

Leibniz's Theodicy as a Critical Response to the Question of Human Suffering

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Abstract

This study is a critical appraisal of Leibniz's theodicy which centers on the perennial problem of evil in Philosophy. It investigated the justification of God by Leibniz in the face of human suffering as human suffering is a universal phenomenon and obviously an aspect of the perennial problem of evil. The problem of evil consists in the attempt to reconcile the existence of a good and powerful God with the presence of evil in the world. This study explored the question of whether God's goodness and power can be justified when one considers the amount of suffering evident in the world. It equally challenged the best possible world claim of Leibniz. The aim of this study was to examine Leibniz's response to the problem of human suffering through his theory of the best possible world. This study sought a possible justification for the presence of suffering in the world. It considered the various approaches to the problem of human suffering and the dimensions of human suffering. This study employed Criticism as its philosophical method of research. The major finding of the study is that Leibniz's response to the problem of human suffering in the world is not entirely satisfactory since it presents God as either a sovereign who has limited love or limited power. The study concluded that Leibniz's submission does not resolve the issue because man still finds it hard to make sense of the suffering in the world supposedly created by an all-loving and all-powerful God. Hence, Leibniz would have made more sense theorizing that God was once all-powerful but not all all-loving and then eventually became all-loving and no longer all-powerful.

Key Words: Theodicy, Evil, Suffering, All Loving, All powerful, Sovereign, God

Introduction

Human beings live their lives in pursuit of pleasure or happiness while suffering is the opposite of pleasure. It is often considered an experience of unpleasantness or aversion. As stated earlier, suffering is a universal human experience. All sentient beings experience suffering at varying degrees. This study is strictly concerned with human suffering as some sufferings may be considered mild and others severe and intolerable. People have different responses or reactions to the experience of suffering. Sometimes, these varying types of reactions could come from those who directly experience the suffering themselves, their friends, or relatives, or other people generally. It is precisely because suffering pervades human experience that many fields of human endeavours have concerned themselves with various aspects of suffering: its nature, its processes, its origin and causes, its meaning and significance, its remedies, its management, and usefulness.

Human suffering is a daily occurrence noticeable in the streets the poor village woman who struggles with her perishable goods by the road side and barely earn enough to feed her family, the poor and needy widow who cannot even harvest from her own farm due to interference from her late husband's family who want to claim all that their deceased brother owned, the low-income family that is unsure of their next meal; the sick old woman who cannot be attended to by the doctors because she has no one to pay the required deposit for the commencement of treatment; the countless number of village women that have no access to the hospital for ante-natal care, the numerous village children who cannot afford school, good food, good water, or good health system.

In addition to all of these, there are several other circumstances of life witnessed every day in the human society which depict suffering at different levels or intensity. Human suffering stares everyone in the face. One may have difficulty in explaining what it means, but one would not claim to have never experienced it. In his theodicy, Leibniz responds to the problem of human suffering, arguing that due to the principle of sufficient Reason, God created the best of all possible worlds. It is however difficult to accept Leibniz's theory once one is faced by the numerous sufferings noticeable in the world. This study is an appraisal of Leibniz's theodicy as a response to the issue of human suffering in the world.

Clarification of Terms

Theodicy: This is the vindication of divine providence in view of the existence of evil. This term was coined by the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in his 1710 work "Theodicies." In the philosophy of Religion, theodicy means an argument that attempts to resolve the problem of evil that arises when all power and all goodness are predicated of God. This term is derived from ancient Greek (*theos*) which means God and (*dike*) which means justice. According to A. Laytner, theodicy is an attempt to justify or defend God in the face of evil. Theodicies tend to address one of four audiences: atheists/atheodacists who reject the existence of God or who charge believers in God with being irrational on the grounds that the above is illogical; moral atheists who find the notion of God repugnant because of the amount of evil and suffering; theists who are troubled by the above; and sufferers of all kinds atheists or

theists (Laytner, 1998, p. 5). It has also been defined as a theological construct that attempts to vindicate God in response to the problem of evil that appears inconsistent with the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God.

