

Anti-theodicy: A No-thought Position on Evil¹

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Abstract. Theodicy has long been held a plausible explanation of God and evil. This paper presents a position called anti-theodicy which argues that theodicies are ambitious, defective and reinforce moral biases. It also qualifies that while theodicies trivialize suffering through constructs or systems that explain suffering away, anti-theodicy is a “no-thought” position on the problem of evil, similar to the approaches of Buddhism and Daoism.

Keywords: Theodicy, Anti-theodicy, Problem of Evil, Daoism, Buddhism

The Problem of Evil and Theodicy

“The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts, which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or whatever.”
— Wittgenstein (2009, 109e [§304])

Why has God allowed evil in a world that He created? A theodicy is a reasonable or plausible justification of God’s permission of evil. It is a justification of the ways of God to man (Milton 2020, 6). There is evidently much debate about the problem of evil in the philosophy of religion. Theodicy is, more precisely, the problem of whether there is any reasonable belief as to why God allows so much evil in the world, and if so, on what grounds does He allow it (Plantinga 2004, 12). The *locus classicus* is Hume’s formulation: “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? Where then is evil?” (Hume 2007, 74). An interesting observation, however, is that the whole area of contention does not crop up in other religious traditions that do not posit an All-loving, All-knowing, All-powerful God. That theodicy is, by and large, prevalent in Western religions; eastern religions recognize pain and suffering, sure, but they are not a problem in the way they are for the Abrahamic faiths, particularly because they posit God (Meister & Moser 2017, 266). Let’s briskly go through some explanations for why this is the case.

¹ I would like to thank my professors, Dr. Ranie Villaver and Fr. Ramon Echica, for helping me develop the ideas presented here.

In India, Arthur Herman (1976), for example, observed that for the most part, the theodical problem of evil was never posed by Indian theologians and philosophers, unlike their Western counterparts. Historically, Herman claims that theodicy does not occur in classical Indian philosophy because their Karmic theories foreclose the very possibility of the problem arising (Herman 1976, 1-2). Another scholar, Peter N. Gregory (2017), corroborates this claim. He says that “the problem is never theologically highlighted in Buddhism [as] as in Christianity because Buddhism has a distinctly different conception of transcendence” (Gregory 1986: 77). In the case of China, Ning Chen (1994) argues that the doctrine of Heaven and fate in Confucianism and Daoism “serve as a powerful solution to the problem of theodicy by completely severing any reciprocal relationship between humans and the transcendental” (Chen 1994: 69). By adopting this doctrine, Chen said, “the Confucians were able to free themselves from the problem of theodicy.” Weigang Chen (2012), meanwhile, substantiates this view by saying that “the Confucian identification of the Dao with the traditional cosmic-social world order allowed virtually no latitude for questioning Heaven’s inscrutability or even for raising the questions of theodicy” (Chen 2012, 936). What these suggest is that “theodicy is so thoroughlygoingly Christian” (Ekstrom 2004, 101).

An interesting way, then, to approach the problem of theodicy is perhaps to come at it from the outside: to see through the lens of religions that do not feel the need to resolve the aforesaid contradiction. The purpose of this paper is not to comb through the many theories in theodicy. Rather, the exciting task for us is seeing that theodicy requires some comparative philosophy of religion. I want to draw our attention to Daoism and Buddhism in particular, to see what it has to contribute to the discussions in lieu of theistic theologizing. Drawing on Daoist and Buddhist insights, I argue for a position called “antitheodicy” (anti-theodicy), which suggests that the problem of evil persists only so long as we insist on framing suffering within a rigid moral and metaphysical schema that demands explanation. But first, what is antitheodicy?

Why Anti-theodicy?

