

# A Philosophical Investigation on Human Security Using the Problem of Evil

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**Abstract** – *This paper will look on human security using the (via negativa) negative way. It will try to expose human security from what it is not. At this point this paper will be dealing with the idea of evil in human relations according to St. Thomas Aquinas of the Christians and that of Siddhartha Gautama of the Buddhists, as the negative way and the necessary condition. The contention here is that a) evil is a threat to human security. b) It follows that knowing evil means knowing the threat to human security. c) So, solving the cause of evil in human relations means establishing human security.*

**Keywords** – *Evil, Human Security, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Siddhartha Gautama Buddha*

## INTRODUCTION

United Nations Development Programme's 1994 (UNDP) views human security in two major aspects such as the freedom from fear and freedom from wants. Freedom from fear refers to the safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease, and repression. And freedom from wants means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life-whether in homes, in jobs or in communities [1]. This UNDP report commends both of the two aspects as complementary in forming the holistic dignity of every individual. To be specific, the report lists seven categories to address human security which can be found in [2] economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security.

The above position is the prevailing idea in defining human security but still, there is an encouragement to look for it in a multidisciplinary perspective. With this challenge, it is the response of the researcher to find an alternative within the parameters of philosophy. In finding such, it is the contention of the researcher that if human security encompasses many established definitions, then it is possible to capture the entirety of the idea by starting from what it is not. The point is that if it is possible to establish what human security is not, then it is easier to locate what it is. So, if there is a universal negation of human security then solving this negation entails the attainment of the other. With this, the researcher will deal on the problem of evil which has a sense of universality in the presence of what we call common human condition. The first step, therefore, is to define

what is evil using the concepts of some notable philosophers such as St. Thomas Aquinas and Siddhartha Gautama Buddha. After defining evil, the second step is knowing the cause of evil. Upon knowing the cause of evil, it entails knowing the cause of the absence of human security. So, in the rule of negation, it follows that solving the cause of evil entails establishing human security.

## I. St. Thomas Aquinas on the Problem of Evil

St. Thomas is caught in the logic of the problem that (a) if God created everything, and (b) there is evil, therefore (b) God created evil [3]. This problem posts a sense of universality as the first claim cannot be stated otherwise, for it is really the general claim of Christianity- that God created everything. On the other hand, the second claim is very basic, that there is really something which is questionable and that is what we called evil which turns into the forms of physical, natural, and moral. So, provided that the second statement is true then there is no other way than to jump to the conclusion that it is God who created evil. Otherwise, if Christianity will not accept the conclusion then new arguments may come that is (a) God did not create everything, (b) there is evil, so (c) it is possible that evil is created by another and not God. Or shall we say that there is another creator besides God?

St. Thomas Aquinas took the problem step by step. First, he established the existence of God. That is this existence is inevitable. That is on his book Summa Theologia, Aquinas [4] states that this God is logically a necessity that its absence is a contradiction. He then

says that it can be proven through reason and not through faith only as what many are claiming. He formulated the five ways of proving the existence of God which are the argument from the cause, the argument from motion, argument from possibility and necessity, argument from the gradation of being, and argument from design. Through these proofs, according to St. Thomas [5] there is really one absolute God.

### **That Everything Created by God is Good**

Aquinas [6] follows the logic that (a) everything that is produced through the will of an agent is directed to an end by that agent. This states that the agent has the authority over his acts and the results of his acts. Second, (b) the good and the end are the proper objects of the will. It follows, therefore, that (c) whatever proceeds from the will must be directed to an end which is good. So, (d) everything God created is good [7].

The bottom line here is that everything produced through God's will carries the resemblance of Him. God created two good categories, the first category is those bereft of intelligence, which does not direct themselves to their end, examples of these are the plants, animals, and other things which lack the intelligence to direct themselves to their end. But on their uniqueness, according to St. Thomas they are subject by the end of the divine ruler, so these are basically good. Second, God also created those beings with intelligence and direct themselves to their appointed end by their own actions, which are called human. Same as the Creator, these agents act for an end which is good [8].

