

Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
Department of Philosophy

The Compatibility of the Problem of Evil and The Existence of God

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of
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For the Degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy

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Addis Ababa

DECLARATION

I declare that “**The Compatibility of the Problem of Evil and The Existence of God**” is my own original work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged through complete references and this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

Yonas Zewde

.....

Signature and Full Name

Date

Acknowledgment

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Abstract

If God exists, why does he allow little children to die of starvation? Why does he permit the earth quake? Why does he permit the rape? Why does he let babies to be born addicted to drugs? Why does God allow millions to die at the hands of wicked dictators? Why so many suffer from arthritis, cancer, or birth defects while others are healthy? Why does God permit any suffering at all? Elie Wiesel in his book entitled “*Night*” tells us what he observed in a German concentration camp. The Nazis hanged two adults and a child. The two adults died quickly. The child, on the other hand, took longer:

For more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying slowly in agony under our eyes. And we had to look at him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him .His tongue was still red, his eyes were not yet glazed. Behind me, I heard the same man asking: “Where is God now?”¹⁴²

Why does God permit suffering? This question is undeniable that, as novelist Peter De Vries puts it, “the question mark turns like a fishhook in the human heart”¹⁴³The problem of evil has been a serious question among different Scholars, theologians and philosophers. Our feelings and perception of God will be different when we pass through suffering¹⁴⁴

Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, if you turn to Him then with praise, you will be welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴²Wiesel, E.(1992). “*Night*.” In the Problem of Evil: Selected Readings. Peterson, M. (Ed.). Noter Dame, IN: University of Noter Dame Press.p.86.

¹⁴³Allen, Stairs. (2007). *A thinker’s Guide to the Philosophy of Religion*. Priscilla McGeehan.p.200.

¹⁴⁴ Yancey, P. (1977).*Where is God when it Hurts? Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan*. p.15.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.p.211.

Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

St. Thomas Aquinas, in his book entitled *Summa Theologica*, wrote that “there could be two objections to the existence of God. The first one is the apparent ability of natural Science to explain everything in our experience without God, and the other is the problem of Evil.”¹ Evil, sadness, misery, hurt and suffering of the world pose a serious question over believing in all knowing, all powerful and perfectly good God. The overwhelming problem of evil raises a significant question. If God really exists, if he is so good, then why does He allow evil? If he is all powerful, why does He not eliminate or prevent all evil? If He is all knowing, why does He not find a way to avoid evil in the world? Among philosophers and theists, this is an ever existing continuing debate named “the problem of evil.” Atheists often point to suffering as evidence that God does not exist.

Evil is a problem, for the theist, in that a contradiction is involved in the fact of evil on the one hand and belief in the omnipotence and omniscience of God on the other.”² Mackie argues that the existence of God and the existence of evil are logically inconsistent. However, Prof. Alvin C. Plantinga, in his book entitled *God, Freedom, and Evil*, has convincingly shown that there is no contradiction between the existence of God

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. J.D. Bastable, (1966), 20.

² J.L. Mackie (1963). “The Paradox of Confirmation,” *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, (1963): 97.

and the existence of evil in this world.³ In this study, the researcher wants to show how the existence of God and the existence of evil are compatible. This research has four chapters. The first chapter shows a detailed argument of the existence of God and the existence of evil. The second section includes three supporting claims for my thesis statement. The third section considers and argues against different objections that are raised against the compatibility of the existence of God and evil. The last section is my reflections on Plantinga's position and conclusion of the paper.

1. 2 The Rationality of the Research

While, I was discussing about theodicy or the problem of evil as my research topic, one of my professors said, "Isn't that old hat? I mean, what more can be said after Ivan Karamazov?" However, "Barry Whitney recently published a bibliography of over 4,200 philosophical and theological writings on the topic, all published from 1960 to 1990. That's nearly one publication every two and half days."⁴ This clearly indicates that the topic is not as such old and forgotten in academic circles. It also reminds us of what happened to our brothers in Libya by ISIS and South Africa xenophobia. Numerous philosophers think that the existence of evil constitutes a difficulty for the theist, and many believe that the existence of evil makes belief in God irrational or rationally unacceptable.⁵ However, I would like to show how the existence of God and evil are compatible in this research. The overwhelming problem of evil around everywhere and

³ Alvin. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing, 1977), 1-122.

⁴ Daniel Howard-Snyder, *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Indiana University Press, 1996), 1.

⁵ Alvin. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing, 1977) 7.

among everyone raises a significant question. So, I would like to argue that if the question about the problem of evil is answered, I do not need to do research on this topic but the research that I am doing under this topic shows that still it is an answered question. Articles and books are also publishing under this topic by different philosophers and theologians this clearly shows that the issue is serious and it needs answer. First, we will see the existence of God and the existence of Evil in detail.

1.3 The Existence of God

Before we consider whether God and evil are compatible, we need to have a rough idea of God's existence. There is different traditional evidence for the existence of God. The design argument says "Nature appears to display purpose and complexity. Some theists see this as evidence for the existence of God. Critics argue that purpose in nature can be explained without postulating the existence of God."⁶ According to this argument God designed the world. The other argument is the cosmological argument.

The teleological argument is really a subcategory of the cosmological argument. It focuses on the evidence of harmony, order, and design in the universe, and argues that its design gives evidence of an intelligent purpose (the Greek word τέλος, G5465, means "end" or "goal" or "purpose"). Since the universe appears to be designed with a purpose, there must be an intelligent and purposeful God who created it to function this way.⁷

The cosmological argument considers the fact that every known thing in the universe has a cause. Therefore, it reasons, the universe itself must also have a cause, and the cause of such a great universe can only be God.⁸ The other traditional argument proposed by St.

⁶ Allen, Stairs, (2007). *A Thinker's Guide to the Philosophy of Religion*. Priscilla McGeehon .p. 25.

⁷ Wayne, Grudem, (200) *Systematic Theology*, (Inter-Varsity Press. 109.

⁸ Ibid. 109.

Anselm is the ontological argument; numerous people “have formulated ontological arguments, including the seventeenth-century philosophers Rene Descartes and Gottfried Leibniz and twentieth century logician and mathematician Kurt Godel.”⁹ The ontological argument¹⁰ begins with the idea of God, who is defined as a being “greater than which nothing can be imagined. It then argues that the characteristic of existence must belong to such a being, since it is greater to exist than not to exist.”¹¹ Even though the soundness of Anselm’s ontological argument is criticized by many thinkers, such as St. Gaunilo, it remains profound. The fourth is the moral argument. This argument begins from man’s sense of right and wrong and of the need for justice to be done and argues that there must be a God who is the source of right and wrong and who will someday mete out justice to all people.¹² Emmanuel Kant also argues for the existence of God from the moral perspective.

However, for the sake of this sub-chapter, I would like to present the evidence for the existence of God from the book entitled *Summa Theologica* by St. Thomas Aquinas. How are philosophy and theology related in Aquinas’ natural theology? Thomas Aquinas tried to show the harmony between faith and reason and theology and philosophy. Aquinas saw specific differences between philosophy and theology, between reason and faith. For one thing, “philosophy begins with the immediate objects of sense experience and reasons. Theology, on the other hand, begins with a faith in God. Philosophy and

⁹ Allen. Stairs, (2007). *A Thinker’s Guide to the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 82.

¹⁰ The stem onto-in “ontological” is derived from a Greek word that means “being.”

¹¹ Qtd. in Grudem,(2000). *Systematic Theology*,p. 109.

¹² *Ibid.*, 109.

theology played great roles in man's quest for truth."¹³ There have been many philosophers that have developed and used natural reason in their apologetic of the Christian faith.¹⁴ Aquinas is one of the more prominent philosophers. Aquinas was heavily influenced by the Greek philosopher Aristotle and borrows many ideas from him, including Aristotelian concepts such as the unmoved mover¹⁵.

In the first part of this chapter I include Aquinas' five proofs for God's existence because it will help us for the next section. All are taken from *Summa Theologica*. The five proofs can be summarized in the following categories: proof from motion, proof from efficient cause, proof from possibility and necessity, proofs from the gradation to be found in things, and proof from governance of the world.¹⁶ Aquinas rejected Anselm's argument, as God's existence is not self-evident, and human beings are not in a position to understand God's nature. Tomas Aquinas begins the discussion of God with the subject of His existence. Knowing that a thing exists is the first step towards knowing anything else about it, and this is true with God as with anything else. Before we go too deeply, however, we need to know what St. Thomas means by "self-evident."¹⁷

¹³ Samuel E. Stumpf, (1953). *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy* (New York: Alfred North Whitehead Press, p, 189.

¹⁴ Allen, Diogenes and Eric O. Springsted, (1992). *Primary Reading in Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, p, 95.

¹⁵ Allen, Diogenes, (1985). *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox Press, p, 139.

¹⁶ Diogenes and Springsted, *Primary Reading in Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 96-98.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

A proposition is self-evident because the predicate is included in the essence of the subject, as “Man is an animal,” for animal is contained in the essence of man. If, therefore the essence of the predicate and subject be known to all, the proposition will be self-evident to all; as is clear with regard to the first principles of demonstration, the terms of which are common things that no one is ignorant of, such as being and non-being, whole and part, and such like.¹⁸

We know that a whole is greater than any of its parts just because of what “whole” and “part” mean. We know that “man is an animal” because “animal” is part of the definition of “man” (which in this context is “rational animal”). We know that two is greater than one, and so forth. These are self-evident statements, and Aquinas says that God’s existence does not qualify as self-evident.¹⁹

If, however, there are some to whom the essence of the predicate and subject is unknown, the proposition will be self-evident in itself, but not to those who do not know the meaning of the predicate and subject of the “proposition. Therefore, it happens, as Boethius says, that there are some mental concepts self-evident only to the learned, as that incorporeal substance are not in space.” Therefore, I say that this proposition, “God exists,” of itself is self-evident, for the predicate is the same as the subject, because God is His own existence as will be hereafter shown. Now because we do not know the essence of God, the proposition is not self-evident to us; but needs to be demonstrated by things that are more known to us, though less known in their nature namely, by effects.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid., 93.

¹⁹ Ibid., 92.

²⁰ Ibid., 93

Some things are self-evident to those who have sufficient knowledge of them but not to others; this is not a defect of the self-evident thing itself, but rather a defect of our knowledge. Because (as Aquinas says) we don't know God's essence, it would be impossible for a proposition about Him to be self-evident. Instead, truths about God must be made known to us.²¹

The first proof Aquinas presents is the argument from motion. Aquinas took this argument directly from Aristotle's philosophy of motion. He first presupposes that motion actually exists. His first premise to this argument is some things are in motion. He explains this by saying that motion is basically just potentiality becoming actuality. Motion actualizes things which were potential. His second premise is a thing cannot, in the same respect and in the same way, move itself: it requires a mover. His third premise explains that there is an unmoved mover from whom all motion proceeds. Aquinas concludes this argument that this unmoved mover is what we call God²². When Aquinas was alive, people believed that the universe was eternal and that it had no cause. They never conceded a beginning to the universe in any way. This makes this premise extremely difficult for Aquinas to really prove.²³ In the second proof, he shows that this premise is true based on how efficient causes work and the properties of causes.

The second proof is an argument devoted to proving God as the first efficient cause and all others as "secondary causes" that are dependent on God.²⁴ Aquinas talks about efficient causes and how they work exactly within time. Efficient causes cannot be

²¹ Ibid., 94.

²² Ibid., 96.

²³ Samuel, E. Stumpf. *Socrates to Sartre*, 191.

²⁴ Diogenes and Springsted, *Primary Reading in Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 139.

infinite, according to Aquinas. He first states that some things are caused. He explains this by saying that everything that is caused is caused by something else. The first cause must produce the intermediate cause which will then produce the ultimate cause. Therefore, there must be an uncaused cause of all that is caused. This cause is what we call God. He then says one has to concede that God is the first efficient cause of the universe. This argument, though, somewhat rests on the assumption that a first cause is really needed rather than an infinite regress of causes.²⁵

In his third proof, Aquinas presents the argument of possibility and necessity. For his first premise, he says that many things in the universe may either exist or not exist and are all finite. Such things are called contingent beings. It is impossible for everything in the universe to be contingent, for then there would be a time when nothing existed, and so nothing would exist now, since there would be nothing to bring anything into existence, which is clearly false. However, Aquinas knows this is utterly impossible not only because nothing cannot exist, but rather because out of nothing, nothing comes. He knows it is impossible to get something out of nothing without some type of cause. There must be a necessary being whose existence is not contingent on any other being or beings. This being is whom we call God.²⁶ Aquinas goes into further detail of the definition of this cause in his next proof.

The fourth proof is based on the gradation to be found in things. This fourth proof is simple and easy to understand. Aquinas says that everything exists in degrees, such as goodness, truth, nobility, and the like. In all of these things, we judge the degree of

²⁵ Ibid., 96-97.

²⁶ Ibid., 97.

something relative to a concept in our minds. For instance, if we are thinking about people who are good, then we imagine them relative to a conception of "maximum goodness" in our minds. Aquinas states that this is what we know to be God.²⁷ This argument is different from Anselm's, because Aquinas never talks about conceiving of God existing in reality. Rather, he takes a more basic route and proves God by definition.²⁸ This fourth proof is more of a support to the third proof and gives more of a definition to the necessary cause that he postulated.

