A Critique of John Hick's 'Soul-Making' Theodicy

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Abstract

Man is faced with terrific misfortunes, frightening disasters and tormenting pains. We recently experienced the Covid19 pandemic that caused numerous deaths, crippled social ties, and created a socially and psychologically battered society. There are cases of floods, fire outbreaks, earthquakes and other natural disasters that sweep homes, degrade lives and create excruciating suffering. Cases of organ failures and terminal illnesses like cancer have increased even in our country, Nigeria.All the experiences of incomprehensible andinexplainable human pain engender doubts inthe hearts of believers and strengthen disbelief in the hearts of atheists (nonbelievers). This issue constitutes what we call 'the problem of evil'. The problem is that God cannot be benevolent, all-knowing and all-loving and yet evil continues to pervade the world. John Hick argues that human beings are created in the imperfect world to be perfected by experiences of pain and suffering. The aim of this paper is to respond to the depressing feeling of emptiness, meaninglessness and hopelessness occasioned by the presence of evil in the world. The aim is to offer meaning to our imperfect world and engender trust in divine order.The thesis of this paper is that the presence of evil in the world is not incompatible with the existence of God. Adoptingthe analytic approach, this paper looks at Hick's response to the problem of evil, relating himtothe teaching of Thomas Aquinas on God and evil.

Keywords: dysteleological, Evil, God, 'Soul-making', Theodicy

Introduction

That evil exists in the world is obvious, and a strong belief is also that an all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing God exists. The presence of unmerited and unexplainable evil in the world creates worries and doubts about evil in those who believe in the existence of God. Among many philosophers who attempt an explanation of the compatibility of evil and the existence of God is John Hick, who does so through his soul-making theodicy. A theodicy is an attempt to explain the place of evil in a world made by God. In explaining the meaning of theodicy, Brian Davies says: "It typically seeks to give reasons for evil in the light of belief in God so as, in the words of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), 'to justify the ways of God to men'."[1] We seek in this paper to provide a critique of the soul-making theodicy of John Hick (1904-1989).The problem of evil as it confronts the existence of God has been perennial. How does Hick provide a defence for the existence of God in the face of evil? The problem of evil can be distinguished between the logical problem as articulated by J. L. Mackie (1917-1981), and the evidential problem as articulated by William Rowe(1931-2015). The logical problem of evil says the divine attributes of omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence cannot all be true given the existence of evil in the world.[2] The evidential problem of evil says there are many evidences of evil that make it probable that God does not exist, even though, such evil does not constitute proof against God's existence.[3] Rowe rejects the logical problem of evil with his argument in favour of friendly atheism where he says: "Perhaps, an atheist may be

1. Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.
2. Mackie J. L., "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64 (1955): 200-201.
3. WilliamRowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism,"*American Philosophical Quarterly* 16:4 (1979): 340-341.

rationally justified in his atheistic belief and yet hold that some theists are rationally justified in believing just the opposite of what he believes."[4] Rowe is a proponent of the evidential problem of evil. This paper continues by stating the problem, and touching on the basis of the problem of evil. The paper continues with a presentation of the soul-making theodicy of Hick which explains evil as allowed by God for the purpose of character formation. This also looks at the teaching of Thomas Aquinas on evil in relation to God and place Aquinas and Hick side by side, looking at what they have in common and where they differ in respect to their teachings on God and evil.

Stating The Problem

That evil exists in the world is for many an obstacle to belief in the existence of God. The resounding question in the face of incomprehensible and disastrous misfortunes has always been; "where is God when bad things happen?" If there is an omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient God, then it might seem there should be no evil. But evil exists and so, it seems either God does not exist, or He exists, but is either not all-powerful or not all-knowing or not all-good. Hick presents the problem in these words:

> Can the presence of evil in the world be reconciled with the existence of a God who is unlimited both in goodness and in power? This is a problem equally for the believer and for the non-believer. In the mind of the latter, it stands as a major obstacle to religious commitment, whilst for the former it sets up an acute internal tension to disturb his faith and to lay upon it a

4. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," 340.

perpetual burden of doubt.[5]

Amidst all evil, there is an all-knowing God out there, who knows about the presence of evil and might even know about it before it happens, and if He is all powerful, He could stop it. If God is all good, He would stop evil from tormenting His children, yet He doesn't, because evil continues. Given this logic, it has been argued that one cannot consistently hold these beliefs of God's omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence, and this forms the logical problem of evil. The evidential problem of evil holds that evil constitutes compelling evidence for not believing in God even if it does not proof that God does not exist. Hick provides what he calls the 'soul-making'[6] theodicy. Giving some specific possible divine reasons for allowing evil, he attempts to show that the existence of evil does not rule out God's existence and does not rule out faith in God.

