


2014-01-01

The Problem Of Using Evil Against The Possible Existence Of God

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THE PROBLEM OF USING EVIL AGAINST THE POSSIBLE EXISTENCE OF
GOD

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2014

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to: my beloved parents Olga Saldivar and Fidel Torres, because they help me to believe and to achieve my dreams; to Dr. Jules Simon for all his teaching, encouragement and dedication. I dedicate this work to the love of my life Elizabeth Vega who has been God's gift to me; and to all my teachers because they have become a part of me.

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GOD

by

JUAN RAFAEL TORRES, M.Ed.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Philosophy
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2014

Acknowledgements

I give special thanks and acknowledgment to Dr. Jules Simon for his mentoring, teaching and encouragement for the realization of this thesis. Also, thanks to my thesis committee: Dr. Marc Moffett, and Dr. Arturo Olivarez and to Dr. Caroline Arruda for her comments and constructive critiques. I profoundly appreciate all the support and encouragement from my family and friends, specially my brothers: Abel Torres, Emmanuel Torres, and Noel Torres, thanks to Luis Diaz for his comments and Ramon Alvarado as well.

Abstract

This thesis has two modules, which entail two different approaches about the problem of evil. In module one, which consists of chapters one and two, I consider the difficulties of defining ‘evil’ and the case against the ‘logical problem of evil’ respectively. Module two is a phenomenological and skeptical approach to the problem of evil. Specifically, it is a response to those that do not agree with Plantinga’s arguments and it is a critique of the traditional paradigms about God, evil and ethics. For instance, I reject the so called category of “natural evils” and I categorize ‘evil’ as a human phenomenon that requires consciousness, intentionality and agency. Additionally, this last module brings into question the anthropomorphic views about an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God. Moreover, it introduces evolutionary ethics and evolutionary psychology as possible explanations of why there is a problem of evil in the first place and why humans categorize actions, persons, phenomena and even the gods or God as either good or evil. On the other hand, the main objective of including a section on the ‘phenomenology of evil’ is to understand what makes an action or an agent evil. This analysis proceeds from an unorthodox paradigm. I question the most traditional philosophical dogmas about the concept of evil, such as: evil as a positive-objective reality, natural evils and the banality of evil. Evil has traditionally been used to make a “logical” argument against the possible existence of God. Nevertheless, the term ‘evil’ is problematic, because ‘evil’ has different meanings and it needs to be explained. However, there is a major issue with the logical problem of evil, that is, in accordance with Alvin Plantinga (1974) the syllogisms that use ‘evil’ entail neither an explicit contradiction nor an implicit one against the possible existence of God. Yet, most philosophers have assumed that there is at least an implicit contradiction among the premises:

1. God is omnipotent and omnibenevolent
2. Evil exists in the world
3. Therefore, an omnipotent, and omnibenevolent God does not exist (John Teehan, 2013)

Many philosophers also argue that there is an obvious inconsistency among the prior premises, but such a claim is problematic while building a “logical” argument against the possible existence of the traditional God, because these premises are not explicitly contradictory. Additionally, the ambiguity of

the concept 'evil' is disregarded and thus cannot be used as an adequate premise for a logical argument. Upon critical examination of the terms and assumptions made from philosophers such as J.L Mackie and David Hume, Plantinga claims that the problem of evil as a logical issue is weak. Additionally, these philosophers do not provide an explanation of what they refer to by the premise "evil exists" and simply rely on traditional views such as: Evil as an independent and objective reality or as something that is self-evident or natural. Mackie exemplifies a common mistake that is made by other philosophers as well in supporting this argument, such as Epicurus. They assume that evil exists, because it is generally "known", and/or self-evident. However, these two assumptions are problematical.

My claim is that we do not know whether or not evil exists as an independent objective entity. Additionally, I argue further that even if evil does exist as an objective entity, there is no logical inconsistency with the premises in the argument for the existence of the traditional Western God. This is the case because even if evil is used merely as a logical place holder in a standard syllogistic argument, it is still possible to maintain a valid conclusion that necessarily entails that God is omnipotent and omnibenevolent if we include the premise that an omnibenevolent God does not necessarily entail the exclusion of the existence of evil because of the demands of human free will. However, in my thesis I problematize the merely logical approach by defending the view that evil requires agency and intentionality. This claim may seem outrageous for some people because it has been commonly accepted that we know what evil is and that the existence of evil contradicts the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God, but I want to show how the use of the term 'evil' in standard arguments is problematic. So on the one hand, I show how the traditional argument for the existence of God is rationally sound, on the other hand I claim that philosophers are not able to define evil without facing many problems because moral judgments claiming that something or someone is evil are neither analytical nor empirical truths (Shafer-Landau, Ross, 2012). Therefore, using such a problematic term makes the argument ultimately fallacious since the word "evil" does not mean something specific. It has no objective reference in the physical world. A possible objection is to claim that evil could be equated to a specific variable such as "suffering" but is all suffering evil? For instance, the suffering that is

caused by a vaccine would hardly be categorized as evil. The point is that evil is neither analytically nor empirically true and therefore its use in standard arguments is problematic.

Keywords: Evil, Transword depravity, Agency, Anthropomorphism, God, Idiosyncrasy

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Module I: Chapter I Introduction to the Problem of Evil

I begin by assuming that evil exists as an objective reality. Yet even this assumption is problematic to make a logical case against the existence of God. Specifically, I raise questions about this assumption of a “natural-objective” evil and how that needs to be distinguished from a “moral” evil that depends upon a better understanding of both why and how humans use such terms. My conclusion is relatively straight forward, namely that the ongoing use of the term to structure arguments for proofs for the non-existence of god is problematic. This shows how using the term for standard arguments in normative ethics is also problematic. Moreover, in relation with the possible existence of God how is the possible existence of evil incompatible? Claiming that just because evil exists God does not is claiming that there is an ontological inconsistency. This is because it is assumed that the mere existence of evil eliminates the possibility of an omnibenevolent and omnipotent God. However, such a claim is problematic because there is not an explicit contradiction. This signifies that an implicit contradiction is required to make the argument valid. For instance, J.L. Mackie (1955) states the problem of evil as follows: “In its simplest form the problem is this: God is omnipotent; God is wholly good and yet evil exists” (p.201). The claim is that the preceding premises are contradictory. Let us express this in a syllogism:

1. God is omnipotent
2. God is wholly good
3. Evil exists

Alvin Plantinga (1974) argues that the previous premises of the “logical problem of evil” are not explicitly incompatible with the traditional concept of God, and this is a problem for its supporters, because they need to show that these premises are implicitly contradictory. Additionally, the obscurity of the term “evil” has been traditionally ignored; nevertheless, it is a problem as well. The term evil is

unclear, since it has many different connotations and/or interpretations. Though, for the sake of this argument let us say that evil does exist; even though we do not know what its nature is or even if it has a nature and let us say that the traditional concept of God is the only one that is correct.

Would this mean that the traditional God is logically incompatible with the existence of evil? Not necessarily, a traditional theodicy claims that God may have sufficient reasons to allow evil to happen. For instance, a world with free creatures is a morally significant world, since there is no morality without free choice. In contrast, a world where people only choose to do right, would be a predetermined world and therefore, totally amoralist. Nonetheless, in such a world, there would be neither a problem of evil nor a traditional God. This is because good and evil cannot exist without free will and the traditional God is omnibenevolent. He gives free will to his creatures, but in a predetermined world, God would be a puppet master and not the traditional God. Consequently, claiming that an all-powerful and all-good God does not exist because he could have created a world where all people were predetermined to freely choose the good is a total contradiction and completely unlikely. There is no moral good without the possibility of choosing what is wrong and even if it was it would be totally meaningless.

Furthermore, it is not easy to understand evil and this fact prompts the questions: What is evil? What does it mean to be or to do evil? Can evil exist without the possibility of good? Is the traditional God logically incompatible with the existence of evil? These questions show that it is not easy to understand what evil is or even what its nature is. The existence of evil is not self-evident as many philosophers claim. There are interesting new approaches to evil. For example, John Teehan (2013) states:

The problem of evil is generated by the cognitive processes that give rise to god-beliefs, as those beliefs are formed by evolved-moral intuitions. The ‘problem’ arises

independent of doctrinal or theological teachings-its origin derives from the natural workings of our evolved social-brain. (p.326)

If this is true, then evil would not exist, it would be just an idea, and so the argument of evil falls. This paradigm states that evil is just a product of our mind. Evil is a creation of our psyche use as a tool to survive and this is why whatever threatens life would qualify as evil. Yet, this approach may be mistaken and evil may be something beyond humans' consciousness, something that is part of the world. Evil would be a positive reality to be discovered out there in the world.

Qualifying something as 'evil' is problematic. In this regard Mark Ferguson (2013) writes; "Discussions about evil tend to be dominated by normative concerns whom or what actions ought to be regarded as evil according to particular moral standards" (p.1). This creates a problem when determining what evil is, because whose standards should prevail to decide whether something is evil? In other words, in order to define evil I must already have an idiosyncrasy, which influences my moral standards to define what is good or bad. For instance, if I claim that killing an innocent human being is wrong or evil, it is because I have a previous set of beliefs, assumptions, feelings, and emotions about it and not because I am able to see the 'wrongness' of the act by itself. To illustrate, Teehan (2013) writes; "The 'problem' arises independent of doctrinal or theological teachings its origin derives from the natural workings of our evolved social-brain" (p.326). In accordance with this evolutionist theory, evil and the problem of evil would be just a product of humans' evolved minds and nothing more. Under this approach evil is not something that happens in the world, but rather something that happens only in our evolved minds. People have beliefs, customs, feelings, emotions and desires. This dramatically influences what they consider to be evil. For example, if a person believes that life is worthless and has no meaning, this individual may kill someone that he/she considers to be miserable and think that it is a noble act, while others may judge the act as evil in itself. They would just assume that life is meaningful and good and therefore eliminating life would be evil. This could be the case, but my point here is that

those moral judgments are always related with peoples' idiosyncrasy and/or survival of the species. This significantly influences what qualifies as good, bad or even 'evil.'

This survival 'instinct' is crucial to determine whether something is evil. It looks like human beings want to survive and whatever threatens their lives is categorized as bad or even evil. Consequently, terrible acts of dehumanization such as; genocide, murder, slavery and whatever attempts against humans' lives would qualify as 'evil.' However, killing cows, chickens, whales, birds and many other species does not qualify as something evil. This is a problem, because there is no compelling argument to defend such a moral standard. It is difficult to elaborate an argument without bias, an argument not grounded on humans' arrogance as the superior species with the only right to life. Other species do not have a right to life because humans affirm it and thus is not evil to kill them? Or someone may say that it is not evil to kill other species to eat them so if a human kills innocent babies to eat them, such an action must not be considered evil either under the scope of such a poor argument. Teehan (2013) continues:

Human cognition is hyper sensitized to the presence of agents in the environment as agents (beings that act with intent) are often a source of moral danger. Surviving in a dangerous and uncertain world, a world of predators and prey, requires that we be prepared to respond appropriately to possible signs of danger, and so evolution would favor a cognitive strategy that lead to a preponderance of false positive (mistakenly detecting the presence of an agent)over false negatives. (p.329)

Teehan (2013) is making the claim that to survive we have evolved psychological tools, which basically entails attributing mental states to the already detected agent or agents, he writes: "The detection of agency triggers other mental tools; of particular importance is the theory of Mind tool (ToM) which lead us to ascribe mental states to the agent"(p.329). In the same way, it is possible that

humans attribute value to actions, qualities, desires, etc. Additionally, in order to survive humans may have invented morality. It is plausible, because values do not derive from facts in the world. Instead, people give value to actions or things independently of the facts. Values are not the same as facts, and as stated by Hume, we cannot derive values from facts, to this respect Ross Shafer (2012) writes:

...Hume had a supporting reason for thinking that moral knowledge could not be empirical. Empirical knowledge tells us how to describe the world. And when we describe the world, we talk about what is the case. But morality speaks of what ought to be the case. How can we get from descriptions to prescriptions? (p.77)

This is important because when people make a moral judgment such as: “Killing innocent people for pleasure is evil” they are not stating a fact, because there is no reference in the world that makes the statement truth. This is a problem for the validity of moral claims and should not be ignored, while claiming that evil exists beyond humans.

It is very important to distinguish values from facts, to avoid the naturalistic fallacy. Nevertheless, this theory may be wrong and there is the evil by itself, even independently of humans, but if there is such a natural evil how can we perceive it? Can we know it? Shafer (2012) quoting Hume writes:

1. We can know only two sorts of claims: conceptual truths or empirical truths.
2. Moral claims are neither conceptual truths nor empirical truths.
3. Therefore, we can have no moral knowledge. (p.76)

If Hume is right about this: then any moral claim would not be knowledge, meaning a big problem for the claim “evil exists” because such claim would not be knowledge. Maybe it would be just an expression, but maybe Hume was wrong and we can have moral knowledge.

The problem that Hume brings to moral judgments is extremely hard to solve and must not be ignored, while making a claim about the inexistence of a being. The difficult question that Hume's ideas motivate is: How can philosophers claim that there are good and evil, if good and evil are not knowledgeable? Atheists may post the same question to believers of God's existence and they will be right, because knowing that God exists may be impossible. However, most theists would not claim that because of the existence of an omnibenevolent and omnipotent God evil does not exist. This is because the existence of an entity, thing, concept or a being may not be necessarily inconsistent with the existence of another being. Nevertheless, there is a very possible objection to this reasoning; this is the assumption that the existence of evil is "self-evident" while the possible existence of God is not. However, this brings the burden of explaining how evil is self-evident, which will always be problematic, because it is highly unlikely.

My argument here is that making a moral judgment such as; Earth quakes are evil or killing babies is evil or wrong, may not be true. But it may be that moral judgments are not meaningful as conceptual or empirical truths, because as Hume claims maybe they are neither. However, they may be meaningful as psychological tools to survive in a hostile world as Teehan (2013) claims. Many people believe that violent acts such as killing innocent people, raping, stealing, are objectively evil or bad. This is they are evil by themselves, independently of whatever a person or society believes about them, and even of the context in which such actions may be performed. As if we were able to see the wrongness of such actions. This is the view of moral realism, however, if this paradigm were true how can we 'see' such wrongness? Helen. C. Huzzey (2006) states a simple and common concept of evil she writes: "We could develop a secular conception of the term 'evil.' It might be, for example...something is evil if and only if it is an act which causes great harm, and is done intentionally from a desire to produce the resulting harm" (p.3) This definition of evil, while plausible, has its difficulties and requires development. This is because defining 'evil' is

problematic. For instance, it is already assuming that harm is something bad or evil. In other words, this definition is equating evil to causing harm. This is problematic, because there are many instances where causing harm would be accepted as good. To illustrate, someone may have a desire to cause certain harm to his/her body in order to gain something good. Supposing that this desire to cause harm is accomplished, the action will be accepted as good and such harm will be good as well.

