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On the concept of evil: An analysis of genocide and state sovereignty

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On the Concept of Evil: An Analysis of Genocide and State Sovereignty

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The history of ideas and contemporary genocide studies conjointly suggests a meaningful secular conception of evil. I will show how the history of ideas supplies us with a cumulative pattern, or an eventual gestalt, of the sought-for conception of universal secular evil. This gestalt is a result of my examination of the history of ideas. The historical analysis of evil firmly grounds my research in the tradition of philosophical inquiry, where I shift the focus from the problem of evil, which is indebted to theological discourse, to an analysis of the concept of evil. Next, I show how this gestalt applies to genocide studies. Specifically, I show how a secular concept of evil meaningfully functions in this research program. The examination of genocide studies serves as a test-bed for the fruit of my historical examination. There, I show, first, in what way a secular notion of evil is irreducible, or elementary; second, how the concept used in genocide studies compares to the cumulative historical pattern; and third, in what way genocide studies have progressively enriched the pattern. Armed with these results, I then engage with the contemporary literature that criticizes the possibility of a meaningful concept of evil, and attempts to reduce this notion of secular evil to relativistic particulars. Here, I describe relevant arguments and objections. It is interesting to explore whether, and if so, how, some aspects of the objections may lend themselves to an actual

refinement of the concept of evil. Finally, then, I present a summary account of evil on the basis of my findings.

Introduction

The primary focus of my dissertation is simply to define and describe the existence of evil. Questions such as, “what is evil?” “How can it be identified?” “How can we understand it?” are the governing questions guiding my analysis. For over a millennium the analysis and investigation of evil has remained firmly within the domain of theological discourse and discourses in theodicy, which is properly classified as the problem of evil. In traditional accounts, evil has been described as either moral evil or natural evil. Moral evil results from human agency and our ability to freely act within the world, which is simply represented by the violence and murders that plague our existence, whereas natural evil results from catastrophic acts of nature.

In discussing moral evil, then, the traditional approach, which has remained nearly unchallenged for over 2000 years, is to account for evil in terms of a theodicy, that is, a description of evil as the problem of evil, wherein the existence of evil undermines the characteristics of God. Thus, the problem of evil specifically pertains to the complications that arise for the theist once both the existence of evil and the existence of God are simultaneously affirmed. If God is understood to be all knowing, all powerful and all loving, then at least one of these characteristics must be false if one is also to account for the existence of evil. For if God were all knowing, he would know of the existence of evil, and if he were all powerful he would have the ability to prevent its occurrence. Finally, then, if he were all loving, his love would motivate him to act on our

behalf. Thus, the solutions to the problem of evil are attempts to preserve the existence of God and also account for the existence of evil. Throughout the centuries, many have tackled the problem of evil, using various methods to reconcile this difficulty. Due to the brevity of these introductory remarks, I will only discuss the most salient historical arguments concerning the problem of evil and identify the contributions these philosophers have made to my contemporary philosophical understanding of the concept of evil.

For example, St. Anselm realized that all too often those who discuss and analyze the problem of evil are equivocating in their use of the term. Anselm's account of the distinction between 'evil as nothing' and 'evil as something' is an important contribution to a philosophical investigation of evil. We cannot use the term 'evil' to mean *both* that which is not-good, in the sense of privation, *and* that which results from one's voluntary actions *to do* evil. We are certainly justified in asking, "In what sense is the term 'evil' being used." In formulating an argument, we can use the former or the latter but not both. Thus, St. Anselm contributed to the discussion of evil by insisting that our use of the term remain consistent throughout our argument.

In my present description of the philosophy of evil, I have incorporated this and other historical conceptions but I have tried to move beyond the description of evil in terms of the problem of evil, which has traditionally been couched in theological terms. I have also tried to account for the causes and ultimately the concept of evil. These distinctions among the problem, the causes, and concept of evil, serve as the foundation for my analysis.

My intention to move beyond the notion of describing evil in theological terms is indebted to Professor Schonfeld's readings of Immanuel Kant's distinctions between entropy and order, of Chinese philosophy, particularly the works of Mencius, and Professor Guignon's account of authenticity and the need, in the process of socialization, to disentangle our propensities to do evil from our capacities to live virtuously. It was in reading their accounts that I recognized the possibility that one could articulate the existence of evil in purely secular terms. Schonfeld's expertise in Kant's early works and Chinese philosophy would offer me the conceptual framework with which I could begin a cosmological articulation of this tension. The battle between good and evil harkens to the primordial forces of nature, between order and disorder, diversity and uniformity. It begins to situate the discussion of evil in naturalistic rather than spiritualistic terms. It is the start and the point of departure from theological discourse to secular understandings of the existence of evil.

Within the works of Mencius the interchange between Mencius and King Hwuy of Leang, serves to demonstrate the correlative forces of greed and the responsibility of governance, which the King has long since forsaken. The king's obligation arises as a direct consequence of the function of his role as king. The word 'king' carries a very specific meaning, which obligates him to fulfill his duties, as directed by meaning; otherwise, he fails to fulfill his duties as king, by failing to uphold the functions of a king.

In attempting to discuss the process of our socialization it is of the utmost importance that we recognize that we are already thrown into a world of sociopolitical interactions, though evil clearly affects our embodiment, the attempt to articulate the problem of evil moves beyond the body. It need not, however, move beyond this world. It is within this

world that evil exists. It moves beyond our embodiment and infects our social relations. One of the fundamental purposes of the political is to contain and control the spread of evil within society. Even then it cannot be contained; evil moves beyond the social to infect the political, wherein it manifests in its greatest instantiation, namely, in the act of genocide, from the body, through the social, into the political, evil manifest in its most heinous form in the act of genocide.

I would not have been able to propose a definition of evil, one of the primary aims of this dissertation, without the contributions of Professor Edward Kissi's comparative analysis of the Cambodian and Ethiopian genocides. His work challenged a decade long misconception and forged the path for my interdisciplinary account of evil and genocide. Briefly, Kissi's analysis demonstrates *how* genocide occurs and the similarities between the practices of the Khmer Rouge and the Mengistu regime. His description of the relationship between the state and the population was the point at which I recognized exactly what philosophy could contribute to genocide scholarship.

My investigation into the nature of genocide and evil, then, begins where Kissi's analysis ended, with an explicit formulation of the necessary conditions for converting a civilian into an enemy of the state, i.e., explaining *how* political power and a state endorsed ideology of exclusion are used to justify genocidal intentions. I then demonstrate how state intentionality can be assessed through the analysis of codified law and a politics of discrimination. My investigation draws from an interdisciplinary discourse on genocide, combining key conceptions of selectivity and jurisdiction with philosophical notions of power and ethical prescriptions on fairness. As I argue, this ability to convert members of the population into enemies of the state initiates the process

of extermination and, moreover, serves as the foundation for the possibility of discussing evil.

In describing how this process of genocide unfolds, I account for three phases of exclusion, which I have crafted as conceptual tools to articulate precisely how the state justifies genocidal acts. The description of these phases is a pedagogical tool to facilitate in describing how enemies of the state are created. The phases are the selective phase, where dissenters are identified, the transformative phase, where these dissenters are transformed into enemies of the state and finally the purgative phase, where they are purged by exile or extermination from the state demography.

Thus, my definition of evil is informed by the history of philosophy and genocide scholarship. My definition of evil is a practical account of evil, and my subsequent descriptions of assessing state intentionality in endorsing genocide, has direct legal implications. Thus I propose the following definition of evil:

Evil, within the discourse of state sovereignty, is *the intentional reduction of domestic diversity within state demography, by the formulation and pursuit of an exclusionary ideology for the purpose of enforcing a homogeneous society.*

I then undertake a description of the notion of state purity, which I argue, is a direct result of subscribing to an exclusionary ideology. If a state's demography is naturally heterogeneous and the state assumes an ideology of exclusion to enforce or create a homogeneous state, then such actions are counter to the natural occurrences within the state and thereby unnatural. Furthermore, the attempt to purify the state presupposes that there exists an imperfection within the natural occurrences of diversity in state demography. It assumes that the natural occurrence of a diverse state demography is

contaminated by the incorporation of groups that the state seeks to expel. Thus, to decontaminate or purify the state, those in power must endorse an exclusionary ideology and seek to expel targeted groups from the state demography. The expulsion of these targeted groups from state demography is the act of purification. In using the term purification, I refer to the act of expelling targeted groups from the state demography once it has assumed an exclusionary ideology. I then offer a description of the Fascist and totalitarian state to demonstrate how this process is enacted.

The Fascist state seeks to subordinate the individual to the will of the state, ruled by a single party, and is thereby driven by the “movement” of supporters of the political party. The idea that the party is a movement of the people is merely a muse to attain political power; it is the framework with which the leaders of the party articulate their intentions to the masses. The masses support the movement because the movement is allegedly a representation of the will of the masses, which in the case of Fascism is clearly false. The Fascist state is solely concerned with total domination. It functions to ensure that its sole party occupies every facet of political power and challengers to that power threaten the existence of the Fascist state. Thus, totalitarianism is a natural consequence of a Fascist state because the drive for omnipresence is reinforced by the will to omnipotence. The desire to represent the party in every position of political power (omnipresence) is reinforced by the totalization of that power (the omnipotence of the state).

Despite my many examples, there are those, however, that will invariably deny the existence of evil. The majority of the second half of the dissertation, at the suggestion of Professor Steven Turner, focuses on defending the existence of evil from those that would deny its existence. I offer a historical account of various philosophical attempts to

deny the existence of evil, and demonstrate the errors in reasoning for each account. For example, historically, the debate between the traditionalist and non-traditionalist theologians over the existence of God and the problem of evil has taken many forms, nontraditionalist invariably articulating the imperfection of God, which accounts for the existence of evil, and traditionalists denying the existence of evil, which preserves the characteristics of God. The nontraditionalist stance, however, has the typical consequence of also resulting in the denial of God, while the traditionalist stance has the peculiar consequence of denying the existence of evil. For the traditionalist, then, the denial of evil is logically necessary to preserve the characteristics of God. The argument becomes dogmatic, because no attempt to challenge the characteristics of God can be entertained because to do so would undermine one of the three characteristics mentioned earlier. Thus, the traditionalist denial of evil is necessitated by the refusal to question God's characteristics more so than it is a critique of the ontological existence of evil, as one could still on theological grounds account for the existence of evil as a consequence of personal autonomy, while preserving the characteristics of God. This is but one of many attempts at denial that I account for and defend against throughout the second half of the dissertation.

Chapter 1: Conceptions of Evil in the History of Ideas

1.1. *The Historical Approach to Evil*

I intend to outline various arguments surrounding both the problem and the concept of evil. The problem of evil, as will be discussed, is specifically a problem for the theist. Accounting for the existence of God and explaining the existence of evil has presented unique challenges for monotheistic philosophers throughout the history of ideas. The concept of evil more fully speaks to the nature of evil and the relation of its existence to the moral implications posed to humanity.

Throughout this chapter I will address the role of humanity. Without acknowledging our shared humanity no analysis of evil can be complete. Evil affects human beings and as such, it is specifically a problem because of our sentience and our rational constitution.

Understanding how evil manifests and shapes the nature of human existence has been the goal of philosophers in East and West. It has served as the conceptual foundation on the basis of which scholars have theorized on the formation of the state. It is operative in all accounts of social contract theory. In short, evil is a plague to every facet of humanity. Understand the relationship between evil and human agency, or between evil and our propensity toward the good requires that we firmly situate the discussion of evil within the history of idea; this chapter, then, serve precisely that purpose.

1.2. *Confucian Conceptions of Evil: 551-301 BCE*

Our journey through the history of philosophy and our analysis of the concept of evil begins in ancient China where I will focus on four great thinkers, viz., Confucius, Mencius, Laozi and Zhuangzi. The investigation will span more than 250 years, from 551 BCE to 301 BCE, covering both Confucian and Daoist traditions, and concluding with an account of Zhuangzi's mysticism. While the investigation is not an account of Confucian and Daoist philosophies, I will, throughout, refer to the system of beliefs that support Confucian and Daoist texts, further aligning my interpretations into a specific discussion on the concept of evil.

Confucian philosophy is a moral philosophy in which the distinction between good and evil manifests itself in relation to the moral agent's obligation to live virtuously. The good is always moral and the moral is always virtuous. Thus, the actions of those that live virtuously are good and the actions of those that fail to live virtuously are evil. This conception of virtue is embodied by the gentleman, *jùnzi*, who represents a life lived within the mean, governed neither by excess nor deficiency. In contrast, however, the small man, *shǎo rén*, is represented by the individual led by his desires. His desires for wealth, for social status, and for recognition, have corrupted his sensibilities, making the virtuous life impossible for the small man.

In Confucian thought, the small man is a representation of evil because of his ignorance and small-mindedness, and ultimately his refusal to live virtuously. The gentleman, however, is a friendly man. He identifies himself with humanity and understands his role in society. His modesty enables him to live virtuously and thus his

actions are good. The actions of the small man are antithetical to the good. He is led by desire not reason. He is prideful instead of being modest. The most damaging of his traits, however, is his inability to recognize the humanity of the other person. His small-mindedness and self-centeredness contaminate his ability to empathize with the plight of the other. Where they are famished, he is filled. Where they are wanting, he has excess. The moral of Confucianism is to live by virtue and not by vice because even the king, if not led by virtue, can act like the small man. When he does, however, his kingdom fails. Where his actions are governed by virtue, his kingdom flourishes.

At the heart of Confucianism are the so called four books, which are: the *Analects*, *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Works of Mencius*. Briefly, Confucianism emerges from the philosophies of Confucius and Mencius, though Confucius predated Mencius by nearly one hundred years. Confucius and Mencius's philosophy, as represented through these four texts, are the grounding for Confucianism, which more accurately stated is a moral philosophy. Within these four texts, then, it is possible to distill a conception of evil since Confucianism is primarily an applied moral philosophy, wherein the moral agent is taught how things are and how they should be.

In formulating my account of evil, I will offer an interpretation of these four books by analyzing the key conceptions presented within the text. I will proceed from the *Analects* to the *Works of Mencius*, which is not, however, to suggest that my account will be exhaustive. Rather, I will present my findings on the basis of their explanatory importance in an attempt to understand the concept of evil. My discussions of these texts

are surveys into the concept of evil more so than methodological investigations into the nature of Chinese thought.

Within the *Analects* a number of students discuss the nature of virtue with their master, and as the dialogue unfolds, the master makes reference to both government and the nature of goodness, insights that will factor into our discussion later. In James Legge's translation of the text, the master explains the nature of the good, saying,

If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishment, they will try to avoid *the punishment*, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good.¹

The emphasis of this initial quote arises from a keen sense of duty that the moral agent has to that which is virtuous. In fact, Kant's account of the Categorical Imperative harkens to this conception of a rigorous deontological ethic. If one merely follows the law to avoid punishment, as noted by Confucius, then though his actions may be lawful, they will not be moral, i.e., the moral agent will have no sense of shame, according to this Confucian ethic. If, however, the moral agent acts in accordance with both the law and a profound sense of his obligation to that which is virtuous, then his path will follow the path of the good, and he will understand the nature of morality. Thus, morality arises from one's obligation to living a virtuous life, rather than trying to avoid punishment. It

¹ Confucius, Mencius. trans. James Legge. 1900. *The four books: Confucian analects, the great learning, the doctrine of the mean, and the works of Mencius, with English translation and notes*. Shanghai, China: Commercial Press. (*Analects* Book II, Chap. III, 1-2).

is the moral agent's respect for the *moral* law, the obedience to virtue, and not fear of the legal rules that determines morality.²

Within the *Analects*, then, Confucius warns of such temptations toward wickedness and the pitfalls of corruption.³ The Confucian gentleman, *jùnzi*, is a representation of a virtuous life, and the small man, *shǎo rén*, represents a corrupted lifestyle. From the differences in how these men choose to live their lives, emerges a greater conception of morality.

The gentleman is always concerned with mankind. He has situated his actions within the context of a greater social setting. He is aware of the plight of others. His is a life of reflection and contemplation, whereas, the small man is concerned with himself. The one is concerned with humanity, the other motivated by selfishness. These simple distinctions will invariably corrupt the small man and lead him toward evil, whereas the gentleman will always be a force for goodness.

According to the master, the fundamental difference between the gentleman and the small man arises from a difference in thinking and acting. The master says, “The mind of the gentleman is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain”⁴ This distinction can be understood in terms of altruism and greed, giving and taking. There is a balance that must be maintained between these two forces and understanding one's relations to these forces allows the moral agent to empathize with another's lack or loss. The gentleman is capable of giving to those in need, of sharing, of

² Ibid., (Book II, Chap. IV, 5).

³ Legge, 1900, (Book IV, Chap. IV).

⁴ Ibid., (Book IV, Chap. XVI)

understanding his role in the community. The small man, however, is concerned and motivated by his unending desire for more. He is consumed with and by possessions. His desire for gain supersedes his desire to act righteously. Thus, the small man will forever act immorally, as his motivation is one of selfishness. In a Hobbesian sense, the small man is motivated by his psychological egoism, as he is fueled by his desire for that which he does not possess.

If the consumerist desire for possessions, however, is coupled with anxiety and fear, the conditions for immorality are sure to be met. In an insightful passage, Confucius notes, “The gentleman has neither anxiety nor fear...what is there to be anxious about, what is there to fear?”⁵ The fear of loss, especially for the small man, who, as we have seen, is obsessed with his attachments, combined with the ensuing anxiety, which often dominates his thoughts, can and often does lead to the most deplorable acts of immorality, in an attempt to preserve one’s possessions or defend one’s self from an unknown threat. These angst-ridden obsessions often lead to the most heinous forms of brutality by defy the natural course of events, including death and loss.

The source of angst is a cause for the manifestation of evil within the world. It is because of this cause, i.e., one’s angst-ridden obsessions, that the small man remains so transfixed on trivialities. As a cause for the manifestation of evil within the world, anxiety serves to remove the small man from the calm demeanor of the gentleman. The *Analects*, then, is a lesson in patience, a lesson in the virtuous way of the gentleman, which is antithetical to the ways of the small man. His ways are governed by selfishness

⁵ Ibid., (Book XII, Chap. IV, 1, 3)

and greed. His motives are grounded in response to the fear and anxiety of an impending unknown. One, then, must live like the gentleman rather than the small man.

The contrast of small man and gentleman is actually a continuum, with the small man and gentleman being opposite extremes. The continuum between these men is comprised of the necessary learning, education and growth needed to transition from a small man to a gentleman. The small man – the ‘evil man’ – requires cultivation to transition and evolve into the gentleman – the ‘good man’. Thus, as the small man transitions into the gentleman along this continuum, that which is good points to an evolutionary progression toward learning, education and growth, and that which is evil points to ignorance, misology and destruction.

In *The Great Learning* there is an evolutionary progression toward the good. This progression begins with self-knowledge. It is written that,

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were the rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.⁶

From self knowledge the moral agent is able to progress to tranquility and happiness. The cultivation of this knowledge allows the individual to progress away from those forces that would seek to undermine these ends. Within the fourth chapter of this analysis I will return to the conception of the progression of knowledge from the individual to the state and synthesize how evil unravels this evolutionary progression toward the good.

⁶ Ibid., (Book I, V).

The very basis of this evolutionary progression toward the good is itself contingent on the cultivation of the self and the social and communal networks that support this progression. Where one's actions are governed by and concerned with the relationship of the individual with the surrounding world, the individual's knowledge will be rooted in the experience of his kinsmen, his country men, and the world itself, this being the greatest realization of his self understanding.

In *Doctrine of the Mean*, Confucius explains the proper mode of being in the world, through his descriptions of the way and the path one must take to living virtuously. He notes, "The gentleman cultivates a friendly harmony—without being weak," (Chap. 10, 5). The misconception, even within a contemporary context, is that friendliness and amiability are signs of weakness, whereas aggression and haughtiness are signs of power. The gentleman, however, understands the falsity in this claim. There is power in friendship and amiability, which increases one's worldview and is itself buttressed on conceptions of diversity and inclusiveness. Inclusiveness and diversity are antithetical to the concept of evil, which unfolds as an exclusionary and monolithic ideology of hatred.

The conception of friendly harmony is the point to the discussion in the *Doctrine of the Mean*. To be good, i.e., to evolve, means to attain a friendly harmony with one's surroundings. Surroundings refer both to culture and nature—it refers to the social community as well as the cosmic environment. It is the awareness that we are intimately connected to the world and insofar as we exist within the world we all share a common dependence. Thus, attuning one's self to the plight of others and understanding the shared

nature of our experiences, requires that one recognize the friendly harmony of one to all. Without this realization, the good is unattainable.

The notion of a friendly harmony relates to the importance places on human interaction and inevitably humanity. Humans are social beings and ascribing to a conception of friendly harmony supports and furthers the existence of all humans. It specifically situates concerns for one's surroundings and one's countrymen as directly influencing one's progression toward the good.

Incorporated within Confucian ethic, Mencius applies the tenets of living virtuously to the political realm. His contribution to Confucianism relates to his ability to demonstrate the application of Confucian thought to both the political and social, both the king and his subjects. Mencius understands that Confucianism is an applied moral philosophy, one that is accomplished in the everyday practices of its people and the obligation to live virtuously is an obligation that even the king cannot escape. Thus, in attempting to understand the influence of Confucian thought, one must first recognize that Mencius is applying the very same tenets of morality that govern the everyday practices of the individual to the political.

Mencius even illustrates the small-mindedness of King Hwuy of Leang, which only serves as a reminder that even he can be corrupted by evil. The actions of both the king and his subject must be virtuous. Both he and his subjects must accept the responsibility to live virtuously and in so doing Mencius argues that the kingdom will flourish. Thus, since virtue is a means to goodness and living virtuously results in flourishing, then the good too results in flourishing.

Mencius skillfully contrasts this conception against the small-mindedness of King Hwuy of Leang who has allowed his greed and desires to govern his actions. As noted earlier, these traits are excess and deficiencies from the mean and as such the king too represent how evil can pollute the political. As a result of his failures as king, his people starve and death plagues his kingdom. The atrocity of this destruction is a direct result of his action. Thus, where the good leads to flourishing evil leads to death and decay.

In the *Works of Mencius* the account is wholly more political in tone, though the political nature of the discourse is firmly influenced by a Confucian mode of interpretation. What was true for the gentleman is also true for moral agents, but more importantly, within the *Works of Mencius*, it is also true for government. Mencius, with great care, draws light to the disparities between the corruption of government and the impoverishment of its subjects. The greed for power and control of the government, mimic the corruption and immodesty of the small man. He notes,

King Hwuy of Leang said, "I wish quietly to receive your instructions." Mencius replied, "Is there any difference between killing a man with a stick and with a sword?" The king said, "There is no difference." "Is there any difference in doing it with a sword and with the style of government?" "There is no difference," was the reply. Mencius then said, "In your kitchen there is fat meat; in your stables there are fat horses. *But* your people have the look of hunger, and on the wilds there are those who have died of famine. This is leading on beasts to devour men."⁷

The oppositions between the "look of hunger" and "fat horses," between "those who have died of famine" and "fat meat" is a stark distinction, one not to be overlooked. Evil

⁷ Legge, 1900, (*Mencius*, Book I, Chap. IV, 1-4).

here has the face of destitution or deprivation; good has the face of prosperity or flourishing. As properties of actions, good is any action that furthers general flourishing; evil is any action that promotes destitution. King Hwuy of Leang is evil because he's been led by his desires instead of by his obligation, and in doing so, he fails to live up to the friendly harmony and thus fails to contribute to the civil evolution.

What is important in my interpretation of Confucianism is intimately related to the conception of the small man and the gentleman. To understand how these men function in the world, how their minds think respectively, is to understand how one sets about living a virtuous life. The prescriptions in the *Analects* are primarily for the particular moral agent, whereas the prescriptions in the *Works of Mencius* are primarily political in nature. What is important to my analysis of the concept of evil, then, is this movement from an individual obligation to uphold the moral law to an understanding of shame and virtue, and the political obligation to the same. Though the small man corrupts himself, the King, as just noted, destroys his kingdom. It is this insight that will guide us through the remainder of the analysis into the concept of evil.

The antithesis between good and evil is represented in the distinction between flourishing and decay. The king that embraces humanity and seeks to better the lives of his people creates the condition for flourishing, which inevitably leads to happiness and the good. The king that seeks his own ends, like the small man, will eventually destroy his kingdom. There is, then, a necessary relationship between the notion of goodness that yields flourishing and evil that leads to decay.

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, an understanding of the good facilitates an understanding of that which is evil. In the *Works of Mencius*, this relation between good and evil are defined within the context of one's relation to the state. Mencius writes,

Never has he who would by his excellence subdue men been able to subdue them. Let a prince seek by his excellence to nourish men, and he will be able to subdue the whole empire. It is impossible that one should become ruler of the empire to whom it has not yielded the subjection of the heart.⁸

In the *Work of Mencius* there is a stark contrast between the leader of the state (the prince) and his subjects. For Mencius, the people are only subjugated to the prince, insofar as he has won their heart, which is to say, he has gained the affection of the people. Mencius garners power through an appreciation of personal autonomy, which the state seeks to acknowledge. Mencius describes the good statesman as concerned with the wellbeing of his subjects.

Returning, then, to the doctrine of the rectification of names, (*zhèng míng*), it should be apparent now why King Hwuy failed as a leader. He failed to serve the needs of his people and chose instead to satisfy his own desires. His use of power can oppress or liberate his people. Where his power is used for oppression, his kingdom will fail. Where his power is used for the betterment of his people, his kingdom will succeed. Maintaining a keen sense of friendly harmony provides the king as well as any citizen with the necessary cognitive tools required to live harmoniously with others and with one's environment.

⁸ Legge, 1900, (Book IV, XVI)

1.3. *Daoist Conceptions of Evil*

Like Confucianism, Daoism involves a moral philosophy, but the emphasis is placed on the way one lives. For Laozi, the Dao is represented in the natural flow of life, in the increasing complexity of life and one's progression from birth to death. This flow is a harmonious principle. It is a way of existence, i.e., a way in which the moral agent can live within the world. Thus, the ideas of good and evil relate to this mode of being in the world. Those actions that conform to the Dao are good. Those actions that do not conform to the Dao are evil.

The good is aligned with creation and the life-oriented flow and complexity of nature. One's relation to another human being is of the same importance as one's relation to the natural world because the Dao manifests in both. A sense, then, of our interconnection to other human beings and our connection as human beings to the world, allow for a holistic conception of codependence on others and the world. To live ethically, then, the moral agent must remain within the harmony of the natural order.

Conversely, however, evil is that which does not accord with the Dao. It is the refusal to recognize the inherent interconnection of all life forces. Where the Dao is a way of living harmoniously, evil disrupts the harmony of the natural flow. It runs counter to the Dao and as such introduces chaos to the order of the universe. These primal forces of order and entropy manifest in the opposition between good and evil. For Laozi, then, the good is harmonious, it accords with the Dao and it is ordered, whereas evil is disruptive, it fails to accord with the Dao and it is marked by chaos.

Laozi characterizes good and evil in the *Dao De Jing*. In v 31, he writes,

Recognize beauty and ugliness is born.
Recognize good and evil is born.⁹
...
Weapons are ill-omened tools,
Not proper instruments.
When their use can't be avoided,
Calm restraint is best.
Don't think they are beautiful.
Those who think they are beautiful
Rejoice in killing people.
Those who rejoice in killing people
Cannot achieve their purpose in this world.¹⁰

Laozi recognizes the disparity between good and evil. He sees that good and evil are both brought about by human action. Goodness is defined as actions that accord with the Dao and evil is recognized as the contrary.¹¹ Sung-peng Hsu writes,

“Good” and “evil” are defined with reference to actions, because, in Laozi’s philosophy, they are not some substantial entities, eternal forms, or God’s commandments. *They are qualities of action* (emphasis added)¹²

Tools are instruments of this creative action. The tools we create reflect the will of the creator, as the kinetic process of creation manifests in that, which is created; hence, an “ill-omened tool” is a reflection of the ill-will of its creator. Evil is similar to goodness in that it is a product of this creative act. If the creative act accords with the Dao, the action is good. If the creative act is in discord with the Dao, the action is evil.

⁹ Laozi. trans. Stephen Mitchell. 1988. *Dao te ching: a new English version*. New York: Harper & Row. v. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid* v. 31.

¹¹ Feng, Youlan, and Derk Bodde. 1952. *A history of Chinese philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. vol. 1, p. 170-191.

¹² Sung-peng, Hsu. 1976. “Lao Tzu's Conception of Evil” *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 26, No. 3. Jul., p. 301-316.

At the same time, Laozi recognizes the disparity of good and evil. The good is defined as actions in accord with the Dao. The Dao can roughly be defined as the form of nature's flow. This flow aims at life. Good actions are in harmony with the life-oriented flow; Evil actions are in opposition to this. In that sense, the good is aligned with creation and evil is aligned with destruction.

In an attempt to approximate an understanding of the nature of evil, one can contrast the good in opposition to the nature of evil. In the *Dao Te Ching*, for example, Laozi offers many descriptions of the good life, which can then be contrasted against the nature of evil. He writes,

Giving birth and nourishing,
having without possessing
acting with no expectations,
leading and not trying to control:
this is the supreme virtue, (emphasis added).¹³

In asserting that the supreme virtue entails, "having without possessing" Laozi acknowledges a conception of holding, without possessing, of sharing without begrudging. If I am not bound by the law of possession, as a moral agent, I am unconstrained in my movements. The fluidity of my existence is such that I can exist without possessing. I can lead without controlling. As we have seen in a previous section, the prince controls the people through their affection for him, not through the exercise of his might.

Unlike the good, evil arises from destruction, which works against the flow of nature. That which is evil is necessarily against the Dao. It remains in perpetual conflict with the

¹³ Laozi, 1993, v.10.

Dao. The destruction of life and the disruption of the flow of nature are hallmarks of evil and one's progression toward evil is always marked by inhumanity.

The duality of good and evil is represented in the duality of humanity and inhumanity. The good is always a benefit to humanity. It strengthens humanity by imbuing it with meaning, with lives lived for virtue. Evil is always a regressive force, which suppresses humanity and the flourishing thereof by motivating selfishness and inconsideration. These factors will invariably lead to desensitization. Unable to empathize with the plight of others, war and mass exterminations are sure to follow. Our attachment to things and our selfishness interferes with our ability to recognize the suffering of others.

Through our connections to material objects, then, we lose a sense of our autonomy, our connection to ourselves, which is to say our identity becomes conflated with the things we own or possess. For example, you may here someone say, "I am my car" or "I am this apartment." In truth, however, the individual is not and cannot be these things. The person has conflated his sense of personal identity with that which he possesses, which serves as the groundwork from the manifestation of evil. Laozi continues:

Whoever relies on the Dao in governing men
doesn't try to force issues
or defeat enemies by force of arms.
For every force there is a counterforce.
Violence, even well intentioned,
always rebounds upon itself.

The Master does his job
and then stops.
He understands that the universe
is forever out of control,
and that trying to dominate events

goes against the current of the Dao.
Because he believes in himself,
he doesn't try to convince others.
Because he is content with himself,
he doesn't need other's approval.
Because he accepts himself,
the whole world accepts him, (emphasis added)¹⁴

In following the Way, the Daoist rejects the imposition of forceful argumentation, which brings about confrontation and violence. Rather, he is patient and mindful of the issues, without an insistence of proving points or winning retorts. He understands that there is a balance, a counterforce that governs the laws of nature and moreover realizes that he too is subject to these laws.

The Dao's flow evolves from chaos to order, from uniformity to diversity, from the void to complexity. The Sage acknowledges the role of serendipity and waits patiently. As the Sage is a representation of the good, so too is the fool a representation of that which is evil. As Kant has mentioned, "a universal relation obtains that *integrates all worlds into a single framework*," which corresponds to Laozi's profound insight that,

*Every being in the universe
is an expression of the Dao.*
It springs into existence,
Unconscious, perfect, free,
takes on a physical body,
lets circumstances complete it.
That is why every being
spontaneously honors the Dao,
(emphasis added).¹⁵

This nexus of interconnectivity serves as the ultimate condition for all creation. It is the manifestation of creation, as an infinite act of increasing diversity, all hinged upon the

¹⁴ Laozi, 1993, v. 30.

¹⁵ Laozi, 1993, v. 51.

possibility of utter systemic collapse. My understanding of this Oneness, in a strictly Parmenidian sense, evolves as Parmenides states in Plato's *Parmenides*,

if there is a *one*, of course the one will not be many. Consequently it cannot have any parts or be a whole...And, if it has no parts, it cannot have a beginning or an end or a middle, for such things would be parts of it. Further, the beginning and end of a thing are its limits. Therefore, if one has neither beginning nor end it is without limits.¹⁶

Though there is, to use the Kantian phrase, a “single framework” it is the manifestation of a plurality, it is the representation of one through many. It is an understanding, as we have seen that the One is continually held in opposition to the chaos that seeks to consume it. It is the primordial battle between entropy and order. Martin Schönfeld expresses this tension nicely, writing,

nature's stellar order is the logical reflection of its initial chaotic opposite in time. This opposite is some kind of energetic mist or smoke. Its dirty chaos of flow-vectors and explosive collisions is structurally a flip-flop of oscillating continuities and limits...Nature sometimes seems chaotic, sometimes ordered, but instead of reducing the one to the other...Kant accepts both: free chaos and lawful order hang together.¹⁷

This balance between the utterly destructive capabilities inherent within a system that supports life and the proliferation of life itself, in actuality are two sides to the same coin. More appropriately stated Parmenides' conception of the one is manifested as a representation of plurality; it is the appearance of contradiction without contradiction. In fact, were this contradiction to manifest, there would be no life at all. Thus, the existence

¹⁶ (137c2-137e).

¹⁷ Schönfeld, Martin, “Kant's Early Cosmology,” Bird, Graham. 2006. *A companion to Kant*. Blackwell companions to philosophy, 36. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub. p. 49, 51.

of life necessitates a balance of these dualities. These primordial dualities of chaos and order, then, manifest in our conception of evil and goodness. Evil is a force of the destructive capacity of the universe, which is only of moral concern because of human sentience. Otherwise, it just is. Conversely, good is the creative capacity of the universe, whose end only approaches but never reaches, viz., the infinite multiplication of all life.

Balance is construed as the golden mean, which allows life and nature the opportunity to flourish. Where balance is absent, evil manifests as an excess or deficiency, which is antithetical to life. Where balance facilitates flourishing, evil resists stabilization. It always manifests as an extreme. Thus, evil is a totalizing force that is contrary to the balance necessary to bring about flourishing.

This sense of balance was further discussed by the greatest of all Chinese mystics, Chuang Chou (Zhuangzi), a Daoist, Chinese mystic of the 4th century BCE. His writings are of such philosophical complexity and beauty that his works have mystified scholars throughout the ages. In Burton Watson's introduction to the *Complete Works of Zhuangzi* he writes,

The central theme of the *Zhuangzi* [as a body of work] may be summed up in a single word: freedom. Essentially, all the philosophers of ancient China addressed themselves to the same problem: *how is man to live in a world dominated by chaos, suffering, and absurdity?* Nearly all of them answered with some concrete plan of action designed to reform the individual, to reform society, and eventually to free the world from its ills...Zhuangzi's...answer...is grounded upon a wholly different, type of thinking. It is the answer of a mystic...[his] answer to the question is: free yourself from the world (emphasis added).¹⁸

¹⁸ Zhuangzi. trans. Burton Watson. 1968. *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 3.

The world, rooted in evil and chaos, binds us by appealing to our vanity, our hubris, our self-aggrandizement, or desire for fame and knowledge. It is this self-referential mode of being that deludes our ability to conform to the moral law. It is, in effect, to believe that one is, “above the law,” i.e., vanity furnishes the moral agent with the false belief that he transcends the moral law, which is a refusal to disentangle our propensities for evil from the act of our socialization into goodness.

