



Rethinking *Deus Mortuus* et *Deus Absconditus*: Philosophical Psychotherapeutic Palliative to Righteous Suffering

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Abstract

Problem of evil has continued to engage scholastic attention without much input. This research delves into the concepts of *Deus Mortuus* (a "Dead God") and *Deus Absconditus* (a "Hidden God") as philosophical and psychotherapeutic tools to mitigate the anguish of righteous (unjust) suffering. It examines how these philosophical constructs, often associated with nihilism and existential crisis, paradoxically serve as a balm for those grappling with the injustice of their plight. By exploring the connectivity between philosophy, psychology, and theology, the study aims to develop a palliative approach that acknowledges the depth of human suffering while offering a framework for finding meaning and resilience. The research investigates how these concepts therapeutically apply to individuals experiencing profound suffering due to circumstances perceived as morally unjust, providing a potential path towards healing and reconciliation. The research adopts research philosophical method. This is a development of a holistic approach to palliative care for individuals experiencing profound suffering. It provides new paradigm for understanding and responding to human suffering and the effectiveness of philosophical concepts like *Deus Mortuus* and *Deus Absconditus* in extenuating psychological distress.

Keywords: *Deus Mortuus*, *Deus Absconditus*, Righteous Suffering, Philosophical psychotherapy, palliative Care.

1. Introduction

The problem of evil has occupied thinkers both ancient and modern. Human experience is inextricably intertwined with suffering. While pain is an inevitable component of life, righteous suffering, borne from the perception of profound injustice, presents a unique and complex challenge

to the human psyche. This research delves into the depths of this particular form of suffering, exploring the potential of philosophical and psychotherapeutic interventions to alleviate its burden.

David Hume in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* echoes the Epicurus' questions on the problem of evil "Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?" Thus, the history of theories of evil is traceable to various attempts to reconcile the existence of evil (in the broad sense) with an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good God or Creator. The phenomenon is a serious challenge to the defense of religion.¹ Philosophers and theologians have proffered varied solutions to resolve the challenge, including the Cosmos under the reign of the prince of this world,² Theodicy, *Dues Absconditus*, *Deus Mortuus*, *Deus Incognito*, among others.

Some philosophers and 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 lie 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 in the wake of the First World War. The shattering 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

¹ David Hume, Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, (London: Penguin Books, Limited 1779), 186

² Amos Francis Dike, "The Cosmos Under the Reign of "the Prince of this World:" A Philosophical Discourse" in *Nnadiebube Journal of Philosophy* (NJP), Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Vol. 7, No. 3, 2024. 65-77. <https://acjol.org/index.php/NJP/issue/view/41864>.

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*.

Deus Mortuus – God is Dead

This is a complex and multifaceted concept that has had a profound impact on Western thought. 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, 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. Again, some scholars have traced the idea even further back to medieval mystical traditions and interpretations of Christian theology.

This school of thought argues 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."³ Others, again, speak of the death of God as a cultural fact, meaning that in the technological civilization, the concept of a transcendental realm has disappeared from the consciousness of self-reliant, and sophisticated modern men. For William Hamilton God disappeared when he (Hamilton) discovered that God was not a "need-fulfiller" or a "problem

³ Sinclair B. Ferguson, and David F. Wright, *New Dictionary of Theology*, (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 242

solver.” Ever since then, Hamilton has experienced the sense of the real absence of God but he maintains a steadfast attitude of prayerful waiting upon God. Thus, he can hardly be said to be in the strict sense a believer in the “death” of God.⁴