I will develop the importance of intentionality as a necessary requirement to qualify something as evil in chapter three of this thesis. However, my point is that more than the intention to do harm and even the accomplishment of such an intention is needed. For example, someone may cut off an arm or leg in order to avoid death. This action has the intention of causing harm, but such harm will be a necessary harm to gain a greater good and therefore the action would not qualify as evil.

Philosophers who believe that evil is self-evident may say that whenever an action has certain characteristics or features, it would be evil. For instance, the action of slapping a baby for pleasure every morning will always be evil. To illustrate let us say that philosopher 'X' argues that whenever I see these characteristics of someone slapping a baby such action would be evil. Therefore, if I see someone slapping a hopeless baby and this person looks very happy while doing such abusive act, then it would qualify as something evil by itself regardless of anyone's opinions and/or beliefs. Nonetheless, the problem is that there are too many variables and possibilities so no definition of evil could ever cover all circumstances. For example, maybe slapping the baby is the only way for the baby to breathe and the person who does this "evil" action is happy because his/her baby will survive. This is a problem for philosophers who claim that evil is self-evident, because if evil was self-evident everyone would see it regardless of the circumstances. However, this thought experiment with the slapping baby shows that people may misinterpret the data and qualify a kind action as evil.

Defining evil is problematic because no definition of evil seems to be universal and apply to every possible circumstance. Therefore, an ambiguous term such as evil should not be used to build a logical problem against the existence of God or any other issue, without further development. At least, not as if evil was self-evident or an objective reality independent of humans. Unfortunately this is how many philosophers and common people have traditionally utilize the term evil. Traditionally some philosophers make a peculiar distinction between moral evil and natural evil, they both are problematic but 'natural evil' is even more. Huzzey (2006) states:

A volcanic eruption, a hurricane, a tornado, and all other natural disasters and epidemics, while horrible and devastating and indeed terrible and tragic, are not really evil. Evil seems to truly exist only in moral evil, that is when human agency is involved. A volcano is not trying to make people suffer; it is not intentionally killing a large amount of people. While the consequences may be truly horrible, we would not say, and it would not make sense to say that the volcano was evil, or that the actions of the volcano were evil. Evil truly exists in moral evils, done by human beings (p.8).

This observation by Huzzey illustrates how inappropriate is to call or qualify natural events as evil. It may be arbitrary to attribute wrongness to a natural event that has no agency. It is absurd to say that an earthquake is evil. Huzzey (2006) continues: "For something to be what we want to call evil, or as I will put it, for something to be evil properly so called it must be something that is caused, moreover, through the agent's acts" (p.11) This idea totally excludes natural evils, because they do not have a moral agent. I agree with this view, evil requires agency. Evil would have to be an intentional act and committed by a moral agent. Otherwise, it would be an accident, a natural phenomenon, but not an evil act or anything similar. Huzzey (2006) states:

Evil properly so called has to be something caused by agents, then, if we talk carefully, the phrase “natural evil” must be viewed as an oxymoron and we should say that “natural evil”, while truly horrible and tragic, is not really evil, because it lacks agency. (p.13)

Agency is essential to rationally call something evil, because labeling something as evil without agency would be totally meaningless. For instance, saying that an earthquake is evil without intentionality would be irrational. Since, an earthquake has neither purpose to harm nor consciousness to decide whether to do it. It would be senseless to call an earthquake evil, in the same way; it would be absurd to call the consequences of such earthquake evil. They are tragic no doubt, but not evil.

Agency is substantial to properly qualify something as evil. It would be meaningless to call an earthquake evil, because it is not conscious and therefore it cannot be held responsible, in agreement Huzzey (2006) states: “Human beings are responsible for the holocaust, while plate tectonics produced the Lisbon earthquake. Human suffering, torture and murder caused by Nazi’s in concentration camps is what should be properly understood as evil” (p.13) Huzzey makes a very important distinction here to make clear the importance of agency, which is that agency entails responsibility and this is why it is meaningful to classify actions and/or agents as evil, she continues: “Evil should not be found in the fact that immense rigid plates of the earth rub against each other and sometimes sink below one another, even when human suffering results.” (p.13) I agree without agency, there is no evil, because evil is a product of humans and not something independent of humanity. This is because humans are the only ones who have either a good or bad intention, because of their consciousness. Yet, even this vision of evil is problematic, because we are already qualifying intentions as either good or evil. We are making moral judgments and moral judgments must be justified. This is one problem for the claim that “evil exists therefore God does not” because there is no reference in the world to support that something is good, bad or evil. This is known as the error theory in meta-ethics, Shafer (2012) writes the postulates of the error theory:

1. There are not moral features in this world. Nothing is morally good or bad, right or wrong, virtuous or vicious.
2. No moral judgments are true. Why not? It's simple: there is nothing for them to be true of.
3. Our sincere moral judgments try, and always fail, to describe the moral features of things. Thus we always lapse into error when thinking in moral terms.
4. There is no moral knowledge. Knowledge requires truth. If there is no moral truth, there can be no moral knowledge. (p.307)

Basically, the error theory states that whenever we make a moral judgment we are in error, because there is nothing in the world that could ever make such statements true. The error theory is very strong against moral realism. Yet, if we look at evil not as a positive objective reality and change the dogma to a new paradigm, which recognizes evil as a product of human's intentionality and consciousness. The error theory may not be as strong as it is against the traditional paradigm.

Humans react to whatever offense their intelligence and they look for a reasonable explanation for mostly everything even for what they call evil. In this regard Huzzey interpreting Neiman (2006) states:

The problem of evil exists because evil interferes with our ability to make sense of the world in which we exist and act, and the theodicy is just a special case of the difficulty of making sense of a world. Evil is something then that is a problem because it threatens the intelligibility of our world. (p.15)

Humans as rational beings try to make sense of what they qualify as evil; this would be the real problem in this paradigm. Evil would be a problem of making sense of this world. Huzzey (2006) continues:

Neiman seems to be appealing to the idea that there exists both a desire and a need to make sense of the world, and evil is something that challenges the deep seated belief that the world somehow makes sense and perhaps must make sense. (p.16)

People seem to look for a reason to anything and sometimes do not understand why rational people do what they believe to be evil. Many times such actions are irrational and make no sense. To this point Hussey (2006) states:

Most people, it would seem, behave as though they accept the principle of sufficient reason in its most general form, which is that for every state of affairs that obtains there must be a sufficient reason for that state to obtain when, where, and how it does... what happens in the world can be made sense of. (p.16)

People try to make sense of their life-world and they use reason to understand it. However, some actions are considered to be irrational. For example, killing a person just for pleasure would be irrational. Such an action would be qualified as evil, most likely because it would violate the right to live that each person holds. Killing someone just for pleasure would not be considered a sufficient reason and therefore it would be evaluated as something evil. In contrast killing someone in self-defense would not be considered bad, because it would have a sufficient reason, namely, preserving one's life over an unjustified attack. Huzzey (2006) states:

When something happens that is considered evil, most people are shocked, appalled, confused, and left wondering for example: "how could somebody do that?" People question how the result occurred because the cause or reason does not suffice as viable, understandable, or sufficient reason. Evil then can easily be understood as something that confronts our capacity to make intelligible sense of the world---either causally or teleologically. (p.17)

This conceptualization of evil is interesting as an explanation of how we as rational people qualify actions or agents as evil. However, under this paradigm evil still remains as a human product and not as something beyond humans. Huzzey (2006) states: “When I observe most peoples’ behavior and actions they act as though they accept the basic idea that... for every action B there is some reason, purpose or goal, ‘A’ because of which B was done” (p.18). It is assumed that there must be some rational explanation for whatever happens and if there is not such an explanation, then something must be wrong.

Human idiosyncrasy is fundamental and when qualifying something as evil Huzzey (2006) notices this important claim and, writes:

It seems to me that they act this way because I have this way of “thinking about these movements” that is, I have in my conceptual framework the idea of the principle of sufficient reason, and so it seems to me that people behave and react in ways which can be made sense of by reference to the principle. If you were to ask probably any random person – why did X happen? they would give you a reason. (p.18)

Huzzey makes a very important point, that is, people have conceptual frameworks and they give value to events, things, actions, consequences, etc. Based upon this idiosyncrasy Huzzey (2006) elucidates:

People’s behavior, actions and reactions proceed as though they accepted the principle of Sufficient Reason and, secondly, acts are to be called evil, according to Neiman, if they are beyond morally wrong in the sense that their acts threaten our capacity to make sense of our world that is...such acts threaten the intelligibility of our world. (p.18)

This seems to me a very rational explanation of why we qualify something as ‘evil,’ that is, it is not because we observe the wrongness of an act, but rather because we understand that such action is irrational and threatens the meaning of our world. Teehan and Huzzey offer reasonable explanations of why we call something evil. In accordance with both of them, we call something evil or we qualify something as ‘evil’ not because it is evil by itself or naturally evil, but because of our cognitive and mental processes. These theories conceptualize evil not as something to be known, but rather as a concept to be understood with the purpose of surviving and making sense of our life-world. However, this behavior may not justify moral judgments. For instance, the principle of sufficient reason may not be true. Huzzey (2010) writes:

I think that –it just may be that we do act as though we accepted, in some basic way, and are guided by, something like the principle of sufficient reason, so that, in some very general sense, we act as though the principle were true, though it may not in fact be true (p.19).

People assume many beliefs to be true, but maybe such beliefs are not true. For instance, they may believe that killing cows for food is not wrong. People believe this because of their idiosyncrasy. They assume that cows are inferior to humans or that cows do not have a right to live while humans do. Therefore, it would be good to kill them because they help us to survive or at least to be happier, even though this may be false; it is enough to make a moral judgment such as “killing cows for food is good”. Many people would agree with this moral judgment.

This moral judgment is grounded in assumptions and not on objective facts, but there is a ‘sufficient reason’ which is pleasure and maybe survival in a few cases. Though, saying that cows do not have a right to live or that they are inferior to humans are two big claims and a compelling argument is needed for each one. Nevertheless, people assume that such claims are true and it is commonly accepted

that it is correct to kill them for food or even other reasons. Yet, such assumptions may be false and we would not have a sufficient reason to approve such an action. To illustrate my point, let us say that for each cow we kill for food, two innocent people would die somewhere in the world and we would know about it. Would we still have a sufficient reason to kill them? Would we still believe that killing cows for food is good? Whether or not the answer is yes, what does it depend upon? Is it because there is something out there in the world that tells us it would be wrong? Or is it because there is something in our minds that makes us believe that it would be wrong? Maybe our brains evolved to survive and whatever threatens our survival would qualify as evil or perhaps we need to make sense of our world and we make assumptions and accept them as truthful. In this respect Huzzey (2010) states:

The problem of evil results from something conflicting with or challenging the sense and understanding that we have attributed to the world we exist and act in. On Neiman's account the problem of evil is connected to our dependence on the principle of Sufficient Reason in a very general way, evil threatens our belief that the world is intelligible to us since everything either has a cause, or that there is a reason for everything that exists as it does. (p.20)

We see no evil in the world; rather we name things, acts, actions, intentions and consequences evil if they threaten our beliefs about an intelligible world and our survival. Huzzey continues:

To say that something is evil is to say that it is something which clashes with or challenges our belief or perhaps our need to believe that the world makes sense and that something can be done in the face of evil to maintain the understanding we have of the world. (p.20)

In this way evil would be part of a human's understanding of the world, it would be a conceptualization to maintain order and meaning by avoiding its practice. However, all these

explanations of why we consider something to be evil have problems, because defining evil is extremely hard. For instance, Huzzey (2010) writes:

Neiman's account is appealing since it at least provides us with a specification of what is evil and why; evil is something that conceptually devastates, and that it is conceptually devastating is why it is evil. There is however a serious flaw in Neiman's account and this is...while evil may be conceptually devastating, that is not what makes it evil, and not what is evil. (p.40)

The important point here is that Huzzey introduces significant claims against Neiman's theory and this is because, as I mentioned before, defining evil is particularly hard. It is difficult to define why something is evil. Consequently, if philosophers want to claim that God does not exist because 'evil' exists, they would have to explain what they refer to by defining evil and secondly what they mean when they claim that evil exists. They need to explain how evil exists. They need to answer the following questions to make a logical problem of evil: What do they refer to when they use the term evil? And how is the existence of evil inconsistent with the existence of the traditional God? Is evil a natural entity beyond humans or it is a product of a human's intentionality and consciousness? These important questions constitute the subject matter of this thesis.

Chapter II Plantinga and the Case against the “Logical” Problem of Evil

In this chapter I provide two parts of Alvin Plantinga’s argument. These are divided into two sections: Section (A) is about Plantinga’s concept of transworld depravity and his free will defense and section (B) is an analysis of the premises and assumptions exemplified by J.L. Mackie and maintained by many other philosophers in the “logical problem of evil”. Plantinga sets out the logical variables for us in the problem of evil that has been traditionally used to refute the existence of God, because of the existence of evil. He does this as a logician. Consequently, we are given some logical difficulties that Plantinga identifies in analyzing the major premises of the argument. These two sections make the case against the logical problem of evil. This chapter is an examination of his analysis to refute the presumption that an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God is incompatible with the existence of evil.

(SECTION A) OMNIPOTENCE AND CONTRADICTIONS

Many philosophers claim that the existence of evil and the existence of the traditional God are incompatible. Plantinga (1974) states: “Many philosophers believe that the existence of evil constitutes a difficulty for the theist, and many believe that the existence of evil... makes believe in God unreasonable or rationally unacceptable” (p.7). This is interesting, because philosophers and other supporters of this argument are presupposing that the premise; God is all good and all powerful is implicitly contradictory with the premise evil exists. This assumption has traditionally been made without questioning the hidden premises that must be true in order for the argument to succeed. However, most philosophers use the argument as if it was explicitly contradictory to negate the possible existence of the traditional God.

In this chapter I will analyze such assumptions under the scope of Plantinga’s arguments. It is not clear what philosophers refer to when they say that evil exists. The problem is that it is claimed that evil exists, but what in the world does such claim mean? What does such premise refer to? This is the first difficulty for the logical problem of evil, the ambiguity of the term evil. Nevertheless, for the sake

of this argument, let us say that we know what evil is. This is to say that evil exists in the world as many naturalists claim, though they are not able to define it without facing problems. Yet, would the existence of evil be logically incompatible with the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God? Plantinga believes that the existence of the traditional God is logically consistent with the existence of evil; Plantinga (2010) states:

If a person S is free with respect to a given action, then he is free to perform that action and free to refrain; no causal laws and antecedent conditions determine either that he will perform the action, or that he will not. It is within his power, at the time in question, to perform the action, and within his power to refrain...