**“What do I know about God and the purpose of life?
I know that this world exists...Therefore that good and evil are somehow
connected with the meaning of the world.”
—Wittgenstein (1984, 72e-74e)**

Antitheodicy is relatively new to theodicy debates. Contemporary proponents of antitheodicy that this paper shall tackle are mainly Nick N. Trakakis and Samuel Shearn. Both essentially argue that theodicies are too ambitious and that there are objections on moral grounds to the very practice of doing theodicy (Shearn 2013: 439). They, among others, call for the theistic discourse of theodicy to be abandoned because all theodicies involve some form of moral impropriety (Simpson 2008: 153). Theodicy, as Trakakis says, may set out with a noble aim, but only end up effacing humanity and divinity (Trakakis 2008: 189).

For Trakakis, anti-theodacists reject theodicy, but not for the reasons that atheistic philosophers typically do. Anti-theodacists claim that theodicies are by nature defective because it is a non-starter (Trakakis 2017, 124). For example, theodicy does not provide a correct perspective on our sufferings and instead abuses our existing moral biases and prejudices to come with the distinction between natural, gratuitous, and moral evil, etc. Trakakis, however, clarifies that the anti-theodacist does not believe that the project of theodicy is something detestable or outrageous. It also does not rule out the plausible answers like the Freewill Defense (see Willos 2014: 255-257; Augustine 2010, 67)², *Felix Culpa* (see Plantinga 2004, 12)³, *In statu viae* (see Tao 2008),⁴ or non-interventionist (see Echica 2008, 155-169; Echica 2026, 81-82)⁵ solutions, etc. This is an important qualification because anti-theodicy is not in the business of disproving theodical explanations per se.

On the other hand, for Shearn, ambitious theodicies “necessarily trivialize suffering.” (Shearn 2017: 455). He argues, “Anti-theodicy seems to rest on the moral rule that one should not trivialize evils but give the

2 This view purports that an instance of evil is an instance of free will. As Augustine says, “you should also admit that free will, without which no one can live rightly, is a good thing and a divine gift – and also that those who use this good for evil should be damned, rather than that He Who gave it ought not to have given it (sic liberam voluntatem, sine qua nemo potest recte vivere, oportet et bonum et divinitus datam et potius eos damnandos, qui hoc bono male utuntur quam eum qui dederit, dare non debuisset fatearis).” De libero arbitrio, 2.18.49.185.

3 Plantinga’s idea is that “a necessary condition of atonement is sin and evil. But all the highly eligible worlds contain atonement; hence all the highly eligible worlds contain sin and evil, and the suffering consequent upon them.”

4 As Fr. Tao writes, “I explain the reality of evils (as failures in goodness) in the context of a loving God’s plan for creating a world in a state of journeying and entrusting it to the stewardship of human beings (images of God in *statu viae*) called to personal communion.”

5 Fr. Echica basically argues that “God continually sustains the universe not by sporadic acts of intervention which disregards secondary causes...Thus, God is not like Superman deciding when to intervene or not to intervene. Rather, God is metaphysically constrained from doing any intervention.”

sufferer's experience due weight, and also that one should not seek one's own existential comfort without regard for the consequences such theoretical theodicy has for those undergoing suffering." (Shearn 2017: 451) In other words, we run the risk of discounting the plight of those suffering the worst, for the sake of being intellectually rigorous.

At this juncture, we read a curious statement from Shearn: "moral anti-theodicy is equivalent to philosophical pessimism" (Shearn 2013: 454). The reasoning behind this is that theodicy is, according to him, "the affirmation of life on moral grounds." Therefore, by rejecting theodicy, the anti-theodicist must, perforce, be against any attempt at affirming life on whatsoever moral grounds. This, he claims, is philosophical pessimism broadly understood. He continues, "A commitment to anti-theodicy could be better described as aesthetic rather than as [a] straightforwardly moral [way] of seeing the world" (Shearn 2013: 454). Shearn cites Arthur Schopenhauer and Fyodor Dostoevsky for his case as good examples of anti-theodicists. As Schopenhauer incisively writes,

There are two things which make it impossible to believe that this world is the successful work of an all-wise, all-good, and, at the same time, all-powerful Being; firstly, the misery which abounds in it everywhere; and secondly, the obvious imperfection of its highest product, man, who is a burlesque of what he should be. (Schopenhauer 1913, 24) [trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders]

On this view, the anti-theodicist is left with a stance that cannot justify hope or meaning in moral terms and must instead retreat into something like an aesthetic posture toward existence. And Schopenhauer sharpens this pessimistic edge, who above says that the sheer scale of suffering in the world undermines the idea of a perfectly good and all-powerful Creator. This reinforces Shearn's claim that rejecting theodicy leads naturally to a pessimistic conclusion.