The five and last proof Aquinas presents in his *Summa Theologica* is taken from the governance of the world. He says in his first premise that all natural bodies in the world act towards ends. These objects are in themselves unintelligent. Such things do not necessarily have a will or a mind yet they still work with a supernatural intelligence that is built into them. Aquinas talks about the final causes of such things their purpose and end in life. Acting towards an end is a characteristic of intelligence. He makes an extremely interesting point when he says that there exists an intelligent being that guides all natural bodies towards their ends. He concludes that this intelligence must be God.²⁹

The existence of God is the necessary foundation of any theology, and Aquinas' five arguments are well-constructed, sound in their reasoning and logic. Today, many arguments have been formulated and built upon the groundwork that the Christian medieval philosophers created. Arguments One, Two, and Five are based on observation of the natural world, whereas Arguments Three and Four are based on rationality.

²⁷ Ibid., 97-98.

²⁸ Ibid., 137-138.

²⁹ Ibid., 98.

However, although Aquinas has argued for God's existence, he never explained which God or gods should be accepted, leaving the reader with more questions. Nonetheless, Thomas Aquinas did help Christian philosophy, theology and did provide proofs of the existence of some supernatural god. Both Catholics and Protestants have benefited from the proofs Thomas presented.

The existence of God is a fundamental question that nearly all humans have questioned with throughout human history. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica* proposed five proofs in which humans can use philosophy (natural reason) to prove the existence of God through extrinsic evidence. Yet, honestly speaking, God's existence cannot be definitively proved or disproved through philosophy.

Here, I agree with Ockham that Aquinas's God seems subject to the nature of things rather than being their author in any significant sense. Of the two ways available for obtaining some knowledge of God – faith in revelation and reason without revelation – Ockham rejected the latter. Consequently, the only way remaining to know something of God is by faith in divine revelation.³⁰ However, Plantinga argues “the existence of God can be rational without evidence.” It is not the aim of this research to discuss about the existence of God rather the focus of this research is on the compatibility of God and evil. In general, this research assumes God exist.

³⁰ Diogenes, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 153.

1.4 The Existence of Evil

1.4.1 What is Evil?³¹

The Dictionary of Philosophy defines evil as follows: “Negation of the extrinsic elections of things. In practice, the positive effects of such negation. The morally bad. Hostility to the welfare of anything. Absence of the good. Opposite of goodness.”³² Alternatively, we can define as a matter of free creatures doing wrong things. One only needs to look at the last ten years of human history to see evils such as murder, rape, lying, oppression, stealing, drunk driving accidents, starvation, drug abuse, unjust wars, the Rwandan genocide, addictions, and others. Additionally, we struggle with making sense of “natural disasters” such as tsunamis, earthquakes, tornados, cyclones, which all clearly shows that evil exists. Does God cause or allow these disasters? Are famine, drought, floods, disease, collapsed bridges and dams because of Man’s Fall or just random accidents? How can a loving God exist, if there is so much evil and suffering in the world? If God exists, why does He allow little children to die of starvation? Why does He permit earthquakes? Why does He permit rape? Why does He allow babies to be born addicted to drugs? Why does God allow millions to die at the hands of wicked dictators? Why so many suffer from arthritis, cancer, or birth defects while others are healthy? Why does God permit any suffering at all? Elie Wiesel, in his book entitled *Night*, tells us what he

³¹ This footnote is directly taken from Bernard for better understanding and clarification on the issue. The word “evil” has several meanings, and this is sometimes a source of confusion. Some see how people, like Adolph Hitler, are evil but they don’t see how natural events, like an earthquake, is evil. Natural events, like earthquakes, seem to be morally neutral. To avoid this confusion, it is important to understand that philosophers are mainly concerned with the evil of *suffering*. Both persons, like Hitler, and natural events, like earthquakes, seem to be evidence that God does not exist because a completely good, all-powerful God, if He existed, could and should prevent it. The problem really is, in the words of Christian thinker C.S. Lewis, “the problem of pain.”

³² Runes .v, Dagobert D.(1960). *Dictionary of Philosophy*. United States of America. P.102

observed while in a German attention camp. The Nazis hanged two adults and a child. The two adults died quickly. The child, on the other hand, took longer:

For more than a half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying slowly in agony under our eyes. And we had to look him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him .His tongue was still red, his eyes were not yet glazed. Behind me, I heard the same man asking: “Where is God now?”³³

Why does God permit suffering? This question is undeniable that, as writer Peter De Vries puts it, the question mark turns like a fishhook in the human heart.³⁴ The problem of evil has been a serious question among different scholars, theologians and philosophers. As C.S. Lewis is quoted in the book entitled *Where is God When It Hurts?* our views of God will be different while we pass through suffering.

Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, if you turn to Him then with praise, you will be welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. C.S. Lewis

³⁵

In fact, the way we perceive God in good times is quite different than when we pass through the hard and difficult time. Some perceive God as sovereign and perfectly good when things are going well, but, when a thing goes wrong, they started to question the goodness and sovereignty of God and perhaps deny that His existence. C.E.M. Joad said that “as I read books on pain, I exposed that many great philosophers, otherwise

³³ Allen. Stirs. (2007). Wiesel. Qted in *A thinker’s Guide to the philosophy of Religion*: .p.199.

³⁴Yancey. Philip. (1977). *Where is God When It Hurts?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. p.20.

³⁵ Ibid. 15.

concerned to Christian principles and ethics, have stumbled at this problem of pain and suffering, ultimately rejecting Christianity because of it.”³⁶ Here, Bertrand Russell and Voltaire eloquently share Joad’s complaint. But Dr. Paul Brand accepts God for allowing pain. Brand said that “God could have done a better job but he prefers to create this kind of world.” These thinkers do not think that God does not have any other way than to allow suffering to take place in this world and that He could have created a world without suffering.

The problem of evil and human suffering has always been complex. Human suffering is a common denominator to man. Sorrow, grief, pain, disappointment, sadness, heartbreak, trials, and tribulations often occur in our lives. Having an adequate answer to the suffering found in the world is something that is a “must” for the Christians. In his famous essay “Nature,” John Stuart Mill clearly states the problem of evil and who has wrestled with it throughout history. Starting from 350 Epicurus, he states:

If the law of all creation were justice and the Creator omnipotent, then in whatever amount suffering and happiness might be dispensed to the world, each person’s share would be exactly proportioned to that person’s good or evil deeds. No human being would have a worse lot than another without worse deserts; accident or favoritism would have no part in such a world, but every human life would be playing out a drama constructed like a perfect moral tale. Not even on the most distorted and contracted theory of good whichever was framed by religious or philosophical fanaticism can the government of nature be made to resemble the work of a being at once both good and omnipotent.³⁷

The above quotation indicates that, when good things come to a person, it is because of his or her good deed, like the retribution principle. The retribution principle means that

³⁶ Ibid. 15.

³⁷ Ibid. 119-120.

the morally good people will prosper and that the wicked and evil will suffer. However, life is not governed by this principle in this world. People who are holy may suffer, and people who are evil may prosper. Atheists often point to suffering as evidence to argue that God does not exist. Among philosophers and theists, this is an ongoing point of contention.

For the last few years, a huge amount of philosophical analysis has been poured into the problem of evil, and genuine philosophical progress has been done. Evil can be divided into two categories, moral evil and natural evil. Before we discuss moral and natural evil, however, let us first make a distinction between the intellectual or logical problem of evil and the emotional problem of evil. The intellectual problem of evil is mainly focused on the logical inconsistencies of God and evil, whereas the emotional problem is mainly focusing on the emotion of the people who are suffering, passing through hardship, and so forth. Here, we have to distinguish between evil and suffering.

1.5 The Difference between Evil and Suffering

Evil and suffering do not have the same meaning in this research. Norman Powell Williams said, “The problem of evil is at once the most momentous, most terrible, and most intractable question which has ever vexed the thoughts of man.”³⁸ Both theologians and philosophers have been struggling to find the solution for the problem of evil. It has been an issue throughout history, because it does not align with the characteristics of God. The problem of evil concerns the question of the consistency of the existence of evil in the created world with the characteristics attributed by theists to the world’s creator.

³⁸ G.W. Leibniz, (2005). *Confession Philosophy Papers Concerning the Problem of Evil*, ed. Robert C. Sleigh, Jr., p, 20.

Specifically, these characteristics are His moral perfection, holiness, justice, wisdom, and power.³⁹ Because of God's character, especially his moral character, the problem of evil and His existence are under question by different philosophers.

So, in order to understand this thesis, let us define what evil is in order to distinguish it from suffering. As it is defined earlier in this paper, evil is the “negation of the extrinsic elections of things. In practice, the positive effects of such negation. The morally bad. Hostility to the welfare of anything. Absence of the good or Opposite of goodness.” Suffering, in contrast, is defined below in the following section.

1.3.1 What Is Suffering?

Suffering means any kind of pain or discomfort, a result of disease, injury, disappointment, oppression, old age, dissatisfaction with life or with people around you.⁴⁰ There is a clear difference between suffering and wrongdoing. In fact, we do find these distinctions in the Christian Scripture in the book of John, Job, and Psalms and elsewhere throughout both the Old and New Testament. In the Gospel of John, Jesus Himself is shouting on the cross, “Abba, Abba, why are you forsaking me?”

1.4 Kinds of Evil

Now that we have differentiated between suffering and evil, we can focus further on the two categories of evil: moral evil and natural evil. My focus in this research is about both.

³⁹ Ibid. 20.

⁴⁰ Alvin. Plantinga,(1977). *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing, 34.

1.4.1 Moral Evil

This kind of evil is caused deliberately by humans doing what they ought not to do or allowed to occur by humans neglecting to do what they ought to do.⁴¹ For example, homicide is suffering caused by humans freely doing bad things, by “sin,” coming from the result of moral being.

1.4.2 Natural Evil

All evil which is not deliberately produced by human beings and which is not allowed by human beings to occur as a result of their negligence is natural evil. Natural evil includes both physical and mental sufferings of animals as well as humans. This includes disease, natural disasters, and accidents unpredicted by humans.⁴² Natural evil is not deliberately caused by human beings. For example, natural disasters and their resultant suffering are not caused by human choices. This is the result of natural evil. In one hand, we said that we do have moral evil, and, on the other hand, we do have natural evil. Since, we do agree that there is evil in this world, how can God and evil can co-exist? Now, let us see what is compatible.

1.5. Compatible

Compatible is defined as “capable of existing or living together in harmony or able to exist together with something else.”⁴³ If the lexical definition of compatible is capable of existing or living together in harmony, how can God and evil co-exist? On one

⁴¹ Richard Swinburne, *Why God Allows Evil*, 89.

⁴² Ibid. 89.

⁴³ “Dictionary,” accessed January 26, 2016, <http://dictionary.com>.

hand, Plantinga has said that “God’s existence is compatible with some evil.”⁴⁴ The researcher also agrees with Plantinga that God and evil can co-exist. On the other hand, God’s existence is not consistent with the huge amount and variety of moral evil the universe actually contains. Here, in fact, we can declare it is impossible to measure all the evil, because we do not have units like watts, volts, pounds, meters, kilograms or kilowatts so that we could say “this situation holds exactly 20 turps of moral evil.”⁴⁵ We will see the detailed arguments on the coexistence of God and evil in the third chapter of this thesis. In fact, all these objections about whether the existence of God and evil are compatible or not and whether God exists or not these are all questions asked by theists themselves. Since we are taking a theistic outlook (assuming that God exists), let us first explore theism.

1.6 What Does Theism Look Like?

Theism is the belief that God exists. Atheism is the belief that God doesn’t exist. Theism is divided into two categories, rational theism and irrational theism. Rational theism is a belief that there are evidential reasons for believing in God, whereas irrational theism is a belief which says God exists without evidence. In fact, irrational theism is a common belief for people to believe something based on faith. For example, when we sit on the chair we do not check whether the chair has four legs or not. Another example also is that, when we take taxi or any transports, we do not check the car or the driver but we trust and start to go with it. Here, I have shown that sometimes we believe something based on wishful thinking. Rational theism is not like the above examples but is based on

⁴⁴Alvin. Plantinga, (1977).*God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing,

55.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 55.

evidence, requiring some information about something for its credibility. This thesis is prepared based on rational theism. So, when we believe in the rational theism, we are assuming that God exists, and we do have reason and evidence for that. Atheists often raise the question of evil as a logical contradiction against the existence of God. However, rational theism is the common position among believers. Irrational theism is not acceptable in this thesis. Now, let us ask about the problem of evil as the logical contradictions against the existence of God from a rational theist stance.

1.7 Logical Contradiction

1.7.1. What Is Contradiction?

Before we look at the logical contradiction, it is first better to see what contradiction means. Atheism says that the classical theist belief is a contradiction. However, I would argue classical theists do not believe in contradictions. So, first we have to make clear what contradiction means. What is a contradictory belief? A set of beliefs is contradictory if and only if it is not possible for all of them to be true together.

Example: 1. Today is Sunday.

2. It is not the case that today is Sunday.

This is contradiction because both of them cannot be true. If you believe in both, you believe in a contradiction. In fact, a contradiction does not necessarily appear in just two statements, but it can even appear in three or more. Alvin Plantinga distinguishes between three kinds of contradiction: explicit, formal, and implicit.⁴⁶ An explicit

⁴⁶Alvin. Plantinga, (1977). *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing,

contradiction is just a standard form contradiction ($A \& \sim A$). We will see these three points in detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

Example: 1. All birds can fly.

2. Ducks are birds.

3. Ducks cannot fly.

Here, we might say it is not the case that all birds can fly. Maybe it is not the case that ducks are birds. People may say that we believe in contradictions always. It may be true, but it is not good to believe in a contradiction.

1.8 Types of Contradictions

There are different kinds of contradictions, and, in this research we will see at least three kinds of contradiction according to Plantinga. Using these, we will measure whether the existence of God and evil are compatible or not. The three types of contradictions, as stated earlier, are explicit, implicit, and formal.