John Hick's Soul-Making Theodicy

'Soul-making' denotes the "divine purpose to make finite persons who have a genuine autonomy and freedom in relation to their creator and who are therefore capable of entering into personal relationship with him."[7] We have the Augustinian and the Irenaean theodicies. Augustinian theodicies have their foundations in primeval beginnings, the idea that God made a perfect world and created human agency in a perfect condition and in ideal

5. John Hick, *Evil and The God of Love*(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.
6. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*,x.; According to the understanding of John Hick, 'soul-making' theodicy means 'person-making', character building for a relationship with God through free choices in an imperfect world of evil, pain and suffering.
7. John Hick,"God, Evil and Mystery," *Religious Studies* Vol. 3, Issue 02 (April 1968): 540.

circumstances and evil came due to the rebellious use of created free will. The other evils of human experience are to be understood as punitive consequences of Adam's fall. Marilyn MacCord Adams explains: "Augustinian theodicies try to maximize Divine opposition to evil by shifting blame for the origin of evil off God's and onto the shoulders of created free agents."[8] The Augustinian version of theodicy connects to the idea of the fall which has resulted from the disharmony of the natural order. This form of theodicy is developed philosophically today as the free-will defence. Brian Davies writes of Hick:"Echoing what he believes to be the position of the early Church Father St Irenaeus **(c**.140-**c**.202), Hick argues that the existence of evil is necessary for the perfect development of human beings."[9]

Hick says**, "**our present world is not intended to be a paradise, in the sense of a proper habitation for perfect beings, but rather a place of soul-making, an environment in which creatures made as rational and personalin the image of God can grow towards the finite likeness of their maker."[10] We are not like God's pets that He keeps in a safe and comfortable cage just for our comfort and for His fun. Hick explains further:

> Instead of seeing humanity as having been created in innocent perfection and then falling, it sees us as having been created - as we now know, through the long process of evolution - as immature beings capable of growing through the experience of life in a challenging world. We are to grow gradually, in this life and beyond it,

8. MarilynA. MCCORD, "Forward" Evil *and The God of Love,* by John Hick, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), v.
9. Brian Davies, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion,* 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 34.
10. Hick, "God, Evil and Mystery,"540.

> towards our perfection, which lies in the future, not in the past.[11]

The soul-making theodicy has an eschatological and teleological character. Through suffering and pain, human beings will come to the perfect state, that purposeful end intended by God for which He allows evil in the world. Hick succinctly writes: "It follows that in order freely to come to God man must not be created in the immediate presence of his maker but at a distance from him-not a spatial but an epistemic distance."[12] God makes his presence vague and that helps us to be truer and free without acting in fear that the 'big brother' is watching us from somewhere.

Hick uses modern anthropological knowledge to suggest a two-stage conception of the creation of man. The process of human creation by God is still ongoing. The first stage was the evolution of humans and the second stage is the moral formation of suitable human beings, people with the right kind of character that a perfect being would want. He explains:"At the very least we must acknowledge as two distinguishable stages the fashioning of *homo sapiens* as a product of the long evolutionary process, and his sudden or gradual spiritualization as a child of God."[13] He says the first stage is completely from the omnipotence of God because of His creative work. It includes the development of man into a rational and responsible person that is capable of personal relationship with his infinite creator. Hick explains the second stage thus:

11. Hick, Evil *and The God of Love*, Preface to the 10th reissue, xii-xiii.
12. Hick, "God, Evil and Mystery,"540.
13. Hick*, Evil and The God of Love*,255.

