
THEODICY: A KUHNIAN INTERVENTION

INTRODUCTION

Theodicy is the justification of God in spite of the preponderant magnitude of evil which characterizes our world. It is a defence of Christian orthodoxy against presumed assaults involving suffering and evil (Sleigh 481). In some other interpretations, it is a theistic response to the question as to whether theism is justified within our understanding of evil and suffering in the world (Stone 326). For Alvin Plantinga, theodicy is a theological construct which attempts to vindicate God in spite of the evidential and existential problem of evil that seems inconsistent with God's omnipotence, omniscience and omni-benevolence. In literature, it is mostly believed that the idea of a God defined in terms of properties such as omni-benevolence, omniscience, and omnipotence is inconceivable in contrast with an idea of a world substantially marked by evil. This is the bane of every exercise which attempts to justify God within the enormous degree of sufferings and pains experienced in our world. This seems to be the concerns of the discourse of theodicy. In its theoretical formulation, theodicy appears to be involved in providing credible understanding to three fundamental assumptions. The first is whether or not there are rational grounds available for the justification of moral evil. Secondly: is a belief in God intelligibly supported within the enormity of evil in our world? And lastly, does God have the power, knowledge and goodwill to avert suffering and evil which evidently taunt his creation? (Surin 233) These assumptions are somewhat akin to J. L. Mackie's discourse on "Logical Problem of Evil" in which three propositions whose semantics are seen to be evidently incompatible, are given. "God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet, evil exists" (Mackie 200). Mackie argues that there seems to be certain contradiction generated by these three propositions for it would be preposterous to accept them without engendering a logical absurdity. Presumably, the acceptance of any two must force a rejection of the third. However, theodicy is committed to the acceptance of these propositions but cannot consistently adhere to their coherence indicating a problem theodicy is yet to address. This is because there seems to be a convoluted understanding of the semantics domicile in the two fields of the discourse involving an idea of God and the existence of evil. Surin has equally proposed some other reasons why no satisfactory response could be given to any form of theodicy. This shall be examined later in the study. I do not propose a discourse of evil relative to an idea of God for doing so will ultimately return us to the scholastic problem of the author of sin, nor do I attempt a discourse of its origin at this point. In a somewhat re-enactment of Kenneth Surin's advocacy, I propose that approaching discourse of evil as a counterfactual to a justification of God can at best produce an exercise which progresses in error.

Evil: An overview

Although a discussion on the origin of evil is not intended, it is important to briefly outline its contours and the extent to which it could provide further understanding to the ultimate goal of this study. In doing this, it is important to mention that phenomenon of evil is co-existential with man. In the religious perspective, evil is assumed to have entered into discourse of human existence in the garden of Eden created by God for His creatures including Adam and Eve, our supposedly first parents. Equally significant in the setting of the garden and its habitants is the

consideration of two important realities; the tree of life and the serpent. These realities, though are said to be myth, occupy certain place in the examination of the whole discourse of evil particularly with reference to whether God is the author of sin or not. Following the narratives in the scripture, it would be indubitable to want to maintain that the tree in the middle of the garden and the serpent play crucial roles in the fall of man. The response to the inquiry concerning the author of sin seems to go in favour of the atheists who would argue that the episode in the garden of Eden only suggests God as the culprit. If the fall of Adam and Eve and the subsequent dethronement of the condition of the original state of man was ushered by these two realities, then it might be argued that the author of them all: God whose knowledge, goodness and power surpasses all things, had the stage set for the realization of His intention; whatever this intention may be. Ascertaining the intention of God has constituted the focus of scholarship particularly in the inquisition as to whether God is able to overcome evil or not. But by what means are we able to understand God's mind? Who may interpret God sufficiently in terms of His creation? What might best describe this process can be no more than conjectures or body of guesses tentatively waiting for refutation. This seems to suggest that the propositions that seek a rational justification of God in the face of its counterfactual can hardly communicate any sort of intelligibility.