1.8.1 Explicit Contradiction

“Explicit contradiction is a proposition of a certain sort—a conjunctive proposition, one conjunct of which is the denial or negation of the other conjunct.”⁴⁷ For example, Yonas is a good football player, and it is false that Yonas is not a good football player. Is Mackie charging the theist with accepting such a contradiction?⁴⁸ Surely not. What he says is different. According to J.L Mackie, the theist has to accept the three attributes of God and that, if the theist accepts these, it is inconsistent. However, Mackie not tell or

⁴⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 12.

show how it is inconsistent. We will see his argument in detail in the second chapter of this thesis. However, these three attributes do not contradict explicitly.

- (1) God is omnipotent
- (2) God is wholly good and
- (3) Evil exists.

According to our definition of explicit contradiction, the set does not show it has explicitly contradicted itself.

1.8.2 Implicit Contradiction

The second type of contradiction is an implicit contradiction, “A set s of propositions is implicitly contradictory if there is a necessary proposition p such that the result of adding p to s is a formally contradictory set.”⁴⁹ So, where are Mackie’s claims of a contradiction? As Plantinga said, this does not show the contradiction, so let us add some premises called “quasi-logical” rules.

However, the contradiction does not arise immediately; to show it we need some additional premises, or perhaps some quasi-logical rules connecting the terms “good” and “evil” and “omnipotent”. These additional principles are the good is opposed to evil, in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can, and that there are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do. From these it follows that a good omnipotent thing eliminates evil completely, and then the propositions that a good omnipotent thing exists, and that evil, exists and that evil exists, are incompatible.⁵⁰

We will see in detail the argument in the next chapter, but, in this chapter, we have to make critical remarks that the existence of God and the existence of Evil are not implicit

⁴⁹ Ibid.,16.

⁵⁰John Mackie, quoted in Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 16.

or explicit contradictions. Now, let see, whether it contradicted in the implicit contradiction. “A set of sentences is formally inconsistency if one can derive an implicit contradiction from the set by making valid deductive inferences”.⁵¹ Example

(1) Yonas is in Addis Ababa

(2) Selam is not in Addis Ababa and

(3) If Yonas is in Addis Ababa then Selam is in Addis Ababa, we can derive an explicit contradiction; namely:

(4) Selam is in Addis Ababa and Selam is not in Addis Ababa.

If we unload G and E we get four prepositions:

(a) God is omnipotent.

(b) God is omnibenevolent

(c) God exists.

(d) Evil exists.

As we see each set of sentences seems to lack the necessary material to drive an explicit contradiction.

1.8.3 Formal Contradiction

A formal contradictory set is one from whose members an explicit contradiction can be deduced by the laws of logic. For example,

(1) Desta is older than Robel

(2) Robel is older than Nebiyou and

(3) Desta is not older than Nebiyou.

⁵¹ Christopher. Bernard,(2015).Addis Ababa University, *Philosophy of Religion Undergraduate Class Lecture*, 9.

This set is neither explicitly nor formally contradictory; we can't, just by using the laws of logic, deduce the denial of any of these propositions from the others. Yet there is a good sense in which these statements are *inconsistent or contradictory*. For, clearly, it is not possible that its three members all are true. It is necessarily true that, according to Plantinga,

(4) If Desta is older than Robel and Robel is older than Nebiyou , then Desta is older than Nebiyou.

And if we add (4) to set C, we get a set that is formally contradictory; (1), (2), and (4) yield, by the laws of ordinary logic, the denial of (3). I said that (4) is *necessarily true*; but what does that mean? Of course, we might say that a proposition is necessarily true if it is possible that it be false, or if its negation is not possible true.⁵² Based on these three kinds of contradiction, we will evaluate whether the existence of God and evil are logical compatible or not. However, before that, let us discuss whether believing in a contradiction is a good thing or not.

1.9 Why Is It Bad to Have a Contradictory Belief?

I can give at least two reasons why we do not have to belief in contradictions. The first reason is that it is good to have true beliefs. Even if we do hold false beliefs unknowingly, it better to have true beliefs. The second one could be difficultly to act logically. In order to be consistent and to be logical, it is good to avoid believing in a contradiction. Example: Today is Monday and today is not Monday. This is contradiction. If the first one is true, the second one has to be false. Because of the above reason, it is important not to believe in contradictions.

⁵²Alvin. Plantinga,(1977).*God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing,p.16.

The purpose of this thesis is to show the existence of God and the existence of Evil are compatible. Rational theists do not believe in contradictions. In fact, there are many conceptions of God or gods among westerners and in other parts of the world. It is not the main purpose of this thesis to make clear each concepts of God and clarify all the concepts of God and say this is the right way of looking at God or this is the wrong way of looking at God. However, there are particular definitions of God in the West that will be outlined here. Classical theists have at least three features of God.

Omni=all

1. all knowing (omniscient)
2. all powerful (omnipotent)
3. all good (omnibenevolent)

(1) If God exists, then He/She/It would have to be all three of these features, according to classical theists. These are a hypothesis. Some are unsure whether God exists or not, but I would say let us assume He/She/It exists. Whether Him, Her, or It, it is better to assume that (2) if an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God exists, then there would be no evil. An all knowing being would know whether there will be evil. An all powerful being could prevent the evil from happening if it tried. An all good being would try to prevent evil. There would not be evil. For the sake of this thesis, let us assume that (3) God exists. If an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God exists, there would not be evil. God exists, therefore, (4) there is no evil.

(5) There is evil (it seems there is evil.) For some simple examples, there is ISIS, and the death of innocent children. There is no evil and there is evil is a contradiction. So, we have to reject the one of the given premises. (1) If God exists, then He, She, or It

would be omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent. In fact, it is hard to reject or deny this claim, because it is just how we defined what God is. The second one, which says if there is an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God, then there would be no evil is straightforward. If we assume God exists and evil exists, which is hard to deny, we get a contradiction. So, we have to reject something. Maybe we have to take (3) God exists and say God doesn't exist, but this point assumes on two things. In fact, the argument is that God and evil are incompatible, or, in other words, it is logically impossible for them to co-exist. Therefore, the theist has to deny that there is no evil or give up at least one of the omnipotent, omniscient, or omnibenevolent features or be irrational not rational. In general, the theist has to say whether this kind of God exists or does not exist. Here, the research strongly agrees that the God of classical theist and evil can co-exist and is logically possible. We will see the historical background of this argued and the advocators of it, and we will see how it is possible God and evil can co-exist. Now, let us see some discussion on the problem of evil.

1.10 Discussion on the Problem of Evil

One of the important desires of human beings is to find answers to the basic questions of human existence, answers to important philosophical questions regarding the meaning of life that arise during the course of one's life. Epicurus was the one who brought up old unanswered questions about the existence of God and evil. Is He willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is impotent. Is He able, but not willing? Then He is malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Whence then is evil?⁵³ Evil is a problem, for the theist, in that a contradiction is involved in the fact of evil on the one hand and belief

⁵³ David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

in the omnipotence and omniscience of God on the other.⁵⁴ John Stuart Mill, J. E. McTaggart, Antony Flew, H.D. Aiken, J.L. Mackie, C.J. Ducasse and H.J. McCloskey are a few of the many others who have echoed Philo's finalistic dismissal of traditional theism after making reference to the logical incompatibility of "God exists."⁵⁵ Mackie argues that the existence of God and the existence of evil are logically inconsistent. But Prof. Alvin C. Plantinga in his book entitled *God, Freedom, and Evil* has convincingly shown that there is no contradiction between the existence of God and the existence of evil in this world.⁵⁶ In the next chapters we will see in detail the arguments, from historical perspectives to the contemporary views.

⁵⁴ J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *The Problem of Evil*, (1992), 97.

⁵⁵ Marilyn McCord Adams, *Problem of Evil* (Oxford University Press, 1990), 39.

⁵⁶ Alvin. Plantinga, (1977). *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing, 1-122.

Chapter Two

2.1 Debates on the Problem of Evil

In 1999, George Barna, the public opinion pollster, conducted a national survey in which he asked a scientifically selected cross-section of adults: “If you could ask God only one question and you knew he would give you an answer, what would you ask?” The top response, offered by 17 percent of those who responded, was: “Why is there pain and suffering in the world?” “There is only one question which really matters: why do bad things happen to good people? All other theological conversation is intellectually diverting; somewhat like doing the crossword puzzle in the Sunday paper and feeling very satisfied when you have made the words fit; but ultimately without the capacity to reach people where they really are.”⁵⁷

This research attempts to answer the title question by way of philosophical reflections on the compatibility between the existence of God and the existence of evil. An attempt to answer this title question would require us to critically examine several ways of thinking about the compatibility of the existence of God and the existence of evil. The main reason that motivates this researcher is a widely held view or belief by many, philosophers and non-philosophers alike, that links, for some reasons, being a philosopher and being an atheist in a positive or favorable way. In the Ethiopian context, it seems to be a widely held belief that the study of philosophy is supposed to lead to all kinds of things such as being crazy, being radical, being different, and going against

⁵⁷ Rabbi Harold Kushner quoted in M.B. Ahern, *The Problem of Evil* (London and New York: Rutledge and Kegan Paul and Schocken Books, 1971).

religious beliefs or religion, because the philosophers believe that God does not exist. Their reason for this claim is that God and evil cannot co-exist. The focus of this research is not on all the above mentioned popular beliefs about philosophy; rather, as pointed out above, its focus will be on whether the existence of God is compatible with the existence of evil or not. We'll consider whether the correlation, if there is any, is logical, causal, and epistemic/evidential. I'll argue none of these possible correlations justify the belief that the existence of God and the existence of evil are not compatible. Now, let's see the logical problem of evil.

2.2 Logical Problem of Evil

The logical problem of evil concerns how to give a rational explanation of the co-existence of God and evil, whereas the emotional problem of evil concerns how to reassure those who are suffering. The logical problem lies in the province of the philosopher; the emotional problem lies in the province of the counselor.⁵⁸ Both the logical problem of evil and the emotional problem of evil are difficult to explain in single statement and give full explanation. But it is important to keep this distinction clear in our mind because the solution to the intellectual problem is suitable to appear dry, uncaring, and uncomfoting to someone who is going through suffering, whereas the solution to the emotional problem is apt to appear on the surface and deficient as an explanation to someone contemplating the question conceptually.⁵⁹ Keeping this distinction in mind, let us turn to the logical problem of evil. In this research, the researcher wants to focus and

⁵⁸ D. Howard-Snyder, ed., (1996), *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Indiana University Press, p. 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 6.

examine the logical problem of evil and the evidential problem of evil as evidence that the classical theism God is not compatible to the existence of evil. Why does God let evil happen, if He can do all, knows all and is perfectly good? This question has been articulated into point of view based upon the work of John Mackie “Evil and Omnipotence.”⁶⁰ In this selection, Mackie argues that the existence of God and the existence of evil are logically inconsistent.⁶¹

1. God is omniscient (all knowing)
2. God is omnipotent (all powerful)
3. God is perfectly good
4. Evil exists
5. If God is omniscient, He should know a way to eliminate evil from the world
6. If God is omnipotent, He should be able to prevent or eliminate evil from the world
7. If God is perfectly good, then He should be willing to prevent evil from the world.
8. Evil exists, then God must either not be omniscient, omnipotent, or perfectly good.

⁶⁰ J.L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence,” *Mind* 64 (1995): 200-212.

⁶¹ From *Mind* 64 Copyright © 1955. Used by permission of *Mind* .

Note that, while considering arguments if a contradiction resulted either out of the set of the arguments directly, i.e. if there are a true and false statements at the same time punctuation or if following the argument one can come up with a contradiction in the above argument we see how we had already stated in statement (1) to (3) that God possessed these attributes and statement (8) appeals to the point that God lacks either one of the mentioned attributes. So following this contradiction, the conclusion would be, as it is unquestionable that evil exists, that God does not. Hence following the contradiction and the above set of arguments show how the coexistence of God and evil is hard to swallow. This is the reason for different philosophers to say the existence of God and the existence of evil are not compatible. The logical problem of evil is called a logical problem because it is logically impossible for the God of the classical theist and evil coexist. As H.J. McCloskey put it:

“Evil is a problem for the theist in that a contradiction is involved in the fact of evil on the one hand, and the belief in the omnipotence and perfection of God on the other. God cannot be both all-powerful and perfectly good if evil is real”.⁶²

We can put the logical problem of Evil in another form.

Premise # 1: God and suffering can't coexist.

Premise #2 Suffering exists.

Conclusion: Therefore: God doesn't exist.

We can also put the logical problem of evil in another form.

⁶² H.J. McCloskey, (1960). “The Problem of Evil, *Journal of Bible and Religion*, pp.187-97.

Let “G” stand for God exists and is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent.

Let “E” stands for evil exists.

(1) $\sim (G \ \& \ E)$

(2) E

(3) $\therefore \sim G$

According to Mackie and McCloskey, the existence of God and the existence of evil are logical inconsistent. The argument is sound, but we will see whether the existence of God and the existence of evil are logical incompatible or not in detail. The other objection for the existence of God is the evidential problem of evil.

2.3 Evidential Problem of Evil

William Rowe puts the evidential argument from evil more or less like this:

(1) There exist instances of intense suffering that God could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good. Here, premise (2) says that the existence of God is incompatible with each instance of preventable intense suffering the permission of which is not required for some greater good.⁶³ As Rowe points out, “we cannot know with certainty that instances of suffering of the sort described in (1) do occur in the world.” But he said that we do have a rational argument for believing premise (1). Since 1979, Row has articulated two other evidential arguments from evil.

⁶³ Daniel Howard-Snyder,(1996). *The Evidential Argument From Evil*, (Indiana University Press,p, 2.

(2) God would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering He could, unless He could not to do so without thereby losing some greater good.