Hick is emphatic that man is not created completed and perfect but is only in a process of perfection."Man cannot be perfected by divine fiat, but only through the uncompelled responses and willing co-operation of human individuals in their actions and reactions in the world in which God has placed them."[14] The world as we find it is a place of becoming. It is not a perfect heaven for perfect finite beings. Hick explains:

> The value-judgement that is implicitly being invoked here is that one who has attained to goodness by meeting and eventually mastering temptations, and thus by rightly making responsible choices in concrete situations, is good in a richer and more valuable sense than would be one created ab initio in a state either of innocence or of virtue. In the former case, which is that of the actual moral achievements of mankind, the individual's goodness has within it the strength of temptations overcome, a stability based upon an accumulation of right choices, and a positive and responsible character that comes from the investment of costly personal effort.[15]

This is related with the ancient notion of moral virtue which comes from Aristotle, the idea that we make virtual good choices and that become developed as a habitual and permanent part of our character.[16] In the example of honesty, you are not just honest once, but you are honest over and over again and you develop that habituated personality trait or character. Hick is relying on this Aristotelian kind of notion that when we face temptations or trials again and again and master them, we develop virtue out of those

14. Hick, *Evil and The God of Love, 255.*
15. Hick,*Evil and The God of Love,* 255-256.
16. Aristotle, *Nich. Eth.*, 1105a18-1105b18.

repeated right choices which make us better persons.

Hick criticises the idea that God should have created a hedonistic world in which people will be full of pleasure, in a manner that a human person would build a cage for his/her pet;a world full of fun, feasting, eating and drinking and dancing, a world without challenges. He says those who use the problem of evil as an argument against belief in God almost invariably think of the world in this kind of way.He makes his point in these words;

> Antitheistic writers almost invariably assume a conception of the divine purpose which is contrary to the Christian conception. They assume that the purpose of a loving God must be to create a hedonistic paradise; and therefore, to the extent that the world is other than this, it proves to them that God is either not loving enough or not powerful enough to create such a world. They think of God's relation to the earth on the model of a human being building a cage for a pet animal to dwell in. If he is humane, he will naturally make his pet's quarters as pleasant and healthful as he can. Any respect in which the cage falls short of the veterinarian's ideal, and contains possibilities of accident or disease, is evidence of either limited benevolence or limited means, or both.[17]

He refers to David Hume's analogy of an architect planning the building of a comfortable house and using the analogy, the architect will be held to blame if the windows, doors, fire places, stairs and passages were in a mess. Hick says: “Such critics as

17. John Hick, “Evil and Soul-Making,” in *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology,* 5th ed., eds. Louis P. Pojman and Michael Rea (USA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008)*,167.*

Hume are confusing what heaven ought to be, as an environment for perfected finite beings, with what this world ought to be, as an environment for beings who are in process of becoming perfected."[18]

Hick continues by presenting the parent-child analogy, explaining how parents would always want the best for their children but cannot always train their children in the way of "unalloyed pleasure"for the sake of moral discipline. Even though every parent wants the best pleasure for his children, they do not educate their children in the process of utmost pleasure, because they know that such life of total pleasure for children does not make them morally responsible persons. Hick says:

> I think it is clear that a parent who loves his children and wants them to become the best human beings … do not desire for them unalloyed pleasure at the expense of their growth in such even greater values as moral integrity, unselfishness, compassion, courage, humour, reverence for the truth, and perhaps above all the capacity for love.[19]

In Hick's analogy, a good parent allows the child to suffer because the process is valuable and moral virtue cannot be achieved in another way. This parent-child analogy is applicable to God the creator of this world as a place of soul–making rather than a place of utmost pleasure. If efforts to acquire better values of life conflict with the quest for pleasurable things, then such pleasurable things have to be forfeited for the purpose of acquiring those values needed for building a good character.[20] For Hick, "this world must

18. Hick, "Evil and Soul-Making," 167.
19. Hick, "Evil and Soul-Making," 167.
20. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 258-259.

be a place of soul-making. And its value is to be judged, not primarily by the quantity of pleasure and pain occurring in it at any particular moment, but by its fitness for its primary purpose, the purpose of soul-making."[21]

