

BEING AND EVIL: REVISITING ‘PRIVATIO BONI’

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ABSTRACT: After outlining the previously proposed notion of the ‘*non-personal* Universe of Being’, this paper delineates a hypothetical scenario of the unimpeded development of Being in the world and the deviations from it - *natural and moral Evil*. It argues first that they *are inevitable*, due to the multiplicity of systems operating in the cosmos and the complexity of the workings of the ‘moral brain’. Secondly it argues that those deviations lead to ill effects (evils) which - in analogy to their traditional interpretation as *privatio boni* - are seen here as a *privatio entis* within humans and natural ‘substances’ (i.e., a failure to reach their full Being), and not separate substances themselves; their mode of being fits best in the category of ‘states/events’ (Chisholm). On a practical level, the idea of its inevitability motivates a stoic acceptance of evil as a universal condition of life (although resistance to it is needed in particular situations in which it is preventable); in turn, the notion of *privatio entis* carries several psychological benefits, among which the conviction that, since the growth of Being/Good is endless, it will prevail in the future, consistent with the scientific idea of ‘synchronization’, nature’s ‘yearning for order’ (Strogatz).

KEYWORDS: Being; Universe of Being; *Privatio boni*; Inevitability of evil; Substance; synchronization

This paper attempts to build upon the notion of a ‘*non-personal* Universe of Being’ that I introduced elsewhere,^{1,2} looking at good and evil from a perspective that does *not* rely on a *personal God*. After briefly summarizing it, I will develop my argument from it in three steps: first envisioning an unimpeded development of the Universe of Being, then examining how natural and moral evil disrupts this development, and finally trying to determine *what* is the mode of Being of evil. In closing I will dwell on the practical implications of my arguments.

I 'SUBSTANCE' AND THE *NON-PERSONAL* UNIVERSE OF BEING

The idea of a *non-personal* Universe of Being originated from two basic inspirations. The first is a philosophical concept – *substance* – that has been around for long time to refer to an ontological category that includes all visible things, as opposed to other categories, such as properties, relations, states etc. For its definition, avoiding contemporary controversies,³ I relied on traditional thomistic thought. In that tradition, as expressed by the French philosopher Jacques Maritain, a '*suppositum*' or '*subject*' is something that has an *existence*, which we can detect with our senses or instruments, and an *essence* or Being, which is behind it and supports it.^{4,5} Kant later expressed a similar idea. In visible things, he distinguished their appearances from the things in themselves, which – at least in the metaphysical 'dual aspect' interpretation of his thought – is 'a distinction between two ways of considering one and the same object'.⁶

The second inspiration is a compelling idea proposed by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. He argues that the experiences of religious conversion he reports in great and moving details are evidence of a connection between 'the higher part of' the human being, our soul, and 'a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him'.^{7,8} I refer to this 'MORE' as the Universe of Being and I take it to be the realm of *all* essences, our soul as well as the essence of all substances in the world. James appears to interpret this MORE as a *personal* God, 'the absolute world ruler',⁹ with whom our contact in prayer is 'both active and mutual'.¹⁰ However, I further argued that the content of most of those experiences is actually 'ineffable'; that James' MORE could equally well be regarded as a *non-personal* Universe of Being; and that such notion provides a solid ground for a comprehensive view of the world and human life for those who cannot accept a religious perspective based on a God/Father, who directs both.^{1,2}

II THE GOOD: THE ENDLESS EXPANSION OF BEING

The focal point of my argument in this paper is Being, 'being as such, ... neither the particularised being of the natural sciences, nor the being divested of reality of genuine logic ... It is real being in all the purity and fullness of its distinctive intelligibility—or mystery'.¹¹ In this light, I propose first to envision a hypothetical

scenario in which the development of Being proceeds unhindered.