I take issue, however, with the claim that anti-theodicy is equivalent to philosophical pessimism. My proposal is that anti-theodicy can be expressed differently, namely as an approach that dissolves rather than solves the problem of evil and suffering. I propose that anti-theodicy can be rearticulated as a 'no-thought' position regarding the problem of evil à la religious traditions that do not need theodicy like Buddhism and Daoism (Chen 2012, 936; Gregory 1986: 77). We'll consider the views of Buddhists like Nāgārjuna and Daoists like Lǎozǐ, respectively.

The significance of this comparative conceptual analysis is twofold. First, it expands the scope of anti-theodicy beyond its current moral critique by introducing a therapeutic and comparative dimension. Not a rejection of theodicy grounded in ethical protest, but from a reconfiguration of how philosophical problems themselves are understood. Second, it challenges an entrenched assumption in the philosophy of religion that the problem of evil must be addressed by either justifying God, denying God, or affirming the tragic meaningfulness of existence. My move is to open a fourth possibility: one in which the problem is neither solved nor denied, but rendered defunct.

Rather than merely rejecting theodicy on moral grounds as Shearn does, we should ask whether the problem of evil, as traditionally formulated, is a problem that arises from a confusion in our conceptual and linguistic practices. In this way, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions of theodicy (see Franklin 2020: 563-576; Snellman 2019: 201-211) by inverting the debate. It suggests that the persistence of the problem is less a reflection of an unresolved metaphysical tension than of a habitual way of thinking that demands explanation where none is required (Griffioen 2018: 99). That we are not hereby interested in a new position within theodicy debates per se, but in showing that the debate itself may be in need of being passed over. Once this insistence is relinquished, the problem ceases to arise.

The Anti-theodicy of Daoism

**“I am either happy or unhappy, that is all.
It can be said: good or evil do not exist.”
—Wittgenstein (1984, 74e)**

Sung-peng Hsu (1976) points out that Daoism does not have any rigid descriptive criteria for good and evil in the way that Christianity does for the purposes of answering the problem of evil. However, we can glean some ideas about what it considers good and evil. According to Hsu, “evil means any action that is not in accordance with Dao. An action is evil if it interrupts or prevents spontaneous life-processes, that is, if it is against life and spontaneity” (Hsu 1976: 311). In the Daoist view, it seems all evils are either some assertive uses of the will or their consequences, such that natural processes like tectonic shifts cannot be deemed evil whatsoever.

The classical distinction in theodicy between moral evil and natural evil presupposes that suffering can be neatly categorized either as the result of human freedom or as a feature of the natural order (see Leibniz 1985, 420). There are evils that are caused by free human acts, called moral evil, and

those that are part of nature or natural evils. For Lǎozǐ, there cannot be any physical or mental pains in the universe where the assertive will is not operative. It means that all the sufferings in the world are supposedly man-made (Elmi & Zarvani 2016, 41). Nothing can be considered essentially evil in the world because it is the manifestation of the Way. Nevertheless, evil does exist as such. We read in the *Dào Dé Jīng* 58,

All in the world know the beauty of the beautiful, and in doing this they have (the idea of) what ugliness is; they all know the skill of the skilful, and in doing this they have (the idea of) what the want of skill is. So it is that existence and non-existence give birth [to one another] (Lǎozǐ 1962, 47-48)⁶

