The Problem of Evil in Islam and Christianity: Suffering from the Philosophical Perspectives in Medieval Thought.

The solutions provided to question of why there is evil range from a denial of absolute evil to a denial of God. The problem of evil weighs heavy on the Abrahamic faiths due to the need to reconcile God's mercy and power with the existence of evil. Although both Christian and Islamic traditions begin their explanation of evil from the Fall of Adam, their interpretation of the repercussions of this event differs. For the Christians, Adam was caste out to earth as   a punishment for his sin. For the Muslims, on the other hand, Adam had asked God for forgiveness for this transgression and his repentance was accepted and thus, he was forgiven. However, he was still send down to earth not as a punishment but in order to develop his full potential. The Christian response to the problem of evil is dominated by Augustine's free will argument and its solution God's grace. St Irenaeus on the other hand, argues that man is an immature creation that requires earthly experience in order to develop his potential. Combining both Augustine and Irenaeus positions may actually provide a more complete answer and is certainly not contradictory. Muslim philosophers integrated both approaches to get the best of both worlds.   They utilized Augustine free will and incorporated Ireneaus' fulfillment of man's potential to argue that life on earth though hard is actually good. These differing understandings of the concept of genesis and evolution evil have practical implications on the concept of man responsibility and human action although it is not obvious in everyday life.

Larry King did an interview on CNN with representatives of three Abrahamic faiths after the shock of the 2003 tsunami that killed over two hundred thousand lives. Mr. King assumed such a catastrophe would leave anyone to questions one's faith in God, at the very least, the assumption that God is All-Powerful and All-Good.   However, the responses given by the representatives of these faiths shocked and surprised Larry King. Instead of the horrendous catastrophe leading them to question their faith, the event served only to reaffirm their faith. Baffled by these responses, Larry King prodded on to try to understand the rationale of how such an obviously evil event could reaffirm one's faith in God and not produce instead the opposite result, doubt of the very existence of God itself.

The question why does evil exist may not be the burning question across kitchen tables except maybe during catastrophes but it remains at the heart of the human endeavor to make sense of man life and experiences. Journalist and best-selling author Lee Strobel, a fundamentalist preacher commissioned George Barna, a public-opinion pollster, to conduct a nationwide survey.

> The survey included the question "If you could ask God only one question and you knew he would give you an answer, what would you ask?" The most common response, offered by 17% of those who could think of a question was "Why is there pain and suffering in the world?"[1]

The survey demonstrated that although questions of pain and suffering may not constitute everyday kitchen table discussions, the question dominated our understanding of why we exist and how we comprehend our existence and experiences, and thus colors and shapes all our actions and measurements of success and failure of life. The desire to know why evil exists is not a trivial quest or self indulgence, but it is a deep human need to know in order to come to term with one's mortality and find meaning of life. We may not even be able to answer this question, however, it in the seeking that we find solace and meaning, thus, the consolation of the quest.

All the responses by these three representatives of the three Abrahamic faiths are predicated on their understanding of why humans are here on this earth. What is the meaning of our life experiences and how does that impact us? In order words, why is there something instead of nothing? Their answers lie in the story of genesis and the

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[1] Lee Strobel. (2000). *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 29.

differing understanding of the repercussions of the Fall of Adam. We will firstly discuss what is evil. Next, address why evil is a challenge to God's theodicy and thus, God's very existence as questioned by the atheist and conclude with examining the Christian and Muslim tradition responses to the problem of evil.

What is evil

One of the best presentations of the problem of evil comes from Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel, "The Brothers Karamazov." Ivan, a character in the book, goes through a litany of evil actions.

He says:

> They burn villages, murder, rape women and children, they nail their prisoners to the fences by the ears, leave them so till morning, and in the morning they hang them—all sorts of things you can't imagine. People talked sometimes of bestial cruelty, but that's a great injustice and insult to the beast; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel. The tiger only tears and gnaws, that's all he can do. He would never think of nailing people by the ears, even if he were able to do it. These (men) took pleasure in torturing children, too; cutting the unborn child from the mother's womb, and tossing babies up in the air and catching them on the points of their bayonets before their mothers' eyes.[2]

Can any form of evil make sense? Why would God allow such suffering, evil to be perpetrated? Could there possibly be any redeeming qualities that one can get from such barbaric acts? Can there ever be sufficient justification for it? It is true that the above evil is perpetrated by man and not by God? If man is responsible for these evil deeds, can we relegate evil to simply man's free will? Could it be that simple?