Based on the discoveries of modern cosmology, *our* first evidence of Being goes back 13.7 billion years to the Big Bang, an immensely rapid expansion of a state of near-zero volume in extreme conditions of heat and density (or to a Big Bounce from another universe that had undergone extreme contraction and heating.)¹² In the first fractions of a second, physical constants developed,¹³ so precisely ‘fine-tuned’ - writes Ian Barbour in *Religion and science* - that ‘even a small change in [them] would have resulted in an inhabitable universe’.¹⁴ On them are founded our natural laws, and the resulting regularity¹⁵ and intelligibility¹⁶ of the cosmos.

Since growth, expansion is the very nature of Being, its budding into specific essences brings into existence newer and newer substances/subjects, from the inanimate to the sentient, each developing towards ‘the fullness of its being’¹⁷. In Maritain’s words, ‘As we pass progressively to higher degrees in the scale of beings, we deal with subjects of existence or supposita more and more rich in inner complexity’.¹⁸ At the top, realizing ‘a higher ontological density than that whole [material] universe’, ‘the *suppositum* becomes *persona*’, whose essence, our immaterial soul, is - uniquely - self-conscious, autonomous and ‘acts by setting itself its own ends’.^{19,20} Among them, is the creation of Being itself. As I suggested elsewhere, ‘human beings are not only bearers of being, but also makers of it.’ Via ‘good’ thoughts and actions they ‘help somebody or something to reach the fullness of its being ... i.e., they create being and add it to the Universe of Being’.²

Where is all this to end? Not with the ceasing of Being, as the notion of it ending in non-being is a logical contradiction. The case for this endless duration was made effectively by Heidegger. Starting from ‘Aristotle’s fundamental insight’ that “‘being-moved” (*kinesis*) is the basic mode of being’ - writes Capobianco²¹ - Heidegger states:

‘... the “rest” that we think of as the opposite of “movement” also has its being as being-moved. ... “End” [*telos*] is not the result of stopping the movement, but is the beginning of being-moved as the ingathering and storing up of movement’.

The *existence* of the world and humans will cease, by either of the two scenarios entertained by modern cosmology - frying or freezing. But the *essence* of all things does endure in its own realm, the Universe of Being. That also applies to the essence of man, for those willing to consider that the soul may survive death

III THE BAD: NATURAL EVIL

How does evil fit into the hypothetical scenario proposed above? We call *Evil* that which produces *evil effects*, a distinction that is often blurred in ordinary language. Both elements will be defined better, but for the moment suffice to say that one needs to consider moral Evil, which results from man's wrong decision and action, and natural Evil, which includes both natural catastrophes and what is sometimes referred to as 'physical' Evil, for which I mean here the whole varied class of agents of disease. From such Evils follow a host of evil consequences: natural 'woes', such as damage to or total destruction of 'substances' (humans and things), as well as the moral void in the wrongdoer.

To consider natural Evil first, we need to return to the beginning and the physical laws that guide the expansion of Being in the cosmos: they are such that, within each physical system operating in the universe, a combination of specific necessary factors will produce the same effect.²² However, given the enormous number of systems operating concurrently in space and time, it is quite likely that any system be acted upon by other factors or events that are extraneous to it (non-necessary to its operation, 'contingent'), leading to a result different from the one that would be produced in a closed system. In other words, *by virtue of the multiplicity of causes, deviation from the 'normal' course of an event is to be expected*, i.e., this deviation, which we call *Evil*, is *inherent, inevitable part of creation as such*, from its very first instant.

A similar reasoning applies to 'physical' Evil. Normal human development is supported by such an extremely complex interplay of myriads of biological factors and processes that mistakes are bound to occur internally, or external 'contingent' noxious factors may interfere, so that genetic, autoimmune, infectious, neoplastic and other diseases may result. This point is well illustrated by a recent study showing that 66% of mutations found in cancer are due to *'unavoidable errors associated with DNA replication'*²³ (emphasis added).