Brian Davies, in his preface to Aquinas' *On Evil* examines the nature of evil. He asks: "Is anything objectively evil? Is anything objectively good? How does what is evil differ from what is good? Can there be evil without good? Does evil have a cause? Does goodness have a cause?" (vii). The responses to these questions are not yet conclusive. The problem of evil antedates the Christian era and received its first formulation in the works of Epicurus (341-270 B.C) but succinctly and successively defined by David Hume in the following words: "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?" (Hume 22-23). Boethius, having been incarcerated, similarly posed the question concerning what appears to be a case of incompatibility between the idea of a God who might exist and the evidential problem of sin and suffering in our world. Deducing from this inquisition is a reasoning that informs this problem which can be modestly formulated in the following lines: If God is omnipotent, by this definition, he should possess the ability to do all things as well as prevent evil if he wanted to. And if God is perfectly and morally good, then he should be willing to prevent evil if he chooses to. The existence and persistence of evil in the world, within the understanding of a God who is omnipotent and omnibenevolent, inescapably presents a logical absurdity to human comprehension. The problem of evil is then understood as both logical and evidential. In the sense of how human intellect seems to lack the luster and capacity to grasp the reality of evil vis-a-vis an all-good, all-knowing and all powerful God, a logical problem is presented involving what is usually referred to as consistency problem. The enormity of evil, which has defined our world in such an exponential degree is an empirical affirmation that constitutes evidential nature of the problem.

Evil as a phenomenon has been given various interpretations in literature. Some have argued that good cannot exist without evil implying that good and evil are both sides of the same coin. No good without evil neither will there be evil without good. They are just corollary in the sense that one is a natural deduction of the other. The question concerning the author of sin still begs for an answer. If God is the author of good and good cannot exist without evil, then it might be inferred that God is the author of evil as well. This line of reasoning further interrogates properties of God such as omnipotence. Are all things created by God really

good? Is God not limited in his powers for if he is not, then he should be able to create good and will good without necessarily having such good as a counterpart of evil. Either God is not omnipotent or omnipotence must be understood in terms of God's inability to do what is logically incompatible with his nature. Perhaps the word 'inability' is a wrong term to describe the divine, expecting good without evil would be a logical impossibility. This view seems sufficient to justify the temperament of the theist who is willing to maintain that omnipotence of God finds plausibility within the assumption that evil is a phenomenon that is incompatible with God's nature and so, God will not do evil. However, for the theist willing to acknowledge God's omnipotence without such restriction, the assumption generated is the arbitrariness of God in choosing and acting which seems to indict and trivialize the order and harmony in God. This path to describing evil fails to exonerate the theist from a theistic motivated discourse of God and evil.

Another interpretation given to problem of evil is its perception as instrumental to good. This is to argue that, although evil is not a counterpart to good, every evil perceived as such aims at certain good. A teleological interpretation of this sort compels an affirmation of knowledge of causal laws involving cause and effect or means and end. If good is the end sort, but that this end cannot be attained unless there is certain evil, then it could be maintained that evil is the means to this end or the cause of the effect. However, the interpretation of omnipotence by the theist cannot be plausible within the confinement of God to causal laws; for God is understood as the author of causality. A theistic interpretation of problem of evil in this perspective seems to have failed in addressing the core of the problem.

That the universe is better with some evil in it than it would have been without it is suggestive of the idea that this is the best possible world. If God is perfectly good, all-powerful and all-knowing, then whatever he creates subject to his willing and choosing must be the best. The present world as known to us is the best of all possible worlds that God might have created. Since God is perfect and infinite, he would not have created infinite or perfect things otherwise, other Gods would have been created. Proceeding from his infinite nature are finite and imperfect entities which ultimately make up for pluses and minuses. A world entirely good without evil, though conceivable, is unattainable. According to Leibniz, the best possible world is that constituted by optimal balance of all possible values (Lawhead 287). Mackie argues that a world described as better with some evil than if there were no evil in it is marked by certain second order good such as benevolence, heroism, sympathy, etc, which is implicated by certain first order evil involving pains, diseases and misery (206). By this description of the world, God seems not exonerated from the authorship of sin and suffering.

The belief that evil proceeds from human freewill has been proposed by various theists including St. Augustine. The discourse of human freewill has often generated controversy as to whether or not humans are truly free given the condition of necessity under which humans must act. If evil is a function of the perversity of the human will, then question must be asked as to whether there could be humans who are infallibly guaranteed not to sin. Although the freewill of man is a defining characteristic of its rationality by which humans are demarcated from other creatures, the consequences that result from the act of choosing, as effects produced, are sometimes traced back to the cause by which these effects are generated in the first place. This is to surreptitiously describe God, not only as the author of human freewill, but the cause of the effect that may ensue from the application of such will whether good or evil. A position in this direction of opposition to theodicy is often described by this temperament. Of

course, a few more questions may arise from this. Is God incapable of creating humans that are infallibly guaranteed to always choose the good? On the part of God's creative prowess, if there may be no logical impossibility for man to freely choose the good on some occasions, then there may be no logical impossibility for God to have created humans who will always not choose amiss. A reasoning that is proposed to exonerate God from creating such humans as would be defended by theistic motivated scholars, only questions the omnipotence and omnibenevolence of God. These are some interpretations given in attempts to proffer solutions to the problem of evil. According to Mackie, these are fallacious attempts toward the resolution of the problem (Mackie 200-207).