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[2] Fyodor Dostoevsky. (1980). *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. by Constance Garnet. New York. 146.

Not all evil however, are the result of the actions of man. A tsunami killed hundreds of thousands in Indonesia alone in 2003. A hurricane kills, maims thousands in Myanmar, leaving hundreds of orphans to fend for themselves in 2008. Are not such natural disasters evil? At the very least, their product certainly is evil and suffering. This certainly cannot be of man's doing. If man is not responsible for these evil results, then who is?

We can even add a third category to evil, a hybrid of man's reckless actions, resulting in natural evil. Man's merciless ravaging of the earth has resulted in ozone depletion, acid rain, deforestation, imbalance in bio-diversity, climate change etc. all resulting in pain and misery on a mass scale maybe not for the present generation but certainly for the future generations. Those who will suffer are not the one's who had perpetrated the crime but the hapless future generation.

We conclude that evil can be classified into three broad categories: Man made evil, better known as moral evils, such as murder, torture, rape, theft etc. Natural evils are such as tsunami, earth-quakes, volcano eruptions, hurricanes etc. Hybrid evils (combination of two) are such as pollution, ozone depletion, starvation etc.

Classifying evil, painful as it is, is the easy part. What is evil *raison d'être* is the question we are asking and hoping to answer here. Michael Peterson argues that the problem of evil is a kind of "moral protest." In asking "How could God let this happen?" people are often claiming "It's not fair that God has let this happen."[3] What is contentious here is that there is something morally problematic about a morally perfect God allowing

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[3] Michael Peterson. (1998). *God and Evil: An Introduction to the Issues*. Colorado. 9

all of the evil and suffering we see. Atheists like John Mackie and H. J. McCloskey[4] would conclude that it is an apparent contradiction in terms for God to allow evil and be at the same time morally perfect. How and why have they reached this damming conclusion? What are their basis assumptions in order for them to reach this conclusion? The first assumption has to be that God is morally responsible for His creation. They assume God has to be responsible for them since He chose to bring them into existence and thus must be responsible for their sustenance, suffering and pain. However, does this mean all of God's creations have equally legitimate demands on God for their well being, or is man simply special, the exception and if so why man? Even if we accept this idea that God is responsible for man, then, we have to ask the question why He, God made man's life difficult, challenged by the pain and suffering? A potential solution is evil is justifiable. The experience of evil must transcend the pain and instead produce good. Evil must have redeeming values. It seems a contradiction in terms or an oxymoron, but the only possible justification for evil's existence, in fact it *raison d'être* is that it is necessary to produce good.   Even if we accept that evil can produce good, can we ever accept why there is so much evil. Where is the redeeming value in that? Can there be sufficient reason to ever justify the amount of evil that existed or will exist?

J. L. Mackie's solution to all the above troubling questions is simple, there is no God. The problem of evil is not a problem for the atheist.   It is however, a problem for the theist who must grapple with if he/she wants to make sense of why he/she exists in this challenging transitory world. Mackie argues;

The problem of evil, in the sense in which I shall be using the phrase, is a problem only for someone who believes that there is a God who is both omnipotent and wholly good. And it is a logical problem, the problem of clarifying and reconciling a number of beliefs: it is not a scientific problem that might be resolved by further observations or a practical problem that might be solved by a decision or an action these points are obvious… In its simplest form the problem is this: God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet evil exist. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions, so that if any two of them were true the third would be false. But at the same time all three are essential parts of most theological positions: the theologian, it seems, at once must adhere and cannot consistently adhere to all three.[5]

All theists who accept this idea that God exist, He is All Powerful and He is morally good but at the same time there is evil must explain this seeming conundrum in some acceptable manner. It is not a scientific problem, for science is able to state the events, it can observe evil actions, but never conclude if they are ever justifiable; that's a value judgment call. Theologians may wish to but they should never brush aside this problem as something not requiring explanation or discussion but a problem to be simple accepted, just bear with it and overcome. That would be seriously flawed approached, a cop-out and will harm the very foundation of man's responsibilities and accountability.