Suffering: suffering is not a homogenous concept. Although many people are aware that there is suffering in the world, there is still some difficulty in defining what suffering is. One can easily point out numerous instances of suffering but still fail to provide a definition or description of that could capture its many dimensions. In any case, suffering is most times associated with pain. Suffering is the state or experience of one that suffers. Suffering is a multifaceted phenomenon that describes the many ways in which people deal with depression, pain, loss, and adversity. Suffering has been defined as “extreme anguish” (Gregory & Joseph, 1994, p. 20). As for Coulehan, suffering is simply “soul pain” (Coulehan, 2012, p. 227). Others have defined suffering as the state of “being less than whole” (Currow & Hegarty, 2006, p. 124). Furthermore, suffering is defined as the state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness of the person. It is said to occur when an impending destruction of the person is perceived and it continues until the threat of disintegration has passed or until the integrity of the person can be restored in some other manner (Quilao, 2018, p. 45). Suffering is a phenomenon that is closely tied to evil. It refers to situations of pain and sorrow, unpleasant states of affairs for sentient beings. In any case, not all suffering is evil. There are some situations of distress and anguish which serve to edify a person. However, in this work, suffering is understood as all forms of pain and anguish which a person will not willingly accept and which do not serve any relevance for the person or group experiencing it.

The Reality of Human Suffering in the World

There is no gainsaying the fact that there is so much suffering in the world. It is one of the most evident things one could think of in that it colours the everyday life of people. In Nigeria, avoidable suffering has become part and parcel of the lives of people everyday. People are found to live in conditions of untold hardship and want because they find themselves in a society where the rule of law is neglected and justice is luxury. In a similar line of thought Christian Ele notes that Nigeria has many suffering indices that ruffle the-would-have-been smiling faces of citizens and change them into frowning facial contours that are squeezed with exposed ropes of arteries and veins that scare beholders. The experience that man comes into the world crying, lives in the world complaining, and departs at death with a sigh, is common in the lives of many in Nigeria. This situation corroborates the view of the English author Tomas Fuller (1608–1661) who said that ‘we are born crying, live complaining, and die disappointed.’ (Ele, 2020. P.46).

Although one may argue that the Nigerian situation is not reflective of the entire picture of suffering in the world, it is nevertheless a worthwhile representation because what takes place in Nigeria equally takes place more or less in other parts of the world. Ele describes beautifully this situation of suffering in Nigeria: the unpleasant experience affects the faces of sufferers as one could easily notice the frowning facial contours and the exposed ropes of arteries and veins which show that all is not well with such a people. The view of Thomas Fuller is accurate not only of people in Nigeria but also people in other parts of the world. It appears as if the cry of the

new born baby is indicative of the fear of the imminent suffering she would come to experience in the course of life. Human life is coloured every now and then with so much complaints and dissatisfaction due to pain and lack.

Approaches to the Problem of Human Suffering

Due to the puzzle that suffering has caused in the minds of many, different groups of people have developed both philosophical and theological responses to the problem of suffering and some of them are:

The Dualistic Approach: This is the first and oldest approach. It holds that there are two opposing forces at work in the world light and darkness, good and evil. The good God, according to this view, is responsible for every good thing in the world, while the evil god is responsible for evil and suffering. Many ancient myths of the Middle East hold such views. This view may not be acceptable to Christian thinkers since it opposes monotheism. The ancients generally believed that the world was governed by two contrary principles, two rival powers. They see this as the reason why there is a mixture of good and evil in human life. They equally see it as the cause of the inequalities and vicissitudes we find in the world. Their belief was based on the fact that nothing happens without a cause, and no good can produce evil. Hence, there must be in nature a particular principle that is the author of evil and another that is the author good. Some held that the principle of evil is Pluto while Jupiter is the principle of good (Siwek, 1991, p. 1).

The Classical Approach: This is usually called the classical, Freewill, or Augustinian theodicy since it was systematised by Augustine. According to this view, evil and suffering came as a result of the free choice of human beings, beginning with original sin. But we know that not every human suffering is caused by the free choice of human beings. Hence, the incompleteness of this approach is glaring. The central contention of the Classical approach is that human freewill is the root cause of evil in the world. In other words, man is capable of doing evil because he has been given this ability by God at creation. This is a very early theodicy which tends to exonerate God in the face of evil in the world and to put the blame on man who uses his freewill to choose evil when he can actually choose the good. Several other scholars have upheld this view after Augustine.

