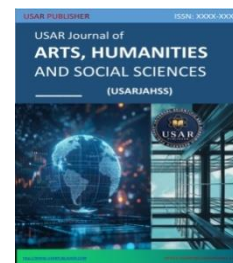




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A Phenomenological Investigation of *Deus Mortuus* and *Deus Absconditus* as Theodical Responses to the Problem of Evil

BY

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Abstract

Despite significant scholarly attention, the problem of evil remains largely unresolved. This research explores the philosophical concepts of Theodicy, on the one hand, and Deus Mortuus (a 'Dead God') and Deus Absconditus (a 'Hidden God'), often linked to nihilism and existential crises, as potential therapeutic frameworks for individuals grappling with the suffering of injustice. By examining how these concepts can paradoxically offer solace to those experiencing profound pain, this study bridges the gap to develop a mollifying approach that acknowledges the depth of human suffering while providing a framework for finding meaning and resilience. Focusing on individuals experiencing morally unjust suffering, this research investigates the therapeutic applications of Deus Mortuus and Deus Absconditus as pathways toward healing and reconciliation. Employing a philosophical methodology, this study contributes to a more holistic approach to comfort, offering a new paradigm for understanding and addressing human suffering and the potential efficacy of these philosophical concepts in mitigating psychological distress. Significantly, this study displays the limitations of traditional theodicies, and the inadequate or even harmful nature of it for individuals struggling with suffering. Consequently, it provides alternative frameworks in Deus Mortuus (the death of God) and Deus Absconditu (the hidden God) presenting an innovative solution to the problem of evil. This research concludes that Deus Mortuus and Deus Absconditu, while seemingly nihilistic, offer alternative frameworks for addressing the problem of evil having challenged traditional theodicies.

Keywords: Theodicy, Deus Mortuus, Deus Absconditus, Righteous Suffering, Philosophical therapy.

Introduction

Throughout human history, thinkers have grappled with the profound question of why evil and suffering exist in a world that is often perceived as divinely created or governed by moral principles. Though suffering is an undeniable aspect of the human condition, the experience of "righteous suffering" — the pain arising from the perception of profound injustice — presents a unique and deeply challenging psychological and spiritual dilemma. This research delves into the complexities of righteous suffering, examining its impact on the human psyche and exploring the potential of philosophical and therapeutic approaches to alleviate its burden. The existence of suffering, particularly in the face of a seemingly

benevolent or just deity, has been a central question in philosophy and theology. The problem of evil forces a critical re-examination of our understanding of both good and the divine. While physical pain and emotional distress are inevitable parts of life, righteous suffering is distinct. It arises from the belief that one has experienced an injustice, a violation of moral or ethical principles, and that this injustice is systemic or deeply rooted in the fabric of society.

The historical discourse on the problem of evil traces its roots to Epicurus's distressing query, eloquently echoed by David Hume in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. This

dilemma, which posits that a truly omnipotent and benevolent God should be able to prevent evil, remains a formidable challenge to theodicy. The persistent existence of suffering and injustice casts a long shadow on the plausibility of religious doctrines that assert the existence of such a deity (Hume, 1776, p. 186). Philosophers and theologians have proffered varied solutions to resolve the challenge, including the Cosmos under the reign of the prince of this world (Dike, 2024, p. 64), Theodicy, *Dues Absconditus*, *Deus Mortuus*, *Deus Incognito*, among others.

Some philosophical theologians have favoured the traditional theodicy or justification of the divine. Therefore, this study is a shift from theodicy to *Deus Mortuus* and *Deus Absconditus*. From "having sympathy for the divine (Theodicy and Freewill Defense)" which rationally must birth the standpoint of those who actually suffer; to focusing less on defending an age long irrationality of religious belief and more on rational academic as well as therapeutic effectiveness with respect to suffering.

At the core of this inquiry lies the philosophical concepts of *Deus Mortuus* and *Deus Absconditus*. These terms, respectively translated to "dead God" and "hidden God," have traditionally been associated with nihilism and existential despair. Yet, paradoxically, they offer profound and strong perspective on the mystery of righteous suffering. By considering these concepts through the lenses of philosophy, psychology, and theology, this research aims to develop a palliative approach that acknowledges the depth of human suffering while providing a framework for resilience and meaning-making.