To recognize our place within the world is understand our need to detach from its many offerings and its appeal to our pride. Zhuangzi offers an interesting metaphor. He says, “the swamp pheasant has to walk ten paces for one peck and one hundred paces for one drink, but it doesn’t want to be kept in a cage. Though you treat it like a king, its spirit won’t be content.”¹⁹ We, unlike the swamp pheasant, want to be pampered. We want to be taken care of. We want to be provided for, but most importantly, we want to be king, because to be king suggests that others will have to walk those many paces to satisfy our needs, while we remain idle. The question, then, is who is freer, the king, or the servants, the caged bird, or the free ranged bird? This is where evil takes root, *in the desire to be king, the desire to be famous*. With such desires, however, Zhuangzi warns, “If you do good, stay away from fame. If you do evil, stay away from punishments.”²⁰

According to Zhuangzi, “Virtue is destroyed by fame.”²¹ Thus, it is impossible for one to act virtuously if his actions are governed by a desire for fame. The king is the embodiment of fame, and as such is “caged” or immobilized by his status. He is

¹⁹ Ibid., 52

²⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

²¹ Ibid., p. 55.

imprisoned by his fame. His spirit cannot run free, as does the spirit of even the swamp pheasant. “Fame is something to beat people down with, and wisdom is a device for wrangling. *Both are evil weapons*—not the sort of thing to bring you success” (emphasis added).²² We can see that evil, for Zhuangzi, is partly based in this desire for fame.

Better stop short than fill to the brim
Oversharpen the blade, and the edge will soon blunt
Amass a store of gold and jade, and no one can protect it
Claim wealth and titles, and disaster will follow
Retire when the work is done
This is the way of heaven.²³

A sentiment that certainly holds true in an era of Youtube and our chance for instant stardom, reality TV and the prospects of immediate international celebrity. To subvert evil, then, we must relinquish this desire for fame *and* for wisdom.

For Zhuangzi, wisdom must not be used for the destruction of others. The true sage does not profess to be so, does not relish in his own brilliance, and does not use his knowledge for destructive ends. The true sage is concerned with truth rather than knowledge, as the ordinary man should be. “If he [the ordinary man] is willing to regard the ruler as superior to himself and to die for him, then how much more should he be willing to do for the Truth!”²⁴

1.4. *Presocratic Conceptions of Evil: 535-430 BCE*

From the dawn of civilization, great thinkers have been intrigued by the concept of evil, what is it? Why does it occur? How, if at all, are we to prevent its proliferation? It was through countless attempts to answer these questions, that formal thought became

²² Ibid., p. 55.

²³ *Dao De Jing*, V.9.

²⁴ Zhuangzi, 1968, p. 80.

ordered and logical; the formation of a discipline emerged as a result of our infatuation with evil. Good versus evil, God versus Satan, man versus woman, and the individual versus the state, are but a few such polemics wherein the analysis of evil has thrived.

The Presocratics did not have a clear definition of evil. So to speak of their philosophies strictly in terms of the polemics between good and evil may be anachronistic. In fact, Empedocles discussed the notion of Love or *philia* and Strife or *neichos* rather than discussing good and evil. It can be argued that Empedocles' articulation of Love and Strife would later inform accounts of good and evil, but to strictly align Empedocles account of Love and Strife with notions of good and evil is too great a generalization.

For Empedocles, Love and Strife serve an essential role in the formation of the universe. They are the primordial forces, whose interplay generates the evolving universe or *kosmos*. The act of Love is a pulling-together; it is needed to counterbalance the act of Strife. The act of Strife is a pushing-apart; it complements the act of Love. The attraction of Love or *philia* and the repulsion of Strife or *neichos* work together to mingle the elements and to combine them to more complex structures, thus organizing the cosmos. If either of Love or Strife outweighed the other, destruction would ensue—Strife unbridled causes the world to fly apart into disorganized *akosmia*; Love unbridled causes the world to collapse into an undifferentiated *sphairos*. Thus, creation is represented in the balance of Love and Strife, where equilibrium is maintained, and destruction is represented in a failure to preserve this balance.

The notion of Love and Strife are co-emergent with life and since life is an increasing progression toward complexity, Love and Strife are also co-emergent with complexity. Since complexity is a mixture of the elements, a coming together, which Love facilitates as the attractive force, unbridled Love leads to a singularity and an undifferentiated unity. It leads to the *Sphairos* – the big crunch of the cosmos into a singular, uniform, even sphere, in which all is equal and there are no qualities.

To balance this extreme, then, Strife arises as an opposing force insofar as it pushes things apart, i.e., it pushes the mixture of elements apart. The purpose of Strife is to reign in Love. It prevents the tendency toward undifferentiated unity. It preserves the mixture of elements by destabilizing the attractive forces of Love. Unchecked, however, Strife leads to *Akosmia* – the big rip of the cosmos into elemental tatters, disjointed and unconnected. This process of stability and instability, balance and unbalance is a continual process, which is represented in the forces of Love and Strife. Thus, in either extreme, total Love, or total Strife, lies death and destruction, and as seen from the optics of life, evil. In fragment B112 of *On Nature*, Empedocles explains,

O friends who dwell in the great city on the yellow
Acragas, on the high citadel, caring about good deeds,
honorable harbors for strangers, *unacquainted with evil*,
greetings! (emphasis added).²⁵

Empedocles suggests that the Acragantines are unacquainted with evil, which is contrary to historical findings, as the Acragantines waged war against Syracuse in c. 445 BCE. Empedocles is suggesting that the Acragantines lack the moral sensibility necessary for

²⁵ Empedocles. trans. M. R. Wright. 1995. *Empedocles, the extant fragments*. London: Bristol Classical Press. *Frag.* B112.

differentiating good and evil. Clearly, evil needed to be defined, and Empedocles implores his brethren of Acragas to remain morally accountable for their action. In her analysis of fragment B112, Catherine Osborne writes,

It is in the light of what Empedocles proceeds to reveal that we perceive the ambiguities of the value judgments implied in B112...The Acragantines turn out to be, in a very real sense...inexperienced or ignorant of evil...They have not learnt what evil is, that the very acts which they place in such high regard are the worst evils, and that their prosperity, their non-acquaintance with misfortune and evil, is illusory.²⁶

The tensions among the Acragantines are reflected within Love and Strife, in an infinite battle between the two forces of nature. Empedocles characterizes Love as a force of unity and symbolizes it as a circle. He characterizes Strife as a force of disunity and symbolizes it as a whirl. The distinctions between Love and Strife are more than mere degree, Love seeks to unify the four roots and Strife seeks their destruction. The destructive capacities of man aren't inherently evil, but left unchecked can lead to the eradication of all. Love too, if left unchecked will overpopulate the world and slip into destruction.

Aristotle interprets Empedocles' conceptions of Love and Strife as meaning both Good and Evil. He writes,

Since it is apparent that nature also contains the opposite of what is good, i.e., not only order and beauty but disorder and ugliness, and that there are more bad and common things than there are good and beautiful, another thinker introduced Love and Strife as the representative causes of these things. For if one follows and gives heed to the

²⁶ Osborne, Catherine "Empedocles Recycled" *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 37, No. 1. (1987), p 34.

statements of Empedocles with a view to his meaning, and not to his lispng expression in words, *it will be found that Love is the cause of Good, and Strife of Evil*. Thus, it would perhaps be correct that Empedocles in a sense spoke of Evil and Good as first principles, and was the first to do so, (emphasis added).²⁷

Empedocles's metaphor of the circle and the whirl is best characterized in terms of a pool of water. If the pool is still, it is ideal for drinking, breeding, bathing etc. Without motion, without a disruptive current, the pool becomes stagnant. If the current is too strong, however, and the pool whirls too forcefully, it becomes destructive. Animals that would seek reprieve from the sun in the waters depths would be pulled by the current and eventually drowned. Thus, a balance must be met. The pool must be still enough to accommodate the possibility of its many functions, but its current must be strong enough to remove the waste and excess buildup that, if left unchecked, would contaminate its waters.

Empedocles writes,

for the uniting of all things brings one generation into being and destroys it, and the other is reared and scattered as they are again being divided. And these things never cease their continuous exchange of position, at one time all coming together into one through Love, at another again being borne away from each other by Strife's repulsion.²⁸

Empedocles recognizes that the dialectic nature of Love and Strife. Love and Strife are a function of an infinite attempt to maintain balance between these forces. The Acragantines could not recognize that a balance must be attained between Love and Strife, between creation and destruction, and were, therefore, incapable of recognizing

²⁷ *Met*, A. 4, 984b32.

²⁸ Empedocles, 1995, *frag.* 17. 1-8.

their own evils. Strife, then, is a necessary component of existence, but it is to be kept in balance by our recognition of its destructive nature.

Empedocles' predecessor, Heraclitus, suggested the more forceful claim that, "Good and Evil are one,"²⁹ which is not to suggest that they carry the same meaning or share the same account of change, rather, for Heraclitus, good and evil are ascribed meaning through their oppositional relation, i.e., one cannot understand goodness without evil or evil without goodness; good and evil are specifically human phenomenon because of this requirement for understanding. These conception, then, are defined in terms of their binary opposition. Heraclitus' monistic view predates Empedocles' pluralism. For Heraclitus, the totality of reality could be explained in terms of its derivation from fire, as the primordial substance, whereas, Empedocles argues for the 'four root' as a pluralistic account of the same.

Heraclitus was arguably the first Presocratic philosopher to offer a complete account of change in his cosmogony. A conception of change is necessary in any monistic account because the world is composed of more than just one substance. Heraclitus' account that everything is derived from fire does not fall prey to Anaximander's critique of Thales, who suggested that everything is composed of water. Anaximander challenged his teacher (Thales) on the notion that everything could be derived from water, on the basis that at least one thing could not, viz., fire, since fire is in opposition to water. Heraclitus' account differs insofar as fire has the capacity to account for the plurality of substances. If there is fire and paper (2 substances) and the paper is placed into the fire,

²⁹ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν ταύτων. Bywater, I. *Heracliti Ephesii Reliquiae*. (Oxford, 1877) frag. 57.

the product is ash, which is neither paper nor fire. The destructive capacity of fire is capable of creating new substances. Thus, Heraclitus' cosmogony can account for change and the multiplicity of substances.

William Chase Greene writes,

Heraclitus includes both Good and Evil, as correlatives, within a natural system which presents an analogy with primitive moral law; human good and evil, however, are related to a specifically human attitude and activity, as with the Atomists and Stoics.³⁰

This binary opposition facilitates in identifying each half, that which is good is defined by its oppositional relation to evil, and that which is evil is defined by its oppositional relation to good.

Thus, the Presocratics sought to articulate the conception of evil in terms of its relation to that which is good. Through an understanding of the good, one is better equipped to understand evil and the nature of this relationship. A cosmogony and the descriptive account of how things came to be must incorporate these conceptions of good and evil as fundamentally and inextricably bound to the origins of the universe. As noted in the previous section, the association of order and entropy, the balance of life always teetering on total systemic collapse is a facticity of not only the formation of the universe, but also our lives. The duality of these forces is in effect two sides to the same coin. To reject one is to reject the other and to affirm one is to affirm the other. The forces of good and evil, like fire and water, are the primordial forces of the universe.

³⁰ Greene, William Chase. 1936. "Fate, Good, and Evil, in Early Greek Poetry" *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 47, p. 128.

1.5. Socratic Conceptions of Evil: 424 BCE- 210 CE

Like the Eastern philosophers that predated them, Ancient Greek's also had conceptions of virtue and morality, which prescribed proper moral action. Plato, for example, suggests that our actions should reflect moderation, *sôphrosynê*.³¹ In the *Charmides*, he and Critias discuss the nature of man's search for happiness, which is inextricably bound to moderation and the knowledge of good and evil.

Socrates. Yet I should like to know one thing more. Which of the different kinds of knowledge makes [man] happy?

...

Critias. The knowledge with which he discerns good and evil.

Socrates. You villain! I said. You have been carrying me round in a circle, and all this time hiding from me the fact that it is not the life according to knowledge which makes men act rightly and be happy, not even if it be knowledge of all the sciences, *but one science only, that of good and evil* (emphasis added).³²

For Plato, the form of happiness is intertwined with our acts of moderation and the knowledge of good and evil. The form of our happiness resides outside this world –it is transcendent– yet moderation functions as a vehicle, within this world, leading us toward that transcendence.

Unlike Plato, however, Aristotle championed the idea that function and form were one in the same, that material objects attained formal cause not in their matter (thisness) or in the work needed to bring about the object (the efficient cause) but in the form itself. Form inheres within matter, thus, substance equals form and matter. For Aristotle, good

³¹ σοφροσύνη

³² *Charmides*, 174a-c.

and evil were kept in balance by *arête* (virtue). Like the pre-Socratics, Aristotle sought to resolve the polemics of good and evil. He writes,

And also for the sake of mere life (in which there is possibly some noble element so long as the evils of existence do not greatly overbalance the good) mankind meet together and maintain the political community. And we all see that men cling to life even at the cost of enduring great misfortune, seeming to find in life a natural sweetness and happiness.³³

For Aristotle, moderation is the path to *arête*, between excess and deprivation, which he investigates at length in the *Ethics*. In discussing the nature of evil, Aristotle notes, “excess can be manifested in all [including love]...yet all are not found in the same person. Indeed, they could not; for evil destroys even itself, and if it is complete becomes unbearable.”³⁴ He suggests that evil eventually destroys itself. It undermines its own end, which correlates to Laozi’s claim that, “Those who think [weapons] are beautiful, rejoice in killing people. Those who rejoice in killing people cannot achieve their purpose in this world.”³⁵

The commonality between Laozi and Aristotle is shared by Plato’s account of evil in the *Gorgias*. The following discussion between Polus and Socrates demonstrates the point.

Socrates. Which do you consider the worse, Polus, to do or to suffer wrong?

Polus. I? To suffer wrong.

³³ Aristotle. trans. Benjamin Jowett. 1900. *The Politics of Aristotle*. New York: Colonial Press. *Politics III* Part VI.

³⁴ Aristotle. trans. Jonathan Barnes. 1984. *The complete works of Aristotle: the revised Oxford translation*. Bollingen series, 71:2. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. *Ethics*, Book IV, Part VI. 1125b35.

³⁵ *Dao Te Ching* v. 31.

Socrates. Well, and is it more shameful to do or to suffer wrong?

Polus. To do wrong...

Socrates. Then to inflict wrong is worse than to suffer it through an excess of evil.³⁶

Plato offers an interesting account in the *Gorgias* by trying to reconcile the difference between inflicting evil, on the one hand, and being made to suffer evil, on the other. It is important to see that for Plato, one's attempt to inflict pain, to exacerbate another person's suffering, is more heinous an act than having to endure suffering. Thus, Plato describes two properties of evil. On the one hand, he discusses suffering as a property of evil, but on the other hand, he also acknowledges the troubles of deliberately inflicting harm. In our continued discussion of the causes of evil, then, one must acknowledge that deliberately inflicting harm is a fundamental cause of evil.

In attempting to forego evil, Plato demarcates its types, there is the evil of intent and the evil one suffers. In demarcating its types, one is better equipped to analyze the concept of evil, so as not to confuse one form of evil with another. The type of evil associated with the intent of causing one to suffer, is worse than the type of evil wherein one is made to suffer. Recognizing this distinction between types allows one to moderate or ultimately forgo engaging in acts of evil. In our attempts to understand the many causes of evil, as moral agents, we must recognize the role of suffering and the deliberate attempt to inflict harm as essential sources for the proliferation of evil. In the next chapter, I will incorporate these conceptions of harm and suffering into an overall discussion of genocide theory and the act of genocide as the greatest manifestation of

³⁶ *Gorgias*, 474c2-8/475c12.

evil. Genocide, as enacted within the external world, however, is itself buttressed on notions of deliberate harm and the perpetration of suffering.

The stoic philosophy of Seneca ushered in the dawn of the Common Era with an insightful investigation into the nature of providence and evil, wherein he addresses the difficulties faced by the deterministic aspects of providence, and the obvious presence of evil. If our lives are fated and deviations from that fate are impossible, yet we experience evil in our daily lives, what sense can be made from the relation of its existence and providence? One may argue that such an outlook of pessimism ultimately dooms, i.e., fates, the moral agent to suffer the ills of evil without the possibility of reprieve. Seneca suggests that evil makes us stronger. It makes us more resilient.

Why do many misfortunes fall to the lot of good men? It is not possible that any evil can befall a good man...He maintains his poise and assimilates all that falls to his lot to his own complexion, for he is more potent than the world without. I do not maintain that he is insensible to externals, but that he overcomes them...All adversity he regards as exercise.³⁷

Though Seneca offers neither a metaphysical account of evil nor a description of how it manifest within our lives, he does offer insight into coping with its existence. For Seneca, evil builds character. It allows a man to overcome adversity, to define himself as resilient, capable of enduring great sufferings. He suggests that, “No one is more unhappy...than a man who has never met with adversity. He has never had the *privilege* of testing himself” (emphasis added).³⁸

³⁷ Seneca, Lucius Annaeus. trans. Moses Hadas. 1968. The stoic philosophy of Seneca; essays and letters of Seneca. New York: Norton. To Lucilius. On Providence. II, 1-5.

³⁸ Ibid, III.

With regard to that privilege, Seneca is suggesting that through suffering, we grow callous to suffering, which serves as a testament to the resilience of human beings. We identify ourselves through our abilities to overcome suffering. He writes, “By suffering misfortunes, the mind grows able to belittle suffering.”³⁹ Our endurance, then, our ability to persevere despite great adversity, is the hallmark of a good man.

Though Seneca speaks to the resilience and character that is cultivated through one’s sufferings, if it is believed that a divinity is the ultimate creator of the universe, and that good men exist alongside evil, “Why does God allow evil to happen to good men?”⁴⁰ This question speaks more to the problem of evil and the causes of evil. For Seneca, evil is an instrument of perseverance. The more one perseveres, the more one experiences evil. The more one experiences evil, the better equipped one is for facing the brutal realities of life. Thus, the more one perseveres, the better equipped one is for facing the brutal realities of life. Perseverance allows us to overcome a lifetime of struggle. Seneca suggests that our suffering is, “to teach others to endure [suffering]”⁴¹ The ultimate end of suffering is a greater ability to endure more suffering as evident in the claim, “Scorn pain: either it will go away or you will”⁴² Death becomes trivial and unlike many other that characterize death as the ultimate evil, for Seneca, death is a release, an escape from a lifetime of suffering.

One would certainly be justified in labeling Seneca’s stoicism as pessimistic. The more dubious claim that human beings are controlled by providence rather than freedom,

³⁹ Ibid, IV, 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid, V, 1.

⁴¹ Ibid, VI.

⁴² Ibid, VI.

all the while enduring the greatest evils, disturbed a new generation of philosophical skeptics. Thus, in attempting to understand the concept of evil one cannot truly conceptualize the grandeur of its destructive capacities without also acknowledging its ability to exacerbate suffering and ultimately destroy human life. The willful attempt to proliferate the suffering of other and the wholesale destruction of human life is the greatest manifestation of evil. Through its manifestation, however, those that survive the onslaught of evil will retain a greater resilience to survive. Through their survival, former victims of evil serves as the greatest source and hope for understanding the nature of evil, and as Seneca has suggested, their struggle emboldens future generations of sufferers to persevere through the ills of evil.

1.6. *Hindu Mysticism and the Concept of Evil*

In articulating this balance, there were variations in how the concept of evil is formalized. Patañjali was a Hindu mystic believed to have lived between the 2nd-3rd century C.E. and author of the widely influential Yoga-Sūtras. His Yoga-Sūtras is based on the Samkhya school of Hindu philosophy, which teaches that all matter is derived from *prakṛti* (primal Nature) and its three constituent gunas, viz., *sattva* (being, existence, light), *rajas* (change, energy), and *tamas* (resistance, darkness). The three gunas are the foundation for all existing things. Their unification results in the creation of the external world, which are but manifestations of their essences. Patañjali explains,

The nature of each different Guna is influenced by the nature of the other two Gunas. Gunas are perceived in objects which are manifestations of their mutations. In each manifestation, the three Gunas are combined. When analyzed, it shows Sattva on one side, Tamas on the other, and Rajas in the middle. When we speak of Sattva, Rajas

and Tamas are bound to be there... [Thus] Gunas combine to produce all objects and they act by mutual cooperation.⁴³

It is our attachments to others, to wealth, and even to our own minds, which serves as the true source of evil. In the highest stage of self-liberation, Patañjali writes, “the highest form of detachment is achieved in the mind ceasing to act, the Seer is said to be in a state of Kaivalya or liberation.”⁴⁴ Patañjali’s account of the Yoga-Sūtras and the conception of self-liberation spread to foreign countries and were quickly translated by others.

Some of the first known translations of Patañjali’s work were by the Persian philosopher and natural scientist, Abū ar-Rayhān Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Bīrūnī, also known as al-Bīrūnī (973-c.1050), who translated the original Sanskrit text into Arabic. There is some debate, however, over the accuracy of Al-Bīrūnī’s translation of Patañjali’s Yoga-sūtras,⁴⁵ but there is consensus on the influence and purpose of Patañjali’s philosophy. In a further elaboration of this process of self-liberation, Al-Bīrūnī translates Patañjali, writing,

Q6. How can the quelling of the soul and the compression of its faculties away from external things be accomplished?...

Ans. This may be accomplished... [by] intellectual, namely mental asceticism, which consist of contemplating the consequences with the eye of the heart, and considering the evil of the existents, which come into being and pass away. For nothing is worse than decaying and passing away, these two being inherent in (the existents)... For they are the

⁴³ Patañjali. trans. P.N. Mukerji. 1983. Yoga philosophy of Patañjali containing his Yoga aphorisms with Vyāsa’s commentary in Sanskrit and a translation with annotations including many suggestions for the practice of Yoga. Albany: State University of New York Press. p. 162.

⁴⁴ *Ibid* p. 109.

⁴⁵ Pines, Shlomo, Tuvia Gelblum, Al-Bīrūnī and Patañjali. “Al-Bīrūnī’s Arabic Version of Patañjali’s “Yogasūtra”” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1966), p. 302-325. The authors acknowledge the debate over Al-Bīrūnī’s translation of the original Sanskrit text without refuting its importance and historical significance.

causes of attachment to things existing in the world, and add to the evils of bondage, and prevent him from addressing himself single-mindedly to his liberation.⁴⁶

Death is part of life. To relinquish our attachments, then, is to transcend death, as death is but a loss of one's attachment to another. Thus, in self-liberation and the ultimate act of Kaivalya (liberation of the mind), one transcends death and all attachments including one's attachment to one's self. According to Patañjali, this is truly the triumph of good over evil.

This mystic conception of self-liberation differs from the conception of original sin insofar as the power to overcome evil resides within the individual. We are not burdened by the guilt of original sin and the process of overcoming evil is clearly defined. This process is undertaken by recognition of one's need to attain Kaivalya and total self-liberation. Evil can have no hold of the Yogi since he is without attachments, and the fear of loss will not motivate an evil action to preserve that which is inherently mortal or prone to decay. Thus, Patañjali's Yoga-Sūtras serves as an alternative, non-Western, non-Christian, account of our relationship to evil, which exists and arises from a fear of loss. Remember it was Mencius's discussion of fear and anxiety that led to the corruption of the small man and the king, and the act of attempting to circumvent the process of our socialization that led to the greatest injustice, which is the appearance of justice without an obligation to the moral law. Later in the discussion, I will return to Patañjali's mystic conception of self-liberation in a contemporary account of political evil.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 317.

1.7. *Medieval Conceptions of the Problem Evil: 160-1274 CE*

The discussion of evil reached its peak during the middle ages. As a point of clarification, I will discuss evil, in this section of the analysis, in terms of the theological problem that pertains to the traditional argument for the existence of evil in light of God's characteristics, viz., his omnipotence, omniscience and his benevolence. Towards the end of this section, I shall return to a discussion of the concept of evil and draw my conclusions.

St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo Regius, rejected the notion that God has abandoned us in a cosmos where everything is evil and proposed an alternate account: man, not God, is the source of evil. This goes against Seneca's stoic conception of fate and providence, and is an embrace of man's freedom of will. For centuries, theologians have grappled with the existence of evil, attempting to reconcile its presence with the existence of an omnipotent and benevolent God.⁴⁷

On this account of Augustine, Paul Vincent Space writes:

There is a paradox about evil in the world, at least there is a paradox if you believe in any kind of traditional God. If God (a) knows about evil by his omniscience, (b) has the power to prevent it by his omnipotence, and (c) is benevolent and just and so will arrange things to avoid evil wherever he can (which in virtue of (a) and (b), means that he will avoid it everywhere), then it looks as though there can be no evil in the world. It has been successfully prevented by a power strong enough to do so. And yet God

⁴⁷ Augustine. trans. Henry Bettenson, 1984. *Concerning the City of God, against the Pagans*. New York: Penguin Press. p. 447-481. Tooley, Michael. 1991. "The Argument from Evil" *Philosophical Perspectives*. Vol. 5, Philosophy of Religion, p. 89-134. and Mackie, J.L. 1990. "Evil and Omnipotence" *The Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press.

is supposed to have all these properties, even though there is evil in the world.⁴⁸

If in attempting to account for the problem of evil, one denies God's love, one raises the issue of absentee deism. Absentee deism is the belief that God created the universe but that after the creation of the universe he abandoned his creation, leaving us to fend for ourselves. Thus, it accounts for the existence of evil by denying God's benevolence.

St. Augustine explicitly denies this suggestion. His contribution to analyzing the problem of evil arose from his refusal to deny God's characteristics or the existence of evil, i.e., he embraced both the belief in the existence of evil and all three of God's characteristics. In order, then, to integrate both, St. Augustine had to find an account for the existence of evil, one that did not compromise God's characteristics. St. Augustine found this alternative in man's free will. Within the will, man had the ability to exercise his freedom, and God, being the benevolent being He is, could not limit man's freedom. Evil, so St. Augustine, enters the cosmos through the corruption of man's will.

The fundamental account for this initial corruption arises from man's *original sin*. The original sin occurred when, according to biblical text, Adam and Eve transgressed and disobeyed God's commandment not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In their transgression, their eyes were opened to the evils of this world and they realized that they could act as they pleased. In breaking God's law they were punished, ejected from the Garden of Eden and forced to fend for themselves.

Augustine discusses the nature of man's will in relation to God's power and the ramification of original sin, writing:

⁴⁸ Paul Vincent Space, *Medieval Philosophy* ("The Course in the Box"), typoscript 1990, p.15- 9.

the first evil act of will, preceding as it did, all evil works in man, was rather a falling away from the work of God to the will's own works than any one work; and those works were evil because they followed the will's own pattern and not God's. Thus, the will itself, or man himself in so far as he was possessed of an evil will, was the evil tree, as it were, that bore the evil fruit that those works represented.⁴⁹

Augustine argues that it is man's weakness of will and his inherent freedom to exercise that will, which has led to the proliferation of evil. Since Augustine is not denying the existence of evil, and he acknowledges that God is the creator of the cosmos, and evil exists within the cosmos, then his account of man's freedom of the will, offers an explanation as to how evil exists and how its existence cannot be attributed to God.

Through exercising his freedom, man is able to follow his own will instead of the will of God. After eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, man became aware to corruption and disobedience. His awareness is a direct result of his disobedience. Thus, in disobeying God's will, man placed primacy on his own will. The will of a man, however, is often incapable of properly distinguishing between instances of good and evil and therefore prone to the proliferation of evil throughout the world. Augustine writes,

“The eyes of both” we are told, “were opened,” yet not that they might see, since they could see already, but that they might distinguish between the good that they had lost and the evil into which they had fallen. This also explains why the tree itself, which was to enable them to make such a distinction if they laid hands on it to eat its fruit in spite of the prohibition, what named for that fact and called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Saint Augustine *The City of God Against the Pagan: IV Books XII-XV*. eds T.E. Page, et. al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), Book XIV. xi.

⁵⁰ *The City of God*, Book XIV. xvii.

The true nature of man, however, is to obey the will of God. The fall was a contingent event wherein we chose to disobey. In disobeying the will of God, those that now attempt to walk in the faith, as it were, face additional evils that are not faced by nonbelievers.⁵¹ Thus, the righteous will be made to bear not only the suffering of “evils common to good and bad” but also a species of evil of their own. Augustine writes,

[Evil] would never have existed anywhere if our nature had still remained upright as it was created. Hence also this conflict of ours, on which depends our salvation, and from which we desire to be freed in final victory, is one of the evils of this life. And so by the evidence of these evils, so many and so great, we prove that this life is one of condemnation.⁵²

This life is condemned. It has been defiled by man’s freedom of the will, which has placed his desires above the will of God. Nonetheless, there is reprieve in heaven.

Augustine’s dualism shuns this world for the afterlife, shuns desire for abstinence, and attributes the problem of evil to man’s corrupted will and his ability to exercise his freedom.⁵³

Ernesto Bonaiuti and Giorgio La Piana discuss Augustine’s interpretation of evil in terms of his account of original sin and his strict tenets of predestination. Though it is not often noted, Augustine argued in *De libero Arbitrio* (On Free Choice of the Will), that the original substance of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden was one of an “ethereal

⁵¹ *The City of God* Book XXIII. The title of Book XXIII is, “Of the troubles which (*in addition* to the evils common to the good and the bad) belong to the distress of the righteous” (emphasis added).

⁵² *The City of God* Book XXII. xxiii.

⁵³ While I am inspired by Augustine’s attempts to situate the problem of evil in our freedom of the will, the analysis of evil, in terms of its relation to Augustine’s theological account, is of little use in a contemporary discussion of evil. One of my main objectives within this investigation is to divorce the analysis of evil from theology.

substance.”⁵⁴ Bonaiuti and La Piana then argue that, under biblical interpretations, Adam and Eve’s bodies were made physical, i.e., the punishment of sin is death. Death is the decomposition of physical substance. An ethereal substance would lack divisibility and therefore lack the ability to die. What is of interest in my analysis of the concept of evil is not the view which argues for death as the greatest evil, rather I am interested in St. Augustine’s conception that our punishment for disobeying God’s laws was embodiment.

An ontological question arises with Augustine’s conception of ethereal substances, one which, until now, has yet to have been addressed, i.e., does the ontology of evil require embodiment? The answer, for Augustine, is simple enough, as he affirms that it does. Quite obviously, contemporary metaphysicians may classify themselves as idealists or materialist. Those supporting the existence of evil can certainly be found in both camps. Thus, the question arises, in an Augustinian sense, as to the nature of evil and embodiment. The idealist may argue for the existence of evil but deny the requirement for embodiment and the materialist may also argue for the existence of evil and affirm the requirement for the same. It would be very interesting to see how this argument would develop within the discourse of evil. I would anticipate that as the difficulties of defending these two stances would unfold, one would further gain insight into the ontological nature of evil and its specific relation to embodiment.

St. Augustine also faced the further historical pressure of differentiating Roman Catholicism from both Manichean and Pelagian interpretations of the gospel. Gillian Evans captures this tension nicely writing,

⁵⁴ Bonaiuti, Ernesto and Giorgio La Piana. 1917. “The Genesis of St. Augustine’s Idea of Original Sin” *The Harvard Theological Review*. Vol 10. No. 2 (April), p. 162.

The Pelagian regarded the lust of the flesh as a natural good; the Manichees think that it has been an evil thing from all eternity; the Catholic date the evil in it from the fall of Adam. The Pelagian says that even a wicked man can do good by his own free will; the Manichees deny that it is from a man's free will that evil takes its beginning; the Catholics maintain that each man is the source of his own evil and that no one can do good of himself.⁵⁵

It is interesting to note that the main conceptual difference between each of the three systems of belief pertains to the role of evil within a devotee's life. Though Augustine's account is theological in its nature, he is more accurately, here, concerned with articulating various concepts of evil, rather than couching the discourse in terms of the problem.

As noted in Evans's account, the concept of evil and the effect it has on a parishioner's life, unfolds in vastly different ways. For Pelagians, sexual pleasure is a natural good, whereas for the Manicheans it a natural evil. Catholics locate the existence of evil within the moral agent's exercise of the will, whereas the Manicheans deny this claim. It is not so much that these arguments regress into relativism, which is of any concern here. Rather, *that* the discourse on evil was structured in terms of its manifestation and proliferation instead of attempting to consolidate its existence with that of God's characteristics, at least demonstrates that the concept of evil, though tenuous, was of interest even within theological discourse. Separating the two, however, i.e., totally separating a discourse of evil from theological analysis would have been sacrilege.

⁵⁵Evans, Gillian. 1981. "Neither a Pelagian nor a Manichee" *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol 35 No 3. Sep., p. 232.

As has been noted, various philosophers at the beginning of the Common Era tackled the problem of evil by relating its existence to our freedoms, some suggesting that we are free to determine the course of our lives, others arguing the contrary. Nevertheless, God's relation to mankind as the creative force behind our existence was contrasted by the conception that human beings are inherently free. On the one hand, the existence of evil and God's divine providence for mankind, as noted by Seneca, is divorced from a conception of a caring God, insofar as God's providence includes evil, on the other hand, the existence of evil is necessitated by our freedom of will. Thus, either God is uncaring or, as Augustine noted, it is man that exercises his will and as such serves as the source for the proliferation of evil.

Sextus Empiricus of the Pyrrhonian School offered one of the first arguments for the problem of evil, which directly challenged the conception of a monotheistic God. He argues that evil becomes a problem for the theists because there is an inability to reconcile the obvious existence of evil with the existence of God. He argues that God is attributed with three characteristics that are incompatible with evil. God is said to be omnipotent, omniscient and omni-benevolent.

If God were omnipotent, he would have the power to prevent the occurrence of evil. However, evil exists, which challenges the notion that God is omnipotence. If God were omniscient, he would know that evil exists and would use this knowledge to prevent its occurrence. Since evil exists, we are led to believe that God is not omniscient. Finally, if God were omni-benevolent his love for us would motivate him to prevent the occurrence of evil, but evil exists, which leads us to believe that God does not love us.

The implications of Sextus' argument challenge the core beliefs of Christianity. In defending the existence of God, some have denied the existence of evil and thereby preserved the characteristics of God. I will discuss such attempts in chapter 3. Others have suggested that God is not omnipotent as he has created the laws of nature to which even he is bound. But few deny the omniscience and omni-benevolence of God. For centuries after he first presented his argument, philosophers and theologians alike have attempted to resolve the fundamental conflict between the existence of evil and the three characteristics of God. The attempt to resolve this tension cannot arise within the context of a theological account for the problem of evil. One must shift the analysis from the problem of evil to a discussion of the concept of evil, a discussion that can be fully articulated within secular terms. In his description of the problem of evil, Sextus writes,

Anyone who asserts that God exists either says that God takes care of the things in the cosmos or that he does not, and, if he does take care, that it is either all of things or some. Now if he takes care of everything, there would be no particular evil thing and no evil in general in the cosmos; but the Dogmatists say that *everything is full of evil*; therefore God shall not be said to take care of everything. On the other hand if he takes care of only some things, why does he take care of these and not those? For either he wishes but is not able, or he is able but does not wish, or he neither wishes nor is able. (emphasis added)⁵⁶

The discussion of evil shifted significantly from the more modest claim to live a life of balance and moderation, espoused by so many before the Common Era, to an indictment of God's inability to shield humanity from the evils of the world. Effectively, then, the discussion shifted from an analysis of the concept of evil to an analysis of the problem of

⁵⁶ Empiricus, Sextus. trans. Benson Mates. 1996. "Outlines of Pyrrhonism," *The Skeptic Way: Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, New York: Oxford University Press. p. 175.

evil, the former accounts for the conceptual nature of evil's manifestation within the world and the latter accounts for how that manifestation affects the nature of God's divine existence. The concept of evil can be articulated purely in secular terms, whereas the problem of evil is primarily a theological discussion.

A dramatic shift, then, has occurred in the discussion of evil: rather than bemoaning the harsh nature of suffering that we must bear, rather than labeling death as the greatest evil inflicted upon humanity, Sextus implicates God as bastardizing His creation. We have been left to fend for ourselves, irrespective of fate or divine providence; God has abandoned us in a cosmos where, "everything is full of evil". Despite Sextus' skepticism and his indictment of God as absentee deity, he does offer an account of good and evil:

If, then, there exists anything good by nature or anything evil by nature, this thing ought to be common for all men and good or evil for all. For just as fire which is warmth-giving by nature warms all men, and does not warm some but chill others...what is good by nature ought to be good for all...but there is nothing good or evil common to all...therefore there does not exist anything good or evil by nature.⁵⁷

Surprisingly, Sextus' account of good and evil is to refute the possibility of their nature. Unlike the capriciousness of God's care, or even more forcefully said, his responsibility to his creation, which follows no conceivable logic, Sextus applies the most rigorous skeptical doubt in conceptualizing the nature of good and evil. Since being good or evil by nature would entail an ability to universalize, under every circumstance, either conception, and interpretations of these facts are (arguably) subjective matters, Sextus'

⁵⁷ Empiricus, Sextus. trans. R.G. Bury 1997. *Against the Physicists, Against the Ethicists*. Mass: Harvard University Press. Books 69-71.

suggest that it is impossible to generalize the nature of good and evil. Thus, he concludes, there is nothing that is inherently good or evil.

