

The Examination of the Problem of Evil in Alvin Plantinga

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Alvin Plantinga's Free Will Defense as a response to one of the perennial problems of philosophy; problem of evil which challenges the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent, and wholly good God. Plantinga refutes traditional theodicies that attempt to specify why God permits evil and argues that the human free will is a crucial component in understanding the coexistence of God and evil in the world. He posits that evil stems from the misuse of free will by humans and non-human free agents such as Satan. This study examines how Plantinga's approach addresses natural, physical and moral evils while refuting the logical inconsistencies proposed by atheologians. The essay drawing from the positions of philosophers like Augustine, Leibniz, and Mackie highlights how the existence of evil does not invalidate belief in God. This Free Will Defense maintains that God allows evil as it is a necessary condition for the greater good of free will. It emphasises that God's reason for permitting evil may be beyond human comprehension. The study concludes that Plantinga's Free Will Defense is logically consistent, providing a compelling refutation of atheistic arguments, while reinforcing the rationality of theistic belief in the face of evil.

Key words: Free will, Defense, Evil, Theodicy and Theism.

INTRODUCTION

Among all the numerous traditional problems of philosophy, the problem of evil seems to be the most problematic. Alvin Carl Plantinga's Free Will Defense is the best approach that justifies to a great extent, why a wholly good, omniscient, omnipotent and all-powerful God permits evil in the world. Instead of offering a theodicy to specify God's reason for permitting evil or for creating a world that contained evil, he chooses to present a Free Will Defense. He did this because of the fact that human intellect is limited as to fathom why God actually allows evil in the world.

Evil is defined as any bad state of affairs, wrongful action, or character flaw. We are concerned here with the first two notions of evil as any bad state of affairs and wrongful action. Arguments from evil make the belief in the existence of God unlikely if well formulated. This constitutes a very serious problem to the theist. A belief in the omnipotent and good God contradicts with the fact that evil is in the world. Down from the days of the ancient Philosophers, to those of this era, evil had been classified into natural, physical and moral. Natural evil is the evil that results from nature like earthquakes and tsunami, flood and other natural disaster. Physical evil consists in suffering, pains, or diseases while moral evil consist of sin and evil acts from an evil will of humans.

Five propositions are taken to validate the argument from evil, (a) God exists, (b) God is omnipotent, (c) God is omniscient, (d) God is wholly good, and (e) Evils exists (Plantinga, 2008: 70). These five propositions in themselves are not formally contradictory; to get a formally contradictory set, the atheologian must add some propositions. The atheologian in order to be successful must provide some propositions which are either necessarily true or essential to theism, or a logical consequence of such preposition (Plantinga, 1967: 116). Many atheologians have tried to provide additional proposition in order to contradict the five propositions but they do not seem to know how difficult the task is.

The question of what, who or where is the source of evil is a hard one. The oldest record of the word evil is in Genesis 2:6-17 where God commanded Adam to eat of any fruit in the Garden of Eden except the tree that

gives the knowledge of good and evil. Thus, as far as all men are concerned following the biblical account, we got the knowledge of evil from Adam and Eve which they acquired after they ate the forbidden fruit. Since it was God who created the tree, He should be the one to give an adequate account of the source of evil. The above difficulty notwithstanding, Plantinga in his Free Will Defense situates the source of evil to the misuse of free will by free creatures.

The world for certain contains a great deal of evil which brings about remorse, shame, anguish, rage, disappointment, anxiety, fear, dejection, despair etc (Plantinga, 1967: 117). This naturally makes belief in God unreasonable or rationally unacceptable but Descartes refutes this by opining that men are born with the idea of God in their minds and this would not be possible if God does not actually exist. Thus, the existence of evil in the world cannot cancel the idea that God exists. Why does God allow evil? This is the question, the atheologian asks. If God is as benevolent as Christians claim, He must be just as appalled as we are at all this phenomenon; evil. If He is powerful as the Christians claim, then He presumably is in a position to do something about evil. So why does he allow evil? (Plantinga, 2002: 8) The atheologian would want the theist to justifiably answer the above question.