The notion of a "dead God" has its roots in the theological and philosophical discourse that emerged following the First World War. The disintegration of traditional beliefs in a benevolent, omnipotent deity, in the face of widespread and seemingly senseless suffering, led to a profound crisis of faith. The concept of *Deus Mortuus* encapsulates the sense of divine absence, a world devoid of transcendent meaning or purpose. However, rather than succumbing to nihilism, this research proposes that the acknowledgment of a "dead God" serves as a liberating act, freeing individuals from the burden of an unattainable ideal and allowing them to confront the harsh realities of existence on their own terms.

Complementing the concept of *Deus Mortuus* is that of *Deus Absconditus*. This theological construct suggests that God, while not entirely absent, is concealed or hidden from human understanding. It acknowledges the limitations of human comprehension in the face of divine mystery, while simultaneously affirming the possibility of a deeper, transcendent reality. By exploring the implications of a hidden God, this research seeks to uncover potential sources of hope and resilience in the face of seemingly insurmountable suffering.

Righteous suffering, as a distinct category of human experience, arises from the perception of profound injustice. It

is a complex phenomenon that intersects with issues of morality, ethics, and social justice. Individuals who experience righteous suffering often grapple with feelings of anger, betrayal, and a profound sense of meaninglessness. Their suffering is compounded by the belief that they are victims of a moral or ethical failure on the part of others.

By examining the interplay between the philosophical concepts of *Deus Mortuus* and *Deus Absconditus* and the psychological experience of righteous suffering, this research aims to develop a comprehensive and strong understanding of this complex phenomenon. The goal is to create a framework for a palliative approach that offers both intellectual and emotional relief to those who are burdened by righteous suffering. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to a broader conversation about human suffering, meaning, and resilience. By exploring the potential of philosophical and psychotherapeutic interventions, it aims to offer new perspectives and approaches to addressing the challenges posed by righteous suffering. Also, it explores the potential for a "secular spirituality" derived from the concepts of *Deus Mortuus* and *Deus Absconditus*.

Theistic theory: Theodicy and Freewill Defense

The theory that states that the World is under the authority of the "Prince of this World" is highly questionable because it doubts the sovereignty of God thereby making the "Prince of this World" the author of evil. This theory negates the question of Job "Shall we receive good from Him [God] and not receive evil? This raises critical questions about God's authority as the ultimate source of all creation. If God is the creator of everything, then he is the creator of both good and evil. This presents a theological dilemma, as the Bible asserts that "all things work together for good to them that are called according to his purpose" (McCullough, 2022, p. 185). However, if a separate entity, such as the "Prince of this World" (often interpreted as Satan), is the author of evil, it implies a co-creatorship, effectively undermining God's sole authority. This notion bears a striking resemblance to the dualistic philosophies of early Greek thinkers, who posited the existence of both a benevolent and a malevolent deity.

Yes, all beliefs have to explain why bad things happen, but it is a bigger problem for people who believe in God. Atheists say there is no God, so evil is just how it is. Pantheists say God is everything, and evil is just a part of the whole system. But if you believe in a good and all-powerful God, it's hard to understand why there's so much suffering in the world. When compared with other theistic and pantheistic worldviews that acknowledge the existence of both God and evil, traditional theism appears to face a more significant challenge in reconciling these two realities. For instance, finite *godism* posits a God with limited power, acknowledging the divine desire to eradicate evil but acknowledging the limitations of divine power (Tilley, 2024). Similarly, deism emphasizes God's transcendence, suggesting that God is not directly

involved in the workings of the world, leaving humanity to grapple with evil on its own. In contrast, pantheism views evil as an integral and necessary component of the dynamic interplay between God and the universe, perceiving it as a crucial element in the ongoing process of cosmic evolution (McCullough, 2022, 207).