### **Evil is unintentional in a thing**

Since the above discussion states that every agent act for the end, which is good, it directly supports the claims that when the result of an action differs from the intention of the agent, it is clear that such result occurs unintentionally [9]. Thus, a shoemaker upon trying to fix a shoe destroys the beauty of the shoe is something which is unintentional. For his intention is simply to fix the shoe, which is good. Or it can be viewed that a defect in effect and action results from a defect in the principle of action. This simply means that maybe the shoemaker is not that ready to handle such situation. Something is lacking to his skills, therefore, which happened to be the leeway for the destruction of the shoe. Given that he is trained, such thing will not happen.

Considering the creatures without intelligence, what is happening to them is rooted from generation and corruption. The transformation of matter is directed per se to the form, and privation results unintentionally. This is best viewed with the breaking of seed. This corruption or destruction of seed is really happening but the intention here is not the corruption rather the transformation of new matter. That after the destruction follows the sprouting of new life. The destruction here, therefore, is unintentional [10].

With respect to human relation, one can argue that evil which is (vice/sin) is cannot be unintentional because it is voluntary in nature; this is from the fact that a man does an injustice voluntarily [11]. The concrete example is rape. It is absurd that a man who does unjust actions voluntarily does not wish to be unjust, and that he who rapes voluntarily does not wish to be incontinent. Or to put on the idea of unintentional, it is impossible to say that the rapist does the act, unintentional yet voluntary. Aquinas on this objection answers yes! It is voluntary. But he states that cognitive errors and excessive passion can distort our moral views [12]. So, such act will happen only if there is a defect in the active force. There is a problem on the mental state of the rapist or on the rationality and on his value system. If he is on the proper mental state and value system, then he will not do that. On the other hand, Aquinas states that still his actions are done for the sake of what he believed as (rightly or wrongly). There is still the idea of good in mind. Yet this good is not the proper because the man's appetitive excesses corrupt his understanding of what is really good. He explains that many of man's actions are informed by mistaken views of what happiness really consists of. These views may be the result of some intellectual or cognitive error (say if one's views are the result of ignorance or ill-informed deliberation). In short Aquinas [13] only says that rape happens because the agent has the privation of a rational good.

### **Then Evil is not an Essence**

Essence is what the thing is and will remain, taking out all the accident. And since it is discussed above that evil is a privation, the non-existence of something in a substance, therefore evil is not a real essence [14]. Thus, there is no blindness in itself as being but only the privation of sight. And this privation is what is lacking and what is lacking on something has no essence.

On the other hand (b) everything is either an agent or something made. Evil cannot be an agent, for what which acts inasmuch as it is, is actually existing and perfect. In cannot be made for if it is, it is already good. If that will be the case, then evil has no essence. Also, (c) every essence is natural to something. Therefore evil, since it is the privation of what is natural, cannot be natural to a thing. Then (d) whatever has an essence is either itself a form or has a form. (e) Being is divided into act and potentiality. Insofar as a thing is an act it is good. Potentiality is good insofar as it tends to act. But privation does not apply to it saves accidentally [15]. So Evil has no essence.

There are many objections on this view that evil has no essence, but with respect to the scope of this research, only those evil in human relations will be addressed. Of all the objections the one which holds the strong position is the point that "each thing derives species from its proper difference [16]." Now evil is a specific difference in a certain genus namely in moral habits and acts. Thus, everyone is always prone to say that respecting a female is good and raping is bad. So, if there is a difference then both an essence. But Aquinas [17] points out here that morality depends on the will and the will's object is the end and good. From this, the measure of good is the moral reason. This is to say that what is in accord with reason is good and that not in accord is evil. So it is possible that a thing is evil for one but good for others. Here, evil is a relative thing which is only possible when there is a defect on rational good. And when there is also the apprehension of good which happens to be bad. So in short evil might happen only in human relation considering the moral aspect if there is a defect in one's rational faculty. Without the defect on one's rational faculty then moral evil in human relations will not happen.

## II. Buddhism on the Problem of Evil

If Thomas is forced to prove the existence of a good God in facing the problem of evil, the principle of Buddhism suspends this topic and deals more on the humane aspect of this problem. In short, Buddhism is not agnostic on the idea of the divine, for they are not saying that there is a divine being or saying that there is none, but they are simply suspending this topic to deal more on what is present at hand [18]. So the logical contradiction between the good God presented in the philosophy of Aquinas is not the same as what is present on the principle of

Buddhism. Evil then has a different approach to this ancient eastern tradition. And the best way to tackle this problem is to deal with the basic tenets of Buddhism.