Misery! Happiness is to be found by its side! Happiness! Misery lurks beneath it! Who knows what either will come to in the end? Shall we then dispense with correction? The method of correction shall by a turn become distortion, and the good in it shall by a turn become evil. The delusion of the people on this point has indeed subsisted for a long time. (Lǎozǐ 1962, 101-102) [trans. James Legge]⁷

These lines from Lǎozǐ reinforce this point by showing how evaluative distinctions such as beauty and ugliness, skill and lack of skill are not fundamental features of the world but arise relationally. The same is true for all value judgments. Happiness already contains the seed of misery, and what is taken as good can, through attempts at correction or control, transform into its opposite. Another good Daoist perspective is in Zhuāngzǐ (1968). For him, the world could be one without evils and evil-dependent values, that is, one of evil-independent values (Cheung 2020: 550). What we call good and evil are all-too-human discriminations of petty minds that disappear before the harmony of the vast universe. Zhuāngzǐ's critique of discrimination between good and evil anticipates the anti-theodist's suspicion that language itself reifies suffering. We get this rich passage,

The Way has never known boundaries; speech has no constancy. But because of the recognition of a 'this,' there came to be boundaries. Let me tell you what the boundaries

6 天下皆知美之為美，斯惡已。皆知善之為善，斯不善已。故有無相生，難易相成。

7 正复为奇，善复为妖。其政闷闷，其民淳淳；其政察察，其民缺缺。祸兮，福之所倚；福兮，祸之所伏。孰知其极？其无正。正复为奇，善复为妖。人之迷，其日固久。是以圣人方而不割，廉而不刿，直而不肆，光而不耀。

are. There is left, there is right, there are theories, there are debates, there are divisions, there are discriminations, there are emulations, and there are contentions...The sage embraces things. Ordinary men discriminate among them and parade their discriminations before others. The Great Way is not named; Great Discriminations are not spoken; Great Benevolence is not benevolent; Great Modesty is not humble; Great Daring does not attack. If the Way is made clear, it is not the Way... (Zhuāngzǐ 1968, 43-44) [trans. Burton Watson]⁸

Here, the attempt to articulate and defend distinctions is shown to be precisely what distances us from the Dao. This passage suggests that the problem is not merely that we misclassify certain events, but that the act of classification itself generates division, conflict, and dissatisfaction. The sage does not resolve contradictions by choosing one or the other, but by transcending them altogether, that is, by refusing to be bound by the conceptual framework that generates them. From this perspective, the Daoist contribution to anti-theodicy becomes clear. By exposing good and evil as relational and contingent distinctions, and by emphasizing harmony over justification, Daoism shifts the focus from explaining suffering to transforming one's relation to it. This gives rise to a no-thought approach: not the absence of awareness, but the relinquishing of rigid conceptual impositions that give rise to philosophical perplexity in the first place.

The Anti-theodicy of Buddhism

**“Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death.
If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness,
then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.”**
—Wittgenstein (1922, 88 [6.4311])

Recall that the central point of theodicy is the notion of suffering aimed usually at justifying or defending theistic belief (Griffioen 2018: 99). Suffering is evil felt by someone who can perceive it as such. Therefore, an analysis of suffering is crucial. In this regard, Buddhism has a very interesting answer. The Buddha prescribes the Four Noble Truths, which are as the

8 夫道未始有封，言未始有常，為是而有畛也。請言其畛：有左，有右，有倫，有義，有分，有辯，有競，有爭，此之謂八德。六合之外，聖人存而不論；六合之內，聖人論而不議。春秋經世，先王之志，聖人議而不辯。故分也者，有不分也；辯也者，有不辯也。曰：何也？聖人懷之，眾人辯之以相示也。故曰：辯也者，有不見也。夫大道不稱，大辯不言，大仁不仁，大廉不賺，大勇不忮。道昭而不道，言辯而不及，仁常而不成，廉清而不信，勇忮而不成。

Dharmasamgraha of Nāgārjuna states: Suffering is a necessary attribute of existence. The arising or accumulation of suffering is caused by passions or desires. Cessation or extinction of passion or desire is possible. There is a Path leading to the extinction of the passions or desires (Kasawara et al. 2017, 5). The first Noble Truth of the Buddha makes our job regarding evils seemingly straightforward: all life is suffering. Indeed, birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, and death is suffering. Given that suffering is inevitable, it is not possible that there are living beings that are not involved in suffering, and it is also not possible that any being could create a world in which there are living beings that are not involved in suffering (Gab 2015: 349-350).