Kenneth Surin has outlined certain reasons why attempts toward formulating credible response to problem of evil are fraught with failure. A neglect of the historical antecedent surrounding this problem only shows an intellectual rupture between the scholastics and the succeeding enlightenment period. Given what Surin refers to as 'historicity of understanding', it might be implausible, in the present age, to legitimately address problem of evil via some intellectual inquiries similar to what was the case in previous centuries. A discourse of theodicy may be intelligible in a world presumably administered by a God involving the assumption that the earth is at the centre of the universe and that humans occupy special space in this world such as was described in Aristotelean worldview. A shift from this orientation or worldview is a shift of intellectual horizon which makes such a discourse unintelligible in relation to an emerging worldview. Perhaps it is important to mention briefly that a worldview is "a system of beliefs that are interconnected in something like the way the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle are interconnected. That is, a worldview is not merely a collection of separate, independent, unrelated beliefs, but is instead an intertwined, interrelated, interconnected system of beliefs" (Dewitt 27). Some of the beliefs of Aristotle which informed his worldview include the beliefs that the earth is at the center of the universe (geocentrism) with other planetary bodies orbiting around it. The four elements, which constitute the sublunar region namely; earth, water, air and fire characterized by imperfection, as well as ether in the superlunar region, involving a perfect circular and uniform motion, all operate according to their essential natures. What then makes the discourse of theodicy favorable in the Aristotelean worldview? One philosophical/conceptual implication derived from the Aristotelean belief system among others, reveals that since it is believed that God created the heavens and the earth, and with an anthropocentric understanding that humans are the most valuable of God's creation, then it can only be inferred that humans form the focus of God's attention and so the justification of the belief that the earth is at the center of the universe. By this, it is maintained that God is omnibenevolent, omniscient and omnipotent. Evil of any sort cannot be associated with him. Although Aristotle did not associate any of his ideas with God's proprietary of the universe, Christian theologians of the medieval period recognized that the adoption of his views is instrumental to a process of Christianization of the universe. A point of departure from Aristotelean orientation and by extension the discussions on theodicy is the emergence of Newtonian mechanics ultimately heralding the age of enlightenment and the new science. The earth-centered universe could no longer be justified in the face of new findings compelled by the inventions of telescope. Geocentrism was considered anachronistic and supplanted by a Sun-centered universe involving the belief that the sun is at the center of the universe while the earth as well as other planetary bodies move in an elliptical orbit around the sun in 24hrs. Entities are directed not by any essential nature but according to external forces represented in the mechanistic system of the universe. The understanding of the universe for this purpose,

requires a justification of a Godless but mechanistic, rigid and nature oriented universe in which the universe runs according to its course independent of a divine cosmic orderer (Becker 18). With the absence of a cosmic orderer and an elevation of mechanistic conception of the universe, the problem of evil must assume a shift of ontological commitment from that which utilizes principle of a God relating to the world, to a universe directed along the line of mechanical laws of nature. The intellectual horizons of these two worldviews must become disparate and theodicy must be supplanted by 'anthropodicy' (Surin 228). 'Anthropodicy' is then a consequence of the historical condition engendered by the enlightenment in which the principle of a cosmic orderer is replaced by a machine-like and mechanistic universe. The discourse of theodicy therefore seems no longer sustainable within modern and postmodern intellectual horizons since human existential condition dominates any divine interest in the universe.

The abstract conception of evil seems to constitute another encumbrance to a credible discourse of theodicy according to Surin. The evidential problem of evil seems to trivialize claims of theodicists leaving theodicy at a level of mere theoretical formulation, though Surin thinks justification of this is not as easy as it seems. It is not implausible to assume that the various explanations of evil do not in any way alleviate the stark reality of evil which stares us in the face. This is what Paul Ricoeur calls 'the bad faith of theodicy' since its articulation is not from the stand point of victims of evil and so theodicy does not seem to triumph over real evil beyond mere rhetoric.

