

EVIL: A PROBLEM OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

SOBIA TAHIR*

Problem of evil, as a philosophical issue, occupied my attention in 1987 when I was a student of M.A. Philosophy, Part II. It was an important topic of Philosophy of Religion and we discussed it at length and analyzed critically the views, interpretations or the "solutions" offered by various philosophers and theologians. None of them was satisfactory or without inherent self-contradictions. The depth and profundity of the problem urged me to study and explore it more. It continued to haunt me ever since, hence, after passing M.A. I decided to attempt my doctoral thesis on this subject.

It should not be thought, however, that before 1987 I had never deliberated upon the problem and it suddenly obsessed me during the said year. It confronted me now and then, and I habitually offered laymanish theodicies to appease my occasional anxiety (a theodicy is an attempt to justify the ways of God to man – it shall be explained in detail somewhat later during the discussion). Eminent Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky acted as a strong intellectual stimulant to ponder over the problem and seek after its various dimensions. The painful existential cry of Dostoevsky in "The Brothers Karamazovs" echoed year after year in my brain and kept my soul agitated. The large extent of purposeless suffering and misery the world over, often astounded me, since it was virtually impossible to justify it with the existence of a benevolent and omnipotent God.

Problem of evil is a perennial problem of both Philosophy and Religion. It is a pertinent, genuine and real problem that compels one to reflect and analyze and make unprejudiced judgements based on evidence and not on pre-conceived notions and ambiguous beliefs. The problem gave me a chance to make extensive study on my favourite topic. I critically evaluated the ideas propounded by the

*Dr. (Miss) Sobia Tahir, Malik Park, Bilal Gunj, Lahore-54000. She got her M.A. and Ph.D. from the Department of Philosophy, University of the Punjab, Lahore (Pakistan).

luminaries of the discipline and evolved my own specific viewpoint, (however, it is subject to modification with further maturity and broadening of horizon of knowledge).

Problem of evil is actually a dilemma which poses serious threats for theism, but other Philosophical Schools have also attempted it and offered their opinions. Besides theism, I have paid attention to Deism and Pantheism as well; the Problem was also examined from a logico-linguistic angle.

The Problem of Evil

The simplest statement of the problem of evil is: If God exists and is all-good, all-powerful, why is there so much evil in the world? This question was first time formally put forward in the History of Philosophy by Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (480-524 AD), Roman philosopher and statesman, who was noted particularly for his work *De Consolatione Philosophiae* which has been translated in English under the title of *Consolations of Philosophy*. He was executed by Theodoric.

As has been already stated that problem of evil is a dilemma because its statement yields contradictory propositions. Especially in theism it has been taken for granted that God exists and is all-powerful and all-good, but as a matter of fact huge amount of evil is prevalent in the world. If God is omnipotent, He can overcome or abolish evil but He does not or cannot do so which means that He is not all-powerful. On the other hand, if being omnipotent, He willingly does not overcome evil, He is not all-good. Both of these propositions are not acceptable to a theist. Thus, the real problem is to justify the existence of evil in the face of above mentioned attributes of God and offer a tenable and cogent theodicy. Theodicy is an attempt to explain how an all-good and all-powerful God could justifiably permit evil. If theism is to be intellectually respectable, it must provide a theodicy (or failing that, explain why the demand for a theodicy is inappropriate? (William I. Rowe and William J. Wainwright (ed.), *Philosophy of Religion*, Selected Readings, p. 172).

In order to keep this study methodical, organized, clear, sharp and apprehensible, I have started it with a thorough analysis of Pantheism and treated theism at number three. In the following pages, I would like to explain briefly what Pantheism is and how has it tried to tackle the thorny issue of Philosophy and Religion, *i.e.* the Problem of Evil!

Pantheism and the Problem of Evil

Pantheism is a Greek term consisting of the words Pan meaning 'all' and Theos meaning 'God'. Thus, according to the etymology, Pantheism is the view that all is God and God is all. As thought may move from God to all or from all to God, it can assume two forms. In the first one as a religious belief or a philosophical faith, God is considered the eternal and infinite reality. In this case the temporal and the finite world is swallowed up in the Being of God. This form of Pantheism is called 'acosmism', while the second framework is known as 'Pancosmism'.

It is interesting to note that Pantheism is the most primitive and the oldest form of philosophy or metaphysics conceived by man. It is the first and foremost endeavour of human mind to explain the scheme of things entire. Pantheism is no doubt one of the most beautiful and intoxicating philosophies of the world that has influenced literature in all of its forms including poetry. It is especially the religion of the dreamy and unpractical mood, and when such a mood affects a mind possessed also of intellectual strength, Pantheism becomes the faith of person concerned. In certain phases it has been used as a refuge when inequalities were glaring, political life most unpromising and moral effort, generally speaking despairing and weak.