The central dilemma for theistic belief stems from the inherent contradiction between the traditional attributes of God and the existence of evil. If God is omnipotent, as theism asserts, then God possesses the power to eradicate evil. Furthermore, if God is omnibenevolent, then God has the moral imperative to eliminate suffering. Given that God is also omniscient, implying full awareness of the consequences of creation, the question arises: how can a perfectly good and all-powerful God create a world containing evil? This paradox presents a significant challenge to the coherence of theistic belief. Consequently, the following logical argument emerges:

1. God is absolutely perfect by definition.
2. A being of absolute perfection cannot create anything imperfect.
3. Perfect creatures, by their very nature, are incapable of performing evil acts.
4. Therefore, neither God nor any of God's perfect creations can be the source of evil.

The foundational elements of the theistic response to the problem of evil can be traced back to the influential works of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas (Geisler, 1999, p. 221). Subsequent theistic responses have largely followed the contours of their thought. Both thinkers, while offering nuanced variations, generally agreed on the following core principles:

1. God is absolutely perfect.
2. God created only perfect beings.
3. God endowed certain creatures with the gift of free will.
4. Some of these creatures, exercising their freedom, chose to do evil.
5. Therefore, evil originates from the free choices of created beings, not from God or any inherent flaw in God's creation.

The above statement posits that God, being omnipotent and benevolent, possesses the capacity to derive good even from the occurrence of evil. This perspective suggests that God, in his providence, can ultimately redeem and utilize even the

negative consequences of evil events to bring about positive outcomes. The argument proceeds to explain the origin of evil as a consequence of human free will. While God created humans with the capacity for free choice – a fundamentally good gift – this freedom inherently carries the potential for misuse. The abuse of this freedom, through acts of rebellion against God or other forms of wrongdoing, introduced evil into the world.

The free-will defence raises the question: what caused the first instance of evil? Theists differentiate between God as the ultimate source of the capacity for choice and humans as the agents who exercise that choice. While God grants humans free will, He is not responsible for the evil that arises from its misuse. Humans are accountable for their own choices, as they are the direct agents of their actions. God enables the possibility of free choice, but individuals are responsible for the actual choices they make. God neither desires nor prevents evil; instead, He permits it (McCullough, 2022, p. 190). However, this raises the question: if God cannot will evil, what is the cause of it? The principle of causality suggests that every event must have a cause, leaving the origin of evil unaccounted for if it is not directly willed or prevented by God.

Religious believers have had recourse to two main strategies. One approach is to offer a theodicy which attempts to account for why God chooses to permit evil in the world. Many critics have rejected theodicy as inherently unbelievable or as unwise attempts to go beyond the bounds of human knowledge to discern God's unfathomable purposes. On the other hand, freewill defense, claims that evil is caused not by God but by human beings, who must be allowed to choose evil if they are to have freewill (White, 2021). The freewill defence posits that God, while omnipotent and omniscient, does not directly create evil. Instead, the existence of evil is a necessary consequence of granting humans the fundamental freedom of will. This argument preserves God's goodness by suggesting that God created the best possible world, given the inherent limitations imposed by the necessity of free will. It also upholds God's omnipotence and omniscience, acknowledging that God could prevent evil but chooses not to interfere in order to safeguard human freedom. This justification addresses the problem of evil by reconciling it with the traditional attributes of God (White, 2021). However, this defense presupposes the existence of true human freedom and primarily focuses on moral evil, with limited applicability to natural evils such as natural disasters, except insofar as they may be exacerbated by human actions.

Deus Mortuus – God is Dead

This is a multifaceted and intricate concept with a profound influence on Western intellectual history. It represents not the literal death of a deity, but the decline of religious belief and the subsequent challenges for morality, meaning, and the human condition. The phrase "Deus Mortuus – God is Dead"

is most famously associated with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), though the concept seems to have roots in earlier philosophical and theological discourse. It is crucial to understand that Nietzsche was not celebrating the literal death of a supposed deity, rather using it as a metaphor for the decline of belief in supreme being, particularly within Western European culture (Youvan, 2024), and the subsequent consequences for morality and meaning.