Simply put, suffering arises because we want something we cannot have, and what we want is such that it is essentially impossible for us to ever attain it (Gab 2015: 349-350). The way the world works, it's just impossible for us to really get what we want. The Buddhists view evil as necessary in itself, but we don't have to look for reasons for a particular instance of evil (Gab 2015, 351). There is no need to justify it. Evil is inevitable or necessary, but not necessary for something. Hence, it is clear why we can enlist Buddhism into anti-theodicy. As it is written in Buddhist scripture, the *Dhammapada* 9.127-128—

Neither in the sky nor in mid-ocean, nor by entering into mountain clefts, nowhere in the world is there a place where one may escape from the results of evil deeds. Neither in the sky nor in mid-ocean, nor by entering into mountain clefts, nowhere in the world is there a place where one will not be overcome by death. (trans. Ven. Weragoda Sārada Mahā Thero 1993, 431-434)⁹

The *Dhammapada* reinforces this point by emphasizing the inescapability of suffering and its consequences. No matter where one goes, whether into the sky, the depths of the ocean, or hidden within mountains, one cannot evade the results of one's actions or the reality of death. That's not all. The Buddha's noble truths say suffering originates in the interdependence of causes. The question is how suffering is related to its cause: is it self-caused or is it caused by something distinct from itself, by both, or by neither? In the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 12:1, Nāgārjuna argues, paradoxically, that it is not correct to think of suffering as an effect. That is, it

9 नान्तरीक्षे न समुद्रमध्ये न पर्वतानां विवरं प्रविश्य । न विद्यते स जगति प्रदेशो यत्रस्थितो मुच्येत पापकर्मणः ॥ नान्तरीक्षे न समुद्रमध्ये न पर्वतानां विवरं प्रविश्य । न विद्यते स जगति प्रदेशो यत्रस्थितं न प्रसहेत मृत्युः

is not something that originates either from itself, something else, both, or neither (Nāgārjuna 2013, 134). He disputes quizzically that,

Suffering is, first of all, not self-made, not at all is that made just by that. If the other could not be self-made, how would suffering be made by the other? Suffering might be made by both self and other if it were made by one or the other. And how can there be a suffering not caused by self or other, or that is causeless? Not only can suffering not be found under any of the four possibilities, external objects also cannot be found under any of the four possibilities. (Nāgārjuna 2013, 134) [trans. Mark Siderits, Shoryu Katsura]¹⁰

This passage has immediate relevance to anti-theodicy. It shows that the problem of evil is entangled in assumptions about causality, agency, and explanation that do not ultimately hold up under scrutiny. If suffering is not an exception to be explained but a structural feature of life, then the demand for a theodicy is already misplaced. Thus, the Buddhist contribution lies not in offering an alternative explanation of evil but in displacing the need for explanation altogether. An attempt to impose intelligibility for them is not required for liberation. This is a striking reversal of the assumption that a worldview which takes suffering seriously must be somber or pessimistic. When framed in such terms, the problem of evil collapses under its own conceptual weight. The Buddhist approach, it seems, is one grounded not in explanation, but in transformation. To wit, the highest form of understanding is not achieved through increasingly refined doctrines or justifications, but through a kind of attunement that does not rely on discursive demonstrations. It constitutes a practical discipline aimed at dissolving suffering.