Though this conclusion may seem to follow from the premises, there are a number of problems in Sextus' argument. First, that the nature of good and evil, if the existence of such things are called into question, is contingent on subjective interpretations, in no sense serves to refute the possibility of their existence. It only demonstrates a difficulty in distilling their nature from an event, a feat that presents no logical contradiction.

Determinations of good and evil are complex assessments that require not only moral determinations, but political determinations as well, which is essentially an empirical process. Determinations of good and evil can be made in this regard, which is not to discredit Sextus' claim, by appealing to political rather than moral determinations. Furthermore, all human beings have bodies and those bodies are either healthy or sick. Sickness or disease yields suffering and misery whereas health points to wellbeing and an ability to flourish. On the level of embodiment, then, good and evil are physically or biomedically universal. Our embodiment is a necessary feature of our humanity and as such, our identification with these conceptions directly pertains to how an understanding of these concepts affects our bodies. As we have seen in the previous section, in account for evil one must also acknowledge the role of suffering, which is itself contingent on the idea of an embodied being. Thus, embodiment as the nature of our existence serves as the requisite framework with which we truly come to understand notions of good and evil.

Secondly, his use of the word 'nature' is vague. One can argue that the attempt to define the 'nature' of evil, as an essential component to understanding how we identify

events *as* evil is a meaningless prospect, since determinations of evil depend on the nature of the *event* rather than the nature of evil. In fact, one could grant Sextus the claim that evil has no nature and still demonstrate conditions wherein its manifestation yields the judgment that an event is evil. I will present such a case in chapter two. The very thought that one can either prove or disprove the existence of evil based on defining its nature, presupposes its existence—inevitably begging the question. The question is not whether there is a nature to evil, but whether we can identify conditions that lead to the determination that an *event* is evil. Evil, then, does not exist as a concept whose nature can be articulated based on some set of universals. Rather, evil exists as an empirical phenomenon of our *shared reality*, which can be logically assessed from the nature of the event in question—not the nature of evil itself.

Sextus' critique of God in light of the problem of evil challenges the conception of God's characteristics. Omnipotence, omniscience and omni-Benevolence are three characteristics that are attributed to God. For most, the existence of evil is readily apparent and, therefore, undeniable. However, God's attributes, viz., his omnipotence, omniscience and omni-benevolence, are incongruous with the existence of evil. If (1) God is omnipotent, (2), God is omniscient, and (3) God is benevolent, *and* one acknowledges the existence of evil, then the following truth table represents the problems with adhering to all four claims.

It is argued that God cannot retain all three attributes simultaneously. If God is omniscient and benevolent, and one acknowledges the existence of evil, then God cannot be omnipotent because if He were, His love and His knowledge of evil's existence would

compel Him to act on our behalf. Thus, though He may be said to be omniscient and benevolent it cannot be true that He is omnipotent in the face of such evil, (2&3) are true but (1) is false. If it is argued that God is omnipotent and benevolent, and one acknowledges the existence of evil, then God cannot be omniscient because if He were, his love and his unlimited power would allow Him to prevent the occurrence of evil, were He to know of its existence. Thus, though He may be said to be omnipotent and benevolent, it cannot be true that He is omniscient, (1&3) are true but (2) is false. Finally then, if it is argued that God is omnipotent and omniscient, and one acknowledges the existence of evil, then God cannot be benevolent because if He were, his power and His knowledge of evil would compel Him to prevent evil from ever occurring. Thus, though he may be said to be omnipotent and omniscient it cannot be true that he is benevolent, and this presents the ultimate critique against God's existence. If he knows that evil exists and He has the power to prevent its existence, but He does not because He does not love us, there can be no God, or at best, He would be an absentee deity that has bastardized all of His creation, (1&2) are true but (3) is false.

These references to the characteristics of God and the difficulties that arise over evil, is properly termed the *problem of evil*. Essentially, then, the problem of evil is a theological puzzle, rooted in monotheistic religion and only incidentally related to philosophical analysis.

More specifically, however, a discussion of the problem of evil requires the historical context with which emphasis was placed on the individual moral agent's use of free will, as the problem of evil is inextricably bound to the agent's exercise of freedom and God's

knowledge that such freedom would invariably result in the existence of evil. Thus, on moral grounds, since freedom is being assumed, responsibility and knowledge for proper actions, in accordance with a governing moral code, must also be assumed.

There were those philosophers who combined the discussion of free will with an analysis of political life, more so than simply discussing freedom in terms of particular moral agency. Within Islamic culture, al-Fārābī (Alfarabi), whose full name was Abū Nasr Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Tarkhān Ibn Awzalagh al-Fārābī, was such a thinker. He is regarded as the founding father of Islamic political thought. He commented extensively on both Plato and Aristotle. His theories of political life were heavily influenced by the *Republic*.

For Alfarabi, accounting for evil was simple. Evil resulted from the misery of our voluntary actions. In expressing our freedom, human beings have the ability to choose how they will govern themselves and in so doing it is inevitable that some will deliberately seek to inflict suffering on others. For Alfarabi, this capacity to act is an existing fact for all human beings.

There are, however, alternatives to this capacity. Alfarabi discusses the virtues of the soul, such as self restraint. These abilities serve to counter our inclinations toward evil. In seeking to cause other people to suffer or to increase their misery, Alfarabi suggests that we think in terms of how that desire may undermine the stability of the state.

If every citizen within the state were to seek to inflict suffering on others, quickly the state would slip into chaos and cease to exist. To prevent this disaster, Alfarabi suggests that we learn to control our impulses and think in terms of our interconnectedness rather

than our difference. In appealing to our similarities rather than our differences, Alfarabi's account of evil and its relation to the political speaks to the shared obligation of humanity to preserve life.

For Alfarabi, our voluntary actions define who we are as human beings. The person who chooses self restraint and moderation will invariably lead a virtuous life. Living a virtuous life strengthens the state, whereas seeking to harm other and increasing their misery leads to evil and the ultimate destruction of the state.

Within Alfarabi's political philosophy, he discusses the nature of evil (*sharr*) and characterizes its two types, a characterization that preceded St. Anselm's discourse of the same.⁵⁸ In *The Political Writings*, Alfarabi suggests the following:

Evil does not exist at all, not in anything of these worlds and, in general, in that whose existence is not at all due to human volition... That is because evil is of two types. One is the misery opposite to happiness. And the second is everything such that misery is obtained by means of it. Misery is evil in that it is the goal one comes to without there being beyond that a greater evil to which one comes by means of misery. The second is the voluntary actions such as to lead to misery.⁵⁹

Alfarabi clearly defines the existence of two forms of evil, both of which are described in terms of misery, as the ultimate goal of evil. In analyzing evil, a difference in typology does not reflect a difference in teleology, since misery is the goal for both types.

Distinctions in type, however, do reflect distinctions in the nature of their existence. For Alfarabi, one form of evil results from "the misery opposite to happiness" and the other

⁵⁸ I am unsure whether Anselm was familiar with Alfarabi's work, but his characterizations of evil, and the insights gained by his analysis, were investigated by Alfarabi nearly one hundred years earlier.

⁵⁹ Alfarabi. trans. Charles E. Butterworth. 2001. *The Political Writings*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, Aphorism 74, p. 47.

from “the voluntary actions [that] lead to misery.”⁶⁰ With respect to the relationship between evil and free will, then, it is important to note that free will, i.e., one’s “voluntary actions,” only account for the second type of evil. With respect to defining man’s predisposition toward evil, Alfarabi continues,

It is not likely to find a human being endowed so perfectly from the onset that no disparity is found in him at all and that the rest of his actions, his way of life, and his moral habits flow according to justice and equity without inclining to any of the extremes or to the tyranny of some contraries over others.⁶¹

For Alfarabi, it is evil if our voluntary actions are such that their occurrence leads to misery. Granted, our imperfections as human beings will always lead to faulty reasoning, which in turn leads to misery, but the intent of our actions must be governed by virtue. The virtuous person will shun evil and embrace goodness, and will be an asset to the city, whereas, the person without virtue will embrace evil and must be cast from the city.

Alfarabi writes,

Evils are made to cease in cities either by virtues that are established in the souls of the people or by their becoming self-restrained. Any human being whose evil cannot be made to cease by a virtue being established in his soul or by self-restrain is to be put outside the cities.⁶²

For Alfarabi, then, evil threatens the stability of the city and thus the state. If we are to safeguard the state, we must seek to instill virtue into the lives of every citizen; otherwise, it will spread, destroying the population and inevitably destabilizing the state. Thus, for Alfarabi, evil is defined in terms of the misery that results from voluntary

⁶⁰ Ibid, Aphorism 74. p. 47.

⁶¹ Ibid, Aphorism 97. p. 65.

⁶² Ibid, Aphorism 16. p. 20.

action. Since laws are passed by governmental officials to protect the lives and wellbeing of its citizenry, the existence of malignant forces within the population, seeking to proliferate misery, undermines the ability of the state to protect its people, which justifies Alfarabi's claim that, "Any human being whose evil cannot be made to cease...is to be put outside the cities."

As noted earlier, in our discussion of Mencius's critique of the king and his greed, the security of the state rests within the hands of its government. For Alfarabi, evil arises from two sources and either of these sources may also corrupt those charged with safeguarding the lives of its citizenry. His conception is well defined and articulated. Despite the variations in typology, however, the teleology is the same, the end being exclusion. If the goal of a given ruler is to exclude those that would otherwise benefit from inclusion, be it inclusive rights or accessibility to services, then the government directly participates in exacerbating the misery of those within the excluded group. On an Islamic conception of evil, the actions of the government would equally warrant reproach. Thus, under Islamic code, both the moral agent and those charged with governing the population are bound to proper moral action. Any intention, whether vocalized or not, whether written or thought, to enact or prolong the misery of another human being is deemed evil.

Anselm of Canterbury continues the discussion writing,

Let us turn now to a consideration of the will and recall the conclusion to which we have come: namely, that the will for happiness, whatever it wills, is not evil but a good before receiving justice. From which it follows that, when it abandons the justice received, if it is the same essence as it was before, it is something good insofar as it exists, *but*

insofar as justice is not in the thing that it was in, it is called evil and unjust (emphasis added).⁶³

Anselm returns to a Platonic conception of justice (*dikē*) and further elaborates on the interrelation between that which is just and that which is good. The conception of justice, in a political sense is not novel to Anselm; it is a conception as old as Western philosophy. What Anselm was able to contribute, however, was the union of justice and injustice with the conceptions of good and evil. A further investigation of Anselm's quote reveals that the deliberate attempt to remove justice from moral considerations is both "evil and unjust." If, in determining the morality of a given action, the moral agent willfully removes or overlooks conception of justice and equality, fairness and inclusion, for the intended purpose of excluding members of the community that would otherwise be included in moral consideration, then the moral agent's action ought to be considered, according to Anselm, as evil and unjust. What is important to understand from Anselm's articulation of evil is the emphasis he places on the agent's will and the exercise of his freedom in determining which action to take. If, in determining the appropriate course of action, I intentionally disregard the moral considerations of an agent, how, then, am I to hold claim to proper moral conduct. To remain consistent with proper moral conduct, I ought to respect and recognize the freedom of other moral agents, all of whom hold the same claim to exercising their freedom as I do. Thus, essential to a discussion of evil, especially if the discussion focuses on conception of justice and morality, is the

⁶³ Anselm, Brian Davies, and G. R. Evans. 1998. "On the Fall of the Devil." In *The major works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. § 19, p. 221.

recognition of other wills, and other, possibly competing, modes of interpretation. Otherwise, the moral agent cannot hold claim to inclusivity.

The argumentative difference between Anselm and Augustine's conception of the nature of the will, differ in the slightest regard, but it is an essential distinction. For Augustine, we are free to determine our actions and evil is an absence of goodness, which also holds true for Anselm. The difference being, however, that for Anselm,

*the nature in which injustice is found is something evil, because it is something real and differs from injustice which is evil and is nothing. Therefore, what is real is made by God and comes from him; what is nothing, that is evil, is caused by the guilty and comes from him (emphasis added).*⁶⁴

Anselm's argument here is a bit complex and arguably confusing, but it is important to understand what is being said. The circumstances wherein we identify an act or event as unjust, is itself an instance of evil, i.e., the particular, real world event, wherein an atrocity occurs is an identifiable instance of evil. This identification of an evil event, however, differs from the lack of goodness, which is *also evil* but posits no identifiable existence. It is evil insofar as it is not good but it posits no positive (in the sense of actual) evil. He later writes,

When the we hear the word 'evil' we do not fear *the evil that is nothing*, but that which is *something real* and follows the lack of the good. Many sufferings follow on injustice and blindness and those in fact are nothing, but these sufferings are evil and are something real and it is these we fear when we hear the word 'evil'.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Ibid, § 21, p. 223.

⁶⁵ Ibid, § 26, p. 230

Anselm has two radically different conceptions of evil; there is, what I will call, the conception of ‘evil as nothing’ and ‘evil as something’. I will argue two points. First the conception of ‘evil as nothing’ is synonymous with, that which is not-good, and second, that we equivocate in the use of the term ‘evil’ if we are interchangeably using ‘evil’ as that which is not-good, (evil as nothing) on the one hand, and evil as a positive act of exclusion and destruction, on the other. The two are *not* interchangeable. In the following chapter, I will disregard the concept of ‘evil as nothing’ or the lack of goodness for a positive (being actual) account of evil, which will require me to define and qualify what is meant by the term.

Anselm’s account of the distinction between ‘evil as nothing’ and ‘evil as something’ and Alfarabi’s discussion of the two forms of evil are important contributions to a philosophical investigation of evil. We are frequently equivocating in the use of the term evil, which Anselm recognized and all too many have overlooked. We are not using the term ‘evil’ in the same sense if we are defining an event that was not good from one’s voluntary actions that led to evil, which has semantic rather than ontological importance. For example, there is a difference in saying “Though he could swim, Bob did not save Mary from drowning,” and saying, “Bob drowned Mary”. Many would suggest that both are instances of evil, and they may be correct, but the use of the term ‘evil’ in formulating an argument, cannot have two senses, i.e., we cannot use the term ‘evil’ to mean *both* that which is not-good *and* that which results from one’s voluntary actions to do evil. Thus, we are certainly justified in asking, “In what sense is the term ‘evil’ being used.” In formulating an argument, we can use the former or the latter but not both.

In this analysis, in referring to the term evil, I will *always* be referring to the conception of evil as positing something positive. I will never use the term evil to describe an instance of not being good. Though it is also correct to discuss evil in terms of not being good, I will refrain from using this sense of the term. In the following chapter, I will define the positive attributes that I have ascribed to evil and further define what I mean by the term. Furthermore, it is not being suggested that these are the only two senses of the term, to add more would only strengthen my point. My argument is based on Anselm's explanation of this difference, and as such, I will limit my use of the term 'evil' to a positive account of evil as something.

Both Alfarabi and St. Anselm discuss evil in terms of the concept of evil, one form of evil arising in opposition to that which is good, and the causes of evil as arising from one's voluntary actions. If voluntary action is based on one's freedom of will, and the will is the source of evil's existence, then one's voluntary action is the source of evil's existence. Might there, however, be some third omni-malevolent cause of evil? This question is posed and answered by Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Saint Thomas Aquinas offered a comprehensive analysis of evil within his magnum opus, *Summa Theologica*. Rather than surveying Aquinas' discussion of evil, however, I have selected two key points of interest for investigation. First, does Aquinas believe in the existence of a supreme evil, as the cause of all lesser evils, which would function as alternative cause of evil? And second, what is the signification of evil?

Regarding the first question, St. Aquinas ultimately disagrees with the conception that a supreme evil could exist, but he poses the following argument.

Further, if one contrary is in nature, so is the other. But the supreme good is in nature, and is the cause of every good... Therefore, also, there is a supreme evil opposed to it as the cause of every evil. Further, as we find good and better things, so we find evil and worse. But good and better are so considered in relation to what is best. Therefore, evil and worse are so considered in relation to some supreme evil.⁶⁶

In formulating his *reductio ad absurdum*, Aquinas suggests that one could argue for the existence of a supreme evil based on the conception of the greatest good, *summum bonum*. Since nature is comprised of contrary existences,⁶⁷ and the *summum bonum* exists within nature, it seems logical to conclude that the *summum malum*, or the greatest evil, also exists. If the *summum malum* existed, it would be the cause of every evil in existence.⁶⁸ Thus, Aquinas considers the possibility of its existence, but refutes the infinite regress of causes and effects, which would result from a lack of a *summum malum*. He writes,

Further, the evil of the effect is reduced to the evil of the cause, because the deficient effect comes from the deficient cause... But we cannot proceed to infinity in this matter. Therefore, we must suppose one first evil as the cause of every evil.⁶⁹

Assuming the logical necessity of a *summum malum*, which prevents a regression of causes and effects *ad infinitum*, Aquinas argues against the possibility of its existence by appealing to the conception that evil is the lack of that which is good. In chapter three of

⁶⁶ Aquinas, Thomas, "Summa Theologica", Fathers of the English Dominican Province (trans.), Daniel J. Sullivan(ed.), vols. 19–20 in Robert Maynard Hutchins (ed.), *Great Books of the Western World*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago, IL, 1952. Part I, Q. 49, article 3, objection. 2-3.

⁶⁷ Aristotle, *Heavens*, II, 3 (286a23).

⁶⁸ *Summa Theological*, Part I, Q. 49, article 3, objection. 4.

⁶⁹ *Summa Theological*, Part I, Q. 49, article 3, objection. 6.

this analysis I will argue against the suggestion that evil is merely a privation of goodness, as this line of reasoning is prone to error. Nevertheless, Aquinas writes,

But there cannot be a supreme evil, because...although evil always lessens good, yet it never wholly consumes it; and thus, since good always remains, nothing can be wholly perfectly bad.⁷⁰

Aquinas even makes the stronger claim, which was discussed in my analysis of Aristotle and Laozi, that evil invariably destroys itself. Aristotle writes,

[Anger] can be manifested in all the points that have been named (for one can be angry with the wrong person, at the wrong things, more than is right, too quickly, or too long); yet all are not found in the same person. Indeed they could not; *for evil destroys even itself*, and if it is complete becomes unbearable (emphasis added).⁷¹

Aquinas concludes that the *summum malum* cannot exist because it would destroy itself. Furthermore, Aquinas must reject this conception of the *summum malum* because the existence of an all powerful force of evil would further exacerbate the problem of evil and particularly undermine God's love. As the creator of the universe it would be impossible to account for the existence of absolute evil, which would be the cause of all minor instances of its instantiation. Theologically, then, Aquinas cannot support the notion of a *summum malum* because he would then be left with the terrible task of accounting for its existence in light of God's characteristics. On these grounds, then, and based on his religious beliefs, Aquinas must deny the existence of the *summum malum*.

⁷⁰ *Summa Theological*, Part I, Q. 49, article 3.

⁷¹ Aristotle. trans. W. D. Ross, J. O. Urmson. 1988. *The Nicomachean ethics*. (Oxfordshire): Oxford University Press. IV.5, 1125b35.

Evil, then, is said to approach supreme evil but it is incapable of utterly destroying that which is good, since it is defined as that lack of goodness.⁷² If the existence of evil is inextricably bound to goodness, and is more properly defined as a lack of goodness, then the complete lack of goodness would serve as a sufficient condition for the destruction of evil.

I turn now to the question of signification. Concerning the signification of evil, and I quote here at length, Aquinas writes,

One opposite is known through the other, as darkness is known through light. Hence, what evil is must be known from the notion of good. Now we have said above that good is everything desirable; and thus, since every nature desires its own being and its own perfection, it must be said also that the being and the perfection of any nature has the character of goodness. *Hence it cannot be that evil signifies being*, or any form of nature. Therefore it must be that by the name evil is signified a certain absence of good. And this is what is meant by saying that “Evil is neither a being nor a good.” For since being, as such, is good, the taking away of the one implies the taking away of the other (emphasis added).⁷³

Aquinas suggests that being has the “character of goodness,” which is to assert that, that which exists (being) is signified by goodness, i.e., all of reality is signified by goodness. Thus, goodness is a signifier, and it signifies being. What is interesting about Aquinas’ claim, though he doesn’t make it at all clear, is that evil is not, and cannot be, a signifier, i.e., evil does not signify being. In fact, if one defines evil as a lack of goodness, and a lack constitutes privation, if the signifier is deprived, that which it signifies must also be

⁷² Though Aquinas’ refutation of the *summum malum* follows from defining evil as a lack of goodness, it does not follow from a definition of evil based on one’s voluntary actions, which is not a privation of goodness but the willful attempt to proliferate evil.

⁷³ *Summa Theological*, Part I, Q. 49.

deprived, which is reflected in his claim that “the taking away of the one implies the taking away of the other.” The taking away of goodness (the signifier) is the taking away of being (that which is signified by goodness). Thus, if one accepts the premise that evil is defined as a lack of goodness, and that goodness signifies being, then one must recognize that it is incorrect to conclude that evil, too, signifies being. The signification of being cannot be ascribed on these grounds, by a privation of goodness, since the privation, the lack, has no signification. As we have seen the *summum malum* or supreme evil destroys itself because if the existence of evil is inextricably bound to goodness, and is defined in terms of privation, then the complete privation of goodness serves as the sufficient condition for the destruction of evil.

Being is signified by goodness, without which it would cease to exist. Since evil cannot signify being, we are made aware of evil’s existence because of a privation in goodness. Without goodness, then, being would cease to be, i.e., it would cease to exist, since it is signified by goodness. Thus, to argue for the possibility of the *summum malum*, necessitates the absence of goodness, and goodness is the only source of signification from being. Thus, the *summum malum* eliminates the signification of being (goodness) and thereby being itself. On this ground, the *summum malum* is impossible since it results in the total annihilation of being.

As we have seen in the discussion, Aquinas introduces the notion of the *summum malum* only, in the end, to argue for the ontological impossibility of its existence. The question, however, one must ask is, “Why does Aquinas deny the ontology of the *summum malum*?” In denying the ontological existence of the *summum malum* Aquinas

preserves the monotheistic sentiments of an omni-benevolent God. Aquinas' theology has informed his philosophy and as such he cannot allow for the existence of the *summum malum* as such an acknowledgment would undermine his theological beliefs.

Though he ultimately denies the ontological possibility of the *summum malum*, as noted earlier, Aquinas does consider its existence. It is of the utmost importance that one recognizes that Aquinas' refutation of the ontological existence of the *summum malum* assumes a theistic cosmogony, wherein the origin of the universe is ultimately traceable to God. If one denies the existence of God and assumes as secularist or naturalist cosmogony, then one is certainly justified in reexamining the plausibility of the ontological existence of the *summum malum*. Again, for Aquinas, the *summum malum* is refuted on theological grounds as the theist cannot accept the ontological existence of the *summum malum*. Nontheistic accounts are not obligated by such limitations.

If one attempts to conceptualize the ontological existence of the *summum malum*, given a secular humanists stance, then two key assertions arise. First, in articulating the ontology of the *summum malum* one can argue that its reality is not a result of continuum wherein absolute evil dominates all of existence. Rather, one can certainly argue that the ontology of the *summum malum* arises as a fleeting occurrence that rushes to the surface, destroys all within its path, and then collapses under its own heinousness. It is a pulse or a spike. It is pronounced and totalizing. Within the history of the world, the *summum malum* manifests as total devastation. Secondly, then, the ontological basis of the *summum malum* can to be affirmed in the context of the unyielding attempt to destroy human life. Unlike the problem Aquinas faced in describing a transcendent evil, i.e., a

supernatural evil, the secular humanist can certainly account for the ontology of evil without also appealing to the transcendence of evil. Thus, the *summum malum* is ontologically sound if its manifestation is relegated to this world. Whereas the theist may represent the manifestation of the *summum malum* as the ultimate conquest of the devil over the force of good, the secular humanist can offer a more pragmatic account of its manifestation in genocide and extermination of massive portions of the human population. Thus, the ontological impossibility of the *summum malum* only results from accepting a theistic cosmogony. If one accepts a naturalistic cosmogony of the universe the ontological possibility of the *summum malum* can be explained in terms of a totalizing attempt to destroy human life.

Medieval philosophers desperately fought with an attempt to understand the problem of evil and how one, especially one of faith, is to reconcile the existence of God with the existence of evil, their solutions to the problem of evil, however, manifested in a broad spectrum of alternative accounts. Whether God was implicated as an absentee deity or man was implicated as the source of evil in the exercise of his freedom, throughout the Middle Ages the discussion of evil was always articulated within the context of the problem of evil, i.e., it was articulated in theological terms. The problem of evil, however, is only a problem for the theist, which left many secularist and atheists to view an investigation into the nature of evil as essentially fruitless. This wholesale rejection of the existence of evil will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three of this analysis, but the notion that the contemplation of evil is essentially a theological enterprise is a direct result of the proficiency with which medieval philosophers engaged the topic.

1.8. Early Modern Conceptions of Evil: 16th – 17th Century

In conceptualizing the formation of society, Thomas Hobbes addresses the concept rather than the problem of evil. It is, then, the natural attempt to return to a non-theological discussion of the concept rather than the problem of evil, which motivated Hobbes' inquiry. Thomas Hobbes was adamant to offer an account of evil in political rather than theological terms. Like Alfarabi, Hobbes describes evil in terms of its manifestation within and affect on the state. For Hobbes, evil arises in the state of nature, which is both a pre-moral and pre-social state.

Within the state of nature there are no restrictions in how individual power is wielded and those with limited power will fall prey to those with more power. Individuals will use force to attain the limited resources available. However, all individuals within this state of nature share an equality of needs. Since there is a limited capacity for altruism, each person within this pre-social state will use force to acquire the resources he needs to survive at the expense of the lives of every other person within the state of nature.

The resulting situation is state of constant war, in which each person is feverishly fending for his own wellbeing. The formation of the political results in the recognized need to allocate and resources fairly and efficiently. The problem, however, with such a state of affairs is that one quickly realized that if one is to preserve one's life it will require an impartial third party. However, all are motivated by self interest, which only complicates any attempt to protect the lives of others. Thus, a sovereign must be elected and the power to take one's life is transferred to the sovereign, who is now obligated to protect the lives of his subjects.

The constant war that defined the state of nature is offset by the protection guaranteed by the sovereign. Thus, for Hobbes, evil proliferates within a state of nature, where our unregulated desires result in constant chaos. With the formation of society, however, human beings establish codependence and as such the necessary norms to govern our actions. Evil, then, is the natural and logical outcome of the given nature of our pre-social setting. A limitation on resources in a setting where each must fend for his own can only be described in terms of evil. It is proliferated by unobstructed greed and self centeredness. Only through our socialization, then, are we able to overcome evil.

There is an explicit account of evil in Hobbes' conceptualization of the social. For Hobbes, evil is,

...the object of his Hate, and Aversion [which results in]...three kinds...Evil in promise...Evil in effect...and Evil in the means...*Molestation* or *Displeasure* [is] the appearance or sense of evil... (italics in original).⁷⁴

Though Hobbes offers an account of these three kinds of evil, he does not articulate their function, which suggests that he recognized their existence, but felt no need to define each kind or relate each to its sociological corollary.

If, on the other hand, one argues that no account of Hobbes' social contract theory can be reduced to psychological egoism, including the mechanics of behavior, then it is imperative to demonstrate the necessary conditions for the existence of evil in terms of pure mechanics (i.e., in terms that do not include human motivation), which is substantially more difficult. In his analysis of Hobbes, Gert concludes,

⁷⁴ Hobbes, Thomas, and Richard Tuck. 1996. *Leviathan*. Cambridge texts in the history of political thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 39-40.

In showing that psychological egoism cannot be validly deduced from Hobbes' mechanism, in either version, it was not necessary to investigate the concept of self-interest, only that of motive. By showing that a motive entails having a belief and that neither version of Hobbes' mechanism entails having any beliefs, it was possible to conclude that Hobbes' mechanism could not entail...psychological egoism.⁷⁵

While this account of Hobbesian mechanics severs the association between psychological egoism, by disassociating motivation and belief from Hobbes' mechanism, it may seemingly sever a mechanistic account of Hobbes' social contract theory from a discourse on evil.

For those accounts that do not have their basis in freedom, evil manifests as a consequence of providence or God's divine will, i.e., our will is determined. The existence of human motives results in an ability to exercise our freedom, which often leads to evil. The alternative account is to suggest that our actions are mechanical (their function is independent to our beliefs), resulting in pure determination, either by God or nature, which also has the tendency of leading to evil. Thus, evil has two sources and these sources are mutually exclusive.

- | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---------------|---|------|
| 1. Motivation | – | Freedom | – | Evil |
| 2. Mechanical | – | Determination | – | Evil |

What if, wonders the defender of Hobbes' mechanism, there was a third account of evil, which could be articulated such that one combined a mechanical account of behavior with the freedom of will, which still resulted in the existence of evil?

- | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---------|---|------|
| 3. Mechanical | – | Freedom | – | Evil |
|---------------|---|---------|---|------|

⁷⁵ Gert, Bernard. 1965. "Hobbes, Mechanism, and Egoism" *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 61, Oct., p. 341-349. p., 347.

Such an account would allow for a confluence of mechanistic behavior, on the one hand and freedom on the other, which is the only logical conclusion since Hobbes believed that we were free. It is suggested that human behavior exists independent to motivation, which, for Gert holds true,

Whether we say that one's action is caused by some more elaborate physical, chemical, biological, or psychological terms, nothing follows about motives...not even...that one did or did not have a motive in doing [an] action.⁷⁶

Such an account would suggest that evil exists as a consequence of human behavior, which is mechanical insofar as there is no *identifiable* association between action and motivation. Thus, our behavior is shaped by forces beyond our control, which is not to say that our behavior is determined. Granted, it would require an extensive investigation to successfully “prove” the possibility of mechanical-freedoms resulting in evil, an investigation I would certainly love to read, but it is difficult to see how one would go about formulating such an argument.

In discussing a Hobbesian account of the social, whether one holds psychological egoism as applicable to his account or not, one has the challenge of incorporating his conception of evil in either case. For those who deny a psycho-egoistic read of Hobbes, explaining evil is all the more difficult (though not impossible) as one would have to account for the concept of mechanical-freedoms resulting in evil, which could conceivably exist but would certainly be difficult to demonstrate.

The most consistent account of good and evil, then, according to Hobbes' discussion of the emergence of the social order and transference of power to the sovereign locates

⁷⁶ *Ibid* 348.

the concepts of good and evil within his sociopolitical framework. For Hobbes, then, goodness is located within social order and gives rise to a well governed society, whereas evil results from the four factors mentioned earlier that inform the state of nature—limited altruism, equality of needs, equality of powers, and scarcity of resources. This juxtaposition between war and peace, good and evil is best exemplified in the following:

For moral philosophy is nothing else but the science of what is *good*, and *evil*...*Good*, and *evil*, are names that signify our appetites and aversions...And therefore so long as a man is in the condition of mere nature, which is a condition of war, as private appetite is the measure of good, and evil: and consequently all men agree on this, that peace is good, and therefore also the way, or means of peace, which, as I have shown before, are *justice, gratitude, modesty, equity, mercy*, and the rest of the laws of nature, are good; that is to say, moral virtues; and their contrary *vices*, evil (emphasis in original).⁷⁷

Hobbes describes the condition of “mere nature” as a state of war, that is, an existence in a pre-social setting must be dominated by continuous war and anarchy. Evil prevails within this setting as there are no political systems yet in place to enforce peace. Consequently, after transitioning from the state of nature into the social order, not only does one transition from a continuous state of war, one also realizes, for the first time, an opportunity to actualize peace, which is inconceivable in the state of mere nature. Thus, for Hobbes, good points to peace and civility and evil manifests in war and the state of nature. The veracity of Hobbes’ account rests in his ability to articulate the existence of both good and evil within the understanding and discretion of the sovereign’s judgment. Emphasis is placed in the power of his judgment, which of course is not infallible, but for

⁷⁷ Hobbes, 1996. p. 123-124.

Hobbes, judgment is an essential element in identifying and describing what one means by evil, thereby removing any mystery from its discussion. In the transition from the state of nature to a socialized setting, the transference of judicatory power shifts from the mob and their continual warmongering to the sovereign and his efforts to preserve peace and civility. Hobbes describes the ease with which we can discuss and understand conceptions of good and evil.

Here is confirmed the right that sovereigns have, both to the *militia* and to all *judicature*; in which is contained as absolute power as one man can possibly transfer to another. Again, the prayer of King Solomon to God was this: (I Kings, 3. 9) *Give to thy servant understanding, to judge thy people, and to discern between good and evil.* It belonged therefore to the sovereign to be *judge*, and to prescribe the rules of *discerning good and evil*: which rules are laws; and therefore in him is the legislative power... To these places may be added also that of *Genesis*, (3,5) *Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* And (verse 11) *Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee thou shouldest not eat?"* For the cognizance or judicature of *good and evil*, being forbidden by the name of the fruit of the tree of knowledge (emphasis in original).⁷⁸

For Hobbes, then, in the transference of power from the state of nature to the sovereign also results in transference of the power to judge and exercise capital punishment, as such powers are necessarily reserved for the state. The state of nature is plagued by evil and war precisely because everyone has the ability to serve as judge and executioner, whereas in the social settings these powers are reserved for the sovereign, which is exactly how society is spawned. Thus, peace and goodness are predicated on proper judgments,

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 156-157.

whereas war and evil arise from a diffusion of judgment and the ability to exercise capital punishment throughout the population, a condition that can only give rise to anarchy and violence.

In his *Ethics*, Baruch Spinoza formulates an altogether different account of good and evil in terms of pleasure and pain. He writes,

Knowledge of good and evil is nothing other than the emotion of pleasure or pain in so far as we are conscious of it...so far as we perceive some thing to affect us with pleasure or pain...we call it good or bad; and so knowledge of good and evil is nothing other than the idea of pleasure or pain...⁷⁹

Spinoza's account of good and evil, in terms of pleasure and pain, covers a wide range of topics from the emotions⁸⁰ to desires,⁸¹ human nature,⁸² to knowledge⁸³ and fear.⁸⁴ Of the many issues discussed by Spinoza, I am interested in the relationship between fear and evil. Concerning fear, Spinoza writes,

He who is guided by fear, and does good so as to avoid evil, is not guided by reason...This corollary can be illustrated by the example of the sick man and the healthy man. The sick man eats what he dislikes through fear of death. The healthy man takes pleasure in his food and thus enjoys a better life than if he were to fear death and directly seek to avoid it.⁸⁵

To continue with Spinoza's metaphor I will briefly discuss two approaches to medical treatment. Within the health sciences, one may approach the discussion of medical

⁷⁹Spinoza, Benedictus de, Samuel Shirley, and Seymour Feldman. 1992. *The ethics: Treatise on the emendation of the intellect ; Selected letters*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., (IV, prop. 8)

⁸⁰ Ibid., (IV, prop. 14)

⁸¹ Ibid., (IV, prop. 15-17)

⁸² Ibid., (IV, prop. 29-31, 68)

⁸³ Ibid., (IV, prop. 19, 27, 64-66)

⁸⁴ Ibid., (IV, prop. 63)

⁸⁵ Ibid., (IV, prop. 63, *scholium*)

treatment in one of two fashions. Either one may discuss medical treatment in terms of preventative medicine or one may discuss treatment in terms of reactionary medicine. A preventative approach to medical treatment is informed by precautionary and proactive measures taken to maintain a healthy standard of life. A reactionary approach to medical treatment, however, begins as a response to a decline in the patient's quality of living, by the onset of disease formation, sudden illness etc. The motivation of a patient seeking treatment for a preexisting illness is one of fear, viz., fear of death. The patient's fear, however, could have been minimized or completely eliminated by informing the patient of the necessary steps that could have been taken to prevent disease formation in the first place, which is evident in the claim, "The sick man eats what he dislikes through fear of death."⁸⁶ He eats what he dislikes because he believes that in so doing, he will live longer. Thus, eating what he dislikes is motivated by fear, since he would otherwise shun the thought of eating it. Similarly, Spinoza is arguing, that our actions must be guided by reason rather than fear. The most rational people will make a hasty decision if fear is motivating the decision. It is better to act in light of all the facts, make a decision based on the information presented, which requires time, and an understanding of these facts, than to make a hasty decision based on fear.