Hick's theodicy is teleological as he says: "The good that outshines all ill is not a paradise long since lost but a kingdom which is yet to come in its full glory and permanence."[22] For Hick, man is created a personal moral being, in the image of God, but has not yet reached the likeness of God, and life here is an instrument to reach that likeness by using free will in the right way. Freedom in Hick is just a precursor, a background condition that makes it possible for moral growth to take place. Hick's idea can be described as the moral growth defense and is different from Alvin Plantinga's freewill defense which reads: "The Free Will Defense can be looked upon as an effort to show that there may be a very different kind of good that God can't bring about without permitting evil."[23] After his efforts to provide a theodicy, Hick realises that the problem of suffering lingers.Hetherefore, expresses a worry that leads to his mystery-solution when he says:

> The problem consists rather in the fact that instead of serving a constructive purpose pain and misery seem to be distributed in random and meaningless ways, with the result that suffering is often undeserved and often falls upon men in amounts exceeding anything that could be rationally intended.[24]

21. Hick, "Evil and Soul-Making," *168.*
22. *Hick, "Evil and Soul-Making," 169.*
23. Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*(Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 29;A world containing creature who are significantly free is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all.
24. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 333.

Confessing that he has run short of any alternative rational or ethical explanation to why men suffer greatly, he resorts to an appeal to mystery. Mystery in his application here in not just that we cannot fathom the rationale of suffering. He explains: "It may be that the very mysteriousness of this life is an important aspect of its character as a sphere of soul-making."[25] The distribution of pain and suffering needs to defy our comprehension for us to achieve moral growth and soul-making. Hick argues further that if the world contains no unjust punishment or no dysteleologicalmisery, there will be no room for compassion, sympathy and relief services because all suffering will be taken as deserved punishment.[26] Hick writes: "It seems, then, that in a world that is to be the scene of compassionate love and self-giving for others, suffering must fall upon mankind with something of the haphazardness and inequity that we now experience."[27]

Hick explains the divine purpose and provides reasons why there is incomprehensible suffering saying: "Accordingly a world in which the sinner was promptly struck down by divine vengeance and in which the upright were the immediate recipients of divine reward would be incompatible with that divine purpose of soul-making that we are supposing to lie behind the arrangement of our present world."[28] He says the solution to the presence of undeserved and dysteleological suffering is found in the positive value of mystery, acknowledging that it is a mystery impassable to the rational human mind.

25. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love,* 334.
26. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love,* 334.
27. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love,* 334.
28. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 335.

The Teaching of Aquinas on God and Evil

Thomas Aquinas (1226-74) can be said to anticipate discussion of what is now commonly called 'the problem of evil' when he writes:

> It seems that God does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would be altogether destroyed. But the word "God" means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, God existed, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore, God does not exist.[29]

Aquinas disagrees with this argument which purports to deny the existence of God. In his reply to the above argument, he refers to Augustine who says, since God is supremely good, He would not permit evil in His works unless He were sufficiently powerful and good to bring good from evil, and it belongs to His unlimited goodness that He permit evil to draw goodness from it.[30] Even though, as Brian Davies says, Aquinas has no stand-alone discussion of what contemporary philosophers would now call 'the problem of evil', and does not engage in a sustained theodicy or defence of belief in God with an eye to evil, he has a lot to offer with regards to God and evil throughout the corpus of his writings.[31] Davies acknowledges of Aquinas: "That what he has to say comes scattered throughout almost the entire corpus of his writings and needs to be brought together if one is to understand

29. *ST1*, q.2, a.3; Ad tertium sic proceditur. Videtur quod Deus non sit. Quia si unum contrariorum fuerit infinitum, totaliter destruetur aliud. Sed hoc intelligitur in hoc nomine Deus, scilicet quod sit quoddam bonum infinitum. Si ergo Deus esset, nullum malum inveniretur. Inveniturautemmalum in mundo. Ergo Deus non est.
30. *ST* 1, q.2, a.3 ad1.
31. Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil*, 6.

his take on the problem of evil."[32] He continues:

> When Aquinas concerns himself with God and evil, his aim is always to strive to provide some account of what God is and how evil should be thought of in a world created by God. He is, you might say, never on the defensive when it comes to the reality of evil and the existence of God.[33]

According to Aquinas, evil is a non-entity, the privation of being. Aquinas writes,"In fact, evil is simply a privation of something which a subject is entitled by its origin to possess and which it ought to have, as we have said. Such is the meaning of the word 'evil' among all men."[34] Like Augustine, Aquinas defines evil in negative terms: "For evil is the absence of the good, which is natural and due to a thing."[35] On the question of evil as non-entity, Aquinas writes: *"*Therefore, every real thing has a conformity with some good, and evil as such is not in harmony with good but contrary to it. Therefore, evil is not an entity."[36]

Evil exists only in the sense in which blindness exists, and as blindness is not a reality additional to the eyes, but rather a defect of the eyes, so evil is not a substance or an entity on its own but consists in lack of some positive power or quality that a thing ought by its nature to possess. "Every privation, if taken properly and strictly, is of that which one is born to have, and should have. So, in this strict meaning of privation, there is always the rational

32. Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil*, 6.
33. Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil*, 79.
34. *SCG* 3, 7.2.Malumenim, ut dictum est, nihilestaliud quam privatioeius quod quisnatusest et debethabere: sic enimapudomnesestusushuiusnominismalum.
35. *ST* 1, q.48, a.1; Malum enim est defectus boni quod natum est et debet haberi.
36. *De Malo,* q.I, a.I.

character of evil."[37] God is therefore, not a cause of evil in the creative sense.

For Aquinas, evil has no formal cause, neither does it have a final cause, but rather it is a privation of order to the end. Evil has a cause by way of an agent, not directly but indirectly. It has no causal efficacy of its own. Evil can operate as a cause per *accidens* through the activity of the good thing of which it is a defect.[38] Evil is the absence of good not in the negative sense but in a privative sense.[39] If a human being does not have wings, this is not an evil in the privative sense because human beings by their nature ought not to have wings. When a human person is blind or does not have eyes, it is an evil because it is a privation of what human beings by their nature ought to have, which is eyes. For Aquinas, evil is not a created thing, evil is not an essence. "Now privation is not an essence; it is rather, a negation in a substance. Therefore, evil is not an essence in thing."[40]

For Aquinas, to say that God is the ultimate good does not mean we should think of Him as having moral virtues like us. The key point here is that Aquinas does not regard God's goodness as definable by anything we consider moral obligation. He does not think that God has any moral case to answer. For him, God is *ipsumessesubsistens*, that is, God cannot be thought of as lacking being or goodness. We cannot think of God as being potentially because He does not change. God can in no way be thought of as being bad.[41] The word Deus is *nomennaturae*. We lack

37. *SCG* 3, 6.1.
38. *SCG* 3, 14.1.
39. *ST* I, q.48, a.3.
40. *SCG* 3, 7.2.
41. Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and evil*, 80.

comprehensive knowledge of God because, from His effects, we do not come to the understanding of what God's nature is in itself.[42] From the foregoing, one can understand why Aquinas does not see evil as capable of robbing God of His goodness and existence.

There are two kinds of evil in human life; the evil of moral wrong *(malumculpae)*[43] and the evil of punishment *(malumpoenae)*. Disordered acts of the will constitute the evil of moral wrong while evil suffered when deprived of the necessary potential for good activity constitute the evil of punishment. Explaining the difference between punishment and moral fault, Aquinas says**:** **"**Punishment differs from moral fault in that the latter consists of acting, and the former in being acted upon, as Augustine makes clear in his work On Free Choice, where he calls moral fault the evil that we do, and punishment the evil that we undergo."[44] Aquinas does not consider God responsible for the evil we undergo or the evil we do. Davies speaking of Aquinas, says:

> For him, people really do become sick, carnivorous predators really do squeeze the lifeblood out of other animals, and plants fall victim to pests, weather conditions, or a lack of water. But the badness in each of these cases is not, thinks Aquinas, something created by God. Rather, it amounts to a privation or lack of being explicable in terms of a good that is created.[45]