Indeed, it would seem that some at least for the death of God theologians have been strongly influenced by their discovery that their own inherited “cultural” conception of God was mortally wounded in conflict with the modern scientific world-view. Nietzsche's concept of "God is Dead" refers to the decline of religious belief in modern society. This can be a philosophical psychotherapeutic palliative 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. 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*⁵ refers to God who has withdrawn totally from the world having no interference with the affairs of the world. This seems to be in tandem with the fundamental Christian notion of God as beyond human comprehension. This biblical notion from the Old Testament⁶ is closely linked to the problem of evil, for divine hiddenness is most productive of suffering for those already in the midst of suffering: the inability of such persons to perceive God or his purposes intensifies their sufferings by making it feel to them as if God does not care, or that their sufferings are meaningless, or that God has forsaken them and does not love them. Divine hiddenness also intensifies the problem of evil by seeming to undermine a common strategy in theodicy, namely, treating the way God acts in relation to his creatures as analogous to the way loving parents' acts toward their children. The premises of the argument are open to challenge, however. Some theists argue that God has good reasons for not revealing himself to everyone who seeks him, and different theories have been developed as to what God's reasons might be.⁷ It is often claimed that just as loving parents sometimes must subject their child to some painful experience for the child's wellbeing, though the child is unable to understand, so God sometimes allow us to experience suffering for similar reasons.

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.”⁸ For Calvin, “the invisible divinity is made manifest in such spectacles [that is, faith] but that we have no

⁴ William Hamilton, “the Death of God Theology,” *Christian Scholar*, XLVIII Spring: 1965, 33-34

⁵ Herbert. O. Anyanwu, *African Traditional Religion from the Grassroots*, (Owerri: Lasen, 1999), 71

⁶ 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)

⁷ Dike, “The Cosmos Under the Reign of “the Prince of this World” 65.

⁸ Steven Paulson, *Luther's Doctrine of God*, (Oxford: Oxford Handbooks, 2014), 366

<https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604708.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199604708-e-034>,

eyes to see this unless they be illuminated by the inner revelation of God through faith.”⁹ The reformers’ thinking of hiddenness is the emphasis of Karl Barth who states “hiddenness of God necessarily reminds us of our limitation.”¹⁰ For Barth, the matter is simple: between God and humans there stands the hiddenness of God, in which God is far from humanity and foreign to them except as He has of Himself ordained and created fellowship between Himself and humanity. And this does not happen in the actualizing of their capacity, but in the miracle of His good-pleasure.¹¹ By implication, divine hiddenness is not a problem to be solved rather related to God’s gracious 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”¹² as Amos 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*.”¹³ This theory postulates that God does not interfere in the affairs of the world and human beings. God is held to be too remote in the African Traditional Religion and absent from the daily lives of the people. However, most African anthropologists and experts in African Traditional Religion argue on the contrary that the *Deus Otiosus* in relation to the African God is a sheer introduction of ‘ethnocentric chauvinism’ by the Westerners in the African Traditional Religion. For instance, Anyanwu posits that this idea of a withdrawn God was formulated to distinguish the Westerners’ god from the God of the Africans.¹⁴ By implication, those who use the term or believe in it, think God is not totally unknown to the people. According to J. O. Awolalu and P. A. Dopamu:

We can thus see that the notion of a withdrawn God is an academic invention perpetuated by the obstinacy and dishonesty of those who will refuse to learn in partiality that the living God shows no discrimination or partiality in his universal 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. The imperfect knowledge of the nature and character of God is a result of the limitation of the human kind.¹⁵

⁹ Paulson, *Luther’s Doctrine of God*, 368

¹⁰ Karl Barth, *Dogmatics: in Outline*, (New York Harper & Row, 1959), 20

¹¹ Barth, *Dogmatics: in Outline*, 21

¹² Dike, “The Cosmos Under the Reign of “the Prince of this World” 64.

¹³ Amos Francis Dike, “Atheism in Igbo Religio-Cultural Philosophy: Justification for the Proof of God’s Existence” In *TheNOUN SCHOLAR: Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Volume 3, Number 2, Pp. 198-218. 2023.

<https://www.thenounscholar.nou.edu.ng>

¹⁴ H. O. Anyanwu, *African Traditional Religion from the Grassroots*, (Owerri: Lasen, 1999), 70

¹⁵ J. O. Awolalu, and P. A. Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion*, (Nigeria: Onibonoje, 1979), 15

However, in recent philosophy, scholars like J.L. Schellenberg argue that, divine hiddenness constitutes putative evidence for atheism.¹⁶

Deus Incognito

The idea of *Deus Incognito* (The Unknowable God) like *Deus Absconditus* does not represent any theological position but a trend. It was a term used frequently in the medieval mystical era. Perhaps, the diction was purely conventional, but it nonetheless carried certain implications. The “unknown God” captured a core theme of this mystical understanding, born in the pagan Platonic academy and maturing in the salons of the French enlightenment.