An Antitheodicy That Is Not Pessimistic

**“Don't for heaven's sake, be afraid of talking nonsense!
But you must pay attention to your nonsense.”**

—Wittgenstein (1980, 56e)

¹⁰ न तावत् स्वकृतं दुःखं न हि तेनैव तत् कृतम् । परो नात्मकृतश्चेत् स्याद् दुःखं परकृतं कथम् ॥ स्यादुभाभ्यां कृतं दुःखं स्यादेकैककृतं यदि । पराकारास्वयंकारं दुःखम् अहेतुकं कुतः ॥ न केवलं हि दुःखस्य चातुर्विध्यं न विद्यते । बाह्यानाम् अपि भावानां चातुर्विध्यं न विद्यते ॥

The danger that theodicy teaches, according to Shearn, are that suffering and evil is inadvertently justified and rationalized in such a way that basic reality is ultimately denied or buried. While it is not entirely stated outright by Trakakis and Shearn, I would submit that anti-theodicy begins with the understanding that humans, rather than God, have full responsibility for dissolving the problem of evil (Buswell, Jr. 2019: 228). A proponent of anti-theodicy, moreover, must be interested in not solving, but dissolving the problem of evil. This is done by actually vanquishing evil and winning liberation à la Buddhism and Daoism rather than explaining away evils or justifying them following the original definition of theodicy.

In sum, the theodicy of evil is for Buddhism and Daoism the perpetuation of illusion that fosters constant disputations that lead to even more suffering. The fact of suffering is the non-cognitivist focus of the Four Noble Truths. In Daoism too, evil is profoundly relativized and is perhaps the result of a lack of balance between Yin and Yang (Meister & Moser 2017, 1).

The lesson provided by these two philosophical traditions is that our simplistic good versus evil dualism may appeal to our human sense of order in the universe and imparts a false sense of security that we understand and can thus control it, for our own ends (Wawrykto 2000, 38). This is consistent with the claims of Trakakis and Shearn. However, Trakakis himself disagrees with Shearn's identification of anti-theodicy with philosophical pessimism. He argues that anti-theodicy should not be "a nihilistic picture of the world as utterly random and chaotic and of human life as lacking any intrinsic worth or purpose," interested in "overturning not only our most cherished beliefs and hopes but even our will to live" (Trakakis 2017, 137). He thinks that Albert Camus is a good example of a secular anti-theodicist, who is not a pessimist, for showing that life can only be lived passionately and meaningfully in complete consciousness of the absurdity of existence, absent any theodical explanation (Trakakis 2017, 137).

Clearly, the challenge for anti-theodicists, according to Trakakis, is to show how their view of evil does not have to invite unwelcome consequences (Trakakis 2013, 375), i.e., philosophical pessimism and nihilism. If theodicy is not a viable response to the problem of evil, then what possible responses remain? For my part, I think the old masters Nāgārjuna and Lǎozǐ are even better examples for giving us the possibility of a religious antitheodicy, complete with an all-encompassing but happy worldview. The antitheodicist should not advocate for "less ambitious theodicies," as Shearn (2013) calls it, but rather what I'd call a no-thought theodicy. As Lǎozǐ says, "There are few in the world who attain to the teaching without words, and the advantage

arising from non-action” (Lǎozǐ 1962, 87).¹¹ And Nāgārjuna again in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 25:19-24,

There is nothing whatsoever of Nirvana distinguishing it from Samsara...All dharmas being empty, what is without end, and what has an end?...This halting of cognizing everything, the halting of hypostatizing, is blissful. No Dharma whatsoever was ever taught by the Buddha to anyone. (Nāgārjuna 2013, 302-304)¹²

For Nāgārjuna and Lǎozǐ, the cessation of conceptual proliferation, the halting of cognizing everything, is itself bliss. They gesture that liberation is not achieved by discovering a correct explanation of reality, but by relinquishing the impulse to reify and conceptualize it in the first place. The idea is not to deny suffering, nor to justify it, but to situate it within a broader existential posture in which it does not have the final word. To illustrate just how non-pessimistic our antitheodicy would be, we can say that although suffering exists, if we can overcome it with strength, then perhaps we can better understand the meaning of happiness. Although the troubles in the world are many, we should not bring these troubles and sorrows to sleep in our thoughts. The most important thing is to fill the world with joy. As the Venerable Master Hsing Yun (1999) says,