Arguably, while Nietzsche popularized the phrase, ideas surrounding the "death of God" existed before him. For instance, in the early 19th century, G.W.F. Hegel discussed the "death of God" in a more theological context, referring to the loss of the immediate, naive faith in God and the need for a more rational and philosophical understanding of the divine. In the same way, Jean Paul used the phrase in his 1797 novel "Siebenkäs," where a character has a dream in which Christ proclaims there is no God (Youvan, 2024). Again, some scholars have traced the idea even further back to medieval mystical traditions and interpretations of Christian theology.

This school of thought argue that, the word "God" is meaningless. A being who has never lived before cannot logically be said to have died. Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) argues thus: "If God were all-good, he would destroy evil. If God were all-powerful, he could destroy evil. But evil is not destroyed hence, there is no such God" (Ferguson, and Wright, 1988, p. 242). Some scholars interpret the 'death of God' as a cultural phenomenon, asserting that the concept of a transcendent realm has become obsolete in technologically advanced societies characterized by self-reliance and sophistication. For William Hamilton, the realization that God did not fulfill his personal needs or provide solutions to his problems led to a profound sense of God's absence. However, despite this realization, Hamilton maintained a consistent practice of prayerful waiting, suggesting that he did not fully embrace the notion of God's non-existence (Youvan, 2024).

It appears that some 'death of God' theologians have been significantly impacted by the realization that their inherited cultural conceptions of God are incompatible with the modern scientific worldview. Nietzsche's concept of "God is Dead" refers to the decline of religious belief in modern society. This can be a philosophical succour to righteous suffering by providing a framework for meaning and morality in a world without God. It helps individuals cope with the suffering caused by religious dogma and institutions.

Nietzsche's use of "God is Dead" is most prominent in his works "The Gay Science" (1882) and "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" (1883-1885). He argued that the Enlightenment and the rise of scientific thought had eroded the foundations of religious belief. This was not simply a sociological observation for Nietzsche; it had profound implications (William, 2024). Importantly, Nietzsche himself did not advocate for nihilism. Instead, he believed that the death of God could create an opportunity for individuals to create their own values and live fulfilling lives.

Deus Absconditus and Dues Reveletus (The Hiddenness of God and the Revealed God)

The Latin, *Deus absconditus* refers to God who has withdrawn totally from the world having no interference with the affairs of the world (Dike, 65). This seems to be in tandem with the fundamental Christian notion of God as beyond human comprehension. This biblical notion from the Old Testament (See Isaiah 45:15; 59:2; Micah 3:4; Psalm 10:1; 22:1-2; 30:7; 44:22-23; 88:13-14; 89:46; 104:27-29) is closely intertwined with the problem of evil. For those experiencing suffering, the inability to perceive God's presence or understand God's purposes can intensify their pain. This lack of perceived divine engagement may lead sufferers to feel abandoned, unloved, or that their suffering is meaningless. Furthermore, divine hiddenness challenges a common theological argument, namely, the analogy between God's actions and the actions of loving parents towards their children. While this analogy is often used in theodicy to justify God's ways, divine hiddenness appears to undermine its validity. However, some theists argue that God has justifiable reasons for not revealing Himself to everyone, and various theological explanations have been proposed to account for these reasons (Dike, 2024, 62). Analogy is often drawn between the actions of loving parents and the actions of God. Just as parents may sometimes impose temporary discomfort on their children for their long-term well-being, even when the child cannot fully understand the rationale, so too may God permit suffering in the lives of individuals for their ultimate benefit.

The early reformers (Martin Luther and John Calvin) connect divine hiddenness to divine revelation. Luther writes "God hides in order to be found where God wills to be found." (Paulson, 2014). According to Calvin, the invisible nature of God is made evident through acts of faith, which serve as 'spectacles' of divine presence (1966). However, true understanding of these manifestations requires the illumination of divine revelation, received through the act of faith itself (Paulson, 2014). The reformers' thinking of hiddenness is the emphasis of Paulson who states "hiddenness of God necessarily reminds us of our limitation" (2014). Paulson asserts that an insurmountable chasm exists between God and humanity, characterized by God's inherent hiddenness. Human beings, by their own nature, are incapable of bridging this gap. Fellowship between God and humanity is not a product of human effort or capacity, but rather a miraculous act of divine grace and good pleasure (2014). Divine hiddenness, rather than being a problem to be overcome, is intrinsically linked to God's gracious act of self-disclosure.