The theist in order to answer the question would propound theodicy but most of them are unsatisfactory because actually the theist cannot give a satisfactory answer because they do not know the reason why God permits evil. They resolve that God has a good reason, but the reason is too complicated for them to understand (Plantinga, 2002: 9). What is certain here is that God must have a good reason for permitting evil in the world. This of course does not make the theist's belief in God irrational or improper for since God is an infinite being and man, a finite being is limited to know the way of God.

This essay tackles the problems of the source of evil and why God permits evil in the world created by Him who is wholly good, omniscient and omnipotent. It is problematic to come to terms with the fact that evil exists in the world whereas evil is not in the nature of God whom the theists believe created the world. This essay defends the claim that the abuse of the free will of human beings and non-human free spirits is the source of evil in the world and that God has a good reason why He permits evil in the world. Theoretically, this essay will add to the existing literature and expose to the readers how Alvin Plantinga tries to disapprove of the atheist's denial of the existence of God from the problem of evil. Practically, the write-up maintains that God not only have good reason for permitting evil in the world, though the reason may be too complicated for us to understand (Plantinga, 2002: 29) due to the limited nature of our knowledge of divine wisdom but insists that the misuse of the faculty of free will given to humanity accounts for the existence of evil in the world. This study proves that the theists' belief in God notwithstanding the evil in the world is consistent and non-contradictory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In "On the Nature and Source of Evil" in his book *The Six Enneads*, Plotinus (205-270AD) tries to expose what constitutes the nature of evil as a way to know its source in order to prevent further questions to the problem. Evil manifests itself as the very absence of good (Plotinus, 2006: 1.8.1). The good is that on which all else depends as their source and need (Plotinus, 2006: 1.8.2). The good in its first degree is existent in the King of all who is the unfailing cause of good and beauty and controller of all. Where thence comes evil? He maintains that if evil exists at all, then it would be situated in the realm of non-being or has its seat in something in touch with the non-being or to a certain degree communicates in non-being. Evil would emanate from a kind whose place is below all the patterns, forms, shapes, measurements and limits and which has no trace of good by any of its own (Plotinus, 2006: 1.8.3). Evil is thus an absolute lack of good. It is limited to matter but the soul becomes evil when it has contact with matter. In all, we cannot know the very source of evil since it existed before we came to be. The existence of evil is necessary given that good is not the only existent thing. The continuous down-going or away-going from the good will produce at last evil. As there is something after the first, so necessarily there is a last (Plotinus, 2006: 1.8.7). As good is the first, evil becomes the last. It is through our contact with matter that one becomes evil and those who with strength have out-powered evil live with the principles guiding the soul. Alvin Plantinga unlike Plotinus is exact in postulating the abuse of free will by free creatures of God as the source of evil in the world.