The conclusion of the inevitability of natural Evil has also been arrived at within a religious perspective, often articulated in the form given by Leibniz: a world without Evil would not be possible, since anything created had to be less than God, i.e., less than perfect: 'The imperfections, on the other hand, and the defects in operations spring from the *original limitation that the creature could not but receive* with the first beginning of its being For God could not give the creature

all *without making of it a God*²⁴ (emphasis added). In modern times, a theologian, F.R. Tennant, stated that ‘the human afflictions arising from our relations with the physical world... are rather inevitable, if incidental, accompaniments or by-products of the world-order’²⁵. And the great Jesuit scientist and philosopher, Teilhard de Chardin, wrote in his *The Heart of Matter*: ‘... the Problem of [natural] Evil is given an acceptable intellectual solution (the statistical necessity of disorders within a multitude in process of organization)’²⁶.

IV THE BAD: MORAL EVIL

Turning now to the latest part of the scenario of an untainted expansion of Being, at the very top of the ladder, we found mankind, bearer and maker of Being. Endowed with free will, however, mankind is also the *cause of moral Evil*.

In Catholic thought, free will, with its awesome power, is a gift from God that makes man ‘like God’ (Irenaeus, quoted in ²⁷), a most extraordinary view in my mind. It seems counterintuitive and circuitous that an all-knowing God would allow into His creation such an unreliable and uncontrollable factor, only ‘so that he [man] might by his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him’²⁷.

In the perspective of the Universe of Being, one may find a much more plausible, rational origin for free will. This is the hallmark of a *new sort of subject*, a *person* - we noted -, in which the existence of a material body, including the brain, is supported by a uniquely self-conscious essence, a soul. This, or ‘the core of the “person” or the “self”’, is what anchors the continuity between all the stages of our life²⁸ in the process of growing to our fullness of Being. Such growth is achieved through the activation of the structures of the ‘moral brain’^{29,30} that underlie ‘the cognitive and emotional processes involved in moral decisions.’³¹ This is not a separate, complete anatomical site, but ‘comprises a large functional network that includes several brain structures’, many of which ‘overlap with other regions that control different behavioral processes.’³² When such structures are impaired due to a variety of factors (genetic, pre- and peri-natal influences, hormones and neuro-transmitters, trauma) interacting in the brain³³, moral Evil results³⁴, in the form of distorted moral emotions and judgements²⁹ or, if such are acted upon, of an evil action. One might reasonably conclude that, *by developing*

in the human being an organ that is open to such alternatives, it is evolution that has brought us free will (and moral Evil).

One may also conclude that it is *the variety* of internal factors involved in the moral life that leads to the ‘deviation’ in the soul that we call moral Evil, just as the countless external contingent factors acting on any one natural system in the cosmos lead to natural Evil; and that, in either case, *due to such inherent multiplicity of causes in play, Evil is inevitable.* It needs to be pointed out, however, that this conclusion, like the entire discussion that lead to it, refers to Evil as a general presence in natural and human life, not to that arising in the domain of contingent realities, which is at times preventable (section VI).

V PRIVATIO ENTIS AND STATES/EVENTS

I can now take my argument to its final point. Whether one looks at natural or moral Evil, the *end result* of any ‘deviation’ (from a ‘normal’ development) is *a failure to attain the full Being potentially achievable by substances (natural subjects and humans) in their growth* or, in other words, is a *privatio entis*.

It is clear that this argument, based on a view (the Universe of Being) that does not subscribe to a *personal* God, concurs with the classic response to evil proposed by Augustine and other theologians in their theodicies (and by many philosophers independently of any theodicy): ‘For evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name “evil”.’³⁵ In more details, in the form proposed by Maritain:³⁶ God is the origin of everything that is good/being and his ‘motion’ to activate all beings in the direction of their plenitude is the ‘rule’. Man, however, as endowed with free will, may choose not to follow the rule, so creating a *defectus* in Being.³⁷ This *defectus* will come into existence as evil in the external execution of man’s free decision, in the wrong action.³⁸ This view then ‘justifies’ God: He is completely innocent of evil, although He allows it. Moreover, if evil is a privation, not a separate reality, one may indeed believe that it can coexist with a good and omnipotent God.

There are glaring differences between the two scenarios considered above (the Universe of Being vs. a theodicy): absence vs. presence of a *personal* God, and inevitability of evil vs. God’s permission to evil.³⁹ But, in both, the key point at this juncture is that ‘evil’ means ‘the loss of good’/Being.