This view is that, God or the ultimate Reality is not fully knowable. All language used to describe this God is inadequate¹⁷ and insufficient. David Daiches notes well, “In an outburst of spectacular cosmic poetry, the voice of God hammers home the point that the going-on in the universe are far beyond the wit of man to comprehend; that nature was not created for man and has its otherness and its mysteries that man can never penetrate; and it is against this background of miracle and mystery which dwarfs man that the problems of human suffering must be set.”¹⁸

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.¹⁹

Vulgate translation was the first to use *Deus Absconditus* in biblical translation.²⁰ Luther saw this as a problem of religious language and picked it up and fashioned it into an entire theological perspective. For Luther, the notion of God as Deus Incognito smacked of everything wrong with the medieval theology on which he was reared. This view which drank deeply from pagan springs accounts for mankind’s separation from God, misinformation and ignorance of his dealings with humanity. In the original pagan metaphysics, creation itself is a kind of Fall and mankind is separated from God purely by accident. Man, being a heavenly spark imprisoned in earthly matter, must diligently work to ascend back to God from where he came.²¹

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

It is logical to assume that, since God’s mind is infinite and man’s mind is finite, man will never fully comprehend the divine intellect. So even if we do not know God’s purpose, he may still have a good purpose for evil. Surely infinite good and wise God has a good purpose for all suffering as expressed in the obvious event of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The most enduring challenge to traditional monotheism is the problem of righteous suffering, which attempts to reconcile three incompatible propositions: God is all-good, God is all powerful yet evil persists. However, by the

¹⁶ J.L. Schellenberg, Stanford encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Hiddenness of God,” (November, 2024) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cusanus/>

¹⁷ Matthew Claridge, 2012: 23

¹⁸ David Daiches, “God under Attack,” in *The Book of Job*, Ed. Harold Bloom. *Modern Critical Interpretations*. (New York: Chelsea House, 1988), 37-61, 197.

¹⁹ Claridge, 23

²⁰ Vulgate Bible, Isaiah 45:15.

²¹ Claridge, 2012, 23.

description above, “the Prince of this World” traces the story of one of the most influential attempts to square this circle: the offloading of the responsibility for evil to one of God’s rebellious creatures.²² By inference, the story of the devil is bitterly ironic, full of tragic reversals. He emerges as a theological symbol who promises to help oppressed communities cope with the trauma of unjust treatment, persecution, torture and death in the hand of a negligent God and eventually becomes a vehicle to justify oppression at the hand of political, economic and religious rulers. In this theory also, the devil evolves alongside the biblical God and the philosophical Necessary Being, who at first presents himself as the liberator of the oppressed but ends up a cruel ruler who delights in the infliction of suffering on his friends and enemies alike.

The above claim agrees with Wilbur O’Donovan when he argues 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 Christ²³ and the “god” of this world by Paul.²⁴ 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.²⁵ He probably does this so that God will be required by his justice to bring punishment on his own people whom he loves.²⁶

This notion argues that evil is being perpetrated through the activities of Satan – “the prince of this world.” This understanding delivers God from evil in the world and pushes the blame on 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 also provides a rare glimpse into the activities of Satan as he endeavours to drive a wedge between God and his people. Job describes how Satan – the accuser attempts to call into question the integrity of humans such as Job who are seeking to live in a way that honours God. As Job’s experience portrays, this adversary working within the freedom granted by the sovereign Yahweh, schemes to undermine the faith and destroy the joy of those who live for God.²⁷ Job affirms that one source of suffering/evil, is the malicious activity of Satan as he opposes God’s plan by afflicting his 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).

²²Dike, “The Cosmos Under the Reign of “the Prince of this World” 66.

²³ John 12:31, John 16:11.