In the essay “On the Problem of Evil”, Augustine (354-430) in his book *Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love* maintains that since God the creator of all is supremely good, all of nature is therefore good (Augustine, 2006: 9). The nature and God are not good in the same sense and degree. The goodness of nature can be diminished but that of God cannot since He is goodness itself. For good to diminish is evil, thus, evil is a privation of good (Augustine, 2006: 9). Hence, where there is no privation of the good, there is no evil. Every actual entity is good; it has a greater good if it cannot be corrupted and a lesser good if it can be corrupted (Augustine, 2006: 9). For an entity to be entirely corrupt is for it to cease to exist since it has no subsistent being in which to exist in. Thus, there is nothing to be called evil if there is nothing called good. An entity that is wholly good lacks evil but where there is some evil in a thing, its goodness is defective. A man naturally is a good entity but becomes evil when he is wicked, his goodness becomes defective. Every entity, even if it is a defective one, in so far as it is an entity, is good but in so far as it is defective, it is evil (Augustine, 2006: 10). Though evil and good are contraries, they can co-exist in things or persons that are evil. Evil cannot exist at all without the good or in a thing that is not good but the good can exist wholly without evil in entities. Augustine’s view on the co-existence of good and evil is in consonance with Plantinga’s notion that the presence of evil in the world does not negate the existence of God.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in his “Treatise on the Distinction of Good and Evil” in the *Summa Theologica* acknowledges evil as the absence of the good. One opposite is known through the other; hence, what is evil must be known from the nature of good. Evil is the absence of the good, thus it is neither a being nor a good (Aquinas, 1911: Q[48] A[1]). In the universe, there are two categories of entities; things that their grades of goodness cannot fail and those that their grades of goodness can fail. In the above two grades of entities consists the perfection of the universe. It is in things that can fail in their grades of goodness that evil can be found. The subject of evil is good, for every actual being is good and since evil consists in things that fail in their grades of goodness, therefore, there is no evil without the good (Aquinas, 1911: Q[48] A[2]). A thing cannot entirely be evil and still remains a being; hence, it is only the non-being that can be entirely evil. Every evil in some way has a cause by way of an agent accidentally. Evil has no direct cause but an accidental one and this is the way good is the cause of evil. This is in line with Plantinga’s view that the source of evil in the world is the misuse of the free will by free creatures for the good gift that God gives to the free creatures is the source of evil in the world.

In Theodicy, Leibniz (1646-1716) formed a theodicy to the problem of evil. He maintains that this actual world is the best possible world that could be created by God. God is an all-good and all-knowing being and would have to choose the best of all possible worlds to create. He explains that the source of evil must be sought in the ideal nature of the creatures, in so far as this nature is contained in the eternal verities which are in the understanding of God, independent of his will (Leibniz, 2007: 139). There is an original imperfection in the creatures because they cannot know all, and that they can deceive themselves and commit errors. He typified evil into: metaphysical evil consisting in mere imperfections, physical evil in suffering and moral evil in sins (Leibniz, 2007: 139). God permits but does not will moral evil at all. He also does not will physical evil absolutely but may only be a means to a good end. As for metaphysical evil, it consists in imperfections which are unavoidably present in finite beings. In the free will of man rests the justice of God and the evil in the world. Alvin Plantinga refutes Leibniz’s view on the best possible world because God though omnipotent, could not have actualized just any possible world He pleased. This is contradictory of Plantinga since this position negates the omnipotence of God.

In “On the Miscarriage of all Philosophical Trials in Theodicy”, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in his book *Religion and Rational Theology* defines theodicy as the defense of the highest wisdom of the creator against the charge which reason brings against it for whatever is counter purposive in the world (Kant, 1994: 24). There are three categories of counter purposive phenomena in the world contrasting with three principal attributes of God which co-jointly constitute the moral concept of God. The first is the absolutely counter purposive which is moral evil or sin. This contrasts with God’s holiness. If God is actually holy, why is there moral evil in the world? The second one is the conditional counter purposive which culminates in pains, ills and suffering in the world. This is in contrast with God’s goodness for many cannot understand why God in His goodness allows these to be experienced by His creatures. The third one is the counter purposive resulting from the disproportion between crimes and penalties in the world and this is in contrast with God’s attribute;

justice. Against all these categories of counter purposive phenomena, many have offered theodicies as Kant tried in this essay. Kant after his trials of all previous theodicies maintains that every previous theodicy was not able to untie the knot of defending the highest wisdom against the doubts raised against it because of the implausibility of their submissions. This is because they were doctrinal in their submissions instead of being authentic. All theodicies should truly be an interpretation of nature insofar as God announces His will through it (Kant, 1994: 31). Our reasoning is limited to know the mind of God in order to carry out an authentic theodicy which is made by the law-giver Himself. The mind of God can only be known to humans through an efficient profession of faith and sincerity. This is Alvin Plantinga's view pre-empted, no wonder why he prefers to offer a defense instead of a theodicy.