Such major statement, however, definitely requires clarification. In itself it sounds heartless and absurd in view of the undeniable reality of the manifestations of evil in front of us, a reality vigorously defended by many, among whom Sartre, Camus, Ricoeur and Heidegger.²¹ But it is in fact rationally sound if one is speaking strictly within the boundaries of substances, as we have done in the argument presented here. More specifically, the evil effects caused by an avalanche consist in the loss or diminution of the *existence* of the victims (and natural objects in the village struck) and, consequently, in a loss of their potential further growth in Being. Likewise, genetic disorders, cancers, mental or other diseases reflect an absence of normal biological functions that inhibits the physical or mental growth of an individual to his/her full *essence*. The moral Evil of a mass shooting, along with the effects on the victims, also involves the forsaking of potential Being in the soul of the perpetrator. Within these boundaries, the notion of evils as *privatio entis* (of substances) does not negate their existence, i.e., their manifesting or 'presencing' to humans, it only negates that they themselves are substances. Put more precisely, neither evil effects nor, by extension, the natural Evil (an avalanche, contingent biological 'errors' or agents leading to diseases) and moral Evil (a mass shooting) that produces them are a new independent 'something' of its own, so distinct and real that it has even been personified.⁴⁰

What could then be Evil's mode of Being, if not a substance? Within the variety of ontological categories considered in many systems⁴¹, most philosophers accept *substance*, *relations* and *properties*; others have also proposed *privatio* or *negatio*; and Chisholm, in particular, has upheld *state* and *event*.⁴² State is taken in his theory as an 'undefined' philosophical concept (as others are in 'any other philosophical theory')⁴³, but it is exemplified with 'you thinking', 'Jones walking', 'me being seated': each of these is 'a state of a substance'⁴⁴. 'Events are ... a subcategory of states'⁴⁵ and are characterized as follows: they *occur*⁴⁶ to substances⁴⁷; they endure as 'a *temporal* whole' and 'therefore, involve[s] *change*'⁴⁸; they '*contribute causally*' to other events and are '*causally determined*'⁴⁹.

These last categories seem to me those that best describe the different ontological modes in which evil afflicts the world and us. In regards to the 'something' that produces ill effects, one can now envision both natural Evil and

moral Evil (in the external wrong action) as *events*⁵⁰. With regard to the evil effects, such as, on one side, natural ‘woes’, and, on the other, the moral scars left in the wrongdoer (section III), all of them can be aptly construed as (defective) *states*.

VI PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In closing, I am left to consider how the two main conclusions offered above - the inevitability of Evil and evils as *privatio entis* – may help in approaching evil in human life (we may now conflate the two terms as we find them in ordinary language).

Once one accepts the former conclusion as well founded, *one is able to come to terms with evil, intellectually if not emotionally*. In the case of natural woes, it helps greatly to firmly believe that error is *integral to life* and that there is no single reason behind it that answers our ‘Why?’, no inexplicable permission from a divine Person for it to happen, no ‘sins of the ancestors’ and especially no malevolent entity ‘who prowl(s) about the world seeking the ruin of souls.’^{51,49} In the case of moral evil, the understanding that it is due to a *dysfunction* of the moral brain in the culprit (an ‘impaired’ mind) may help mitigate anger, hatred, desire for vengeance, and perhaps point to forgiveness.

Among others holding the view of evil as inevitable, Kekes in his *Facing Evil* advocates ‘a reflective temper’, which is mainly based on ‘*an enlarged understanding of the essential conditions of life*’.^{52,53} Goldberg instead rejects this ‘comprehending evil as a psychological coping mechanism for the individual,’ and ‘contend[s] that understanding evil’s inevitability is crucial for our moral interaction with other persons.’⁵⁴ Denying it ‘... clearly leads to an inability to respond to others in the face of evil and tragedy. The proper response to the inevitability of evil and moral tragedy is ... *inquiry into their nature*’⁵⁵ (emphasis added).