(3) So, God does not exist.

P. No good we know of justifies God in permitting E1 and E2 (where E1 and E2 are cases of especially horrific evil); so, it is quite probable that

Q. No good at all justifies God in permitting E1 and E2.⁶⁴

First, let us make the distinction between the logical problem of evil and the evidential problem of evil. The logical problem of evil says theism is incompatible with some known fact about evil; but the evidential argument is not like the logical problem of evil.

2.4 Plantinga's Perspective on Evil

In this subchapter, I would like to present Plantinga's view on evil. According to Plantinga's natural atheology "try to prove that God does not exist or that at any time it is unreasonable or irrational to believe that He does. Perhaps the most widely accepted and inspiring pieces of natural atheology have to do with the so-called problem of evil."⁶⁵ Many philosophers believe that the existence of evil constitutes a difficulty for the theist, and others believe that the existence of evil makes belief in God unreasonable or rationally unacceptable. Plantinga quotes what David Hume dialogues through the character Philo, laying out the argument from evil against the existence of God.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁵ Alvin. Plantinga, (1977). *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing,p.7.

But though these external insults, said Demea, from animal, from men, from all the elements, which assaults us from a frightful catalogue of woes, they are nothing in comparison of those which arise within ourselves, from the distempered condition of our mind and body. How many lie under the lingering torment of diseases? Hear the pathetic enumeration of the great poet.⁶⁶⁶⁷

Intestine stone and ulcer, colic-pangs,
Demonic frenzy, moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy.
Dire was the tossing, deep the groans: Despair
Tended the sick, busiest from coach to couch.
And over them triumphant Death his dart
Shook: but delay'd to strick, though oft invoc'd
With vows, as their chief good and final hope.⁶⁸

Continued Demea,

though more secret, are not perhaps less dismal vexations. Remorse, shame, anguish, rage, disappointment, anxiety, fear, dejection, despair who has ever passed through life without cruel inroads from these tormentors? How many have scarcely ever felt any better sensations? Labor and poverty, so abhorred by everyone, and the certain lot of the far greater number; and those few privileged persons who enjoy ease and opulence never reach contentment or true felicity. All the good of life united would not make a very happy man, but all the ills united

⁶⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁷ The “great poet” referred to is John Milton, and the quotation is from *Paradise Lost*.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 8.

would make a wretch indeed; and any one of them almost, any often the absence of one good is sufficient to render life ineligible.⁶⁹

In addition to “natural” evils such as earthquakes, tidal waves, mass murders, ISIS, war and virulent diseases, there are evils that result from human foolishness, arrogance, a lack of knowledge and cruelty. Some of these are described in painfully graphic detail in Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* as it is quoted in Plantinga.

A Bulgarian I met lately in Moscow,” Ivan went on, seeming not to hear his brother’s words, “told me about the crimes committed by Turks and Circassia’s in all parts of Bulgaria through fear of a general rising of the Slavs. They burn villages, murder, outrage women and children, they nail their prisoners by the ears to the fences, leave them so till owning, and in the morning they hang them all sorts of things you can’t imagine. People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty, but that’s a great injustice and insult to the beasts; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel. The tiger only tears and gnaws, that’s all he can do. He would never think of nailing people by the ears, even if he were able to do it. These Turks took a pleasure in torturing children, too; cutting the unborn child from the mother’s womb, and tossing babies up in the air and catching them on the points of their bayonets before their mother’s eyes. Doing it before the mother’s eyes was what gave zest to the amusement. Here is another sense that I thought very interesting. Imagine a trembling mother with her baby in her arms, a

⁶⁹ David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Nelson Pike (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1970), 84-85.

circle of invaliding Turks around her. They've planned a diversion; they pet the baby, laugh to make it laugh. They succeed, the baby laughs. At that moment a Turk points a pistol four inches from the baby's face. The baby laugh with glee, holds out his little hands to the pistol, and he pulls the trigger in the baby's face and blows out its brains. Artistic, wasn't it? By the way, Turks are particularly fond of sweet things, they say.⁷⁰

War also brings suffering, disability and other unnecessary things to human beings. Plantinga also believes that there is suffering and savagery which go with war, and it brutalizes those who take part in it. Commenting on the trail of Lt. William Calley, who was accused of taking part in the 1969 American massacre of unarmed civilians at My Lai, a young soldier said,

“How can they punish Calley? They send us over here to kill dinks. Our job is to kill dinks. How can they punish him for that?” One who speaks in this way has indeed become brutish. Socrates once said that it is better to suffer injustice than to do it better to be victim than perpetrator. Perhaps he's right; perhaps one who has become as morally callous and insensitive as that comment reveals has lost something more precious than life itself. Lot of the far greater number, and those few privileged persons who enjoy ease and opulence never reach contentment or true all the ill united. So the world obviously continues great deal of evil.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Random House, 1933), 245-246.

⁷¹ Alvin. Plantinga,(1977). *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing,7-9.

As the above points clearly indicate, Plantinga believes that there is really evil in this world.

2.3 Other Scholars Point of View for or against the Existence of Evil and God's Compatibility.

Historically, the problem of evil is a serious issue in human life, and it is also a serious academic topic. Different philosophers and theologians have differing views on the problem of evil. On one hand, there are philosophers and theologians who support that the existence of God and the existence of evil are compatible and on the other hand those there are philosophers who support that the existence of God and the existence of evil are not compatible. In this chapter, the researcher will present both views. First, let us see those who say that the existence of God and the existence of evil are not compatible or, in other words, it is impossible for God and evil to co-exist. Before that, let us see the historical proponents of the view.

In the book entitled *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*, the first author on the issue of the incompatibility of God and Evil was an unknown author of a French work (despite the Latin title), Jordanus Brunus Redivivus (1760 and 1770.) This author wanted to show the logical incompatibility of God and evil. According to Justin P. McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder, this was the first advance towards a logical argument from evil of the sort that J.L. Mackie (1955) most famously defended in 1955. The second author, David Hume (1711–1776), in the 10th and 11th chapters of his posthumous *Dialogues Relating to Natural Religion*, offers the humbler argument that the existence of a morally good first cause of the universe is highly improbable given the

evidence of our senses. And also Hume is the first to offer an evidential argument from evil of the sort that Paul Draper and others have more recently offered.⁷² In fact, Jordanus Brunus Redivivus begins by describing the Epicurean theses, recast by Giordano Bruno, of the endless vastness of the universe and the plurality of worlds. Epicurean anti-providentialism early on in the work turns to outright atheism beginning in the third chapter, “On the Existence of God,” which offers a natural history of belief in God and finally a philosophical attack on that belief.⁷³ Historically, there were philosophers who were arguing on the incompatibility of the existence of God and evil one the one hand, including Epicurus, David Hume, J.L Mackie, McCloskey, Paul Draper, William Rowe, J.L. Schellernberg; and, on the other hand, those who argued the compatibility of the existence of God and evil, including St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, Gottfried Leibniz, Robert Merrihew Adams, Michel Martin, John Hick, Richard Swinber, Alvin Plantinga. Now, let us see their arguments.

Against (God and Evil Are Not Compatible to Exist Together)

2.3.1.1 Epicurus

It was the ancient Greek philosopher named Epicurus who first formulated the problem of evil in 341-270 B.C., or I would say he was the one who generated this argument. In fact, throughout history, the argument from evil is possibly the most vital argument against the existence of God. “Epicurus's old questions are yet unanswered. Is He willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then is He impotent. Is He able, but not willing?

⁷² Draper, 331-350.

⁷³ Justin P. McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder, *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 14.

Then is He malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Whence then is evil?”⁷⁴ He stated clearly as follows:

If He is willing and is unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God; if He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God; if He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then are evils? or why does He not remove them?⁷⁵

2.3.1.2 David Hume

Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not by chance, surely from some cause, then. It is from the intention of the deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. It is contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, and so decisive⁷⁶

So Hume insists on this question: if God is perfectly benevolent and also omnipotent, or almighty, why is there any evil in the world? Why does he permit it?

2.3.1.3 J.L. Mackie

In the logical problem of evil, Mackie argues that the existence of God and the existence of evil are logically inconsistent.⁷⁷ Mackie argues that religious beliefs lack

⁷⁴ Hume, quoted in McBrayer and Howard-Snyder, *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*, 22.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁶ Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, pt.X, 88, 91.

⁷⁷ From *Mind* 64 Copyright © 1955.

rational support and it can be shown that they are positively irrational. As Mackie conceived of it, the problem of evil is “a logical problem, the problem of clarifying and reconciling a number of beliefs” that were “essential parts of most theological positions.” The three “beliefs” he had in mind were these: “God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet evil exists.” Mackie was aware that there was no obvious inconsistency here.⁷⁸ According to Mackie, the existence of God and the existence of evil are not compatible because God’s attributes do not allow for evil to exist.

2.3.1.4 William Rowe

Rowe’s Evidential Arguments over the past 35 years, (1979, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001a, 2001c) have claimed that

the kinds and amounts of suffering to be found in our universe are evidence that our universe was not created by an omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good god. Rowe does not mean to be claiming that the kinds and amounts of suffering to be found in our universe are immediately decisive evidence that our universe was not created by an omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good god.⁷⁹

In summation, the problem of evil was discussed by philosophers from Epicurus to Hume and formalized by Mackie. This problem of evil is often held to have been solved in our own day by Professor Alvin Plantinga (1974). “Plantinga cuts a wide swath through

⁷⁸ Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence,” 97.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 34.

contemporary philosophy of religion, and most agree that with his famous Free Will Defense, he carries the old logical problem of evil away with him.”⁸⁰

For (Those Who Said the Existence of God and the Existence of Evil Are Compatible)

2.3.1.5 St. Thomas Aquinas

According to the information stated in the book entitled *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*, the author argues that “there is no ancient argument from evil”. The first clear account of an argument from evil occurs in the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) as one of only two objections raised against the existence of God:

“It seems that God does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would be altogether destroyed. But the word ‘God’ means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, God existed, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore God does not exist”⁸¹

From the above argument, we can think that the argument from evil dates back to roughly 1266 year when Aquinas began writing the *Summa*. However, I do not think did Aquinas consider his argument from evil as real threat.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁸¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 13.

2.3.1.6 St. Augustine

In Augustine's time, evil was not broadly recognized as a threat to belief in the existence of God. "Evil had been invoked in argument against the unity of the creator, divine providence, and the human capability to know whether any gods existed; but evil had not yet served in an explicit attack on the very existence of God."⁸² In fact, Augustine believed that evil is the Absence of Good like darkness is the absence of light. Augustine (354- 430) is generally recognized as one of the greatest thinkers of Western Christianity.

This stage of Augustine's life profoundly influenced his view of the problem of evil. Augustine's view about evil was formulated while he was associating with Manicheans, who were dualistic in their thinking. They believed that evil and good are two equal and opposite principles.⁸³ In general, Augustine argues that evil is not a thing. It is a lack of a thing, namely, goodness.

2.3.1.7 Gottfried Leibniz

Leibniz (1646-1714), in his book entitled *Confessio Philosophi*, argues that the world that we are living in the best of all possible worlds. Evil in man is counterpoised by the good in other forms of life, and the evil that man experiences will surely be

⁸² McBrayer and Howard-Snyder, *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*, 15

⁸³ From *Augustine Confessions and Enchiridion*, trans. and ed. by Albert C. Outler (1955).

counterpoised by the blessedness of heaven. Leibniz said, “if such a man had failed to receive light during his life, he would receive it at least in the hour of death.”⁸⁴

2.3.8 Robert Merrihew Adams

Robert Merrihew Adams argues that the ethical views of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition do not require the theist to believe that God would have to create the best possible worlds.⁸⁵ He is arguing that God must create the best world which does not have any evil.

2.3.9 John Hick

John Hick explains and defends “soul-making theodicy,” according to which God allows evil in order to promote moral and spiritual growth. Hick argues that God wants us to develop character traits that suit us for a relationship with God, as well as with other humans, and that this requires that we live in a morally challenging environment.⁸⁶

2.3.10 Michael Martin

Martin defends two versions of the evidential argument from evil direct and indirect. He said that both the direct and indirect versions have strong points, but they are not indisputable evidence for the non-existence of God. Martin postulates that the direct “evidential argument shows that under certain conditions the fact of apparently pointless

⁸⁴ G.W. Leibniz, *Confessio Philophi Papers Concerning the Problem of Evil 1671-1678* (London: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁸⁵ From *The Philosophical Review* 74, Copyright © 1965.

⁸⁶ Christopher. Bernard, Addis Ababa University Undergraduate Philosophy of Religion Lecture Hand-out, 5.

evil provides a strong reason for not believing in God. In the case of the Indirect Argument, he maintains that the failure of known theodicies provides a powerful reason for non-belief.”⁸⁷

2.3.11 Alvin Plantinga

Alvin Plantinga is widely regarded as the most important and influential theistic philosopher of the latter half of the twentieth century. In this article, he criticizes the logical argument from evil by setting out the Free Will Defense.⁸⁸ Plantinga, in his book entitled *God, Freedom, and Evil*, has convincingly shown that there is no contradiction between the existence of God and the existence of evil in this world. In this study, the researcher wants to show how the existence of God and evil are compatible in the third chapter in detail.

⁸⁷ © 2002 by Michael Martin.

⁸⁸ Alvin. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing,p.7.

Chapter Three

3.1 Evil and God Cannot Co-exist

The focus of the researcher, in this chapter, will be on presenting two positions on the existence of God and evil. Some people believe that God and evil are not compatible. Other people believe that God and evil are compatible. I will give more emphasis on Plantinga's argument on the compatibility of God and evil. In order to sufficiently understand Plantinga's position, we must first understand the logical and evidential problem of evil in detail. In this chapter, our question is this: are God and evil compatible? A useful project would be to try to make this question more precise. What is God? What is evil? What is incompatibility and in what varieties does it come? We have already seen in chapter one these questions.