All buddhas become enlightened because of joy, all the great bodhisattvas liberate all living beings from suffering because of joy, and Wheel-turning Kings protects all his people because of joy...Joy is the core truth in Buddhism, and also the essence of practicing the Dharma. (Ven. Yun 1999, 140; trans. Bing 2023, 116)¹³

This jewel of wisdom perfectly clarifies why antitheodicy need not collapse into philosophical pessimism as originally purported. It also helps clarify the difference between your view and philosophical pessimism. The pessimist, like Schopenhauer, takes suffering as grounds for a negative evaluation of existence as a whole. By contrast, the absence of justification in antitheodicy does not lead to pessimism, but instead leads to a form of life

11 不言之教。無為之益。天下希及之。

12 न संसारस्य निर्वाणात् किंचिदस्ति विशेषणम् । न निर्वाणस्य संसारात् किंचिदस्ति विशेषणम् ॥...शून्येषु सर्वधर्मेषु किम् अनन्तं किम् अन्तवत् । किम् अनन्तम् अन्तवच्च नानन्तं नान्तवच्च किम् ॥...सर्वोपलम्भोपशमः प्रपञ्चोपशमः शिवः । न क्वचित् कस्यचित् कश्चिद् धर्मो बुद्धेन देशितः

13 諸佛或因慈悲而歡喜，諸大菩薩皆度眾生也因歡喜，轉輪聖王福佑全民也因歡喜...歡喜是佛教真理的本質，歡喜是佛法修行的精髓。

that is both realistic about suffering and fundamentally affirmative about life. As seen in both Daoism and Buddhism, the absence of ultimate justification does not entail despair but opens the possibility of a different orientation toward life. While borrowing from Buddhism and Daoism, it is clear that I have used Wittgenstein's philosophy as a template or framework of sorts for integrating Western and Eastern traditions. To wit, the philosophical rationale for dissolving (not solving) the problem of evil is shown by the fact that theologians still have not demonstrated anything conclusive. In his *Lecture on Ethics*, Wittgenstein sums up his view as follows:

Now all religious terms seem in this sense to be used as similes or allegorically. For when we speak of God and that he sees everything and when we kneel and pray to him all our terms and actions seem to be parts of a great and elaborate allegory...Now in our case as soon as we try to drop the simile and simply to state the facts which stand behind it, we find that there are no such facts. And so, what at first appeared to be a simile now seems to be mere nonsense...I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence...all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. (Wittgenstein 1965: 3-12)

Wittgenstein underscores that language need not function by stating facts about the world in any straightforward sense. Crucially, his point is not dismissive but therapeutic. The "nonsense" of ethical and religious discourse reveals that these forms of expression are not meant to answer factual questions. Instead, they gesture toward something that cannot be captured within the framework of explanation or even language (Pihlström 2020, 101).

Let's tie up our discussion in light of this insight. The antitheodicy, as represented by Trakakis and Shearn, is primarily a moral critique of theodicy. They argue that attempts to justify suffering are ethically problematic because they risk trivializing or instrumentalizing the experiences of those who suffer (Trakakis 2008, 184; Shearn 2013, 453-455). My proposed account decisively departs from this framework. Theodicy is a philosophical trap. It had lots of illustrious victims from Leibniz to Plantinga. A no-thought antitheodicy, then, does not present a solution but to pass over the question unto silence. Theodicy is not useful for actually alleviating suffering and vanquishing evil. Therefore, a no-thought antitheodicy advocates a 'don't think but look' (Wittgenstein 2009, 36e [§66]) approach to the reality of evil.

That way, we can distinguish it from nihilism and pessimism. The hope is that this simply means that the philosophical problems related to theodicy would completely disappear (Wittgenstein 2009, 206e [§133]). So it is no coincidence that anti-theodicists are easily placed in a broadly Wittgensteinian lineage. (Betenson 2016: 57).

