virgin Spring* the father of the murdered girl cried out: “God, I do not understand you.” He accuses God of playing hide-and-seek with his creature, like an enemy would do. His agony arises from the seeming absence or silence of a God who eludes him or hide himself from him. Koenig (1974: 43). The silence of God during the holocaust inflicted by Hitler on the innocent and persecuted Jews with the apparent triumphal impunity and the blossoming of the godless and the wicked, who mock the tortured, suffering creatures: “Where is your God?” “Why has he not directed a bolt of thunder against us, the persecutors of his beloved creatures?” On June 5 2022, a mass shooting and bomb attack occurred at a Catholic church in the city of Owo in Ondo State, Nigeria. At least 40 worshippers were massacred, including women and children during Sunday Mass by unknown gunmen. This was a gathering of innocent believers paying their homage as sensible creatures to their Maker. But why did God not intervene, protect them, crippling the unjust aggressors? en.m.wikipedia.org

The Zaki Biam massacre and mass execution of hundreds of unarmed Tiv civilians by the Nigerian Army between 20 and 24 of October 2001 bears testimony to issues going by name the problem of evil, especially when the Federal Government of Nigeria, whose duty it is to protect life and property, maintained utter silence. On the 12 May 2022, Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a second-year Christian college student, was lynched by a mob of Muslim students in Sokoto, after being accused of blasphemy and this happened in the very presence of more than a hundred inactive security agents. A critical philosophical mind would ask: “Where was God during that martyrdom?” On the 15 January 2023, a Catholic priest, Rev. Fr. Isaac Achi was murdered and his dead body burned to ashes in his rectory.

The body of Father Isaac Achi was found among the charred parish building of Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church on Jan. 15, according to the Catholic Diocese of



Minna, Nigeria. He died after armed bandits attacked the priest residence in the village of Kafin Koro at 3 a.m. Another priest at the rectory, Father Collins Omeh, escaped the building but sustained gunshot wounds and is being treated in a hospital. www.catholicnewsagency.com

Instances of such horrific experiences and many thousand massacres on daily basis in the North by Boko Haram, ISWAP and other terrorist groups amidst the tacit apparent support of the Nigerian government do not leave a critical mind at peace. And at a very critical point, many ask what was God doing to keep safe such innocent victims against their unjust aggressors? How justified is God not impeding the wicked of their disastrous ardors? Such is the origin of the title of the afore-mentioned small but very powerful book: *If God is God*. Yes, If God is God, why should these happen? “Why should the nations say “where is their God?” (Ps. 115:2).

The problem of evil presents a formidable challenge to the Christian faith. It provokes believers, especially scholars, to look critically and deeply into what they believe and profess. This is in order, because in Christian life there is an unending struggle between the heart and the head. From time to time, reason must question the reality of faith that the believer is committed to. As Koenig rightly holds “The spiritual life is certainly no head trip, a purely intellectual exercise as Pascal contended when he made his famous remark about the heart having reasons that reason can never know.” (1974: viii). In Philosophy of religion, the demonstrative function of religion demands that “Faith should reflect on or inquire into what it holds to be true”. The experience of the children of Israel at Massah and Meribah in the desert depicts a typical circumstance of the problem of evil. Due to the life-threatening experience of God’s people, they questioned the authenticity of the God of their belief by fault-finding against such a deity if he was still alive and with his people: “Is the Lord among us or not?” (Ex. 17:7) Are his promises still binding and reliable? The problem of evil is provoked when a believer is torn apart between the glaring pangs of misfortune and his unflinching trust in his God.

This is exactly the mood of most Nigerians at the time of writing this paper. The populace is so distraught about what happens in the name of 2023 election, coupled with the biting ordeal of the cashless policy drowning the masses in penury forcing them to wail: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34). The country has been waning in the midst of penury, bloodshed, brutality of religious insanity channeled against only a sector of the population. Poverty



equally deepens the experience of evil because it exposes people to hunger, marginalization, indignity and helplessness, even within religious communities that should provide support (Essien & Edem, 2024). Thus, the muteness of God of justice seems to be competing with the silence of the government, which rather appears to be celebrating the massacre of the innocents by feasting.

The phrase: “Suffering Man, Loving God” can go as the poignant summary of the problem. The problems takes as its point of departure, the nature of God, not only as Creator and Sustainer of humanity, but as major theistic religions teach, a loving and caring Father. The doctrines of Creation and divine providence are outstanding testimonies in this latter regard, for they maintain that God did not only graciously bring the whole human race into existence, but holds it in the palms of His hands, leading it to its definite destination. In other words: the universe of man was created in love and destined for life with God. In the book of Job, we meet the “Dark Night of the Soul” of a man who placed all his confidence on his living God; but who, ironically, is portrayed as a “silent-absent-enemy” of his loving creature. Here goes the groaning of a forsaken and betrayed creature:

Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; he would give heed to me. There, an upright man could reason with him, and I should be acquitted forever by my judge. “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand I seek him, but I cannot behold him; I turn to the right hand, but cannot see him. (Job 23: 3-9).