More broadly if I am free with respect to an action A, then God does not bring it about or cause it to be the case either that I refrain from this action; he neither causes this to be so through the laws he establishes, nor by direct intervention, nor in any other way. For if he brings it about or causes it to be the case that I take A, then I am not free to refrain from A, in which case I am not free with respect to A. Although of course God may cause it to be the case that I am free to respect to A, he cannot cause to be the case either that I freely take or that I freely refrain from this action and this though he is omnipotent. (pp.165, 166,171)

Plantinga elucidates the contradiction that implies claiming that God could have created a world where persons would always freely choose what is correct over what is wrong. Persons would have to be predetermined to always take the right choice. But if they are predetermined to always do what is correct, they cannot possibly be free. Furthermore, in a morally significant world people need to be free to be ethical. They do what is significantly right because it is possible for them to do what is wrong, but if it is impossible to do what is wrong, then their actions are morally meaningless. Hence, it would be

logically impossible to create a world where people “freely” choose what is right without the possibility of choosing otherwise and God’s omnipotence does not entail the ability of actualizing contradictions. In agreement Thomas D. Davis (1979) states:

Today most philosophers and theologians reject the claim that an omnipotent God would have to do contradictory things. This claim, they say, results from a misunderstanding about the nature of contradictions. It supposes that contradictions describe the most difficult kinds of tasks. In truth, contradictions describe nothing at all. In this sense, they are analogous to nonsense statements. (p.91)

The atheist may argue that omnipotence entails the ability of doing what is logically impossible. However, by his own claim the atheist would solve the problem of evil because God would be able to do what is logically impossible so let us say that being all good is incompatible with the existence of evil, but God is able to actualize logical impossibilities so God is all good and yet evil exists, because God's omnipotence which entails logical impossibilities actualizes it. Therefore, for the sake of his own argument, the atheist would have to admit that God's omnipotence does not entail logical impossibilities.

God could have created an amoral world by predetermining the state of affairs, including humans' nature so that humans make only good, but only at the cost of free will. This would mean that humans would have to be like robots programed to do whatever their designers want. Morality would not exist, because humans would not have a choice, they could never do wrong. This world with people that are programed to always choose what is right has no moral significance, no moral meaning. They would not be moral agents; morality would not be in such a "perfect" world. However, God would be responsible for creating slaves that have no choice, but to act in accordance with their fixed nature or an incomplete state of affairs, because of Plantingas' concept of transworld depravity; Plantinga (2010) continues:

But then it follows that there are plenty of contingent states of affairs such that it is not within the power of God to bring about their actuality, or cause them to be actual. He cannot cause it to be the case that I freely refrain from an action A; for if he does so, he causes it to be the case that I refrain from A, in which case I do not do so freely (p.171)

If God had set up the state of affairs in such a way that persons could not do what is wrong, then such persons would be predetermined to do what is right. Consequently, their actions would neither be free nor morally valuable. Plantinga (2010) expresses this problem as follows: "If God brings it about that I refrain from A, then I do not freely refrain from A" (p.172). It would be a contradiction and omnipotence does not involve the ability of doing logical impossibilities. Claiming that God could have conditioned the state of affairs in such strange manner that everyone freely does moral good is self-contradictory, because in the moment that God manipulates the state of affairs so that people always do what is right, freedom is diminished. People would be predetermined and their actions would not be morally significant. After all, they could not have done things different because the state of affairs was already fixed by God.

TRANSWORLD DEPRAVITY

In order to make his case, Plantinga introduces another important concept: "Transworld depravity" in accordance with Plantinga (2010) a person suffers transworld depravity when:

A person P suffers from transworld depravity if and only if for every world W such that P is significantly free in W and P does only what is right in W, there is a state of affairs T and an action A such that

- (1) God strongly actualizes T in W and T includes every state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W, and
- (2) A is morally significant for P in W and

(3) If God had strongly actualized T, P would have gone wrong with respect to A. (p.186)

If the state of affairs is not strongly actualized that is, if God takes something out to avoid 'x' from doing what is wrong then x's actions would not be free and therefore morally meaningless, because without free will, there is not moral behavior. Plantinga (2010) states: "A world containing creatures who are sometimes 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" (p.166). For a world to be morally meaningful must contain free agents and such agents must take meaningful decisions; these are decisions that are free and morally admirable. However, if x cannot choose wrongly, because God already set up the state of affairs in such a way that it is impossible for x to do wrong, then in such a world x is deprived of the possibility of being virtuous, because his actions have no moral value at all, since x could not have done otherwise.

Plantinga (2010) states:

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 leave these creatures free to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so. (p.167)

This is because it would be contradictory and God is not able to do contradictions because contradictions are errors of our minds, but not something that could ever be actualized not even for an omnipotent being, because omnipotence does not entail the ability of doing logical impossibilities. Moreover, in an amoral world where people can only do what is right, but not what is wrong, because the state of affairs has already been fixed by God. They would have to suffer of transworld depravity as Plantinga (2010) states:

What is important about the idea of transworld depravity is that if a person suffers from it, then it was not within God's power to actualize any world in which that person is significantly free but does no wrong---that is, a world in which he produces moral good but no moral evil. But clearly it is possible that everybody suffers from transworld depravity. If this possibility were actual, then God could not have created any of the possible worlds that include the existence and significant freedom of just the persons who do in fact exist, and also contain moral good but not moral evil. (p.186)

If a person suffers from transworld depravity, then the state of affairs is already fixed in such a way that it is impossible to do what is wrong, because God did not strongly actualize the state of affairs so that a person could be significantly free and choose good over evil. This is because it is impossible to be significantly free without the possibility of choosing wrong, because the state of affairs would have to be manipulated and consequently a person would suffer transworld depravity. Plantinga (2010) explains:

If this possibility were actual, then God could not have created any of the possible worlds that include and significant freedom of just the persons who do in fact exist, and also contain moral good but no moral evil. For to do so he would have had to create persons who were significantly free but suffered from transworld depravity. And the price for creating a world in which such persons produce moral good is creating one in which they also produce moral evil. (pp.186,187)

This is a problem for a moral world, because a moral world requires free will, but transworld depravity diminishes free will and morally significant actions; therefore people's choices are not morally significant, they could not be held morally responsible. This is because their choices are limited by a weak state of affairs that forces them into choosing the right action. Consequently, their actions would not have any moral value. Plantinga (2010) elucidates a possible objection; he writes:

Now we might think this settles the question in favor of the free will defender. But the fact is it does not. For suppose all the people that exist in x suffer from transworld depravity; it does not follow that God could not have created a world containing moral good without creating one containing moral evil. God could have created other people, but not containing any of us. And perhaps if he had done that, he could have created a world containing moral good, but not moral evil...Perhaps. But then again, perhaps not. (p.187)

This is an important objection, but as Plantinga explains there is such possibility, but maybe it is not a possibility. However, to deal with this objection Plantinga (2010) introduces this ingenious move, transworld depravity applied to essence, he writes:

An essence E suffers from transworld depravity if and only if for every world W such that E entails the properties is significantly free in W and always does what is right in W , there is a state of affairs T and an action A such that

1. T is the largest state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W ,
2. A is morally significant for E 's instantiation in W , and
3. If God had strongly actualized T , E 's instantiation would have gone wrong with respect to A . (p.188)

This means that it is impossible even for the traditional God to actualize such a world, because it entails a contradiction, if God does not strongly actualize T , then a person is not significantly free with respect to an action A , because the state of affairs would have to be incomplete so that such person could not do wrong with respect to A . To this respect Plantinga (2010) writes:

If an essence E does suffer from transworld depravity, then it was not within God's power to actualize a possible world W such that E contains the properties is significantly

free in W and always does what is right in W. Hence it was not within God's power to create a world in which E's instantiation is significantly free but always does what is right. (p.188)

This is because a person cannot be significantly free and always do right without suffering transworld depravity, Plantinga (2010) continues his argument:

If every creaturely essence suffers from transworld depravity, then it was beyond the power of God himself to create a world containing moral good but not moral evil... it was not within the power of omnipotence to create worlds containing moral good but not moral evil. God could have created a world containing no moral evil only by creating one without significantly free persons. But it is possible that every essence suffers from transworld depravity; so it is possible that God could not have created a world containing moral good, but not moral evil. (p.189)

It is a logical impossibility to create a world where people are significantly free and always do what is right without suffering transworld depravity, because if someone suffers transworld depravity is not significantly free, since the state of affairs would not be strongly actualized. The state of affairs would have to be fixed by God in such a way that people could not possibly do what is wrong, but they would be neither significantly free nor morally responsible.

Plantinga (2010) synthesizes his argument as follows:

The essential point of the Free Will Defense is that the creation of a world containing moral good is a co-operative venture; it requires the uncoerced concurrence of significantly free creatures. But then the actualization of a world W containing moral

good is not up to God alone; it also depends upon what the significantly free creatures of W would do if God created them and placed them in the situations W contains. (p.190)

It is logically impossible to create persons that are significantly free, but limited to always do what is good, without having the option of doing what is wrong. Additionally, it is morally meaningless, because such persons have no option, they cannot do otherwise. Moreover, if God created a world with significantly free people, he cannot violate such freedom arbitrarily to stop moral evil. However, persons who are significantly free and with moral agency are the only ones responsible of their actions.

PLANTINGA'S ANALYSIS OF THE LOGICAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

(SECTION B) QUASI-LOGICAL PREMISES

Let us examine Plantinga's variables in the analysis of the major premises of the "logical problem of evil" Plantinga (1974) states: "Many philosophers believe that the existence of evil constitutes a difficulty for the theist, and many believe that the existence of evil...makes belief in God unreasonable or rationally unacceptable" (p.7). This assumption is grounded in a false belief, which is that good necessarily eradicates evil. Theists claim that God is omnibenevolent and omnipotent. Consequently, atheists believe that because of the existence of evil or suffering in the world, it is irrational to believe in such a God. However, Plantinga analyzes the hidden assumptions in the logical problem of evil. These assumptions make the argument dubious.

Plantinga addresses the apparent difficulty of harmonizing evil with the existence of the traditional God, he writes:

If god is as benevolent as Christian theists claim, he must be just as appalled as we are at all this evil...as Hume puts it: 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? (pp.9-10)

The theists try to answer this problem by giving an explanation of why god may permit evil in the world. Theists rely on God having a reason to allow evil, but they do not know what that reason is or may be. To this point, Plantinga (2010) states: “The theist believes that God has a reason for permitting evil; he does not know what that reason is. But why should that mean that his belief is improper or irrational?” (p.11). This is very important, because it presents a very important question: is it possible that God could have a reason to allow evil in the world? It may be but this would be a theodicy. However, Plantinga’s argument is not a theodicy. Instead it is a metaphysical-logical defense. Nevertheless, Plantinga makes a brief reference to this theodicy to show that atheists assume that their inferences are logical, but they are not. For instance, Plantinga (1974) states:

I believe that there is a connection of some sort between Paul’s deciding to mow the lawn and the complex group of bodily movements involved in so doing. But what connection, exactly? Does his decision cause these bodily movements? If so, how? The decision may take place long before he so much as sets foot on the lawn. Is there an intermediary causal chain extending between the decision and the first of these movements? If so, what sort of events make up this chain?...No one, I suspect, knows the answer to these questions. But does it follow that it is irrational to believe that this decision has something to do with that series of motion? Surely not. (p.11)

Affirming that omnibenevolence requires the total elimination of evil implies that there is not a single state of affairs for an omnibenevolent being namely God to allow it. This assumption problematizes the “logical” argument because there are no grounds to accept such assumption as plausible. There could be at least one possible world where evil would have to be allowed. For instance, in order to create significantly free people and to avoid Plantinga’s concept of transworld depravity evil would have to exist. Therefore, there is not a logical impossibility between the existence of evil and the existence of an all good God. On the other hand, it is logically consistent that a significantly free world

with moral good and without transworld depravity requires the possibility of moral evil. This is a problem for the atheist, because he needs to make an argument to support his hidden assumptions. To this respect, Plantinga (1974) notes:

To make out his case, therefore, the atheologian cannot rest content with asking embarrassing questions to which the theist does not know the answer. He must do more—he might try, for example, to show that it is impossible or anyhow unlikely that God should have a reason for permitting evil. (p.11)

The atheist usually claims that omnibenevolence entails the elimination of all evil, but such an assumption is not necessarily true and it does not follow logically. When the theist talks about God, he refers to someone and not to something. This being, namely God, faces many different issues and knows all the possible outcomes of every possible world. Consequently, he may have at least one possible reason that justifies allowing evil, for instance, to avoid transworld depravity and create significantly free people. This possibility along with the hidden assumptions that Plantinga examines as a logician make the inference that an omnibenevolent and omnipotent God does not exist, because of the existence of evil flawed. On the other hand, if the traditional God was a thing that has no purposes and no intelligence, it would be irrational to believe that such a God has a reason to allow evil. However, this is not the case or at least the traditional God that faces the problem of evil.

The atheist's argument that because evil exists the traditional God does not rests upon an assumption. This assumption is that the characteristics of the traditional God automatically and necessarily would eliminate all evil. However, the problem is that such an assumption does not logically follow from the premises. Therefore, it makes the argument weak.

In his article "Evil and Omnipotence" J. L. Mackie (1955) makes the following claim:

I think however, that a more telling criticism can be made by way of the traditional problem of evil. Here it can be shown, not that religious beliefs lack rational support, but that they are positively irrational, that the several parts of the essential theological doctrine are inconsistent with one another...He must now be prepared to believe, not merely what cannot be proved, but what can be disproved from other beliefs that he also holds. (pp.200, 201)

As I explained before, there is no inconsistency between the existence of evil and the traditional concept of God. This is because there is neither an explicit contradiction nor an implicit inconsistency between the concept of the existence of the traditional God and the existence of evil. Mackie (1955) exemplifies the underlying assumptions that many philosophers have made to argue for the incompatibility of the traditional God and evil when, he writes:

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', 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 evil exist are incompatible. (p.201)

These quasi-logical assumptions as Mackie calls them are not necessarily true. The first one that all good eliminates all evil is problematic, because there are circumstances where this is not the case as Plantinga creatively shows. Plantinga (1974) begins his logical analysis by referring to Mackie's "quasi-logical" premises; he states:

Here Mackie refers to additional premises”; he also calls them “additional principles” and “quasi-logical rules”; he says we need them to show the contradiction. What he means, I think, is that to get a formally contradictory set we must add some more propositions to set A; and if we aim to show that set A is implicitly contradictory, these propositions must be necessary truths—“quasi-logical rules” as Mackie calls them . The two additional principles he suggest are: (p.17)

(19) A good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can

And

(20) There are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do (p.17)

Plantinga elucidates a very important factor, namely, that these “quasi-logical” assumptions must be necessarily true in order to make the contradiction implicit. But is it the case that these assumptions are necessarily true? Of course not, and therefore there is no implicit contradiction. This is because (19) is not necessarily true and neither is (20) since there is a limit to what an omnipotent being can do: God cannot do logical impossibilities. It is important to remember “set A” as Plantinga (1974) sets it up:

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

Plantinga (1974) criticizes the suppose inconsistency of the premises in set “A” he writes:

Call this set A; the claim is that A is an inconsistent set. But what is it for a set to be inconsistent or contradictory? ...we might say that a set of propositions is explicitly contradictory 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.