In "On the Suffering of the World", Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) in his book *The Essays of Schopenhauer: Studies in Pessimism* projects suffering as the direct and immediate object of life. Evil in making its own existence felt is positive. A great part of the torments of existence lies in sickness, poverty, mutilation, loss of sight or reason (Schopenhauer, 2004: 2). Suffering is necessary for every man at all times if not, men would be swollen with arrogance and eventually die of boredom or hang themselves. (Schopenhauer, 2004: 2-3). In the end men would inflict more sufferings on themselves than it has now to accept at the hands of nature. Happiness of any given life if to be measured must not be by its freedom from suffering for this would place the lower animals happier than man. Evil though necessary is always abhorred. Based on the misery that abound in the world and the existence of obvious imperfection of man, Schopenhauer denied the world to be a successful work of an all-wise, all-good and all-powerful Being; God. His view is contrary to that of Plantinga because the existence of evil in the world does not nullify God as the creator of the world for Plantinga.

John Leslie Mackie (1917-1981) in his essay "Evil and Omnipotence" which is domiciled in his book titled *Problem of Evil* negates the existence of an omnipotent God using the traditional problem of evil as a point of inference. He opines that religious beliefs in God are positively irrational because several parts of the essential theological doctrines are inconsistent with one another (Mackie, 1992). For a God who is wholly good and omnipotent should not allow evil to exist in the world. This is a serious logical problem which the theologians shy away from by giving flimsy excuses (theodicies). In these three propositions: God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. The problem lies in the conjunction of the first two propositions with the third. Contradiction arises when some additional premise is added to connect 'good', 'evil' and 'omnipotent'. This is because good is opposed to evil, thus, that a good omnipotent thing exists, and that evil exists, are incompatible (Mackie, 1992). Hence, he concludes that there is no omnipotent, wholly good God. This is because it is obvious enough that this present world is not the best of all possible worlds. Plantinga's free will defense opposes Mackie position for God could not have actualized any possible world He pleased.

In "The Problem of Evil and some Varieties of Atheism", William Rowe (1931-2015) in the book *The Evidential Arguments of Evil* condemns all intense human and animal suffering whether it is a means to a good end or as evil intrinsically. Evil cannot be morally justified to be permitted by an omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good God as claimed by theists. It is an absurd idea that none of these sufferings could have been prevented by an omnipotent being without thereby losing a greater good or permitting an evil at least as bad (Rowe, 1996). The above atheist's claim cannot be justified since we needed to be omniscient before we can account for that position. The theist in a bid to refute the argument of the atheist against the existence of God posits that the omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good God would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse. Rowe evidently was trying to compare theism and atheism with an aim to highlight varieties of atheism. Plantinga maintains that no proposition of the atheologians or atheists can make belief in God irrational.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND ALVIN PLANTINGA'S FREE WILL DEFENSE FOR THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The problem of evil is first and foremost grounded on a type of experience that provides defeasible grounds for believing in the non-existence of God (Gellmann, 1992). The atheologian in positing the problem of evil as

evidence for the refutation of the existence of God put the theists at a crossroad to validate their belief in God. Efforts by the theists to prove the atheologians wrong result in propounding theodicies and free will defenses in their favours. A theodist attempts to say why God permits evil whereas a free will defender's aim is not to say what God's reason is but at most what God's reason might possibly be (Plantinga, 2002: 61). A theodicy would be more satisfying, if possible, to achieve than a defense but our aim in this section of the study is to expose Alvin Plantinga's version of Free Will Defense. The theists opine that a morally perfect, omniscient, and omnipotent Being would permit an evil state of affairs to exist only if that evil state of affairs were logically necessary condition of a good which outweighed it (Plantinga, 2002: 28). Perhaps there are certain good states of affairs that an omnipotent God cannot bring about without permitting evil. God in His omniscience knows and understands the disparity between good and evil. For Him to permit evil state of affairs means that they are important as means to achieve goodness or as means to good ends. This good that God used because of to permit evil states of affairs in the world is the free will which is the ability of one to choose without being compelled to good or evil options. This is a faculty given to human beings and other non-human spirits by God that has made evil and the good found within the human sphere.