According to Plantinga, there are different kinds of contradictions in this chapter. We will see only three kinds of contradictions, and, based on these contradictions, we will evaluate whether the God of classical theism and evil are compatible or not. There is explicit, implicit and formal contradiction, in the presence of plausible assumptions.⁸⁹ Then we will see the defense between God and evil in detail. According to the Holy Scripture, Church tradition, Apostolic Creeds, and Church fathers' teaching throughout the history of the church, God is understood to be omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, omnibenevolent. But the existence of evil causes the problem for this kind of God. If God is good, then he has the desire to eliminate evil. If God is omnipotent, then God is able to eliminate evil. If God is omniscient, then God knows that evil exists and knows

⁸⁹ Alvin Plantinga, (2009). "*The Plantinga-Dennett Debate: Science and Religion: Are They Compatible?*" (paper presented at American Philosophical Association Central Division Conference.

how to eliminate it. But if God wants to eliminate evil and can eliminate evil, then why does evil exist? We can conclude that since evil exists, God at least an omnipotent, good God does not exist. There are two cases for the incompatibility of the existence of God and evil. The first, one is the logical problem of evil and the other one is the evidential problem of evil.

3.1.1 The Logical Problem

There are two interpretations of this argument. One version, called the logical problem of evil, claims that the mere existence of evil is logically incompatible with the existence of an omnipotent, good God. It understands the argument deductively.

Something is logically impossible if it involves a contradiction. It is logically impossible, for example, today is Monday and today is not Monday. Something is logically possible if it does not involve a contradiction. The above example is logically impossible. In the same way Mackie and McCloskey are arguing that claiming that God and evil both exist is logically impossible. According to J.L. Mackie, “religious beliefs lack rational support,” and it can be shown that they are positively irrational, that the several parts of the essential theological doctrine are inconsistent with one another.⁹⁰ Mackie thinks that the problem of evil is “a logical problem, the problem of clarifying and reconciling a number of beliefs” that were “necessary parts of most theological positions.” The three “beliefs” he had in mind were these: “God is omnipotent;

⁹⁰ J.L. Mackie, (2000). “*Evil and Omnipotence*,”

God is wholly good; and yet evil exists.”⁹¹ Mackie was aware that there was no obvious inconsistency here. Thus, he said,

to show it we need some additional premises, or perhaps some quasi-logical rules connecting the terms “good,” and “evil,” and “omnipotent.” These additional principles are that good is opposed to evil, in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can, and that there are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do. From these it follows that a good omnipotent thing eliminates evil completely, and then the propositions that a good omnipotent thing exists, and that evil exists, are incompatible⁹²

According to literature nearly 60 years have passed since Mackie published his “logical problem of evil”, as he called it. But what, exactly, is the argument we will see it in detail. Mackie is claiming that the three beliefs cannot all be true. As he says, though, these three are not formally contradictory; that is, we cannot create a paradox using just these assumptions. To show that they are inconsistent, we have to add some further principles⁹³. Mackie gives us two:

- ❖ If something is wholly good, it always eliminates as much evil as it can.
- ❖ If something is omnipotent, it can do anything.

Mackie thinks that these two principles are plausible. Using these, we can deduce a contradiction from the three principles with which we began. One way to set up the argument is as follows:

1. God exists.
2. If God exists, then God is wholly good.
3. If something is wholly good, it always eliminates as much evil as

⁹¹ Ibid. 200.

⁹² *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*, p.20.

⁹³ Ibid. 21.

it can.

4. If God exists, then God eliminates as much evil as God can. (2,3)

5. If God exists, then God is omnipotent.

6. If something is omnipotent, it can do anything.

7. If God exists, then God can eliminate all evil. (5,6)

8. If God exists, then God eliminates all evil. (4,7)

9. God eliminates all evil. (1,8)

C. There is no evil. (9)

The conclusion is clearly false because there is evil in the world. The argument appears to be valid. At least one of the premises must be false. So, according to Mackie the existence of classical theistic God and evil are incompatible.

3.1.2 God and Evil Can Co-exist (Plantinga)

In this section, we will see the detail argument whether the existence of God and evil are compatible or not. There are different kinds of contradiction, in this research we will see at least three kinds of contradiction according to Plantinga and we will measure whether the existence of God and evil are compatible or not.

3.1.2 1 Explicit Contradiction

Explicit contradiction is “a proposition of a certain sort-a conjunctive proposition, one conjunct of which is the denial or negation of the other conjunct”⁹⁴. Example yonas is a good football player, and it’s false that yonas is not a good football player. Is

⁹⁴ Alvin. Plantinga, (1977). *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing, 7.

Mackie charging the theist with accepting such a contradiction?⁹⁵ Surly not what he says is different. According to J.L Mackie, theist has to accept the three attributes of God and he said that if the theist accepted it is inconsistence. But he do not tell or show us, how it is inconsistent. However, these three attributes of God does not contradicts explicitly.

- (1) God is omnipotent
- (2) God is wholly good and
- (3) Evil exists.

According to our definition of explicitly contradiction, the set does not show it is explicitly contradicted itself. Explicitly contradictory appears if one of the members is the denial or negation of another member. But then, of course, it is evident that the set we are discussing is not explicitly contradictory; the denials of (1), (2), and (3), respectively are

- (1) God is not omnipotent (or it's false that God is omnipotent)
- (2) God is not wholly good and
- (3) There is no evil.

None of which are in set A. of course many sets are pretty clearly contradictory, in an important way, but not *explicitly* contradictory. For example, set B; (4) If all men are mortal, then Daniel is mortal

- (5) All men are mortal
- (6) Daniel is not mortal.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 12.

This set is not explicitly contradictory; yet surely *some* significant sense of that term applies to it. For by using the law modus ponens (if p , then q ; p ; therefore q) we can deduce

(7) Daniel is mortal.

From (4) and (5) The result of adding (7) to B is the set {(4), (5),(6),(7)}. This set, of course, is explicitly contradictory in that (6) is the denial of (7). We might say that any set which shares these characteristics with set B is *formally* contradictory. So a formally contradictory set is one from whose members an explicit contradiction can be deduced by the laws of logic. Is Mackie claiming that set A is formally contradictory? If he is, he's wrong. No laws of logic permit us to deduce the denial of one of the propositions in A from the other members. Set A isn't formally contradictory either.⁹⁶ So, the existence of God and evil are not explicitly contradictory.

3.4.2 Implicit Contradiction

The second type of contradiction is implicit contradiction "A set S of propositions implicitly contradictory if there is a necessary proposition p such that the result of adding p to S is a formally contradictory set."⁹⁷ So, where is Mackie's claim of contradiction? As Plantinga said this does not show the contradiction so, let us add some premises called "quasi-logical" rules.

⁹⁶ Alvin. Plantinga, (1977). *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 15-16.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16

However, the contradiction does not arise immediately; to show it we need some additional premises, or perhaps some quasi-logical rules connecting the terms “good” and “evil” and “omnipotent”. These additional principles are the good is opposed to evil, in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can, and that there are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do. From these it follows that a good omnipotent thing eliminates evil completely, and then the propositions that a good omnipotent thing exists, and that evil, exists and that evil exists, are incompatible.⁹⁸

The existence of God and the existence of Evil do not implicitly contradict. The formal contradiction. “A set of sentences is formally inconsistent if one can derive an explicit contradiction from the set by making valid deductive inferences”.⁹⁹ Example

(1) Rahel is in Addis Ababa

(2) Selam is not in Addis Ababa and

(3) If Rahel is in Addis Ababa then Selam is in Addis Ababa, we can derive an explicit contradiction; namely:

(4) Selam is in Addis Ababa and Selam is not in Addis Ababa.

If we unload G and E we get four propositions:

(a) God is omnipotent.

(b) God is omnibenevolent

(c) God exists.

(d) Evil exists.

⁹⁸J.L. Mackie quoted in. Alvin. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing, p.16.

⁹⁹ Christopher. Bernard, (2015). *Philosophy of Religion Class Lecture* Addis Ababa University. p. 9.

As we see each set of sentences seems to lack the necessary material to drive an explicit contradiction.

3.4.3 Formal Contradiction

The third, is called formal contradictory set is one from whose members an explicit contradiction can be deduced by the laws of logic. For example

(1) Desta is older than Robel

(2) Robel is older than Nebiyou and

(3) Desta is not older than Nebiyou.

This set is neither explicitly nor formally contradictory; we can't, just by using the laws of logic, deduce the denial of any of these propositions from the others. And yet there is a good sense in which it is *inconsistent or contradictory*. For clearly it is not possible that its three members all be true. It is necessarily true that. According to Plantinga

(4) If Desta is older than Robel and Robel is older than Nebiyou ,then Desta is older than Nebiyou.

And if we add (4) to set C, we get a set that is formally contradictory; (1), (2), and (4) yield, by the laws of ordinary logic, the denial of (3). I said that (4) is *necessarily true*; but what does that mean? Of course we might say that a proposition is necessarily true if it is possible that it be false, or if its negation is not possible true¹⁰⁰. Based on the kinds of contradiction we will evaluate whether the existence of God and evil are logical compatible or not. According to Plantinga the existence of God and evil are not logically contradictory.

¹⁰⁰Alvin. Plantinga,(1977). *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing, p.16.

3.1.2 The Evidential Problem

The second objection for the existence of God and evil are not compatible is the evidential problem of evil claims that “the amount and distribution of evil that exists is good evidence that an omnipotent, good God does not exist.”¹⁰¹ It understands the argument inductively: the way evil actually exists is good evidence for thinking that God does not exist¹⁰². For example, children can die of very bad diseases like malaria or they can be harshly treated. Animals can go through in natural disasters such as deficiency. This seems exactly the kind of thing an omnipotent, good God would want to eradicate. Evil is unjustly distributed, and, even if it is necessary for certain goods, is so much evil necessary? So, the logical problem of evil and the evidential problem of evil are the two objections so far to say that the existence of God and the existence of evil are incompatible. As I have clearly described in chapter one compatible means existing together or going together or harmony. According to the given definition God and evil cannot go together or co-exist. But is this claim true? We will see in 3.2 in detail.

For the logical argument of evil, Plantinga convincingly showed that the existence of God and evil are compatible and that it is logically possible. Now, Plantinga’s work has shifted attention from the logical argument from evil to the evidential argument. The atheist philosopher William Rowe writes:

A number of philosophers have contended that the existence of evil is *logically inconsistent* with the existence of the classical theistic God. No one, I think, has succeeded

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 16.

¹⁰² Jeff Speaks, (2008). “*The Problem of Evil*”.

in establishing such an extravagant claim. Indeed, granted incompatibilism¹⁰³, there is a fairly compelling argument for the view that the existence of evil is logically consistent with the existence of God...there remains, however, what we may call the *evidential* form—as opposed to the *logical* form of the problem of evil¹⁰⁴

Paul Draper, also an atheist philosopher, agrees “with most philosophers of religion that theists face no serious logical problem of evil.”¹⁰⁵ Rather than argue that it is a necessary truth that God has no morally justified reason for permitting evil and that we can know this *a priori*, they argue it is a contingent truth that can be established empirically.

Rowe’s inductive argument from evil tries to establish empirically what the defender of the logical argument could not establish *a priori*, namely, that God has no morally sufficient reason to permit suffering. The theist has two general strategies he can employ to counter the inductive argument from evil.

3.2 The Existence of God and the Existence of Evil are Compatible

As we have seen in the above, there are philosophers on one hand who says the existence of God and the existence of evil are not compatible. On the other hand, there are philosophers who say the existence of God and the existence of evil are compatible. Now, we will see in detail how God is justified in permitting evil. Before that, we have to have a clear distinction between theodicy and defense in order to understand the compatibility of God and evil.

¹⁰³ Incompatibilism is the view that free will and determinism are not compatible. Some determinists are incompatibilists but the term is often, as in this case, used as a synonym for (libertarian) “free will.”

¹⁰⁴. William L. Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion* (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1996), 10.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Draper, "Evil and the Proper Basicity of Belief in God," *Faith and Philosophy*, (1996): 26.

3.2.1 Theodicy and Defense

The literature indicates that the term “theodicy” was first introduced by the German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz. The word derived from the Greek words for *theos* “God” and *ake* “justification.” John Milton described a theodicy as an attempt to “justify the ways of God to man.” A theodicy is any response to the problem of evil that purports to tell us why God permits evil. A defense is any response to the problem of evil that *does not* try to tell us why God permits evil. In the context of the logical argument from evil, a defense merely tries to give a *logically possible* reason why God permits suffering. In this research, I used both theodicy and defense in order to show why God permits evil and give any possible response to the problem of evil. In order to show the existence of God and the existence of evil are compatible. I will briefly explain some theodicies and let the reader decide whether they serve as sufficient reason for God to permit evil or not.

In the article entitled “Does Theism Need a Theodicy?” Richard Swinburne concludes that, in general, theism does need a theodicy.¹⁰⁶ It is not only Swinburne who said theist has to do theodicy but also Keith Yandell, William Rowe, Eleanor Stump and Marilyn Adams.¹⁰⁷ I also strongly agree that theodicy is necessary to show that being a Christian is being rational and the existence of God and the existence of Evil are compatible.