### Karma and the Origin of Being

The Buddha positively declares: "without cognizable beginning is this Samsara. That earliest point of being who, obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving, wander and fare on, is not to be perceived" [19]. It follows then that the beginning of this life cannot be perceived. This life-stream flows ad infinitum, as long as it is fed with muddy waters of ignorance and craving as Buddha says. The basic contention, therefore, is that life was born from the matrix of action. There are series of connections that its infinity cannot be traced. Being precedes being as it is said. But it should be noted that inherent to this beginning of infinite is the sorrowfulness (suffering) as it is said"

*Now, monks, this is the noble truth as to sorrow. Earthly existence itself is sorrowful. Decay is sorrowful. Disease, death, union with the unpleasing, separation from the pleasing is sorrowful; the wish which cannot be fulfilled is sorrowful; in brief, the desirous, transient individuality is sorrowful"[20].*

It is then a reality in Buddhism that life is suffering. So living is suffering and to live is to suffer. One cannot get out of suffering provided having earthly existence for its very nature is suffering. This universality of suffering sees no gender or status, everyone is bound to it. Whether one is rich or poor both suffer from money affairs; one suffers from poverty and one suffers from wealth. It is because a wealthy man worries of his estate if he has one, he worries over his mansion and its many servants, he worries about his health and comfort, and he worries about his treasures and their safety [21].

Now, if suffering can be equated with evil, it follows that its existence is evil. So it is very important to note that the cause of the existence of suffering is also the cause of its equivalence-evil. This energy of existence is known as karma. Karma is an action, it is intentional, voluntary and conscious as it is written that "By oneself, indeed, is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself, indeed, is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one purifies another." [22]. It is indeed an act which is directly imputable to the agent or to the doer. There is the logical relation between the

agent, the act, and the effect. It states that every action has the corresponding result. That if one has done good things, good things will go back to him. If one has done bad things, bad things will go back to him. This is more commonly known as the universal law of retribution. This law then teaches everyone to be responsible because the sin everyone commits, shall reap the crop of what he has sown in this life or in one of the coming lives [23]. This law of karma also qualifies the distinction between good acts and evil acts. That is the good acts are those which are altruistic and ascetic which has merit in the next life. Then bad acts are those which make other people suffer, such as murder, theft, and adultery [24].

To summarize, it is karma that conditions rebirth. Past Karma conditions the present birth; and the present karma, in combination with past karma, conditions the future. The present then is the offspring of the past and becomes in turn, the parent of the future [25]. This means that the present action will determine the condition in the next life.

### **The Interdependent Origination**

From the above discussion, it is stated that karma is the universal law of retribution and the reason of the ad infinitum of rebirth. But it should also be noted that before the operation of karma, it is first ignorance that leads being into existence in earthly life and continues to hold from the earthly life. As it is said that,

*"Ignorance is the root of evil and unless ignorance is overcome, man will never be able to free himself from dukkha, because it is the root of evil, dukkha follows inevitable where ignorance reigns"* [26].

Ignorance then is the foundation of the interdependent origination which says that everything and everyone is a web of interconnection, and every part of the web expresses and reflects every other part of the web [27]. It is the starting point of the twelve stages of the cycle of origination which are: (1) Ignorance, (2) Volitional formations (sankhâra), (3) consciousness, (4) mind-and-form, (5) sense-bases, (6) contact, (7) feeling, (8) craving, (9) clinging, (10) becoming, (11) birth, (12) old-age-and-death.

As this cycle ends up in death this will push through again to the next life provided an individual fails to overcome this ignorance and enter in the state of nirvana.

Overcoming ignorance, therefore, is the only way to get out of karma and to get away with the cycle of birth and rebirth. That if one has the noble eightfold

path which is the right view, intention, speech, action, effort, livelihood, concentration, and contemplation. He can overcome ignorance and finally breaks to the circle and enter nirvana- the extinction of desire. It is the final goal of Buddhism where one already gets out of the system of karma. In short, if suffering is evil brought about by ignorance, and then overcoming ignorance is overcoming suffering and evil at the same time.