(p.13)

This is because explicit contradictions are very easy to identify. For instance: “I am a soldier and I am not a soldier” or my “pencil is blue and it is not blue” This is a problem for Mackie and all, his supporters, since they have to show that there is an implicit contradiction for “set A.” But as Plantinga shows, there is no such implicit contradiction, Plantinga (1974) continues:

If Mackie means to show that set A is implicitly contradictory, then he must hold that (19) and (20) are not merely true but necessarily true, but are they? What about (20) first? What does it mean to say that a being is omnipotent? That he is all powerful, or almighty, presumably. But are there no limits at all to the power of such being? Could he create square circles, for example, or married bachelors? Most theologians and theistic philosophers, who hold that God is omnipotent, do not hold that he can create round squares or bring it about that he both exists and does not exist. These theologians and philosophers may hold that there are no nonlogical limits to what an omnipotent being can do. (p.17)

Plantinga affirms that (19) and (20) must be necessarily true, because in order to show that the existence of evil and the existence of God are incompatible, there must not be a single state of affairs where (19) and (20) are not true. Otherwise, we would have at least one possible world where God and evil would not be logically incompatible.

Another important point that Plantinga considers is that omnipotence does not entail the ability of actualizing logical inconsistencies. There are two important points to make clear. First of all, contradictions are just mistakes of our understanding, but they do not refer to anything in the real world,

which is evident by common sense. For instance, a tree cannot be nonexistent and existent at the same time, likewise, it is inconsistent to say that God exists and does not exist at the same time, because it is a contradiction, an absurdity and to claim that God is not omnipotent because he cannot actualize absurdities would be irrational. Consequently, he would still be omnipotent, because omnipotence refers only to what is logically possible. Secondly, if we say that omnipotence entails the ability of actualizing contradictions, then, the problem of evil would be automatically solved, because even if the existence of an omnibenevolent God was incompatible with the existence of evil, the omnipotence of God with this unlikely ability of actualizing logical impossibilities would actualize such a contradiction. Plantinga (1974) states:

Some theists, on the other hand...have apparently thought that God's power is unlimited even by the laws of logic. For these theists the question whether set A is contradictory will not be of much interest. As theists they believe (1) and (2), and they also presumably, believe (3). But they remain undisturbed by the claim that (1), (2), and (3) are jointly inconsistent, because as they say, God can do what is logically impossible. (p.17)

Therefore, the atheist and theist must agree upon the limitation of omnipotence, which is logic. Otherwise, there would be neither a problem of evil nor a philosophical argument, because the problem of evil would be solved by a God capable of actualizing logical impossibilities. Plantinga (1974) resumes: "What the theist typically means when he says that God is omnipotent is not that there are no limits to God's power, but at most that there are no nonlogical limits to what he can do" (p.18). Therefore, premise (20) is true only in this sense that God is able to do everything, but within the limits of logic. Plantinga (1974) continues his analysis of premise (19) when he writes: "It is not a necessary truth or even a truth that every good thing eliminates every evil it knows about and can eliminate" (p.19). Mackie's "quasi-logical premise" is dubious because there are circumstances where a good thing

does not eliminate an evil thing. Plantinga offers many counter examples to Mackie's claim that every good thing eliminates every evil as long as it can, which is assumption (19). For example Plantinga (1974) proposes the following:

Paul unwisely goes for a drive on a wintry day and runs out of gas on a deserted road. The temperature dips to 10, and a miserably cold wind comes up. You are sitting comfortably at home (twenty five miles from Paul)... your car is in the garage; in the trunk there is the full five-gallon can of gasoline you always keep for emergencies. Paul's discomfort and danger are certainly an evil, and one which you could eliminate. You don't do so. But presumably you don't thereby forfeit your claim of being a "good thing"---you simply didn't know of Paul's plight. And so (19) does not appear to be necessary. (p.18)

This counter example shows that (19) is not necessarily true, because the good does not eliminate what is evil automatically.

Plantinga (1974) writes:

And so (19) does not appear to be necessary. It says that every good thing has a certain property—the property of eliminating every evil that it can. And if the case I described is possible...then (19) is by no means necessarily true. (p.18)

A "good thing" as Mackie calls it, does not have a property of eliminating evil automatically by its mere existence. However, there are possible objections, as Plantinga (1974) states:

Mackie could sensibly claim that if you didn't know about Paul's plight, then in fact you were not, at the time in question, able to eliminate the evil in question; and perhaps he'd be right. In any event he could revise (19). (p.18)

This objection sounds reasonable, since we cannot solve what we do not know about, but Mackie just made a general ‘quasi-logical’ premise without thinking much about it. Nevertheless, many philosophers that support this argument to refute the existence of God do not even bother doing Mackie’s “quasi-logical” premises and they just assume the contradiction dogmatically. However, Plantinga (1974) improves Mackie’s assumption, he gives us a series of improve versions:

(19a)Every good thing always eliminates every evil that it knows about and can eliminate

But is (19a) necessary? Hardly. Suppose you know that Paul is manrooned as in the previous example, and you also know another friend is similarly manrooned fifty miles in the opposite direction. Suppose, furthermore, that while you can rescue one or the other, you simply can’t rescue both. Then each of the two evils is such that it is within your power to eliminate it; and you know about them both.

But you can’t eliminate both...so the fact that you don’t doesn’t mean that you are not a good person. Therefore (19a) is false. (p.19)

This counter example shows that being good does not eliminates evil by itself, because there are many other factors to be considered, such as one’s physical limitations. Plantinga (1974) goes further and improves Mackie’s “quasi-logical premise” even more, when he writes:

(19b) A good being eliminates every evil E that it knows about and that it can eliminate without either bringing about a greater evil or eliminating a good state of affairs that outweighs E.

It is then obviously possible that a person finds himself in a situation where he could properly eliminate an evil E and could also properly eliminate another evil E’ but couldn’t properly eliminate them both... So neither (19a) nor (19b) is necessarily true. (pp.20-21).

For instance, two people are about to fall off the edge of a bridge, and person ‘x’ can only save one, does this mean that person x is not good? No, it just means that it was not possible for him to save

them both. However, this brings up a possible objection, which is that God is omnipotent and saving them both is not a logical impossibility and thus this claim is correct, because he can save them both. However, as stated by Plantinga (1974) this is not the point. He writes:

You may be tempted to reply that the sort of counter examples offered...are irrelevant to the case of a being who, like God is both omnipotent and omniscient. That is, you may think that if an omnipotent and omniscient being is able to eliminate each of two evils, it follows that he can eliminate them both. Perhaps this is so; but it is not strictly to the point. The fact is the counterexamples show that (19a) and (19b) are not necessarily true and hence can't be used to show that set A is implicitly inconsistent. (p.21)

Plantinga's last words are very important, because this logical analysis destroys the supposedly logical problem of evil. Since, without this assumption there is not an implicit inconsistency and if there is not an implicit inconsistency, there is not a "logical problem of evil."

Plantinga (1974) goes even further and improves Mackie's 'quasi logical premise' even more, when he writes:

(19c)An omnipotent and omniscient good being eliminates every evil that it can properly eliminate.

And suppose, for purposes of argument, we concede the necessary truth of (19c).Will it serve Mackie's purposes? Not obviously. For we don't get a set that is formally contradictory by adding (20) and (19c) to set A. This set (call it A') contains the following six members:

- (1)God is omnipotent
- (2)God is wholly good
- (2')God is omniscient
- (3) Evil exists

(19c) An omnipotent and omniscient good being eliminates every evil that it can properly eliminate and

(20) There are no nonlogical limits to what an omnipotent being can do. (p.21)

Even in this improved version of the “logical problem of evil” there is not an explicit contradiction, not even by granting the necessity of (19c) as Plantinga (1974) states:

Now if A' were formally contradictory, then from any five of its members we could deduce the denial of the sixth by the laws of ordinary logic. That is, any five would formally entail the denial of the sixth...But they don't; what they formally entail is not that there is no evil at all but only that there is no evil that God can properly eliminate so (19c) doesn't really help either---not because it is not necessarily true but because its addition [with (20)] to set A does not yield a formally contradictory set.” (pp.20-21)

Logicians cannot deduce a formal contradiction here and not even by accepting the necessity of Mackie's assumption in a much improved version of his “quasi logical premises”. This fact makes the classic syllogism against the possible existence of God problematic, because the supposed contradiction that it entails is groundless. This means that the “Logical problem of evil” is not so logical after all and that it rests upon certain assumptions that when profoundly examined are torn apart. Therefore evil cannot be used in a syllogism to disprove the existence of God without being problematic, because of the assumptions that such a syllogism would require to be implicitly contradictory. This is very important and I believe is the value of this analysis.

This calls into question how many syllogisms have been used in this same way. Philosophers and people in general have been deceived by an apparently logical contradiction in a fallacious syllogism. Finally, Plantinga (1974) goes much further in improving Mackie's and his followers' assumptions, when he grants them a much stronger ‘quasi-logical assumption’ but not even this one is necessarily

true. He writes: "If God is omniscient and omnipotent, then he can properly eliminate every evil state of affairs... Is this proposition necessarily true? No." (p.22) Plantinga's refutation is ingenious and logically complex and it is enough to make this premise dubious. He elucidates:

Well, suppose that E is included in some good state of affairs that outweighs it. That is, suppose there is some good state of affairs G so related to E that it is impossible that G obtain or be actual and E fail to obtain... Now suppose that some good state of affairs G includes and evil state of affairs E that it outweighs. Then not even an omnipotent being could eliminate E without eliminating G. (p.22)

While this argument may be subject to some other objections and criticisms, Plantinga's point is plausible enough to refute the traditional view that the mere existence of evil is logically inconsistent with an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God.

THE EVIDENTIAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

This problem claims that the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God is highly unlikely because of the great amount of evil in the world. However, this argument is less ambitious than the "logical problem of evil" because the former wants to show that God's existence is impossible and the latter just tries to show that it is unlikely. However, the theist needs the possibility of God's existence and not the probability. For instance, it is highly unprovable to win the jack pock; actually the possibility is 1/175,000,000. Yet many people have won it over the years, because of the possibility of winning it. Therefore, this evidential problem of evil is irrelevant, because it is not against the possibility of God's existence, rather it claims that God's existence is unlikely. However, winning the lottery is highly unlikely, yet it happens, because it is possible. Plantinga (1974) writes:

Now perhaps the atheologian could maintain that at any rate God could have created a world containing less moral evil than the actual world contains. But is this really obvious? It is obvious, but, considered by itself it is also irrelevant. God could have created a world with no moral evil just by creating no significantly free creatures. A more

relevant question is this: was it within God's power to create a world that contained a better mixture of moral good and evil than Kronos---one. Let's say, that contained as much moral good but less moral evil? And here the answer is not obvious at all. (p.55)

This means that it could be impossible for God to create such a world if creating such a world would have to entail a contradiction. This is because God cannot do contradictions, since contradictions are meaningless and do not refer to anything in the universe. Plantinga (1974) argues that it would be impossible, because it would require transworld depravity, he writes:

More generally, it's possible that every world containing as much moral good as the actual world, but less moral evil, resembles W' in that God could not have created it. For it is possible that

(37) For every world W containing as much moral good as Kronos, but less moral evil, there is at least one essence E, an action A, and a maximal world segment S' such that

(1) E contains the properties: is free with respect to A in W and goes right with respect to A in W

(2) S' is included in W and includes E's being instantiated but includes neither E's instantiation's refraining from A

And

(4) If S' were actual E's instantiation would have gone wrong with respect to A. (p.56)

It is important to remember that Plantinga does not claim that his arguments are true, he only claims that they are possible and this is what the theists need "possibility" in this respect Plantinga (1974) writes: "(37) is possible; if it is true, then it wasn't within the power of God to create a world containing as much moral good as this one but less moral evil" (p.57) This possibility improves the likelihood of God's existence against the amount of evil in the world. However, many people and philosophers may argue that the evidential problem of evil remains strong against the probability of God's existence. However, it fails to eliminate the possibility of the existence of God and this is all we need to claim that it is possible that God exists and maybe Plantinga's argument is a good objection to the evidential problem of evil, but even if it was not,

the evidential problem of evil is weak, because many unprovable things happen all the time such as winning the jack pock, being killed by a meteorite, and even the beginning of life was highly unlikely. However, all this have happened so possibility has defeated probability many times. Therefore, even if we grant this unlikelihood of God's existence, because of "the evidential problem of evil" God may still exist, because it would still be possible and this is all the theists need.

CONCLUSION

I believe that Plantinga's argument succeeds at the very least in making the problem of evil extremely dubious, because there is no inconsistency neither explicitly nor implicitly among the premises of set 'A' as Plantinga label it. Moreover, whoever supports this "Logical Problem of Evil" needs to make his claim much more convincing by making a very elaborate argument that shows that there is at the very least an implicit contradiction, but this seems a very hard task to do, since to show that these 'quasi-logical premises' (as Mackie name them) are necessarily true could be impossible. Plantinga's (1974) conclusion is also worth noticing. He concludes:

Our discussion thus far shows at the very least that it is not easy matter to find necessarily true propositions that yield a formally contradictory set when added to set A. One wonders, therefore, why the many atheologians who confidently assert that this set is contradictory make no attempt whatever to show that it is. For the most part they are content just to assert that there is a contradiction here. Even Mackie, who sees that some "additional premises" or "quasi-logical rules" are needed, makes scarcely a beginning towards finding some additional premises that are necessarily true and that together with the members of set A formally entails an explicit contradiction. (p.24)

Yet, this necessity of Mackie's "quasi-logical premises" would be required to avoid a possible world in which such quasi-logical premises were not true, since to disprove the plausibility of the

possible existence of God the logical inconsistency must be true in every possible world. However the claim that there is an implicit contradiction for set 'A' seems to be totally false even in this world, which is the actual world and hence set 'A' fails to prove as implausible the possible existence of an omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient God.