Herbert Onyema Anyanwu has observed that scholars of the early theories painted the African "God" generally as a Supreme creator of the universe who is not represented by any symbols but is regarded as a God who retired and went into his eternal rest after creating and commencing the organization of the world. These scholars maintain that the

idea of God among the people is confusing and obscure and imbued with polytheism. Further, God is represented as leaving the world to the lesser deities while Himself has gone away to a repose of eternity thereby suggesting “the cosmos under the prince of this world” (1999, 70) as Amos Francis Dike argues.

One can therefore say that they were giving expression of European deistic philosophy, the kind of philosophy which has led them to speak of God in the whole of Africa as a withdrawn God – “*Deus Otiosus*” (Anyanwu, 1999, 70). This theory proposes that the African concept of God reflects a deity that does not intervene in the affairs of the world or the lives of human beings. This perspective, often labeled as 'Deus Otiosus,' suggests a distant and uninvolved deity within African Traditional Religion. However, many African anthropologists and scholars of African Traditional Religion contend that the concept of 'Deus Otiosus' is a mischaracterization, reflecting a Western ethnocentric bias imposed upon African religious beliefs. For instance, Anyanwu posits that this idea of a withdrawn God was formulated to distinguish the Westerners' god from the God of the Africans (1999, 71). By implication, those who use the term or believe in it, think God is not totally unknown to the people.

The concept of a withdrawn God can be attributed to academic misinterpretations perpetuated by a resistance to acknowledge God's universal and impartial self-disclosure. The fact that God cannot be perfectly known is not to be blamed on West Africa peoples. It is universally significant fact that God who is a *Deus Absconditus* is also a *Dues Reveletus* – God who is hidden is also God who is revealed. Human limitations inherent to our finite nature contribute to an imperfect understanding of God's nature and character (Amos Francis Dike, 2023, p. 199). However, scholars including J. L. Schellenberg argue that, divine hiddenness constitutes putative evidence for atheism.

Deus Incognito

The idea of *Deus Incognito* (The Unknowable God) like *Deus Absconditus* does not represent any theological position but a trend. The term 'unknown God,' frequently employed during the medieval mystical era, may have been primarily a conventional designation. However, it nonetheless encapsulated a central tenet of mystical thought, a concept with roots in the pagan Platonic academy and further developed within the intellectual salons of the French Enlightenment.

This perspective posits that God, or ultimate Reality, is inherently unknowable. Any attempt to describe God through language is ultimately inadequate and insufficient (Rippee, and Brown, (eds.), 2024, p. 78). Dike judiciously observes that the universe, in its awe-inspiring grandeur, reveals itself to be far beyond human comprehension. Nature, he argues, was not created for human benefit, but possesses an inherent otherness

and mystery that transcends human understanding. It is against this backdrop of cosmic wonder and human insignificance that the profound challenges of human suffering must be considered (Rippee, and Brown, (eds.), 2024, p. 68).

Whereas in the Medieval and ancient world, the unknowability of God was held in check by an optimistic view of human nature, in Modern time that naïve confidence has been lost. Man is a purely temporal, physical epiphenomenon. There is no 'divine' spark resident in his bosom. As such the unknowability of God has significantly hardened. The underlying ethos of this Modern *Deus Incognito* is fundamentally pessimistic, cynical, and Darwinian (insufficient (Rippee, and Brown, (eds.) 2024, p. 125).

Vulgate translation was the first to use *Deus Absconditus* in biblical translation (Vulgate Bible, Isaiah 45:15). Luther identified the concept of 'Deus Incognito' – the unknown God – as a fundamental flaw in medieval theology. This notion, deeply influenced by pagan philosophical ideas, posits a separation between humanity and God arising from ignorance and misinformation. In this view, creation itself is seen as a kind of fall, and humanity, trapped within the limitations of earthly existence, must strive to return to its divine origin. Luther vehemently rejected this perspective, viewing it as a distortion of true Christian theology (Dike, 2024, p. 67).