H. J. McCloskey adds to Mackie challenge to theologians by arguing that "evil is a problem for the theist, in that a contradiction is involved in the fact of evil on the one hand and belief in the omnipotence and omniscience of God on the other."[6] Evil would clearly be a problem that theist must address to some satisfaction if they want to maintain

[5] J. L. Mackie. (1990). "Evil and Omnipotence" in Adams, Robert Merrihew and Marilyn McCord Adams, eds. *The Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.. 25

[6] McCloskey, H. J. 1960. "God and Evil" *Philosophical Quarterly* 10: 97-114. 97

their claim not only of the existence of God, but also a God that is all powerful and at the same time wholly good.

Mackie and McCloskey argument can better be expressed in the form of these truth claims of the following statements.

(1) God is omnipotent (that is, all-powerful).
(2) God is omniscient (that is, all-knowing).

(3) God is perfectly good.

(4) Evil exists.

Any two or three of these claims might be true at the same time. However, there is no way that all of them could be true. In other words, (1) through (4) form a logically inconsistent set. What does it mean to say that something is logically inconsistent? Put simply, it means impossible. Therefore, for Mackie and McCloskey, there cannot exist a God that is omnipotent, omniscient, and at the same time allows evil to exist. Thus, for them, bluntly put, there is no God.

Can this contradiction of the problem of evil be so cut and dry and resolve with such finality as Mackie argues, I think not. However, one should never be dismissive of the very real challenge posed by the atheist due to the existence of evil. Throughout the history of religion, there are religious men/women who were aware of the problem and were sensitive enough to realize that the question must be address rationally instead of simply brushing it aside as a matter to be settled by resorting only to faith or more appropriately blind faith, and thus relegating anyone who raises such contentious issues as not having sufficient faith. The natural human need to know, satisfy and justify it own

beliefs cannot and should not be put aside or to rest but must be addressed to the best our human abilities. To ignore human curiosity will lead to dire repercussion of building up a belief that the religion is unwilling or unable to satisfy the natural human criteria of human reason, ultimately leading to the consequences of secularism that separates the realm of religion from the realm of reason, never to reconcile the two. This leads to relegating religion which was the dominating force over all human life over the centuries to becoming only one of a myriad of competing explanations and perspectives on human experiences as demonstrated in modern life[7]. If religious explanations are unable or unwilling to accept the fact that their explanation is no longer the dominant explanation of human experiences, and become unwilling to appeal to the human criteria today human reason, it will not only relegates to the backwaters, but becomes the explanation that one resorts to last.

Medieval Justification for the Existence of Evil: Responses to Evil from the Religious Traditions of Christianity and Islam.

Responses to Evil in the Christian Religious Traditions: Why is there something instead of nothing

The three representatives of the Abrahamic faiths response to evil is based on the question 'why is there something instead of nothing? And thus why are we here on earth? Although the basis of all three Abrahamic faith's understanding of genesis of human existence is based on the story of Adam and Eve, their subtle differences are amplified and thus have profound implications on the question of evil. We will elaborate on only

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[7] The debate on whether God must create the best of all possible worlds is one form of questioning of God's justice and the problem of evil that was generated internally within the theological debates in defense of God's justice. Although the atheist attacks on God through the issue of the problem of evil, the debate of this issue had been raise throughout the history of the Abrahamic faiths. Within the Islamic faith, more than 44 authors have dealt with this question of theodicy. Refer to Eric Ormsby's Theodicy in Islamic Thought : The Dispute of Al-Ghazali's Best of All Possible Worlds" and Ibrahim Kallin's Mulla Sadra on Theodicy.

two narratives, the Christian and Islamic tradition, however, Judaism will always be there in the background for you could not understand neither religions, Islam or Christianity without referring to Judaism.