The problem of evil is a global challenge to the philosophic mind which feels very uneasy reconciling the existence of evil and suffering with the belief in the existence of the omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient God believed to be in charge of the world. The problem takes off with the presumption that the God of our life would agree with human beings on what they reckon as evil and fatal to their existence and would be more than willing to eradicate it. From this angle then, theistic theodicy operates with the assumption that God is a personal God, who is interested and active in his world and who wishes his creatures well. The problem of evil counts against or lowers the probability of the truth of theism.

Problem of Evil: Division and Types



The problem of evil is generally formulated in two forms: the **logical problem of evil** and the **evidential problem of evil**. The logical form of the argument tries to show a logical impossibility in the coexistence of a god and evil, while the evidential form tries to show that given the evil in the world, it is improbable that there is an omnipotent, omniscient, and a wholly good god. The problem of evil has been extended to non-human life forms, to include animal suffering from natural evils and human cruelty against them. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

The logical problem of evil is a purely theoretical treatment of the problem. While the evidential treatment is all about evil as experienced in day-to-day concrete human existence. Evidential problem of evil is subdivided into two categories: Natural and Moral Evil. In addition to these, there is what is called Metaphysical Evil, which interests philosophers alone because it has no concrete relevance in man's daily lives.

Metaphysical Evil

Metaphysical evil is no evil at all. In philosophy it is called mere fruit of imagination. It belongs to the categories of things like the Flying saucer, which has no existence in reality. Metaphysical evil is a lack of a feature in an organism, but which feature is not part of such organism. Metaphysical evil is a lack of a quality that is Not Due to a particular being, though it is all the same a lack and therefore goes by the name evil. (Umoh 2012) gives an example: a case of

...kidnapped person, with no ability of disappearing or becoming invisible before his captors. The absence of such ability is a 'defect', but such is not a defect in quality due to the poor victim. Such a privation is simply characterized as metaphysical, since it operates in the realm of mere possibility. And there are no ends to possibilities. However, nothing stops one from still asking why God did not give such qualities to humans, especially given the peculiar circumstance; or at least why did he not intervene even miraculously at that peculiar instance by blinding those hoodlums. (59).

Physical Evil

Physical evil is the first and the most enigmatic type of experiential evil. The experiential natural problem concerns the difficulty of reconciling a concept of a loving God, mighty in power and knowledge when confronted with the evil of natural disasters and suffering in the real world, such as epidemics, hurricanes, incurable ailments, famine, drought, volcanoes, tsunamis, flood, cyclones and death. All these are calamities meted on helpless, innocent humans by nature. These



are bad state of affairs which do not emanate from any bad intention of the human agent, but from the Mother Nature herself. And this is the world God created and found to be “good”.

Moral Evil

By contrast to natural evil, moral evil results from the ill intentions or bad wills of moral agents. It is often attributed to the ill use of human freedom resulting in sometimes utter wickedness and barbarism or sheer negligence leading to calamities for fellow human beings. Along this line we have injustice, corruption, wickedness, crime perpetration, armed-robbery, kidnapping and all forms of violence and insecurity. Murders, massacres and other forms of blood-bath that have become daily routine in Nigeria are all moral evil, a testimony of man’s inhumanity to man. Theologically, they are called sins, because they emanate from moral entities. Theologically moral evils are known as sins, because they proceed from free agents.

God on Trial

The entire spectrum of evil highlighted above, points accusing fingers at God, the maker of the universe and all creatures within it. God is dragged to the dock to answer charges from His down-trodden creatures brought into the world by his unique initiative. The charges are not many but very poignant:

1. Why the untold hardship on your beloved creatures?
2. Why are you unfaithful to your promises and covenant concerning the well-being to your poor creatures?
3. Why have you not redeemed your three Omni-qualities-pledges: of Omnipotence Omniscience and Omnibenevolence?
4. Why do you hide from your servants in times of calamity?

With the above set-up, your taunts from non-believers fall on your people as well. Hence *Christianity (is) on Trial* as well. Is not the presence of evil in the world contradictory to claims of omnipotence and benevolence, to say nothing of the overall governance, of God?” (Hume 1961: 206)

The Verdict



When God is brought on trial on account of the sufferings, pains and evil in his world, what should be expected as the verdict? This question plunges the philosopher into the depth of the problem of evil. In philosophy, most thinkers would pronounce God guilty in many regards. From the argument on design, from the *Quinque Viae* of Thomas Aquinas, Gottfried Leibniz concluded that our world is the best of the possible worlds God could have created. For Leibniz, there were innumerable *possible* worlds available to God before creation and the one we live in was the best to be created. Then critics like Bertrand Russell would aver that if this is the best world, God can be called the worst conceivable designer or artist, for bringing into existence such a wicked world. A sample of the condemnation of the “horrible Creator” becomes evident in this post World War II drama by Guenter Rutenborn: *The Sign of Jonah* dealing with the horrible memories of the war:

God is guilty! That's true! True! True! ... I ask where is the God we were taught to call Father. He has failed just as this Court must fail, because the children aren't here to accuse Him with their emaciated, decayed bodies, and with eyes hollow from hunger and terror. (Koenig 1974:55)

One of the earliest statements of the problem of evil is that of Buddha (in the 6th or 5th century BC) and it is a verdict against God, which states that if a God created sentient beings, then due to the pain and suffering they feel, he, God is likely to be evil.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Attempted Refutations of the Verdict

Moral evils are attributable to human beings and they are to blame. Many apologists exonerate God from these evils because moral evil result from the misuse of freedom by the moral agents. Another name for moral evil is sin because it is committed by moral agents. However, some philosophers would still insist that God, who created such humans free, knowing quite well they would misuse their freedom, should share at least part of the blame. Here is an objection to the controversy raised by the above:

Whoever can prevent sin in another and does not do so but instead contributes to it although he is well aware of it is accessory to it. God can prevent the sin of intelligent



creatures; but he does not do so and instead contributes to it by his concurrence and by the opportunities he creates although he is well aware of it. Therefore, God is accessory to sin. Williamson (1984: 278)

The real problem lies with natural evils which leave devastating impacts on human lives and memories. If we think of the destructive natural disasters and calamities caused by the non-human environment in terms of flood, hurricane, thunderstorm, tsunami, drought and famine etc. the situation is more than a joke. The miseries meted on human welfare by this non-intelligent nature are tremendous. And no other can take the blame but their maker.

However, there are some who attempt to acquit God of the guilt charges in the issues of a world He created in love and found to be good at the beginning, but which is invested with many natural evils. These are responses of some thinkers refuting the logical conclusion of atheists that the type of God advocated and proclaimed by many monotheistic religions, does not exist.

In all these, the language used is anthropomorphic; describing God's affairs in human terms. One of such attempted defenses is that the "maximal power" attached to the "Omnipotence God" is not truly unlimited. One of such defenses according to the philosopher Hoffman is that an omnipotent God is not required to bring about an impossible state of affairs. In other words, maximal power has logical and temporal limitations, which include the limitation of a state of affairs that an omnipotent cannot cause. For instance, "Can the almighty God create a mountain He cannot lift?" or "Can God commit fornication?" All these are play on words; play on the term "Can" in human language. The same thing can be said of his omnibenevolence. After all these human dabbling, the pains and sufferings of evil still persist.

Plato and St. Augustine are accredited with this attempt to explain away evil as something usual. According to them, evil is a privation; a lack, an absence of something in a Being, but not a Being; not a substance. Hence sickness is the absence of health, wickedness a privation of kindness and maybe they would argue also that death is the absence of life in human and therefore there is nothing bad at all about it. Evil is not a reality like a human being, we must accept. There are no forces of good and of evil as the Manicheans had imagined during the time of St. Augustine. But



arguing that evil is a negation of good in something, that it is aesthetically necessary to mix with the good, has nothing to write home about in philosophy:

And in the universe, even that which is called evil, when it is regulated and put its own place, only enhances our admiration of the good; for we enjoy and value the good more when we compare it with the evil. For the Almighty God, who, as even the heathen acknowledge, has supreme power over all things, being Himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among His works, if He were not so omnipotent and good that He can bring good even out of evil.

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Evaluation and Conclusion

As we round up our itinerary in the consideration of the problem of evil, we have touched on the very nexus of the problem that has burdened scholars throughout history. Our consideration has gone through series of man's inhumanity to man, especially which has become the order of the day in our society today. This inhumanity is evident in poverty, crime, corruption, political exclusion and retaliatory violence, all of which continue to threaten human dignity and social harmony in Nigeria (Essien & Edem, 2024). Such have brought us the brutality of kidnappers, hired assassins, terrorists and glaring injustice in human dealings. All these go by the name moral evil. Though moral agents are held responsible for moral evil, philosophers find it hard to completely acquit God, the maker of the good and the horrible humans, of blame.

As for the pangs of physical evil, the insensitive devastation of nature, philosophy holds God wholly responsible. It argues that an almighty, all-good and all-knowing that keeps silence in the face of these trauma of nature should be found wanting in any of the Omnia-qualities characterizing the Creator. Or at worse, a logical conclusion should be drawn that such a God does not exist. The paper has seen a few futile attempts of apologists to exonerate God. Such attempts are considered unsatisfactory to the critical opponents in the philosophical field.

The conclusion to this paper is that the problem of evil has no all-round philosophical answer. At any rate, this is very usual in philosophy, which considers posing relevant questions as more pertinent than giving porous and illogical answers that would satisfy only unphilosophic minds. Moreover, there is no Q.E.D. in philosophical discuss. As someone's conclusion may turn



to be another philosopher's abstract or introduction. As for the Problem of Evil only theological explanations are tolerable. At any rate, philosophy has been recognized as the handmaid of theology since the Medieval Period.

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