¹⁰⁶ Henry J. Schurman, (1993). “The Concept of Theodicy,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 30 no. 3: 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

3.2.1.1 The Greater Good Defense

The greater good defense is one logical defense for why He allowed evil to happen on earth, and this claim states that every evil is just a small part of the greater good that is to unfold. This means God allows one man to pass through evil things because there is a better tomorrow, the greater good is at the cost of evil. As humans, we can only see a portion of life as a whole. No one is capable of knowing how everything happens and why. There are many random, unexpected, and unimaginable things that happen with a certain kind of result. For example, the Israelites came out of Egypt, with a promise of freedom, prosperity, and health but were stuck in a dry desert for forty years. There, they faced plagues, wars, internal chaos, and water shortages, and almost everyone who got out of Egypt, save only two, died on their way to promise land. This is evil not just at a personal level but also at a national level. However, if we consider the big picture, the reason why they were set free out of centuries of slavery and the promise of a new country was not so that Israel would put her feet up and eat to the fullest; rather it was for an important reason of worshiping God and to be a safe path for the coming of the Messiah. But in between the ten plagues of Egypt, the Red Sea, and the Sinai Desert, this call was lost. Because they had to be a nation from which ultimate salvation comes, they had to be challenged. So, for the greater good of not only Israel but also the world, God abused them with evil for forty years in the desert. Hence, evil could be in the agenda for a bigger and brighter future.

Man is incapable of foretelling the future result of evil. All evil could be in the plan of God to produce a better human being out of everyone. The nature of man being finite makes it impossible for all of us to understand the one ultimate reason of life, the

big picture of each successive event. As we are unable to know and give reason to all things, God could be justified for allowing evil to happen for the greater good. John Hick also agree with this idea, as he pointed out in his work of soul making theodicy which states that God allows evil to produce a more efficient and positive quality in life that prevails over all the wrongness of evil. For instance, if we consider a teacher who packed my weekends and holidays with assignments, I would say as a student what a cruel and inconsiderate act it is. What actually is the point of a holiday if one is stuck on class matters? However, with accomplishing the holiday assignment, the teacher would have enough time to deal with national examination studies. For the student, it was a cruel and painful act. However with enough time for the national exam, I would study spaciously without any tension and get good marks through hard work. Hence, the evil was for a while, and it actually produced a better student with great opportunity of higher education.

So evil happens not to make people suffer for totally no reason at all but for the greater good and enhancement of oneself. Even though this explanation shows why evil may happen to an individual, it cannot cover the evidential problem of evil.

3.2.1.2 The Logical Defense

As I have discussed above, God allows evil to happen for the greater good. This shows how God has a sufficient reason for allowing evil to happen, as traditional Christianity holds God is good. Modern theism adds to the idea that “God is good, save that there is a good reason for allowing evil to happen.” Like the Israelites’ and the teacher example, God is, without any shadow of a doubt, good. He is good enough to

allow evil to exercise on earth if it has a good result. So now let us consider again the set of problem of evil argument God is omniscient (all knowing)

1. God is omnipotent (all powerful)
2. God is perfectly good
3. Evil exists
4. If God is omniscient, he should know a way to eliminate evil from the world
5. If God is omnipotent, he should be able to prevent or eliminate evil from the world
6. If God is perfectly good, then he should be willing to prevent evil from the world.
7. Evil exists, then God must either not be omniscient, or omnipotent or perfectly good.

But now I have to reconsider the third premise as it should be stated as

3*. God is perfectly good, save allowing evil for a sufficient reason and an ultimate goal.

Now, again, let me bring another attribute of God to light: God is omnipotent. Without a doubt, that is true. However, God cannot do a logical contradiction. Let's ask, for instance, if God can produce a sound so low that he can't even hear. It is a pure contradiction to assume that the omnipotent God could produce a sound so low that he can't even hear it. However, I am not imposing logic as a limitation to God's omnipotence, rather as Ganssle, wrote on thinking about God "it [logical non-contradiction] is a reflection of who he is."¹⁰⁸

This can be explained more as follows: I am in a classroom taking a difficult exam, and I know all the answers to the exam except two answers. My classmate sitting

¹⁰⁸ Gregory E. Ganssle, (2004). *Thinking about God: First Steps in Philosophy*, Intervarsity Press, : 165.

right in front of me seems to be doing well, so I peek to his exam and copy the answers. This is something I shouldn't do, but I can. I also simply can't swim on ice. Take me to Alaska with a swimming suit, and I will only freeze to death. On the first example, it is a school law I can break and probably get expelled, if I am caught. The latter is a natural law; I can't float on solid materials, end of discussion. So even though I can swim that I can't swim on ice is a logically correct idea. I propose this logical contradiction also works for God, as for swimming in the ice. I do not think God can do anything about it either logically necessary ideas and entities are things that can't form any contradiction, and this entity includes God. However, do note that I am not implying that it is a hard and impossible thing for God to perform miracles, rather do something that exist and does not exist at the point that is logical inconsistency¹⁰⁹

So now let's see rephrased premise one

1*. God is omnipotent, unless there is a logical contradiction

Hence now that I've reconstructed two of my basic premises, I have to consider the whole argument as;

6*. If God is omnipotent, then He should be able to prevent evil, unless there is a logical contradiction if He does so.

7*. If God is perfectly good, then He shouldn't allow evil to happen, unless there is a sufficient reason to justify the evil.

8*. If evil exists then God must have a good reason to allow it or there could be a logical contradiction if evil is prevented. Hence, there is a perfectly plausible situation in the co-existence of God and evil.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 118.

3.2.1.3 The Free Will Defense

Alvin Plantinga, however, is widely regarded as having shown that God *could* have a good reason to allow suffering. He calls this possibility the “Free Will Defense.” According to the Free Will Defense, it is logically possible that:

A world containing creatures who are significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all.¹¹⁰

The free will evidence proposed by Alvin Plantinga has been the most successful defense by far. This claim states that humans are created with a free will that was from God for the purpose of a good and content relationship with Him and among each other. For God to abolish evil or misery would be to interfere with free will given to people. The free will view is called libertarianism, which says that a person possesses free will as long as he is free to do or refrain from doing an action. Plantinga agrees with the idea that there are infinite numbers of possible worlds that would have been actualized, this world types include.

World 1 – God made man with freewill

- God avoided evil

World 2- God made man without free will

- God avoided evil

World 3- God made man with free will

¹¹⁰ Alvin. Plantinga, (1977). *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdman Publishing, p.30.

- There is evil

Among these and other possible worlds, world 3 is actualized, as it is where we are now at. The first world is logically inconsistent, as there can't be a world with and without a free will, so creating man with free will and avoiding their bad choice that result in evil can't be actualized. The second would have not been actualized. Hence in more realistic and actualized way, God made the world with a people who, without a single imposition on their will, could freely choose. However, philosophers like J. Mackie and A. Flew disagreed as an omnipotent God could create the two (free will and a world without evil). However, if evil is avoided, people are always with choosing well. Even though it seems a people are choosing, the choice is only one with no other options. This then becomes deterministic rather than choosing.

Defining the concept of free will in the light of determinism, if the universe is determined based on the logical physical laws that make everything, the act that is resulted because a determined course of action. The world is, according to determinists, a path already paved through the already existing physical; actions and laws that predict the successive actions that are supposed to happen specifically. So even though a person has a choice to do or not to do a certain action, his desire of choosing either one is already decided by the course of history that had the particles of the world working in the most according way befitting the natural and physics laws. However, this action of human being that is thought to be totally the result of his free will, despite the actual intrusion of the deterministic character of the world, is wrong. The world doesn't ideally just let him choose what it had already been determined but rather affects the desire to choose in that person.

This, in other words, is that the choice of people is the result of what they want to do, a desire from the inside. If the world is deterministic and affects this core source of every choice, then, by all means, the choice of human is not free. Hence, not only the decision but also the source or desire to choose has to be free for the free exercise of free will.¹¹¹ As mentioned, the deterministic world shows all actions and desires are determined, and, if all is determined, then evil will totally be determined as a course of action. This will in turn show us how there would be logical contradiction in this set of thinking, so Mackie's and Flew's ideas would be very wrong. Hence, God in all his power and knowledge created the world with free-willed people, risking the happening of evil. For God to avoid evil would also fill the world with people with no free will, which are forced to be in a loveless or pseudo-loving relationship with him. However, God chose love and genuine relationship over everything and coexisted with evil.

a. Objections to Free Will Defense

The main objection to the free will theodicy is that God should be able to create a world where people have free will and always freely choose the good. Like a robot, robots are programmed to do what it uploaded to them. So, in the same way God should be able to create human beings uploaded those to do choose free good things. Is it not possible? The other objection to free will theodicy is that it explains moral evil only, not natural evil. If we say that evil things happened because of our free will, it does not answer the problem of natural evil, like earthquakes, forest fires, et cetera. In fact, we can see the natural evil in two ways. Some people have suggested that it is possible that all natural evil is caused by demons. If we grant the above point is true, then all natural evil

¹¹¹ Ganssle, (2004). *Thinking about God: First Steps in Philosophy*, pp. 118-119.

is just a type of moral evil, and the free will defense explains moral evil adequately. Other philosophers, like Richard Swinburne, argue that to truly have the freedom to bring about evil or good, we would have to have knowledge of how to bring about evil. As he presented, we got such kinds of knowledge by observing natural evil. “He also maintains that natural evil creates additional opportunities for making moral choices. HIV/AIDS provides us with the opportunity to help a person suffering from HIV.”¹¹² Each of us at one time can make the existing universe better or worse. The best plan is not always that which seeks to avoid evil, since it may happen that the evil is accomplished by a greater good.¹¹³ Having seen the two objections, I strongly agree that free will theodicy answers the moral evil, and we will see the natural evil in detail in the points below.

Permitting suffering is not always wrong. For example, it is morally acceptable for someone to permit suffering involving people with limited abilities. The surgeon, for example, is limited by his tools, ability, knowledge, and skills. However, God is all-powerful and is not limited like the surgeons are. There are two positions under this point. On one hand, there are theologian and philosophers who said God can do even logically impossible things, like Luther and others. On the other hand, there are philosophers and theologians who said that God cannot do logically impossible things. However, the fact that God’s *power* knows no limits does not mean that God has no limits. Here is one of God’s limits: God cannot sin. He also cannot lie. These are real and genuine limits on God. The Scripture teaches clearly about attributes like these. These limits on God, though, are not limits resulting from a lack of power but ones resulting from God’s moral

¹¹² Richard Swinburne, *Why God Allows Evil*, pp. 107-109.

¹¹³ Gottfried Leibniz, “God, Evil, and the Best of All Possible Worlds,” *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. John Perry (Oxford University Press, 1993): 29.

character. God's character is holy, just, loving, and morally perfect; thus, his desires are holy. His holy nature limits His behavior to holy behavior, according to Leviticus 19:18. The limiting factor when it comes to God's inability to sin or to lie is not a limit of power but of a character. The basic point I want to make here is just this: not all limits are limits of power. Just because there is something God cannot do does not mean He cannot do it because He is not powerful enough.

The other limit on God is that He cannot do the logically impossible. Historically, the vast majority of Christian theologians have understood omnipotence as God's ability to do anything *logically possible*. Let me define logical impossibility. Something is logically impossible if it involves a logical contradiction. It is logically impossible for someone to be both married and a bachelor at the same time in the same sense. It is logically impossible for $1+1=3$. Both of these things involve contradictions and, hence, are logically impossible. God cannot make $1+1=3$. He cannot make a married bachelor or draw square circles. It is not a limitation on power, but it is logically impossible, as we could not find a square circle in reality. Making contradictions true is incoherent and meaningless.

In summation, God is morally justified in permitting suffering if two conditions are met (1) He is permitting evil to in order to obtain some good so valuable it outweighs the suffering or prevents even worse suffering ,and (2) permitting suffering is the only *logically possible way* for God to obtain that Good. What is this valuable goal that even God cannot obtain without permitting suffering? What candidates for outweighing goods

meet these criteria? Let's consider a few possibilities. These reason, or reasons, that God permits suffering is called a "theodicy"¹¹⁴.

3.2.1.1.1 Punishment Theodicy

In the book of Job, we do find the story of a man named Job. In fact, the author of the book is anonymous; but almost certainly an Israelite¹¹⁵ its setting patriarchal, or even pre-patriarchal age, eastward outside the covenant land of Israel.¹¹⁶ The book's structural outline has different sections.¹¹⁷ YHWH never provides an answer to Job for why he has suffered. The book is therefore not written to answer the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?"¹¹⁸ But we read the sufferings of Job. In chapter 1:14, 16, 18, 20, 2:4, Job loses his entire family, all his property, and comes down with a painful disease. His friends come to console him, and one of them, Eliphaz, tries to explain Job's suffering as punishment for sin:¹¹⁹

Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed? As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap

¹¹⁴ Christopher Bernard, "Notes on Providence," MA Hand-outs to Evangelical Theological College (2014), 9.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 39–40.

¹¹⁶ Habel, *Job*, 39–40. See Job 1:1–3; 42:16–17; cf. with Gen 25:7–8; 35:28–29; 50:23–26. It is noteworthy that Job is mentioned in Ezek 14:14, 20, along with Noah and Danel, "three ancient men of renown, selected because of their proverbial righteousness. Because the Hebrew here spells "Danel" instead of "Daniel," another Daniel may be referred to" other than the biblical Daniel (the Ugaritic literature speaks of an ancient, famous, and honored "Danel"), "since the Biblical Daniel's righteousness probably had not become proverbial so soon (Daniel and Ezekiel were contemporaries)" [*NIV Study Bible* on Ezek 14:14].