Theory of “the Prince of this World” as the solution to the Problem of Evil

Given the infinite nature of God's mind and the finite limitations of human intellect, it is reasonable to acknowledge that full comprehension of divine purposes may be beyond human grasp. Thus, while we may not understand God's reasons, it is possible that even suffering serves a divine purpose. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ exemplifies this concept, suggesting that even profound suffering can have redemptive significance. The enduring challenge for monotheism lies in reconciling the seemingly incompatible truths of God's omnibenevolence, omnipotence, and the persistent existence of evil. The concept of the "Prince of this World" represents a significant attempt to address this challenge by attributing the origin of evil to the actions of a rebellious creature within God's creation (Dike, 2024, 66). The narrative of the devil is characterized by a bitter irony, marked by a series of tragic reversals. Initially serving as a theological symbol for oppressed communities, offering solace in the face of unjust treatment and suffering inflicted by a seemingly indifferent God, the devil ultimately becomes a vehicle for justifying oppression by political, economic, and religious authorities. This theory also presents a complex evolution of the biblical God, initially depicted as a liberator of the oppressed, who ultimately transforms into a figure of cruelty, inflicting suffering indiscriminately upon both friends and enemies.

The above claim agrees with some scholars when argue that, with his great army of fallen angels, Satan set up an invisible

rebel movement in this world. The present world system of values is not God's will. It is Satan's will. Satan is called the "prince of this world" by Christ (John 12:31, John 16:11) and the "god of this world" by Paul (2 Cor. 4:4). In his capacity he controls the present world system of values. Since the present world system of values is under the control of Satan and other evil angels, Christians are [therefore] warned that they must not love (desire) [and submit to the] world . . . The present world system is based on pride, selfishness, lust and greed (1 John 2:16). He probably does this so that God will be required by his justice to bring punishment on his own people whom he loves (Mindiola, 2023, p. 256).

This notion argues that evil is being perpetrated through the activities of Satan – "the prince of this world." This interpretation absolves God from responsibility for evil in the world, instead attributing it to Satan. It is not a surprise that Satan is labeled the "evil one" in the light of Matthew 13:19, the "tempter" according Matthew 4:3 and also the "ruler of the kingdom of the air" as seen in Ephesians 2:2. From the above discussions, there is no doubt that the governments of this world are influenced by a vast host of evil angels, who control the world system of values under Satan.

The Book of Job offers a unique insight into the actions of Satan, who actively seeks to disrupt the relationship between God and humanity. As depicted in Job's story, Satan, acting as the accuser, attempts to undermine the integrity of individuals like Job who strive to live in accordance with God's will. This adversary, operating within the framework of freedom granted by the sovereign Yahweh, seeks to erode faith and destroy the joy of those who seek to live for God (Estes, 2005, p. 26). The Book of Job identifies one source of suffering as the malevolent actions of Satan, who actively opposes God's plan by afflicting God's people.

This view holds that the cosmos is under the control of "the prince of this world" thereby portraying Divine Hiddenness" as a problem of religious language. He walks everywhere incognito, his actions are glaring and he is divine and mysterious, therefore *Deus Incognito* – we simply do not understand his ways and actions. In summary, God is hidden from humanity and handed the cosmos over to "prince of this world" to punish the world for sin (a succor to those suffering).

Human Suffering

The concepts of "Deus Mortuus" (the death of God) and "Deus Absconditus" (the hidden God) offer a philosophical lens to address the profound suffering that often accompanies a sense of righteous indignation. By acknowledging the absence or concealment of a traditional, omnipotent deity, these concepts provide a framework for understanding and coping with such

suffering. In the face of injustice, the realization of a distant or absent God leads to feelings of abandonment and despair. However, embracing the idea of a "Deus Mortuus" offer a liberating perspective. It allows individuals to relinquish the expectation of divine intervention and take ownership of their own experiences and responses to suffering. This enables individuals to cultivate intrinsic meaning and purpose, fostering a sense of self-worth and fulfillment independent of external validation or the expectation of external salvation.