For Aquinas, evil signifies neither being nor nature. He says: "Hence it cannot be that evil signifies being, or any form or nature. Therefore, it must be that by the name of evil is signified the

42. *ST* I, q.13, a.8.
43. *De Malo*, q.1, a.4.
44. *De Malo*, q.1, a.4.
45. Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil*, 69.

absence of good. And this is what is meant by saying that evil is neither a being nor a good."[46]

Aquinas divides evil into those affecting 'voluntary things' (angels and men) and those affecting the rest of creation. For the latter, God made all things into being so that his goodness be communicated to creatures, which accounts for the variety and inequalities of nature. *Produxitenim res in esse propter suambonitatemcommunicandamcreaturis.*[47] He produced many creatures that His goodness can be adequately represented. Even though God has operated in creation propter *perfectionemuniversi,* it should not be considered that the universe is so perfect such that God could not have made a better one had He wished. Nevertheless, Aquinas argues that given the things which actually exist, "if any one thing were bettered, the proportion of order would be destroyed; as if one string were stretched more than it ought to be, the melody of the harp would be destroyed."[48]

Aquinas thinks that God's production of creaturely goodness is a reason to speak His love for His creatures. Aquinas does not ascribe emotional love to God. For him, the very existence of a thing is a certain good. God wills some good to every existing reality. In the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas says: *amor Dei estinfundens et creansbonitatem in rebus.*[49] Aquinas explains the unquestionable love of God when he writes: "To every existing

46. *STI*, q.48, a.1; Unde non potest esse quod malum significet quoddam esse, aut quandam formam seu naturam. Relinquitur ergo quod nomine mali significetur quaedam absentia boni. Et pro tanto dicitur quod malum neque est existens nec bonum.
47. *ST* I, q.47, a.1; For He brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures.
48. *S.T*I, q.25, a.6.
49. *ST*I, q.20, a.2.whereas the love of God infuses and creates goodness.

thing, then, God wills some good. Hence, since to love anything is nothing else than to will good to that thing, it is manifest that God loves everything that exists."[50] We may think God ought to have made a world without evil, but Aquinas says, such a world would not be remotely like ours. Ours is a world in which things flourish at the expense of others and in which people are not able to choose well.[51]

Aquinas does not deny the reality and existence of evil. He rather takes it to be something that can truly be said to exist, but he does not take it to be something that has *esse*, and so, does not consider evil as creatively caused by God. He does not agree with the free will supposition that God can sometimes go in for a hands-off approach when it comes to people freely acting. It is clear from Aquinas' thoughts that he is not on the defending side when it comes to the question of evil and God's existence."His approach to this matter is always thoroughly influenced by his confidence that God, indeed, exists."[52]

Placing Hick and Aquinas Side by Side

There are some similarities as well as differences in the theodicy of Hick and in the teaching of Aquinas on God and evil. Aquinas says for the sake of the perfection of the world, it is necessary that things should not only be incorruptible but also corruptible. This idea is close to Hick's view of a world with evil that constitutes an environment for soul-making, an environment for the perfection of man. Hick's theodicy accepts God's ultimate omni-responsibility and tries to show for what purpose, and for what good and

50. *ST*I, q.20, a.2.
51. Davies, *ThomasAquinas on God and Evil*, 72.
52. Davies, *ThomasAquinas on God and Evil*, 79.

justifying reasons God has made a universe in which evil was inevitable, while for Aquinas, all kinds of evil in human life have link with moral fault. Aquinas has a metaphysical notion of evilas theprivation of being. Hick looks at evil as contained in subjects and as necessary for soul-making. For Hick, God has no other way of making perfect human beings except through soul-making, the process of character formation through the experience of pain and suffering in our world of evil while Aquinas rejects this view.