### **III. Evil and Human Security**

There are many links which evil and human security may intersect, first is with St. Thomas two categories of creation such as (1) those without intelligence and (2) with intelligence. His idea is consistent with saying that nothing is bad and undesirable of those without intelligence. This is supported by his claim that everything existed by the virtue of existing is good. But the problem maybe lies on the second category which is those with intelligence. What if those with intelligence committed something which will put the others in danger? It follows that these with intelligence can be evil or is not good. Relating to the theory of human security, it is possible therefore that these with intelligence may put the insecurity to the other with or without intelligence. This scenario happened during the World Trade Center attack last 2001 when a group of individuals hijacked an airplane and maneuvered it to hit a building that damaged the life of many innocent civilians.

But it is worth noting that St. Thomas acknowledges that even every act is directed to good still it is possible that an agent might not direct his act to good rather to bad. So, it is possible that an individual will do something which will endanger the situation of the other. In short, it is possible that an individual will hijack an airplane and manipulate it to put others in danger. But St. Thomas argued here, that it is really possible only with the person or agent involved lacks the dictates of right reason. So, provided that one has the right knowledge then he will not do the said act. It is, therefore, the case that the absence of noble knowledge leads individual to do things which endanger the others. St. Thomas further clarified this by saying that the result, therefore, is unintentional, since it happened only in the absence of knowledge. So, going back to the principle of Thomas, if there is no evil by essence then there is nothing to be insecure off. The threat to security happens only if there is a problem on reason so if

everyone has the right and noble reason then there is no need to look for human security for being rational and human is security in itself.

Natural disasters such as earthquake, typhoons, and flood which destroyed thousands of people are also threat to human security which is inevitable. So even as Thomas says that good is still the end of all things then isn't it a contradiction that dying of many individuals is not good. If that is the case, it follows that the above propositions lack the experiential aspect. Thomas argument might not sufficient to answer this inquiry but using Buddha's principle of karma then on this threat to human security will help a lot. First, these disasters are brought by man's act of destroying natural resources. The same is the law of karma, it is a willful act which states that every act simply brings back the product of one's act. It means that if you destroy nature, then the result will be not favorable-- the negative karma of your negative act. But if people will protect nature then the result will be favorable to them or good karma of the good act. Provided people abused the government and act negatively, then they are not aware of the rule of karma. Using the above discussion of the cause of this bad act in the Buddhist perspectives, these people, therefore, have the absence of the knowledge of the rule or like in the principle of Thomas; they are in the state of ignorance.

#### **IV. Human Security as Freedom from Ignorance**

The two systems, Thomistic and Buddhist perspectives merged on the point regarding the problem of evil as the absence of authentic knowledge or being under the state of ignorance. Relating it to human security, it follows that if there is no evil in itself then, there is no real threat to human security except when there is an absence of knowledge or state of ignorance. Thomas emphasized that evil to those creatures without a will is unintentional and just privation. If it is privation Thomas says that it has no essence, so it is nothing. Then to those with a will, evil occurs only with the absence of the right reason or if the agent is in the state of ignorance. On the other hand, Buddha talks on the problem of evil by simply talking to a man as agent under the state of ignorance of the rule of karma.

Both acknowledge the presence of man as the center of this entire quest to overcome evil. It is the same also as what is written in the UNDP report [28] which says that the quest for human security is universal and people-centered. Considering the

categories stated by the 1994 report which says that human security is divided in: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political. All of these categories are nothing but a creation of man. All of these are products of human relations that only man can solve and bring insecurity to security.

First, in economics, it is said that only about a quarter of the world's people may be economically secure [29]. This point doesn't mean that there is a problem with the population or with the resources because these elements are always constant. The problem lies on few human beings who are ruled by the misguided knowledge that accumulating wealth is a sign of wisdom. So, if they are guided with the noble knowledge that sharing is good then everybody will be in a good state. The same is true with the second aspect which is the food security, UNDP states that people go hungry not because food is unavailable but because they cannot afford it. If wealth and opportunities are limited to the privileged few because of those who are trying to simply serve their personal ego, then many will die because of hunger.