Surin identifies a third reason toward unsuccessful formulation of theodicy involving the application of principles of reason to a discourse that defies all rational principles. By this, I wish to add that a discourse of God and evil in our world cannot assume application of standard of measurement by which methods of inquisition and conceptualization in one can compare with the other. To attempt such comparison is to assume a common measure between two incompatible paradigms with conceptual and methodological disparity. There is little sense in how such an attempt can engender plausibility for it can at best unveil a condition leading to what Gilbert Ryle refers to as 'Category Mistake'.

The discourse of evil in literature, it must be noted, is usually more complex than what has been presented in the current paper. This study is not limited to a theological interpretation of theodicy for threading on this path only makes every attempt toward its resolution more intractable. A philosophico-scientific approach is hereby proposed which utilizes the application of Kuhn's method to the consideration of these fields of discourse (Divinity and Humanity) as paradigms which are often incommensurable. In doing this, it is important to first examine few attempts at resolving problem of evil. I shall consider the views of three theodicists namely St. Augustine, St. Thomas and Leibniz.

In its theoretical perspective, problem of evil revolves around certain belief and assumption that there is a God who is all-knowing, all-powerful and all-good; yet there is evil. This assumption usually presents certain inconsistency and logical absurdity in what is referred to as consistency problem. A response to this problem is somewhat contained in St. Augustine's idea of greater good defense which seems to be subsequently adopted by St. Thomas. According to St. Augustine, if God is the highest good, he would certainly will to prevent evil. And if there appears to be a counterfactual of this conclusion, then his omnipotence and omnibenevolence are such as to unveil a good in the midst of evil. On the reading of this latter position, it would not be implausible to want to conclude that an all-good and all-knowing God permits evil for the purpose of certain good. Reading from Robert Sleigh, Augustine's defence

of the greater good would imply that it is morally acceptable for an agent to permit, and, in some cases, even to cause, an evil state of affairs to obtain, provided that there is some good state of affairs such that the agent cannot bring about the obtaining of the good state of affairs without the obtaining of the evil state of affairs and provided further that it is better for both states of affairs to obtain than neither.(482)

This position is somewhat similar to a construction that seems to recognize the obtaining of good state of affairs and the obtaining of an evil state of affairs explicated by a process of causal relatedness without which such explanation of greater good defence becomes implausible. Reading from Surin, John Hick maintains that all forms of sufferings ultimately advance God's purpose in creation. Our souls, despite the suffering in our world, can grow intimately into a true and lasting relationship with its creator; God (238), suggesting that evil and sufferings in the world are causally related to certain good. Similarly, Augustine's reasoning on evil encourages a process that seeks to explain the causal relatedness of evil and good. He avers that question concerning evil can be addressed in three ways namely; that evil is instrumental to achieving good, that evil is not an independent reality but a form of privation or a lack and lastly that evil is a product of human perversity (Lawhead 150-151). In all these, Augustine's solution to the problem of evil seems to be located in his free-will defence. We do believe, with little doubt, that man is a free being marked by rationality which demarcates him from every other creature, although opposing views are available to challenge this position. Some of these antitheses involve the question as to whether man is really free within the context of God's foreknowledge and foreordination of human actions. If God knows ahead of time every action and choice one would make in such a way as to make God's knowledge of the choice of my action a causal factor to whatever effect is afterward produced, then human actions cannot be said to be free (Lawhead 149). If God had the infallible foreknowledge of the authorship of this paper you are reading, it would then mean that its author could not have done otherwise suggesting that there was no choice left other than to author this paper. So what does it mean to be free according to Augustine? For him, the omniscience of God does not preclude us from choosing that which we would ultimately choose. In spite of the complex nature of human agency, (*que sera sera*) what will be will be and this is already contained in the mind of God. With this background therefore, Augustine tries to show that human free-will is the first cause (*causa prima*) of moral evil which he refers to as genuine evil. Moral evil then is to be conceptualized as a product of human perversity involving a defective will turning away from God. It is a privation of the will created good by God which ultimately is directed away from the good as a result of its perversion. The corruptibility of the human will does not in any way diminishes the all-goodness, omniscience and omnipotence of God for such infirmity can only lead to certain ultimate good. God therefore brings forth good from the universe which seemingly is characterized by evil but whose perfect moral order must be preserved (Stone 326). This is the free-will defense of Augustine to problem of evil. Surin maintains that such a defense as well as Hick's 'soul-making' response to evil appear insufficient to respond to the atheist and so the task of theodicy in providing answer to the riddle of evil appears to be insurmountable (241).