It is important to stress here that *stoically accepting evil is not the same as surrendering to it*. While acceptance is a sound conclusion in a ‘universal’ view of the inevitability of evil (section IV), when it comes to contingent, particular situations, some evils *can be* prevented. So can global warming and its catastrophic effects; droughts and famines; and epidemics. So can moral evils arising from poverty, addictions, violence, war and other society ills. And, as importantly, these *need to*

be prevented proactively, a goal in the sight of innumerable local, national and world organizations and the subject of a vast literature.

The second conclusion, that evil is a *privatio entis* in the growth of the Universe of Being, has compelling ramifications that spring from an essential idea mentioned in section II: *Being has no end*, as its end would mean non-being. The Being in everything and everyone whose existence has been impeded by evil is not erased, but remains part of the Universe of Being.

Such an understanding - applied to *the past* - would provide *at least two consolations* that I can conceive, *when facing the loss of a beloved one* or another human being. Not only would one remember and cherish the Being that the departed have contributed to us and others (it may be said in some cases that he/she has changed our lives), but one rests confident in the conviction that, even if their existence has ceased, their essence persists.⁵⁶ So, to death one can respond in truth: they are not gone from us.⁵⁷

Furthermore, envisioning the evil that surrounds us as a temporary setback in a growth that continues despite it may give us *a more balanced view of the present*. Qohelet, who is fully aware of the cruelties and injustices of life,⁵⁸ still sees a silver lining that is worth considering: 'Look, I have seen what is good: it is fit to eat and to drink and enjoy good things in all his toil that he toils under the sun in the number of the days of his life that God gave him, for that is his share.'⁵⁹ It is a fact that these good things exist. Actually, on average, i.e., if we do not unfairly discount vast parts of its manifestations in the world,⁶⁰ Being seems to prevail: we expect, and it happens without us paying any attention, that gravity holds, the sun raises and sets, trees keep growing upwards, rivers flow to lakes and oceans, rains feed the crops, and most people live good and productive lives. One would think that an *acknowledgment of, and gratitude for, these otherwise ignored things* could help put in perspective and make more bearable, at least partially, our encounters with evil.

Looking *forward*, the notion of the inherently eternal expansion of the Universe of Being brings with it *the certainty of a positive future for the entire cosmos*. [I am talking here of the future that concerns us, the 'historical' one of thousand years, not of the remote 'cosmic' future of billion years]. By choosing to believe in such endless advance, one puts his/her trust in the invincibility of this

Universe: it does have the power to ultimately redress any disorder and so, as it were, will always, sooner or later, have the upper hand. This idea, in fact, concurs with that of scientists who claim that chaos spontaneously produces order, a concept referred to as ‘Sync’ [synchronization]⁶¹. By this it is meant the tendency of systems to synchronize themselves with time, as evidenced in situations as diverse as the orbital movements of planets, the rhythms of heart beating, or the simultaneous flashing of thousand fireflies. ‘In every case, these feats of synchrony occur spontaneously, *almost as if nature has an eerie yearning for order*⁶² (emphasis added).

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Glauco Frizzera, ‘Man and Being: A Platform for “Spiritual but not Religious” People’, *The Philosopher*, vol. 105, no. 2, 2017, pp. 23-27.
- ² Glauco Frizzera, ‘“The Universe of Being”: Some Implications of an Idea’, *Journal for the Study of Spirituality*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2018, pp. 173-179.
- ³ Howard Robinson, ‘Substance’, in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition).
- ⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, New York, Vintage Books, 1966a, p. 62.
- ⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2.
- ⁶ Nicholas F. Stang, ‘Kant's Transcendental Idealism’, in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition).
- ⁷ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York, First Vintage Books/The Library of America Edition, 1990, p. 454.
- ⁸ At the same time, the biological and psychological effects of these experiences are proof of the reality of this outside world (*Ibid*, p. 461).
- ⁹ *Ibid*, p. 462.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 416-417.
- ¹¹ Jacques Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being*, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1958, p. 44.
- ¹² Martin Bojowald, ‘What happened before the Big Bang?’, *Nature Physics*, vol. 3, no. 8, 2007, pp. 523-525.
- ¹³ Such are the expansion rate; the magnitude of strong nuclear forces to form elements (H, He, C, O); the particle/antiparticle ratio; as well as other ‘unexplained remarkable coincidences’. See Ian G Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*, New York, HarperOne, 1990, pp. 204-205; and Hans Küng, *The Beginning of All Things: Science and Religion*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 2007, pp. 60-61.
- ¹⁴ Barbour, *Religion and Science*, p. 204.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 310.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 210.

