

# The Problem of Divine Hiddenness

A Reflection on Faith, Silence, and the Search for God

By Ninox Antolihao

Stone Grill Press · Leyte, Philippines · First Edition — 2025

# Introduction

Across history, countless seekers have longed for an encounter with the divine. Yet for many, heaven remains silent. This reflection explores the philosophical and emotional weight of that silence — a silence that has tested believers and thinkers for centuries. Known as “ The Problem of Divine Hiddenness, ” it asks why a loving God would ever remain unseen to those who sincerely seek Him.

— —

## The Problem of Divine Hiddenness

Throughout human history, people have sought signs of the divine — not merely in miracles or sacred texts, but in the quiet assurance that they are seen, heard, and loved by something greater than themselves. Yet for many, that assurance never comes. Prayers echo back in silence. Tragedy unfolds without intervention. Good people suffer while the wicked prosper. This absence, or seeming concealment of God, is what philosophers call the problem of divine hiddenness. The question is not simply why the divine does not always act — but why it so often remains unseen. If God exists and desires a relationship with humanity, why is His presence not self-evident to all sincere seekers? The 20th-century philosopher J. L. Schellenberg formulated this into a structured argument: If a perfectly loving God exists, He would want a personal relationship with every human being capable of such a relationship. Such a relationship would require that people be aware of His reality. Yet many reasonable, honest individuals sincerely seek God and still find nothing — they encounter divine silence. Therefore, Schellenberg concluded, this hiddenness counts as evidence against the existence of a perfectly loving God. The argument does not arise from rebellion, but from yearning. It reflects the pain of those who reach out in faith and find emptiness instead of presence. It is not atheism born of arrogance, but of disappointment — a cry from within the human soul that wants to believe, yet cannot find the beloved it searches for. Religious traditions have responded in many ways. Some say that God ’ s hiddenness protects human freedom — that if His existence were undeniable, belief would be forced, not chosen. Others argue that divine silence is a form of testing or preparation, a way to cultivate spiritual maturity. Still others interpret it through mysticism: that the divine never truly hides, but reveals itself through the very longing we feel when it seems absent — the absence itself being a kind of presence too vast for our limited understanding. From a psychological and existential perspective, divine hiddenness also reveals something about humanity. Our search for meaning, for moral order, and for connection points toward an innate sense that something greater must exist — otherwise the silence would not wound us so deeply. Even in doubt, the ache for God may itself be evidence of the divine, echoing Augustine ’ s confession: “ You have made us for Yourself, O Lord,

and our heart is restless until it rests in You. ” Thus, the problem of divine hiddenness is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be lived. It exposes the tension between the human need for certainty and the divine invitation to trust without seeing. Whether one interprets the silence as absence, patience, or transcendence, it remains one of the most intimate struggles of the spiritual journey — the feeling of standing in the dark, calling out to heaven, and learning to listen for the whisper that answers from within.

— —

## About the Author

Ninox Antolihao is a Filipino thinker, writer, and restaurateur based in Leyte, Philippines. Through his work at Stone Grill Restaurant and his reflection series *\*Moments of Solitude\**, he explores the intersections of faith, philosophy, and human experience — seeking to illuminate the spaces between belief and doubt, reason and wonder. His writings serve as quiet invitations to see the divine not as distant, but as deeply woven into the silence of everyday life.