Fear, then, is a powerful tool in hastening faulty decisions and the prized tool of terrorists the world over. If a state of terror manifests, there is no opportunity for preventative measures to combat its existence. The immediate state of terror requires a visceral reactionary response. This response is typically in the best interest of the

⁸⁶ Ibid., (IV, *prop.* 63, *scholium*)

population at large, but it is most certainly based on fear rather than reason. Was the state of terror not to exist, the decision to act out of desperation would assuredly differ given adequate preparation, time and information. The man eats what he dislikes because he has to in order to survive. To refuse to do so expedites his death. But the man could have lived a different, a more self reflected life. Similarly, the state that engages in a reactionary war as a means of combating terrorism, only demonstrates the lack of preparation and intelligence gathering, which may have prevented such a state of terror from arising in the first place.

In his discussion of good and evil, Spinoza addresses these conceptions by means of their relations to pleasure and pain, but more importantly, however, he discusses the nature of rational thought and the capacity for decision making in the face of one's own mortality. The threat of death, the recognition of our fragility yields a fear so powerful, a terror so great that it impedes the capacity for rational thought. The mechanization of this terror, this fear, hampers the state's ability to sufficiently protect members of its population, by forcing hasty decisions. Thus, to prevent such terror from undermining the sovereignty of the state, and protecting its populations, the state must learn to prevent a state of terror from forming rather than reacting to a state of emergency.

More so than merely describing fear as a cause of evil, Spinoza discusses the concept of evil as it pertains to an investigation of nature and our knowledge of good and evil. In an insightful passage he writes,

Every man for the laws of his own nature, necessarily seeks or avoids what he judges to be good or evil. Knowledge of good and evil is the emotion of pleasure or pain insofar as we are conscious of it, and therefore every man necessarily

seeks what he judges to be good and avoids what he judges to be evil (emphasis in original).⁸⁷

To judge Spinoza's account of the distinction between good and evil as hedonic is a mischaracterization. It is more than the simple affinity for pleasure and the judgments that moral agents make, with respect to their specific desires and proclivities, which influence their nature. Again, Spinoza writes. "Every man for the laws of his own nature..." though it may certainly sound as if Spinoza is defending a relativistic account of good and evil, insofar as the laws of good and evil seem to conform to the nature of each individual, such an account would be incorrect. In a later passage Spinoza notes,

pleasure consists in the transition to a state of greater perfection, blessedness must surely consist in this, that the mind is endowed with perfection itself.⁸⁸

This account harkens to the Platonist account of the forms, wherein the semblance or the imitation of the true form of perfection, i.e., the good, is represented in a lesser instantiation, namely the mind of the perceiver. The suggestion is that if we have a conception of perfection within our minds and we are obviously not perfect beings, then there must exist this perfect thing, namely, God or goodness that allows or justifies our ability to conceptualize perfection. Goodness, then, for Spinoza is undeniably attached and associated with perfection and God, thereby accounting for his pantheism. The inverse relationship also holds true. Spinoza writes,

So perfection and imperfection are in reality only *modes of thinking*, notions which we are wont to invent from comparing individuals of the same species or kind; and it is

⁸⁷ Ibid., (Part IV, Prop. 19)

⁸⁸ Ibid., (Part V, Prop 33, Scholium).

for this reason that I previously said *that by reality and perfection I mean the same thing*...So in what follows I shall mean by 'good' that which we certainly know to be the means for approaching *nearer to the model of human nature* that we set before ourselves, and by 'bad' that which we *certainly know prevents us from reproducing* the said model (emphasis added).⁸⁹

Based on what Spinoza has himself stated, it would be incorrect to attribute more importance to the conception of goodness and evil beyond modes of thinking.

Remember, Spinoza has argued that, "Knowledge of good and evil is the emotion of pleasure or pain," and he says that, "pleasure consists in the transition to a state of greater perfection," thus, goodness is a state of greater perfection and evil, then, a state of imperfection. Insofar as our conceptions of good and evil reflect modes of thought, our conceptions of these notions are not bound to the exactness and specificities of the natural world, as our thought is limitless, universal. Thus, in conceptualizing good and evil each moral agent faces the infinitude of their limitless intellectual capacities.

Spinoza's practical account of evil as simply a state of imperfection, results in an interpretative advantage insofar as one can now describe the existence of evil in relation to an inherent imperfection within the system, that system being either the nature of our social interactions, namely, our socialization, or the nature of the universe itself. The problem, however, with such an interpretation of evil is that it trivializes the grandeur and the willful method with which human life is destroyed. It is not merely that Hitler's conception of morality was imperfect, or in some sense flawed, but that he categorically rejected morality. For him, everything including the norms that govern human interaction

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

was subject to the will of the state. And as the leader of the state, Hitler positioned himself as God and as the ultimate source for moral justification. Thus, despite Spinoza's insight, there is grave danger in conceptualizing evil merely in terms of imperfection.

Leibniz situates his account of the problem of evil within a traditional account of mitigating the tension between the existence of evil and the characteristics of God. It should be noted, however, that for Leibniz, "God" is not to be understood in the traditional conception of God. Rather, God is understood in terms of nature or a cosmic force. As such, Leibniz was able to offer new interpretations in attempting to resolve this tension.

Like St. Augustine, Leibniz acknowledged the role of freedom. He argued that this world, with its misery and suffering, with the evil that plagues humanity, is still is the best of all possible worlds. For Leibniz, at each level of emergence, things are as complex as they possibly can be. So at each stage, the world is the best possible world. Thus, God, as defined as nature or cosmic force is himself bound to the laws of nature. Man's freedoms, then, cannot be limited.

In allowing for the existence of evil, however, unlike former articulation of the problem, for Leibniz, is it precisely because God loves us why evil exists. God, in His infinite wisdom realizes that He must allow for the existence of lesser evils if He is to prevent the existence of the greatest evil, an evil so powerful that it would destroy all of existence.

Leibniz is able both to account for the problem of evil and God's characteristics without denying either. In fact, he is able to define three forms of evil, namely,

metaphysical, physical and moral evil, none of which undermine God's characteristics. For Leibniz, then, evil is a necessary consequence of our existence which he expressly defines in terms of imperfection. Imperfection results from our flawed reasoning, which necessitates the existence of evil. Thus, as long as human reason is prone to error, evil will always exist.

Leibniz's *Theodicy* takes an unexpected stance within the historical narrative and discourse on the problem of evil, by claiming that our agency and will are undetermined, i.e., our will is free, without denying the omniscience or benevolence of God *and* acknowledging the existence of evil. Until now, the combinations of these characteristics were thought to be incompatible, but Leibniz is able to overcome the apparent disparity by arguing for the best of all possible worlds (BPW). Concerning the BPW, he writes:

Thus I shall say that God, by virtue of his supreme goodness, has in the beginning a serious inclination to produce...good and every laudable action, and to prevent...all evil and every bad action. But he is determined by this same goodness, united to an infinite wisdom...to produce the best possible design of things. This is his final and decretory will. And this design of the best being of such a nature that the good must be entrenched therein...God could not have excluded this evil, nor introduce certain goods that were excluded from this plan, without wronging his supreme perfection. So for that reason one must say that he permitted the sins of others, because otherwise he would have himself performed an action worse than all the sin of creatures.⁹⁰

The importance of Leibniz's BPW argument is that it lays bare the claim that this world, with its many imperfections and the obvious existence of evil, is the best of all possible

⁹⁰ Leibniz, G.W. 1998. *Theodicy*. Chicago: Open Court. p. 402.

worlds. The key difference between Leibniz's theodicy and traditional theodicies is that Leibniz does not recognize a disparity between God's love and the existence of evil.

For Leibniz, God's love is governed by his omniscience, and his "Supreme reason,"⁹¹ which allows God to instantaneously conceptualize all possible worlds, this particular world being the best of all possible. God, then, had to allow for the existence of lesser evils, so as not to introduce even greater evils into the world. Note, that it was God's reason that determines this course of action. For Leibniz, reason dictates that if one is to ascribe to the belief of the inherent freedom of our will, and one acknowledges the existence of evil, while holding steadfast to a belief in God, then the only means of coherence within such a theological system is to necessitate that God is ultimately rational. His reason could not prevent the existence of evil as it was necessitated by our freedom. Thus, "Supreme reason constrains him to permit the [existence of] evil."⁹²

In discussing the problem of evil, Leibniz had finally bridged the gap between the characteristics of God, on the one hand, and accounting for the existence of evil, on the other. He neither denied the characteristics of God, nor denied the existence of evil, but suggested, rather, that both conceptions are compatible given an understanding of the best of all possible worlds. The BPW, then, afforded Leibniz an ability to rationally explain the problem of evil without offending theists or denying its obvious existence.

The only possible offense to a theist is the appeal to evolution in Leibniz's theodicy. In contradistinction to the literal exegetic conception of the Creation, the world according to Leibniz suffers discrete stages in its development—a contention that also comes out in

⁹¹ Ibid.,129 XIV, p. 201.

⁹² Ibid.,129 XIV, p. 201.

his work on the early history of the Earth, *Protogaea*. As the world develops, it unfolds its implicit dynamic potential along ever greater stages of actuality. At each level of emergence, the beings in the created world are as complex as they *possibly* can be. Thus, already in this ontogenetic sense, the world is at each successive stage of its development the best of all possible worlds. Evil is simply a symptom of evolution, a sign that the world, in its self-realization along stages of possibility, is not yet done. God, the driving creative force, may well be omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent, but as the expression of the force is bound by the very structure it expresses, God, defined as cosmic force, is Himself bound to the self-created laws of nature.

Leibniz differentiates among types of evil. He notes,

Evil may be taken metaphysically, physically and morally. *Metaphysical evil* consists in mere imperfection, *physical evil* in suffering, and *moral evil* in sin. Now although physical evil and moral evil be not necessary, it is enough that by virtue of the eternal verities that they be possible. And as this vast Region of Verities contains all possibilities it is necessary that there be an infinitude of possible worlds, that evil enter into divers of them, and that even the best of all contain a measure thereof. Thus has God been induced to permit evil.⁹³

In attempting to account for the existence of evil, which must then be reconciled against the existence of God's grace and love, Leibniz offers three instantiations of evil, namely, metaphysical evil, physical evil and moral evil. Though he acknowledges the existence of both physical and moral evil, he suggests that their existence, "be not necessary." Thus, of the three forms of evil that he describes, only metaphysical evil exists with necessity. Moreover, Leibniz defines metaphysical evil as, "mere imperfection," which as has been

⁹³ Ibid., Part I, 21.

demonstrated by Spinoza's account of good and evil, is the same, i.e., metaphysical evil is defined in terms of an inherent imperfection within the system.

Since that system of existence is the universe in its entirety, and though there are laws of nature and regularities within the system, the system is necessarily balanced by the forces of entropy and chaos, black holes and lacunas in thought. An infinite multiplication of diversity would inevitably overpopulate existence. Thus, multiplicity and diversification must be, that is, they are necessarily balanced by, destruction and chaos.

Metaphysical evil exists with necessity because the nature of the universe is the continual refinement and evolution of life itself. The continuous evolution of species, knowledge and the universe itself, necessitates an acknowledged understanding that the universe cannot be a perfect creation. Were it to be a perfect creation evolution would cease to fulfill its function and a state of perfect would have been reached. Metaphysical evil, as described by Spinoza and Leibniz in terms of imperfection, follows as a necessary consequence of existence—as such. Where there is existence, and assuming a state of perfection has not been attained, then there must also exist imperfections inherent within the system, which is continually mitigated by the gradual process of evolution. Thus, the very notion of evolution is itself buttressed by the conception of metaphysical evil.

The imperfection within the system is also an imperfection within all human beings, i.e., moral imperfection. This imperfection, however, is itself contingent on the existence of human beings, as moral evil is solely a problem for humanity, barring the existence of

other sentient life forms. Moral evil is an imperfection of moral, which is mitigated by virtue, a notion that Leibniz shares with the ancients. But in the description of evil and its necessary existence within the world, for Leibniz, one can only articulate its existence in terms of metaphysical evil and the notion of inherent imperfection.

Early modern philosophers found themselves competing with the old paradigm of evil, viz., the problem of evil and the theological underpinnings that inform that analysis, and the new paradigm of evil, which is rooted in an increasingly secularist account of the same. The shift from the problem of evil to the concept of evil, during this philosophical age, swung like a pendulum, wherein philosophers attempted to divorce their theories from theology, at one end of the pendulum's swing, but were essentially unable to divorce the concept of evil from digressing into discussions of the problem of evil. Thomas Hobbes', however, was able to finally realize that the means of discussing evil without also enacting a theological discussion of the problem of evil was to articulate evil in terms of its sociopolitical manifestation. The manifestation of evil purely in terms of its sociopolitical dynamics, as mentioned earlier in my analysis of Mencius, is a return to the ancient concepts of government and the regulation of the masses by the prince. Though Hobbes merely points to this ability to articulate evil in terms of its sociopolitical instantiation as rooted in the moral agent's psychological egoism, I will continue, and more thoroughly describe the concept of evil and its greatest manifestation within sociopolitical terms in the act of genocide. Thus, without a proper understanding of the historical analysis of evil one cannot anticipate how the discussion will progress and as such the concept of evil will lose its relevance to contemporary thought. It is my

intention, then, to rekindle the investigation of evil in terms of its historical situatedness. To do this, however, requires that one understand the preconditions for a globalized society, and the need for international jurisprudence. To this end, Immanuel Kant articulated the conditions that would lead to the formation of the United Nations and he conceptualized the process and problems of globalization in the 18th century, which is why the analysis will culminate with a Kantian account of radical evil.

1.9. A Kantian Account of Radical Evil

Kant suggested that evil is best understood in terms of maxims rather than the consequences of actions. The maxim is the driving intention of an action. It is one of the conditions for the possibility to act. The maxim precedes the action. It informs the act. To describe evil strictly in terms of an action's performance or consequences is to misidentify the root of evil.

The power of a maxim rests in the fact it can be universalized. The moral agent can universalize the maxim and in the example of an evil person, Kant argues that those maxims that fail to be universalized are evil. The potential for evil presents a greater threat in ascribing to a failed maxim than in committing an evil act. If, in attempting to universalize a maxim, the moral agent realizes that it is impossible, i.e., the benefit is lost after universalization, but does so anyway, such an attempt is evil. Later, I will describe Kant's specific example of cheating to demonstrate this point. Thus, the good is universalizable and sustainable, whereas evil is self-reducing and unsustainable. The attempt, then, to act on a failed maxim is precisely what Kant defines as evil.

Thus, Kant's account is a hybrid between those accounts that suggest that evil is imposed on moral agents through misery (Alfarabi) and those that suggest that evil results from free will (St. Augustine). Kant, then, bridges the gap between strictly external and internal accounts of evil. For him, evil manifests as a union of both accounts. The internal notion of evil, as resulting from one's freewill is instead articulated in terms of maxims, which prescribe action. These actions affect the world as a consequence of the maxim. For Kant, then, it is impossible to discuss evil in terms of action without also discussing the maxim.

The benefit of Kant's account in a contemporary analysis of universal secular evil is his articulation of how evil is universalized. It is not, as Aquinas may have argued, universalized in the *summum malum*. Rather, Kant describes the attempt to universalize evil in terms of ascribing to a failed maxim. In the next chapter I will argue that this maxim or an ideology of exclusion is the unnatural attempt to universalize a failed maxim.

The greater point for Kant, in discussing the attempt to universalize evil is that such an attempt is inherently unsustainable, i.e., like the ancient Chinese philosophers, Kant contends that universal evil destroys itself. Evil is a function of collapse entailed by unsustainable actions. If, for example, one discusses murder and attempts to universalize it as a categorical imperative, one progresses from murder to mass murder, from mass murder to genocide and from genocide to the total destruction of life, which is contradictory to the intended imperative. One cannot universalize murder because it is unsustainable, i.e., perpetual murder is impossible. Thus, on Kantian grounds, genocide is

evil because it is a representation of the specific attempts to universalize this failed maxim. Such attempts seek to universalize murder for some but quite obviously not for themselves.

Kant defines evil in the following terms:

Well-being or ill-being always signifies only a reference to our state of *agreeableness* or *disagreeableness*, of gratification or pain, and if we desire or avoid an object on this account we do so only insofar as it is referred to our sensibility and to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure it causes. But *good* or *evil* always signifies a reference to the *will* insofar as it is determined by the *law of reason* to make something its object; for, it is never determined directly by the object and the representation of it, but is instead a faculty of making a rule of reason the motive of an action (by which an object can become real). Thus good or evil is, strictly speaking, referred to actions, not to the person's state of feeling, and if anything is to be good or evil absolutely (and in every respect and without any further condition), or is to be held to be such, it would be only the way of acting, the maxim of the will, and consequently the acting person himself as a good or evil human being, that could be so called, but not a thing.⁹⁴

Thus, for Kant, the maxim determines the morality of the act. Whatever is moral is a priori. Anything of moral relevance, and thereby anything that can be called 'good' or 'evil' is formal, i.e., its morality is contingent on the agreement between the action and the maxim. An action is evil, then, insofar as the attempt to universalize the maxim has failed yet the action is still performed. An action is good or moral insofar as the attempt to universalize has succeeded and the action performed conforms to the maxim.

⁹⁴ (tr. M. Gregor, Kant: Practical Philosophy, Cambridge Ed, p. 188)

What is material, or concerns the empirical, however, amounts to being contingent and a posteriori. Hypothetical imperatives do not count, so, as moral notions, ‘good’ and ‘evil’ cannot be defined in empirical terms. That is to say, for Kant, determinations of morality are based on the maxim not the action, since actions are empirical. So benefits and harms, being empirical, are improper assessments for determining morality. Essentially, good and evil concern the formal structure of action.

Crucial, of course, in the Kantian account, is the Categorical Imperative as the unified principle of morality. According to the first version of the Categorical Imperative, good turns out to be what is universalizable, which is to say, an action is good if anybody can replicate it and, in doing so, *continue* to replicate it indefinitely. According to the second version, good is a property of actions that accord humanity its appropriate respect, which is to say that good involves the treatment of autonomous beings *as* autonomous beings. According to the third version, good is whatever helps the evolution of complexity along, or whatever empowers heteronomous beings to develop into autonomous beings.

Thus, good actions are sustainable, appropriate, fitting, realistic, progressive, liberating, and empowering. Evil is the opposite. Evil is what fails to be universalized (by the first version of the categorical imperative), what treats ends as means (by the second version), and what enslaves (by the third). Put differently, for Kant, evil actions are self-reducing by the first version; they are inappropriate, misfits, and unreal, by the second version; and they are regressive, enslaving, and disenfranchising, by the third version. Thus, evil results from a failed attempt to universalize a maxim, where the action

was performed despite this failure. Goodness, on the other hand, rides on successful attempts to universalize maxims.

Our historical investigation into the nature of evil culminates with an analysis of Immanuel Kant's conception of *radical evil*, specifically, and the nature of evil in general. Evil has plagued humanity from the origins of time, as we have forgone paradise to suffer the brutality of an increasingly evil world. Rather than bemoaning the fact, Kant addresses this demise in his discussion on religion. He suggests that, "nature itself would be promoting the cultivation in us of this ethical predisposition toward goodness."⁹⁵ His account of 'nature' as a force, driving mankind toward the cultivation of goodness, is contrasted from an underlying failed maxim, which if enacted defines the act as evil. The locus of power in any discussion of evil, then, is situated in the moral agent's maxim, rather than the agent's actions. It is the maxim that motivates action, and as such, the maxim that is inherently evil. According to Kant's account, it is wholly incorrect to label the individual as evil if such an assessment is solely based on the act. Rather, it is the maxim that motivated the moral agent *to* act, which serves as the true source of evil. The specific act, however, is limited by the perpetrator's power. The more power the perpetrator has, the more pervasive the affects of evil. Kant, nevertheless, identifies the true source of evil within the maxim rather than the action. The maxim is universalizable. It contributes to our judgments about the nature of human morality, but is all-the-while inferred from "consciously evil action(s)."⁹⁶ The moral agent cannot be deemed evil by

⁹⁵ Kant, Immanuel, Allen W. Wood, and George Di Giovanni. 1998. *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason and other writings*. Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 46

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46

the actions he performs, without also regarding his maxims as evil. Since, one's maxims inform one's actions, the person is properly labeled as "an evil person" not because of the action he has performed but by the maxims that drove him to perform such actions in the first place. Kant describes this relationship between the action and the maxim in the following quote:

...we cannot observe maxims, we cannot do so unproblematically even within ourselves; hence the judgment that an agent is an evil human being cannot reliably be based on experience. In order, then, to call a human being evil, it must be possible to infer *a priori* from a number of conscious evil actions, or even from a single one, and underlying failed maxim.⁹⁷

Kant's conception that evil is rooted in the attempt to universalize a failed maxim, rather than simply identifying evil in particular actions, is the keystone of my research. The attempt to locate evil in one's maxims, rather than one's actions, suggest that Kant is emphasizing our specific obligations to uphold the moral law—for its own sake, i.e., the moral law is good in-and-of-itself, and for the sake of itself. *Prima facie*, then, a failed maxim is universalizable and therefore presents a greater metaphysical threat than any particular acts of evil, which is why Kant suggests that the determination of an evil person is based on his maxims rather than his actions. Moreover, the universalizability of a failed maxim, according to Kant, speaks to the general universal conception of evil that is at the heart of this discussion. At the heart of the discussion is the assertion that evil cannot and should not be limited to mere harms and torts, for specific instance of moral infractions. To do so is to relativize the scope and grandeur of evil to petty and trite moral

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 46

infractions, when in effect, evil is the deliberate and contemplative attempt to universalize a maxim that would endanger, harm, maim or kill a substantive portion of the population for personal gain. This attempt at universalization, however, ignores the fundamental principle of fairness and the value of human life—held with such esteem—in Kant’s first and second formulations of the categorical imperative, wherein he asserts,

*Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law...So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.*⁹⁸

Contrary to Kant’s imperatives, the moral agent seeking to universalize a failed maxim is inherently seeking reprieve from the very maxim universalized. That is, the attempt to universalize a maxim for personal gain is nullified during the process of universalization, wherein the sole benefits of the maxim is lost as it is a contradictory stance to attempt to universalize personal gain. More clearly states, then, personal gain is nullified if everyone benefits. Under a strict Kantian approach to both formulations of the categorical imperative, such indiscretions are not supported in the process of universalization. In the attempt to universalize evil, however, the moral agent is obliged to *him or herself*, i.e., the *duty* is to one’s self, rather than to the moral law. This strict obligation to one’s self, this adamant refusal to acknowledge the plight and sufferings of the *other*, this contradictory and unnatural attempt to universalize a maxim solely for personal gain, not only violates both of Kant’s formulations—especially the second—it deifies the moral

⁹⁸ Kant, Immanuel, and Mary J. Gregor. 1998. *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*. Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press. 4:421 & 4:429.

agent and grants him or her reprieve from the very maxim in question. Such biased self-centeredness universalized as the sole maxim of the moral agent *is the very definition of evil*. It is unnatural. It is unfair. It runs contrary to the moral law and whenever it is universalized, it necessitates evil.

The attempt, then, to universalize a failed maxim is unnatural. Evil runs counter to nature, which requires Kant to qualify just how he is defining the term *nature*. As we have seen, Kant has suggested that nature is a force promoting goodness. The unnatural attempt to universalize a failed maxim eschews the moral law and both of Kant's formulations of the categorical imperative for the exacerbation of suffering and death. So as not to confuse his use of the term 'nature,' Kant writes,

...by "the nature of a human being" we only understand here the subjective ground—wherever it may lie—of the exercise of the human being's freedom...but this subjective ground must itself always be a deed of freedom.⁹⁹

Kant's emphasis in the subjective grounding of our nature within deeds rather than the ability to choose reflects his understanding that the preservation of freedom and the justification for punishment requires personal accountability. Concisely, then, for Kant, our nature is inherently governed by freedom. We are free to choose, and thus accountable for the choices we make. According to Kant, one's choices cannot be determined. Thus, "the ground of evil cannot lie in any object *determining* the power of choice through inclination, not in any natural impulses, but only in a rule that the power of choice produces for the exercise of its freedom, i.e., in a maxim."¹⁰⁰ Evil, then,

⁹⁹ Kant *Religion*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁰ Kant, *Religion*, p. (46-47)

according to Kant, arises *from* our choice to universalize a failed maxim. Evil does not determine our choice, since our *nature* is inherently free. Evil follows from our choices, specifically our choices to universalize failed maxims. In short, evil results from human freedom. It is not merely that evil results from human freedom, but that evil manifests as a condition of one's maxims. Kant notes,

...the will is in all its actions a law to itself, indicates only the principle, to act *on no other maxim* than that which can also have as object itself as a universal law. This, however, is *precisely the formula of the categorical imperative* and is the principle of morality; hence a free will and a will under moral law are one in the same. If, therefore, freedom of the will is presupposed, morality together with its principle follows from it by mere analysis of its concept (emphasis added).¹⁰¹

The moral agent has at every instant the opportunity to *conform* to the moral law as is his obligation; his duty under the a priori conditions of his judgment should always be in accordance with the moral law, for the sake of the law itself. Remember, Kant's cautionary tale of the shopkeeper. It is only when the shopkeeper acts in accordance with the law, for the sake of the law itself, rather than out of fear of discovery, that his *action* is considered moral. The exercise of freedom, then, cannot be determined by "nature" nor can it be objectified in experience, since it serves as the very condition for morality and human agency. Nevertheless, the exercise of freedom directly informs the maxim the moral agent *chooses* to universalize. Properly speaking, then, one is held accountable by one's choice of maxim rather than the result of one's actions, which is contrary to a purely consequentialist interpretation of morality. This is not, however, to suggest that

¹⁰¹ *Groundwork*, 4:447.

Kant deemphasizes the role of one's actions, as it is to stress both the capacity of the moral agent's freedom of will, which is universal, and the resulting moral assessment of one's actions, which necessarily conforms to the given maxim. Thus, the exercise of one's freedom informs both the maxim and the action. If one freely chooses to universalize a maxim that is grounded in self-centeredness, without consideration for others, for one's own personal gain, the resulting action, must, and can only be, labeled as *evil* and cannot arise as a natural propensity among human beings.

For Kant, the adoption of a failed maxim cannot arise from a natural propensity within humans, because, as he notes, the "human being is alone its author," "its" referring to the maxim.¹⁰² The preservation of freedom and our ability to choose to universalize a good or failed maxim is prior to any and all experiences we perceive within the given world. Thus, experience cannot dictate future actions, i.e., Kant is denying the possibility of social determinism. For Kant, the ability to choose and the preservation of freedom are independent to our experience. Our actions do not determine our maxims; rather, it is the choice to universalize a particular maxim that determines our actions. Thus, an act is classified as evil not merely because it is an infraction of the moral law, for such errors in reasoning are redundant or tautological. Instead, the act is evil because the maxim necessitated an evil act. The maxim, then, serves to determine the nature of the action.

There are some, however, that focus on the nature of human beings, suggesting that, "*The human being is (by nature) either morally good or morally evil.*"¹⁰³ Kant argues that this disjunction isn't entirely accurate because it might also be true that human beings are

¹⁰² *Religion*, p. 47

¹⁰³ *Religion*, p. 47

neither morally good nor evil. The condition of being good or evil, then, according to Kant, functions independent to the moral agent's "natural" propensities. He writes,

...freedom of power of choice has the characteristic, entirely peculiar to it, that it cannot be determined to action through any incentive *except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim* (has made it into a universal rule for himself, according to which he wills to conduct himself); only in this way can an incentive, whatever it may be, coexist with the absolute spontaneity of the power of choice (of freedom).¹⁰⁴

The moral agent's actions are governed by his maxim, and the maxim is a consequence of his freedom. Thus, the agent's actions are a consequence of his freedom. The maxim, then, separates the agent's actions from his freedom. Since his actions are a reflection of his maxim, a change in maxim is a change in action. The ease with which we fluctuate between good and evil is reflexive of our change in maxims. This fluctuation is characterized by the manner wherein we describe some actions a "good" and others as "evil". Such a description pertains to the action and, as Kant has describes, does not speak to the "nature" of human beings, since to do so would eliminate human freedom. This, however, is not to suggest that a moral agent can be partly good *and* evil with reference to a particular act, if, to deem one's actions good or evil means that it has followed from one's choice in maxim, because one cannot universalize contradictory maxims. Take for example, the second formulation of the categorical imperative. One cannot simultaneously treat others as ends in themselves and also seek to exploit others for personal gain. Evil, then, is the deliberate selection of a maxim with disregard for the universal law, wherein the resulting actions are solely meant to benefit the moral agent's

¹⁰⁴ *Religion*, p. 49

self-interests. To be a good person means that the individual has properly selected the moral law as his maxim and has universalized accordingly, whereas to be an evil person means that he has not. This classification, however, in no sense speaks to the moral agent's "natural" disposition. Kant allows for a flexible transition between classifying a moral agent as good and evil because such classification does not rely on a "natural" propensity, i.e., no one is inherently good or evil. The moral agent's character is based on the choices he has made, especially which maxim he has chosen to universalize.

In discussing an agent's actions, then, one should recognize that good and evil emerge as properties of action, the existence of which continuously challenge the very notion of morality and the agent's maxims. Unlike Plato's notion of transcendent goodness, which is otherworldly, Kant has localized good and evil within the inferred presence of either good or failed maxims. Thus, with respect to the relationship between good and evil as properties of action, it is not the action itself that serves as the emergent property for the existence of good and evil, but the maxim that informed the agent's action. Kant is very clear in his account of this relationship between action and morality. He writes,

We call a man evil, however, *not because he performs actions that are evil* (contrary to law) but because these *actions* are of such a nature that we may infer from them *the presence in him of failed maxims*...but a man's maxims, sometimes even his own, are not thus observable; consequently the judgment that the agent is an evil man cannot be made with certainty if grounded in experience. In order, then, to call a man evil, it would have to be possible *a priori* to infer...the presence in the agent of an underlying

common ground, itself a maxim, of all particular morally-failed maxims (emphasis added).¹⁰⁵

It is, then, correct to assert that good and evil are emergent properties of actions because the underlying maxims informing those actions are themselves the true source for the existence of both good and evil. As suggested by Kant, we can observe the existence of good and evil from an agent's actions, that is, through the process of direct observation, but such a process cannot speak to the emergence of good and evil as properties of action. It is the action, then, that serves to manifest the existence of either good or evil. But as Kant has rightfully noted, the action is itself informed by the maxim. Thus in discussing the emergence of good and evil as a property of action, one must recognize that we cannot properly speak of action without fully acknowledging its relation to the maxim. The association of both the maxim and the action as one conceptual unit [maxim-action] is the very fabric with which all discussions of good and evil, and furthermore, all discussions of morality are based. To discuss the maxim in itself is incomplete because assessing judgments of morality would be impossible without the conformity or disconformities of action. Likewise, to also discuss an action by itself is also incomplete because there would be no standard or law with which assessments of morality could be referenced against. Thus, to truly understand the meaning of good and evil, one must first recognize that the existence of these concepts are themselves supported by the unit of maxims and actions.

¹⁰⁵ Kant, Immanuel, Allen W. Wood, and George Di Giovanni. 1998. *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason and other writings*. Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 16.

In a contemporary discussion of evil, Kant's articulation plays an integral role in bridging the gap between the substantive claims that evil is relative or has little bearing in political discourse and our emotive often visceral abhorrence to catastrophic abuses of political power, viz., genocidal and holocaustic level events. There is a cognitive discontinuity between the claims that, "evil does not exist" and the sight of innumerable decaying bodies, plied in towering heaps of amputated and mutilated piles. There is a "gut level" feeling of injustice, inhumanity, and repugnance, often coupled with numbness, paralysis and terror at even the mere thought of such wantonness destruction. Kant's discussion of evil bridges this chasm because, as he writes,

...we are *only* talking of a propensity to *genuine evil*, i.e., moral evil, which, since it is only possible as the determination of a free power of choice and this power for its part can be judged good or evil *only on the basis of its maxims*, must reside in the subjective ground of the possibility of the *deviation of the maxims from the moral law* (emphasis added).¹⁰⁶

This ability to deviate from the moral law is the necessary consequence of our freedom; it is the price we pay for freedom. Insofar as a moral agent is free, he or she is free to deviate from the moral law. If one holds freedom as an essential aspect of human agency and accountability but denies the existence of evil, then such a person bears the burden of proof in demonstrating, how on the one hand we preserve our freedom, i.e., our actions are not socially or biologically determined, and simultaneously, on the other hand, refute the existence of evil. In chapter three of this investigation I will discuss the many historical attempts to deny the existence of evil, using the same line of reasoning and

¹⁰⁶ *Religion*, 6:29.

disprove the reliability of all such attempts. It is, therefore, imperative that one recognize Kant's mediation between freedom and our personal duty to universalize the moral law.

Maxims by their very nature *require* universalization, and universalization cannot be implemented without the conscious choice of the moral agent. Moreover, the choice of the agent cannot refer to the agent's "nature" because to do so undermines the agent's freedom, thereby necessitating his action. Thus, labeling one "evil," if by "evil" one means "morally evil" or "genuinely evil," is a misrepresentation of the metaphysical conception of evil, if one is referring to the agent's actions rather than the agent's maxims. Remember Kant's is not a consequentialist account and Kant would undeniably disapprove with the general conception that all human beings have an inherent propensity to evil. He himself writes,

...the statement, "The human being is *evil*," cannot mean anything else than he is conscious of the moral law and yet had incorporated into his maxim the (occasional) deviation from it. "He is evil *by nature*" simply means that being evil applies to him considered in his species; not that this quality may be inferred from the concept of his species.¹⁰⁷

The structure of Kant's argument in the preceding quote follows a similar line of reasoning as presented in Plato's *Euthyphro*, wherein Socrates asks, "Is the pious being loved by the Gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the Gods?"¹⁰⁸ With respect to Kant's claim, being evil is a "natural" characteristic of a *particular* human being only if by "natural" we mean something like, "this human being is more inclined to evil, than others within his species." What Kant is not saying, which is

¹⁰⁷ *Religion*, 6:32

¹⁰⁸ *Euthyphro*, 10a-e

clear from the above citation, is that “being evil is a (natural) characteristic of humanity,” i.e., of humans in general. In his discussion Kant even emphasizes the “occasional” deviation from the moral law, which strongly suggests that there is no natural propensity for evil. Humans, according to Kant, irrespective of their past moral infractions can never be labeled as inherently evil, as to do so would rob them of their freedom. For Kant, there is always the possibility for change, for the opportunity to conform to the moral law, for the sake of the law. The suggestion that a man is “genuinely evil” is a dangerous claim, as it, in effect, absolves him both of his actions, but more importantly, his choice of maxims, insofar as, on such grounds, he could argue that he was a victim of his “natural inclination.” To then punish such a man, if one agrees with this conception of his “natural inclinations toward evil,” would be sadistic. Clearly, Kant refutes any such claim. We are accountable for our moral infractions because we could have done otherwise. We could have done otherwise, because we could have chosen to universalize our maxims in accordance with the moral law. Deviations from our *duty* to follow the moral law are a necessary consequence of our freedom, which in turn furnishes each and every moral agent with the opportunity to participate in evil. This, however, does not mean, nor does it follow that every human being has a “natural” propensity for evil, since such an assertion would eliminate the possibility of deviating from the moral law in the first place. Thus, the moral law is the very condition for which we arrive at a choice, the choice either to follow the law or not to. In either case, there is no “natural,” i.e., determined, propensity for evil. Evil, then, is a result of this choice and as such, everyone choosing to participate in evil, i.e., enact a failed maxim, can be held accountable. The

apparent gap, then, between freedom and nature is substantiated by the conceptual gulf between our ideas of freedom and our embodiment. The two are often and mistakenly set in opposition. Kant, however, attempts to ramify this conceptual oversight, writing,

Hence, freedom is only an *idea* of reason, the objective reality of which is in itself doubtful, whereas nature is a concept of the understanding that proves, and must necessarily prove, its reality in examples from experience. From this arises a dialectic of reason since, with respect to the will, the freedom ascribed to it seems to be in contradiction with natural necessity...Philosophy must therefore assume that no contradiction will be found between freedom and natural necessity in the very same human actions, for it cannot give up the concept of nature any more than that of freedom.¹⁰⁹

This dialectic of reason is the attempt to resolve this apparent gap between nature and freedom, which is further complicated by attempts to account for the origins, existence and definition of evil. If evil is natural, then we are absolved from any wrongdoings. If evil arises from freedom, then, why should we cling to the concept of freedom, knowing that it necessitates the existence of evil?