One of the causes of popularity of pantheism is that it offers an escape from present troubles. It tends to give relief from the calamities of life, however grave these may be. It enables us to negate or at least forget the worry of details and vexations of everyday life. It affords a metaphysical justification for withdrawing from the responsibilities of society. It is such a powerful and fascinating system of thought that greatest minds of the world could not escape from its grip. Entire Indian philosophy with its splendid and dignified metaphysics is a manifestation of pantheism. Its contemporary in Greek thought, *i.e.* stoicism is through and through a pantheistic system. We find Spinoza and Hegel amongst its torchbearers. The most famous Muslim mystical thinker Ibn-al-Arabi is also an upholder of pantheism.

Since for a Pantheist all is God therefore good, so there is no room for evil in this system. If something appears evil, it is an illusion. If it is true, it means that we must deny all the facts of human experience to be a consistent Pantheist. It is really a question as to whether Pantheism has been successful in its attempt to provide a solution for the misery of the world or it has failed? If it has failed, its failure is an additional evil, since it has remained unsuccessful not

only in eliminating already existing evil but also caused intellectual confusion and bafflement. In both cases (either in success or in failure) Pantheism may yield either thoroughgoing pessimism or thoroughgoing optimism (Dr. Inge, "*Studies in English Mystics*," p. 213). Pantheism being a strictly monistic metaphysical system, cannot afford to introduce moral dualism, hence, it is invariably connected with Fatalism. A consistent Pantheist cannot adjust freedom (both inner and external) in his system. So there are two ways open to him; the first is to deny evil altogether, rejecting it as illusion; while the second is to accept it as necessary, inexorable and unavoidable. But – anything that is necessary, cannot be bad, only finite reason is unable to apprehend it. Though particularly appearing evil, it is universally good. History proves that monistic theories have always led mankind to material and moral disaster, since they serve two purposes:

- (i) Distort the facts and conceal reality.
- (ii) Impose dogmatic bondage on man and snatch his entire freedom to think and act.

Pantheism has practically done the same and deprived man of any ray of hope to remedy his ills and sufferings. A pantheist can be either a conformist and a resigned silent spectator who can do nothing to change or improve the surrounding situation; or he can be a self-deceptive, confused person who remains happy and optimist by simply denying the plain facts. So pantheism has not 'solved' the problem of evil but actually has opened the door to the "heart of darkness".

Pantheists, no doubt, set high ideals and lofty intellectual goals but they cannot do so without an evident self-contradiction. Its basic flaw has been traced out by Lotze who stresses the impossibility of an unconditional "should be", without recognizing that any 'should be' or 'ought to be' must have a reality distinct from what 'should not be'. In this alone consists the absolute worth, which is possessed by ideals pointed out by moral laws. So by appreciating no value at all, Pantheism has become thoroughly self-contradictory (Lotze, *Philosophy of Religion*, page 158). The major cause of the failure of Pantheism is that it can not admit an ideal without contradiction, for it involves a deification of the actual whereas the ideal is a criticism of the actual. Pantheism identifies entire universe with God, hence engulfs every sort of personal identity along with responsibility and freedom. The true sense of good and evil entails that, 'I am responsible for an act which is essentially mine and not of God, universe or environment etc.' When subjective personality is

destroyed, we really seem to have got to the end of everything – all real goodness morality and religion at any rate, (Walker, *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*, page 106). The shaking off of the sense of evil, no doubt, contributes very much to our peace of mind, but actually it is self-contradictory because there is no logical sense of ‘I’ since everything is one!

Pantheism also results in strict dogmatism, nature is working well in her own way, “If anything happens, it is right, if anything is prevented, it is wrong” (Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, page 191). So if something appears to us evil, we should be content on its mere explanation.

On the Political side this Philosophy yields thoroughgoing, consistent and most rigid dictatorship. Various philosophers and thinkers who upheld this Philosophy, actually tried to justify the tyranny of the autocratic regimes of their era.

Thus Pantheism proved itself an utter failure in solving the myth and mystery of evil and ended in escapism. Therefore some other theory must be tried and judged, why not deism?

Deism and the Problem of Evil

Deism may be defined as any tendency away from religious dogmatism, implicit faith and the mysterious, and in the direction of freedom of thought in religious matters. In Latin ‘deus’ means God which is a synonym of Greek word ‘theos’ which also means the same. Thus both the world deism and theism indeed denote belief in the existence of God or Gods and they are antithesis of atheism. Though certain differences developed afterwards which distinguished both terms from each other. With the passage of time deism acquired a connotation of religious unorthodoxy, while theism represented religious orthodoxy.