¹⁷ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, p. 93.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 67.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 68.

²⁰ Quite à propos here is Heidegger's statement that 'it is *human beings alone* who are able to encounter the question of what it means to be' [Michael Wheeler, 'Martin Heidegger', in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition)].

²¹ Richard M. Capobianco, 'Heidegger and the Critique of the Understanding of Evil as Privatio Boni', *Philosophy and Theology*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1991, pp. 175-186.

²² E.g., in a *closed* system, the change in its internal energy (ΔU), the work done in it (W) and the heat added to it (Q) are *consistently and predictably* connected as in the first law of thermodynamics: $\Delta U = Q - W$.

²³ Cristian Tomasetti, Li, L, and Vogelstein, B, 'Stem Cell Divisions, Somatic Mutations, Cancer Etiology, and Cancer Prevention', *Science*, vol. 355, no. 6331, 2017, pp. 1330-1334.

²⁴ Gottfried W. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, Whithorn, UK, Anodos Books, 2017, pp. 95-96.

²⁵ Frederick R. Tennant, *Philosophical theology*, vol. 2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 204.

²⁶ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The heart of matter*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980, p. 144.

²⁷ Anonymous, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., Washington, DC, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2016, p. 430.

²⁸ John Polkinghorne, 'Eschatological Credibility: Emergent and Teleological Processes', in T. Peters, R.J. Russell, and M. Welker (eds.), *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans, 2002, p. 51.

²⁹ Jorge Moll, Zahn, R, de Oliveira, R, Krueger, F, and Grafman, J, 'The Neural Basis of Human Moral Cognition', *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, vol. 6, no. 10, 2005, pp. 799-809.

³⁰ Leo Pascual, Rodrigues, P, and Gallardo-Pujol, D, 'How Does Morality Work in the Brain? A Functional and Structural Perspective of Moral Behavior', *Frontiers in Integrative Neuroscience*, vol. 7, article 65, 2013, pp. 1-8.

³¹ Manuela Fumagalli, and Priori, Alberto, 'Functional and Clinical Neuroanatomy of Morality', *Brain*, vol. 135, no. 7, 2012, pp. 2006-2021.

³² They are found in the frontal lobe, the parietal lobe, the temporal lobe and insula and the subcortical structures³⁰.

³³ Andrea L Glenn, and Raine, Adrian, 'Neurocriminology: Implications for the Punishment, Prediction and Prevention of Criminal Behavior', *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2014, pp. 54-63.

³⁴ I find intriguing that these recent biological notions seem to concur with the brilliant intuition of Jewish wisdom, that "in every human being there are two urges – one to evil [Jetzer Hara] and the other to goodness [Jetzer Tob]" (Abraham Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud: The Major Teachings of the Rabbinic Sages*, New York, Schocken Books, 1975, p. 88).

³⁵ Augustine, *The City of God* (Translated with an Introduction by Marcus Dods), Overland Park, KS, Digireads.com Publishing, 2017, p. 303.

³⁶ Jacques Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, Milwaukee, Bruce Publishing Company, 1966b, pp. 3-12 and 34-38.

³⁷ One sees here the equivalency posited by Thomistic thought: '*ens et bonum convertuntur*' (being and good are interchangeable) (Ibid, p. 9).

³⁸ Ibid, p. 35.

³⁹ The view of the Fall as a wound in a good creation (Anonymous, Catechism, p. 98) that God could, but did not want to stop (Ibid, p. 82).