Preface for Module II

The purpose of this module is to offer an unorthodox approach to difficult and problematic concepts such as God, evil, anthropomorphism, morality. This is done with the objective of motivating creative, critical and inquisitive thought for future generations. For instance, in chapter three I argue that evil is a product of human consciousness and intentionality. Therefore, I totally reject the notion of “natural evils” because they have no consciousness and/or intentionality and I claim that there is only moral evil. This means that I negate evil as a synonym of suffering, because suffering alone may even be good in certain contexts. For instance a vaccine that is given to a child causes suffering, but is not evil. On the other hand, I agree with Levinas’s concept of “evil” as a human experience that is caused by moral agents with consciousness and intentionality and causes unnecessary suffering. Therefore, under this phenomenological approach ‘evil’ must contain: Agency, intentionality, consciousness, and meaningless suffering. Consequently, only moral agents are meaningfully categorized as evil. In contrast, natural disasters and illnesses are not significantly called evil, because they lack these prior elements. It would be inappropriate to call an earthquake evil and totally meaningless, because it can be neither avoided nor persecuted (Huzzey, 2006). The objective of chapter four is to inquire why we have a problem of “evil” and why do we have this traditional concept of God as omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient. Additionally, it is important to understand why we have developed moral thought. These issues prompt me to inquire into two sciences evolutionary ethics and evolutionary psychology to investigate why we believe that there are good and evil actions, persons or phenomena. Furthermore, I criticize anthropomorphism under Rosenzweig’s paradigm and try to explain why we have these anthropomorphic views about God. Finally, it is argue that God is the metaphysical and that maybe the problem of evil is meaningless, because we do not know anything about God and maybe the concepts of good and evil have been invented to survive in a hostile world. They would be important and practical tools to survive and live in peace, but they would still be a “product” of men kind and not something objectively independent of humans.

Module II: Chapter III The Phenomenology of Evil

This chapter provides a phenomenological analysis of evil and the main thesis that is defended is that there is no evil without intentionality. Consequently, there are no such things as the so called “natural evils”, since they have no intentionality. From this perspective evil originates only from human beings, since only humans act with intentionality. For instance, an earthquake is not some thing that is ‘evil’ it is just a natural phenomenon, it has no intentionality. My own intention in this chapter is to inquire into what the tradition of phenomenology can provide us for responding to the problem of evil. I begin with Hannah Arendt’s view that intentionality is not fundamental to determine whether an action is evil as an objection to my thesis and I refute it. My fundamental claim is that evil is done when our intentionality is directed with a bad will to cause unnecessary harm. This directedness has the possibility of dehumanizing others or even oneself and this possibility happens because of unawareness of the will to do evil. This claim is in agreement with Arendt’s views concerning the need for profound thought to avoid evil. This perspective sees evil as a product of intentionality and therefore there is no evil without humans as such. Humans are responsible for their own evil and not God. Evil is not a positive reality and is not something natural at all or something beyond humans. Such metaphysical ideas are totally implausible. It is however, a consequence of our intentionality with a bad will to cause unnecessary harm, and consequently there is only moral evil.

But is intention really needed to do an evil act? Arendt (1964) states:

Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking for his personal advancement
Eichmann had no motives at all... He merely, to put the matter colloquially, never
realized what he was doing... He was not stupid; it was sheer

thoughtlessness...that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals.

(pp. 287-288)

These statements by Arendt express her view of evil as something that does not require intentionality; apparently, she believed that evil was caused mainly by lacking reflective thinking. I question her assumption that evil does not require intentionality. In this regard,

Alexandria Pallas (2007) analyses Arendt's position:

Arendt's true purpose in attempting to deny intention as a valid category for consideration is to eliminate any possible avoidance of responsibility or alleviation of guilt that can be the result of arguments from intention, which she believes can be relativized. In doing so, she operates within an assumption that, while we cannot know the internal state of intention under which a person acted, we can still ascribe intentionality to a person's actions. Otherwise she could never justify her support for Eichmann's execution. (p.132)

Therefore, it appears that Arendt was aware of the role of intentionality on evil, but had to remain ambiguous about it because of her overriding concerns about justice. Arendt's example illustrates how even philosophers had diminished the importance of intentionality. Therefore, it is not unusual for most people to have strange views about evil. For instance, many persons believe that there are evil acts in themselves. This claim is problematic. For example, let us suppose that a robot is driving a car and kills a person. Is this robot evil? Or, was its action evil in itself? If it is answered that the robot was not evil because it is not human and thus its act has no intentionality, then how could such an "unintentional action" possibly be evil? And if the act is evil in itself then it logically follows that the robot that did the action is evil because it is the act of the robot and intentionality does not count, under such a view. But how could the act be evil in itself and be the act of an innocent robot? The robot could not possibly be held accountable because the robot acts without intentionality. The point is to show that

it is meaningless to call actions evil in themselves without agency because the act is the act of an agent. However, it is traditionally accepted that the intention of the agent is not required in order for an act to be considered evil. Nevertheless, upon reflective thinking we notice that such traditional assumptions are fail. For example, a little three-month old baby hits me on the face with a spoon. Can I accuse the baby of being evil? Or, maybe I should argue that the act of hitting me was evil in itself? My point here is that whoever answers yes to either of these questions would face serious trouble justifying his/her affirmation. For instance, she would have to explain how the baby is evil without the intention of hurting me and how the baby's action is evil in itself, but yet the baby remains good. As far as I know, until now nobody has been able to make a compelling argument to support these neo-platonic affirmations. Such a metaphysical view of evil as something beyond humans is problematic because it seems not to have any grounds at all. Evil does not spread like a fungus, as Pallas observes (2007):

In the famous letter to Scholem, Arendt compares evil to a fungus: "Evil possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension. It spreads like a fungus on the surface"... The fungus metaphor signals evil which can be comprehended. It also shows an object in which intention plays no role. (p.123)

The problem with Arendt's view is that it rests on the assumption that it is possible to have conscious activity without intentionality, which is problematic. Intentionality brings responsibility, because we have the possibility of directing it in a different manner and with a good purpose, other than causing unnecessary harm. Pallas (2007) refutes Arendt's claim that evil does not require intentionality as follows:

For if she is right about the banality of evil as a choice to live under totalitarianism, in which one "allows oneself" to be conditioned by the reversal of norms involved in

totalitarianism, then she seems to locate intentionality within the choice of allowing oneself to be conditioned. (p.132)

Therefore, intentionality would play a major role even in this case. For instance, if I choose to allow myself to be mutilated, I still would be responsible for the consequences of such a choice. In the same way, if I choose to follow a law or regimen, I would still be responsible for my decision and all the obligations that it entails for me. Moreover, I am certain that by choosing to adhere to a totalitarian government or any government, our intentionality has already been directed to everything that such a choice would require of us. Arendt may have argued that we make such choices because of our lack of thinking. But it could also be said that, in such a case, we would be directing our intentionality towards not thinking. Therefore, we would be responsible for our actions, because of such an intention. For instance, if I have the intention of being a soldier, that would embrace the intention of going to war. Moreover, if I have the intention of going to war, I must be conscious of my intention to kill. Consequently, I would be responsible for killing, maybe not legally, but morally. Therefore, an intention towards something may involve a hidden or implicit intention towards something else.

Pallas (2007) noticed this and she continues her refutation of Arendt's diminishment of intentionality, when she writes:

What Arendt seems to miss in her own statement is that she herself claims Eichmann actively supported a policy of mass murder--- that he was still making choices and acting out of his capacity to choose freely as an active agent. (p.134)

In furthering her critique, Pallas refers to Arendt's following words:

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that it was nothing more than misfortune that made you a willing instrument in the organization of mass murder; there still remains the

fact that you have carried out and therefore, actively supported a policy of mass murder.

(Arendt, 1964, p.279)

Here, it seems that Arendt contradicts herself, by saying that Eichmann actively participated in activities that cause mass murder and that the important thing is what he did, but then why does she give so much importance to Eichmann's intention of actively supporting a policy of mass murder? She seems to realize without actually noticing the tremendous importance of intention to qualify an act as evil. She continues:

And just as you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of other nations...we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to want to share the earth with you. (p.279)

Here, she refers again to Eichmann's intentions of not wanting to "share the earth with" others, which in this case means killing. The point is that Eichmann had an intention and such intention was totally evil. He knew that his intentional actions would ultimately lead to mass murder. This means that his hidden intention was to help accomplish such a horrifying goal. Hence, his intentionality played an essential role. Therefore, we can say that intentionality is essential to evaluate an action as evil and that there is no evil without intentionality. First we need to understand and to answer the following question: what is intentionality in phenomenology? And then we will grasp a better understanding of its role in evil.

HUSSERL'S INTENTIONALITY

"Husserl...does recognize that intentionality is the key to unlock the whole domain of pure consciousness. Every conscious lived experience intends something" (Moran, Dermot, and Mooney, 2002, p.61). Intentionality is essential to direct ourselves in life because it is what makes us free. I mean, we could not decide anything without it and we would simply be predetermined. Most likely we would

have to be like robots, since robots lack intentionality that are not aware of anything. They are just machines without any intentionality. The important question here is to ask how can we know the mysteries of our consciousness? This would have to be done by understanding intentionality, which is essential awareness, and this is why it is the key to understanding our consciousness. Edmund Husserl claims that in a relationship of the object to be experienced and the subject who experiences it, we have a peculiar and complicated experience. He writes: “There are not two things present in experience, we do not experience the object and beside it the intentional experience directed upon it... only one thing is present, the intentional experience, whose essential descriptive character is the intention in question.” (Moran et al, 2002, p.82). Therefore, when experiencing an object only our intention is experienced, not the object. This means that we cannot experience the object without intentionality, and that intentionality entails experience. Therefore, I would say that we cannot have one without the other. That means that when we experience an object, we are having an intentional act towards it. Husserl states:

If this experience is present then, *eo ipso* and through its own essence, the intentional “relation” is achieved, and an object is intentionally present... an experience may be present in consciousness together with its intention although its object does not exist at all. (Moran et al, 2002, p.82)

This refers to thoughts, since we can think about something that may not exist at all, yet we can direct our intentionality towards it. For instance, I can think of “a God of computers” and I can create this God in my mind, picture it and direct my intention towards it even though such a God does not exist.

Husserl’s definition of intentionality makes difficult to believe Arendt’s claims about intentionality as not necessarily playing a big role on understanding evil. Because, if every conscious experience has an intention as mentioned by Husserl, then it would be really hard to believe Arendt’s

claims about intentionality since every person directs his/her intentionality towards something as long as such person is conscious. If this Husserlian perspective is true, then Eichmann was directing his intentionality towards something as long as he was conscious. Therefore, he deliberately and intentionally participated in behaviors that he knew would bring the death of millions. He could have directed his intentionality towards different objectives, but he did not, which made him totally responsible. Consequently, what made him responsible were not the acts by themselves, but his bad intentions. Eichmann's consciousness about his intentionality made him totally responsible. Moreover, without such intentionality, which entails consciousness aligned with action, Eichmann would not be responsible for his actions because he would not have been acting consciously and thus not directing his intentionality. Eichmann would have been innocent just like the little baby that hits me with his spoon leading us to ask why the baby is innocent. He is innocent because he has no intention of hurting me, and therefore is not conscious of what he does. Also, he does not direct his intentionality towards other actions that he knows will hurt me. Consequently, he cannot be held responsible. However, some philosophers may argue that the nature of the act is not the same, since hitting someone with a spoon is not the same as killing millions. Nevertheless, let us say for the sake of argument that this little baby pushes a button that fires a nuclear arsenal and kills millions. He kills even more people than Eichmann did so how could we hold the baby responsible for the 'nature' of the act itself? We could not, because he had no intentionality of doing such killing. Therefore, he was not conscious of his action. Consequently, neither the baby nor the act would be evil, as mentioned before, and as far as I know, there is no compelling argument to make the claim that evil is a metaphysical entity that exists somehow beyond human agency and intentionality. In support of this position, Mackie presents the argument from queerness and points out that such an argument has two strong parts:

This has two parts, one metaphysical, the other epistemological, if there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relationships of a very strange sort,

utterly different from anything else in the universe...if we were aware of them, it would have to be by some special faculty of moral perception of intuition, utterly different from our ordinary ways of knowing everything else. (Fisher & Kirchin, 2006 p.77)

Objective values independent of human beings should be perceivable, like all the other physical properties, if they were natural, but they are not perceivable by our senses and since they are neither observable, nor tangible. It is not plausible to believe that objective values exist as an independent reality beyond humans.

HEIDEGGER'S UNDERSTANDING OF HUSSERL'S INTENTIONALITY

Martin Heidegger asked himself; "Whence and how is it determined what must be experienced as the things themselves in accordance with the principle of phenomenology? Is it consciousness and its objectivity or is it the being of beings in its unconcealedness and concealment?" (Moran and Mooney, 2002, p.254) Even though I do not have the answer, and perhaps no one else does the important point here is that with this question Heidegger expands Husserl's epistemological approach with an ontological approach. In this respect Heidegger, states: "Thus I was brought to the path of the question of being, illuminated by the phenomenological attitude, again made uneasy in a different way than previously by the questions prompted by Brentano's dissertation." (Moran et al, 2002, p.254) Therefore, Heidegger was motivated not only by Husserl's views but also by Husserl's teacher, Brentano and so he expands their theories. For instance, talking about intentionality, Heidegger writes: "We will try to show that intentionality is a structure of lived experiences as such and not coordination relative to other realities, something added to the experiences taken as psychic states" (Moran et al, 2002, p.258). Therefore, for Heidegger intentionality is not just a state of mind; it goes beyond that as a complicated assembly of experiences. This is why Heidegger disagrees with the traditional view that intentionality is just psychological perception. He writes:

The psychic event enters into a relationship with something else, outside of it. But in itself it is not necessary for this relationship to occur, since this perception can be an illusion, a hallucination; it is a psychological fact that psychic processes occur in which something is perceived...which does not even exist...in other words, intentionality, directing itself toward something, is not a necessary mark of every perception. (Moran et al, 2002, p.259)

This claim is very important, because traditionally the opposite was accepted and postulated for philosophers, namely, that we could perceive something intentionally even if it was an illusion. In other words, I believe Husserl would disagree with Heidegger at this point, because he believed that we could direct our intentionality even to a thought and it does not matter whether such thought is referring to something real, at least for him. This is an important point that Heidegger made and it is supported by empirical evidence, at least to a degree, because there are many people with problems of hallucinations. This brings up the related issue of the 'real-world' consequences of hallucinations and mental objects and the effects that they have on our actions in the world. What if I hallucinate that there is shade from a tree, lie in this shade, and then get sunburnt. Such a hallucination would hurt me, very much. These are very important points about our consciousness and intentionality. Heidegger states:

As fundamental as intentionality is, it also seems empty at first glance. We are simply saying that representing is the representing of something, judging is judging about something, and the like. It is hard to see just how a science is to be made possible from such structures. (Moran et al, 2002, p.264)

This difficulty leads Heidegger to elucidate the problem in this way:

By intentionality we do not mean an objective relation which occasionally and subsequently takes place between a physical thing and a psychic process, but the structure of comportment as comporting to, directing itself toward (p.265).