In the history of Philosophy the word ‘deist’ was first used in 1564. Anyhow the word deist was not very popular in England until a century later. The first interpretation of deist in both French and English as a euphemism for ‘atheist’, was not followed by Dr. Samuel Johnson who in his ‘Dictionary’ (1755) defined deist as a “man who follows no particular religion but only acknowledges the existence of God without any other article of faith”. The first appearance of the word deism in English seems to have been in Dryden’s preface to his poem ‘Religio Laici’ 1682, where he equated it with natural religion. Deists were basically reformists and struggled for legal and constitutional reforms. They had their own set of beliefs and specific world-view, according to which they had put forward the

solution for the problem of evil. They say that pain, suffering and misery are inseparable parts of life as they are necessary outcomes of the laws of nature. In the absence of evil existence of any sort is itself impossible. Pain is connected with consciousness and sensitivity and abolition of pain can only be attained at a cost of non-existence of sentient beings. Feelings should be crushed to get rid of sensation of pain.

Deists consider natural evil a result of laws of nature while moral evil is the result of human free will. Moral evil also has a specific worth, it is not intrinsically bad, rather a valuable entity. Just as the absence to all physical evil means cessation of all feelings, similarly complete absence of wickedness would imply the disappearance of individuality and personal freedom. If such sort of universe exists it would no doubt be an entirely different universe, but nonetheless a poorer universe, a universe of much lower type.

If this 'ideal' world is possible, it would be deprived of finest forms of human experience, *viz.* knowledge, art, philosophy, religion, music, poetry, virtue, passions, feelings, emotions and heroism etc. On the other hand the pleasure-pain drama of life will also end absurdly. One should not have the slightest expectation of the cheap hedonism from the scheme of things. Another point of view is that all evil in the end is self-destructive and self-indulgent, which means that at bottom it has no permanent or real place in the universe. So according to deist thinker universe itself is not bad, rather good, though evil has certain inexorable status and function therein.

As per deistic philosophy the essential nature of evil is objective rather than subjective. It is an opposition or hindrance in the way of evolutionary advance of universe in upward direction. It is important to note that deists believed in emergent evolution centuries before Darwin propounded his hypothesis of biological evolution and natural selection (1859) which is now a well-established theory. Deists without any clear-cut evidence believed that the said evolution was purposeful while evil is purposeless. That is why the evil is foredoomed to ultimate defeat, though this process appears slow to human vision. Through emergent evolution divine purpose fulfils itself in spiritual sphere, just as it does in the material world. Hegel's Absolute Idealism can be seen reflecting in this fanciful super-academic theory.

Deists belonged to an age when Newtonian physics was dominant in entire intellectual realm. The universe was believed to be static and strictly governed by rigid natural laws with absolute space and time. Deists explained metaphysical and ethical problems also

with the help of this view. According to deism, the absolute automatism manifests itself in physical mechanism and gives direction to human individuality. Though man is certainly determined by the inflexible laws of nature but his free will and mental capabilities are beyond their grasp. In human progress the perfection of divine purpose becomes most clearly perceived.

Deism believes in a functionally autonomous universe that is working without any divine intervention, and after once set into action, needs no more 'guidance' from God. Physical evil is a result of natural laws while moral evil is an outcome of free will. J.E. Turner writes in *'The Nature of Deity'*, "The fixed ethical laws operate in the sphere of selfhood as natural selection does in the lower realm of life. Natural selection ensures, 'survival of the fittest' while moral selection entails the 'survival of the noblest'. Most heroic personalities are born by their stern contest with evil, purified by the endurance of persecution and perfected it may be by martyrdom" (page 138).

Anyhow the question of moral freedom is not as simple as it appears. Because of uniformity of natural laws and divine omnipotence, the entire universe is subject to that absolute necessity which characterizes all its structures and governs all its processes; so what is the nature and sense of human freedom since the same rules regulate the spiritual universe, *i.e.* the realms of consciousness and reason, of ethics and personality? Its consequences can be quite deadly for morality and selfhood. Then what is the way to reconcile necessity and divine supremacy with genuine and real human freedom? Is man really free or just believes delusively that he is free! Deists acknowledge that human freedom is always limited, neither infinite nor absolute like that of supreme self. But it must also, not be thought that man's freedom though real, is able to impair or restrict supremacy of Deity. Therefore the familiar concept of 'limited God' (as is described in popular deism) is also faulty and wrong. God's omnipotence is no doubt absolute but in spiritual domain it manifests itself in different way. One is necessarily free to choose between good and evil, evil is resistance against the progressive evolution and the evolution is actually the divine will or decree. Therefore, one who tries to inhibit good or interferes with divine goodness destroys itself. But to say in the orthodox sense that God has already 'written' the destiny of people is not in accordance with deistic approach. Man is not determined in this way at all. The fact is only this that the consequences of freedom are to be faced necessarily, there is absolutely no way to escape. Thus there lies a very delicate balance between freedom and determinism. 'Man is

free' means that he can choose any of the ways possible in an actual moral situation. 'God is supreme' means that His laws cannot be altered so the consequences of one's actions are unavoidable.