Against the conception of Hick and most modern thinkers on the problem of evil, who present God as either lacking or having enough morally sufficient reasons for permitting evil, Aquinas does not see God as one of us who could be morally good or bad, virtuous or doing what He ought to do. Aquinas talks of all creatures created good, but like Hick, he does not suggest things are created perfect in a manner that they lack potentiality. For Hick, discovering the existence of God is a question of personal religious experience. For Aquinas, the existence of God can be rationally proven. With regard to God's goodness, Aquinas does not consider God's goodness as dependent on anything He has created. But Hick seems to think that God remains Good in as much as He has designed the purpose of soul-making as a justification for the evil there is in the world. Aquinas thinks of the love of God as not an emotion but rather 'willing goodness' for something. For Aquinas, there is a metaphysical explanation and a theological explanation of evil. Evil is the privation of being. The issue with Hick, as with many other modern thinkers on the problem of evil, is that they believe God really has a moral case to answer since He is a good God like one of us. Aquinas does not think so, as Davies says of him:

> For one thing, and as I have stressed, what goes

> by the name "the problem of evil" since the time of Hume (or, indeed, Epicurus) is not a problem for Aquinas. Without denying God's omnipotence, omniscience, or goodness, he does not think that God has any moral case to answer.[53]

Hick and Aquinas both agree that there is evil. However, they do not agree on why the evil is there. Both agree that the good we are pursuing is outside this world. For Aquinas, evil in human life does not just happen; it comes in the character of punishment. Evil results from moral fault, which needs to be corrected with severe fault. Since we are experiencing pain and suffering, there is a fault that God, in His providence, is responding to; he is governing in response to the existence of a moral fault, personal or by nature. This is the meeting point between Aquinas and Hick. We can add that the metaphysical explanation of evil by Aquinas can be of help to Hick, who has built a theodicy that is eschatological, teleological, hope-raising and very consoling but turns out to be dissatisfactory even to himself.

Evaluation

Hick's theodicy is eschatological in its bearing as it looks to the future, the ultimate future to which only faith can look instead of looking to the past for a clue to the mystery of evil and suffering. Hick's soul-making theodicy is teleological in style, given that he attempts to reconcile God's existence with the reality of evil in the world by appealing to a hypothesis of a divine purpose that justifies the existence and amount of evil in the world. The view that man is in the process of becoming a perfected being whom

53. Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil*, 126.

God seeks to create is both developmental and teleological.[54] With Hick's conception of man created in two stages and the idea of epistemic distance as a necessary condition for human freedom, we see the anthropological aspect of his theodicy. In general, Hick, through his theodicy, gives more meaning to the confronting presence of evil and suffering. Can we say Hick's soul-making theodicy is successful?

Hick considers this world as a place of soul-making other than a paradise, and evils are part of this soul-making process. However, Hick gives room to be asked if God created evil and if He did, what then will be the relationship between God, evil and good? His analogy or example of parents' love towards their children and the love of God towards His children, as beautiful as it sounds, might be considered a weak analogy. It is true that parents do not want their children trained in a life of ostentatious pleasure and would sometimes give punishment to improve the character of their children, but they do not, however, leave their children in damaging disasters as can be experienced and as evident around the world.

For Hick, God allows evil so that men may learn moral virtue from it and build a better character. The God who does this would look like a moral monster who answers to pointless suffering by doing nothing. The question for Hick will be; how are we supposed to learn kindness, benevolence and mercy from a God who looks on as we suffer? This could be a double standard problem. God allows evil to serve us the good purpose of soul-making but, at the same

54. Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence of God: The Challenge of John Hick's Theodicy,*34.

time, turns out to be a bad teacher in the lessons of moral virtue.[55]

Hick makes a statement that sounds like God wills and even creates all things, including evil (terrors).[56] Several questions challenge Hick's theodicy. Must people undergo severe suffering for the purpose of soul-making? Why can't a small amount of suffering suffice for the need for soul-making or character development? Why is there extreme evil when people could develop while experiencing just a small amount of suffering? Of course, some people and even children, suffer horrendously and die without any opportunity to grow from the experience. Where is the place of soul-making in their case? Can we say our world is the best for soul-making? Are there people who enjoy lives of ease and success without anything to challenge them for character development? What has Hick to say about them?

Hick concedes there is moral evil in the world but says it will be logically impossible for God to achieve His soul-making purpose if He created moral puppets (pets) that always act rightly. This sounds like God being constrained, but Aquinas argues against God being constrained. For Hick, those who criticise humanfree

55. God in the theodicy of Hick looks like a poor teacher in the lessons of mercy, compassion, kindness, benevolence, charity, etc., when He does not immediately show mercy to our suffering while teaching us through suffering and pain to be merciful. God trying to offer man the environment and the opportunity for character formation, fails in the good example of moral virtue, given that we are supposed to develop moral virtue in a world where God the paragon of moral virtue Himself responds to suffering by only watching how it impacts character development.