The Retaliatory Approach: This approach sees evil and suffering as God's punishment for human sin. The OT accounts of the floods and the plagues in Egypt reflect this view, and the view was later taken up by figures such as John Calvin and Karl Barth. However, this view is inconsistent with man's understanding of God as a loving and merciful father. Employing his dialectical method, Barth contends that evil must be understood as both not something and not nothing. For him, evil is a force that threatens to corrupt and destroy God's good creation. It is nothingness. It is an opposition and resistance to God's world dominion. It is an element, indeed an entire sinister system of elements which is not preserved, accompanied, nor ruled by the Almighty action of God like creaturely occurrence. He sees it as an alien factor among the objects of God's providence. (Woltesstoff, 1996, 43).

The Redemptive Approach: According to this approach, suffering is redemptive. This is a strictly theological approach which draws on the song of the suffering servant in Isaiah (40-45) and on the experience of Jesus in his passion and death. For those who hold this view, some human sufferings are only expiatory payment on a debt, whether one's own or that of others. Jesus is considered the archetype of the suffering servant in Isaiah. This approach explains only some suffering and not all, and people do not seem to agree to the meaningfulness of the idea of a redemptive suffering.

The Process Approach: This approach is traceable to the works of Irenaeus, and then later to be found in the writings of Chares Hartshorne, John Hick, and Tiehard de Chardin. According to this view, suffering and evil are realities that are inevitable in an unfinished world that is evolving towards its fulfilment and so is in the process of growth. For those who hold this view, suffering and evil are the natural spin-off, the inevitable growing pains of matter and spirit evolving from fetal immaturity into fullness of being. Hence, this view is seen as process, developmental, and evolutionary approach. However, this view presents God as being harsh and as one who denies or is ignorant of the fact that suffering is largely destructive and not a necessary condition at all.

The Remedial Approach: This view holds that God uses suffering as tests. He allows suffering and evil to test our moral and spiritual strength, and to purify us as we go through life. Hence, suffering and evil are a kind of moral and spiritual medicines for human beings. Some scholars have criticized this view since it refers only to some suffering and also since it portrays God as a harsh taskmaster and disciplinarian (Ezenweke&Kanu, 2010, p. 192). Furthermore, according to this view, suffering and evil are a kind of moral and spiritual medicines for human beings. This is a view that is consistent with some Christian thinkers' position which claim that God allows men to experience some pain in order to purify them or to test them.

The Dimensions of Suffering

Although suffering is experienced universally by people of all times and places, it does not affect people in just one way or one aspect of life. There are different degrees of suffering and also different layers of impact suffering makes on people, it affects different aspects or dimensions of peoples' lives. In this section, the study shall be considering some dimensions of suffering as identified by T. Quilao (2018. P. 70):

Physical Suffering: Pain is often regarded as one of the most burdensome causes of physical sufferings. When a physical symptom like pain is overlooked and not alleviated, it may lead to an experience of suffering. This is the type of evil that affects a living being by altering its physical integrity. Examples are cancer, birth defects, pain, etc (Ishaya, 2023, p.43). Excessive pains could be very invalidating and have the potential to provoke psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and dependencies on families. Studies have shown that conflicting relationships might arise when patients are not listened to about the severity of their pains. There have been cases of people who try to solve their problem of chronic pain by drinking alcohol without support and understanding from health professionals. Physical pain brings up

a feeling of hopelessness sometimes and even a feeling of worthlessness as one in some cases becomes a burden to others. Some terminal advance cancer patients have revealed their desire for hastened death.

Psychological Suffering: There is equally a psychological dimension of suffering which consists of desirable and undesirable relationship with others. Several studies have been conducted overtime in which participants evoked psychological suffering as they expressed immense form of isolation from the family, the community, and the society. Sometimes this is due to ineffective professional care and support which results from lack of professionalism, and a failure to recognize and address needs or offer adequate information to empower those who suffer. Neglect from health care professionals makes the sufferers live painful and unbearable lives. Losing one's autonomy as a consequence of debilitating incurable illness is another example of psychological suffering. In some cases, patients are dependent on families' support. Some families tend to offer more reliable support than professional based care. Depression is sometimes overlooked but it is often times a consequence of psychological suffering resulting from losing one's good health, excessive pain and following a traumatic experience in life. In some cases, studies show that some patients suffer in silence as they are afraid to ask questions due to unwelcome experiences in the past and sometimes they avoid complaining in order to avoid humiliation from health professionals. Advanced nurse practitioners have the responsibility to promote openness and approachable attitude to enhance a relationship that is devoid of fear and shame.