This understanding is critical to avoid reducing the concept of intentionality to merely a relationship of a physical subject and a physical object and expands it as a more complicated cognitive process. Heidegger notes that “The perceived is an environmental thing, but it is also a natural thing” (Moran et al, 2002, p.265). This point is important because it makes intentionality dialectical, that is, it entails more than one process and is not reductive. He gives us an example of a chair as an environmental thing and then as a natural thing that may be only wood. Here Heidegger deepens Husserl’s ideas about intentionality when he says:

The being-perceived of the chair is not something which belongs to the chair as chair, for a stone or house or tree or the like can also be perceived. Being perceived and the structure of preciseness consequently belong to perceiving as such, to intentionality. (p.267)

Intentionality is an act of active consciousness toward the perceived object that could be understood in multiple ways but always as determining our relationships to the object. Heidegger says that, “Accordingly, we can distinguish along the following lines: *the entity itself*; the environmental thing, the natural thing, or the thingness; and the entity in the manner of its being intended; its being-perceived” (p.267). It is clear to me that he was already focusing on the different ways of being of the object as an entity being-in-the-world and the different ways that intentionality functions.

INTENTIONALITY AND ARENDT ON EVIL

Heidegger inquires into the question of being, basically what does it mean to be? “Heidegger...sees human’s existence as essentially taking place in time, spread out between past and

future and radically limited by death, being must be understood in terms of time” (Moran et al, 2002, p.82). We are as long as we are alive; being in this world means to be alive, to be able to experience it. This is why, in accordance with Moran et al (2002) “Heidegger’s existential analytic of Dasein reveals that the ultimate context of all understanding and action is the world. Dasein is essentially being-in-the world. We are thrust into a world, and are involved in a kind of caring involvement with things” (Moran et al, 2002, p.247). Here is where we see Husserl’s influence on Heidegger but also Heidegger’s difference, because while Heidegger needs Husserl’s intentionality and categorial intuition to make his reasoning about being work, he goes further by analyzing what it means to appear in the world, or for something to show itself for perception: “The term intuition corresponds in its meaning to...seen in the broad sense of the word. Intuition means: simple apprehension of what is itself bodily found just as it shows itself” (p.273). The question here would be how does anything at all show itself? All acts of perception have to take into account the subjectivity of the one who perceives, and this perception is different from anyone else’s perception. Under this approach what could we say is objectively evil? How would it objectively show itself? If evil were something objective beyond humans, a metaphysical reality, how would it reveal or show its way of being? If evil spreads as a “fungus” how can we perceive it? We simply cannot, because evil is not a being in the world and therefore has no intentionality by itself. It cannot spread as a fungus or anything else as Arendt claims. Moreover, Actions are not evil in themselves because they do not have a ‘being’ or entity called evil, they are not of an “evil nature” Therefore, evil is not something in the world or any kind of entity independent of humans’ intentionality. Consequently, actions or events are neither evil nor good. Only the people who commit such actions may be evaluated as evil or good, because of their intentionality. This intentionality involves how they make use of their being in this world, by directing their intentionality towards the object of their free will.

Having such perception gives us consciousness of what is around us and at the same time provides us with a sense of being. I do not believe that being would be meaningful without being conscious, not to say without intentionality. This is very important, when considering the phenomenology of evil, because to avoid evil we must direct our intentionality towards awareness of what is happening in the world. Otherwise we would be guilty of not directing our intentionality appropriately to avoid evil and therefore we would be responsible for it, at least to a certain degree. For instance, when we do not have knowledge of what may happen and we take intentional actions that may lead to hurting someone. For example, when a driver neglects following traffic signs and he runs over someone. He does not have the intentionality of running over someone and his action is not evil. However, he would still be held responsible of not directing his intentionality towards awareness, meaning the appropriate awareness of driving a car. He is not guilty of being evil or committing an evil act by itself, he is guilty of intentionally not being a responsible driver. Yet, intentionality still plays a crucial role. In contrast, it would be different when the same driver observes every single rule, yet unintentionally runs over someone. He would not be held responsible for anything and would be immediately free (at least as soon as everything clears up) because his intentionality was directed toward awareness. In agreement Alexandria Pallas (2007) mentions that Arendt's brilliant insight was to realize the importance of awareness, she writes:

The banality of evil rides on the surface of things because it never reaches the level of thinking and the kind of reflective awareness and depth of judgment that thinking makes possible. It is a central insight within Arendt's work as well as her experience at Eichmann's trial that a critical of the Holocaust, one which may the banality of evil possible, was the failure of individuals to engage in the process of thinking. (p.136)

However, the importance of intentionality is crucial here as in the examples already established. The people involved in this holocaust decided not to direct their intentionality towards reflective

thinking as in the case of the irresponsible driver, but with greater knowledge (in some cases, such as in Eichmann's case) and therefore, with the intentionality towards harming people. We need to remember that for Husserl's consciousness is always intentional towards something. Moreover, when I am conscious of something, I am actually participating in an activity. Heidegger takes this conceptualization and uses it to propose what being means. Moreover, for Heidegger human's existence is correlated with the physical world.

Heidegger would consider important to understand how a being such a bat directs his/her intentionality towards the object. He would like to experience the consciousness of being such an organism to understand it better. However, even then he undoubtedly would wonder what being means. Furthermore, for the existence of such a being to be meaningful, it must have intentionality towards something to separate himself from the external world, since without intentionality such a being would have to be like a rock or any other unanimated object, without any intentionality or consciousness. This is why the existence of evil beyond humans is absurd, because if we assume that it is possible, then evil would have to be like a rock, which is obviously absurd, because of the reasons and arguments I already exposed such as the argument from queerness.

LEVINAS ON EVIL

We can consider evil as a phenomenological occurrence rather than an ontological one as Pallas (2007) states:

Levinas, unlike writers such as Susan Neiman who explore evil in its collective aspect as a force change in a larger philosophical or political landscape, explores the nature of evil as a phenomenological event. From this perspective, it is how evil is experienced as experience, as phenomenological event, that is significant. (p.30)

The important factors in this phenomenology of evil are consciousness, which entails experience and intentionality. Consequently to call an action 'evil' such an action must be intentional and with the purpose of causing unnecessary suffering. It is important to clarify this point, because unintentional acts are not evil. They would be accidents, because they lack intentionality to harm or cause unnecessary suffering. Pallas (2007) mentions this 'malignant intention' when she writes:

What Levinas points to is this felt sense of intentionality behind the event, the question of 'why me,' implying the possibility of a malignant intention behind the event or action. In a way, it is out of our attempts to make sense of things that we attribute an act of will, of choice, behind events that seem to lack any sense of coherence. There must be a "why" or the event becomes truly meaningless. Suffering, in Levinas's words, becomes utterly "useless." (pp.36-37)

Being in the world is difficult and we as conscious beings with intentionality try to explain natural phenomena as having intentionality too, but that is simply irrational. Natural evils do not exist, meaning that viruses, bacteria, earthquakes etc., are not conscious beings in this world. Thus, they have no intentionality, which means that they are not evil. And even though they may cause suffering, they are not moral agents because they lack consciousness and therefore, they lack intentionality. On the other hand, human beings are in the world and have consciousness of it. Hence, they direct their intentionality towards different objects. This makes them capable of being either good or evil. Pallas (2007) continues: "It is in this aspect of the phenomenology of evil that Levinas finds the priority of the ethical over the ontological---the sense of some kind of moral order behind the 'scene' of the world" (p.37). This is highly plausible, since nothing could have been evaluated as good or evil without ethics. These ethics and morality emerge from the need to live in a society, to regulate our relationships with the other, who is different from us and, as Levinas claims, "the other" cannot ever be completely known. However, we still need to live together, but in order to live in peace and survive, we need a moral order.

One way to achieve such a moral order, according to Levinas, is to understand that doing evil is an act of power and so he writes that: “To kill is not to dominate but to annihilate; it is to renounce comprehension absolutely. Murder exercises a power over what escapes power...this most banal incident of human history corresponds to possibility, since it claims the total negation of a being” (Moran, and Mooney, 2002, p.518) I agree that evil entails an act of power as the power of directing our intentionality towards the dehumanization of the other or even towards oneself. It is the power of imposing our free will over the will of the other with bad intentions. In agreement, Ernesto Garcia (2002) interpreting Kant writes:

In bad action, humanity itself comprises a constitutive element of our end. More precisely, the object of our willing just consists in the mistreatment of the humanity of another person qua human...in evil actions; we seek out to directly violate the humanity of another person itself. (p.201)

This is an ethical theory that embraces intentionality, and states that intentionality is used with the purpose of dehumanization of the other. This dehumanization causes suffering and pain and undermines the quality of our life. For example, intentionality has been misused to manipulate some ethical theories such as utilitarianism. For my thesis, Jules Simon (2009) elucidates this point even more strongly:

Especially in the modern period, utilitarian, instrumentalist ethics have come to dominate our decision making. It could even be said that a form of this sort of ethics was used to justify committing the genocidal murder of millions of Jews by the Nazis during World War II. The greatest good for the greatest number can be interpreted in many different, even obscene ways (p.133).

This manipulation of utilitarianism happens because conscious beings have the power to direct their intentionality to cause suffering or to alleviate it. When “persons” like Hitler do not care about the ‘other’ they direct their intentionality to fulfil their ambitions, regardless of the unnecessary suffering that they cause. These kinds of people may even try to justify their actions with utilitarianism, which is an ethical theory that can be manipulated by people’s misguided intentionality. However, Simon (2009) writes: “The phenomenon of the suffering of another cannot be systematically justified, teleologically rationalized, or categorically classified” (p.134). This is what many people have tried to do, but it is not possible to justify “acts of injustice” not even by manipulating ‘ethical theories’ with a hidden intention to achieve power, or to maintain it. Simon (2009) continues: “...the existence of that power is “measured” in terms of domination or annihilation, since murder is accomplished over what escapes power, what is incomprehensible and beyond grasp and domination. I murder simply because I am able to murder” (p.139). This misuse of power to direct intentionality to achieve selfish objectives regardless of the unnecessary suffering of the other is called ‘evil’ by Levinas. However, this raises the question: is all suffering meaningless? To this point Simon (2009) states: “Levinas insists that the only time that I can say that suffering is meaningful is when I personally take on the responsibility of suffering for the suffering of another” (p135). This is revolutionary and changes old paradigms, and it is significant for ethics and phenomenology. If I suffer for the suffering of the other I would avoid wars, because I would not want for the other to suffer.

Levinas’s approach is totally different from traditional paradigms such as “the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number” which ignores many injustices that may entail much suffering. Since the focus is not on the suffering of the “other” then their particular suffering is not as important as the happiness of the many. This utilitarian approach leads to injustices. For instance, many people have gotten killed for the happiness of the many. This is the manipulative use of ethical theories. In this regard, Simon (2009) notes that:

Levinas's use of the term "ethics" as interruptive, as ethical critique, helps us to better confront those very traditions of philosophy that have produced the systematic and normative ethics that have been used by successive political regimes to enforce totalitarian and genocidal policies. In confronting those traditions with Levinas's writing, we become more sensitive to the suffering and pain of others on the practical and interpersonal levels of our day-to-day lives. (p.136)

Useless suffering of the other is provoked to fulfill a thirst for power. To malevolently cause suffering is an act of power and intention. It is to direct intentionality towards the oppression, domination and even annihilation of the other. The agent causes this suffering regardless of the horrible experience of the "other". This is why it is very important to become more 'sensitive' to the suffering of the other, that is, to avoid the thirst to obtain power or maintain it.

Consciousness is essential to direct our intentionality with benevolence and concern for the other's suffering. This may be accomplished by making the other's suffering our own and by avoiding excuses to ignore it, or reasons to cause it, since it is not justifiable. In this respect Simon (2009) writes:

Levinas rejects justifying suffering for the sake of a 'Kingdom of transcendent ends' That would guide one by a benevolent wisdom, rejecting all grand designs and any suprasensible project, including those involving an arbitrary god, belief in progress, a metaphysics of original sin, or congenital failure. (p.143)

The significance of these words is that unnecessary suffering of the other is not justifiable in any way. Therefore, many traditional approaches to solve moral dilemmas would not be ethically good under Levinas's paradigm. For example, allowing the suffering of one innocent person for the welfare of twenty people would be unjust and unethical. Moreover, this suffering would be my responsibility. Consequently, it would be unethical to ignore it. On this point Simon (2009) states:

Suffering or enduring pain for the other is then raised to a compelling ethical principle that takes the form of shaping hopes and commanding the disciple of peoples, such as sharing wealth and coming to aid. Indeed, such suffering for the other is an inescapable obligation and is so inescapable that waiting for divine action in order that I might then imitate it is degrading. I lower and degrade myself with waiting for a redeemer or any other to take over the responsibility that can only ever be mine, a responsibility of which I become aware in the face of the immediate suffering of the other with whom I am sensually and directly engaged. (p.144)

Levinas claims that the suffering of the other is unethical. Furthermore, in accordance with his phenomenology, I should embrace the suffering of the other in my consciousness and make this suffering my own. However, if I suffer because of the other's suffering and I do nothing about it, then I could ask myself: am I still human? Because ignoring such suffering of the other would dehumanize me, since I would be ignoring my own inner-self, this is my own consciousness.

Intentionality must be directed towards avoiding unnecessary suffering because, as defended by Levinas, such suffering is meaningless. Simon (2009) elucidates:

Beyond utilitarian consequences, the problem, however, is that suffering reveals to us the phenomenon of meaningless, since the suffering surpasses our intellectual means of grasping and holding. The suffering of the other...Suffering is, as it should be, beyond all social, political, or religious institutional uses and, especially, should be beyond all rational administration of pain based on oppression of the weak. (p.143)

There is no possible justification to make the other suffer; even with utilitarian purposes such suffering would be just an abuse of power. This power is an imposition of the will of the strongest over the weak. Suffering of the other must not be ignored not even for the happiness of the greatest number,

because it is unjustifiable. On this view Richard White (2012) writes: “Emmanuel Levinas calls it a ‘scandal’ whenever extreme suffering is justified in terms of some higher good.” (p.111) Suffering is not justifiable by accomplishing a greater good. This means that killing or causing the death of one person to save the lives of ten or more people would not be ethical for Levinas. Utilitarians may argue that it is better to leave one person to die than ten, but this claim has many problems, for instance by their own logic maybe the person that got killed would have saved thousands of people with the cure for AIDS and maybe the ten men that were left to die were murderers. Therefore, the action of saving ten over one would bring the most misery possible. On the other hand there is injustice, because it would be unjust to kill an innocent person to save any other amount of people. Utilitarianism requires us to do the ethical thing by being totally unethical, which is a contradiction. For example, it requires us to kill an innocent person, which is totally unethical and unjustifiable in order to save ‘x’ number of persons. Yet utilitarianism claims that this is ethical; but is it? The problem is how can someone be ethical by being unethical? The other should not be allowed to suffer because it is more important for the other not to suffer than to be happy. This is the case because suffering entails a loss of consciousness, as White (2012) writes:

Extreme suffering involves complete passivity. In suffering we are subject to something which does not come from ourselves and which tends to undermine all meaningful structures of subjectivity. In this respect, suffering is the anticipation of death as the encounter with something that cannot be avoided or held at arm’s length.