The Free Will Defense can be looked at as an effort to show that there may be a very different kind of good that God cannot bring about without permitting evil (Plantinga, 1967: 131). It is an effort to show that (a) "God is omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good" is not inconsistent with the proposition (b) "there is evil in the world" (Plantinga, 2002: 29). The free will defender has a task therefore to show that proposition (a) is consistent with the proposition (b) and to produce another proposition (c) whose conjunction(d) with (a) is consistent and entails (b). The free will defender opines that a world that contains creatures that freely perform good and evil actions or do more good than evil is more valuable than a world that contains creatures that always perform good actions because they cannot do otherwise. The creatures in the latter world are determined and though all their actions are good, they have no value for a free will defender who values free will more than determinism.

God in creating free creatures cannot cause them to perform good actions only for that would be a contradiction. Hence, to create creatures capable of moral good; God would also create creatures capable of moral evil since He created them to have free will. That God created creatures that can exercise their freedom in doing what is wrong does not tell against God's omnipotence or against His goodness for He would forestall the occurrence of moral evil only by removing the possibility of moral good (Plantinga, 1974: 165). The free will defender, therefore, maintains that God possibly has a good reason for permitting evil. The free will defense of Alvin Plantinga is synonymous to what James posited in his letter (James 1:12-14) that evil or sin is birthed when a human being is drawn away and trapped by his or her own evil desire or will.

There are three major objections to the claim of the free will defender from atheologians in a bid to make the defense implausible. The first objection is the one posited by Antony Flew that free will and causal determinism are logically incompatible. His claim is that an omnipotent being could have created men who were free but nonetheless causally determined to perform only right actions (Plantinga, 1967: 132). This objection implies that the free will defense supposes that God can determine free creatures to do what is right. The objection is not plausible because the free will defender does not reserve any room for determinism in the actions of free creatures created by God. This is against the law of excluded middle for one cannot be free and determined at the same time. One can either be free or determined. It was against this background that Plantinga propounded his concept of moral heroism which is a situation whereby human beings are considered as totally free and not in any way determined to perform good actions but due to their preference to be good against all odds that obstruct morality. Those who without any constraint perform good actions only are heroic because it is never easy to be good.

The second objection has John Leslie Mackie as the main proponent. He claims that an omnipotent God could have made men who, though free, and free from any such casual determinism, would on every occasion freely refrain from performing any evil actions. Hence, it would be possible to do what is right, even if one is free to do wrong. If the above is not possible then the free will defender's claim that God is omnipotent is mistaken since by that attribute, He is able to create a world that free creatures could perform only good actions without permitting evil. This objection seeks to contradict the free will defense but it is unsuccessful because the defender does not deny that God can create a world of free creatures that perform good actions alone. But for

God to create a world opined by Mackie; a world of free creatures that can only perform good actions without being causally determined would require an uncoerced concurrence of free creatures with God. God would then depend on the co-operation of the free creatures to do that (Plantinga, 1967: 135). This is the reason why the free will defender prefers a world of free creatures that can perform both good and evil actions. That God permits evil in this actual world is because he possibly has a good reason for that.

The last objection espoused by, McCloskey, Flew and others charge that the Free Will Defense, even if it is successful accounts for only part of the evil; moral evil, leaving physical and natural evil unaccounted for (Plantinga, 1974: 190). To refute this, the free will defender attributes the source of physical evil partly to Satan and his cohort and partly to humans whom may experience physical evil as a reward of their moral evil deeds. The theists would in line with St. Augustine follow a more traditional line of thought by attributing much of the evil we find to Satan and his cohort. Since Satan rebelled against God, he and his cohort had been wreaking havoc on the inhabitants of the world (Plantinga, 2002: 57). Thus, natural evil is caused by free but non-human persons and not God. These actions of these non-human persons create a balance of good over evil for it was not within the power of God to create a world that contains a more favourable balance of good and evil. Natural evil resembles moral evil in that, like the latter, it is the result of the activity of significantly free persons (Plantinga, 2002: 58). Hence, God cannot cause natural evil though He permits it; His permission does not make Him responsible and He does not contradict himself.