Aquinas refers to evil not only in terms of wicked deeds but as well as badness across the board which often manifests in human behaviour. It is a privation; a failure or deficiency, something less than good. It is a lack in what is already good in itself (Aquinas 14). It is an unintended or accidental and by-product of some desired good (Stone 326). Aquinas maintains that evil is a shortcoming, having no independent existence and so cannot be conceived as being 'there'

other than that something 'is missing'. Therefore, what is not there in the sense of concrete existence cannot be thought of as constituting the beingness of a being and so could not have been created by God (Aquinas 21). For Aquinas, evil cannot be said to be a part of the fabric of the universe but parasitic to it (21). In the writings of Stone, Aquinas maintains that God permits certain 'malumponae' literally translated as 'evil of penalty' involving natural or physical evil because they are necessary concomitants to a world that is good according to God's will (326). By contrast, 'malumculpa' literally referred to as 'evil of fault' involving moral evil often proceeds from human action and it is by this understanding human freedom is said to connect with the question of evil in our world. This Aquinas calls 'evil done' as against 'evil suffered' deriving from natural or physical evil. Although Aquinas thinks God may be regarded as the accidental cause of 'malumponae', he contends that "human beings are the per accidens cause of all physical evils that are not willed by God. This is so because such evils are themselves by-products of moral evils, all of which are caused per accidens by finite human individuals in the exercise of free will" (Stone 327). What is clear from Aquinas' position is that God may have permitted the occurrence of natural evil in the world, it is important to note that natural/physical evil, especially those not willed by God, ultimately proceeds from moral evil and this makes humans culpable to the degree by which they exercise their freedom. Following from the Thomistic response above, it could be deduced that 'malumponae' derives from 'malumculpa' in the manner in which evil done by men heavily implicates on evil suffered by men.

Leibniz's theodicy is essentially a defense of God's justice in relation to a world inevitably burdened by evil. According to him, a perfect God cannot but possess the power to create the best possible world. Although no world can be totally perfect or be devoid of evil, this world as a creation of God must be understood as possessing balance of good and evil (Stone 327) since the obtaining of certain evil state of affairs can be instrumental to the obtaining of certain good state of affairs. Central to Leibniz's defence of justice of God are the propositions affirming the world, in its present state mixed with balance of evil and good, as the best of all possible worlds. By the best possible world, Leibniz means the sum of history of the world taken as a whole is better than any other that could possibly be told. God is compared to a screenwriter who, prior to the production of a movie, has several possible plots and characters but is able to choose from among these possibilities the best to produce his movie. From among all the possible worlds conceived in the infinite mind of God, the perfection of God required that the best possible world emerged (Lawhead 286). In about four propositions, Leibniz formulated a proof to show this world as the best of all possible worlds that could ever have been created by God.

1 God is a morally perfect, all-knowing, and all-powerful being.

2 A morally perfect, all-knowing and all-powerful being always chooses the best of all possible alternatives.

3. God chose to create this world.

4 Therefore, this is the best of all possible worlds (Lawhead 287)

Leibniz's four- step proof subtly replicates the features of deductive reasoning in which the strong evidential link between the premises and the conclusion necessarily guarantees the inference of the conclusion from the premises. If God is all that He is taken to be, in addition with all actions deducible from such nature, then he has created the best of all possible worlds. However, the soundness of this argument has often been contested by those whose religious temperament is counterintuitive to that of the theists. The discourse of theodicy then, so long

as it is examined within the parameters of the scholastics, undermines any attempt toward its resolution. This is because there seems to be a disparity between the language and conceptualization of the scholastics involving a deep commitment to religion and that of the contemporary intellectualism which was ushered by the advent of modern science of the 16th and 17th centuries involving an understanding of a mechanistic and desacralized universe (Surin 227). It is for the reason of such linguistic and conceptual disparity that Kuhn advanced his thesis of incommensurability of paradigms in such a manner as to argue that two orientations, theories, worldviews, paradigms or constellations are said to be incommensurable for as long as they are inexorably formulated in mutually exclusive and untranslatable languages (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 669-670). If two orientations are calibrated in divergent languages, then meaningful communication may as well have been barred between adherents operating in the two orientations. For a better appreciation of Kuhn's position, it is important to examine the content of thesis of incommensurability.