Deism was indeed a sincere effort to reconcile faith and reason. Deists did their best to establish a balanced world-view in all senses of the word. But unfortunately they were rejected by both sides, *i.e.* religious circles and free thinkers. Both schools of thought placed grave objections on them. Deism stood for natural religion, but history of Philosophy shows that natural religion is a failure and ends in doubt and suspicion. Bishop Joseph Butler in his books "*Rolls Sermons*" (1726) and "*Analogy of Religion*" (1736) defended Christianity in a matter-of-fact way. He sought to prove by analogy that all the deistic objections against revelation were equally applicable to natural religion. Fatal blows to Deism came simultaneously on two fronts – intellectually from David Hume and emotionally from John Wesley. Natural religion, as per Hume, whether of rationalistic or matter-of-fact variety can lead only to doubt, uncertainty and suspension of judgement. Hume himself was not a deist at all, rather he was an antideist, a skeptic who totally destroyed the whole vulnerable *a priori* basis of deism. An aloof, detached, remote, inactive and 'cold' God was equally unacceptable for religious believers, since He was in clear conflict with highly Personal Biblical God.

Similarly the solution proposed for the problem of evil by deists is also subject to severe criticism. Their theories in this regard are too innocent. These are based neither on revealed faith nor on observed facts. To say that evil is eventually converted into good is totally baseless and contrary to facts, how can a cyclone, a famine or epidemic be good in any sense at all? Deism gives no satisfactory explanation for natural evil, the universe with so much calamities can never be called 'perfect' in any way. The assertion that pain or evil makes it more beautiful in a very popular and unphilosophical theory that is based on shallow romanticism rather than on reason, facts or evidence. "The universe with evil is better than the universe with no evil" is a dictum without any proof since we have not observed any universe without evil. So logically no one is entitled to say anything about it, whether it would be good or bad.

Deists have stressed the laws of nature very much, they declare them perfect but it is true that they yield so much suffering. God as an omnipotent being could have adjusted these laws in such a manner that they never caused any evil. The imperfect laws once set by Him in the beginning reveal that He is neither all-good, nor all-powerful.

The concept of 'Law of Nature' has undergone revolutionary changes since the time of deists, as we have already discussed. Bertrand Russell writes in his famous essay '*Why I am not a Christian*', "They (laws of nature) are statistical averages such as would emerge from the laws of chance; that makes this whole business of natural law much less impressive than it formerly was." So the 'laws' are not as hard and fast as deists considered. As so much evil is prevailing in the world, Russell, contrary to the deists asserted, "that as a matter-of-fact this world as we know was made by the devil at a moment when God was not looking" (*Why I am not a Christian?* page 8).

Deists believe *a priori* in an emergent evolution and simultaneously consider the universe 'perfect'. There is a subtle self-contradiction here, evolution and perfection cannot go hand in hand, because evolution of every sort presupposes growth or some kind of imperfection.

Hence, to be brief, deism despite its sincere efforts had remained unsuccessful to solve the age-old puzzle of evil. All of its proposed solutions have fallen in the pitfalls of fallacies. In the end, it will be interesting to end this topic on the couple of verses by Robert Browning taken from his famous poem 'Pippa Passes', in which a fine ironical touch toward deism can be detected;

The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his Heaven –
All's right with the world.

Our next wilderness to wander – obviously will be theism, let us try to find something.

Theism and the Problem of Evil

"Theism signifies belief in one God (theos) who is (a) personal, (b) worthy of adoration, and (c) separate from the world but (d) continuously active in it" (H. P. Owen, "*Theism*"). According to theism, God is a subject possessing not only mind but also will. Being fully personal, He can be conceived through images drawn from human life and can be addressed as 'thou' in prayer. Theists claim that He merits adoration (or worship) on two grounds. First He is wholly good. Second, He exceeds men in power. As per theism proper (or theism in strict sense), God is infinitely powerful both in

Himself (as self-existent Being) and, consequently, in His relation to the world. Theists hold that, God, in this essence is separate from the world, contrary to Pantheism, which identified world and God. According to theism Proper, God created the world *ex nihilo* (from nothing) (*Encyclopaedia of Religion*, Volume 8, page 97).

Theistic belief raises a number of questions, such as: How can finite terms refer to God if He is infinite? Is it possible to demonstrate or at least to justify belief in God's existence by reason? In what sense (or senses) can one speak of a divine 'Province'? But the most important, hotly debated and burning question regarding theism is, is the belief in a God who is both omnipotent and good compatible with the fact of evil.

Interestingly enough, H. P. Owen, a famous 20th century philosopher, whose definition of theism, we have just read, holds God responsible ultimately for the evil in the world. Since God has created the world from nothingness (*ex nihilo*), everything in it is the reflector of God (H.P. Owen, '*Concept of Deity*', page 8). As says

Ghalib

ہے وہی بد مستی ہر ذرہ کا خود عذر خواہ
جس کے جلوے سے زمین تا آسمان سرشار ہے

To exempt God from this accusation various theodicies have been offered in every age, which in turn have been keenly and critically evaluated by anti-theists. A large number of great and prominent philosophers have offered their precious views on the subject, but the space of the magazine does not permit such a lengthy discussion. On the other hand it is also improper to quote the entire chapter here. So in this section a highly selective gist of the problem will be presented. Leibnitz, Hume and Hick will be treated as major exponents of opinion and counter opinion.