⁴⁰ Seventy per cent of Catholics and 79% of Protestants in a 2003 Gallup poll believe in the devil (Jennifer Robison, 'The Devil and the Demographic Details', *Gallup News*, February 25, 2003). Not only regular believers, but Popes too. As a former Catholic, I cannot reconcile myself with pieces of news such as John Paul II's recommendation that all faithful recite daily the so-called Prayer to St. Michael, which starts as follows: 'St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil' (Anonymous, 'Did you Know Pope John Paul II Asked Us to Return to the Prayer to Saint Michael?', *Aleteia*, January 30, 2017a); or Pope Francis' suggestion to refer special sinners to an exorcist (Anonymous, 'Call the Exorcist: Pope Tells Priests to Consult Experts in Casting out Demon', *The Guardian*, March 17, 2017b), and his plan to hold a Conference on exorcism (Anugrah Kumar, 'Pope Francis to Hold Conference on Exorcism Amid Demand, Fears of Satanism Grows', *The Christian Post*, February 25, 2018). This personification of evil, 'primarily a Pauline creation' (James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1997, 111-112; see also Ed P. Sanders, *Paul: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 42-43), has become the norm in Christianity, but still is one notion which I have always found profoundly discordant with the idea of one, omnipotent God.

⁴¹ Amie Thomasson, 'Categories', in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition).

⁴² Roderick M Chisholm, *A Realistic Theory of Categories: An Essay on Ontology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 71-84.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 76-77.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 72.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 81.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 71 and p. 75.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 75.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 82.

⁵⁰ While the Evil of distorted moral emotions and judgements (such as greed, dishonesty, hatred and other moral ills) that precede the wrong action embodies a mental *state*.

⁵¹ Anonymous, 'Did You Know', 2017a⁴⁰.

⁵² John Kekes, *Facing Evil*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 221.

⁵³ Helpfully, later, Kekes also provides specific suggestions on how to change those (internal and external) conditions for evil (John Kekes, *The Roots of evil*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2005, Ch. 15).

⁵⁴ Zachary J. Goldberg, 'The Inevitability of Evil and Moral Tragedy', in C. V. Zanini and L. Bhuiyan (eds.), *This Thing of Darkness: Shedding Light on Evil*, Oxford, InterDisciplinary Press, 2016, p. 54.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵⁶ While working of this text I chanced upon a very moving tribute of a young man to his 19-year-old brother who committed suicide. I want to quote it here in its entirety, as it appears to perfectly illustrate both consolations.

Loren forever 1999-2018 In life, there are many times when words fail... In this case, this is the ultimate understatement. Nothing we can write will ever be able to come close to describing this incredible being and the massive void left by his absence... Loren was an artist, an athlete, a deep thinking Philosopher... He was a grand chef, a comedian and an ego-less, generous soul who thought only of others' happiness and well being... He was an inspiration... Loren was an Angel that walked among us on Earth. He was beautiful and pure and good... He was a light that shined brightly, illuminating the hearts and minds of all he knew and loved. We are so blessed to have had the opportunity to share the all too brief time we had with this magnificent being... Our Angel had to return home far too soon... Loren... We Miss You. We Love You... We Will Never, Ever Forget You... You Will Be With Us Every Minute of Every Day Until We Meet Again... Rest In Peace... Our Son... Our Brother... Our Friend... Our Angel... You are Forever.'

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1881892611891376&type=3>

⁵⁷ These reasons are quite different from those that lead Paul to write "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor 15:55 – NRSV), and are given next: 'The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor 15:56-57 – NRSV).

⁵⁸ Eccl 4.1 - Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2010, p. 358.

⁵⁹ Eccl 5:17 - *Ibid.*, p. 364.

⁶⁰ This is what Kekes, for instance, seems to do when he writes that 'evil is not deviation from a morally good supernatural order because *there is no good reason to believe that there is such an order*' (Kekes, *The Roots of Evil*, p. 242) (emphasis added).

⁶¹ Steven H. Strogatz, *Sync: The emerging science of spontaneous order*, New York, Hyperion, 2003.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

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