²⁴ 2 Cor. 4:4

²⁵ 1 John 2:16

²⁶ Wilbur O’Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective*, (United Kingdom: The Paternoster Press. 1996), 191

²⁷ Daniel J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academics, 2005), 26

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 also questions the authority of God as Creator of all things. God as the creator of all things includes evil and good. Again, the Bible posits “All things work together for good to them that are called according to His purpose.” If the “Prince of this World” is author of evil, it makes him creator alongside with God. This claim tends to justify the position of the early Greek philosophers who alluded to “the good god and the evil god.”

Yes, every worldview has to deal with the problem of human suffering, but it is a special acute problem for theism. For instance, atheism affirms the reality of evil and denies the reality of God. Pantheism affirms the reality of God but denies the reality of evil; whereas, theism strongly affirms the reality of both God and evil. As compared with the other worldviews that affirm both God and Evil, theism seem to be in a more disadvantageous position. Finite godism, for instance, claim that God desires to destroy evil but is unable to because he is limited in power. Deism in the same way, can distance God from evil by stressing that God is not immanent in the world, at least not supernaturally – we are on our own. And for pantheism, evil is a necessary part of the ongoing progress of the interaction of God and the world (his body).²⁸

The major problem of theistic view is that it not only believes God is all-powerful and could destroy evil, but also that he is all-loving and should destroy it. Further, the theistic God is all-knowing and created this world fully aware of what would happen. Where did evil come from? Can an absolutely good God create evil? Or, would it seem that a perfect creature give rise to imperfection. Hence, the problem is thus:

1. God is absolutely perfect.
2. God cannot create anything imperfect.
3. Perfect creatures cannot do evil.
4. Therefore, neither God nor his perfect creatures can produce evil.

The basic elements in the theistic response to this problem are found in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.²⁹ Theists since have followed the contours of their thought. Both in variably agreed on the response that can be stated as follows:

1. God is absolutely perfect.
2. God created only perfect creatures.
3. One of the perfections God gave some of his creatures was the power of free choice.
4. Some of these creatures freely chose to do evil.
5. Therefore, a perfect creature caused evil.

²⁸ David Horton, *The Portable Seminary: A Master's Level Overview in one Volume*, 257.

²⁹ Geisler, “Problem of Evil” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 221

God is able to bring good out of evil. Yes, God is all-powerful and able to redeem good from even evil. God in his providence is able to redeem much (if not all) good out of the evil byproducts in the world. God would in no way permit evil to exist in his works unless he were so almighty and so good as to produce good even from evil. The good God created good creatures with a good power called freewill. Unfortunately, they used this good power to bring evil into the cosmos by rebelling against the Creator. So, evil did arise from good, not directly but indirectly, by the abuse of a good power called freedom. Freedom in itself is not evil. It is good to be free. But with freedom comes the possibility of evil. So, God is responsible for making evil possible, while free creatures are responsible for making it actual.

One of the questions surrounding the free-choice solution is, what caused the first creature to choose evil? Theists distinguish between the primary cause of a freewill action (God) and the secondary cause (a human being). God gave human being the ability to choose. However, God is not responsible for the existence of evil as a result of man's free choice hence man should be held responsible for his action(s). God does not perform the free action for us. Human beings are the efficient, albeit secondary cause of their own free actions. God produces the fact of free choice, but each human performs the act of free choice. God then is responsible for the possibility of evil, but we must bear the responsibility for its actuality. God neither wills evil to be done nor wills it not to be done. He wills to permit evil to be done, and this is good.³⁰ But if God cannot will evil, then what is the cause of it? No action can be uncaused, since this violates the first principle of causality, which demands that every event has a cause.

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. The argument in freewill defense is that God does not create evil, yet evil cannot be avoided without depriving humans of the fundamental freedom of will. This tends to preserve God's goodness, because he created the best possible world. It also preserves his omnipotence and omniscience, because although he knows about evil and could stop it, the reason he chooses not to interfere is to ensure humanity's freedom. This justification, checks off all requirements to explain away evil while maintaining that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent. This response presupposes that humans are indeed free, and it fails to reckon with natural evil, except insofar as the latter is increased by human factors such as greed or thoughtlessness.

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.

³⁰ Horton, *The Portable Seminary*, 258.