(p.114)

I totally agree with this claim, because suffering paralyzes us, limits us and definitely affects us. Specifically, suffering affects our intentionality because suffering undermines our consciousness and intentionality is linked with consciousness. This means unconscious entities or beings do not have intentionality. Therefore, when we lose our consciousness, we start losing our intentionality, and

consequently we lose our free will. This could mean the loss of our humanity, in the sense that we are not free agents anymore, because there is no intentionality with a consciousness that has been diminished by suffering. In this regard, Simon (2009) states: “As passivity, suffering is “useless” and is heard as the moan, ache, or woe of pain that escapes from the person who is enclosed and enveloped in his or her pain” (p.143). It is useless and affects the “other” and by affecting the other, affects us all as ethical agents, because we have this moral duty to alleviate the suffering of the ‘other.’ In agreement with the teaching about the uselessness of suffering and its terrible consequences in our consciousness, Pallas (2007) writes:

This experience of an infinite suffering, with no possibility of being made meaningful, overwhelms, even incapacitates, us, reducing us to nothing but this contraction into pain. In the event of evil, this tearing “out of the world” denies the self its ability to act in its freedom; rather this opening up of meaning comes to us as radical isolation. (p.37)

Suffering is useless and unjustifiable for Levinas, particularly the experience of suffering that is manifested in the face of the “other,” which is meaningless. There is no sense in causing such suffering. On this point, Pallas (2007) writes:

Levinas’s starting point is the event, a certain “noteworthy lived experience” that “interrupts the world” In the “paradox of Morality,” It is the modality of the ‘face’ that is the primary event as the experience of what escapes our systemic attempts to create meaning...What Levinas points to is a fundamentally different kind of modality or ‘human act’ than the experience that we incorporate as knowledge. The modality of the face is not the experience that reaches out to the world and brings experience back into itself. (p.30)

The face expresses the experience of suffering and hopelessness. The face does not need to pronounce any words to express a consciousness that entails intentionality, which is the intentionality of being liberated from the oppression imposed in the name of power. For example, when narrating the experience of a fictitious person that is about to get killed, Simon (2009) writes:

She resists not with some superlative of power, but precisely with the infinity of her transcendence. This infinity, stronger than murder, already resists me in her face, is her face, is the primordial *expression*, is the first word: “you shall not commit murder.” The appeal of the other as infinitely transcendent and beyond my comprehension and mastery is revealed in her defenseless eyes. (p.139)

The phenomenology of evil is reflected in this face of despair; the victim who experiences this suffering loses herself in such a horrible experience. The killer directs his intentionality with the purpose of causing unnecessary suffering. This intentionality is produced in his consciousness and therefore freely directed to cause meaningless suffering. This conscious intention with the will to cause unnecessary suffering is what makes him evil.

CONCLUSION

We have seen this unusual approach about evil, as a product of a human’s intentionality and nothing more. This means that there is no evil by itself. Moreover, actions are not evil without intentionality as it has been sustained in this argument. However, a possible objection for my argumentation could be that my whole argument is also grounded in unjustified assumptions. For instance, I made the assumption that we have free will and that life is good. Nevertheless, the opposite of my assumptions would also have to be a set of assumptions and possibly less plausible ones. Yet, I believe that my argument is more plausible than Arendt’s claim that intentionality does not play a major role in evil as I showed with the help of Pallas’s paradigm.

Evil is just a human phenomenon and nothing more, because we as “rational” beings created moral thought and theories to survive and live in harmony. To understand the importance of intentionality in addressing moral issues is essential, since what makes a person a moral agent is his/her consciousness, which entails intentionality. Moral theories are grounded in this scientific fact that men are conscious beings and as conscious beings they have intentionality, which makes them responsible for their actions. This fact makes a big difference between a man killing someone and an earthquake killing thousands since the former one has an intention so he is morally responsible and the latter one does not so it is not responsible. Therefore, there are not natural evils, the evil by itself, or anything of that sort, because they lack consciousness and therefore intentionality so they cannot be moral agents.

Chapter IV Important Considerations about God, Evil, and Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is about Rosenzweig's critique of anthropomorphic views about God. Moreover, the old traditions such as negative theology and the traditional concept of God are criticized. Rosenzweig's controversial approach is analyzed for how he promotes critical thinking in philosophy of religion. Anthropomorphic paradigms about God are rejected by Rosenzweig's unorthodox approach. The main thesis of this chapter is that old traditions about the 'qualities' of God are mistaken because whatever is 'meant' by God is epistemologically unknowable and no one can legitimately describe God. This is because, there are no evidential grounds—either empirical or epistemological—to make affirmations about God. This is what Rosenzweig means with his critique of such views, namely, that affirmations and negations about God are groundless and so humans have to start in thinking about God with the position that they do not know anything about God. But along these lines, Rosenzweig also attacks the traditions of negative theology as well because it starts from a position that we already know something about what God is using a negative form of logic that defines an entity based on what it is not. However, according to Rosenzweig, we do not know either what God is or what God is not. On this point, Anselm Min (2006) states:

Speaking of God has always been problematic. Assuming that the God one speaks of is truly God, not a projection or a mere concept of the human mind, the problem has been how to avoid sheer kataphasis and sheer apophasis, speaking of God in the same way we speak of our ordinary human experience and reducing God to an object among other objects in our empirical world, and never speaking of God at all. (p.99)

The problem is to define God without making God a projection of a human's idiosyncrasy. The affirmations and negations about God are not knowledge, from the perspective that knowledge entails some form of justification. This difficulty of justifying claims about God brings up the following

interesting questions: was man created in the image of God or God created in the image of man? Or, does God have to be an ethical being? And, why would God have to be omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent as in most religious traditions?

My main point is that we do not have knowledge about God and, instead, we have only opinions and assumptions about him. However, these opinions and assumptions about God give us a beginning to start talking about what we have historically referred to as the concept of the metaphysical God. (Franz Rosenzweig, 1985). However, the question about who or what is God may seem very easy for religious people who have traditionally developed this concept of God, especially in the great monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, the truth is that they do not really know God's nature. And while religious people may answer with the traditional concept of God, this is because of their educational background. They may affirm that the absolute is omniscient, omnibenevolent, and omnipotent. Yet, they do not know whether such a concept is true or false. In agreement, Rosenzweig (1985) writes:

World and man have to become God's nature, have to submit to apotheosis, but God never lowers himself to them. He does not give of himself, does not love, does not have to love. For he keeps his physics to himself, and therefore, remains what he is: the metaphysical. (p.40)

Here, Rosenzweig claims that humans cannot attribute physical qualities or properties to a metaphysical entity, because they have no grounds to legitimately do so. God is beyond all understanding. Nothing is known about God and therefore all of God's attributes are just assumptions. Consequently, I believe that Rosenzweig is right in his critique of anthropomorphism because of the following reasons: We do not know anything about God. The absolute does not have to be the way

people arbitrarily claim. God would be the metaphysical and therefore descriptive physical attributes are inadequate.

God is totally unknown for humankind. This is why Ronsenzweig starts with nothing, because there is no real knowledge about God. People do not have any empirical evidence about God. However, they are accustomed to the practice of affirming and negating God's attributes. In this respect, Ronsenzweig (1985) writes:

God is therefore initially a Nought for us, he is Nought. Two paths lead from the Nought to the Aught ...the path of affirmation and the path of negation. The affirmation is the affirmation of the demonstrandum, the non-Nought; the negation is the negation of the given, the Nought. (p.24)

This means that people build their conceptualization of God from nothing. Thereafter, God becomes something, and he becomes a concept that reflects people's idiosyncrasies. People have idealized God by giving him humanistic characteristics. To illustrate, if humans are powerful God would also be all powerful; if they are good, God would be omnibenevolent, and so on. On the other hand, there is negative theology, which negates God's attributes or qualities. However, this practice of negating qualities that pertain to humans is problematic, because there is no evidence to attribute such negations to God. It is negating the nothing, because from the beginning there is no knowledge about God.

The main point that Ronsenzweig makes is that we started from nothing and then we conceptualized God in accordance with our cultural framework. These ideas about God were traditionally accepted and then such ideas became the aught. They became something and this something is what we have to begin with in talking about God. Consequently, we give attributes to God, but we really do not know whether or not God has such attributes.

This is why Ronsenzweig (1985) affirms: “God is initially nothing more than a problem” (p.25). This is because we do not know anything about God, which is another kind of a problem, especially for believers. Ronsenzweig (1985) continues:

We say as it were: if God exists then the following is true of his Nought. By thus presupposing only that the Nought is the Nought of God, we are not led beyond the frame of this object by the consequences of this presupposition. (p.25)

The negation that God has qualities is defective because it is equally as arbitrary as the affirmation of such qualities. Ronsenzweig continues:

As long as we move within this hypothesizing limit of the Nought, all concepts remain within this limit; they remain under the law of ‘if and then’ without being able to step out of the magic circle...we do not get beyond pure reflections of God. (p.26)

Theologians and people in general make an assumption about God and then jump to a conclusion, which is just a product of their own reflections, and this practice as such is pointless, while trying to know God. For instance, humankind has devised ideas about God from antiquity. For example, claiming that God is omniscient leads to the possibility that God knows how to actualize an illogical impossibility. But as I argued in Chapter Two, logical contradictions such as actualizing illogical possibilities are simply mental errors. The prior example illustrates an assumption and its conclusion, which is grounded in the assumption, which is obviously problematic.

This attribute of “omniscience” may have been, however, very convenient for primitive humans, because a God that knows everything is better than a God that has limited knowledge. Additionally, this adjective “separates” God from the limited knowledge that people have because no human being could ever be omniscient. Again, simply speaking, God is just a projection of an enhanced feature for humans

to deal with their limitations, like the need for protection, fear for the dangers of their natural environment, and to simply survive from one day to the next. It is because humans have limited knowledge but need some belief in order to get more confidence in themselves.

Many religious people think like this; they attribute enhanced qualities to God and then make their conclusions about him, because of their environmental context and situation, in accordance with their needs for something beyond their limitations. Min (2006), interpreting Levinas, states:

Levinas regards being itself as a product of intentionality, consciousness, knowledge, representation, and disclosure, all of which presuppose the equality, proportion, correlation, and identity between subject and object, noesis and noema, thought and the world, and which therefore reduce the object to the unity and identity of the subject, to a presence in a consciousness and therefore in principle relative to the subject. (p.100)

This means that God is reduced to an act of consciousness whereby this consciousness projects itself and gives qualities that are owned by a subject. For instance, benevolence can be projected as a quality of God, but this benevolence is magnified to the status of an infinite attribute when talking about God. This is because all humanistic qualities are enhanced when they are used to describe the absolute in this view: “God is the perfection of a manifested consciousness.” In this paradigm God is confused with ‘thought’ which means that God is seen with an ideal of perfection, as a super human. In this regard, Min (2006) writes:

Ontotheology presupposes coincidence between thinking and being, situates even God in the processes of being in the world and conceives of God as simply the being for excellence, i.e., the “supreme” being, conceived and thematized on the model of entities in the world and reduced to a function of human subjectivity. (p.100)

This reduces God to a product of subjectivity to what humans would like God to be and to what they all need or they believe that they do. It is said traditionally that God is a transcendent being, but as stated by Min (2006):

What goes “beyond being” in its true transcendence has not been thinkable in the history of Western philosophy, which has been the history of the destruction of transcendence. Even in phenomenology, including that of Husserl and Heidegger, there has been no true “shaking” of intentional consciousness as a privileged mode of access to reality. (p.101)

This is because God has been reduced to objectification. This means that humanity’s God is not necessarily the metaphysical God, but just a projection of humans’ consciousness, a manifestation of humans’ ideologies. In this respect Min (2006) writes: “The God of ontotheology is an idol to be rejected, that there is no way of direct, predicative reference to God” (p.113). This is because there are no grounds to describe God as the metaphysical and real God. We can try, but always fail to do so, because God is beyond all understanding. We keep talking only about a “god” that is an ideology and a perfection of humans’ ideals.

DIVINE NATURE

Humans’ consciousness and intentionality construct conceptualizations of God’s nature and real attributes of the ‘possible’ real God are totally unknown, because humans have no access to any real knowledge about God. In this regard Ronsenzweig (1985) asserts:

...the Nought that it is not to be the result but on the contrary and exclusively the point of departure. It is not even the beginning. At most it is the beginning of our knowledge. The point is, it is really only the point of departure, and therefore simply incapable of being negated. (p.26)

Subsequently, in the beginning we knew nothing about God. Then humans started talking about God and began to attribute different characteristics to a God or gods. These attributes or qualities about God are really nothing. They are not true knowledge about God. However, since such compilation of qualities, hypothesis, stories, etc., is the only thing that we have about God. This “nothing” becomes “something” to start with, but it is nothing in the sense that it is not knowledge. Furthermore, the negation of what God is not expresses nothing about God because it contains no true affirmation, because we do not know whether such attributes are true. In agreement Ronsenzweig (1985) writes: “Therefore, the affirmation of the non-Nought circumscribes as inner limit the infinity of all that is not Nought. An infinity is affirmed: God’s infinite essence, his infinite actuality, his Physis” (pp.26-27). The affirmation has endless possibilities, we can affirm about everything, even about God, and God may be anything endlessly. The problem is that we have no grounds to make such affirmations about God at all, as previously stated. Furthermore, we cannot legitimately affirm or negate anything about God’s nature.

DIVINE FREEDOM

Ronsenzweig (1985) asserts: “God’s freedom is born of the original negation of the Nought” (p.29). This negation of the “nothing” is the negation of all the attributes that are given to God, because they are not true knowledge. We have traditions about God and stories, but not empirical evidence. Consequently, all traditions, stories and concepts about God are nothing in a particular sense, they are unjustified. Nevertheless, they could be something, in a different sense; they are the only basis that humans have to begin inquiring about the absolute. However, by negating the Nought people begin to understand that there is not true knowledge about God. This acknowledgment of our own ignorance is just the beginning. Ronsenzweig (1985) continues:

Essence is constituted once and for all “as is”; it confronts the freedom of action, a freedom revealing itself ever anew, but a freedom for which we cannot as yet, contemplate any object other than the infinity of that everlasting essence. It is not

freedom of God, for even now God is still a problem for us. It is divine freedom, freedom in God and with reference to God. Even now we know, as yet, nothing about God. We are still engaged in the piecemeal work of knowledge, still at the stage of inquiring, not of answering. (p.30)

We are not in a position to answer any inquiries about God because we do not know anything about him. Therefore, the traditional concept of God has no grounds at all, since we do not know anything about the divine. To illustrate, we do not know whether or not the possible God is omniscient. We do not even know whether being omniscient is possible. All we have are ideas about this possible God. Furthermore, if God exists, he remains beyond humans' understanding and knowledge. In agreement with Rosenzweig (1985) it could be said that God remains what God is, God is what God is, and we have no knowledge about God's being. "He keeps his physics to himself, and therefore remains what he is: the metaphysical." (Rosenzweig, 1985, p.40).