56. Cf., Hick, "Evil and Soul-Making," *168. "We may, then, say that the beauties and sublimities and powers, the microscopic intricacies and macroscopic vastnesses, the wonders and the terrors of the natural world and of the life that pulses through it, are willed and valued by their Maker in a creative act that embraces man together with nature."*

will by preferring that God should have a better-created man, like a pet in a cage, think wrongly. But Hick can be asked by critics whether God has only two options, creating a man like a pet animal or with the open moral inclinations as they are. The point of God creating man in an 'epistemic distance' that Hick makes can be criticised. In human analogy, he seems to imply that God is afraid of giving man enough knowledge of Himself in case that will hinder his intellectual development and seems to advocate for occasional contact between God the master and man the schoolboy. Hick makes us understand that the infinite future good will make worthwhile all the pain, suffering, travail, wickedness and anguish experienced on the way to it.But we need to ask him to show how this world's suffering is the most efficient for attaining God's goal.How does the realisation of a future good repair the injury of a past evil? How do we guarantee justice and equality in the amount of suffering for the same soul-making?

Hick mentions that unmerited or dysteleological suffering attracts sympathy, compassion and relief service. Of course, that is true. Does this mean one cannot feel sympathy for someone undergoing the pain of surgery or for a woman in labour? The need for sympathy, according to Hick, justifies the presence of all kinds of evil that befall man. Even for a criminal who deserves his penalty, sympathy can be felt. But does unmerited suffering not bring resentment, too? Can a small amount of suffering not do the job of attracting compassion or sympathy? He brings up another argument that if there is no evil that is undeserved, people will not do good for the sake of the good.

Hick seems to imply that faith by inference can easily be distorted by the presence of evil, unlike faith by religious experience. One of

the major and distinct points of the soul-making theodicy of Hick is that evil has always been part of creation and has not just resulted in time from the rebellion of man. He bases his argument on the logic that the conditions that were to cause human disease and mortality and the necessity for humans to undertake the perils and labours of hunting, building and agriculture were part of the natural order before the emergence of man and before any first human sin, as were the conditions causing further 'evils' such as storms, flood, drought, earthquake and plague.[57]

Explaining the role of theodicy, Hick says: "Accordingly, from the point of view of apologetics, theodicy has a negative rather than a positive function. It cannot profess to create faith, but rather to preserve an already existing faith from being overcome by this dark mystery."[58] In modern philosophy language, his theodicy is actually more of a defence.

Conclusion

This paper will not look from afar for a phrase with which to round up. Hick himself echoes: "And yet, so far as we can see, the soul-making process does, in fact, fail in our own world at least as often as it succeeds."[59] The credit we can give to the theodicy of Hick is the hope and consolation it offers in the face of evil and suffering. However, he has much to gain from the insights of Aquinas, especially from the dimension of the metaphysical explanation of evil and its causal relationship to God. We acknowledge a fact about Hick that; there will always be better value, appreciation, joy and fulfilment in success gained when toiled for than having it on

57. Hick, *Evil and The God of Love*, 149.
58. Hick, *Evil and The God of Love, 256.*
59. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love, 136.*

the table without an idea of its source. The soul-making theodicy of Hick reveals that human suffering and the challenges of life are not useless but rather opportunities for individuals to grow and develop in ways that contribute to their moral and spiritual maturation. As far as we can learn, even from Hick, the presence of evil in the world is not incompatible with the existence of God. The new idea in the work is that we have been able to discover a meeting point between Hick and Aquinas and their disagreeing viewpoints. This research reveals that we can look at the teachings of Aquinas on evil to answer the inadequacies of Hick's theodicy. It looks better and safer to use Aquinas' metaphysical understanding of evil to respond to the challenges posed by the problem of evil than to use an idea that presents evil and wilfully created by God from which to actualise His good.

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