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 empowers them to find meaning and purpose within their own lives, rather than relying on external validation or salvation.

The concepts of "Deus Mortuus" and "Deus Absconditus" offer 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 theodicy's, 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 psychotherapeutic palliative.

Philosophical Psychotherapeutic Palliative to Righteous Suffering

In contrast, the biblical tradition clearly comes out with a sharp theological understanding of the solution to the presence of evil and suffering in the world, namely the existence of a good God and of a wicked Devil, the Satan. In the biblical sense, Satan is subject to God, as a creature, though one that has gone astray. It was he, who tempted Eve and Adam in the guise of a serpent and afflicted Job with sufferings after getting permission from God to carry out this test on Job in order to prove Job's fidelity to God. In the biblical sense, God is beyond good and evil. Through history the book of job has been read and studied particularly by philosophical theologians because it surfaces the perennial question of human suffering. If there is a God who is all good and all powerful, then, why do innocent people suffer in his world? Retributive theology, which infers the patterns of practical wisdom into a rigid formula, denies the problem of evil by saying that suffering/evil is always explained by prior personal sin. This position was assumed and articulated by Job's friends but Job insisted that it was invalid for his situation. Some scholars have posited that the problem of evil can be resolved by denying either that God is good or that he is omnipotent. Others went further even to deny his existence as clearly stated above. In either case, God is diminished either from absolute moral rectitude or from sovereign power to non-existence.

Although human experiences and the writings of Job are not structured to give answer to the problem of righteous suffering in precise theological or philosophical terms. But, a careful reflection and study of these discourse reveal insights that combine to provide a solution. First, it demonstrates that some suffering falls outside of retribution. Friends of those who suffer like Job,

insist on double retribution: not only are the just rewarded and the wicked punished, but also “those who are suffering evil must be sinners who deserve the suffering.”³¹ Yahweh’s assessment clearly shows that this is not the case in Job’s situation. Job shows that in some situations there is human suffering that is not caused by personal sin.

A second answer to the problem of evil is that, Satan uses suffering to destroy the faith of God’s people. In the book of Job, Satan insists that Job serves Yahweh only because of the blessedness that he derives from God. Satan claims that if Job were to suffer affliction, he would curse God rather than serve him. Consequently, Satan proceed to destroy Job’s possession, family, health, and relationships. Satan’s ultimate purpose is to bring people’s faith in Yahweh to the point of collapse by the means of intense pain and loss. This understanding gives succour and serves as therapeutic palliative to the righteous suffering.

This concept may further widen the challenge posed by the problem of righteous suffering by affirming that humans cannot comprehend fully the ways of God – *Deus Incognito*. Rather than compelling God to act in accordance with the tidy demands of human logic, the theist see God as mysterious. Refusing to resolve the mystery of the problem of evil by insisting on death of God theology, *Deus Absconditus*, Theodicy, or diminishing God’s goodness, or reducing God’s power, this concept matches this problem squarely by proposing that righteous suffering is Satan’s act to frustrate God’s elect. In doing so, it directs the reader back to Yahweh himself rather than to a continues theological and philosophical exercise.

Implication(s) of the theory of “Deus Mortuus et Deus Absconditus” as Palliative Power to the Righteous Suffering

The problem of evil is the problem of accounting for the suffering of the righteous in a world said to be created by an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good God. It seems that if the creator has these attributes, there would be no evil in the world. But there is evil in the world. Thus, there is reason for some to believe that an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good creator does not exist, 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. And his *absence* is not a passive stance, but an active one.

The religionists argue that many may choose to ignore but we can nowhere deny the presence of God. The world is crowded with him. He walks everywhere incognito. 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

³¹ Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: Old Testament Library*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 61

theodicy; and we have a cosmos where he is actively involved in the affairs 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. Focusing on relationships with others can provide a sense of belonging and support, alleviating 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

The work engaged the curiosity and search which revolve around the central question: how can a good and benevolent God tolerate the reality and presence of evil in the world? This work adopts *Deus Mortuus et Deus Absconditus as a Philosophical Psychotherapeutic Palliative to Righteous Suffering*.

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