German rationalistic philosopher Gottfried W. Leibnitz (1646-1716) in his famous 'Theodicee' (Theodicy) 'proved' by using syllogistic reasoning that our present world is the best of all possible worlds, God could have made, despite its all sick and evil phenomena. According to Leibnitz, "The best divine plan is not always that which seeks to avoid evil, since it may happen that the evil be accompanied by a greater good. For example, a general of an army will prefer a great victory with a slight wound to a condition without wound and without victory. We have proved this more fully in the large work by making it clear, by instances taken from mathematics and elsewhere, that an imperfection in the part may be required for a greater perfection in the whole. In this I have followed

the opinion of St. Augustine, who has said a hundred times that God permitted evil in order to bring about good that is a greater good; and that of Thomas Aquinas (in lib. II, sent. dist. 32, qu. I, art. I), that the permitting of evil tends to do good of the universe" (*The Philosophical Works of Leibnitz*", translated by George M. Dancan, page 195). Unfortunately there is nothing novel in this theory, it is a perennial solution proposed by Stoics that partial evil is universal good or God permitted lesser evil for greater good. Josiah Royce dismisses the view by saying 'one could not say of a rotting apple, however small the rotten spot as yet, that the partial rottenness is universal soundness of apple. If, I have but one slight disorder in one of my organs, still you cannot say that my partial disorder must be universal health. What did old optimists mean by such a contradictory view?' (*The Religious Aspects of Philosophy*", page 265).

Religion as well as Leibnitz could find no powerful rival than a mastermind namely David Hume (1711-1776). His famous work, 'Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion' shattered the concept of a good, just, wise and benevolent God to the bits. Though Hume criticized natural religion, but his arguments are equally cogent for the destruction of revealed theology or theistic beliefs. Hume exploited problem of evil excellently, with an extra-ordinary and exceptional insight. As per Hume, Leibnitz was shamelessly bold to venture such a paradoxical opinion that this is best of all possible worlds created by a just and benevolent God. But how can the collective and united testimony of mankind, based on reasoning be denied by such hypothetical metaphysics? Sense and consciousness of humanity cannot be deluded through these conjectures. Hume says that the whole earth is cursed and polluted. A perpetual war is going on amongst all living creatures. Necessity, hunger and want stimulate the courageous and strong, while fear, anxiety and terror agitate the weak and infirm. The first entrance into life gives anguish to the newborn infant and his wretched mother. Weakness, impotence and distress attend each stage of that life and it is at last finished in agony and horror.

Hume says that "*All the goods of life united would not make a very happy man, but all the ills united would make him the most wretched on the earth.*" He gives an ingenious example, "were a stranger to drop suddenly into this world, I would show him, as a specimen of its ills, a hospital full of crying patients, a prison crowded with criminals and psychopaths, a field of battle with carcasses, a fleet floundering in the ocean, a nation languishing under tyranny, famine or pestilence! What will be his impression about this

world of wise and merciful God”? Hume asserts that believers either of revealed or natural theology hold the view that the Deity is both all-good and all-powerful, but out of empirical evidence we find that neither men nor animals are happy on this earth which reveals that God does not wish their happiness. God’s wisdom is infinite, whatever He wills is executed, He is never mistaken in choosing the means to an end; but the course of nature tends not to human or animal facility, therefore it is not established for this purpose. Through the whole compass of human knowledge, there are no inferences more certain and infallible than these. In what respect then do this benevolence and mercy justify their meaning? (“*Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*” edited by H.D. Aiken, 1955).

Hume asks in a very genuine way that in the presence of a perfectly benevolent Deity why is there any suffering at all in the world? He agrees that a loose system or design can be observed in the universe but this ‘design’ is also full of grave pitfalls. For example, if someone is shown a house, where there is no apartment convenient or agreeable, where the windows, doors, fires, passages, stairs and the whole economy of the building is source of noise, confusion, fatigue, darkness and the extremes of heat and cold, one would certainly blame the contrivance of the architect without any further examination. The present world is exactly similar to that of this house. Similarly the distribution of different virtues, qualities and powers is so haphazard that many miseries in the world come into being due to it. For example Deity can give good tempers, virtues and dispositions to persons born to authority and power. Good princes may enjoy good health and long life. God may make such a situation that a fleet whose purpose was salutary to society may always meet with fair wind, but unfortunately this never happens.

Hume concludes with Prophetic fervour: “It must be confessed that the injudicious reasoning to our vulgar theology has done its best to confuse human rational faculty. The total infirmity of human reason, the absolute incomprehensibility of the divine nature, the great and universal misery, and still greater wickedness of man—these are topics surely to be fondly cherished by orthodox divines and doctors in the ages of stupidity and ignorance. Indeed these principles may safely be espoused; and perhaps no views of things are more proper to promote superstitions than such as to encourage the blind amazement, the diffidence and melancholy of mankind.”