Kuhn's Thesis of Incommensurability

Kuhn's rendition of the thesis of incommensurability, a term he and Paul Feyerabend had borrowed from mathematics, was essentially to show that meanings of scientific concepts such as 'mass', 'force', 'element' or 'compound' often changed in the domain in which they were deployed (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 669). This is to maintain that “it was impossible to define the terms of one theory in the vocabulary of the other” (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 669) and so implies a conceptual or linguistic disparity between one theory or worldview and the other. In literature, discussion of incommensurability has often taken the following interpretation. That “if two theories are incommensurable, they must be stated in mutually untranslatable languages” (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 669-670). This interpretation, according to Hilary Putnam, presents severe implications for any meaningful discourse of inter-personal or inter-framework intelligibility. One is that the absence of a single language between two theories or orientations only makes the basis for any form of comparison unintelligible and therefore no theory of choice is possible. Any attempt conducing to comparison only presupposes there is a ground shared which might provide for meaning invariance. The other implication of thesis of incommensurability, according to Hilary Putnam, is the supposition that “it is impossible to translate old theories into a modern language” (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 670).

The term 'incommensurability', in its local usage, was originally adopted from mathematics to indicate that “the hypotenuse of an isosceles right triangle is incommensurable with its side or the circumference of a circle with its radius in the sense that there is no unit of length contained without residue an integral number of times in each member of the pair”... suggesting that “there is thus no common measure” which metaphorically Kuhn interprets as no common language (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 670). Kuhn however argues that absence of common measure does not bar comparison between theories and orientations only on the account of meaning invariance between theories and practices for which comparison is often sought (*Commensurability* 670). Incommensurability, employed in its metaphoric sense, would mean there cannot be a common or neutral language between which two theories can be translated without residue. This is because meanings of terms and concepts often change in their new domain of application. If this is the case, then it would not be implausible to admit that meaning variance derives from language-use between theories particularly in terms of the inter-defined terms. The issue that borders on question of meaning variance involves whether there can be

'equivalent text' in terms of sameness of meaning and reference in the languages of theories or orientations in question. Upon this consideration, Kuhn affirms that a translated text can tell, describe or present more or less same story, situation or ideas as much as contained in the original text (*Commensurability* 672). However, Kuhn notes that certain terms, which are responsible for meaning invariance or that preserve meanings across theory-change provide sufficient ground upon which theory of choice becomes meaningful. It is therefore within the former interpretation that Kuhn takes incommensurability as tantamount to incomparability (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 671). Kuhn's idea of incommensurability has certain attractiveness particularly in the consideration of notions such as 'translation' and 'interpretation'. For Kuhn, these two terms are not to be understood as appealing to the same meaning (*Commensurability* 672-673). Problems of meaning often arise when one supposes that translation can be intelligible only when construed as having referential connection with objects of the external world. Whereas translation may involve certain interpretative components, it is not to be construed as interpretation. In translation, co-referential descriptions between languages of two theories or orientations may be unavailable and so such universes of discourse may suffer translation failure. Although Philip Kitcher supposes that translation is a function of reference-determination, Kuhn thinks this is preposterous for to limit translation to this condition without evoking other factors such as intensions, sense and concepts would make nonsense of translation particularly in the area of works of fiction which often lack referents (*Commensurability* 674-679).

Kuhn's thesis of incommensurability, in its explication, is somewhat arcane than what has been provided in this text. However, the landmark of the current discourse is to be located in the idea of incommensurability in terms of conceptual disparity which may ensue amongst speakers of languages for which co-referential descriptions are unavailable. This might be partly due to the fact "that different languages impose different structures on the world" (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 682), and so matching terms or words with referents is usually a function of sameness in cultures, conceptual schemes and certain canons of conceptualization without which such universality of meaning or meaning invariance becomes unattainable.