From the foregoing and judging from the nature of God, it seems according to the atheologian that God contradicts himself by permitting evil in the world. This is because opposites are contrary and cannot be found in a particular being. They used the law of excluded middle to defend their claim. Hence, God cannot be omniscient or wholly good yet allows evil in the best of all possible worlds, the theists claim He created. Hence, the presence of evil in the world contradicts his goodness and since goodness is in the nature of God, God contradicts Himself. The atheologians use especially, the presence of natural evil to validate their claims. Suffering due to earthquakes, diseases, and the like (Plantinga, 2002: 10).

Whether the existence of God is compatible with the existence of evil is the crux of the efforts of the atheologians in bringing forth arguments from evil against the theists. They hold that the magnitude of the existent evil in the world negates the existence of God. The major proponents of this view are James Cornman and Keith Lehrer in *Philosophical Problems and Arguments* (1969). They conclude that “it is improbable that God; who if he exists, created the world, because the belief that he exists cannot be justified with the evidence we find in the world” (Plantinga, 2002: 58). To refute them, Alvin Plantinga puts up an argument that even if all the evils in the world is broadly moral evil, of all the worlds God could have created, none could have contained a better balance of broadly morally good with respect to broadly moral evil as this actual world (Cornmann et al; 1969: 349). Hence, no magnitude of evil in the world can make the belief in the existence of God improbable.

The free will defender’s project is to show that the proposition (a) “God is omniscient, omnipotent, and wholly good” is consistent with the proposition (b) “there is evil” by providing another proposition (c) “it was not within God’s power to create a world containing good but no moral evil” (Plantinga, 1967: 149). This (c) proposition is consistent with (a) proposition and form the conjunction (d) “God created a world containing moral good” which entails (b) proposition- “there is evil”. Conclusively, free will defense successfully refutes the charge of contradiction brought against the theist. Thus, the problem of evil does not bring about any inconsistency in the belief that God, who is omniscient, omnipotent, and all-good, has created a world containing moral and physical evil (Plantinga, 2002: 54). The source of evil consists in the perverted disposition and volition of free creatures (Oreili, 1884) and not God, though God permits it.

EVALUATION OF ALVIN PLANTINGA’S FREEWILL DEFENSE

Firstly, Alvin Plantinga by using the clause that “God may possibly have a good reason for permitting evil” is very careful of him because that clause alone can refute any atheologians’ claim. He postulated that the free will that God gives man and other free non-human spirits is the source of evil in the world and God permits evil because He cannot make man free and yet determined. This non-absoluteness is what differentiates Plantinga’s Free Will Defense from a theodicy and strengthens his claim over any refutation.

The challenges of the atheologians took both logical and evidential forms (Baker, 2007: 48). The former presents the presence of evil in the world as a contradiction to the existence of God. The latter argues that the known evils of the world if not rendering it improbable that God exists, at least lowers the possibility that He does (Plantinga, 2002: 64). Plantinga using the Free Will Defense refuted the above challenges. The existence of God is compatible, both logically and probabilistically, with the existence of evil.

Again, many philosophers categorize evil into four different types; metaphysical, physical, natural and moral evil. Alvin Plantinga on the contrary categorized evil into two types based on their sources: natural or physical evil and moral evil. At a critical look at them, the study discovers that Plantinga is right in that metaphysical, physical and natural evil can be grouped into one while moral evil is differently. The source of the natural evil is partly non-human free creatures (Satan and his cohorts) and partly as a reward of moral evil. Moral evil is as a result of the actions of free human creatures. He did it in order to favour his Free Will Defense in positing that evil results from the misuse of free will by free creatures.