Kant resolves this apparent disparity by denying the possibility of “natural evil,” which, in turn, gives his account the flexibility needed to describe situations wherein a moral agent, “naturally inclined to evil,” can suddenly forego his previous habits to act in accordance with the moral law, or conversely, wherein a moral agent’s track record of conforming with the moral law can suddenly deviate from the moral law. As human beings, beings capable of freedom, which as Kant has suggested must be presupposed, it is important that we have the ability to deviate from the moral law, not *that* we deviate

¹⁰⁹ *Groundwork*, 4:455.

from the moral law. In layman's terms, "I could do wrong, but I won't." The recognition that one could deviate from the moral law is in itself sufficient for freedom. One need not actually deviate from the law to exercise one's freedom.

It is specifically how moral agents choose to exercise their freedom that determines the morality of their action. Those choices that conform to the law are moral and those that do not are immoral. There is however, a greater level of understanding with respect to freedom and the existence of evil. As noted earlier, evil cannot strictly be assessed through an observation of action. It must be assessed in terms of the unity of the maxim and the action. Those actions that acknowledge human beings as ends in themselves are good because the act of recognizing one's autonomy [particular] is justified by the law, namely, the second formulation of the categorical imperative [universal], which demonstrates that one can simultaneously speak of both particulars and universals without contradiction. The particular actions are justified by universal law, which govern the actions. Again, the two are inseparable. Kant understood that in making assessments of evil, we would be tempted to merely base our judgments on the action, which is only partially correct. If his account were to stop at this point, it would be weakened by objections of relativism. Kant is able to overcome these objections, however, because of the biconditional relation between actions and maxims. One cannot effectively describe morality or account for the existence of good and evil without simultaneously discussing both conceptions. Thus, our understanding of good and evil, and Kant would agree that we have the cognitive abilities to understand good and evil, is itself contingent on how the action relates to the moral law.

It follows, then, that good is a property of action that is future oriented, that anticipates the conformity of the action with the moral law. In fact, the moral agent should always be able to assess the morality of the action at any time, since the determination of morality is itself time independent. The moral agent is recognized as an autonomous agent capable of understanding the moral law and acting accordingly. All that is required for the process of proper moral action is for the moral agent to have the cognitive awareness of the moral law, which raises an interesting point. Those humans that lack the ability to fully comprehend their moral obligation and duties to the moral law, cannot and should not be held accountable for their actions. This may include infants, patients afflicted with dementia or those in comas. Human development is a process of transforming individuals from mere means into ends.

The relationship between freedom, one's maxims, and the moral agent's action, serves as a source for determining morality and accountability. Strict determinists encounter the problem of accountability if they ascribe to the social or biological determinism of human beings, since such an ascription denies the possibility of punishment, and thereby undermines the grandeur of evil. Therefore, an understanding of evil requires the recognition of both freedom and the universalization of maxims. Maxims universalized in accordance with the moral law result in good actions. Whereas, maxims universalized from deviations from the moral law result in evil actions. For those actions deemed evil, it is the maxim, specifically the choice in universalizing a particular maxim, which is deemed evil, if the maxim deviates from the moral law. The hallmark of evil is a disregard for benefits that would otherwise be lost in universalization and an

adamant stubbornness to retain such benefits despite the contradiction in universalization. For example, my attempt to reap the benefits of getting better grades than my peers or better grades than I am otherwise capable, by cheating on my midterm exam and stealing the teacher's answer key, is lost if I attempt to universalize the maxim that everyone should be able to steal the teacher's answer key. If we all cheat, there is no value in cheating. Thus, the act of cheating loses its benefit if universalized. Hence, the hallmark of evil is the stubborn attempt to universalize a maxim that is grounded in self-centeredness, without consideration for others, wherein the resulting maxim takes the form of a personal gain under *all* such circumstances, and the benefit is not universally transferred. It is, in effect, the bizarre and contradictory attempt to universalize personal benefits that is the telltale sign of evil. All actions resulting from such maxims are necessarily evil and all moral agents freely choosing to universalize such maxims are recognized as evil. The stigma of being evil, however, is transient, as the individual always has the opportunity to realign with the moral law.

Immanuel Kant, then, was able to describe the concept of evil in terms of a perversion of our maxims. Cognition offers each moral agent the accessibility to that, which is universal, that which informs our actions. Norms or morality need not descend from religious texts, as humanity is fully capable of cognizing proper moral action based on the universalization of one's maxims. These maxims, however, are inextricably linked with the actions they inform. Thus, as Kant's account of space-time and momentum-energy would later revolutionize physical sciences and astronomy, so too has his account of maxims and action revolutionized morality. The articulation of evil in wholly secular

terms is feasible insofar as one proceed in such a manner as to recognize the subordination of action to maxim. The attempt to disentangle our propensities toward evil is only feasible within the socialization of each human being, and the process of socialization is itself regulated and subordinate to the power of the political realm. Thus, a contemporary account of evil, must on the one hand, account from the role of our socialization in making good moral agents and, on the other hand, describe how that process is polluted, while also discussing the role of the political and the conflicts each moral agent faces in mitigating social and political obligation with the moral law, i.e., maxims. A contemporary analysis into the concept of evil, then, must be guided by sociopolitical investigations.

Chapter 2: Genocide and Evil

2.1. *Conceptualizing Genocide and Evil*

The concept of *genocide* evolved in 1933 when Raphael Lemkin coined the term. Fifteen years later on December 9, 1948 the United Nations General Assembly, in light of the events of World War II, adopted the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, popularly known as the United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC) Article II of the UNGC States:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intending to prevent births within a group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.¹¹⁰

Since the UNGC's adoption, scholars who study genocide have criticized the convention and offered suggestions for its amendment. The foundation of genocide

¹¹⁰ Chalk, Frank Robert, and Kurt Jonassohn. 1990. *The history and sociology of genocide: analyses and case studies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 44.

studies, irrespective of the many definitional disagreements on the UNGC, is firmly rooted in Lemkin's thoughts on genocide. Lemkin had defined genocide as

By "genocide" we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group... Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.¹¹¹

Thus, for Lemkin, sterilization and the destruction of a group's culture, language, religious symbols, i.e., the basis of a group's identity, without the extermination of the group's members, constituted genocide.

Nearly sixty one years after the adoption of the UNGC, genocide research has grown exponentially. In his 1975 article entitled, "Ethnic Genocide," Rene Lemarchand discussed the 1972 genocide against the Hutu by Tutsi militia in Burundi, in Central Africa. Lemarchand's analysis of the genocide in Burundi furthered genocide scholarship because it dealt with the concept of 'selective genocide'.

The selective genocide that Lemarchand discusses pertains to the selective targeting of the educated members of Hutu society. Any Hutu would be killed but members of the educated class were specifically targeted for extermination. The act of selective genocide, then, demonstrates the calculated capacity and forethought in exterminating a *potential* threat. The selective approach to killing in Burundi highlights Lemkin's idea that a perpetrator of genocide could aim at the destruction of an essential pillar of a group's

¹¹¹ Lemkin, Raphael. 1973. *Axis rule in occupied Europe; laws of occupation, analysis of government, proposals for redress*. New York: H. Fertig, p. 79.

strength. By targeting educated Hutus, the Tutsi perpetrators of genocide in Burundi destroyed the basis of Hutu power and identity.

In an analysis of the ideological motives perpetrators use to justify acts of genocide, Edward Kissi describes the specific processes wherein ethnic groups become enemies of the state.¹¹² Kissi's analysis is significant. It converges with my specific conceptualization of genocide and evil, because it shows *how* the state converts members of its population into enemies, through the implementation of ideologies for the sole purpose of extermination.

Kissi addresses this issue from the very beginning of his book, in his discussion of the Dergue (the Ethiopian military government, which replaced Haile Selassie I) and further expands on the notion of selectivity. He writes:

given the *domestic political climate* under which the Dergue operated, it attempted to consider all the Tigrinya-speaking people of Tigray and neighboring Eritrea as potential supporters of the rebel Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), which sought to overthrow the Dergue, and the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) which fought for the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia. Here, it was the revolutionary regime's *ideology of absolute national unity* that tempted the Dergue to *convert* particular ethnic groups into political enemies to be destroyed (emphasis added).¹¹³

Thus, despite the multi-ethnic composition of the Mengistu regime, Tigrinya-speaking people were selected for extermination because their secessionist nationalism presented a unique political threat to the regime's ideology of absolute national unity.

¹¹² Kissi, Edward. 2006. *Revolution and genocide in Ethiopia and Cambodia*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xxii-xxiii.

Important to this analysis, however, and our ongoing investigation into the philosophy of evil and its relation to genocide scholarship, is the need to further inquire into how political dissidents are converted into enemies of the state, a process I will describe later in the analysis.

Kissi describes the process wherein Mengistu and the Dergue wooed the former Soviet Union into providing military support for an attack against the TPLF and others, the Dergue constructed as enemies of the state. Thus, in embracing tenets of communism, without actually pursuing a communistic ideology, the Dergue obtained Soviets weaponry to launch a repressive campaign against Tigray and neighboring Eritrea verging on genocide. As Kissi has argued, “Here, a determination to crush *domestic political opponents* took precedence over any desire to become the first communist state in Africa” (emphasis added).¹¹⁴

In this description of the Dergue and its political relations with Moscow, Kissi demonstrates *how* the pan-Ethiopian ideology, professed by Mengistu and the Dergue, was used to garner arms by espousing communist slogans in an opportunistic way. More precisely, however, with respect to my analysis into the nature of evil, Kissi’s investigation addresses the problem of domestic jurisdiction, as addressed by Hannah Arendt, and the extent to which the state will go to gain arms for its campaign of genocidal killing. Thus, any opposition to state ideology serves to locate dissenters. As Kissi has already mentioned, after dissenters have been identified, and the necessary arms acquired, the Ethiopian revolutionary state began the process of converting members of

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 150.

the Ethiopian population into political enemies of the state, i.e., once they have been newly defined as enemies of the state, they will be slated for extermination. Though Kissi is not arguing that the events in Ethiopia constituted genocide, the process is the same.

My investigation into the nature of genocide and evil, then, begins where Kissi's analysis ends, with an explicit formulation of the necessary conditions for converting a civilian into an enemy of the state, i.e., explaining *how* political power and a state endorsed ideology of exclusion are used to justify genocidal motivations. My investigation, then, draws from an interdisciplinary discourse on genocide, combining key conceptions of selectivity and jurisdiction with philosophical notions of power and ethical prescriptions on fairness. As I will argue, this ability to convert members of the population into enemies of the state initiates the process of extermination and, moreover, serves as the foundation for the possibility of discussing evil.

In part, I will be addressing the preconditions for genocide and Evil, but most importantly, I will systematically define what I mean by 'Evil'. The purpose of this analysis is to engage the entire spectrum of interdisciplinary research in a discussion of Evil, of which genocide is its most insidious manifestation. Thus, it will be argued that the preconditions for the manifestation of Evil, as manifested through genocide, exists where a state's sovereignty excludes particular members of the population, residing within the limits of the state's domestic jurisdiction, from state-protection, when the following premises are true:

1. there exists reluctance to accept state endorsed ideology;
2. such ideology excludes a portion of the population within the limits of the state's domestic jurisdiction;

3. a refusal to accept state endorsed ideology is punishable;
4. the manner of punishment is contingent on both mutable and immutable identifiers. A mutable identifier is a particular demographic identifier that can be changed, viz., political affiliation. An immutable identifier is a particular demographic identifier that cannot be changes, viz., race.
5. mutable identifiers that *are* changed to conform to state ideology are *not* punished;
6. mutable identifiers that are *not* changed to conform to state ideology *are* punished;
7. all immutable identifiers are inherently incapable of conforming to state ideology;
Therefore, all immutable identifiers are necessarily subject to punishment.

The term identifier simply refers to demographic identifiers, which are used to identify groups within a nation's census, like a group's race or its ethnicity. The conclusion, "all immutable identifiers are necessarily subject to punishment" is the absolute conceptual foundation for the greatest conceivable evil—genocide based on immutable identifiers. Since these demographic identifiers cannot be changed, genocide is necessitated by their presence, i.e., if a state has assumed an exclusionary ideology and the target of its exclusionary practice is based on an immutable identifier like race, then since one's race cannot be changed, the process of state endorsed exclusion is necessitated by the presence of an excluded race. If, unfortunately, my race has been excluded from state protection, then every member of my race is a potential target for extermination.

Genocide based on immutable identifiers, however, is to be contrasted with genocide based on mutable identifiers. Mutable identifiers can be changed. Thus, one's political affiliation, for example, is classified as a mutable identifier because it is a flexible state,

i.e., it is subject to change, whereas one's ethnicity or race is an immutable identifier because it is a fixed state, i.e., not subject to change.

Thus, punishment is a *necessary* result of genocide based on immutable identifiers but only a *contingent* result of genocide based on mutable identifiers because once the state assumes an exclusionary ideology, those possessing immutable identifiers cannot (by definition) conform to state ideology because immutable identifiers like race and ethnicity are fixed states. Thus, it is certain that they will be targeted for extermination. Political affiliation, however, is a mutable identifier, i.e., political affiliation can easily be changed. Punishment based on mutable identifiers is contingent because if the person changes his political affiliation to conform to state ideology he will no longer be deemed an enemy of the state. Those who refuse will be slated for extermination. Thus, punishment will not result from genocide based on mutable identifiers when there is compliance with state ideology. The concept of Evil, then, arises because of the 'forced' punishment of those whose identity is a function of nature. It is as if these demographic identifiers were solely selected for their immutability so as to expedite the "purge" of those bearing such demographic identifiers from state protection and ultimately from existence. Thus, punishment is *inherent* in state ideology where members of the population are excluded based on immutable identifiers.

Evil, then, arises as a consequence of an '*exclusionary ideology*,' since exclusionary-ideologies necessitate genocide based on immutable identifiers. Exclusionary ideology is defined as state ideology that excludes members of particular groups. Simply put, evil, within the discourse of state sovereignty, is defined as *the intentional reduction of*

domestic diversity within state demography by the formulation and pursuit of an exclusionary ideology for the purpose of enforcing a homogeneous society.

As mentioned in the previous chapter in the discussion of Empedocles, the polemics between good and evil are balanced by their coexistence. Unbridled, both Love and Strife lead to destruction. Thus, homogeneity presents a specific problem to how we must assess and interpret our social relations.

Again, I have defined evil, within the context of state sovereignty, as *the intentional reduction of domestic diversity within state demography by the formulation and pursuit of an exclusionary ideology for the purpose of enforcing a homogeneous society*. I will qualify this definition by analyzing its two component parts, which are (1) the reduction of domestic diversity, and (2) the formulation and pursuit of an exclusionary ideology. After I have fully qualified the definition of evil, I will offer a defense against objections.

In his account of state sovereignty and the role of the sovereign, R.B.J. Walker argues,

Entry into the modern system of states enables any particular sovereign to decide on an exception to the norms of human conduct *within a particular territory*. Sovereigns make the final decision...The modern states system is always susceptible to war, to the necessity of sovereigns declaring a state of emergency and an exception to all norms. (emphasis added).¹¹⁵

Within a state's domestic jurisdiction, the sovereign is fully capable of enacting exceptions to the norm, by attempting to control the demography within the state's jurisdiction. The demography within a state's jurisdiction is its domestic diversity. For

¹¹⁵ Walker, R. B. J. 2002. "International/Inequality" *International Studies Review*, Vol. 4, No. 2, International Relations and the New Inequality Summer. p. 21.

states whose demography is very homogeneous, e.g., Somalia, any means of differentiating Somali, legitimate or ad hoc, can always be used to endorse an ideology of state exclusion. Thus, even where a state's demography is homogeneous, the state can still form an exclusionary ideology. By 'domestic diversity,' I am specifically referring to (1) every member of the population within a state's domestic jurisdiction, men, women, children, foreigners, residents and so on that *are* subject to the state's authority, which does not include diplomatic personnel or representatives of foreign governments because they *are not* subject to such authority. Specifically, regarding the use of the term 'diversity,' (2) it should *only* be applied to those subordinate members of the population, living *within* the domestic jurisdiction *and* subject to the state's authority. The application of the term 'diversity' (3) refers to any quantifiable and statistically verifiable demographic identifier, i.e., any and all identifiers, which are quantifiable, or may be assessed to characterize and define a particular person within the state's domestic jurisdiction. These identifiers (4) must be incorporated into the concept of diversity. For example, religious affiliation, language spoken, ethnicity, and variations in culture are all quantifiable and statistically verifiable demographic identifiers and are to be included in what is meant by 'diversity'. Since these demographic identifiers are necessarily associated with *particular individuals*, i.e., they describe members of the population, then any attempt to purge or reduce those identifiers (decrease the level of diversity) from the collective state demography, requires (5) either extermination or the forced mass expulsion of all portions of the population bearing those identifiers. Essentially, however, there is little resistance that can be effectively wielded against a state determined to

“cleanse” or purge its population of those individuals bearing undesirable identifiers. Martin Shaw writes, “*Victims have no choice but to orient their actions to the overwhelming power of the enemy that attacks them.*” (emphasis in original).¹¹⁶ Though resistance is a necessary feature of genocide prevention, there is little that can be done from within the community of targeted groups to thwart their extermination. Thus, third party intervention is necessary to aid in resisting extermination.

As discussed in the previous chapter, however, Seneca’s thoughts on evil would undermine this notion of resistance. Succumbing to evil in the hopes of building character is antithetical to genocide prevention and discourse. Unless some of the intended victims resist genocide, all will perish and there will be none to bear actual witness to their suffering. Thus, on this account Seneca’s discussion of resilience could not be implemented because the intent of genocide is the total annihilation of targeted groups. Unless, of course, mutable identifiers defined some members within the targeted groups and they were willing to change their affiliation to prevent extermination.

Political, ideological, and religious affiliations are but a few examples of mutable identifiers. Ethnic, racial, and physical disabilities are but a few examples of the immutable identifiers. Particular demographic identifiers that *are* subject to change are classified as *mutable identifiers*. Particular demographic identifiers that *are not* subject to change are classified as *immutable identifiers*. Robert Melson captures the concept perfectly. He writes,

Especially vulnerable are ethnic groups and/or social classes that have traditionally been difficult to integrate into

¹¹⁶ Shaw, Martin. 2007. *What is genocide?* Cambridge: Polity, p. 95.

the larger society, or have been refused assimilation... Whether such conditions in fact lead to genocide *depends on the ideology of the perpetrators, the identity and situation of the victims...* (emphasis added).¹¹⁷

Thus, within any collective demography there exist both mutable and immutable identifiers. As Melson has explained, ethnic minorities are especially vulnerable since their ethnicity is immutable. Thus, if their ethnic group is selected by the state for exclusion, it cannot be changed, thereby necessitating the extermination of all members from that ethnic group. These identifiers can be arbitrary and completely *ad hoc*, but they serve the same end—identifying those members of the population that are to be purged from within the state’s domestic jurisdiction. In his analysis of the Khmer Rouge, Kissi writes,

The Khmer Rouge leadership gave each Eastern Zone cadre evacuated to the northwestern province of Pursat a blue scarf, not as a token of honor or of loyalty to the state, but as a “sign” to distinguish them from the other Khmer. The object of this unusual identification was to make cadres of the Eastern Zone more visible as the dissident and impure Khmer to be exterminated.¹¹⁸

The “sign” that Kissi is referring to is a means of identifying a distinction, which carries with it the difference from those in power, so as to exclude “them” from “us” despite the fact, however, that Khmer were targeting fellow Khmer. Thus, the basis for their extermination was one of ideological differences, which means that their extermination was one based on mutable identifiers, since they could have conceivably changed their ideological stance.

¹¹⁷ Melson, Robert. 1992. *Revolution and genocide: on the origins of the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 278.

¹¹⁸ Kissi, p. 125.

The necessity of wearing a blue scarf is of even greater importance because those targeted for extermination were Khmer. As evident in Kissi's example, the process of identification may be entirely *ad hoc*, but its function will always be to identify those to be "cleansed" from the population. The use of genocide in this example is a *contingent condition* based on the ideological refusal of some Khmer to assimilate to the Khmer Rouge's state endorsed ideology. Thus, this ideological refusal led to their eventual extermination. In this example, Kissi is describing the targeting of those Khmer, by fellow Khmer, for extermination based on their refusal to conform to state ideology. Therefore, the subsequent act of genocide was itself based on mutable identifiers that were not changed to conform to state ideology, which was carried out by fellow Khmer.

As we have seen, genocide based on immutable identifiers is the most heinous manner of reducing the diversity within a state's demography, because these identifiers cannot be changed by members of the population. There is, however, as demonstrated in Kissi's example of Khmer targeting fellow Khmer, the ability to base genocide on mutable identifiers, if one defines political affiliation as such. This in no sense suggests that there are better or worse forms of genocide. What it does demonstrate, however, is that unlike genocide based on mutable identifiers, where members of the population are given a choice to conform to state ideology and their lives, possibly spared, members of the population bearing immutable identifiers have no choice and face either mass exile or extermination. In my articulation of domestic diversity, then, I am specifically discussing the attempt to remove any number of demographic identifiers from the population by means of persuasion, exile or extermination. This decrease in both ethnic and ideological

diversity is accomplished by an abuse of state authority within its domestic jurisdiction. Thus, the process of converting a former civilian into an enemy of the state is as easy as identifying or aligning all members of the population bearing those demographic identifiers as enemies of the state. The final solution, then, is to purge the state or exterminate all members of the population bearing these identifiers, in the case of immutable identifiers, or enforcing conformity for all members of the population bearing mutable identifiers. In either case, through the process of a reduction in domestic diversity, the state eliminates those demographic identifiers from its demography and its domestic jurisdiction.

In defining evil, by “the formation of exclusionary ideology” I am referring to (1) a state endorsed ideology that makes specific references to demographic identifiers represented within its population. The state (2) further associates these attributes (i.e., the particular demographic identifiers) as potentially corrupting the remaining members of the population within a state’s domestic jurisdiction. The association, then, of these demographic identifiers with a “contaminated” portion of the population is included in what I will label as the “selective phase” of exclusionary ideology.

It is important to recognize that perpetrators of genocide view both ethnic and ideological diversity as essentially corrupting and contaminating the state. As already discussed in Kissi analysis of the Khmer Rouge, targeting fellow Khmer facilitated Khmer Rouge attempts to “purify” the state. This act of genocide best exemplifies one that is based on mutable identifiers, as their ideological assumptions could have been changed to conform to state ideology. What Kissi’s example demonstrates is the extent to

which a state can enact an ideology of exclusion, even within a substantially homogenous demography. The attempt, then, to purify or force conformity within the state is inherently antithetical to its natural occurrences. Thus, forced conformity is an unnatural attempt to modify state demography. The unnatural attempt to modify state demography through mass exile or genocide is the clearest manifestation of evil, as it is contrary to the natural dispersion of these characteristics within the state. Thus, any attempt to modify a state's demography through the use of coercion or force assumes a godlike stance similar to the manipulation of naturally occurring characteristics.

After the state has selected those demographic identifiers that pose the greatest risk to state sovereignty, it must (3) then associate members of the population bearing those identifiers with risks to state sovereignty or the good functioning of society. This process concludes what I will label as the "transformative phase" of exclusionary ideology. I have briefly discussed the process of converting a civilian into an enemy of the state, a process that I will examine in greater detail shortly. Through the transformative phase, nonetheless, civilians are disenfranchised from the protection of the state. Measures that would have otherwise safeguarded them from exploitation and extermination are now nonexistent.

Once enemies of the state have been identified, the state must begin the process of cleansing or purging itself of those members of the population. I have identified this final phase as the "purgative phase" of exclusionary ideology. This is not specifically the act of genocide, though genocide is certainly to be included within the purgative phase. In order to understand *how* civilians are turned into enemies of the state, one should identify

each of *the three phases of exclusion*: (1) selective phase, (2) transformative phase and (3) purgative phase. It should be noted, however, that I am not suggesting these three phases are in any sense exhaustive. It is likely that there is a wide spectrum of explanatory approaches that would account for such a process. Nevertheless, I have selected these three phases as tools in analyzing state endorsed exclusionary ideology.

2.2. *Phase 1: The Selective Phase*

Peter Uvin, in his discussion of the social relations between the Hutu and Tutsi of Rwanda in Central Africa, comments on existing prejudicial ideologies in the country,

In Rwanda, basic psychocultural images of the Tutsi and the Hutu have been—and still are—the basic building blocks of society. These profoundly ingrained, widely shared images treat Hutu and Tutsi as radically and *unchangeably* different... These images can be observed in—and from childhood are transmitted by—a multitude of proverbs, stories and myths... This prejudicial ideology can properly be called racist, for it is widely perceived as referring to races.¹¹⁹

As Uvin explains, this ideology has been profoundly ingrained into every psychocultural facet of Hutu life and, according to Uvin, their perceptions of the Tutsi have been shaped by their psychocultural development. The continual references to proverbs, myths, and the press, of the differences between the Hutu and the Tutsi contributed to the growing tensions among members of the Rwandan population. Though the Tutsi were selected as potential enemies of the state, under Hutu control the dissemination of information required extensive governmental support. Uvin continues,

¹¹⁹ Uvin, Peter. 1998. *Aiding violence: the development enterprise in Rwanda*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, p. 30.

More generally, at political rallies, in speeches, and in extremist local language newspapers and radio stations, Tutsi were constantly the subject of hateful propaganda...Much of the freedom of press that was suddenly (and only partly) allowed was invaded by newspapers with an incendiary and racist position. The most (in)famous case were *Kangura*, a radical newspaper created in early 1990 and Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines...These genocidal and extremist voices were not only tolerated, but also morally and financially supported by people at the highest levels of the establishment, including the government.¹²⁰

Like Kissi's example of the Khmer Rouge's extermination of fellow Khmer, which represented an ethnically homogeneous state, in Rwanda the same can be said, as the Hutu and Tutsi speak Kinyarwanda. Even apart from the colonial history of Rwanda, the alleged ethnic differences between the Hutu and Tutsi groups may well have been socially constructed and fabricated by the Hutu dominated state, as a means of preserving power and subordinating Tutsi. The difference, however, is that unlike the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer, which was based on mutable demographic identifiers, Rwanda's genocide was based on immutable identifiers, namely, ethnicity. What the comparison between Rwanda and Cambodia illustrates, however, is the extent to which an exclusionary state ideology can arbitrarily assign both mutable and immutable demographic identifiers to a portion of the population to justify their extermination. Kissi's account of the Cambodian genocide and Uvin's of the Rwandan genocide both share the arbitrariness with which the state transforms former citizens in poor standing with the state into enemies of the state.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

As is evident in Uvin's discussion, the government selected those members of the population, namely, Tutsi and moderate Hutu who challenged its power and slated them for extermination. Propagandist newspapers and television networks that are supported or subsidized by the government have great influence among members of the population because the source of information is viewed as credible. Moreover, the pervasiveness of anti-Tutsi ideology throughout nearly every facet of Hutu lives, led enough Hutu to participate in the government supported genocide.

In discussing Hutu-Tutsi relations, Joshua Wallenstein refers to the "enemy within," writing, "The duty of the Hutu, then, was to *erase the enemy within*, i.e., to fight to preserve his family, his race, and his nation," (emphasis added).¹²¹ Wallenstein discusses the role of Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) in justifying the state endorsed massacre of Rwanda's Tutsi, in 1994, on the grounds of protecting and defending Hutu solidarity. The portrayal of Tutsi as subhuman by the Hutu dominated state, demonstrates the antagonistic approach used to justify their extermination. The Tutsi were the 'enemy within,' which refers to the scope of the state's domestic jurisdiction. The Tutsi were to be exterminated and RTLM and other propaganda media were to conduct the business of justifying the extermination to sympathetic Hutus. Thus, in creating an enemy of the state, the state also creates its sympathizers. Those sympathetic to state ideology will justify their discrimination as nationalism, a concept which will be thoroughly discussed later in the analysis. Those disenfranchised by the

¹²¹ Wallenstein, Joshua. 2001. "Punishing Words: An Analysis of the Necessity of the Element of Causation in Prosecutions for Incitement to Genocide" *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 54, No. 2. Nov. p. 351-398.

state's exclusionary ideology will be targeted for exile or extermination and those needing motivation will be subject to state endorsed propaganda.

2.3. *Phase 2: The Transformative Phase*

In analyzing the definition of evil, I am attempting to qualify what is meant by 'the formation of exclusionary ideology' in the proposed definition of evil. In discussing the formation of an exclusionary ideology, I have identified three, phases of exclusion, namely, the selective phase, the transformative phase and the purgative phase. The transformative phase of a state's exclusionary ideology converts members of the population who are subject to state sovereignty into enemies of the state.

This process is transformative insofar as a judgment of value is placed on otherwise valueless demographic identifiers, which state officials then associate with barbarism, or attempt to dehumanize those individuals bearing these identifiers. For example, the shape of someone's nose is an empirical fact that is devoid of value. The shape of someone's nose is of no particular consequence, but if one seeks to dehumanize this fact one must also espouse the bizarre claim of what a proper or normal nose should look like.¹²² Leslie Fiedler describes this as "physiological normalcy." With respect to this particular act of excluding members of the population based on their physiology, Leslie A. Fiedler offers an interesting account. She writes,

But other unfortunate human beings regarded—at that time and in that society—as undesirable deviations were also destroyed...It is a development which should make us aware of just how dangerous enforced physiological

¹²² Fiedler, Leslie A. 1984. "The Tyranny of the Normal" *The Hastings Center Report*, Vol. 14, No. 2. Apr. p. 40-42.

normalcy is when the definition of its parameters fall into the hands of politicians and bureaucrats.¹²³

Again, this conception is not exclusive to genocide, as enforced assimilation, ethnocide, alienation, and many other forms of intolerance work toward the same end, discomfoting members of the population so they conform or exiling others that will not. If members of the targeted population are capable of assimilating their demographic identifier, their identifiers are *mutable*. If they are incapable of assimilating their demographic identifier, their identifiers are *immutable*. With respect to punishment, then, immutable identifiers necessitate punishment, whereas mutable identifiers are contingent on an individual's willingness to assimilate, albeit enforced assimilation.

Within the context of a state's domestic jurisdiction, the concept of enforced assimilation is integral to fully understanding the precise meaning of evil. In formulating an exclusionary ideology, state officials attempt to ensure that political power remains centralized. Political power remains centralized if members of the population are forced to conform to state ideology and state authority is not mitigated by a judicial system of checks and balances. Assimilation, then, is enforced as a means of centralizing state authority. The decentralization of state authority is possible by mitigating sovereignty and embracing cultural and ethnic pluralism.

This process of transforming particular members of the population into enemies of the state is the attempt to homogenize demographic identifiers within the state's domestic jurisdiction to conform to an ideology of sameness. In discussing evil, then, the attempt to enforce assimilation is morally reprehensible because it is a willful disregard of

¹²³ Ibid., p. 41.

physiological properties that are natural and factual within a group. Centralizing political power, then, will invariably destabilize select members of the population, because they pose a threat to that centralization. The threat may not be a political threat, i.e., those labeled enemies of the state may not have an armed force or aspirations for political power, but they threaten political power insofar as they physically embody variation. Their naturally occurring physiological differences are dehumanized, which lays the groundwork for their extermination. It is evil to target others for extermination based on biological properties beyond their control. It is evil when an ascription of value seeks to enforce physiological homogeneity.

The desire to attain political power, “by any means necessary” cannot relate to the use of human beings as a means to an end. In so doing, human beings become tools for advancing a particular ideology of exclusion. Those targeted for exclusion are excluded from the political process without measures to safeguard their lives. Insofar as these members of the population are excluded, they are not identified as an end. To be identified as an end is to be identified as human. Therefore, they are not identified as human. Once this conclusion is reached, the state has successfully completed the process of transforming particular civilians into enemies of the state. Their extermination is justified by their socially constructed inhumanity, which is itself based on an artificial or unnatural attempt to control physiological homogeneity. They are a pest, a plague, roaches, vermin, lice to be purged or exterminated, effectively “cleansing” the state from their infestation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, however, the fate of humanity rests in our ability to maximize goodness and minimize evil.

As has been demonstrated, the dehumanization of targeted groups requires an exclusionary ideology, typically fueled by government sponsored propaganda. If these members of the population are seen as subhuman, their massacre will not be inhibited by moral considerations. Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda characterized Jews as ‘disease’, ‘bacilli’, ‘thieves’, ‘lice’, ‘subhuman’, ‘parasites’, ‘alien bodies’ and so on.¹²⁴

Dehumanization is essential in this transformative phase. The continual use of propaganda aimed at dehumanizing members of targeted groups, as exemplified in the example of the RTLM, facilitates the ease with which potential genocide sympathizers can be spurred into participation, as participants essentially fail to recognize the humanity of their intended victims.¹²⁵ Nazi-Germany viewed Jews as subhuman, as threatening the racial purity of the Aryan race and as a direct threat to the German state. Once perpetrators are unwilling to recognize human beings as moral entities the dehumanization of these human beings follows without much effort. The misrepresentation of members of a targeted group as nonhuman and thereby unworthy of moral consideration serves to bolster an exclusionary ideology.

The process of selecting members of the population for exclusion and transforming those individuals into enemies of the state is a process that seeks, as its ultimate end, the consolidation of political power. A unified and consolidated state, which has already enacted specific measures of enforcing an exclusionary ideology, has truly progressed through a selective and transformative phase of exclusion and approaches the final

¹²⁴ Hinton, Alexander. 1998. “Why did the Nazis Kill?: Anthropology, Genocide and the Goldhagen Controversy” *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 14, No. 5. Oct. p.14.

¹²⁵ Dower, John W. 1986. *War without mercy: race and power in the Pacific war*. New York: Pantheon Books. p. 11.

purgative phase. It is in the attempt to consolidate power under the banner of an ideology of exclusion, where governmental resources contribute to disenfranchising members of its population, that we can begin a discussion of evil. This consolidation of power is not consolidated within an individual. It is an inherent mechanism of human relations and as such is subject to abuse and dominance. The disenfranchisement of individuals by a state endorsed ideology of exclusion, exhibits an inclination to participate in acts of genocide and other crimes against humanity.

2.4. *Phase 3: The Purgative Phase*

The final phase of exclusion is the attempt to purge “enemies” from the state. Though some speculate whether genocide existed during antiquity, there is no speculation about its unfortunate prevalence in our contemporary lives. Quite possibly one of the unforeseen effects of the scientific revolution of the Enlightenment, coupled with the advances made in military grade weapons, is our increasing proficiency with killing. In his book, *On Killing*, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman discusses terrorism and the cycle of violence,

Another powerful process that ensures compliance in atrocity situations is the impact of terrorism and self-preservation. The shock and horror of seeing *unprovoked* violent death meted out creates a deep atavistic fear in human beings. Through atrocity the oppressed population can be numbed into a learned helplessness state of submission and compliance.¹²⁶

State endorsed terrorism is facilitated by the daunting sense of helplessness throughout the population. The ease of extermination is facilitated by an overwhelming recognition

¹²⁶ Grossman, Dave. 1995. *On killing: the psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society*. Boston: Little, Brown. p. 225.

of state authority and its capacity, within the confines of its domestic jurisdiction, for mechanizing mass deaths. Terrorism, then, is inextricably bound to an ideology of exclusion and necessary in fulfilling the purgative phase. Arendt writes,

*[it] reigns over a completely subdued population... Where the rule of terror is brought to perfection, as in concentration camps, propaganda disappears entirely; it was even expressly forbidden in Nazi Germany... terror, on the contrary, is the very essence of its form of government (emphasis added).*¹²⁷

Terrorizing members of the population slated for extermination or mass exile, as mentioned by Arendt and Grossman, serves to subdue the population into accepting the inevitability of their banishment or deaths. There is a very serious danger, however, if an oppressed group usurps the government to gain control of power within the state's domestic jurisdiction. Grossman warns,

Once oppressors begin to think of their victims as not being the same species, then these victims can accept and use that cultural distance to kill and oppress their colonial masters when they finally gain the upper hand.¹²⁸

Clearly, then, matters of authority and subordination are circumstantial. If the circumstances are such that the state has embraced an ideology of exclusion, it is certain that terrorism is surely to follow, and moreover, that those slated for purgation will be –in part– pacified by the use of terror. If, however, the oppressed group attains control of the state, it will likely commit similar acts of devaluation against its former oppressor within the state's jurisdiction.