Therefore, Job, Noah, and Danel would all be ancient, non-Israelite, righteous men of the pre-patriarchal world of Genesis 4–11 (see Habel, *Job*, 39–40). The name YHWH is, except for one place in Job (12:9), found in and clustered only in the Prologue (chs. 1–2), the narrator's introduction of a new speaker in the YHWH speeches (38:1; 40:1, 3, 6; 42:1), and the 'Outcome' (42:7–17). That is, Job and the friends do not "know" the name of YHWH and use the archaic, "pre-Mosaic names" of El, Shaddai, and Eloah (Habel, *Job*, 39–40). "In the prose prologue the narrator informs us, the audience [as well as the original Israelite audience], that Yahweh is the actual deity behind the ancient plot" (Habel, *Job*, 39–40).

¹¹⁷ Taken in large measure from Francis I. Anderson, *Job* (TOTC 13; Downers Grove: IVP, 1976), 75–76.

¹¹⁸ Chris Beetham, "On Reading the OT Poetic and Wisdom Books: Some Genre Rules," Evangelical Theological College Class Handout, 2007.

it. At the breath of God, they are destroyed; at the blast of his anger, they are destroyed¹²⁰

Eliphaz and other countless theist philosophers' believe that God is justified in permitting suffering as a punishment for sin. There are two kinds of the punishment theodicy. According to the first version, it is just to permit Adolph Hitler and Gadafee to suffer because they are such evil people.

a. Objection to Punishment Theodicy

According to my understanding, the major criticism of this kind of theodicy is that so many innocents suffer. Eliphaz's question "who, being innocent, has ever perished" has an obvious answer: infants and young children. Surely, a baby born addicted to crack did nothing worthy of punishment. If suffering is punishment for sin, it should be spread proportionately to the sinfulness of the victim, but this is not the case. Numerous, morally good people seem to suffer far more than many evil people. "Rabbis at Auschwitz suffered more than Hitler. The people of Afghanistan do not seem more sinful than the people of Switzerland but Afghanis have suffered far more in the 20th century than the Swiss."¹²¹ The punishment theodicy also comes in another form according to which disease, malaria, earthquake, physical hardship, natural disasters, and death entered the world as a result of the sin of the first man, Adam (Romans 5:14). In fact, this theodicy depends upon a particular view of the Bible and the history of humankind. If someone doesn't take the biblical account of the prime evil history and fall of man seriously, they will not find this theodicy reasonable.

¹²⁰ (Job 4:7-9 NIV).

¹²¹ Christopher. Bernard,(2015). "On the problem of Evil". *Handout for Undergraduate Students at Addis Ababa University*, 12.

3.2.1.1.2 Counterpart Theodicy

Counterpart theodicy is the other form of theodicy. According to this theodicy, “good and evil are metaphysical compliments or counterparts. One cannot exist without the other. God is justified in permitting evil because without evil there could be no good.”¹²². It clearly says that the existence of evil is necessary for the existence of good.

a. Objection to Counterpart Theodicy

One criticism of this theodicy is that it limits God’s power. Even God cannot create good without creating evil. Second, it assumes that if two properties are opposites, then one cannot exist unless the other does. This assumption is not true. There are many properties that are instantiated in the world while their corresponding compliment is not. Consider the property of being a non-unicorn. Everything in the world has that property. Surely this does not mean that its opposite, the property of being a unicorn must exist? or must be instantiated somewhere.¹²³ In general, this implies that evil and good can co-exist, and its existence is counterpart. If this claim is true, it implies that God’s power is limited. However, the claim is not true as we have seen in the above lines.

3.2.1.1.3 Contrast Theodicy

Now, we will see a third theodicy is the contrast theodicy according to this theodicy. Evil is an important contrast with good. “We would not know what good was if there were no evil. The contrast theodicy makes a claim about *knowledge*

¹²² Allen C.B. Stains, (2007). *A Thinker’s Guide to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Pearson Longman, 202.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 202.

(*Epistemological*) while the counterpart theodicy makes a claim about the *world* (*Metaphysical*).”¹²⁴ This theodicy says we wouldn’t know good without evil.

a. Objection to Contrast Theodicy

As we have seen in the above contrast theodicy also has its own limitation. The first, criticism for contrast theodicy is that we don’t need so a large amount evil to understand goodness. The second, Michael Martin contends that we could learn about evil without there actually being evil. We could learn about evil from novels, movies, and art and other things.¹²⁵

3.2.1.1.4 Natural Law Theodicy

The two types of evil are distinct, and we need to keep both types in mind when we look at responses to the problem of evil. In particular, some responses may solve the problem of moral evil but don’t answer the problem of natural evil. Free will theodicy answered the moral evil but not the natural evil. Now, let us see the natural evil. A fourth theodicy is the natural law theodicy. According to this theodicy, God created the world to function according to natural laws and rules. “Much suffering, like drowning or declining from a cliff, is the result of the laws of nature. These physical laws create the possibility of natural evil but we need regular and systematic natural laws to farm, plan ahead, build,

¹²⁴ Ibid., 202.

¹²⁵ John Martin Fischer, ed.,(1986). *Moral Responsibility* (Cornell University Press, 450.

and invent. The same water that quenches thirst can also drown.”¹²⁶ This theodicy clearly shows that the natural laws can help us and it also hurt us.

a. Objection to Natural Theodicy

This natural law theodicy also limits God’s power by claiming that an all-powerful God could not create natural laws that do not result in suffering. It is saying that God could interfere to stop some suffering without making nature generally unpredictable. It implies that “all-powerful God could make regular natural laws that do not result in suffering. Further, they contend that even with natural laws that have the potential to inflict suffering, God could intervene to prevent some suffering without rendering the laws of nature so unpredictable that we could not survive and thrive in our environment.”¹²⁷

3.2.1.1.5 Soul-Making Theodicy

A fifth theodicy is proposed by John Hick’s soul-making theodicy. Hick thinks that God allows evil in order to promote moral and spiritual maturity. God wants us to develop character traits that suit us for a relationship with Him and others. We develop such character by making free choices in challenging situations. The world we inhabit is an environment designed to promote God’s plan of soul-making. God permits evil in that environment because a world without suffering would not be conducive to spiritual growth.”¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Allen. Stains, (2007). *A Thinker’s Guide to the Philosophy of Religion*, 203.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 203.

¹²⁸ John. Hick, "The Existence of Evil"

a. Objection to Soul-Making Theodicy

First, it limits God's power, because it says there is something God cannot do, namely, make spiritually and morally mature beings without permitting suffering. Second, even if suffering were necessary for spiritual maturity, surely the quantity of evil needed for spiritual growth isn't much as the world actually contains. Third, many evils do not seem to contribute to soul-making. In fact, many have the opposite effect in that they ruin character. Fourth, if theism is true, then God did not become good. He has always been perfectly good, and so in principle, a being can be perfectly good without having to live in an environment like ours. Fifth, even if one grants Hick's theodicy, it cannot explain the suffering of animals. Animals do not have any moral character to be improved.¹²⁹

3.2.1.1.6 Best-Possible World Theodicy

Third, some theists, like Gottfried Leibniz, argue that this is the best of all possible worlds. God could not have created a better world than the actual world because there is no better world.

a. Objection on best possible world

Among other criticisms, many seriously doubt that the world we live in is the best God could have created.¹³⁰ Other criticisms?

¹²⁹ Ibid., 203.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 203.

3.2.1.1.7 Augustine's Theodicy

Fourth, the great North African bishop Augustine offered a theodicy in which he maintained that evil isn't really a "thing" but rather a lack of a thing. According to the Augustinian theodicy, evil is a privation. It is similar to blindness. Blindness isn't a thing. It is the absence of something, namely, the ability to see. He thinks goodness is a thing but evil is just the lack of goodness. This theodicy, and the version of the problem of evil it addresses, assumes a Neo-Platonic view of the world that almost no philosopher today accepts.¹³¹

a. Objection to Augustine's Theodicy

Evil is not thing and also it is not the absence of goodness. Evil may be a lack of goodness, but why is there a lack of goodness? If God were all powerful, could he not have organized the world such that there were no fall from perfection?

3.2.1.1.8 Free Will Theodicy

According to free will theodicy, suffering is the result of people abusing their free will. God is morally justified in permitting suffering because free will is so valuable. There are three main objections to this theodicy.

a. Objection on Free Will Theodicy

First, some say that it limits God's power. According to this objection, God should be able to create a world where people have free will and always choose the good. Second, some philosophers object to the free will theodicy because they deny that humans have free will. They

¹³¹ Ibid., 203.

think all actions are determined entirely by biology and environment. If this is true, then humans do not have libertarian freedom, and so the free will theodicy is false. Third, it might explain moral evil but it does not explain natural evil. Free will might be able to account for why people steal from each other, but it cannot explain why tornados kill people. ¹³²

3.2.1.1.9 Disjunctive Theodicy

The last theodicy we will consider is the disjunctive theodicy. According to the disjunctive theodicy, there is no one reason why God permits evil. A realistic theodicy should link partially successful theodicies together with the disjunction “or.” So, when Rowe asks why God allows the fawn to suffer, the advocate of the disjunctive theodicy says it is either as punishment for sin, or to provide a contrast with good, or because regular natural laws are necessary and they permit forest fires, or because of the free will of men or demons, or to provide an environment for soul-making’¹³³

3.3 Discusses and Explain Plantinga’s Sufficient Response to the Other Thinkers’ Arguments on Evil.

There are different arguments for the co-existence of God and evil. Now, I am going to consider and argue against different objections that are raised against the compatibility of the existence of God and evil.

3.3.1 Objections Against

Following the answer to Mackie’s problem of evil, there were many objections, as all the above reasons discussed could grant a very good explanation for moral wrongs.

¹³² Ibid., 203.

¹³³ Ibid., 203.

Moral wrongs are wrongs or evil action done by people based on their choice and decisions such as lying, cheating, murder, abuse and other. However, the explanations I gave above fail to cover natural evils. These evils are neither what people choose nor what they decide to create. Hence, the free will explanation for the probable of evil lacks the advantage (defense) to extend to this evil. However, Plantinga explains how the free will defense extends to cover natural evil through the first abused free will by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This action didn't only result the first ever evil (death) but also natural evil. The first moral evil resulted in the happening of the rest of natural evils in the world. Hence, according to Plantinga's explanation we can infer how the first evil entered the world through a wrong moral act freely chosen by the first human beings. The following natural evils could easily be assumed as the punishment for the moral wrongness.

Also, the natural evil could be considered as man's irresponsibility. Before the first act of moral wrong, the earth and her whole inhabitation were given to man to manage it. Following Adam's failure to manage his choice, the world, which was originally made to be ruled over and governed, lost its protector. Thus, it became a rotting, crude and a savage place which is very hostile to live in. For instance, though man was initially given the order to protect earth, man has deforested, released poisonous waste products into the air, and polluted the earth. This accumulated abuse of the earth has resulted in more savagery of the world as drought, famine, global warming, and floods started intensifying.

3.3.2 Objections Rise Against

Another famous objection against the compatibility of existence God and evil is William Rowe's gratuitous (pointless evil) argument. According to Rowe and other proponents, the existence of a pointless evil provides sufficient reason that the traditional Christians God doesn't exist. Gratuitous evil is a kind of evidential or personal evil that happens without any justifiable reason.

There are many happenings of this evil type. The most famous example is Rowe's example of a fawn trapped in a wildfire that dies after suffering for a couple of days from the burns. This includes natural evil, but personal evils also could be pointless without any causal factor of abuse of free will. Not only the cause and effect reason of evil does exist rather the reason behind the actual happening of evil to people that seem to be of at any freely cause evil, that is a person whom the evil is happening on who had not abused the free will that he is granted. However, circumstances like a worm moving its way up a child's eyeball and resulting in blindness is innocent enough to not have to cause such a thing by abusing free will wrongly. Hence these problems are attributed to the original sin and living in an already corrupted world that could cause such a thing to anyone for.

This argument based on pointless evil could be seen by Rowe's constructed argument

1. If there is an unjustified evil , then God doesn't exist
2. Probably there is unjustified evil
3. Therefore probably God doesn't exist.

This is a plausible argument with a good deduction. However, it is nonetheless a probability argument. The second premise does not hold any statistical evidence to

support the argument. It is an epistemic probability, showing the argument upon an assumption that is constructed based on human's identified knowledge only. To conclude, the argument in simple terms for all we know there is no justified reason for some evil in the world, hence God does not exist for all we know again.¹³⁴ However, as contingent beings, humans are extremely finite, with limited access and limited knowledge, even as the knowledge of people grows and changes. A few years ago, there were only nine planets, and this was a justified belief. But today, there is a justifiable belief that there are more than 23 planets in our solar system only. For all we know, there could be more. All that man can prove is very small, and it is very sure we lack certain knowledge. So for man to assume that there is at some point an unjustified evil is very wrong. As a limited being, man can only assume so little and even less. For all we know, there quite could and would be justifiable reason for each evil that seems totally pointless. Also to consider the necessary God is unjustified for creating a pointless evil, by people who are contingent beings is wrong as Guessel points out on his book *Thinking about God*, published on 2004, "since God's knowledge and wisdom are so far beyond ours, it is eminently reasonable to suppose that he will have reasons for allowing evils in our lives that. This does not sit well with 'for all we know.' We can figure out plausible reasons for most cases of evil. There will still be some evil events the reason for which we can't discern. This is exactly what we should expect if God exists. It cannot be counted as evidence against God. So even though it might seem, at first glance, that there are no good reasons to allow certain evils we see, this does not provide strong evidence that these evils are unjustified.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 118.