Though Hume has offered last word on the topic of evil, but there is no last word in philosophy, because it is not religion. That is why theodicies are still being offered, two centuries after Hume. A

staunch and stalwart theist of 20th Century John Hick has vigorously defended his beliefs against terrible insight of Hume. Hick has countered him with strikingly novel and original thought. Hick writes in his classic work, "*Evil and God of Love*" that the world is not a hedonistic paradise for man as a very comfortable or cosy cage is made for a pet animal. He calls this world, a 'vale of soul making'. He asserts that fallacy of Hume is to confuse this world with paradise, he wished an environment that was suitable for perfected beings, and he was unaware that such environment was not fit for such finite beings that are in the process of becoming perfected. Men are not to be thought of on the analogy of animal pets whose life is to be made as agreeable as possible but rather on the analogy of human children who are to grow to adulthood in an environment whose primary and overriding purpose is not immediate pleasure but the realizing of the most valuable potentialities of human personality. Because man is the creature who has the possibility of existing in conscious fellowship with God. He uses the terminology used in Bible by Johanna 'Bios' (mere animal life) and 'Zoe' (spiritually developed eternal life). According to Hick, the suffering and miseries we bear in this world are necessary to convert us from bios into zoe. Hick opines that men may eventually become perfected persons but they cannot be created readymade as this. The value judgement that is implicitly being invoked here is that one has attained to goodness by meeting and eventually mastering temptations, and thus by rightly making responsible choices in concrete situations is good in a richer and more valuable sense than would be one created *ab initio*, in a state either of innocence or virtue. In the former case, which is that of the actual moral achievements of mankind the individual's goodness has within it the strength of temptations overcome, a stability based upon an accumulation of right choices and a positive and responsible character that comes from the investment of costly personal efforts. It is an ethically reasonable judgement, even though in the nature of the case not one that is capable of demonstrative proof that human goodness slowly built up through personal histories of moral effort has a value in the eyes of the creator which justifies even the long travail of the soul-making process. In this teleological framework, man is in the process of becoming a perfect being whom God wishes to create. Hick adds that it is not a natural and inevitable evolution but it is a hazardous adventure of human freedom. It is not a racial or social evolution but totally an individual and personal venture, which does not improve the moral state of the world on the whole necessarily. Hick says that it is indubitable that man's ethical situation does change, generation to generation and new public and socio-political institutions come into being as a result but in this

ethical endeavour millions of souls experience the pangs of earthly life and God's purpose gradually fulfils itself. This option of Hick's reminds us of Hegel at once, whose 'The Absolute' is unfolding itself in the course of history and moving towards its completion.

Hick propounds a very old idea too that punishment, penalties, restrictions and hardships are necessary to teach 'untamed' child rectitude and virtue. A child provided with pleasure only cannot develop into a mature personality. Hick further declares that his theodicy is eschatological in its ultimate bearings. That is to say, instead of looking to past for its clue to the misery of evil, it looks to the future. The good that outshines all ills is not a paradise long since lost but a kingdom, which is yet to come in its full glory and permanence. This future oriented and eschatological approach of Hick is much nearer to that of Kant, whose categorical imperative implies necessarily life after death where all human grievances will be undone by the reward.

Nonetheless Hick admits that different personalities accept different effects from the same cause, therefore, it is equally true that for very many people this world may prove a vale of 'soul breaking' and a large mass of humanity is diverted towards crimes, greed, hatred and other vices through the phenomenon of evil. Hick has put forward his views in a lucid style using highbrow, fluent and eloquent language. His theodicy is cogent, sound, rational yet faith-dependent; Hick is unable to 'prove' his views demonstratively. Most of his ideas resemble centuries old 'Principle of Plenitude'.

In the end of this chapter an important rather crucial problem is awaiting us, *i.e.* of moral evil, human freedom and Divine omnipotence. Theists have always propagated without fail that God operates His will through the agency of natural laws, and evil (at least physical) is a direct outcome of these laws. But this oversimplified theory entails another paradox, "Is it possible for an omnipotent being to bind himself by his own created laws?" Another troubling question is "Is an omnipotent being unable to create a universe without such evil-entailing laws?" J. L. Mackie in his famous essay, '*Evil and Omnipotence*', which appeared first in '*Mind*' London (1995), writes that it is a causal law that you cannot have a certain end without a certain means, so that if God has to introduce evil as a means to good, He must be subjected to at least some causal laws. This certainly conflicts with what a theist normally believes by omnipotence. This view of God as limited by causal laws also conflicts with the view that causal laws are themselves made by God.