The Abrahamic faiths' understanding of genesis and why man is here on earth is based on the Adam's act of disobedience of God by eating the forbidden fruit while he was in Paradise. All three faiths concur on this narrative of Adam's act of disobedience. The consequences and repercussions of this act is what differentiate Christianity and Islam. For the Christians, Adam had committed a monumental sin against the Divine Will, God and the consequences of Adam's transgression is the guilt of sin with the grave repercussion of him and his progenies caste out from the tranquility of heaven to the turmoil of the earth. Caste down to earth, Adam develops needs, wants, desires that he must struggle with to achieve and overcome, in other words for the first time, to suffer. The disobedience and unforgiven lead not only to the fall of Adam, but the curse of sin is inherited and borne by all his progeny, thus all men inherited original sin.

> The development of the doctrine of original sin begins with the story of the Fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. When they disobeyed a divine command not to eat the fruit of a certain tree, God punishes them by subjecting them to toil, suffering, and death. Being subject to such things is part of their legacy to us.[8]

Due to the original sin, the Bible clearly state that all men inherit the sin of Adam, or did it? Although it is self evident that all sons of Adam on this earth are also subject to toil, suffering and death, however, it does not necessarily follow that they must have inherited from Adam his

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[8] Phillip Quinn. Sin and Original Sin. P 543

original sin. Quinn points out that inheriting original sin is not clearly stated in the Bible but rather comes from St Paul. Quinn says,

> But the story does not say that they are punishments in our case, and it does not suggest that we have inherited from the first humans a burden of guilt. That suggestion is made by the Epistles of Paul. [9]

Although voices such as Quinn and others have started to emerge and raise questions against the concept of original sin, arguing that it is only an interpretation of the Bible and not clearly stated in the Bible, these voices have been far and few and more importantly, had been drown out by the dominating concept of original sin formulated St Paul and elaborated and made Church doctrine by the brilliance of St Augustine.   Hicks points out the dominating influence of Augustine,

> The main traditional Christian response to the problem of evil was formulated by St Augustine (354-430 A.D.) and has constituted the majority report of the Christian mind through the centuries, although it has been much criticized in recent times.[10]

Due to the dominance of Augustinian thought on this issue, it would be misrepresentation not to consider original sin as the mainstream understanding, and thus, we must address it when dealing with the problem of evil in Christianity.

 The concept of original sin argues that the casting of men to the earth is the result of estrangement with God because of sin.   Man must therefore suffer the trial and tribulation of earthly life, suffer the consequences of sin.

 Augustine explain the traditional Christian position on existence of evil

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[9] Ibid. 543

[10] John Hick. 1990. *Philosophy of Religion*. Fourth edition. New Jersey. 41.

Augustine holds firmly to the Hebrew-Christian conviction that the universe is good-that is to say, it is a creation of a good God for a good purpose. There are according to Augustine, higher and lower, greater and lesser goods in immense abundance and variety; however, everything that has being is good in its own way and degree, except in so far as it has become spoilt or corrupted. Evil-whether it be an evil will, an instance of pain, or some disorder or decay in nature-has therefore not been set by God but represents the going wrong of something that is inherently good…Evil stems from the culpable misuse of creaturely freedom in a tragic act, of cosmic significance in the prehistory of the human race-an act that was prefigured in the heavenly realms by the incomprehensible fall of some of the angels, the chief of whom is Satan, God's enemy.[11]

This fall of angelic and human beings was the origin of moral evil or sin. The natural evil of disease of "the nature red in tooth and claw", and earthquake, storm, and so on are the penal consequence of sin, for human was intended to be guardians on earth, and this human All evil is either sin or the punishment of sin. The existence evil is not from God but from the actions of men. Whatever God create is inherently good, but how man use it through his free will choosing the immediate good over the long term good is what cause evil.

Critics of Augustine challenges and undermines his most sacred assumption that man is inherently good. If man is inherently good, where does this initially evil come from. Why did the angel commit the first sin and then Adam? Free will is good answer for everything after, thus absolving God of any sin, but it does not fully explain why there is the first sin. A possible answer to the question why men commit evil is maybe from his perspective it is not evil or more precisely, he sees as good. Timothy Sexton provides a possible explanation.

Medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas says of Augustine that he believes that "evil cannot exist except in the good." Aquinas goes on to state that "evil cannot have an essential cause." In other words, a person doesn't go about committing evil unless he sees in the action some good. A person does not consciously choose to perform an evil act. It is only evil when viewed from the correct perspective.