Social Suffering: Naturally, people value their friends and the actions of their friends. Those who suffered often take solace in the unconditional love they receive from family and friends. However, ineffective care and support from family and friends reveal the impact of tested relationships, insensitive communication and the fear of rejection from loved ones and friends. Several older people who live in old peoples' homes far away from their children and relatives often get frustrated (a source of suffering) by their children's not wanting to have anything to do with them and cutting off all communication without any explanation. There is the concept of benevolent affiliations a term used to accentuate the value people place on significant connections with other persons, things, and ideas, which for them were a source of help, comfort, faith, hope, and courage. As a result, they feel lucky, thankful, fortunate, and blessed to have such people, things or ideas in their lives.

Ethical Suffering: The ethical dimension of suffering is chiefly about the loss of dignity. Suffering which affects the worth of people and their sense of responsibility definitely affects their dignity. For instance, the shame and betrayal suffered by people with *Hansen's* disease and advanced cancer is due to the fear and ignorance of people around them. Such attitudes of segregating them or discriminating against them makes them lose their dignity, it violates dignity which is the human becoming ethical phenomenon. This is perhaps one of the worst dimensions of human experience of suffering a situation which brings a man to think of himself as being worthless to society thereby affecting his self-esteem. The kind of suffering

that affects one's dignity is definitely of a far-reaching kind. It robs one of the very foundations of his social existence dignity.

Existential Suffering: From this perspective of human suffering, a patient can feel powerless or worthless when hindered from participating or taking responsibility for one's health decision. Many people who suffer several kinds of illnesses express lack of freedom to decide and participate in their patient-oriented care. This could increase the feeling of insecurity, forcing the patients to carry on an undignified fight for themselves provoking existential suffering. Uncontrollable pain and distress symptoms when not alleviated can also provoke an overwhelming feeling of worthlessness and a sense of being a burden to others resulting in a desire for hastened death.

In considering time as one of the five major themes of Existentialism, Archibong (2024, p.24) notes that the finitude of man (*Dasein*) is something of great concern. Man is expected to acknowledge this finitude and live responsibly in order to make the best out of his existence. This is what Heidegger considers an authentic life. The key to this life lies in the concept of angst which is sometimes translated as dread or anxiety. It refers to the vague feeling or mood that we experience when contemplating the finitude of our human existence. man sees in the future the termination of his life in death. This feeling call man's attention to himself as an individual and does not allow him to seek refuge in the crowd. This sort of feeling is a suffering in its own right.

Leibniz's Response to the Question of Human Suffering

The study shall attempt a critical evaluation of Leibniz's theodicy in order to discover to what extent it answers the question of human suffering. Leibniz argues that this world is the best of all possible worlds since God who acts in accordance with supreme reason chose it among all other possible worlds in spite of the evils therein. According to Leibniz, God's omnipotence makes it possible for God to actualize any possible world he chooses from among an infinite number of eternally fixed possibilities (Leibniz, 2007, p. 132).

God's perfect goodness, which always acts for the best, ensures that he chooses to create the most valuable possible world. His omniscience sees to it that he understands all possible worlds that he could create, accurately, calculates their worth, and identifies the very best one. For Leibniz therefore, the theistic concept of God entails the conclusion that whatever world exists is indeed the best of all possible ones (Leibniz, 2007, p. 134). As should be expected, no creaturely reality can be totally perfect. Hence, in this sense at least, reality will contain some evil (metaphysical). Leibniz holds that God's goodness and power guarantee that he will select that possible world from among all other alternatives that contains the optimum balance of good and evil.

Some interpreters of Leibniz mistakenly think he maintains that God brought about that world containing the least amount of evil commensurate with there being a world at all. A rather correct interpretation is that Leibniz envisions God actualizing that possible world that contains the amount of evil necessary to make the world the best one on the whole (Peterson, 1998, p.93). What does Leibniz intend to achieve with the theodicy?

Our end is to banish from men the false ideas that represent God to them as an absolute prince employing a despotic power, unfitted to be loved and unworthy of being loved. These notions are the more evil in relation to God inasmuch as the essence of piety is not only to fear him but also to love him above all things, and that cannot come about unless there be knowledge of his perfections capable of arousing the love which he deserves, and which makes the felicity of those that love him (Leibniz, 2007, p. 126).