Divine omnipotence is also related with human free will, and free will is considered to be the main cause of moral evil. This is the most hotly debated topic of philosophy of religion. Mackie again writes in the above named essay, "If God has made men such that in their free choices they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could He not have made men such that they always freely choose the good? If there is no logical impossibility in a man's freely choosing the good on one or on several occasions there must not be logical impossibility in his freely choosing good on every occasion. God was not then faced with a choice between innocent automata and making beings who in acting freely would sometimes go wrong: there was open to him the obviously better choice of making being who would act freely but always go right. Clearly this failure to avail Himself of this possibility is inconsistent with His being both omnipotent and wholly good." If it is replied that this objection is absurd, that the making of some wrong choices is logically necessary for freedom, it would seem that 'freedom' must here mean complete randomness or indeterminacy, including randomness with regard to the alternate good and evil, in other words that men's choices and consequent actions can be 'free' only if they are not determined by their characters. Only on this assumption God can escape the responsibility for men's actions; for if He made them as they are but did not determine their wrong choices this can only be because the wrong choices are not determined by man as they are? And still more, how can it be the most important good? What value or merit would there be in free choices if these were random actions which were not determined by the nature of the agent? Again there is another clash between the concepts of Divine Omnipotence and human freedom. If man is free in true sense of the word it means that even God cannot control his will. It leads to the deadly conclusion that God is not omnipotent. But if He can interfere with free wills of men, but consciously does not and never forbids them from willing, He is not good at all, this leads to what is called 'Paradox of Omnipotence' (discussed already), 'Can an omnipotent being make things which He cannot subsequently control'? Here no answer can be given satisfactorily either in affirmative or negative. Both 'yes' and 'No' lead to impotence of God. Thus, most regretfully, it is to be admitted that theism ends in utter failure regarding all the aspect of problem of evil. Theists despite all sincere efforts are unable to offer a consistent theodicy to justify phenomenon of evil, which is compatible with the existence of a just, benevolent and omnipotent God.

However, before concluding the present study and offering a final verdict, let us make another try to strive with the terrible problem that has forced the profoundest intellects of the ages to surrender most helplessly! Verily the dimension to be explored is logico-linguistic.

Logico-Linguistic Approach toward the Problem of Evil

Ordinary language has certain limitations and restrictions, and the matter grows more grave when we use it in the philosophico-theological context. The phrases commonly used in the discussion of the problem, *i.e.* omnipotence, possible, freedom and choice are not clearly and sharply defined. The lack of precise definitions and ambiguous use of language has led philosophy to the pool of hopeless muddles. As says J.S. Mill that some words "have come to excite and to be the symbols of feelings which their original meaning will by no means justify; and which have made them one of the most copious sources of false taste, false philosophy, false morality and even bad law" (*The Philosophy of J.S. Mill*, edited by Marshall Cohen, page 445). Similarly the abuse of the phrases quoted above has been misleading men for centuries. It will be wise to analyze them briefly. As regards omnipotence, Thomas Aquinas says, 'Nothing which implies contradiction falls under the omnipotence of God' (*Summa Theologica*, I^a QXXXV, Article 4). Semitic scriptures repeat again and again that "with God all things are possible". C.S. Lewis, in his classical work "*The Problem of Pain*" has introduced a term, 'intrinsic' or 'absolute' impossibility. Intrinsic or absolute impossibility is that impossibility upon which no 'unless' is applicable. It would remain impossible under all conditions, in all worlds, for all agents. Here the "all agents" includes God as well. His omnipotence means power to do all that is intrinsically possible, not to do intrinsically impossible. "You may attribute miracles to Him, but not nonsense." There is no limit to His power. If you choose to say, "God can give a creature free-will and at the same time withhold free-will from it," you have not succeeded in saying anything against God, meaningless combination of words does not suddenly acquire meaning simply because we prefix to them the two other words, 'God can'. It remains true that all things are possible with God but. "The intrinsic impossibilities are not things but non-entities." It is no more possible for God than for the weakest of His creatures to carry out both of two mutually exclusive alternatives; not because His power meets an obstacle, but because non-sense remains non-sense even when we talk it about God' (C.S. Lewis, '*The Problem of Pain*', pp. 13-14).