The concepts of "Deus Mortuus" and "Deus Absconditus" offers a rich perspective on suffering, even when it feels like a direct punishment for righteousness. While these concepts do not necessarily deny the existence of a higher power, they acknowledge the apparent absence or silence of that power, particularly in times of hardship. Instead of attributing suffering to divine punishment, these concepts invite a shift in perspective. They encourage individuals to consider the possibility that suffering is an inherent part of the human experience, rather than a specific test or trial imposed by a vengeful deity. By recognizing the limitations of traditional theodicies, which attempt to justify God's actions in the face of evil, these concepts allow for a more compassionate and empathetic understanding of suffering thereby blame suffering on Satan. Ultimately, the goal is not to abandon faith but to deepen it through a more realistic and rich understanding of the divine. By accepting the mystery of suffering and the limitations of human understanding, individuals find solace and meaning in their own experiences, even in the darkest of times.

"Righteous suffering" is understood as suffering endured for a cause or belief that is considered morally just or divinely ordained. This type of suffering often relies on external validation – a higher power or moral code that justifies the pain. However, in a world where God is "dead," this external validation is lost, potentially leading to existential crisis and despair. The concept of the *Deus Mortuus* this way offers a philosophical solace.

Philosophical Cathartic to the Problem of Evil

Biblical tradition attributes the presence of evil to the actions of Satan, a fallen creature who actively opposes God's will. Satan, though subject to God's authority, tempts humans, as seen in the Garden of Eden, and afflicts the righteous, as exemplified in the Book of Job, with God's permission. This framework absolves God from direct responsibility for evil while acknowledging the existence of a malevolent force. Notably, biblical theology posits God as transcendent, existing beyond the limitations of human concepts like 'good' and 'evil'. The Book of Job has served as a central text for philosophical theologians due to its exploration of the profound question of human suffering. If God is both all-good and all-powerful, why does innocent suffering exist? Retributive theology, which rigidly applies principles of human justice to divine actions, attempts to resolve this problem by asserting that

suffering is always a consequence of prior sin. This perspective, advocated by Job's friends, was rejected by Job in his own experience. Some scholars have attempted to resolve the problem of evil by denying either God's goodness or omnipotence. Others have gone further, denying God's existence altogether. In each case, the traditional concept of God is diminished, either by compromising God's moral perfection or by denying God's ultimate power.

While human experiences and the Book of Job do not offer definitive theological or philosophical solutions to the problem of righteous suffering, careful reflection on these narratives reveals valuable insights. One key insight is that not all suffering can be attributed to retribution. Friends of Job, for example, insisted on a double retribution: not only that the just are rewarded and the wicked punished, but also that those who suffer must necessarily be sinners deserving of their affliction (Ochabski, 2023, p. 56). Yahweh's judgment in the Book of Job clearly demonstrates that not all suffering is a direct consequence of personal sin.

A second explanation for the problem of evil posits that Satan actively seeks to undermine human faith through suffering. In the Book of Job, Satan contends that Job's devotion to God is motivated solely by material blessings. Satan, with God's permission, inflicts Job with a series of devastating losses, aiming to break his faith. This narrative suggests that suffering can serve as a test of faith, challenging individuals to remain steadfast in their devotion to God despite adversity.

This concept may further complicate the problem of righteous suffering by emphasizing the inherent unknowability of God's ways. Rather than demanding that God conform to human logic, this perspective acknowledges the mysterious nature of the divine. Rejecting solutions that diminish God's goodness, power, or existence, such as 'death of God' theology or attempts to resolve the problem through human reason, this concept attributes righteous suffering to the actions of Satan, who seeks to frustrate God's plans for humanity. This redirection of focus towards Yahweh himself underscores the limitations of human understanding and encourages a deeper reliance on divine wisdom

Implication(s) of the Theory of “*Deus Mortuus et Deus Absconditus*” as Solution to the Problem of Evil

The problem of evil arises from the apparent contradiction between the existence of suffering in the world and the traditional theological attributes of God: omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence. If God possesses these attributes, it would seem logically impossible for evil to exist. However, the undeniable presence of suffering in the world challenges this theological premise, leading some to question the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good creator; though we may not deny the existence of the Necessary Being due to the evidences before us. Therefore, it

is either God takes pleasure in the suffering of His people or there is no God.