One thing that appears quite clear from the above passage is the fact that Leibniz has the goal of restoring in men's heart the love for God. He observes that God is the first reason of things, everything else is contingent. He is the reason for the existence of the world (which is the whole assemblage of contingent things), he is necessary and eternal.

Furthermore, he argues that this cause (reason) must be intelligent since the world being contingent and an infinity of other worlds being equally possible and having equal claim to existence with it, the cause of this world should have reference to all these possible worlds in order to choose one of them. The regard or relation of an existent substance to simple possibilities can be nothing other than the understanding which has the ideas of them, and to fix upon one of them (that is to choose one of them) can be nothing other than the act of the will which chooses. It is the power of the substance that renders its will efficacious. "power relates to being, wisdom or understanding to truth, and will to good. And this intelligent cause ought to be infinite in all ways, and absolutely perfect in power, in wisdom, and in goodness, since it relates to all that which is possible" (Leibniz, 2007, p. 127). Now, since all is connected together, there is no ground for admitting more than one. The understanding of this intelligent cause is the source of essences, its will is the origin of existences.

Leibniz responds to the opinions of some of his adversaries who have provided a counter-argument by stating that if this were the best possible world, it should have been without sin and without suffering. Leibniz argues that the world would not have been better even if there were no sin and suffering in it. All things were connected in each one of the possible worlds according to Leibniz. Hence:

The universe, whatever it may be, is all of one piece, like an ocean: the least movement extends its effect there to any distance whatsoever, even though this effect become less perceptible in proportion to the distance. Therein God has ordered all things beforehand once for all, having foreseen prayers, good and bad actions, and all the rest; and each thing as an idea has contributed, before its existence, to the resolution that has been made upon the existence of all things; so that nothing can be changed in the universe (any more than in a number) save its essence or, if you will, save its numerical individuality. Thus, if the smallest evil that comes to pass in the world were missing in it, it would no longer be this world; which, with nothing omitted and all allowance made, was found the best by the creator who chose it (Leibniz, 2007, p. 128).

Considering the view of Leibniz in the passage just quoted, everything put together, good and evil, has been exhaustively and perfectly considered even before they came into existence. Hence, the whole world is complete because everything in it has been ordained by God who foresaw them and considered them necessary for the actual world. for this reason, if there were missing any evil which God had already pre-ordained to be in the world, this would not qualify as the best possible world. Even when people imagine possible worlds without sin and without suffering, some kind of utopian projections, Leibniz insists that even such worlds would be inferior to the actual world in goodness. This fact, he admits is something he cannot demonstrate in detail since he is not able to present infinities and compare them together.

Resolving the Problem of Evil and Human Suffering

Leibniz's response to the question of human suffering is that it is part of, a necessary part of, God's creation of the world which we must think of as the best following our conception of God's infinite goodness, wisdom, and power. In this world (the best possible world), evil and suffering are necessary for the greater good. They are necessary aspects of the divine plan serving as means to greater ends such as moral growth, spiritual development, and the realization of higher goods.

Again, his theory of the best possible world is in line with his vision of a universal harmony. He believes that the universe is characterized by an inherent order and harmony, which reflects the perfect wisdom and goodness of its creator. So, the best possible world is one in which every being fulfils its potential and contributes to the overall harmony and perfection of the whole. He suggests that the diversity and complexity of the universe are necessary for the realization of universal harmony as each individual entity plays a unique role in the grand symphony of existence.

Evaluation

It is important to note that contemporary objections to Leibniz's theodicy often focus on his claim that this world is the best possible world. One objection holds that the idea of the best possible world does not make sense. There are two sides to this argument. The first side is advocated by Robert Adams and it holds that there appears to be no limit to the number of possible worlds and so maximum perfection that could constitute a 'best possible world.' The second side is the position of scholars such as Swinburne, Mackie, Banner, Hoffman, and Rosen Krantz who hold that it is intelligible to speak of a maximum level of merit that a world can have, then it is likely that more than one possible world would possess this level of merit. Due to such difficulties, some scholars seek some procedure or parameters according to which God may rationally select a world, despite the absence of a best option. In the theodicy, Leibniz already anticipates such objections (Jacobs, 2012, p. 374).