Same is the case with freedom, this term is also meaningless rather non-sensical if the holder of freedom is not supplied with alternatives to choose between and act according to his will. Lewis wishes to assert that careless use of religious terminology may lead to grave theological problems and logical absurdities. Another burning question that needs special attention is "why was not man created wholly good by God?" To answer this, well known 20th Century Oxfordian philosopher R. M. Hare may be consulted, who has explained value words logically and linguistically. In his famous work 'Language of Morals' he has described the word 'good' as the most Common 'commending' word. Hare asserts that "there is an intrinsic relationship between commending and choosing. He suggests that this relationship appears if one inquires into the purpose for which we use value words. We do not use them for things which individuals do not have to choose between, we do use them to help guide ourselves or others in making choices between things either now or in future. If we never had to decide as to which pencil to use, which auto to buy, which kind of man to emulate, we would never apply 'good' to these kind of things. "Therefore, the concept of goodness is devoid of meaning if there is nothing to choose between, similarly it is applicable to beings of certain sort, beings who are liable to temptations, possess inclinations, have fears, tend to assert themselves and so forth. If they were to be immunized from evil they would have to be built in a different way." Ninian Smart says, "Moral utterance is embedded in the cosmic *status quo*" (*Omnipotence, Evil and Superman* (essay) edited by Nelson Pike). To say that there can be a man without any tendency to bend towards evil is same like the assertion of a traveller who has come from Jupiter and tells us that unicorns are to be found here, but they possess neither horns nor feet. Hence, the very proposition is self-contradictory therefore false. These authors prove to say that good without evil is a logically absurd thus meaningless and empty term. This is again pretty debatable, which is, however, beyond the scope of this essay. It is also another philosophical question to be studied in depth, that as to what extent the introduction of new words or the reinterpretation of old ones can solve the actual problems of life. In spite of all the endeavours of academics and philosophers, the agony of a cancer patient cannot be soothed by offering him the theory that he has been made to suffer so that evil of disease can be distinguished from good of health. He may complain in the words of Voltair, "Why did (God) select me?" It will be absurd to say to the wailing mother of a brutally murdered youth that her son has been killed so that the criminal could administer his freedom of will, because morality otherwise is impossible. The most significant point here is to notice

that neither Pantheists, deists, theists nor linguists have any answer to the question which is quite fundamental and basic, *viz.* why did God choose to create beings capable of developing their moral potentialities or why did God create anything at all? Well-known Existentialist Martin Heidegger writes that the fundamental Philosophical mystery is, "why is there something rather than nothing?" (*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. Ralph Manheim). Hick suggests that philosophical speculation must be ended here, he admits most honestly that Problem of evil eventually ends in mystery. But I don't agree with Hick, speculation should never cease, reflection should never be given up; however its nature and method may be modified or revolutionized. This is a stage where scientific inquiry and empirical investigation should come forward and continue that journey towards its destination which was initiated by its esteemed and dignified leader, *i.e.* philosophy.

Like very many other issues, problem of evil can never be salvaged solely with the help of theology or metaphysics. No set of pre-conceived beliefs can justify the Phenomena which take place in this spatio-temporal complex teeming with pain, suffering, misery and anguish. A dog-eat-dog world can never justify a theistic outlook. The nature, which is red in tooth and claw, is inherently unable to reflect the benevolent face of kind God in its pool of blood. The world ruled by the law of 'might is right' can never be accepted as the brain child of a just Deity. *Inter alia* the Divine hypothesis is contradictory in its very composition. Any God of whatever nature has absolutely no need to 'create' beings of any sort, nor does He have any desire to 'try' them or 'test' their characters because being omniscient He has a clear-cut foreknowledge of all the actions, the created beings will perform till eternity. And a just, kind and benevolent God is not interested at all to put frail, mortal, sentient and helpless beings into so horrible, terrific and sorrowful trials. It is below His dignity or majesty to try the beings who are so low, small, restricted and insignificant in comparison with His own power, grandeur, omniscience, limitlessness and elevation. Apparently there is no divine purpose in mundane humdrum of everyday life, and moreover which divine scheme is being fulfilled by the animal kingdom which is so full of cruelty, perpetual pain and bloodshed? At this stage of study, it is a high time to say farewell to metaphysics and theology most deferentially. Here one thing is very important to be borne in mind that it is not at all required to degrade or belittle metaphysics. Metaphysics is the fruit of great intellectual labour of man. It is that mighty and strong leader which brought out human mind from the trackless wilderness of mythology. It liberated it from

mysteries and superstitions. It offered fundamental axioms, postulates and principles for an organized and systematic inquiry. Metaphysics made the wandering and decentralized thoughts methodical, disciplined and synoptic, thus set the stage for the greatest achievement of human intellect – the philosophy. But metaphysics has its own limitations and restrictions, so it cannot answer the questions it raises itself. The fuel of this stately beacon has exhausted, so following August Comte it must now be replaced with scientific outlook.

Though I explored the problem of evil from purely philosophical angle in my thesis but I would suggest to somebody else, who is also agitated by this issue, to comprehend it from scientific point of view. It is better to accept and confront the evil rather than to 'justify' it. The roots of inequality, unjust distribution of resources as well as powers and cruelty and suffering (either human or animal) should be discovered in biological evolution, history, anthropology, sociology and economics rather than in metaphysics or theology. Philosophy is not going to lose its worth, as it is often feared, if scientific inquiry is given more priority. Philosophy, actually is the milestone which leads to the road to science by thorough analysis and in-depth research. Philosophy will ever shine on the zenith of intellect with inexhaustible luminosity.

In the end, I definitely hope that an unbiased understanding and review of all the theologically tinged issues will lead to diminished human suffering, better economic condition, fair social system and healthy political set-up. Problem of evil is also one of these issues.