The Third and fourth aspects of human security which are the environment and health issues also boil down with man's inability to reach out with others. UNDP specify that most of the death cases are linked with poor nutrition and an unsafe environment, particularly polluted water. So, with the lack of man's concern and respect to the environment, pollution is everywhere. From the water to soil, going to air, there are problems that bring man's life and property in danger.

On the other hand, the fourth which is political, the fifth which is the community, and the sixth which personal security focused on the idea of one's safety. With the leaders' wrong views of progress and advancement, they are enslaved by egocentric ideas. As a result, with this political chauvinist, the traditional realist would view international law as simply as little more than an attempt to legitimate the interest of powerful (people) states [30]. Wars are created to support only one's political or racial ambition. Terrorists were inculcated with vigilant and wrong doctrine. This threat to national and local community ends up in personal unrest. One could not develop his or her potentialities in the place of danger and uncertainties. In short, the political instability will lead to the destruction of the international agreed values, standards or rules regulating the conducts of states towards their own citizens and towards the non-citizens known as human rights [31].

Without answering these seven threats above, then everything will turn to the last which is the global insecurity. At the end of the day, it is not the world of the poor or of the oppressed. Rather it is the world of all. If men will not learn to live as one then everyone, not a single person, single community or single country will perish. It is the humanity who is endangered. This is written in the UNDP report as it says that "when human security is under threat anywhere, it can affect people everywhere. Famines, ethnic conflicts, social disintegration, terrorism, pollution, and drug trafficking can no longer be confined within national borders. And no nation can isolate its life from the rest of the world." Taking into considerations all human relation globally such political or economic or social it is the idea of Ulrich [32] that man should learn to create a global ethics which will support human rights. Still, this claim is not addressed to nations or to global organizations, but this is addressed to every individual. The problem is always rooted on the individual because even the powerful nations and organizations are composed basically of individuals. So, to generalize, human security which is the main concern of man is really humane. In answering human security is to go back to every individual decision to be made.

Using logical relationships, it follows that in the rule of negation since the cause of evil in human relations is ignorance, then solving ignorance means solving the cause of evil in human relation. So if evil is the negation of human security in human affairs then it follows that solving the cause of evil which is ignorance is establishing human security. It follows that first if everyone has the authentic knowledge of the natural law of the Christians which according to St. Thomas is available to all through the light of human reason then there is nothing to fear. Everyone knows what is right in the first place. Second, if everyone is aware of the rule of karma of the Buddhist, then no one will act injustice against the other. Everyone wants good so everyone will do good to attain good.

In short human security is nothing but the freedom from ignorance [33].

## **CONCLUSION**

Evil is observable in both the Christian intellectual tradition through the ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas and that of the Buddhists through the ideas of SidharthaGaudama. It means that it is experienced everywhere be it in the Western or Eastern part of the

globe. It is observed basically not as a physical entity rather that of a product of knowledge, freedom, and voluntariness in human relations. In short, evil then is a product of human action. For Thomas it is present when there is a problem with the agent's rational faculty as he is willing towards the desired good. This means that only the defect on agent's faculty provides the existence of evil and given the proper orientation the agent will always act towards good. Siddhartha on the other hand points also on the aspect of one's view in life as the possible cause of evil, it means that if the agent is only under the veil of ignorance then he is prone in desiring or craving which is evil. Thus, the two traditions are pointing towards the same direction that evil is product of action but is possible only if there is a defect into the faculty or orientation of the agent.

Establishing human security then is not about creating monumental structures like strong and solid-state borders, technologically advanced anti-criminality system. It is not also about forming a social deterrence like big fences, inescapable prison house or fatal punishment for the law breakers to avoid violation of others right. It is not also only securing sustainable food for hundreds of years to come or securing medicine for different types of sickness that are evolving. In spite of all of these physical fortress and social deterrence, the best part to start the seed of human security is going back to the very basic goodness of man. It is because the threat to human security is within man also. The threat to human security is also in human himself alone-the problem, the evil within brought by misguided idea of good according to Thomas or what Gautama calls as ignorance.

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