3.4 Sufficient Justification of Plantinga's Co-Existence of God and Evil

Plantinga's Free Will Defense¹³⁵ Plantinga identifies an effort to show that G and E are compatible as a defense. More accurately, a defense aims to show that G and E are compatible by producing a proposition that specifies a justifying reason for God to permit evil, is compatible with G, and entails E in conjunction with G. Plantinga aims to find such a proposition in the following familiar story:

A world containing creatures who are significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all. Now God can create free creatures, but He cannot cause or determine them to do only what is right. For if He does so, then they are not significantly free after all; they do not do what is right freely. To create creatures capable of moral good, therefore, He must create creatures capable of moral evil, and He cannot give these creatures the freedom to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so. As it turned out, sadly enough, some of the free creatures God created went wrong in the exercise of their freedom; this is the source of moral evil. The fact that free creatures sometimes go wrong, however, counts neither against God's omnipotence nor against His goodness; for He could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by removing the possibility of moral good.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Qtd, in Bernard. Plantinga says that a theodicy's aims "to tell us what God's reason for permitting evil really is," while a defender aims, at most, to say "what God's reason might possibly be" (Plantinga 1974b, 28). This way of drawing the line between theodicy and defense implies that God exists; the one in the text does not.

¹³⁶ Qtd, in Bernard. complex property that distinguishes that individual from every other possible thing. That property is an "individual essence." Since an individual essence – or "essence," for short – is a property, and properties necessarily exist, each essence exists at every possible world. Many individuals are contingent things, they do not exist at every possible world; nevertheless, their essences do.³ Some definitions of Plantinga's (1974b, 29–30) will be useful here. (1) 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 would not. It is within his power, at the time in question, to take or perform the action and within his power to refrain from it. (2) An action is morally significant, for a given person, if it would be wrong for him to perform the action but right to

Chapter-Four

4.1 My Reflection on God's Existence

As we have seen in the previous chapters, Plantinga has presented objections to the logical and evidential objection for the existence of God. Now, I am in a position to offer my own critical reflection. The focus of my reflection will be on evaluating the logical and evidential objection about the existence of God and the existence of evil. My support about the existence of God can only be known in the circumstance within the specific context that one can understand. Thus, my reflection will show the position I have taken on this topic.

The suffering and evil of the world are spread through the world, intensifying with human age. Questioning of the existence of God follows immediately as the God to whom we are introduced is a very powerful, all knowing, and good. However, this inference is wrong and biased. As we have seen throughout this paper, we can't just see the small world around us and decide that, because of all the evil, God does not exist. As people consider the bigger picture and the reasons that are given to God and evil's co-existence, the compatibility issue is more plausible. Reasons like God having a sufficient and very good purpose, considering a world with free will, and a world without evil is contradictory can be sufficient ideas in supporting the compatibility of the existence of evil and God.

refrain or vice versa. (3) A person is significantly free, at a time, if he is then free with respect to a morally significant action. Plantinga 1974b, 30

4.2 The Nature of the Begging Question Fallacy

I would, argue that the claim which says God and evil cannot co-exist is the begging question fallacy. The evidential argument for the existence of God is also a fallacy called ambiguity. Both the logical problem of evil and the evidential problem of evil are committing fallacies. I will show the fallacies in detail.

Since the fallacy of begging the question is one of my major tools by which I will present my criticism of the logical and evidential objections, I will explain in detail what this fallacy means. Begging the question is a logical fallacy of presumption. This fallacy, in general, is committed in David Hume and Mackie's objection. Begging the question presumes that the premises provide adequate support for the conclusion when, in fact, they do not. The fallacy of the begging the question is committed when an illusion is created by the arguer that inadequate premises provide adequate support for the conclusion by assuming the conclusion in the premise, i.e. circular reasoning. The Latin name for this fallacy, *petitio principii*,¹³⁷ means "request for the source". The actual source of support for the conclusion is not apparent, and so the argument is said to beg the question. After reading or hearing the argument, the observer is inclined to ask, "But how do we know x, where x is then need support?"¹³⁸ The first, and most common, way of committing this fallacy is by leaving a possibly false key premise out of the argument while creating the illusion that nothing more is needed to establish the conclusion.

¹³⁷ M. Patrick Hurley, *Introduction to Logic*, 156.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

Examples:

1. Murder is morally wrong. This being the case, it follows that abortion is morally wrong.
2. Of course humans and apes evolved from common ancestors. Just look how similar they are.¹³⁹
3. The poor in this country should be given handouts from the government. After all, these people earn less than the average citizen.
4. Clearly, terminally ill patients have a right to doctor-assisted suicide. After all, many of these people are unable to commit suicide by themselves.

The first of these arguments begs the question, "How do you know that abortion is a form of murder?" The second begs the question, "Does the mere fact that humans and apes look similar imply that they evolved from common ancestors?" The third begs the question, "Just because the poor earn less than the average citizen, does this imply that the government should give them handouts?"

These questions indicate that something has been left out of the original arguments. In the same way, the logical problem of evil and the evidential problem of evil are begging a question. The argument that God is omniscient, omnipresent, and wholly good and that evil exists therefore God does not exist or His existence is not compatible with the existence of evil is not logically sound. And it is difficult to show the contradiction between the existence of God and evil. Even if we do find pointless evil in this world, it does not follow that God and evil cannot co-exist.

¹³⁹ Ibid.,156.

4.3 The Nature of the Fallacy of Ambiguity

The second, objection that I have on the evidential problem of evil is the fallacies of ambiguity include equivocation and amphiboly. These fallacies arise from the occurrence of some form of ambiguity in either the premises or the conclusion (or both). An expression is ambiguous if it is susceptible to different interpretations in a given context. The words "light" and "bank" are ambiguous, as is the statement, "Tuna are biting off the Washington coast." When the conclusion of an argument depends on a shift in meaning of an ambiguous word or phrase or on the wrong interpretation of an ambiguous statement, the argument commits a fallacy of ambiguity.¹⁴⁰

In general, I would like to argue that the existence of evil does not prove that God does not exist or, in other words, the existence of evil is not an evidence by itself to conclude that God doesn't exist. Rather, it proves that evil exist. The burden of proof is not on theists who say God and evil can-coexist. It is atheists' homework to show us how God and evil cannot co-exist logically, and they are currently failing to show us the logical impossibility of the existence of God and evil. So, the evidential argument of evil is insufficient to conclude deductively that God and evil cannot co-exist or that evil exists and therefore God does not exist. Here, I want to raise questions for those who claim this: does a necessary being need to be explained or tell us why he permits evil? Is it difficult for the necessary being to co-exist with evil? Is it possible to disprove the existence of contingent things to the necessary being? Does the necessary being need to eliminate or avoid evil in order demonstrate his existence? Why is love questioned by the existence of

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 149.

evil? Can permitting evil for greater good be love? What is love, in God's view and in human's view?

4.4. My Own Justification on the compatibility of God and Evil.

As we have seen in the above chapters, the existence of God and evil are compatible, and it is possible for God and evil to co-exist. When a person like Mackie argues evil exist therefore God does not exist, it is begging a question and also an argument from silence. Even the evidential problem of evil does not prove that God does not exist. I would strongly agree that the existence of evil only proves that evil exists. I would also argue that God permits evil to exist in order to bring something out of it. This does not mean that God cannot bring good things without permitting evil. But, if He wills or if it is His purpose, He is correct, because He could have sufficient reason why He permits evil to exist. Saying that He does not have a purpose unless we know the reason could be meaningless, because having the reason and knowing the reason are two different things. If God is a loving and all powerful being, He uses all the suffering for greater good, and He has a reason why He permits evil in this world. In other words, I would argue that the God who created this universe and everything in it is able to create any other world, but He chooses this kind of universe. This does not disprove He does not exist. Rather, it proves He does exist.

As I have said in the above, having the reason and knowing the reasons are two different things. We might know why God permits evil to exist or happen in our universe, but this does not mean that God does not have reason. We are not legitimate to say that, unless we do know the reason, He does not exist. I think the argument itself is unsound

and shallow. Rather, as I have mentioned in Chapter Three, God may permit evil because of different theodicies such as punishment, counterpart, soul making, free will, etc.

I am afraid to say God permits evil because of any one reason, but I am confident enough to say it is possible for God and evil to coexist because God may permit evil for different reasons. This does not mean he does not have reason. The existence of evil proves that evil exists. Mackie's claim based on God's attributes also has a problem. That God is omnipotent or God can do anything does not necessary mean that God can do anything He pleases. According to Christian theology, God has limits not on His power but on His character. We can sin, but God cannot sin. This does not mean He is less powerful than us. Rather, it proves that there are things that God can do and cannot do. According to my understanding, God can do things which are logically possible. This do not mean for Luther and others that God cannot do things which are logically impossible, like draw a square circle or create a stone so heavy that He Himself cannot lift. But, I do not think this is logically sound and acceptable.

4.5 My Reflection on Alvin Plantinga's Theodicy

I would argue that Plantinga clearly shows that the existence of God and evil are logically possible. It is not a logical contradiction based on explicit, implicit, and formal contradictions, and I am supporting his view of the compatibility of the existence of evil and God. According to free will theodicy, suffering is the result of people abusing their free will. God is morally justified in permitting suffering because free will is so valuable. There are three main objections to this theodicy. Plantinga identifies an effort to show that G and E are compatible as a defense. More accurately, a defense aims to show that G

and E are compatible by producing a proposition that specifies a justifying reason for God to permit evil, is compatible with G, and entails E in conjunction with G. However, Plantinga's work does not show us that David Hume's and Mackie's claim is begging the question.

4.6 Conclusion

(1) God and Evil can't both exist.

(2) Evil exists.

Conclusion: Therefore: God doesn't exist.

Premise #2 is obviously true. Evil exists. If premise #1 is true, then it follows logically that God cannot exist. What is the argument for premise #1 of the atheist's argument? David Hume and others who support his views says that, if evil exists, an all knowing, perfectly good, and loving God does not exist. But why?

Here, we are forced to pick between these two unappealing options. There is third option that God may have a morally sufficient reason to permit suffering, one that justifies Him to allow suffering without diminishing either His power or his character. "It is not always immoral for one person to permit another person to suffer. There are circumstances, for example, where a surgeon may be justified in permitting a patient to suffer. Suppose the surgeon refuses to perform the surgery because it is too risky. By

doing so, he permits pain and suffering which he could alleviate.”¹⁴¹ We definitely do not think that a doctor is immoral because he permits the patient to suffer.

Here, the surgeon was justified because the patient would die of gangrene without the surgery, even though the surgery was not only permitting but actually causing intense pain. In this case, causing the pain involved in surgery is justified because it results in an outweighing good the saving of a life. Suppose you have six years old son who is obese. The doctor tells you that, unless the child loses weight, he will get diabetes, go blind, and possible lose limbs. A parent is morally justified in causing the relatively mild pain of diet and exercises on the child in order to obtain the outweighing good health and avoid worse suffering. In the above cases, the pain and suffering are justified because they meet the demands of the moral principle. So, this clearly shows that there are circumstances where it is morally permissible to permit suffering.

Christian theologians contend that God is justified in permitting suffering because it meets this principle. As we have seen in the above chapters, the existence of God and evil have been a subject of debate throughout the history of academic discussion. On the one hand, philosophers and theologians have tried to show the existence of God throughout history, such as St. Augustine, St. Ansem, St. Thomas Aquinas, William Play, Alvin Platinga, J.P. Moreland, Norman Gisler, and many others. On the other hand, there are theist philosophers who have tried to disprove the existence of God like Epicurus, David Hume, J.L. Mackie, and others by showing us the existence of evil and God are

¹⁴¹ Christopher. Bernard, (2015). Philosophy of Religion Undergraduate Hand-out, Addis Ababa University., 2.

logically impossible and by claiming that evil and an all powerful, wholly good, omniscient God cannot coexist.

It is impossible to either disprove or prove the existence of God. But the existence of evil is clear. However, I would strongly argue the existence of evil does not mean that God and evil cannot coexist. The logical problem of evil and the evidential problem of evil failed to show us that God and evil cannot co exist. As Plantinga has said, the reason why God permits evil in this world could be justified by different reasons.

In order to show the compatibility of evil and God's existence one possibility is enough and it makes the objection false claim. God can be justified by permitting evil for the following reasons. The first is the punishment theodicy, as Eliphaz tries to explain Job's suffering as punishment for sin. This theodicy clearly shows that the existence of evil could be punishment for sin. The second one is the counterpart theodicy, which states that good and evil are metaphysical compliments or counterparts. One cannot exist without the other. God is justified in permitting evil, because, without evil, there could be no good. Third, natural law theodicy states that God created the world to function according to natural laws and rules. Much suffering, like drowning or falling from a cliff, is the result of the laws of nature. Fourth, the soul making theodicy states that God allows evil in order to promote moral and spiritual maturity. God wants us to develop character traits that suit us for a relationship with Him and others. The fifth is that this is the best of all possible worlds. God could not have created a better world than the actual world because there is no better world. Sixth, St. Augustine offered that evil isn't really a "thing" but rather a lack of a thing. According to the Augustinian theodicy, evil is a privation. Seventh, according to free will theodicy, suffering is the result of people abusing their

free will. God is morally justified in permitting suffering because free will is so valuable. Eighth, the disjunctive theodicy states that there is no one reason why God permits evil. So, when Rowe asks why God allows the fawn to suffer, the advocate of the disjunctive theodicy says it is either as punishment for sin, or to provide a contrast with good, or because regular natural laws are necessary and they permit forest fires, or because of the free will of men or demons, or to provide an environment for soul-making, or other reasons. In general, knowing the reasons why God permits evil and having the reasons why God permits evil are two quite different things. However, God is not accountable for the evil which come as the result of human freedom. We have to think in different ways to realize that the existence of evil do not mean God and evil can't possibly co-exist.

It has been said that St. Augustine, after he observed the good and the bad things, came with a statement, "If there is no God from where does all these goods things came? If there is God where these entire do evil came?" In fact, God does not tell us why there is suffering, but the reality is that there is suffering. He does not make us free from sufferings. But the existence of suffering neither does not prove that God does not exist rather it proves that evil exists.

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