Nevertheless, the Free Will Defense is better than any theodicy. This is because all theodicies have fundamental problem of correlating the evil in the world which is known by experience, with the moral wisdom of God which is not known (Dembski, 2003). The Free Will Defense in contrast is not absolute in its claim of the reason why God permits evil. Alvin Plantinga's Free Will Defense is quite convincing in that he was able to recognize the seat of non-human and human weakness that gives rise to the evil in the world which is the misuse of the free will given to them by God.

Alvin Plantinga in the conclusion of his Free Will Defense in his book *The Nature of Necessity* (1974) committed an error in limiting the omnipotence attribute of God. He opined that for God to create a world made of free creatures that do good always, He would depend on the co-operation of the free creatures to achieve that (Plantinga, 1974: 190). This negates his stand that God is omnipotent because for any being to be omnipotent, He makes all other beings subjects to Him. Therefore, the omnipotent being cannot depend on His creatures to achieve whatever He wants to achieve.

Moreover, Alvin Plantinga attributes the source of natural evil partly to non-human spirits or Satan and his cohorts (Plantinga, 1967: 149). There is no evidence to prove this stand of his for even the story of Job in the Bible, many have certified to be fictitious. Thus, Plantinga arrives at this view of him by mere human speculation. Though, this is what all philosophers who have attempted to solve the problem of evil have done. The problem of evil is nearly as old as philosophy itself (Gordon, 1920). The more Philosophers try to solve this problem, the more they end up creating more problems.

Finally, Alvin Plantinga narrowed the cause of evil in the world to the misuse of the free will given to the human and the non-human free creatures. This means that a gift that has been given by God to serve a good purpose is the source of evil. This view is quite problematic to human understanding. Alvin Plantinga could have adopted the concept of faith into his Free Will Defense to balance his argument and make it more credible.

CONCLUSION

The atheologians in a bid to make the theists' belief in God irrational and logically inconsistent posited the problem of evil to refute the existence of God. According to them, therefore, the existence of evil is strong evidence against the existence of God. How can an omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good God permit evil. They attribute inconsistency and contradiction to the theistic belief in God due to the presence of evil in the world. Alvin Plantinga in an attempt to refute the atheologians' claim put forth the nature of God, proofs for His existence and his famous Free Will Defense. God's nature is that of absolute goodness, sovereignty, power, His existence is proven cosmologically, ontologically and teleologically and evil can never nullify His existence or belief of His creatures in Him. Alvin Plantinga thus highlighted free will and then maintains that may be God has a good reason for permitting evil.

Again, Alvin Plantinga's Free Will Defense in its strengths and weaknesses remains a logically consistent and non-contradictory defense to the problem of evil. It assures the theists that their belief in God is not irrational

because of existence of evil in the world. Evil personified appears at first sight repulsive (Carnus, 1896), and that made the atheologians to use it to disprove the existence of God by opining that the theist's belief in Him is irrational. They are of that opinion because they understand God as one, who wills evil, but God does not will evil (Tudor, 1916), He permits it. Though no one can say for certain why God permits evil but we know for certain that considering the nature of God, He must have good reason for that permission. The misuse of the free will given by God to the free human and non-human creatures is the source of evil. For a wholly good, omnipotent, and omniscient cannot be the source of evil though He permits it due to a good reason; the gift of free will to human beings and nonhuman agents or spirits. In all, the free will defense is both convincing and at least fairly compelling.

Finally, it is worth noting here that the problem of evil is still an open, complex, and controversial topic in philosophy of which the existence of evil in the world stands as strong evidence against the existence of God who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent. Though the theodicies and defense of theists go a long way in helping to understand the perennial philosophical problem, it remains an open issue in philosophy without an objective conclusion. The Free will Defense that espouses that God has given free will to humans, allowing them to choose good or evil is an exceptional defense but not without its defects. The presence of evil may lead to some greater good, such as: human freedom, human self-reliance and devotion to God. Without the human free will, they cannot be good or evil in the true sense, hence, they would be conditioned to be good or evil. The gift of free will to humans make the reward for being truly good possible and births moral heroism for choosing to be good when they have the chance of being evil. Therefore, the presence of evil may be necessary in God's plan, even if we do not understand it.

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