¹²⁷ Arendt, Hannah. 1973. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York, Harvest Books. p. 344.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

As noted earlier, within that jurisdiction, the state is capable of exercising absolute control over members of its population, an act that frequently flirts with genocide as a means of purifying the population. As mentioned earlier in the discussion, genocide is but one instantiation of state power. The act of “cleansing” the state is more precisely viewed in terms of the implementation of governmental power within the confines of a state’s domestic jurisdiction. This is not to suggest that genocide scholars are less equipped to critically analyze genocide, but the focus must involve a discussion of the implementation of power and a thorough investigation of killing. Once the role of power is incorporated into the discussion, we have the even stricter obligation to remain on topic, i.e., not to fall into a discussion of the geology of power or its infinite incarnations. Rather, we are bound to the bodies of millions of victims to fully acknowledge the state’s power.

The goal of this analysis is to recognize and acknowledge the existence of evil, its viability, and its importance, in *attempting* to interpret atrocities throughout the world. Philosophy must have something to contribute to the discussion of evil, as so many lives have been exterminated in the name of ideological contentions based on philosophical suppositions. While genocide is the greatest manifestation of evil, it is but one of its instantiations. The purgative phase of exclusion is the final eradication of those members of the population transformed into enemies of the state. The power to transform and add value to demographic identifiers, to enforce physiological normalcy, to dehumanize the intended victims, are mostly done with words, with philosophical ideas. Thus, before even one person is killed, before the purgative phase has even begun, much has been

done to create a state of terror and ultimately evil. Philosophy can contribute to the discussion of genocide by incorporating conceptions of power, evil, and the formation of ideology into that discussion but it requires that philosophers embrace an interdisciplinary discussion of evil, one that addresses both philosophical and historical concerns.

2.5. *Politicide and the Plight of Political Groups*

It would be dangerous to assume that genocide occurs as a consequence of rapid political developments wherein the state brutalizes a portion of the population. More often than not genocide results from the ideological refusal of a segment of the population to conform to a particular ideology.

The systematic attempt to exterminate an entire political group that would otherwise seek political power or undermine state sovereignty is an act of politicide. It is the deliberate attempt to eradicate any and all political opposition. The festering acts of subversion from political dissidents fuel governmental paranoia, which, in turn, stigmatizes the opposing political group, as such. Evil manifests in this tension between warring political groups in struggles for political power. The assumption is that political power is mutually exclusive, i.e., only the victor or the dominant political group may wield political power. A winner-takes-all interpretation of political power reproaches egalitarianism and any conception of sharing. Evil, as manifests in political power, assumes the characteristic of an act of exclusion.

Political dissidents are caricatured to fit the ideological mold of a threat against the state, or a threat against the assumed purity of a nation's people. In their act of defiance,

dissidents offer the state, and those within the state that subscribe to a conception of unilateral power, the ability to localize or pinpoint a competing ideology. It is not the act of subversion that is of any consequence. Rather, it is the ideological grounds that have motivated those acts of subversion that are targeted for exclusion.

To approximate an understanding of evil is to recognize that it is a lie to suggest that political power must be maintained with unilateral political force. It is a lie to suggest that political power cannot be shared between competing political groups. Finally, it is a lie to believe that in usurping the current administration anything other than a new administration of dominance and oppression will arise, if one's ideological basis for understanding political power is rooted in its mutual exclusivity. This perpetration of evil is important in discussing genocide because it demonstrates that if one assumes an exclusionary ideology then overthrowing another government that also assumed an exclusionary ideology suggests that the cycle of genocide will continue. Thus, the only way to mitigate the spread and appeal of genocide is to ensure that the state never endorses an exclusionary ideology. Otherwise, despite ceaseless revolutions the appeal of genocide and state purification will always be an option for those who have newly acquired political power from their former subordinators.

Once political dissidents are able to convey the injustices that have been inflicted on them they pose a very real threat to the establishment. The private meeting between dissidents and sympathizers to educate the population about their oppression is conversely enough, a public act. It requires use of public meeting halls once the movement grows beyond secretive meetings in alleyways. This, however, is precisely

the moment when their intentions are brought to light, when the “authorities” are made aware of their motivations. As ideologies of political dissidents compete with the establishment, so too will their intentions compete for political power, which poses a very real threat to those already in power.

After governmental officials have been informed of the intentions of dissidents’ attempts to infiltrate their movements the killings will soon follow. Since, to usurp political power requires the dynamism inherent within the public sphere, then the counter response to such an attempt must be to first destroy the group from within. What dissidents are attempting to make public, must be kept secretive. Thus, typically, the initial killings will be secretive, i.e., they will be private killing.

Evil culminates in the systemization of death. It is the death squad, the assassin, the lynch mob, the death camps and so on. The greatest proof of the existence of evil is in how we redefine and reconstruct instruments of death, which must not be relegated to machinery. The assassin, the lynch mob, and death squads are all examples of such instruments. But overwhelmingly the greatest ability to systematize death, either in drafting the structural blueprints for death camps or the economic expenditure in amassing weapons of mass destruction, rests wholly within the scope of political power. The sheer magnitude of accessible capital or the ability to negotiate capital for weaponry further entrenches the problem of evil within political discourse.

In attempting to contain potential political threats from dissidents, members of the establishment have already begun to think of the various methods of implementing death, i.e., they have already begun the process of systematizing death. Evil begins on a very

slippery slope and once it has gained momentum, there is little that can be done to stop it until it has run its course. To infiltrate dissident groups for the preservation of political power and to use force to do so, suggests that were such a use of force to fail in successfully hampering their attempts at usurping the government, more force maybe required. The attempt to suppress such a political group necessitates their exclusion from governmental protection. In fact, the situation is far bleaker since the government is actively seeking to exterminate members of this rival political party.

The problem, however, which is far more sinister than the attempt to kill those that have aligned themselves with opposing political and or ideological groups, is that one's political group can be an identifying characteristic for that individual. Take for example, the *sharia*, the Islamic religious law. One's identification as a Muslim, as practicing the *sharia*, is an essential means of identifying not only one's political and religious affiliations but, more importantly, it is a means of identifying the individual as a practicing Muslim. Thus, when Serbian nationalists attempted to exterminate Bosnian Muslims during the early 1990s, their attempt was not only directed against the political threat posed by a growing Muslim community, it was an attempt to deny the validity or even relevance of being Muslim, that is, their political affiliation was an incidental fact to their being Muslim. Muslims challenged Serbian nationalists for political power, thus anyone practicing or following Muslim law could be identified as Muslim and slated for extermination. The further manifestation of evil, within the scope of political power, results from an inability to engage in tolerance.

From the description above, one can formulate the following syllogism: To be a political dissident is to threaten the power of the establishment, and such threats are punishable by death. Muslims are political dissidents insofar as they pose a very real challenge to the conception of Serbian nationalism. Any group contending for political power is perceived as a threat. Therefore, being Muslim is punishable by death since the act of being Muslim runs counter to the ideology of Serbian nationalism. Faced with such fallacious reasoning, one must make the decision whether being Muslim is worth the risk of being branded as an enemy of the state. Thus, the example of political affiliation and state endorsed ideology, as also demonstrated in Kissi's example of the Cambodian genocide, serves as a representation of genocidal events based on mutable identifiers, i.e., those capable of being changed. Since being characterized as such may result in one's death, individuals within the targeted group must conform to state ideology or face extermination. In the example of the tensions between Serbian nationalists and Bosnian Muslims, it would require practicing Muslim to renounce their faith, culture and system of beliefs. Quite obviously, these demands from Serbian nationalists could not be granted, which led to the extermination of countless Bosnian Muslims.

In the selective targeting of groups, as evident in the practices of Nazi Germany, such threats are to be taken seriously. The threat of competing political groups is a sufficient condition for the systematization of death. Politicide quickly evolves into genocide when it is no longer one's political affiliation that jeopardizes the unilateral power of the current political party, but the representation of targeted groups as increasingly vying for political power, which most threatens the current bid to retain power. This manifestation

of power is classified as unilateral because there is a strict refusal to share or diversify power among respective or selected minority groups. In the previous example, it is the refusal by Serbian nationalists in power to share power with Bosnian Muslims. It is that fact of being Muslim that necessitates the state's opposition, which begins the process of formalizing an exclusionary ideology and ultimately serves as the justification for state endorsed genocide. Killing, then, as an instrument of political power, has been systematized and used to specifically target members of a competing political group for the sole purpose of maintaining a unilateral hold of political power.

There is no greater display of might than the public execution of human life and there is no greater display of evil than its public mass extermination. Corporal punishment is the ultimate instantiation of political power, which has informed the political theories of every philosopher since Aristotle. Fundamentally, social order is only maintained, according to Hobbes and many others, if the power to kill, to take life is transferred to the state and ultimately the sovereign. When the state abuses this transference of power to publicly exterminate millions of lives, it is the greatest conceivable misuse of political power and necessarily voids the social contract between the citizenry and the sovereign.

Members of opposing political groups knowingly risk their lives for their respective ideologies, which they hope to bring to the forefront as a better alternative to the one they oppose. The difference, however, between political groups vying for political power and the Establishment, is a key difference. The social contract is hypothetically formalized between the citizens and the state and as such the corresponding obligation to preserve the nature of this agreement is solely the state's responsibility. One must be cautious,

then, in how an ideological war is waged against the government, for such a war may result in the extermination of human lives as it undermines the power of the state.

The attempt to increase the efficiency with which human lives are destroyed or to maximize casualties requires a deliberative process wherein assessments are made and consequences compared to the ultimate goal or solution. The goal or the ultimate solution for a state actively engaged in the process of disenfranchising members of its population and specifically excluding particular political groups from state protection can only be the mass extermination of those excluded from such protection. The state's possession of both money and military force means that genocide is only suppressed by the ability for government propagandists like the RTLM to successfully convince protected portions of the population that the extermination of political or ideological competitors is not the same as the wholesale slaughter of human beings, which is why the act of dehumanization serve such an essential role in state endorsed genocide. The greater the desire for extermination, the more likely those groups will be infiltrated and labeled as enemies of the state. The actual mass public killing of people, however, is facilitated by the disenfranchisement of such people in the first place.

There are many who argue that the political is founded on contrasting "us" from "them" wherein "they" are dehumanized and labeled as threats to national security issue and economic progress. Such was the case during Nazi Germany's reign of terror. More heinous than the military campaigns waged throughout Europe was the ideology that informed those campaigns. It was an ideology of blame and exclusion. Laborers inability to afford the very product of their labor disenfranchises them from that which they helped

to create. Similarly, if nations are built on the backs of many, the product of their labor should be governmental protection, equality and access to opportunities and resources. If the Establishment excludes some members of the population from enjoying these protections for ideological reasons, then those that helped to produce the prosperity the state enjoys, have systematically been disenfranchised from the very product of their labor, viz. freedom.

Another feature of evil as expressly manifest in the discourse of political power and genocide is the methodical attempt to suppress individual freedoms, where those freedoms do not infringe on the rights of others within that society. The micromanagement of social freedoms, i.e., the attempt to regulate, with policy, the actions of a nation's citizenry pertaining to private matters and personal beliefs, especially the latter, is a precondition for the abuse of political power. Freedom must be an expression of the will, otherwise, it is socially or politically constructed and therefore no longer an instance of freedom. Acting in accord with political power is drastically different from the motivations that cause one to act in such accord. As Martin Luther King has rightfully noted, there are instances where citizens are morally obligated to break the law in acts of civil disobedience. The attempt to justify the extermination of human life while others within the population are able to enjoy their "freedoms" is certainly one of the biggest paradoxes known to humanity. Our complacency with the status quo, is an act of evil, which means that evil can and does manifest both actively and passively. There is blame to share in engaging in an act of genocide, be it planning or executing the act itself, but there is equally blame to share in passively stepping aside

while an act of genocide is occurring, the differentiation between the two rather minute. Thus, in discussing the nature of political groups and their opposition to the established political power, one must revisit the notion of freedom and the struggle for political power. One cannot enjoy the benefits of freedom at the expense of those who helped to make its realization possible. To do so is hypocritical and it puts some groups beyond state protection. Moreover, in addressing the supposition that political power is to be held unilaterally, one denies others the opportunity of participating and sharing in that power.

It is this notion of sharing that is the kernel of political power. It is the recognition that insofar as there are bound to be individuals within society that have been alienated, all are entitled to the same protect under the auspices of political power. The political must embrace diversity as the social contract binds the state and the sovereign to every member of society. Thus, to be political is to be constantly in flux, it is to adapt to the ever-changing needs of one's constituents, which can only facilitate tolerance and inclusion. The philosophical concept of evil is salient in the discussion of genocide and the abuse of political power because it affects how we associate with other human beings. The nature of that association is determined in part by the level of political acceptance of the other. Where my government is intolerant, I am more likely to express similar sentiments. Where my government is tolerant, I am more like to act accordingly.

Thus, in a Kantian sense, there is a shared obligation, a shared duty between each individual as a moral agent and his or her government as a protector to embrace the diversity of political and personal beliefs. Granted, there will be, on occasions, genuine threats to national security. The state cannot politicize national security and in the same

sense target particular groups within the population for extermination, to do so is inherently contradictory. If the state is dedicated to national security, then it must extend that commitment to every member of the national community. Otherwise, the state selectively decides to exclude particular groups from state protection, thereby forfeiting the social contract in failing to protect portions of its citizenry.

Safeguarding political groups despite their opposition to the established political party is an act of confidence. It demonstrates to the public that competing views will be tolerated as long as they do not infringe on the wellbeing or safety of others. In the event that force is required to suppress a legitimate threat, the criteria of which is itself problematic, the acts of government cannot precede the actual threat. The attempt to preemptively strike before the threat is even actualized is often based in fear and fear is the seed that spawns evil.

2.6. *Conflicting Paradigms: Political Ideology and Nationalism*

Essential to the concept of statehood as political authority over defined geographical boundaries, is also the importance of protecting the lives of those, both citizens and foreigners, who reside within the borders of states. The notion of solidarity is an equally important conception in any attempt to discuss statehood, which is often couched in terms of nationalism or patriotism. Solidarity, then, would seemingly necessitate protection, since nationalism would function as an essential attribute of statehood, and the state would be bound to protect members of its population. There is, however, a dangerous gulf between state ideology, on the one hand, and nationalism, on the other, which surfaces in an analysis of genocide and the problem of evil.

Though the state is undeniably the most lethal agent in the systematization of the mass extermination of human life, the state should not be conceived as inherently ominous. Any attempts to do so, misses the thrust of my argument. It is not simply that the state is an instrument for the systematization of death, which is all too evident in acts of genocide, but that the state, as discussed in the last section, has the ability to share political power. The emergence of evil as a consequence of political power arises when one assumes that such power is meant to be absolutely held and unilaterally exercised rather than shared. Of course the state can exist as a sovereign entity, capable of protecting its population, without having to resort to genocide to safeguard its own power. The difficulty in articulating such a position, however, without sounding ethereal, requires a firm understanding of the dual natures of nationalism.

The aim of this section is to explicate the dual nature of nationalism and demonstrate how one conception of nationalism facilitates genocide by focusing on distinctions between “us” and “them,” while an alternative conception of nationalism avoids these troubles by addressing the common thread binding all members of the population, viz. the nation. The idea of belonging to a nation or a state is integral to how we see ourselves as human beings. A shared sense of belonging is fundamental to defining human beings. We are after all social creatures. The problem arises, however, when nationalism and the idea of social cohesion are conflated with an exclusionary ideology and political intolerance.

Since so much of who we are is bound to our literal geography, and since that geographical location is governed by an authoritative body which implements codified laws to govern our social interactions, and since those laws help to shape our sense of

justice and injustice, then, if through the abuse of political power, the government willfully choose to exclude or suppress a particular group of people, and codifies their suppression in law, then “they” cannot be entitled to the same benefits under the protection of the law as “we” are. “They” remain outside of the protection of law. This was, in effect, what happened during American internment of Japanese-Americans.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Patañjali’s account of our attachments leading to evil, stem from a fear of loss. Since antiquity, the philosophy of evil has been rooted in the conception of this primordial fear. With regard to the internment of Japanese-Americans during WWII, both the government and the average American feared losing their freedoms to, “the Japanese”. Insofar as “they” were Japanese, “they” constituted a danger to national security. Thus, ironically even Japanese-Americans posed a significant threat to the safety of America’s borders.

The example of the internment of Japanese-Americans is a clear example of just how quickly citizens in good standing with their government can be castigated and labeled as enemies of the state. Though the United States government did not seek the mass extermination of those held in internment camps, the ease with which their freedoms were denied was frightening. In attempting, then, to address the association between evil and political power, the adamant refusal to recognize basic human freedom, in the face of a national security crisis, demonstrates the potential hostility that exist between the government and those members of the population deemed as enemies of the state.

Evil is most effective in breaking the human spirit and reaching genocidal levels when those in control of political power have taken specific steps to suppress the

freedoms of some members of the national population. There is a clear recognition of injustice when Americans are not interned, but *Japanese-Americans* are. The sense that “they” aren’t really like “us,” that “they aren’t really Americans,” begs the question, “What does it mean to be an American?” During the rein of Nazi Germany, Jews were segregated then sent to death camps. Their segregation was part of the process of stripping them of their freedom. It was allegedly a demonstration of political might. The reality, however, was that such actions simply cloaked the true intention of the Nazi regime, which was the mass extermination of Jews in Germany and Nazi occupied Europe.

It should also be noted that the state, or those in control of it, during times of extreme crisis, may redefine citizenship or membership of the political community over which it exercises jurisdiction. The power to include or exclude one in the “nation” becomes an act of the state and not one of birth. Thus, the jurisdiction in which citizenship is typically conferred, as to the location of one’s birth, is now reinterpreted by state power. This practice, however, problematizes the conferral of citizenship, insofar as the justification for inclusion or exclusion becomes increasingly arbitrary. Especially in the case of the exclusion of citizenship, those denied citizenship are more readily targeted for potential abuse and extermination.

The concept of statehood is intimately tied to the notion of nationalism. As I have suggested, when the idea of nationalism includes an ideology of exclusion, all efforts to defend nationalism will only result in an exclusion of a portion of the population, which only undermines the solidarity of the nation.

The difficulty of analyzing the concept of evil and incorporating it into a larger discussion of genocide, relates to complications in assessing the role of nationalism and statehood. As previously mentioned, the concept of nationalism is essential to an understanding of statehood. The state is a single authoritative extension of political power and nationalism is the unifying means of constructing identity. It is, in effect, the point of focus for any attempt to assimilate the public at large. The need to assimilate, then, is the force that informs nationalistic ideals. Nationalistic ideologies reinforce norms, which are substantiated by practice. The idea of democratic freedom and free market economics is a governing norm for much of the West. One need not speak of specific instances of nationalism because they all serve the same ideological function. Nationalism is the driving force for socio-cultural assimilation. Thus, for the nation to diversify, for the nation to grow, it must allow an assimilation of its ideals.

Since political ideology informs nationalism and nationalism is an essential facet of statehood, wherein it is the driving force for socio-cultural assimilation, then any attempt to infuse political ideology with an ideology of exclusion, compromises the process of assimilation and therefore compromises the state itself. The strength of the state should only be measured by the diversity of its population, for where there is a diverse population there is a need for ideological tolerance. For the state to endorse an ideology of exclusion undermines the natural interrelation and interaction between diverse socio-cultural groups. Thus, an enforced ideology of exclusion unnaturally seeks to control the state demography. Furthermore, this attempt to control state demography runs counter to natural occurrences and therefore requires the use of force for its implementation. The

manifestation of this force, as an unnatural means of controlling state demography, is most heinously instantiated in the act of genocide. Thus, the use of genocide as a tool of unnaturally controlling state demography is itself justified by an ideology of exclusion. The purpose of an exclusionary ideology is to serve as a means of justifying state endorsed genocide. Genocide is necessarily self-referential, insofar as the ideological construct of exclusion presumes the act of genocide, and the act of genocide is itself justified by the ideological construct of excluding members of its population from protection. Thus, the justification for genocide is always dogmatic. The state appeals to an exclusionary ideology, genocide manifests as a result of this appeal and is subsequently justified by similar appeals to the same ideological basis. The only means, then, of thwarting the occurrence of genocide is to attack and undermine any appeal to an ideology of exclusion. If every attempt to appeal to this ideology is met with diligent and logical arguments to the contrary, the justification for genocide, and also the attempt to dehumanize potential targeted groups, becomes all the more difficult. The more difficult it is for the state to justify the extermination of targeted groups, the more likely it is that genocide will be thwarted. Thus, the most effective means of decreasing the occurrences of genocide results from a refusal to endorse an ideology of exclusion.

The problem lies not in the idea of nationalism but in the conception of an ideology of exclusion, which I have demonstrated, leads to a weakening of the state. Nevertheless, nationalism devoid of an ideology of exclusion, which is based on tolerance and a respect for diverse populations, can only contribute to the welfare of the state. Exclusionary nationalism is, therefore, a construct because it breeds intolerance and facilitates

genocide. As discussed in the previous chapter, intolerance is a core cause in the perpetration of evil. Thus, the manifestation of evil, through acts of genocide, is firmly rooted in intolerance. To practice ideological tolerance is to strengthen nationalism, which reinforces the conception of statehood by incorporating a diversity of political views.

2.7. *Genocidal Intent and Causality*

One of the most difficult puzzles to solve when discussing the relation between genocide and the problem of evil is assessing the intentionality of state ideology. A political ideology of exclusion necessitates a specific intentional act, but proving that the intent was to commit genocide is very difficult. As has been demonstrated in the last section, to incorporate an ideology of exclusion into the conception of nationalism is to undermine the efficacy of the state, and statehood as such. Philosophers, however, can demonstrate that the intentionality of the state was in fact evil, if the means of justification was itself referenced by an ideology of exclusion, i.e., if the state's attempt to justify genocide is based on state ideology, then the state dogmatically justifies its actions by appealing to itself, which was most heinously and continually done by Hitler and members of the Nazi party.

An ideology of exclusion must first be assessed as a thought. The thought in question must also pertain to the deliberate and systematic extermination of a portion of the population. If this thought is realized in the act of genocide, i.e., if the incorporation of an exclusionary ideology could possibly manifest as an act of genocide, then both the attempt to incorporate such an ideology and the resulting genocidal act are evil.

Demonstrating that the thought of exclusion is evil, however, requires that one assesses the intent more so than the causal relationships between state ideology and nationalism, on the one hand, and the mechanics of systematizing death, on the other.

Evil is most easily understood as the willful systematization of death as a result of a state's exclusionary ideology. If, because of an ideology of exclusion, members of a population are willfully targeted for extermination, and the process of expediting their deaths is systematized to result in maximizing causalities, then both the intent to act and the act itself are evil. Such an ideology is evil because it brings death to the public, it politicizes and systematizes death and then subsequently justifies the act of genocide by appealing to its ideology of exclusion.

The legal difficulty in proving that a state has engaged in an act of genocide can be eased if acts of exclusion have been codified by law. State ideology can be an amorphous and often abstracted sociopolitical or philosophical concept that has little applicability to legislative bodies or international tribunals. Since, however, it has been demonstrated that an ideology of exclusion can result in an act of genocide, if one is trying to locate blame for a proven act of genocide, one need only look for exclusionary practices codified in law. The law, then, is a representation of state intentionality. It is the law that seeks to regulate conduct within the domestic jurisdiction of a state's borders. Thus, in assessing the often elusive conception of state intentionality, one need only investigate the execution of law. Every law that enforces acts of discrimination or exclusion or fails to punish acts of discrimination or exclusion, sponsors an ideology of exclusion. Where such ideology is supported by law, the state is specifically responsible for the acts of

members of its population. As I mentioned earlier, this construction of state intentionality is broader than simply assessing instances of state endorsed genocide. Under this interpretation, for example, the United States government would be directly responsible for the mass lynching of African-American men during the 19th and 20th centuries.

One should note, then, that participation is not necessary for implication. The state or the individual can be implicated without ever having participated in the particular act. It is the intention to act, the ability to incite hatred, the inability to prosecute acts of discrimination, or the failure to intervene, to protect the abused and vulnerable, all of which expose state complicity in the perpetrated acts. At this level of the investigation, however, it would be presumptive to suggest that the state was participating in an act of evil or, of that matter, that the state's ideology was evil. There is agreement that it is exclusionary, which is justified by instances of discrimination and exclusion codified law, but it is not evil. The ideology of exclusion is only evil when, based on the principles of exclusion, the state then begins the process of systematizing death. It is the systematization of death and an ideology of exclusion that is evil. One may argue that a standing militia is a representative example of the attempt to bureaucratize death, which may be true, but one may also argue that they are a defensive force charged with protecting the population. To understand the coupling of evil and genocide, one must recognize the necessary causal relation between state ideology and the systematization of death. It is only when a state ideology of exclusion commands some militia to exterminate all members of a population bearing a specific demographic identifier that one can truly understand the coupling of evil and genocide.

Though much has been said of intentionality, little has been said of the causal relationship between an ideology of exclusion and the systemization of death. Insofar as state intentionality can be inferred from codified law, one can assess the nature of the causal relation between the intent to commit genocide and the act of genocide itself. More important than this causal relation between the intent to act and the act itself is the attempt to understand, in the Aristotelian sense, the causal distinction between the potential to commit genocide and the actualization of evil through genocidal acts.

In discussing the relationship between an acorn and an oak tree, one is justified in classifying the acorn as having the potential to be an oak tree. Similarly, the oak tree is the actualization of the acorn. This, however, is a cursory interpretation of causality. It is more than simply the fact that the acorn has the potential to become an oak tree and the oak tree is the actualization of the acorn, but that the acorn is, in fact, incomplete, i.e., it is not an oak tree. An oak tree, however, by definition, produces acorns, such that an oak tree is the production of its own actualization. In short, the oak tree is sustainable given the requisite environmental factors.

In discussing the association of genocide and evil in terms of their causal association, the potential for evil is inherent an ideology of exclusion. The ideology is the seed for spawning evil. As I have mentioned in previous sections it is not enough to say that genocide will necessarily follow from such an exclusionary ideology, as demonstrated in the lynching of African-Americans during the 19th and early 20th centuries, though genocide is certainly one manifestation of evil. More is needed to actualize evil. Though an acorn is a necessary condition for an oak tree, it is not sufficient, as it will need

sunlight, water and shade if it is to actualize that potential. Similarly, an ideology of exclusion may suggest the intent to commit genocide, there maybe a potential for genocide, but without the proper condition, viz. discrimination codified in law coupled with the systematization of death, all the necessary conditions will not be met to define the act as evil. Again, I am here classifying evil as the willful systematization of death as a result of a state's exclusionary ideology. The intent to engage in such action serves to foster the potential for the manifestation of evil through an act of genocide, but that potential is not enough without satisfying other conditions. The greatest actualization of evil, then, is genocide, as a causal result of a state's exclusionary ideology. The formation of an exclusionary ideology is a demonstration of the state's intent, and the systematization of death and the act of mass public killings is the actualization of that intention. Thus, in understanding the causal forces that determine the manifestation of state intentionality, understanding how evil unfolds within the political structures will aid in localizing its existence in acts of genocide.

Also implied in the discussion of an ideology of exclusion is the attempt to determine the nature and composition of society itself, by the creation of a monolithic society. We have often heard of the social construction of race or the social construction of gender, but this is a political construction of society through unnatural means. Societies are naturally constructed and determined by any number of factors and sociologists disagree on what all those factors may be, but there is consensus that migration patterns and accessibility to natural resources are determining factors in the formation of society. Hobbes, notoriously spoke of the "state of nature," but one needs not revert to such

hostile origins to understand the formation of society. The attempt to link genocide and evil strictly through a discourse of political power would be incomplete, because although an ideology of exclusion seeks to remove members of society from the population and thereby from political protection, it also implies that the state is artificially manufacturing the social. There is the potential for a whole host of research surrounding the political construction of the social, but my concern pertains to the artificial creation of a monolithic society.

If one delves deeper into the idea of state intentionality, one begins to uncover the most heinous attempts to thwart the natural migration patterns of human beings and their accessibility to resources. Within human communities, the maximization of diversity is *inherent* in biological reproduction, as a fact of human survival. This is the natural facet of life, i.e., nature tends to maximize diversity as a defensive mechanism against genetic disorders and diseases. Thus, any attempt by a state to thwart the natural progression to maximize diversity, even within the domestic jurisdiction of a state's borders, is unnatural.

Evil, then, is unsustainable. If, as mentioned earlier, it has been suggested that evil is defined in terms of an exclusionary state ideology that seeks to enforce homogeneity, and the demography of the state is naturally heterogeneous, then those in control of the state must realize that to maintain such a control of state demography requires perpetual genocide and mass exile, a fact that is ultimately unsustainable. The attempt to enforce homogeneity weakens society, as it requires excessive uses of force to physically manipulate state demography. Within biological communities, a similar advantage exists

for sexually reproducing organisms. Sexual reproduction increases diversity, whereas asexual reproduction creates uniformity, but also weakens the viability of the group. The viability of social groupings is dependent on the diversity of the society. Without a keen understanding of the intricacies of social networking, one cannot assess the benefits of diversity, which is a job for sociologists. But the unnatural attempt to enforce homogeneity through the abuse of political power undermines the natural occurrence of a diverse state demography.

2.8. *Genocide, Purity and Imperfection*

Within this section of the analysis I will undertake a description of the notion of state purity, which, I will argue, is a direct result of subscribing to an exclusionary ideology. If a state's demography is naturally heterogeneous and the state assumes an ideology of exclusion to enforce or create a homogeneous state, then such actions are counter to the natural occurrences within the state and thereby unnatural. Furthermore, the attempt to purify the state presupposes that there exists an imperfection within the natural occurrences of diversity in state demography. It assumes that the natural occurrence of a diverse state demography is contaminated by the incorporation of groups that the state seeks to expel. Thus, to decontaminate or purify the state, those in power must endorse an exclusionary ideology and seek to expel targeted groups from the state demography. The expulsion of these targeted groups from state demography is the act of purification. In using the term purification, I am specifically referring to the act of expelling targeted groups from the state demography once it has assumed an exclusionary ideology, either through genocide or mass exile.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the anxiety caused by the presence of targeted groups, as a perceived challenge to state authority, suggests that a state willing to exterminate or to impose exile for members of its population behaves in a similar fashion to the small man (*shǎo rén*). As Mencius warned King Hwuy of Leang, the state is obligated to its people just as a man is obligated to live a virtuous life. Thus, in the process of attempting to purge members of the population from the state's domestic jurisdiction, those in control of the state fail to recognize this obligation to their people.

In the description of purification and the attempt to expel imperfect groups from state demography, I will focus my analysis on Fascism and Totalitarianism. In my account of these two forms of government, I will demonstrate the comparative association between the purification of the state, on the one hand, and the endorsement of an ideology of exclusion, both supported by Fascism and Totalitarianism, on the other. Thus, the aim of this final section of the analysis is to demonstrate how the concept of purity is specifically deduced from an exclusionary ideology in both Fascist and Totalitarian states. If it is then demonstrated that the concept of purity is deducible from the initial premise of a state endorsed ideology of exclusion, and also shown that the concept of state purification inevitably results in genocide, then the attempt to thwart genocide is intimately tied both to demonstrating the logical inconsistencies in subscribing to an exclusionary ideology and demonstrating how the idea of purification fails to purify the state.

The power of Fascist and Totalitarian state is grounded in the logic of their respective ideologies, which according to Hannah Arendt is their ability to weaponize their ideologies. She writes,

The device both totalitarian rulers used to transform their respective ideologies into weapons with which each of their subjects could force himself into...proceeded to drive ideological implications into *extremes of logical consistency*, which to the onlooker, looked preposterously “primitive” and absurd: a “dying class” consisted of people condemned to death; races that are “unfit to live” were to be exterminated (emphasis added).¹²⁹

The power of the Fascist and Totalitarian state rests in the strict logical consistency with which it governs and subordinates targeted groups within its population. For the state to weaponize its ideology, no arguments against the state can be warranted. An exclusionary ideology is inherently prone to weaponization because it seeks to alter, by force, the state demography by excluding targeted groups from membership. My emphasis of Arendt’s claim that these forms of government seek to “drive ideological implications into extremes of logical consistency” is a means of further demonstrating the necessity for rigorous and formulized logical coherence within state ideology. Thus, the attempt to undermine these forms of government cannot truly be successful by waging wars as the strength of these governments rests in their logic not their military. To undermine the logical consistencies inherent in subscribing to an ideology of exclusion and specifically demonstrating how a contradiction is drawn from assuming a the initial premise of an exclusionary ideology, is all that is needed to undermine the motive, the driving force behind these forms of governance. This will be my objective, i.e., I will attempt a

¹²⁹ Arendt, 1973. p. 471.

reductio ad absurdum from the initial premise of an exclusionary ideology and if it is shown that assuming such an ideology actually weakens the state, then one cannot assume such an ideology.

With respect to the nature of an ideology Arendt writes, “the real nature of all ideologies was revealed *only in the role* that the ideology plays in the apparatus of totalitarian domination” (emphasis added).¹³⁰ This conception is of key importance in discussing both the Fascist and Totalitarian states. The Fascist state, in its opposition to pacifisms, seeks to subordinate the individual to the will of the state, which is ruled by a single party, and is thereby driven by the “movement” of supporters of the political party. Once the “movement” has attained political power, i.e., it has occupied all facets of government with party members, the Fascist state can become totalitarian in the omnipotence of its political power, which according to Arendt, “is what happened in Italy under Mussolini’s Fascism, which up to 1938 was not totalitarian but just an ordinary nationalist dictatorship developed logically from a multiparty democracy.”¹³¹ The idea that the party is a movement of the people is merely a muse to attain political power, it is the framework with which the leaders of the party articulate their intentions to the masses. The masses support the movement because the movement is allegedly a representation of the will of the masses, which in the case of Fascism is clearly false. The Fascist state is solely concerned with total domination. It functions to ensure that its sole party occupies every aspect of political power and challengers to that power threaten the existence of the Fascist state. Thus, totalitarianism is a natural consequence of a Fascist

¹³⁰ Ibid 470.

¹³¹ Ibid 257.

state because the drive for omnipresence is reinforced by the will to omnipotence. The desire to represent the party in every position of political power (omnipresence) is reinforced by the totalization of that power (omnipotence).

The problem, however, with attaining and maintaining complete political control of power is that it requires ceaseless attention to all those forces, both malignant and benign that may otherwise seek to usurp political power, or even seek representation within political power. Moreover, the Fascist state, by default, since it is a single party state, which is representative of the people's "movement" only represents to population insofar as those not represented within the party cannot be considered as members of the state. The assumption that the state represents the people, is only true to the extent that single party rule cannot, by definition, represent the entirety of a state's demography. Thus, in subscribing to Fascism, it follows that there will invariably be members within the state demography that will, necessarily, be excluded from state participation. Even prior to the formation of an ideology of exclusion, then, the Fascist state, in particular, as a means of its existence, is itself buttressed by the conception of selective exclusion. Those not represented by the single party will be subordinated by state bureaucracy once the political movement to occupy every facet of political power has been accomplished by the Fascist state.

There are two points of importance with respect to the rise of the Fascist state and its relation to state demography. Firstly, the Fascist state is inherently exclusionary, which seeks to govern to the advantage of a few than to satisfy the concerns of the masses. Insofar as the Fascist state is not representative of state demography, it follows that there

is an ideological unwillingness address the concerns for those that do not support state power or for those that seek to diversify the state. Secondly, in strategically dominating all forms of political power within the state, there can be no resistance by state officials to the ideologies espoused by state leadership. In fact, those ambitious for power need only parrot the sentiments of state ideology to virtually ensure their rise to political power. What results from these two instantiations of Fascism is the fundamental inability of those in power to address the concerns of the masses not represented within the state's sole party, and an a further reluctance, by definition, to allow the incorporation of diverse political ideologies within the state's governance. Thus, what results from this political rigidity is a formulation of an ideology of exclusion, which is justified by the insistence on a single omnipresent political party that only represents a portion of the state's demography.