[11] John Hick. (1990). Philosophy of Religion. New Jersey. 41-2.

> Therefore evil should be considered an accidental circumstance of the desire to do a good. The good gets perverted and instead an evil is perpetrated, even though the person committing the act may not see it that way.[12]

Timothy Sexton argument that no man goes about committing evil unless he sees in the action some good has roots in Aristotle's argument that man's chooses between the immediate good over the long term good is what causes evil. Similarly, Augustine argues for the distinction between types of good, the Supreme good with the lesser good. It is Adam free choice of the immediate good or the lesser good, instead of the long term good or the supreme good result into Adam's short sightedness in committing this evil of disobedience that for him at the time must have considered beneficial, good.

A second critic, and I believe a more fundamental question that Augustine needs to account for is , is man's experience on this earth only punitive, payment for Adam's original sin? Does that mean he gains nothing from this worldly life experience? Was man really perfect for Augustine before the Fall? He could not have been. If man was perfect then, he would have known the consequences of his act of disobedience. If he knew, he certainly would have avoided this catastrophic outcome at all cost. Potential answer to some of these conundrums lie in St Iraneues [13] solution to the problem of evil. From the onset, he rejected Augustine assumption that man was created perfect in the first place. This answers the question where evil comes from, man's imperfection. Had he stopped there, it would have been a very perceptible observation, but his second perception is what takes the cake. It addresses the questions why we are here on

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[12] **What Does it Mean to Be Evil: A Medieval Perspective: Medieval philosophies regarding evil. http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/5268/what_does_it_mean_to_be_evil_a_medieval.html?page=2&cat =34**

[13] St Iraneues was an early speaking Greek Father of the Church (c.130-c.202 A.D.)

earth experiencing this challenging earthly life.   St Iraneues argues instead of being perfect,

man is actually an immature creature that can only develop and fulfill his potential through the

trials and tribulations of the earth. Thus, with one brilliant insight, St Iraneues   seems to solve

the weakness of Augustine's 'whereforth comes evil' and 'why are we here on earth. Combining

Augustine and St Iraneues is not only possible but probable desirable with some modifications.

Remove Augustine's perfect man and replace it with Iraneues' immature man.   Maintain

Augustine's man's free will and you potential have a workable solution to problem of evil. Is it a

perfect solution , certainly not , but definitely much more pliable.

If we begin with the assumption that man is in the beginning capable but only potentially, it is

natural to expect that man makes mistakes along the way. Whether he/she learns from his/her

mistakes and is remorseful of it, then he/she will improve oneself and become the mature human

being he supposed to be, realizing his potential. Although it is extremely difficult for one

experiencing evil to see evil as anything but suffering, evil potentially has redemptive value and

not reduce only to punitive in nature. Thus, the challenging life on earth therefore, is not a

punishment for sin, an estrangement as consequence of sin but rather a place to improve oneself

and realize one's potential, therefore, it is a blessing, not a curse.

St Iraneues seems to be much more in line with the Muslim comprehension of why we are here.

Islam recognizes the reality of the existence of evil.   However, the existence of evil is not

unequivocally malicious and vicarious for that would contradict a merciful God. Evil has

redeemable qualities if man can see beyond his immediate pain.

Responses to Evil in the Islamic Religious Traditions: Why is there something instead of nothing

The Muslim narrative although had initial concurred with the Christian narrative on the sin of Adam, had a major difference on the repercussions of the Adam's sin. The Quran argued that Adam had regretted his disobedience and was extremely remorseful. He begged for forgiveness and was finally forgiven. Adam unlike Satan never lost faith and hope in God's, in the mercy and compassion of God. Satan on the other hand after his disobedience, regretted his arrogance, his sin of pride but instead of having any faith and hope in God, that it could even be possible for God to forgive him, simply gave up all hope and instead turned to hate and sought revenge not against God but against man, now his nemesis, the reason for his fall from grace. This faith and hope have become the defining difference between man and Satan. Man ability to commit sin and then regret his action shows that he was not created perfect but has potential. It is this potential that he must cultivate and grow to fulfill his potential. It is his believe in the mercy of His Creator that sustains him to go on and continue his imperfect life, confident that his life will be guided and supported by the God.