A second objection to the best possible world theodicy states that even if there is not a best possible world, it would still be rational for God to create because a world is better than no world. this objection seems to suggest that God gains something by creating. Obviously, no orthodox Patristic would grant that God's goodness is enhanced by creation. God has no potentiality, in the act of creating he does not move his own potential into actuality. As Aquinas suggested, God's goodness is complete in itself and not enhanced by any subordinate end to

which he might choose to act. Hence, Leibniz's premise that if no best could be found among possible worlds, then no world would exist could be seen to have theological merit over the claims of the proponents of this objection such as Adams and Swinburne (Jacobs, 2012, p. 376).

A third objection states that one cannot sin against possible agents; only against actual agents; hence, God has no obligation to any possible world other than the one he chooses to actualize. Robert Adams is also the proponent of this objection. He argues that there is a significant difference between possible beings and actual beings. God has no obligation to treat the former in a certain way since they are not but he has obligation to treat the latter in a certain way since they are. Obviously, this objection has some merit on the surface value. In responding to this objection, one has to fall back to the way in which Leibniz understands divine duty. Leibniz speaks of God's duty to the best in two distinct ways. The first emphasizes the fact that God, unlike a tutor or a mother, has a duty to everything in creation. As God, his duty is to the whole, and there is nothing outside of his jurisdiction. The second way in which he understands divine duty is in reference to God's own self. That is, God's duty to perform the best is a duty to the perfection of his very divinity, namely, his wisdom, goodness, and power.

Now, Leibniz does not appeal to God's obligation to possible agents in either of the above senses of duty. Instead, both senses point to the fact of God having an obligation to God's self. The second sense of duty is more closely related to the objection since it is the basis for Leibniz's claim that God has a duty to the best. This sense of duty is not a claim that one group of possible individuals is more entitled to existence than another set of possible individuals. On the contrary, the claim is that God cannot fail in his obligation to himself. This means it would be unworthy of the divine intellect and wisdom to judge something less than the best to be the best.

Again, it would be unworthy of the divine will, which inclines perfectly towards the good, to choose contrary to the known good (i.e. the best) in favour of a lower good. This claim is an extension of Leibniz's contention that the hypothetical necessity of the best follows *a priori* from the very idea of God. so, for God to create a world that does not meet this hypothetical necessity is for God to destroy his very divinity, since in so doing he would will something utterly incompatible with his divine nature. The ultimate response to this objection is that the duty is not to possible agents, the duty is to God's own nature, since as John of Damascus notes, according to right reason, everything that has come about through providence has quite necessarily come about in the best manner and that most befitting God, so that it could not have happened in a better way (Jacobs, 2012, p.376).

The fourth objection states that a Christian worldview does not require that God create the best. This objection also emerges from the works of Robert Adams. The first problem with this objection is the concept of a Christian worldview. How is it to be defined? The extent to which we find antecedents of Leibniz's theodicy in the Christian tradition makes it difficult to grasp this concept of a Christian worldview. Adams argument is that God has a loving disposition, being graciously disposed towards creatures. Since grace does love without consideration of merit, a gracious person loves others without worrying about whether there is someone better to love. Adams conclude that grace is antithetical to the idea that God chooses the best possible world since God does not create beings because they are better but because but because he is gracious. For Adams therefore, it would be an act of grace for God to stoop down and create a

world that is inferior to the best since by so doing God would display his gracious character by giving existence to a world that does not merit it (Adams, 2001, p.21).

Conclusion

On the whole, Leibniz's theodicy is a highly commendable effort in answering the question of human suffering as he succeeds in showing that human reason can come up with some justification for the existence of evil in the world (contrary to what Bayle had suggested). In doing this, Leibniz firmly establishes himself as a rationalist. Most importantly, the primary goal of the theodicy is achieved. Leibniz gives the theist a reason to continue to trust in God and see God in all his majesty as worthy of all love and adoration. The theist in pain therefore, could take consolation in the fact that God has planned all that he experiences in order to achieve a greater good, even if he (the theist) is not able to discern what possible greater good this could be.

God sees the larger picture, man cannot because he is limited, hence he (man) must keep faith in God who acts in accordance with supreme reason. In any case, Leibniz's response is far from being satisfactory precisely because it is still very difficult to make sense of suffering, excessive suffering, in a world created by a God who is both all-loving and all-powerful at the same time. It might make better sense to state that God was once all-powerful and not all-loving and then eventually becomes all-loving but no longer all-powerful.

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