DIFFERENT CULTURES, DIFFERENT GODS

Every culture gives different attributes to God. These different cultures have different anthropomorphic practices. The Greeks had many gods from antiquity and most of them were quite humanistic, such as Zeus, Hades, and Poseidon. Additionally, many gods were derived from nature. For instance, referring to the Greeks, Rosenzweig (1985) states:

They are immortal. Death lies under their feet...Nature means always the gods' own nature. If a god is associated with a constellation or anything similar, he does not thereby become god of the constellation...rather the constellation becomes a god or at least a part of the god. (p.34)

The imagination of the Greeks in their mythology is admirable because their gods are immortal, much stronger than humans and super powerful, but they all share qualities of humans so they are like

super humans. Gods became humans, but more powerful, and they hate and love just like humans do. Ronsenzweig (1985) continues: “The independence of the human and the worldly spheres was suspended both in the mysteries of apotheosis and in those concepts with which the philosophers bridged the gap between the divine and the human, the worldly spheres” (p.39). Making gods super humans and nature itself part of the gods was a common practice in antiquity and this is a common practice even today. God is like a super human, with all the qualities of humans, but in perfection. The question is why? There is no reason to believe that the possible God would have to be a moralist or to believe that God would have to be omnipotent and omnibenevolent. This is assuming that God exists, which is unknown. This brings into focus my thesis about evil and the question about why God or any possible “god”—anthropomorphic, mythic, or ontotheological, would have to care about us or about good and evil. It is clear that cultures reflect themselves in their gods. Humans give the attributes that they wish for themselves to their gods. It is evident that this practice is still alive today, since many people still believe in an anthropomorphic God. This God is what believers want to believe in and may reflect their cultural frameworks or psychological idiosyncrasies, but in the final analysis, these claims are still just assumptions. If God exists, and maybe God does, God most likely is not what different traditions have argued about for centuries. In agreement with this position, Min (2006) wants to eliminate all talk about God and hold onto:

...the critical importance of maintaining tension between the positive and the negative in our language about God. Not speaking about God at all may prevent us from falling into the idolatry of reducing God to a projection of human ideologies and interests. (p.114)

His position is that the metaphysical has been reduced to a projection of our feelings, emotions, and concerns and that, in short, God has been transformed into a manifestation of our idiosyncrasies. In the end, these idiosyncrasies convert into objects of devotion, but these

devotions are devotions to the ideas about God and, in this sense, such devotion to God is simply idolatry.

For my thesis, the argument about the logical problem of evil could, at the maximum, disprove this anthropomorphic God of idolatry, if the claim for the actual existence of evil ‘works’ in the first place as a way to logically guarantee disbelief in the existence of God. But as we have seen in Chapter Two, Plantinga convincingly refutes the way that the logical problem of the existence of evil is used to disprove the existence of the traditional God and the phenomenology of evil shows that there is only moral evil.

EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

There are possible explanations for anthropomorphism; one of these explanations is Evolutionary Psychology. For instance, Teehan (2013) states:

In determining how to best categorize an object, sometimes the environmental setting provides clues but sometimes it does not. In such situations, Steward Guthrie has argued that the best move is to overinterpret the situation, i.e., to bring to bear the most significant model available. For humans, this model is that of Person. This, argues Guthrie, is the origin of anthropomorphism. (p.330)

Personification of objects, situations and phenomena are made because humans need to make meaning of what is happening around them in an attempt to explain their world. On this point Teehan (2013) writes: “We interpret the world in human terms not because of egoism, or comfort, or familiarity, but because Persons are the most significant beings in our environment” (p.330). We as humans give the most value to humans because they are our equals and we share the same origin. Consequently the traditional “God” is a God made according to the image of the Person. God would have to be a person, but not just any simple person. Instead, God would have to be a super person with the highest levels of

perfection. For instance, a human is powerful, and maybe an alien is super powerful so God would have to be all powerful. This is the same for all qualities: when they are transferred to God, they are enhanced. However, this is not appropriate for a possible metaphysical being. If God exists he would be beyond all human understanding and beyond all descriptions, beyond even the intentionality structure of noesis and noema. In this respect Min (2006) writes: “The glory of the infinite cannot “appear” in itself. To appear means to become an object of representational consciousness, a presence to a constituting consciousness, and an item within a horizon or totality relative to a synthesizing consciousness” (p.101). God has traditionally been an “object to representational consciousness” because humans project themselves. People give life to their thoughts by creating their “God” with their enhanced qualities making a “God” that is too human, a “God” that is a reflection of their wishes, feelings and emotions, even fears. In reference to this point Teehan (2013) states:

Why is it that people come to view their gods in morally-relevant ways? We can only have a problem of evil if we first have a conception that god cares about human welfare and acts in a way that we can somehow recognize as just, or at least justifiable...Epicurus explicitly denounces this as superstitious thinking that results from projecting our needs and fears onto the gods. To Epicurus, the gods as divinely blessed beings cannot be disturbed by petty emotions. (p.328)

This is a very important question that new advances in both evolutionary Psychology and evolutionary Ethics have tried to answer. Epicurus’s claim may be supported for evolutionary Psychology and evolutionary ethics, even today. In support of my earlier remarks about adaptation, Teehan (2013) also notes:

So when Epicurus, anticipating a host of other projection theorists, argues that our (mis)conceptions about the gods are born out of fear and ignorance, he is correct—in a

sense. The mental tools that give rise to god beliefs evolved as adaptations to provide humans with strategies to respond to the dangerous and uncertain world of our environment of evolutionary adaptation. (p.330)

These explanations of how people start attributing humanistic qualities to their gods seems plausible when we think about how humans have evolved and developed projections of their needs. For instance, an all-powerful God would be able to do anything to protect his creation and therefore believing in such a God would alleviate the need for security from fear and anxiousness about a dangerous environment and an uncertain future. This means that believing in an omniscient God that is good and not evil, would give much more security to believers because they would be confident that such a good God would be able to know how to help them and care about them. If such a God is omnibenevolent, then people assume that this God would care about their well-being.

EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS

This paradigm sees morality as an instrument or tool to survive that was developed by the evolution of our brains and therefore produced by humans. In this regard, John Teehan (2013) states: “From an evolutionary perspective morality is understood in terms of pro-social behavior/cooperation. For cognitive tendencies toward pro-social behavior to be favored by evolution such behavior must tend to contribute to inclusive fitness” (p.332). This means that morality has evolved as a “survival mental tool” signifying that morality is not out there in the world as moral realists claim, but rather it is a tool to live in harmony and essentially to survive. Teehan (2013) states:

Humans not only evolved as social beings, but evolved from an even more ancient lineage of social animals. It follows that this has given rise to a set of mental tools that facilitates social exchanges...but it will suffice for our purposes to set out some of the key components of our evolved moral psychology. (p.332)

There are many theories in evolutionary psychology that try to explain the development of morality as a psychological process that has helped humans to survive. For instance, Teehan (2013) states: “Studies show that socially cooperative behavior activates reward systems in the brain, while violations of the social code trigger negative emotional brain responses” (pp.334-335). This shows at the very minimum that there are psychological mechanisms that affect our so-called moral “intuitions” as stated by Teehan (2013): “Humans will often forgo a benefit, and incur a cost, if they perceive that they are being treated unfairly. Some of the evidence for this is provided by behavioral economic experiments employing the ultimatum game” (p.333). Psychologists call this an “innate sense of fairness” that has been evolved in our minds as a survival tool. Experiments have taken place to prove these psychological mechanisms. To illustrate, let us consider the ultimatum game, which in accordance to Teehan (2013) consists in the following:

In the ultimatum game two subjects have to split a sum of money. One subject –the proposer--is instructed to determine how to divide the money with the second subject-the responder-who in turn has the option of accepting or rejecting the offer. If the offer is accepted then both individuals receive the sums proposed, but if the responder rejects the offer, neither one gets anything. (p.333)

This experiment has shown something really interesting about humans’ sense of justice, as Teehan (2013) writes:

If both are rationally self-interested, then the proposer should offer a small cut of the money to the responder, who should accept it; but in fact this is not what typically happens. Instead responders regularly reject what they consider to be unfair offers, with studies showing “a robust result...that proposals giving the responder shares below 25% of the available money are rejected with a very high probability. Furthermore, the

proposers seem to intuitively anticipate this response as the most common proposal in these games is close to 50/50. (p.333)

This is important, because it indicates a common pattern in a humans' psyche—which in this case refers to evolutionary adaptive behavior, and which can be understood as a sense of justice but is really a psychological mechanism developed for the sake of survival. And there are other responses that have been developed, based on what Teehan (2013) refers to in terms of the evolution of our brain activity: “Studies show that socially cooperative behavior activates reward systems in the brain, while violations of the social code trigger negative emotional brain responses” (p.335). This would mean that the human brain is highly involved in morality and it has evolved to ensure the survival of the species, because humans were much more likely to survive by working together and still are. In agreement with this research, Joice R (2006) claims:

Mechanisms of cultural transmission play an enormous and perhaps exhaustive role in determining the content of an individual's moral convictions...it seems that the best explanation of these universal characteristics of morality is that they are expressions of underlying “design features” of human psychology. (p.140)

This possible explanation of moral thought is important, because humans' idiosyncrasies are a product of their psyches and these psyches may be affected by the environment and cultural influence. This may be a good explanation for the different moral codes in the world and also for the different gods that are worshiped all over the world. For example, if a person lives in a place where people need rain, they may invent a “god of rain” and, as mentioned before, “persons” are the most significant beings for humans. Therefore, God would have to be a person but not just any person; God must be a super ‘good’ person who can help fight “the natural and objective evil” projected in the world that is independent of human intentionality. But this remains an insoluble contradiction, from the perspective of the logical

proof for the in-existence of God, unless we accept prior conditions about a possible moral world that includes human freedom.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that the problem of evil as an objection to the possible existence of God or to other issues in ethics, metaphysics, and phenomenology cannot be reduced to a syllogism. The value of Plantinga's logical and metaphysical analysis is remarkable. This is because philosophers and people in general need to be aware of fallacious arguments to improve their critical thinking. The so called "logical problem of evil" is neither explicitly nor implicitly contradictory. However, it has been accepted as such for centuries in philosophy and theology. Nevertheless, upon profound analysis of the main assumptions that have been traditionally accepted to support the premises of the logical problem of evil, I maintain that it is clear that there is no inconsistency between the existence of evil and the traditional concept of God.

My thesis has been based on the position that evil and the suffering that it entails is a human phenomenon and that it cannot be separated from humans' consciousness and intentionality. Evil is objective only in regards to consciousness and intentionality. This means that 'evil' is not out there in the world as an independent reality, beyond humans. The phenomenological approach that has been defended in this thesis contradicts most traditional views about evil. For instance, the paradigm that sees evil as something metaphysical beyond humans cannot be harmonized with this phenomenology of evil and the arguments that I presented make this phenomenological approach about evil plausible. Consequently, in order to progress in the understanding of the phenomenology of evil I look to other areas of contemporary science such as evolutionary psychology. My intent in doing this is to better understand how the phenomenon of evil has come about and how we may be better able to avoid evil and improve the world.

Humans project themselves by giving attributes to God. In agreement with this, Ronsenzweig (1985) raises the issue of anthropomorphism when he states:

Thus the essence of this mythical god remained accessible to the yearning of man and world, but only at a price: that man ceased to be man and world to be world. Man and the world were borne aloft on the wings of yearning into the consuming fire of apotheosis. (p.40)

To give humanistic attributes to things such as; statues, stars, idols and making them gods by enhancing such qualities has always been a common practice from antiquity. However, we humans have no good reasons to believe that we have any real knowledge about either the gods or God. We can believe in a God or even gods, but believing is not the same as knowing.

To know anything at all with certainty is extremely difficult and has been a problematic issue for philosophers for thousands of years. This means that even to know the physical world is extremely hard we can never be entirely sure what we know about it. Again, Ronsenzweig (1985) writes:

Man is no more capable of proof than are the world and god. If knowledge nonetheless tries to prove one of these three, then it necessarily loses itself in the Nought. ..of man too we therefore know nothing. And this nothing too is but a beginning. (p.63)

Here, Rosenzweig claims that it is dubious whether we really know anything with absolute certainty even about ourselves, because of the way we humans construct meaning for ourselves. We use language in such a way that we give meaning to the words that we use as an act of power. Thereafter, we use these words to define objects, to describe and even to evaluate. We make many affirmations and negations of such objects in order to develop a system of communication using this constructed

language that we created. This is problematic because language is unable to describe the real world if what we mean by “the real world” is something like Kant’s “things-in-themselves.”

The actual world is the world that is independent of our experience, the world that is independent of our power of giving meaning and the world that is beyond our affirmations and negations. Consequently, knowing about the metaphysical world would be extremely hard and maybe even impossible, but at best speculative. We may always claim that we know about the metaphysical, but the truth is that we do not. We may guess, but we have no way of knowing that our guessing is accurate. This applies to all metaphysics and not just God. We do not ‘know’ anything from using metaphysics, because when we claim to know something like the existence of God that is ultimately just something that we believe and is based only on possible hypotheses. This is because we have no empirical method to know something from metaphysics and if we did then it would not be metaphysics. Rosenzweig’s epistemological critique could apply to everything in metaphysics which means, therefore, that we do not know anything about time, God, the mind, essences, and consciousness. But this does not mean that these words that we use do not refer to something actually existing; it only means that we do not know with certainty because we do not have empirical or logical evidence for such references. Even with empirical evidence, we are limited by how we express our experiences and the perceptions of our senses of the world to each other.

This leads me to recall my remarks in the previous chapter about evolutionary ethics and evolutionary psychology, which are sciences that are much complex than what is mentioned here. However, these sciences were brought up to show the complexity of such problems as evil, God, anthropomorphism, and moral judgments with the purpose of presenting an important paradigm, which claims that maybe the answers to these questions are situated within “a human’s mind and consciousness.” In agreement with my position, Teehan (2013) writes:

The model presented here of the construction of god-beliefs works from the position that such beliefs are by-products of mental tools that evolved to serve survival and reproductive challenges faced by our ancestors. This by-product position is open to debate, although it appears to me the more compelling explanation of the ultimate origins of god-beliefs. However, once such beliefs become a cultural resource for a group they come to assume a significant role in human evolution. (p.336)

It is plausible that this could be the origin of anthropomorphism and moral-beliefs. However, the point is to show the complexity of explaining anthropomorphism, god-beliefs, and the problem of evil. In other words, problems such as “the problem of evil” cannot be reduced to a syllogism, because there are many other important issues that must be considered in order to have a more plausible explanation for the phenomenon of evil in the world. This is why it is fundamental to criticize philosophical “dogmas” and raise questions about all systems of idealism by developing ways of thinking that are more analytically critical, constructive, and phenomenologically interpretive. I call this a philosophy of emancipation.

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Vita

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This thesis was typed by Juan R Torres M.Ed.