The Quran defines all evil as injustices. All harm that one does to someone else-in sum, all deviation from man (good) normative nature in reality one does to one self, not just metaphorically but literally-a self injustice. The Quranic defining concept of *taqwa* defines all injustices as self inflicting evil. All of man's actions are reflective back onto him.

> This integrative moral action is what the Quran terms *taqwa*, perhaps the most important single term in the Quran. At its highest, it denotes the fully integrated and whole personality of man, the kind of 'stability' which is formed after all the positive elements are drawn in. Though these are not wrong, Muslims are increasingly discarding the term 'fear of 'God because they think the phrase is misleading in view of the false picture, widely prevalent in the West until recently-and present even today- of the God of Islam as a capricious dictator or a

tyrant, in the light of which 'fear of God' might be indistinguishable from say, fear of a wolf. [14]

Evil is not arbitrarily decided by God, but God determiners what is evil in concurrence with the manner He designed and made man. Thus, to do evil is to harm oneself.

> The root of the term, *wqy*, really means "to guard or to protect against something"… Hence *taqwa* means to protect oneself against the harmful or evil consequences of one's conduct. If, then, by "fear of God" one means   fear of the consequences of one's actions-whether in this world or the next (punishment of the Last Day- one is absolutely right. In other words, it the fear that comes from an acute sense of responsibility, here and in the hereafter, and, not the fear of a wolf or of an uncanny tyrant, for the God of the Quran has unbounded mercy- although He also wields dire punishment, both in this world and in the hereafter…the best way to define *taqwa* is say that, whereas action belongs to man, real and effective judgment upon that action, as well as the standard whereby that action is judged, lie outside him.[15]

The defining Quranic concept of taqwa argues against evil as being punitive. The only value of evil has to be redemptive. Even evil as a punishment for sin is constructed in the Quran as constructive. It has redeeming values for those who can see beyond the pain and hardships and see the light at the end of the tunnel and therefore, is able to draw and learn lessons from it. Thus, even those made to suffer can benefit from their suffering but only if they can see beyond the immediate suffering itself, which very few are able. Their suffering makes them repent from their wrongdoings which inevitably benefit themselves.

This scenario that life on earth can be for the betterment is only plausible is we accept that Adam is created imperfect but with great potential and will sin. He was not caste out from the heavens but sent down to earth to be God representative on earth and utilize his life on earth to improve himself by the trials and tribulations and gaining from it, virtues. Thus, the concept of original

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[14] Fazlur Rahman. (1999) .*Major Themes of the Quran.* Kuala Lumpur. 28.
[15] Ibid. 29.

sin does not exist in Islam. The Muslim philosophers neither had to contend with the concept of original sin nor its consequence, man being caste out on to the vile earth. Without having to explain and defend the original sin, they easily accepted man responsibility for his actions and free will. Accepting the Quranic challenge that man was sent down to earth to be God representative or steward on earth and in the process improve his immature self and gain tremendously from the experience of life, this resolve the unaddressed problem not discussed by Augustine on why man is here on earth and could man life experience on earth be possible more than punitive punishment for original sin but in fact is a positive growth experience.

The question for the Muslim philosophers is not whereforth comes evil but why is there so much of it? Ibn Sina attributes whereforth comes evil to the actions of man. He is not naïve nor in denial to deny that there is evil beyond the hands of man, evil also exist due to natural disasters and diseases. Why does God create is a question Ibn Sina sought address in his *magnus opus*, *Kitab Shifa*(Book of Healing).

> Why does God create? Because of His sheer generosity (*jud*), answers Ibn Sina. To describe the nature of the creative activity of God, we are in need of a term which is well-nigh impossible. The reason is whatever we humans do has a certain extrinsic motivation such that the effect of our actions rebound to us with some benefit for us. We mostly do things for some sort of gain, whether material or non-material. But this is unthinkable in the case of God, since He is already absolutely perfect and hence cannot create for any gain. [16]

If God did not create for His benefit, and all His actions are purposeful, then, logically His creation is for the benefit of His creation.