I wager that antitheodicy, as distinct from atheism, is a necessary answer to a very unnecessary question. For not all questions deserve to have an answer. Some arise from the genuine confusion generated by the ways we attempt to conceptualize it. In all theodicies, we go through the hassle of putting God on trial only to see him acquitted. In which case, I'll nab what Agamben said: "The conciliatory vice of every theodicy is particularly clear here. Not only does [t]heodicy tell us nothing about Auschwitz...Behind the powerlessness of God peeps the powerlessness of man" (Agamben 2002, 20). To refuse the demand for a theodicy, informed by Buddhist and Daoist thought, we do not deny the reality of suffering nor to lapse into pessimism. Instead, we acknowledge that human existence calls for a practical response, not a theoretical explanation. We should not get involved into the fray into debates with ideas that do not deserve to be refuted and which cannot be cured by being refuted. To see suffering clearly is to respond to it wisely. This stance relocates it from the level of theoretical explanation to that of lived practice and attunement. Perhaps then we can see the world again with eyes anew, and get down to the real work at hand.

Is No-Thought Antitheodicy an Evasion?

I shall anticipate an obvious objection. Does no-thought antitheodicy evade the problem of evil? If it refuses to explain or justify suffering, does it not abandon the problem rather than address it? This criticism, I think, assumes that the problem of evil deserves to have an answer. No-thought antitheodicy challenges precisely this assumption. The persistence of theodicy's failure suggests not a lack of better answers, but a flaw in the question itself. My response is that refusing to answer the problem is not evasion but a reorientation. It shifts the task from explaining suffering to confronting and eventually vanquishing it. Again, antitheodicy generally works to dissolve the problem of evil by rejecting it or the way it is presented to be (Betenson 2016: 57). The question, then, is not whether the problem is answered or not, but whether asking it is itself appropriate. Philosophical problems of this sort arise from language; they are not solved but dissolved once we recognize their source. The theological problem of evil, on this view, is sustained by the expectation that suffering must have divine justification; that our suffering has meaning. Mere moral denunciation of theodicy is

missing the point. Dissolving it really just requires exposing the speculative metaphysics behind the problem of evil (Snellman 2019: 211). Finally, the charge of evasion overlooks an important asymmetry: Theodicy and no-thought antitheodicy are trying to do two very different things. Theodicy explains suffering at the cost of those who suffer, whereas antitheodicy refuses explanation in order to avoid precisely that cost, without the pretension that it must, or even can, be justified. Such an intellectual peace need not consist in saying nothing at all (Spiegel 2021, 117). Buddhism and Daoism understand wisdom as a transformation of one's relationship to suffering. So dissolving the problem is itself a substantive philosophical response rather than a kind of avoidance. No-thought antitheodicy is about approaching and facing evils correctly.

Epilogue

Clearly the move from solution to dissolution acquires some broader relevance beyond theology and into things like AI discourse and educational reform. The underlying logic is, I reckon, strikingly analogous. There is a powerful impulse to render "evils" (poverty, inequality, illiteracy, pollution) intelligible, manageable, and ultimately explainable. The problem that is confronted here is not confined to religious belief only, but is a recurring feature of human language and rationality itself for instrumentalization. A solution-oriented framework assumes that every problem, theological, pedagogical, or technological, must be addressed via explanations and interventions. A no-thought antitheodicy hints at a corrective here: to resist the impulse to narrate all forms of suffering into intelligible and technical outcomes. Antitheodicy is our pedagogue that teaches intellectual restraint. A refusal to assume that all dimensions of human experience, especially evils, ought to be rendered calculable, solvable, or explainable. Parenthetically, for our AI-saturated educational environment, for example, what we really need to ask is: what does it mean to reorient ourselves towards thinking? Our postmodern epoch cannot stop thinking about bad things thereby sinking us deeper into a kind of pessimism that even more thinking simply cannot rescue you from. Antitheodicy, indeed, is piecemeal to a therapeutic mediation on the limits of thinking in an age that cannot stop thinking. Practice thoughtless thoughts, friends.

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