The application of Kuhn to a discourse of theodicy requires a demonstration of certain terms such as 'spiritualism', 'immateriality', 'immutability', 'immortality', 'infinitude', and 'materiality', 'mortality', 'finitude', 'physicalism' as belonging to two different orientations, worldviews or universes of discourse in such a manner that presents them as incommensurable. It might be suggested that the discourse of theodicy can be seen to involve a discussion between two linguistic worldviews with one, though not necessarily exclusive of the other, perceived as incompatible with the other. This incompatibility is further explained in terms of a conceptual disparity which might attend their adherents. In the next section, this paper shall sketchily show how the discourse of theodicy can be said to involve two fundamental linguistic worldviews namely; the language capable of eliciting meaning of spiritual reality on the one hand and the one branded for the mortal world on the other. These languages may be incompatible to the degree to which the referents and sense of one presents certain measures of incommensurability with the other.

Discourse of Theodicy as worldviews

Mention was made earlier of worldview as "a system of beliefs that are interconnected in something like the way the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle are interconnected. That is, a worldview is not merely a collection of separate, independent, unrelated beliefs, but is instead an

intertwined, interrelated, interconnected *system* of beliefs” (Dewitt 27). Theodicy might be perceived to involve a discourse representing two mutually exclusive worldviews with untranslatable language. It is the extent to which Kuhn refers to paradigm as certain achievements in science, acknowledged by the community as supplying the foundation for further practice (Kuhn, *The Structure* 10) in such a manner as to make these practices and activities meaningful and coherent that paradigm is akin to worldview. There may be no history natural or (unnatural) capable of interpretation outside these achievements which are unprecedented involving belief systems, theoretically and methodologically interconnected like pieces of jigsaw puzzle upon which further evaluation and criticism can be made (Kuhn, *The Structure* 16-17). The point this paper seems to make is that two discourses with two collateral histories and incompatible schemes are involved in the discourse of theodicy. It seems to us that histories of the nature of the divine involving immortality, infinitude and immutability and that of materiality, mortality and finitude are imposed on us in a discourse that seeks to justify the divine in relation with the profane. Attempting to rationally discuss the divine within the language of the profane is tantamount to an exercise that progresses in error. Although the latter may not possess any other language to communicate the divine, it is important to note that such communication will often be adjudged as disparate owing to the fact that co-referential descriptions between the two histories and languages may be unavailable. Imagine the terms 'good' and 'evil' which have mostly delineated every discourse of theodicy. These terms may not elicit same meaning in terms of sameness of referents and sense within the two collateral histories or universes of discourse. This is because they would appear to represent clusters of interrelated or inter-defined set whose meaning cannot be acquired independent of the history, orientation, universe and worldview in which such a discussion occurs (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 676). Further examination of this position would imply that certain terms whose meanings depend solely on the circumstances of their conceptualization may not be understood or translated independent of the circumstances of their meaningfulness (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 677). It must be noted that this paper recognizes the problem associated with meaning particularly in terms of whether meaningfulness of proposition should depend on its sense according to Frege or on its referential connection in the judgement of Russell. In as much as the problem of meaning continues to form an essential undercurrent of philosophy of language, the current paper does not suggest its resolution. However, the position this paper pursues in the above is further highlighted by the fact that the language of, say for example, Newtonian science such as 'force' and 'mass' is said to suffer translation failure into any other physical theory such as Aristotelean physics or even Einsteinian mechanics (Kuhn, *Commensurability* 677). The terms 'divinity' and 'humanity' are mutually exclusive such that the effects experienced in one universe naturally compels us to deduce its cause from the other. There may be no sameness of culture or reference-determination available in these worldviews and so it would be impossible to define the terms such as 'good', 'evil', 'morally perfect', 'omnipotence', 'omniscience' which reflect the structure of one universe or worldview in the vocabulary of the other. To know what gamut of meaning assigned to such terms in a universe with such degree of infinitude is to assume the mind of an infinite being. How then can a finite mind adequately conceptualize the infinite without the restrictions of its finitude? How do finite beings presume the mind of God in terms of the divine standard employed in measuring what is good or evil? Although certain attempts have been made to provide answer to this puzzle, the inability of humans to understand the structure of the divine universe should not be a subject of

controversy. For example, Leibniz's response to the question of whether God is the author of sin or not can only be plausible for a theist who would not wish to cast any doubt on the holiness of God. But this response can at best be preposterous to someone who finds Leibniz' philosophico-theological temperament unacceptable. If the linguistic structure of the infinite universe were to share sameness of reference and meaning with that of the finitude, then no controversy might ensue concerning commensurability of meaning between the two universes of discourse. However, this is not so. The nature of the disagreement that characterizes discourse of theodicy in literature should readily point to the degree of conceptual disparity which makes meaning across the divide incommensurable.