How can we account for disasters, the COVID 19 and post COVID 19 impacts on a world under the watchful eyes of a seemingly good and powerful God? If God had created a world in which it was guaranteed that no one would ever do anything wrong, hence the “freedom” of man which is the basis of Satan’s exploitation of creatures would not have been real. Some have interpreted it to mean that God is absent. Moreover, his absence is not a state of indifference but a deliberate act.

Religious individuals maintain that while many may choose to disregard God's presence, it is undeniable. They assert that God pervades the world, subtly and unobtrusively present in every aspect of creation. Therefore, denying his existence as suggested and proposed by the Dead of God theologians amounts to self-deception hence God walks everywhere incognito, and his works are obviously stirring at our faces. With this argument, *Deus Absconditus* is a fallacy of the mind. Then, if God is perfectly good, all knowing, all powerful and can actualize a possible world containing free creatures without evil as argued by theodicy; and we have a cosmos where he is actively involved in the affaire of his people, and there are a lot of evil, then, ultimately it is illogical and irrational to believe in him.

The concepts of “*Deus Mortuus*” and “*Deus Absconditus*” serves as a powerful philosophical and psychological tool to alleviate righteous suffering by challenging traditional notions of a benevolent, and omnipotent deity. These concepts offer a more realistic and empowering perspective on human existence by providing a palliative to righteous suffering:

- **Finding Meaning in Suffering:**

Instead of seeing suffering as a test from God or a punishment for sin, the *Deus Mortuus* embraces suffering as an inevitable part of life and an opportunity for growth. They find meaning in the struggle itself, in the process of overcoming challenges and becoming stronger. Like Übermensch this concept does not rely on external sources for meaning or validation. It creates values and find meaning within itself. This internal locus of control empowers the individuals who have experienced righteous suffering and feel disillusioned with traditional belief systems. It shifts focus to the present. By turning inward, individuals discover meaning and purpose in the present moment, rather than relying on future rewards or divine justice. It romances with human connection. Prioritizing interpersonal relationships can foster a sense of belonging and provide crucial support, mitigating feelings of isolation and despair. These notions reduce the feelings of abandonment by acknowledging the absence or silence of a traditional God. This way, individuals can relinquish the expectations of divine intervention and, consequently, the accompanying feelings of abandonment or betrayal or

unanswered prayer. Again, it empowers self-reliance. This realization empowers individuals to take responsibility for their own lives and find solace in human connection and personal agency.

• Agency and Responsibility

Deus Mortuus take full responsibility for their own life and actions. They do not blame God or fate for their suffering. This sense of agency is therapeutic, allowing individuals to move beyond victimhood and take control of their lives. Traditional religious beliefs often focus on the afterlife or divine reward. The *Deus Mortuus*, on the other hand, is firmly rooted in the present. They affirm life in all its complexity and find joy in the here and now. This is a powerful antidote to the despair and hopelessness that can accompany righteous suffering. It accepts the uncontrollable. By recognizing the limitations of human control and the unpredictability of life, individuals develop a more stoic attitude towards suffering. This leads to a sense of inner peace and tranquillity, even in the face of adversity. It leads to a personalized faith. Individuals develop a more personal and meaningful spiritual practice that aligns with their own values and beliefs. It helps to rely on human potential. By focusing on the potential for human goodness and compassion, individuals can cultivate a sense of hope and optimism.

The concept offers a potential pathway for individuals grappling with the loss of traditional beliefs and the experience of righteous suffering. In embracing self-overcoming, creating their own values, and finding meaning within themselves, individuals can transcend nihilism and affirm life in a world without God. By embracing the concepts of "Deus Mortuus" and "Deus Absconditus," individuals find solace, empowerment, and a renewed sense of purpose in their lives. This philosophical approach offers a powerful palliative to righteous suffering, allowing individuals to navigate the complexities of human existence with greater resilience and understanding.

Conclusion

This work explored the central question: How can a benevolent and omnipotent God permit the existence of evil in the world? This work adopts *Deus Mortuus et Deus Absconditus* as a Philosophical Cathartic to the problem of evil.

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