In enacting an ideology of exclusion, wherein the state specifically targets and selects particular groups for exclusion and inevitably expulsion from the state demography, the state need only refer to the omnipresence of its political power. Power, in this case, has been consolidated by all those espousing a similar political ideology. The state—argues the Fascist—is the manifestation of the people's will, i.e., it is the people's movement. Thus, any who espouse political ideologies that differ from the state's endorsed ideology, fundamentally undermine the power of the state, since power has been consolidated by one party rule. Moreover, since the state is a manifestation of the people's movement, to endorse any political ideology other than state ideology is tantamount to subvert the will of the people. This attempt to subvert the will of the people corrupts the very essence of

how the state rose to power and successfully occupied every facets of political governance, thereby challenging the state for power.

This threat need not be met by military actions against the state. The very act of introducing an alternative state ideology essentially corrupts the purity of the state. Knowing this beforehand, i.e., understanding that there will be those that oppose and wish to introduce alternative forms of governance before even attain political power, necessitates that once power is attained all those that would seek to “corrupt” the current Fascist state, by challenging its political ideology, must be expelled from the state demography. As mentioned in the introduction of this section, by the process of purification, I am specifically referring to the process wherein the state seeks to expel all those who challenge state power from the state’s demography through mass exile or genocide.

Using the concepts that I have formulized earlier in the chapter to specifically analyze this practice of purification within the Fascist state, it must be said that such an attempt, if it were to result in an act of genocide would have as its foundation genocide based on mutable identifiers. Since political ideologies are given to change, those who have an ability to embrace the new state ideology will be spared. Those that refuse will be exterminated. Granted there are aspects of Fascism that speak to racial superiority, which would only strengthen my point by satisfying conditions for both genocide based on mutable identifiers (the refusal to embrace the new political ideology) and genocide based on immutable identifiers (the extermination of life based on the victim’s race).

In assuming an exclusionary ideology, the state must enact the process of purification. Otherwise, it would be contradictory to embrace such ideology while also recognizing the diversity of state demography. Thus, to remain logically consistent, the acceptance of an exclusionary ideology necessitates the act of purification. The act of purification, then, is the specific act of expelling those excluded in the state ideology from representation and state protection. However, those targeted groups are comprised of those selected on the basis of mutable and immutable characteristics. Clearly it is easier to exterminate those within the population that have been targeted because of their immutable characteristics because these characteristics are readily apparent, e.g., race, ethnicity, disability. For the sake of argument, then, assume that the state was successful in its attempt to purify the state of all those members of target groups excluded on the basis of their immutable demographic identifiers. There would still be, what I will argue, the impossible task of purifying the state of all those that have been targeted on the basis of their refusal to embrace state ideology. How conceivably could this process be completed? If officials were to ask those selected for extermination about their political affiliations, and those targeted for extermination understand that espousing an ideology other than state ideology results in death, then the simple thing one can do is to falsely acknowledge state ideology in the hopes of saving one's own life.

The state, however, has to know that this will most naturally be the instinctive response of potential dissenters, which leads to the conclusion that the state will have to continually seek out and kill dissenters. Note that it would be illogical to assume that the state could ever remove all potential dissenters from state demography, because the very

nature of their political affiliation is based on mutability. Thus, even more dangerous than seeking out dissenters is the danger of losing those that once affirmed state ideology to competing ideologies. Thus, subscribing to an exclusionary ideology results in at least two contradictions, which complete the *reductio ad absurdum*. Firstly, purification is impossible because the total removal of all target groups from state demography is expressly impossible, because some of the characteristics that may be targeted are subject to change. It is impossible, then, for the state to verify that all “contaminants” have successfully been removed from the state demography. Secondly, and even more importantly, if the state endorses an ideology of exclusion, then there for the state to have power there must be those that need to be excluded. If the state were to truly purify itself, there would no longer be a need for the state, as the very ideology of the state is based on the process of exclusion. Thus, what is actually being stated and endorsed in subscribing to an ideology of state exclusion, is the eternal extermination of human life. As long as the state is in power there will always be some group that needs to be purged from its demography. That is the truth behind subscribing to an ideology of exclusion. To support my conclusion, I cite Arendt at length,

To the extent that the Bolshevik purge succeeds in making its victims confess to crimes they never committed, it relies chiefly on this basic fear and argues as follows: We are all agreed on the premise that history is a struggle of classes and on the role of the Party in its conduct. You know therefore that, historically speaking, *the Party is always right*...At this historical moment, that is in accordance with the law of history, certain crimes are due to be committed which the Party, knowing the law of history, must punish. For these crimes, *the Party needs criminals*; it may be that the Party, though knowing the crimes, *does not quite know the criminals*; more important than to be sure about the

criminals *is to punish the crimes*, because without such punishment, History will not be advanced but may even be hindered in its course. You, therefore, either have committed the crimes *or have been called by the Party to play the role of the criminal—in either case you have objectively become an enemy of the Party* (emphasis added).¹³²

It has been my specific goal throughout this chapter, to precisely itemize exactly how an individual “becomes an enemy to the Party.” In following Kissi’s lead and his explanation of how the process of genocide unfolds, it was my attempt to describe how the state manufactures enemies. This process of manufacturing enemies is essentially arbitrary. What is not arbitrary, however, is that there will be victims if the state endorses an ideology of exclusion. Once that endorsement is made, the entire population slips into absurdity because it is fundamentally illogical to assume an exclusionary ideology and not also embrace contradiction. I end, then, with a final quote from Arendt,

The ideal subject of a totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom *the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist* (emphasis added).¹³³

¹³² Ibid 473.

¹³³ Ibid 474.

Chapter 3: Attempts to Deny the Existence of Evil

*“There is an air of unreality about the suggestion that ‘Evil’ is reducible to ‘not-so-Good’”*¹³⁴

In a contemporary discussion of events with negative normative associations, many social scientists, criminologists, and political theorists have abandoned the use of the term ‘evil’ for more “meaningful” terms like violence, harms or torts. These theorists have argued that the term has lost its meaning or that it is too entrenched in theological or metaphysical contexts to have any significant application for an analysis of violence and mass murders. This chapter, then, is an attempt to outline the various ways in which these theorists, both past and present, have attempted to reduce evil to conceptions such as harm or violence. I shall demonstrate the failures of each.

3.1. *The Denial of Evil: Manichaeism and Matter*

From antiquity, philosophers have had difficulties in situating evil within the natural world. Many, unable to locate evil within material substance, have argued that evil is a privation of that which is good. Insofar as evil is conceptualized as a privation, its existence, i.e., our ability to identify evil within the natural world, manifests as a lack of goodness. Rula Abisaab explains,

‘Evil’ ...is the absence of existence or absence of a perfection of existence or absence of perfection in an

¹³⁴Acton, H. B., and J. W. N. Watkins. 1963. “Symposium: Negative Utilitarianism” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, Vol. 37, p. 111.

existing being. What society labels ‘evil’, in reference to injustice and adultery, is a construction and as such has no absolute reality. ‘Evil’, then, describes the person who is lacking in justice, uprightness or goodness.¹³⁵

On this interpretation, evil exist, not as a thing in the world, since there is no corresponding material substance, but as a receding gradient—a diminution of goodness. Rather than the gradient being measured on a scale separated by goodness, on one side, and evil, on the other, evil is measured by privation or lack of goodness, as such. Thus, all that exists, according to this conception, *is* goodness. The problem, however, with defining evil in such terms is rather obvious. Acton and Watkins explain,

From Plato on, the attitude of ‘objectivists’...have mostly been confident about the reality of Good but rather skeptical about Evil. They have mostly been anti-Manichaeists. More precisely, in place of a scale with Very Good at one end, Very Bad at the other...they have put a scale which just has Very Good...at one end. On this scale one cannot approach Very Bad, but only recede from Very Good...*There is and air of unreality about the suggestion that ‘Evil’ is reducible to ‘not-so-Good’* and that we recognize evil situations from a prior knowledge of missing goodness...which is palpably false (emphasis added).¹³⁶

Alexander of Lycopolis was a staunch critic of the Manichaeists and of Manichaeism. For the Manichaeist, dualism arises from their refutation of God’s omnipotence, which accounts for the problem of evil, i.e., if God is not omnipotent then one can rationally argue for the existence of evil within the world. For the Manichaeist, there is the recognition of evil on the one hand, but at the expense of God’s omnipotence, on the other. Alexander recognized that Manichaeism jeopardized the integrity of the

¹³⁵ Abisaab, Rula Jurdi. 2004. *Converting Persia religion and power in the Safavid Empire*. International library of Iranian studies, 1. London: I.B. Tauris. p., 77.

¹³⁶ Acton and Watkins, 1963, p., 111.

Christian faith by challenging God's omnipotence. Thus, to preserve God's omnipotence, Alexander had to deny the actuality of evil. The key, however, in refuting the Manichaean conception of God, would require Alexander to re-conceptualize the nature of matter. For the Manichaeist, evil exists within matter, which only exacerbates their dualism. The Manichaeists argue that if God is imperfect and his powers are limited, then his creations will reflect his imperfections. Evil is an imperfection. Moreover, matter is a product of God's creation. Thus, matter is evil.

To successfully deny the existence of evil, Alexander had to demonstrate that matter could not contain evil, as it was an aspect of God's creation and that, unlike the dualistic conception defended by the Manichaeists, God was omnipotent and therefore his creations, namely matter, was devoid of evil. Jason BeDuhn addresses the nature of Manichaean dualism within the human body,

The especially pernicious character of the human body results, according to the Manichaeans, from an evil motive force that inhabits it. Augustine reports that "you say that all your members and your whole body were formed by the evil mind which you call *hylē*, and that part of this fabricator dwells in the body along with part of your God."¹³⁷ So "every living being has two souls, one of the race of light, and the other of the race of darkness."¹³⁸ The evil mixed into the whole universe manifests itself in the kind of behavior humans display outside the discipline of the Manichaean faith.¹³⁹

Alexander then analyzed the nature of matter. If God is the creator of all things, and God is all good, omnipotent, and benevolent, and matter is a product of God's creation, then

¹³⁷ Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 20.15.

¹³⁸ Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 6.8.

¹³⁹ BeDuhn, Jason. 2000. *The Manichaean body in discipline and ritual*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 95

insofar as God is the Creator of matter, God did not imbue matter with evil. Thus, evil cannot exist, as existence results from God's creation, and all of God's creations are devoid of evil. According to Alexander, then, matter cannot be the source of evil.

Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa explains,

Alexander's argument against Manichaean ontology gravitates around the status of matter...He insists that matter cannot be considered evil since it is generated by God.¹⁴⁰ In his emphatic denial of any evil in connection with matter, he stands rather lonely in the Platonic tradition...For instance he objects to the definition of matter as *ataktos kinesis*,¹⁴¹ which had become too closely connected to the identification of matter with evil in Middle Platonism.¹⁴²

The Manichaeists' conception of *ataktos kinesis* (disordered movement) is a reference to the nature of matter, in which, as it has been suggested, matter results as a product of God's imperfect creation. The imperfection inherent within matter brings about its disorder. Hence, the nature of *ataktos kinesis* as evil results from its disordered and unperfected state. Alexander is taking issue with this conception of *ataktos kinesis*.

Stroumsa writes,

The Christian heresiographers seem to regard Manichaean materialism as contradicting the very concept of God. God cannot be situated in a place...this description implies that God is limited...Alexander of Lycopolis...who...wrote the first full-fledged anti-Manichaean polemic, points out that

¹⁴⁰ The argument is central to Alexander, and runs through much of the book; See also the annotated translation of the text by P.W. van der Horst and J. Mansfeld, *An Alexandrian Platonist against Dualism* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) p. 19-23.

¹⁴¹ Alexander 7-8 (11-12 Brinkmann); 63-66 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld). Cf. L. Troje, 'Zum Begriff ATAKTOS KINHSIS bei Platon und Mani,' *Museum Helveticum* 5 (1948): 96-115.

¹⁴² Stroumsa, Gedaliahu G. 1992. "Titus of Bostra and Alexander of Lycopolis: A Christian and Platonic Refutation of Manichaean Dualism" In *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism Studies in Neoplatonism*. V6. New York: Albany State University of New York Press. p. 340-341.

the Manichaean perception entails not only God's limitation, but also his corporeality.¹⁴³

For Alexander of Lycopolis, the existence of evil is illusory, since its actuality would entail its manifestation from an imperfect and limited God. The Manichaean conception of matter as *ataktos kinesis* would create not only a theoretical duality, but also an embodied duality. Thus, Alexander's refutation of evil was incidental to the fact that he refused to accept the Manichaean conception of matter as *ataktos kinesis*. In refusing to acknowledge this conception, however, and in failing to then account for what we perceive as evil, Alexander discarded evil for the preservation and perfection of matter.

3.2. *The Denial of Evil: Refutation through Endurance*

Many within the Christian tradition have attempted to tackle the problem of evil by defending God's characteristics at the expense of denying the existence of evil. The denial of evil often takes the form of a suggestion that evil is a means to some greater good, and therefore, in order to have these greater goods, we must endure some degree of evil. In his discussion of this attempt to reduce evil to more "meaningful" conceptions, Le Bosquet notes:

There are religious men today who assert and believe in the reality of evil and there are those on the other hand who deny its essential existence...The blatant optimists are ever to be met with, they who are sure that, however things may seem, everything is bound to come out right...[All,] consciously deny[ing] that evil is a fact...*There is harm, calamity, anguish, but our idea that these are evil is due to our limited and distorted vision which is unable to see things whole* (emphasis added).¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Stroumsa, Sarah and Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa. 1988. "Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics in Late Antiquity and under Early Islam" *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 81, No. 1 Jan., p. 43.

¹⁴⁴ Edwards, John Le Bosquet. 1912. "The Evil One: A Development" *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 5, No. 3. Jul., p. 381.

The attempt to reduce evil to harm is appealing because there is an ease, an ability to remain optimistic, an ability to cope with being harmed by another person, whereas one's attempt to confront evil and recognize it as such is often debilitating. It runs counter to the optimism needed to cope with one's ordeal. More importantly, however, if one can avoid evoking terms like evil, one can likely endure one's ordeal at higher intensities and for longer durations. Thus, the process of reducing evil to harm is advantageous insofar as it allows those suffering, the possibility of remaining optimistic about their plight. Denial, then, is a cognitive and evolutionary advantage, a coping mechanism, wherein the moral agent may be said to deny the existence of evil, reducing it to a more easily understandable conception like harm, for the sole purpose of coping with one's suffering. The denial of evil, then, is an effective psychological requirement for the preservation of one's mental and physical health.

the sensation of this enduring evil must not be unremitting – or at least, its unremitting quality must not always be dominant – because it is inconceivable how the *initial resolve to improve* could ever arise under such circumstances... The physical aspect of punishment may last indefinitely, but the better informed sinner *will no longer call it an evil*; he will no longer consider himself unfortunate, however painful it may be to his sensuous nature.' What else does this mean but that the sinner can better himself, *even if his punishment never ceases?* (emphasis added)¹⁴⁵

In facing the difficulties of unremitting evil, an evil as overwhelming as a genocidal or totalitarian state, it is surprising how quickly human beings are capable of adapting to

¹⁴⁵ Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. Nisbet, Hugh Barr. 2005. *Philosophical and theological writings*. New York Cambridge University Press. p. 55.

these new threats. If the threat is honestly recognized for what it is (a fully financed, state endorsed, mechanism of death, with near total power within the confines of its domestic jurisdiction) the individual moral agent recognizes his insignificance in the face of such overarching political power, and is defeated by this recognition. In normal less personal circumstances, the moral agent would easily identify the situation as evil, but when he is directly experiencing, when he is a recipient of the state's attempt to eradicate complete portions of the population, a normal response is incongruous with an abnormal situation.

In fact, Viktor Frankl has noted:

An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal. Even we psychiatrists expect the reaction of a man to an abnormal situation...to be abnormal in proportion to the degree of his normality. The reaction of a man to a concentration camp also represents an abnormal state of mind, but judged objectively it is a normal and...typical reaction to the given circumstance.¹⁴⁶

I am suggesting that the denial of evil is a normal reaction to the overwhelming political force used to exterminate members of a population. Moral agents are emotionally justified in attempting to reduce evil to harm as a means of enduring their suffering, but it does not follow that such psychological coping mechanisms, born from a very real sense of preserving one's own life, translate to an actual and ontological reduction of evil to harm.

It should also be noted that this conception of denying evil through enduring one's suffering isn't only a psychological aspect of human cognition. There is a resilient belief of "redemptive suffering" throughout many religious traditions, which teach that through

¹⁴⁶ Frankl, Viktor. 1959. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press. p., 20.

suffering one attains understanding, immortality, nirvana etc., which isn't to suggest that believers of these religions deny the existence of evil. However, as I will soon discuss, it is possible to both deny the existence of evil and deny the conception of "redemptive suffering," the argument of which only the Christian Scientist defends.

In attempting to cope with the existence of evil, it is often necessary for potential survivors to deny its existence for the preservation of their mental and physical health. In denying the existence of evil, moral agents often attempt to reduce evil to easily understandable conceptions like harm, calamity, and anguish, which is a "normal" response to an abnormal situation. In truly discussing evil, however, it is imperative that researchers try to understand the very difficult and complex nature of evil itself, which isn't to presuppose its existence from the outset, but all facts of science begin with a hypothesis. Thus, we should suppose the existence of evil and test our theories against the facts of the world. If our theories of evil conform to the facts, we will have forged much needed headway into better understanding the nature of evil. If it does not, we can safely dispose with the concept of evil as illusory.

3.3. *The Denial of Evil: The Christian Scientist*

Christian Scientists traced their religious roots to 1866, when Mary Baker Eddy spontaneously recovered from a severe injury that authenticated her "discovery" that reality is completely spiritual and evil is only an illusion. Scientists had believed that Eddy had recovered the cardinal teaching of Jesus Christ that all is good and evil does not exist.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Schoepflin, Rennie B. 2003. *Christian science on trial : religious healing in America* Baltimore Johns Hopkins University Press. p., 6.

Mary Baker Eddy was a staunch proponent of Christian fundamentalism and argued for a Berkeleyan brand of subjective idealism, wherein the response to traditional dualism was to affirm idealism and deny materialism. Both her cosmogony and cosmology are constituted by the mind of God, which necessitates a world of ideas rather than objects. Her particular brand of idealism, however, had the peculiar consequence of also denying the existence of evil. She writes,

Man is not God, and God is not man. Again, God, or good, never made man capable of sin. It is the opposite of good—that is, evil—which seems to make men capable of wrongdoing. Hence, evil is but an illusion, and it has no real basis. Evil is a false belief.¹⁴⁸

It is important to note that Baker equates God with goodness and suggests that, “God never made man capable of sin.” Within the Christian tradition, sin is the means wherein evil is introduced into the world, which is to say, without sin there is no evil. Man’s ability to sin, his ability to transgress the will of God, is the root of evil according to this interpretation of the scripture. Thus, in denying Cartesian dualism and embracing idealism, Baker incidentally embraces another brand of dualism, viz., the distinction between God and his goodness, on the one hand, and evil and sin, on the other. Unfortunately, however, this puts Baker’s argument back in the context of a traditional theodicy, i.e., how do we account for the existence of God in light of evil? What makes Baker’s argument and her subsequent denial of evil different from the others, is her attempt to incorporate aspects of idealism into her denial of evil. She writes,

¹⁴⁸ Eddy, Mary Baker. 1875. *Science and health with key to the scripture*. Massachusetts: The First Church of Christ, Scientist. p., 480.

Nothing is real and eternal—nothing is Spirit—but God and His idea. Evil has no reality. It is neither person, nor thing, but is simply a belief, an illusion of material sense.¹⁴⁹

Baker’s justification that, “evil has no reality” is based on her belief that God is the source of all creation, which is merely a reflection of the ideas within the mind of God, and as such, evil cannot exist because it would suggest that God is capable of its conception.

The motivating force behind Baker’s refutation of evil lies in the belief of the mind’s ability to heal. It is Baker’s belief, and the belief of all current Christian Scientists that were evil to exist, the mind would not be able to heal the “body.” The mind is able to heal the “body,” they argue, thus evil does not exist. Granted this can be a difficult conception to understand, insofar as there is no direct correlation between the ability to heal and the refutation of evil, but all Christian Scientists ascribe to this system of belief.

Unfortunately, however, this refutation of evil, in the belief that the mind is capable of overcoming sickness has resulted in the deaths of many children. Richard A. Hughes writes,

As the primary advocate of religious exemptions from medicine, the Christian Science Church supports a “theological” form of exemption...because it wants to claim equality between medicine and spiritual healing: indeed the Christian Science Church defines spiritual healing as treatment, its healers as practitioners, even though it acknowledges that these concepts are really religious tenets.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid* p. 71.

¹⁵⁰ Hughes, Richard A. 2004 – 2005. “Death of Children by Faith-Based Medical Neglect” *Journal of Law and Religion*, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 258.

As has been discussed, for the Christian Scientists, there is no material world, and what we call evil is an, “illusion of material sense.”¹⁵¹ If physicians and other medical practitioners specialize in understanding the human *body* (as matter), and they interact with other *bodies*, or they attempt to describe how chemicals affect the *body*, then quite obviously the Christian Scientists is going to view contemporary Western medicine as fundamentally a practice of illusion, since they deny the existence of physical bodies to begin with. Evil, then, is Illusory. Matter is illusory. Therefore, Western medicine, that has its basis in understanding matter, is also illusory.

Margaret Poloma sharpens the analysis by writing,

Christian Science accepts as an assumption that illness is a form of evil, and all evil is an illusion. Each person has it within her/himself to counter illusion with truth. . . Given this assumption orthodox Christian Science theology inadvertently undermines the notion of “redemptive suffering.” Since God in no way sends or authorizes illness, he cannot be invoked to redeem it.¹⁵²

The syllogism is simple but its conclusion is rather startling. If illness is a form of evil, and evil is illusory, then, the Christian Scientist concludes, illness is illusory. This conclusion further explains why the Christian Scientist refuses traditional Western Medicine. It is not only that the practice of Western Medicine, as pertains to the human body, is illusory, but the very “thing” they attempt to cure, viz., disease, is also illusory. Evil manifests as disease, but evil does not exist. Thus, disease does not exist either.

Baker writes,

¹⁵¹ Baker, 1875, p. 71.

¹⁵² Poloma, Margaret M. 1991. “A Comparison of Christian Science and Mainline Christian Healing Ideologies and Practices” *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 32, No. 4. Jun. p. 340-341.

Befogged in error (the error of believing that matter can be intelligent for good or evil)...that we perceive the divine image in some word or deed which indicates the true idea—the supremacy and reality of good, the nothingness and unreality of evil.¹⁵³

In attempting to understand Christian Science and its particular brand of idealism, recognizing the role of the refutation of evil, within their religious tradition, is essential if one is to even attempt the discussion of their defense for medical exemption. To offer an analysis condemning Christian Scientists and their religious practices, no matter how nontraditional, and their aversion to Western Medicine, without incorporating an equal account of their refutation of evil, is to completely misunderstand their aversion to begin with.

The root of the Christian Scientist's apprehension to Western Medicine is based on the fundamental belief that matter is illusory. Since matter is illusory, all that exists is the mind of God. The mind of God is incapable of conceptualizing evil, thus, evil is illusory. Illness is a form of evil, which, ultimately suggests that illness, too, is illusory. Baker summarizes, "As mortals give up the *delusion* that there is *more than one Mind*, more than one God, man in God's likeness will appear, and this eternal man will include in that likeness no material element (emphasis added)."¹⁵⁴ In the final chapter of this analysis, I will return to this style of argumentation, not necessarily to a discussion of Christian Science, and offer a refutation of this form of logic.

¹⁵³ Baker, 1875, p. 205.

¹⁵⁴ Baker, 1875, p. 191.

3.4. *The Denial of Evil: Traditional and Nontraditional Theodicies*

For centuries, theological scholars had been debating theodicy and the problem of evil, some arguing for traditional and others nontraditional theodicies. Briefly, traditional theodicies are such that all attempts are made to preserve God's omnipotence in the face of evil, while nontraditional theodicies assume that God does not, or could not, exercise such power over the universe. There are countless defenders for the former, but the most notable names defending the latter are Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. A discussion of their responses to the problem of evil is beyond the scope of this particular chapter, but their theodicies serves as the conceptual foundation for a great debate between John Hick, embracing a traditional stance, and David Ray Griffin, defending a hybrid, 'Whiteheadian-Hartshornean' nontraditional process philosophy.¹⁵⁵ With respect to Griffin's approach to a nontraditional stance for the problem of evil, he writes,

In the first part of the following chapter [chapter 18] I will explicate Whitehead's view as to how divine causation is related to worldly activity...the basic formula...will indicate how, on the basis of Whitehead's metaphysical intuitions, it would be impossible in principle for God unilaterally to determine any state of affairs in an actual world.¹⁵⁶

John Hick, on the contrary defends a traditional, though modified, theodicy, which defends the omnipotence of God in addressing the problem of evil. Hick writes,

As a characterization of evil, *within the framework of Christian theology*, this privative definition must be

¹⁵⁵ Griffin, David Ray. 1976. *God, power and evil: A process theodicy* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. p., 275.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p., 274.

accepted as wholly sound. It represents the only possible account of the ontological status of evil in the universe that is the creation of *an omnipotent and good God*. From this standpoint evil cannot be an ultimate constituent of reality, for the sole ultimate reality is the infinitely good Creator. Evil can only consist in a malfunctioning or disorder that has somehow come about within an essentially good creation... (emphasis added).¹⁵⁷

Many have quickly suggested without a further analysis of Hick's argument that he is simply denying the existence of evil by defining it as a privation of goodness, which he is not. Essentially, Hick is offering a refutation of evil, but his analysis cannot simply be classified as a privative account of evil. Hick then modifies the traditional conception of evil as privation, writing,

We are therefore not authorized to draw any empirical conclusion from the doctrine of the negative character of evil, *taken by itself*. It does not entail that evil is anything other than a real fact and a grievously oppressive problem... it is therefore not permissible to dismiss the privative analysis of evil [by suggesting that] evil exists only in semblance or to say that some theist seek a solution [to the problem of evil] by denying the reality of evil (emphasis added).¹⁵⁸

Essentially, Hick's point is that we cannot confuse the privative argument of evil as an argument for evil as *non-being*, which Hick denies as a confusion of thought. To understand Hick's position, one cannot simply assert that this conception of privation is synonymous with the attempt to understand evil as non-being. Hick understands, as Russell first noted, that the human mind is such that the use of the term 'being' very forcefully suggests the antithetical term 'non-being'. The belief that since being exists,

¹⁵⁷ Hick, John. 1966. *Evil and the God of love. Revised Edition*. New York: Harper & Row. p. 180.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p., 181.

non-being must also exist is a linguistic confusion of ontological existence, i.e., the latter cannot follow from the former.

In discussing negative existential propositions there are no objects that correspond (refer) to the terms (signs) typically used to convey meaning. The paradox of negative existential propositions is the denial of the object's existence for which the proposition is said to refer. For example, stating that, "there is no such thing as Godzilla," the referent being Godzilla, seems to refer to the very thing that is denied in the proposition. Linguistically, we can meaningfully talk about the nonexistence of Godzilla. It makes sense to say that Godzilla does not exist, but ontologically, it is impossible for one to argue for the existence of nonexistence ($A \ \& \ \sim A$), i.e., the nonexistence of Godzilla exists as a thing in the world. As mentioned earlier, such attempts are linguistic confusions of ontological existence. Thus, the paradox of negative existential propositions is that the very object assumed to exist is denied within the proposition itself. Hick writes,

From the point of view of twentieth-century logic, the notion of meontic non-being is an example of the inveterate tendency of the human mind to hypostatize or reify language. The term 'being' generates the cognate term 'non-being'; but it does not follow that there in any sense is or exist anything of which this is the name... Russell's theory of descriptions shows that... to say of some kind of thing that it does not exist (e.g. 'Unicorns do not exist') is not to locate it in any metaphysical realm of non-being, but is simply to deny that some particular description has a referent.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p., 186-187.

Now, with respect to the greater concern of the denial of evil, Hick is suggesting, rather methodically, that, “within the *framework of Christian theology*, this privative definition must be accepted as wholly sound,”¹⁶⁰ because Hick is suggesting that the denial of evil supported by his interpretation of traditional theodicy, is not the affirmation of non-being as an ontological reality, a paradoxical and contradictory stance, but the refutation of the existence of evil *as a consequence of God’s imperfection*.

Hick’s argument is critiqued, however, by David Ray Griffin, but to understand Griffin’s critique, he first defines three key notions, viz., ‘genuine,’ ‘only apparent,’ and ‘*prima facie*’ evil. Griffin writes,

In order to make this point clear, I need to define the notions of “genuine evil”[,], “only apparent evil” ... and “*prima facie* evil.” By “genuine evil,” I mean anything, all things considered, without which the universe would have been better... “*Prima facie* evil” is anything that may be judged as evil at first glance... Some *prima facie* evils may be considered, upon reflection, to be genuine evils. But other *prima facie* evils may be judged to be “only apparent evils.”... their badness may be regarded as compensated for by the goodness to which they contributed.¹⁶¹

Robert Mesle adds,

Griffin argues that classical theologians have tended to equivocate on the word “evil” so as to affirm the reality of evil in some contexts while denying it in others. He hopes to clarify the discussion and show the equivocation by distinguishing “*prima-facie*” evils into categories of “genuine evil” and “merely apparent evil.”¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p., 180.

¹⁶¹ Griffin, 1976, p., 21-22.

¹⁶² Mesle, Robert. 1986. “The Problem of Genuine Evil: A Critique of John Hick's Theodicy” *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 66, No. 4. Oct, p. 412.

Interestingly enough, however, Griffin does not take issue with Hick's argument for the paradox of negative existential propositions, which I believe constitute a substantive portion of his defense for the denial of evil. Rather, Griffin suggests that Hick is equivocating with his use of the term 'evil.' Griffin uses his distinctions between 'genuine,' 'only apparent,' and '*prima facie*' evil, to pinpoint Hick's equivocation and to rebut traditional theodicies in general. Since my analysis within this chapter pertains to the denial of evil, I am less concerned with Griffin's critique of Hick, as it pertains to this perceived equivocation, than I am of properly understanding Hick's denial of evil.

Griffin overlooked Hick's argument for the paradox of negative existential propositions and instead argued against his defense of a traditional theodicy. One of Griffin's main points of criticism pertains to Hick's defense of God's omnipotence, which he argues, "require that there be no genuine powers besides God,"¹⁶³ For me, this critique of Hick only plays into the traditional vs. nontraditional theodicy arguments of the past millennium, and completely avoids Hick's very compelling refutation of evil.

There is an ontological nature of evil, but Hick could not see beyond the confines of his own theodicy, since both he and Griffin are still discussing the problem of evil in terms of the existence of God and the problem it causes for his omnipotence. Thus, the secularization of the problem is, at the very least, an attempt to address the problem of evil, without incorporating any theological conceptions. The nature of God, the nature of his characteristics, our fall from grace and original sin, moral evil as sin, all speak to a very specific population, viz., Christians. Evil, nonetheless, is a problem for us all. Thus,

¹⁶³ Griffin, 1976, p. 270.

an account of evil should be constructed in such a manner that it, at its most basic, its most remedial level, affords a universal forum of interpretation. I say ‘should’ because this will invariably be a moral account. Only then can we begin the process of conceptualizing the ontological status of evil. Granted, we may fail in this attempt, but success will not be measured in terms of facts of the matter, rather, success will be measured in even attempting such a feat.

3.5. *The Denial of Evil: The Argument for Omnipotence Revised*

In discussing nontraditional theodicies and attempting to account for the existence of evil, there is deeper level of complexity that arises with the denial of God’s omnipotence. Before the argument is explained, however, it is important to first understand the logical structure of the argument. The argument is a form of *reductio ad absurdum*. We begin with a nontraditionalist premise and assume that in accounting for God’s imperfection, i.e., the assertion that he is not omnipotent, serves as the cause for the existence of evil in the world. Remember, however, that I am here discussing a refutation of evil, not a denial of God’s abilities. Thus, one must first recognize that a nontraditionalist theodicy can never offer a refutation of evil, since the point of a nontraditionalist theodicy is to account for evil by denying one or all of the characteristics typically attributed to God. Simply put, nontraditionalist theodicies deny God’s abilities, while traditionalist theodicies deny the existence of evil.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ One should note, however, that there are traditionalist theodicies that neither deny God’s abilities nor the existence of evil and, thus, account for the existence of evil by denying some third thing, e.g., freedom, the capacity for human understanding and so on. The point is the denial of evil can *only* be articulated by a traditionalist theodicy.

The next phase of the argument is to then articulate the conditions that would arise given the truth of the initial premise. If it is true that evil exists as a consequence of God's imperfection, what should follow? On the one hand, the nontraditionalist would have avoided the problem of evil by demonstrating that its existence is a necessary consequence of God's imperfection. On the other hand, however, we are now left with a world wherein evil exists and the source of its existence is based in God's imperfection. The logical step may be to deny God's existence, but not everyone will be willing to do so. Thus, for those that retain their belief in God, they must endure the sufferings of evil and continue their faith in an imperfect God. However, to be God is not to be imperfect. Thus, if one wishes to retain the belief in God, and is attempting to account for the problem of evil, then one cannot begin with a nontraditionalist stance because in the end, the believer's conception of God is contradictory. Nelson Pike explains,

by expelling "omniscience" and "omnipotence" from the theological thesis, one could solve, or rather avoid, the theoretical problem of evil. But from the practical point of view, such an adjustment would be no solution, for it would involve changes in the believer's attitude toward prayer and the natural world. When God's omniscience and omnipotence are denied, the efficiency of prayer becomes questionable and the universe can no longer be regarded as a completely dependent creation... To deny the existence of evil is not only to deny the reports of conscious, but to make nonsense of the moral life altogether. In a world where there is no evil... "choice is pointless and responsibility without meaning."¹⁶⁵

The argument is again complicated by the affirmation of the traditionalist refutation of evil at the conclusion of the process of the argument, insofar as the nontraditionalist

¹⁶⁵ Pike, Nelson. 1958. "God and Evil: A Reconsideration" *Ethics*, Vol. 68, No. 2, Jan., p. 117.

theologian now has a rejoinder. If, in the construction of the argument, we begin with the nontraditionalist stance, only to realize that it ends in a contradictory conception of God, unsuitable for believers to hold claim, which denies the existence of evil, then we arrive at yet another contradiction. No sense can be made of moral life for believers if their God is imperfect and what we perceive as evil has been denied.

The argument follows a twofold *reductio*. It begins by assuming the nontraditionalist stance, only to arrive at a contradictory conception of God, and then assumes a traditionalist stance, only to arrive at a contradictory conception of morality and choice. Both arguments are equally plausible and there are many more rejoinders to each side. The point, however, is that in attempting to deny the existence of evil one is forced to address morality. If evil is illusory, how, then, are we to make sense of the world? Clearly, this is not a question for me to answer since I affirm the existence of evil. To offer a refutation of evil without also offering a conception of morality devoid of the existence of evil, is a burden the traditionalist must bear. Thus, it is inadequate simply to refute the existence of evil. Henry David Aiken notes,

The most drastic, if also the most implausible, way of dealing with the problem of evil...*is simply to deny the ethical thesis altogether*. On this view, which most men would regard as highly immoral, there simply is no evil, and when someone says that something is evil he speaks falsely: evil, that is to say, is merely apparent (emphasis added).¹⁶⁶

Fundamentally, the denial of evil requires an alternate account of morality. If it is suggested that evil is an illusion, then it certainly seems that this particular illusion, given

¹⁶⁶ Aiken, Henry David. 1958. "God and Evil: A Study of Some Relations Between Faith and Morals" *Ethics*, Vol. 68, No. 2. Jan. p. 94.

the fact that it is utterly devoid of meaning, nonetheless, retains great meaning. Roy Baumeister writes,

The myth [of pure evil] defines the way people think of evil—which is in some crucial respects quite different from the real, actual causes of *violence* and *oppression*...I began...by noting that evil is in the eye of the beholder; now we can add that these beholders are generally people who suffer harm...*Evil does not exist by itself* but only in relation to the good (emphasis added).¹⁶⁷

What Baumeister and so many others are presupposing in their attempts to reduce evil to violence and harm, to articulate evil in terms of oppression and subordination, is that all instances of violence are also instances of evil, which is certainly debatable. I would argue that it is categorically false. If one uses the term ‘violence’ as a synonym for the concept of evil, then one must assert that all instance of violence are also instances of evil. If not, one would equivocate in using the term ‘violence,’ i.e., ‘violence’ could mean an instance of evil or ‘violence’ could mean an instance of social protest. Logically, then, any attempt to suggest that ‘violence’ is synonymous with evil, is *also* to claim that *all* instances of violence are *always* instances of evil. Thus, all conditions used to satisfy the use of the term ‘violence’ must be a sufficient condition for the use of the term ‘evil.’ However, if and only if any condition used to satisfy the use of the term ‘violence’ is incompatible with the conception of evil, then any such condition cannot be attributed to evil. If such is the case, then ‘violence’ and evil cannot be synonymous. In the final chapter of this analysis I will offer conditions that satisfy the use of the term ‘violence’

¹⁶⁷ Baumeister, R.F. 1997. *Evil: Inside human cruelty and violence*. New York: W.H. Freeman. p. 72-73.

but do not satisfy the use of the term 'evil' to demonstrate both the faulty logic used to deny the existence of evil and the erroneous attempts to reduce evil to violence.