Conclusion

The position this paper seems to pursue, as unfolding as it may seem, suggests that the boundaries which border the discourse of theodicy remain obscure. The nature of this obscurity is displayed by the controversies which have defined the discourse in literature. Some of the crucial questions which require further examination consist in whether or not there is a rational justification for a God who is all-good, all-powerful and all-knowing in spite of the suffering and pains in our world. Closely connected with the above claim is further inquisition into the intelligibility and plausibility of a belief in such a God particularly in terms of its existence and attributes. Supposing the existence of this God is affirmed, his ability and willingness to prevent evil is still subject of controversy. Why a discourse of theodicy in its present form, according to Surin, is off the mark is often located in the intellectual rupture between the scholastic and the enlightenment traditions leading to convoluted intellectual horizon emanating from lack of understanding of the histories of these traditions. According to Surin, "...the epoch in which we live is precisely one in which this presupposition is no longer sustainable. If this argument holds, then the theodicist is one whose sense of "the historicity of understanding" is non-existent or at best defective: he sets out to "solve" a problem which presupposes an intellectual horizon that is no longer available to individuals like us who live in a secular or desacralized age" (226). From the above, it could be deduced that secularism in form of scientism has transformed the concerns of theodicy to a discourse of anthropodicy. This paper notes some of those positions advanced toward a resolution of the problem of evil. Some of these suggest that evil is a privation; an instrument to some sort of good in view; a phenomenon emanating from human perversity; a necessary concomitant to a world already created good by God and yet many more positions. The thesis of this paper is that the discourse of theodicy involves two worldviews with two mutually untranslatable languages owing to the absence of, not only same co-referential descriptions but lack of sameness of meaning as well. Any discussion between these two divides would suffer translation failure due to conceptual disparity which makes meaning across them incommensurable. The fact of incompatibility of these universes of discourse, in a certain manner and degree, then provides for meaning variance suggesting that these two worldviews are not to be compared in terms of the sort of meaning that is conveyed by the terms occurring in both. If this is so, then it might be implausible to continue to suppose that the three propositions maintained by the theist, although adjudged as logically incoherent, do not constitute any problem at the realm of meaning. Of course, they do. It would appear to be a problem once we attempt to examine discourse of God and his attributes vis-a-vis problem of evil with the application of principle of reason. This is because such a tool is incommensurable with the nature of reality we seek to understand. What reason helps us to achieve, as shown above, is that discourse of theodicy appears lopsided and if properly understood as such, problems associated with it may not have arisen in the first place. Toward this direction therefore, problem of evil does not arise for the theist for he does not see how evil, which is a mere privation and a necessary part of the world created by God as good, as constituting a challenge to a belief in an omniscient, omnipotent and omni-benevolent God. Neither would an atheist consider this a problem for he hardly would accept the existence of a God with all the attributes associated with him. The problem of theodicy can only arise for anyone who believe that the existence of an infinitely good, morally perfect and all-knowing God is irreconcilable with the stark reality of evil.

REFERENCES

- Becker, Ernest. *The Structure of Evil: An essay on the unification of the science of Man*. New York: Free Press, 1976
- Dewitt, Richard. *Worldviews: An Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science*. United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell. 2010
- Hume, David. *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion [Reprinted in God and Evil]: Readings in the theological problem of Evil*. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964
- Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Third Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962
- , "Commensurability, Comparability, Communicability" in *Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, Vol. Two, Symposia and invited papers, 1982. Pp. 669-688
- Lawhead, William. *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*. 4th ed. Stanford: Cengage learning. 2015
- Mackie, J. L. "Evil and Omnipotence" in *Mind, New Series*. Vol. 64, No. 254, 1955. Pp. 200-212
- Sleigh, R. C. jr. "Leibniz's First Theodicy" in *Wiley. Philosophical Perspectives, 10, Metaphysics*, 1996. Pp. 481-499
- Stone, M. W. F. "The Philosophy of Religion" in *Philosophy 2: Further through the subject*. Grayling, A.C. (Ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. Pp. 269-350
- Surin, Keneth. "Theodicy" in *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol.76, No. 2, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge University Press, 1983. Pp. 225-247
- Thomas, Aquinas. *On Evil*. Richard Regan (Tr.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003