> His [God] actions is purposive but His purpose cannot be a remedy to any deficiency in Himself. His purpose must be intrinsic and not extrinsic, as for

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[16] Fazlur Rahman. (1990) "Ibn Sina's Theory of the God-World Relationship" in David Burrell and Bernard McGinn eds. *God and Creation*. Notre Dame. 50

example to benefit His creatures. His creatures do, indeed, benefit from Him, and this is why we have used the term 'generous' for His creative activity.[17]

Since all of God activity is purposive, thus, his creation of man must have a purposive. However, since God purposive activity is not to remedy any deficiency in Himself, thus, cannot be for the benefit of God, then, God's activity for His creation man, must be for the benefit for man. Hence, even the challenges and suffering that man faces on earth must therefore be for the benefit of man.

Ibn Sina arguments on the problem of evil basically boils down to two ideas that are- you cannot create good without creating the potential of evil through the misuse or abuse of what is good. Two, what is seemingly evil such as suffering through its endurance, is a necessary means to produce good, virtues. He describes evil as

> a necessity consequence upon the need for the good. Were [the] elements not to oppose each other and be acted upon by the dominant [element among them], these noble species would not have arisen from them. If among these [elements] fire [for example] were not such that , if the clashes concurring in the course of the whole led by necessity to a meeting of a noble man's garment, [that garment] necessarily burns, then fire would not be [something] from which general benefit could be derived. Hence, it is required by necessity that the good possible in these things be good only after [it is possible for] such an evil to occur from and with [such good].[18]

Here Ibn Sina argues that you cannot create good without allowing for the potential misuse or abuse of the good that will result in evil. This is not because it is impossible to do so but it would be probable be undesirable because create only good without the potential of any abuse is

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[17] Fazlur Rahman. (1990) "Ibn Sina's Theory of the God-World Relationship" in David Burrell and Bernard McGinn eds. *God and Creation*. Notre Dame. 50

[18] Shams Inati. (2000). *The Problem of Evil; Ibn Sina's Theodicy*. New York. 137. I have utilized Shams Inati's translation of Ibn Sina's *Kitab ash-Shifa al-Illahiyat,* 418.

to make man an automaton. If man was automaton, the whole purpose of creation would be lost.

No room for error means no room for improvement, no room for life.

To the question why is there so much of it, Ibn Sina's response is there is at all times always

more good than evil. Thus he challenged this contention.

> Evil only strikes individuals, and at certain times. The species are preserved.
> Except for one kind of evil [i.e. accidental evil] real evil does not extend to the
> majority[19]

Ibn Sina would argue that to the individual who is facing evil at that time, forgets that on more

occasions he enjoys good. Even with those who know friends and love ones who are suffering

grave illnesses realize that more of their and love ones are health. Thus, to the question is there

overwhelming evil, Ibn Sina would answer in the negative.

Conclusion.

These differing understanding of the concept of genesis and implications evil have practical

implications on the concept of man responsibility and human action even though it is hard to see

this playing out in our everyday life actions. Most of us are just too practical to allow such

contentious implications to theological hair splitting. However, to deny totally any impact on

these theological differences on our daily action is deny that we are adherents to those faiths.

Thus, however, tedious these debates may seem, they have an impact and place in our lives. For

the atheist, the implication of the existence of evil is the denial of the existence of God. For

some men/women of faith resort to the other extreme and deny the existence of evil. They are

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[19] ibid. 133.

those who would argue for extreme predeterminism and conclude from that position that all actions of everything including man is determine by God[20]. Since God is the author of all these action, these actions can never be wrong or in order words evil. However, for many men and women of faith, the existence of evil neither precludes the existence of God nor the will of man/woman to act and take responsibility for their actions. They accept that both the existence of God and evil is not a contradiction. Instead, evil is a necessary evil in order for good to arise. Man is created imperfect and only through the trials and tribulations, the evil that befalls him on this earth that he/she develops himself/herself into a human being, virtuous, compassionate and merciful. All these god like characters can only obtain through the baptism of fire. Thus, evil seen from this perspective redeems man

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[20] IFor the debate on predeterminism in the Islamic tradition refer to Josef Van Ess, "Wrongdoings and Divine Omnipotence in the Theology of Abu Ishaq an-Nazzam" and Richard Frank, "Can God do what is wrong?" in Tamar Rudavsky ed. Divine Omnipotence and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy.

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