3.6. *Denial of Evil: Understanding Denial through Genocide Studies*

Many scholars and researchers have chosen to substitute the concept of evil with conceptions like harm and violence. The difficulties with such attempts are due in part to the complex nature of analyzing evil. It is a difficult concept to grasp and an even more difficult concept to articulate. Nevertheless, if we are to confront the problem of evil, whether we affirm or deny its essential existence, contemporary scholars should continue their investigations into the problem and the nature of evil. In an attempt to address this problem, Claudia Card explains this contemporary tendency of denying evil. She writes,

The denial of evil has become an important strand of twentieth century secular Western culture. Some critics find evil a chimera, like Santa Claus or the tooth fairy, but a dangerous one that call forth disturbing emotions, such as hatred, and leads to such disturbing projects as revenge...I want to reverse that shift, not because I am enthusiastic about hatred and revenge but because evils, the worst wrongs people do, deserve to be taken seriously and to receive priority of attention over lesser wrongs, which are usually easier to talk about and easier to fix.¹⁶⁸

Historically, the debate between the traditionalist and non-traditionalist theologians over the existence of God and the problem of evil follows a pattern; non-traditionalists invariably articulating the imperfection of God, and traditionalists denying the existence of evil. The non-traditionalist stance, however, has the typical consequence of also resulting in the denial of God. If God is imperfect, and evil exists, then there can be no

¹⁶⁸Card, Claudia. 2002. *Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 28.

God, at least not in any intelligible monotheistic sense—an imperfect “God” would be a mere deity. Thus, the secular humanists often uses a theological argument, specifically, a nontraditionalist theological argument, to refute arguments for the existence of God. The secularist, then, can embrace a world where there is no God. The question, however, that now moves to the forefront for all secular, non-theological scholars, is: what is the nature of evil? There are those that affirm the existence of evil, and those that deny its existence. What Claudia Card is suggesting, is that for those who deny the existence of evil, they do so because they view evil in mythological terms. In the second half of this chapter, I will investigate Phillip Cole’s argument, based on this very conception. He has constructed his analysis as an investigation into the *myth* of evil. This denial of evil, as mythology, is historically rooted in a non-traditionalist affirmation of God’s imperfection, eventually leading to a categorical denial of God, which is coupled with a contemporary denial of evil, based on analyzing the mythology of evil.

Claudia Card is correct in her assertion that, “The denial of evil has become an important strand of twentieth century secular Western culture.” For the discussion of evil to continue well into the 21st century, those defending the existence of evil, those arguing for such a reality, are burdened with the obligation of articulating its existence independent to the existence of God, i.e., the problem of evil needs to be revamped and secularized. The purpose of this secularization is not to refute the viability of continuing to discuss evil in theological terms; it will always be a fruitful analysis. If, however, one is to engage the secular humanist, the attempt must be made to “purge” the theological underpinnings from the discussion. Simply put, a new field of discourse has to emerge in

the discussion of evil, or any moral accounts wherein evil is utilized, if it is to have any relevant impact in contemporary scholarship.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the concept of political evil, a concept entirely rooted in an interdisciplinary discourse of political theory, genocide studies, and philosophy. The articulation of political evil functions independent to any theological concerns, and the definition is substantiated by a half century of genocide scholarship. Within genocide studies, then, one has an ability to access the concepts, theories, and tools necessary to investigate the problem of evil. Genocide studies and the manner in which historians and genocide scholars have approached a discussion into the nature of evil, is a perfect foundation wherein one can attempt to understand the ontological status of evil. The term 'evil' is still used, and with meaning, among genocide scholars, which indicates that there is a sense in which discussing evil remains pertinent and useful to understanding the landscape of political power. Interestingly enough, however, there is a tendency within contemporary genocide studies to deny the existence of genocide. Thus, one can also attempt to understand the denial of evil, by investigating a denial of genocide, which is not to suggest that genocide and evil are in any sense synonymous, as genocide is but one form of evil. The point, then, of this comparison, is to offer the secular humanist a means of clarifying the conception of evil and analyzing attempts to deny the existence of evil, without grounding the analysis in a theological foundation.

Genocide scholars have been discussing the nature of denial, both in terms of evil and in terms of genocide, for as long as they have been engaged in research. Neither the

philosopher nor the political scientist can afford to overlook their contributions and attempts to understand denial. Relevant here is what Donald Millet et al. write:

We acknowledge that the discovery of something redeeming in these tales of human tragedy has been our defense against despair... We refuse, however, to allow these examples of good to turn our attention from the awful reality of genocide itself... We increasingly believe that there is considerable truth in the statement that to *deny genocide* is to repeat it... *Denial of evil* is a defense mechanism that a just world simply cannot afford... *denial seems to be the final stage of most genocides* (emphasis added).¹⁶⁹

As noted, denial is an important aspect in the use of genocide as an effective tool. It is often the final stage prior to political powers enacting the use of genocide against members of its population.¹⁷⁰ There is an attempt, however, among historians and genocide scholars to reconcile the problem of denial and “historical memory.”

Historical memory and its relation to genocide studies is a relatively new concept. Unlike autobiographical memory where memory is directly tied to one’s experience of an event, historical memory is only accessible through our records, i.e., the historical records of the event. In researching the problem of evil, I have had numerous interviews with survivors of the Holocaust. Their direct experience of the Holocaust forms for them the autobiographical memory for which they access the truths of their past. Unlike the survivors, however, members of the world population having not directly experienced the Holocaust, have only historical records as a means of accessing the past. The problem, however, arises when the historical records are challenged by members of the population

¹⁶⁹ Miller, Donald E.; Miller, Lorna Touryan. 1993. *Survivors: An oral history of the Armenian Genocide* Berkeley: University of California Press. p., 5.

¹⁷⁰ Smith, Roger W. 1989. "Genocide and Denial: The Armenian Case and Its Implications," *Armenian Review* 42, no. 1. Spring. p., 1–38.

having not experienced the event, which poses a threat to the historical memory of the event. Thus, denial emerges as the historical memory is challenged.

With respect to challenging the historical memory of the Holocaust, one name stands out among all holocaust deniers, viz., David Irving. In his account of the Irving trial, Adam Jones writes,

Undoubtedly the most famous trial involving a genocide denier is the libel case brought in 2000 by David Irving... The resulting trial became a *cause célèbre*, with prominent historians taking the stand to outline Irving's evasion and obfuscations of the historical evidence... [Irving] was cited for nineteen specific misrepresentations, and contended that they were deliberate distortions to advance a denialist agenda... The spectrum of policies toward deniers, from permissive to prosecutory, is mirrored by the debate among genocide scholars... stress[ing] the link between denial and genocide, *including future genocides*, as well as the personal suffering that denial inflicts on... survivors and their descendents (emphasis added).¹⁷¹

More heinous than the injuries caused to Holocaust survivors by Irving's blatant misrepresentation of the truth, is the potential for falsifying our historical memory of the Holocaust. Clearly, however, no amount of denial can falsify the autobiographical memories of specific survivors. It is not that Irving challenged and even denied the Holocaust that made him liable in court. It was his specific fabrication of the truth that led to his conviction. His denial, in effect, was secondary to the lie that he perpetuated.

Denial has the tendency of contributing to further instances of genocide, recognizing that the horrors of genocide extend beyond victimization. For survivors, the denial of

¹⁷¹ Jones, Adam. 2006. *Genocide: A Comprehensive introduction*. New York: Taylor & Francis Routledge. p. 355.

genocide discredits the nature of their suffering. It minimizes the deliberative and methodical planning required by state sanctioned political powers, which were all an essential component in fully recognizing a state endorsed genocide. The ultimate crime against humanity, then, is the crime of denial. To deny acts of genocide, in the face of overwhelming evidence is to contribute to the process as such.

Next to the deliberate, willful denial of acts of genocide in the face of evidence, there is another, more subtle type of denial—a timid hesitance, or a diplomatic reluctance to acknowledge genocidal events. Such was the case in the Rwanda genocide of 1994.¹⁷² To subvert this dilemma and properly identify the events in Darfur as genocidal events, Secretary of State Colin Powell in his September 9, 2004 address to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee noted,

here is, finally, the continuing question of whether what is happening in Darfur should be called genocide. Since the United States became aware of atrocities occurring in Sudan, we have been reviewing the Genocide Convention...When we reviewed the evidence compiled by our team, and then put it beside other information available to the State Department...we concluded, I concluded, that genocide has been committed in Darfur and that the Government of Sudan and the Jingaweit bear responsibility -- and that genocide may still be occurring.¹⁷³

The simple acknowledgement that genocide was occurring in Darfur brought attention to the victims and the Sudanese government. In making his address to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Colin Powell diverted future complication that would surely have arisen were he to deny the events of Darfur as genocidal. A

¹⁷² Hintjens, Helen M. 1999. "Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2. Jun. p. 241-286.

¹⁷³ Secretary of State Colin Powell, *The Crisis in Darfur* (Sept. 9, 2004) at: www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/36042.htm

community of activists, filmmakers, peacekeepers and so on, was now politically justified in voicing their opposition to the Darfur genocide.

If a legitimate genocide is denied by members of the political community, one essentially absolves perpetrators of wrong doing. This absolution, however, has the negative effect of undermining, or at the very least discrediting, the suffering of survivors. Genocide studies offer us an opportunity to truly recognize and acknowledge the full extent and capacity of human destructiveness. To deny genocidal events as legitimate uses of state authority, or to minimize the suffering of victims as a necessary component of “purging” the state, is to risk the possibility for similar genocidal events in the future. In this regard, Roger Smith et al, write,

Denial contributes to genocide in at least two ways. First of all genocide does not end with its last human victim; denial continues the process, but if denial points to the past and the present, it also has implications for the future. By absolving the perpetrators of past genocide from responsibility for their actions and by obscuring the reality of *genocide as a widely practiced form of state policy in the modern world* denial may increase the risk of future outbreaks of genocidal killings (emphasis added).¹⁷⁴

The denial of genocide, then, is but one aspect of understanding the denial of evil. In denying genocide, the denier challenges the authenticity of our historical memory, which in some sense is a healthy enterprise. The problem, however, arises if historical memory is connected to records and records are, in part, compiled by people, and people are prone to error and embellishing the truth, then our records and historical memories are prone to

¹⁷⁴ Smith, Roger W., Eric Markusen, and Robert J. Lifton, 1998. “Professional Ethics and the Denial of the Armenian Genocide” Hovannisian, Richard G. *Remembrance and denial: the case of the Armenian genocide*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. p. 287

error. This, unfortunately, is a fact of historical memory. Historical memory is prone to error.

If, therefore, one is attempting to understand the nature of genocide *independent* to particular historical events, as *theory*, one need only engage with the concept of genocide. In discussing the concept of genocide, without reference to any particular historical act of genocide, one is now capable of offering an ahistorical analysis of genocide. If the denier now denies the ahistorical attempt to articulate the various typologies of genocide, then one must recognize that such a denial is a sufficient condition for the denial of *all particular accounts* of genocide, i.e., all particular accounts of genocide based on specific historical events. The *prima facie* denial of genocide, *as a concept*, not as a particular historical event, must serve as a sufficient condition for the denial of any particular act of genocide. Though, it must be added, it does not follow that the denial of any particular act of genocide necessitates the denial of genocide as concept. Thus, in denying the ahistorical concept of genocide, it must be true that such a denial suffices for all subsequent historical denials of genocide. Furthermore, the denial of genocide as such (independent to any particular event) cannot be substantiated in terms of theory. Steve Chan writes,

Theory is ahistorical, as it pursues generalizations germane to entire classes of entities or phenomena. It is uninterested in particulars; proper nouns of people, places, or time periods matter only to the extent that they represent specific instances or members of a relevant category. Theory consists of a system of statements from which one can

deduce observable, verifiable implication. Its core elements are concepts, axioms, assumptions and scope conditions.¹⁷⁵

To deny the concept of genocide only serves to deny any future use of the term to specific historical events, which is not the same as refuting the existence of evil. The refutation of evil, as we have seen, is only possible on an ontological level. Thus, to deny specific acts of genocide or even to deny the concept of genocide as such, does not translate to a refutation of evil. As I have argued in the previous chapter, evil is the condition for the possibility of genocide. A refutation of genocide may in part, deny the facts of the event, but unlike historical memory, one's autobiographical memory of evil, i.e., one's personal experience of evil, one's visceral and emotive response to evil, is a valid source for engagement. Viktor Frankl describes this in the opening line of his book, "This book does not claim to be an account of facts and events but of personal experiences, experiences which millions of prisoners have suffered time and again."¹⁷⁶

3.7. *Cole's Denial of Evil: Chapter 1*

For the remainder of this chapter I will closely analyze Phillip Cole's *The Myth of Evil*, offering a review of the literature and a critique of his analysis. Cole begins his investigation into the problem of evil by recapping the events surrounding the September 11th attacks. He addresses President Bush's use of the phrase "the axis of evil" and the horrific discoveries of torture and human rights violations at Abu Ghraib. Then, he rather jarringly shifts focus to the devil. He suggests, "the more I examined the detail of evil, the more I sensed [the devil's] presence—not a supernatural presence, but a political

¹⁷⁵ Chan, Steve. 2002. "On Different Types of International Relations Scholarship" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 39, No. 6. Nov. p. 749.

¹⁷⁶ Frankl, 1959, p. 3.

one.”¹⁷⁷ Then, again, he shifts focus to the distinction between human evil and pure evil, suggesting that pure evil, “belongs to the supernatural” (3).

Cole then suggests the concept of evil may more appropriately be labeled as a form of fiction and categorized as a mythology, a narrative. Narratives explain. Cole is interested in understanding the explanation the narrative of evil discloses with respect to human agency. Cole suggests that in narratives, not reality, the human being is capable of enacting pure evil, but this he says is impossible within reality. He writes, “The human figure who pursues the destruction of others for its own sake is a fictional or mythological figure, but does not exist in reality” (7). He explores the option that human evil, rather than pure evil, may be the only conception needed to describe evil, but he eventually denies this possibility as redundant, e.g., “She did it because she was evil” (7). Clearly, the statement begs the question. Cole suggests that in discussing evil, the importance is connecting the event with human agency, evil is easily affixed to the event but he suggests that, “once we move towards the explanation of agency, the concept of evil becomes obscure” (7). Thus, for Cole, the challenge will be the attempt to attribute the concept of evil to human agency and the attempt to articulate evil in terms of pure evil.

In discussing pure evil, Cole reverts to a traditionalist theological argument, wherein it is suggested that evil cannot be understood, not a denial of its existence—as such, as it is a denial of our ability to understand its nature. He writes, “If we seek to understand the social, psychological, historical conditions that act as the background for horrific acts, the

¹⁷⁷ Phillip Cole. *The Myth of Evil* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 3.

notion of pure evil may disappear” (8). The requirement for knowledge that Cole explores is necessary for our understanding of both evil and the human capacity to act in such a manner. The acquisition of this knowledge allows us to conceptualize human agency and the possibility of enacting evil. Thus, knowledge of evil, according to Cole, allows moral agents to recognize their own capacity for evil.

In his attempt to articulate evil in terms of pure evil, however, Cole notes, that “the one fact we cannot escape is that if pure evil does genuinely exist in the world, it is human beings who put it there” (20). He argues that such a conception of evil demarcates humans from, what he labels rather vaguely as, “inhumans” i.e., those who exercise their freedom to purposefully enact suffering on others. In a previous clarification of this point, Cole says, “According to the monstrous conception, these are monsters in human shape, human/inhumans, or inhuman/humans, who are willing to inflict suffering on others purely for its own sake, capable of pure evil precisely because of their monstrosity” (13).

I found Cole’s “argument” wholly problematic. Even the discussion of his “monstrous conception” was a bit odd. Were he to be offering an account of evil throughout the history of creative writing, maybe then I would understand the logical structure of his denial of evil, but he is not. He himself concludes chapter one, by stating, “I do not supply *any decisive philosophical refutations* of the pure conception, but rather supply moral, political and psychological reasons why we should reject it. It is, *I believe*, a highly dangerous and inhumane discourse and we are better off without it” (emphasis added), (21). The title of his book, *The Myth of Evil*, suggests that he is going to engage in a rigorous historical analysis of evil and sequentially deny each attempt to articulate

the existence of evil. Instead, Cole's discussion is without any clear directive and he himself acknowledges its abysmal lack of philosophical rigor. With respect to his assertion that he has provided a moral reason for rejecting the pure conception of evil, I did not recognize any use of value, deontological, or consequentialist theory in his analysis whatsoever. After completion of the first chapter, I was highly skeptical about the remainder of his book.

3.8. *Cole's Denial of Evil: Chapter 2*

Chapter two is an analysis of Satan and the conception of diabolical evil, which Cole equates with other forms of evil, "one other common description of this pure or absolute evil is that it is diabolical" (4). Cole, then, defines pure evil as, "not only the evil of outcomes, but the evil of intentions – it is the pursuit of the suffering and destruction of others for its own sake" (3). Thus, according to Cole, we can define diabolical evil in exactly the same sense as we have defined pure evil—the two are interchangeable.

Next, Cole attributes diabolical evil to Satan but refuses to acknowledge his existence and then suggests that human beings are capable of emulating Satan's actions. He writes rather paradoxically, "if diabolical evil is a human possibility, although this does not necessarily imply the existence of Satan...it does seem to imply that human beings can be like him" (4). All of which, mind you, is done by Cole in terms of a secularist approach in refuting the existence of evil.

Cole undertakes a biblical analysis of Satan, and attempts to draw the rather bizarre conclusion, that since human beings have a capacity to emulate Satan, (which is fundamentally presupposed), then any attempt to understand "Satan's character" is an

attempt to understand ourselves (25). Cole offers no clarification for any of these terms. His initial premise is presupposed without any justification, and yet he professes to be offering a secularist account for the denial of evil, which he has already stated, “does not supply *any decisive philosophical refutation*” (21). He begins by tracing the accounts of Satan throughout the Old Testament, which he later challenges; suggesting that though the seminal elements of Satan, as deceiver, as serpent, and so on, are present in the Old Testament there is debate over this notion. He shifts his focus to the New Testament where he notes, “Satan is indisputably present in the New Testament” (32).

A problem arises, nonetheless, when Cole returns to the discussion of diabolical evil, which was associated with pure evil, “one other common description of this pure or absolute evil is that it is diabolical” (4). Now, however, he distinguishes the two concepts, writing,

The monstrous conception can now be understood as claiming that there are human beings who are monstrous by nature, and it is only these humans who *have the capacity for diabolical evil*, and the pure conception can be understood as claiming that all human beings *have the capacity for diabolical evil* (emphasis added), (35).

Cole’s “monstrous conception” is extremely unclear and his definition seem very redundant. The monstrous conception is about monstrous people and only these people have a capacity for diabolical evil. He, then, tries to differentiate the monstrous conception from the conception of pure evil. Cole’s error in logic, however, according to his definition, is that the monstrous conception refers to a group of people that have a “capacity for diabolical evil” and the conception of pure evil refers to people as having a “capacity for diabolical evil.” Thus, the basic syllogism suggests that the monstrous

conception necessitates the conception of pure evil, i.e., it is a sufficient condition for pure evil, which is not what he is suggesting. Cole's argument is fundamentally flawed and it is incomprehensible what sense is to be made of his definitions.

In the concluding sections of chapter two, Cole attempts to account for the existence of evil within the world and supposes that the devil and his demons are the cause of its existence. He then begins a very terse historical recapitulation of St. Augustine's theodicy and his account of free will, which leads to the conclusion that human beings also contribute to the perpetuation of evil through exercising their freedom, which leads Cole to claim, "For God to be free of responsibility for human evil, humanity must be capable of freely choosing to be diabolically evil. But if human beings can freely choose to be diabolically, purely, evil, Satan and his demons are redundant" (50). It is unclear if Cole intends this conclusion to be a critique of the existence of evil or a critique of the Devil's purpose in the natural world. In either case, his point is unclear. Finally, with respect to the Devil, Cole suggests that his existence is explained, "not so much as a metaphysical presence as a literary one" (50). The problem with this statement, however, is that Cole is constructing his analysis as a philosophical investigation, and has noted that he is, "a devout atheist and an analytical philosopher by training" (2), yet he has failed, nonetheless, to offer any philosophical conception of evil, either metaphysical or otherwise. Were his analysis to be a literary account, there would be no problem, but in suggesting that evil is a myth, Cole should support his work by a thorough philosophical analysis.

3.9. *Cole's Denial of Evil: Chapter 3*

Finally, in chapter three, Cole addresses the various philosophical conceptions of evil, beginning with Immanuel Kant's articulation of radical evil. Cole writes, "For Kant, moral evil is *any deviation* from what morality demands, as expressed through our power of reason and stated by the moral law or the categorical imperative" (emphasis added), (58). Unfortunately, Cole has oversimplified Kant's account of moral evil. It is not simply that "any deviation" from the demands of morality results in deeming one evil. In his discussion on judging moral agents, Kant's account is certainly not as rigid as Cole suggests. Kant writes, "A man's maxims, sometimes even his own, are not thus observable; *consequently the judgment that the agent is an evil man cannot be made with certainty if grounded in experience*"¹⁷⁸ (emphasis added). Cole suggested that "any deviation" from the demands of morality is classified as moral evil. Kant has clearly stated otherwise, and acknowledges that *sometimes* one's maxims cannot result in a judgment of evil. Cole's strawman argument unfairly compartmentalizes Kant's conception of evil and situates Kant's moral account as a dogma rather than a philosophy.

Cole's strawman argument continues when he distorts a quote for Kant without properly contextualizing his citation. Cole writes,

for Kant humanity cannot reject the moral law as such, cannot reject morality. 'Man (even the most wicked) does not, under any maxim whatsoever, repudiate the moral law in the manner of a rebel (renouncing obedience to it)' (Kant 1960: 31). No one is that depraved that they can violate the demands of morality without feeling some degree of guilt or misgiving (59-60).

¹⁷⁸ Kant, *Religion* 1960, p. 16.

However, the full context for which the quote was taken, is as follows:

Man (even the most wicked) does not, under any maxim whatsoever, repudiate the moral law in the manner of a rebel (renouncing obedience to it). The law, rather, forces itself upon him irresistibly by virtue of his moral predisposition; *and were no other incentives working in opposition*, he would adopt the law into his supreme maxim as the sufficient determining ground of his will; that is, he would be morally good. *But by virtue of an equally innocent natural predisposition he depends upon incentives of his sensuous nature and adopts them also* (in accordance with the subjective principle of self love) into his maxim.¹⁷⁹ (emphasis added).

Cole has tried to force Kant's account of evil to agree with a strawman account he has devised for his own end. Nowhere in Kant's account does he suggest that man is incapable of rejecting the moral law. Kant's account is more attuned to a Daoist conception, a battle between two halves, viz., the sensuous nature, which pulls the moral agent from the moral law, and the agent's desire to adopt the law as the supreme maxim. This battle is not a battle to be won by sides. Rather a harmony is *always* reached between the two halves of our nature. Martin Schönfeld's entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is a further rejection of Cole's strawman argument. Schönfeld writes,

In Daoist ontology, the dynamic principle (Dao) weaves the world by "stretching out" the void (*dao zhong*) and that produces things and life by individuating the resulting field into lingering wholes. *Nature and the good are opposites but harmonize in their parallel thrust toward sustainable complexity. Moral practice is their alignment...* Kant was ignorant of the Chinese but absorbed the Daoist motif...It

¹⁷⁹ Kant, 1960, p. 31.

is an irony that one of the West's greatest thinkers was first inspired by the Dao of the East.¹⁸⁰

With respect to Schönfeld's claim that, "Nature and the good are opposites but harmonize in their parallel thrust toward sustainable complexity." Kant acknowledges nearly the same conception within his account of evil. Kant writes,

Natural inclination, *considered in themselves*, are good, that is, not a matter of reproach, and it is not only futile to want to extirpate them but to do so would also be harmful and blameworthy. Rather, let them be tamed and instead of clashing with one another they can be brought into harmony with a wholeness which is called happiness. Now the reason which accomplishes this is call *prudence* (emphasis in original).¹⁸¹

The process, then, wherein evil is harmonized, i.e., the sensuous nature within us all is regulated, is as Schönfeld has claimed, by the process of *moral practice*. That specific moral practice that regulates and establishes harmony is prudence. Prudence accomplishes the process of harmony. Our natural inclinations, considered by themselves are good. It is only when we attempt to incorporate these inclination into the total process of morality that its nature conflicts. As Schönfeld has stated, "Nature and the good are opposites but *harmonize* in their parallel thrust toward sustainable complexity. Moral practice is their alignment." What Cole has assumed is that this conflict is a fundamental one wherein there is no resolve, wherein, as he has noted, "humanity cannot reject the moral law". Our sensuous nature will compel us to deny the moral law but it is checked, and kept in harmony, so as not to dominate our being by and equally forceful inclination

¹⁸⁰ Schönfeld, Martin. "Kant's Philosophical Development" *The Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy* at < <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-development/>>

¹⁸¹ Kant, 1960, p. 51.

to adopt the moral law as a universal maxim. Deontological ethics is certainly more complicated than the strawman argument Cole has erected. Behind the simplicity of choosing to act, choosing to follow the moral law, or choosing to do otherwise, is a complex nexus of checks and balances, all harmonized by our duty to practice morality. Thus, again, Cole has failed in his attempt to renounce evil or to adequately conceptualize Kant's philosophy of radical evil.

3.10. *Cole's Denial of Evil: Chapter 4*

In chapter four of his analysis, Cole investigates Rousseau's discussion of the "vampire" epidemic throughout Western Europe, which lasted nearly 100 years. According to Cole, Rousseau wanted to refute the supernatural explanations associated with the vampire mythology, offering instead a sound scientific account of their supposed existence. In his investigation of the vampire accounts, however, it is suggested that Rousseau took the vampire accounts seriously (80), which is not to suggest that he believed in the supernatural abilities associated with vampires. Rather than viewing the vampire epidemic as a supernatural phenomenon, Rousseau interpreted the existence of vampires as an indication of socio-political unrest.

Cole then shifts focus to a discussion of witches and witchcraft. He suggests that the spread of witchcraft throughout Europe served as an indication that, "The Christian community was under severe attack by Satan" (83). With the attempt to stifle the spread of witchcraft, it is noted, that the Church and the judicial system often tortured alleged witches, convicted of heresy and other crimes. Cole writes,

There were therefore no legal limits to the use of torture in cases of suspected witchcraft... So we can see that the idea

of diabolical heresy and the witch craze that followed it arose from a sense of fear and anxiety throughout western Christian Europe (83-84).

Cole suggests that the rise in heretical crimes and its correlation with the spread of witchcraft throughout Europe serves as an indication that fear had established a hold of Western Europe. Clearly, however, there was an underlying motivation in the spread of heretical crimes as political opponents vied for power. “The pattern taken by those who sought to gain authority in these regions was to accuse resistant groups and individuals of heresy, and for heresy eventually to become witchcraft” (84). It is suggested, then, that the onset of fear within a society is an indication that an enemy will arise out of that fear, an enemy to be conquered.

The focus shifts back to a discussion of vampires and Rousseau’s attempts to conceptualize their relation to the social and political realm, rather than a continued investigation into their supernatural powers. Unfortunately, Cole’s analysis within this chapter, though it is an interesting read, is quite obviously taken from a paper he presented on an entirely different subject. The chapter has little if any relevance to the discussion of evil, and is more closely in line with a discussion of the shifts in supernatural accounts during the Middle Ages. Earlier, in his acknowledgments, Cole wrote, “I also delivered a paper called ‘The Vampires of Moravia: Towards a Philosophical History of the Undead’ (vii). I’m sure the paper was interesting as the chapter was interesting to read, but unfortunately, the title of his book suggests that he will be debunking the “myth” of evil and this chapter has not contributed to that goal.

Nearing the end of the chapter, Cole attempts to tie in his prior paper into the theme of his book writing,

What we see here is the myth of evil in action, and specifically the myth of monstrous evil, that there are monsters in disguise within our community who seek to destroy it. There can be no negotiation and no compromise against such an enemy, and certainly no redemption – they can only be hunted down and destroyed (93).

Cole has not defined “monstrous evil.” He has not connected the concept of “monstrous evil” to debunking the myth of evil. If his account is that in vying for political power, many create myths of monsters to subdue the population and perpetuate fear, it does not follow, in any sense that from this truth one has disproved the existence of evil. Granted, it is certainly true that this is a common political strategy, but to suggest that, therefore, evil is a myth is a non sequitur. Nonetheless, I cannot understand how, from that point, Cole arrives at the conclusion that “What we see here is the myth of evil in action.” As to the “argument” within chapter four, and its relation to demonstrating the “myth of evil,” I am clueless.

3.11. *Cole’s Denial of Evil: Chapter 5*

Chapter five is an account of the political use of fear. Cole suggests that fear is a projection from within, it is externalized by that which we most fear and is more a reflection of our psychological fears than it is a proper representation of legitimate external threats. He then states that, “it is this internal fear that is politically exploited and mobilised against the myth of evil in the world. And so we must explore our inner psyches to discover the source of fear” (96). Much to his credit, Cole offers an interesting account of the distinction between terror and horror. Terror is a greater form of fear

because it is not attached to readily identifiable elements within the external world.

Horror, however, unlike terror, presents us with the image, the threat that serves as the source of our fears, while terror influences our imagination to wreak havoc on our minds by unsubstantiated fear. Cole does offer an interesting account, writing,

And so while horror may be produced by the physical confrontation with the consequences of evil, the inability to understand the motivations of the evil agent who has brought about these macabre effects results in the psychic dread not so much of the unknown, but of the incomprehensible. Horror and terror are therefore intertwined in our experiences of evil (97).

Much of Cole's account of terror and horror is based on Dani Cavallaro's analysis of gothic fiction. Cole attempts to incorporate Cavallaro's conception of the "dark narratives," i.e., a discussion of terror and horror within gothic fiction, but runs into trouble while trying to translate these conceptions into a political framework. Cavallaro suggests that terrifying imagery alerts us and informs our consciousness. This suggestion, however, clashes with Cole's attempt to articulate the myth of evil and its relation to the realm of politics. He writes, "However, if we extend the concept of the dark narrative beyond fiction into political narratives about the world then we can see its negative power" (98). While I disagree with Cole's account of Cavallaro's analysis of gothic fiction, I do agree that he has identified an important conception in the discussion of evil, viz., he has attempted to identify the source of our fears. Cole suggests, I believe rightly, that the conflation of boundaries, between the natural and unnatural, between the real and the unreal, serve only to exacerbate our fears. In challenging Cavallaro's conception that these "dark narratives" inform our reality, Cole writes.

[there is] no guarantee that the dark narrative will alert us to reality – it may simply create more imaginary terrors, and lead us to mistake those imaginary terrors for real ones. The boundary between fiction and reality is blurred, or rather our awareness of where that boundary lies is blurred, and everyday life itself is framed within the fictional constructs of our imagination or the imagination of our political and cultural leaders (101-102).

The inability to differentiate imaginary terrors from real ones, only serves to heighten one's sense of fear. In his continued discussion of fear, Cole refers to Freud's conception of the uncanny. The uncanny is a form of fear we may develop for something familiar. Freud discusses the *unheimlich*, or the 'unhomely,' which Cole describes as the uncanny, eerie or spooky. The conception of the *unheimlich* is the revealing of that which was hidden. It is to be made aware of what was once concealed. The terrors we most fear are also familiar to us. Cole takes this concept of the *unheimlich* and mirrors his theory of the myth of evil on a similar premise. He writes,

Here, we should note that we have an almost complete theory of evil, that our belief in the myth of evil is an example of the return of primitive beliefs we thought we had overcome, but which, when certain events occur, gain hold on us and threaten to overpower our reason (106).

Cole is arguing that like Freud's conception of the *unheimlich*, the myth of evil is nothing more than a return of repressed beliefs. It is the feeling that we get when we encounter something of fright. He quickly changes focus, however, without further qualification, which leaves more questions than answers. In actuality, I think Cole's analogy fails.

In Freud's conception of the *unheimlich* the source of fear is unknown, it arises from a repressed state of consciousness. Once triggered, the fear is capable of paralyzing our actions, as the source of terror is something familiar, something real, but the person

terrified by this sense of fear cannot identify the specific cause of its onset. There is no myth to this fear. If Cole is suggesting that the myth of evil is similar to Freud's concept of the *unheimlich*, he would have to explain the nature of the "myth" and its relation to the existence of fear.

Cole attempts to discuss the relationship between particular moral agents and the perceived existence of evil, by suggesting that we are fearful of our own capacities for evil, which causes us to "project that capacity on to others and into fictional representatives" (118). He writes,

But there is another answer we should consider – that we are scared of our selves not because of our connection with death, but because we recognise our own capacity for evil. What frightens us is not the fragility of the boundary between life and death, but of the boundary between our 'civilised' self and our 'evil' self. We may well project that capacity on to others and into fictional representatives, but it is profoundly *our* capacity, and this is why we find such projections and representations so disturbing – they threaten to destabilise our conception of our selves as human beings, indeed our conception of humanity itself (118).

Certainly this maybe true of a misrepresented threat. In discussing clearly defined cases of evil, where there is no perception of threat, but an imminent and real danger, there is no projection or representation to be had. In the case of state endorsed genocide, for example, discussing one's projection of one's personal capacity for evil, which is the very thing Cole is attempting to deny, onto the state, is utterly pointless. What purpose does that serve in denying the existence of evil? How does this psychoanalytic example demonstrate the myth of evil? While Freud's conception of the *unheimlich* may explain the aesthetic and psychoanalytic account of the uncanny, a point that is even debated

among contemporary psychologists, there is no connection between a Freud's concept and a denial of evil.

3.12. *Cole's Denial of Evil: Chapter 6*

Within this chapter, Cole explores the conception of the "Bad Seed," i.e., the possibility of an "evil" child. He begins with a story of the murder of James Bulger, a two year old toddler, abducted, mutilated and beaten to death by two ten year old boys. The boys were subsequently found guilty of murder and were sentenced to eight years in prison. Cole suggests that there was little attempt to explain their motives, be they rational or not. The boys were sentenced to a minimum of eight years in prison. Cole cites the trial judge, Sir Michael Morland as saying, 'The killing of James Bulger was an act of unparalleled evil and barbarity' (125). He then cites several media sources and their reference to this crime as an act of evil. Cole challenges Sir Michael Morland's determination, suggesting,

Was it an act of unparalleled evil and barbarity? The killing of James Bulger was brutal and cruel, but in the history of inhumanity it was by no means unparalleled as an act. What Justice Morland was capturing was the sense of horror that this crime was carried out by children, but even then examples of children killing other children, while extremely rare, are not unknown (125).

It is important to understand the severity of the boys' crime. The crime was committed by two ten year old boys. James Bulger was intentionally abducted from his mother while shopping. The boys enticed James away from his mother and lured him to a canal. They kicked him in the face and ribs. They fractured his skull with an iron pipe and cement brick, placing batteries inside his mouth to increase the amount of damage

inflicted by his head trauma. They doused him with caustic chemicals, and then placed his body on a railroad track and covered it with dirt. Two year old James Bulger was then struck by a train as his body was masked underneath the debris. This level of brutality and torture, the sadism of James' death is beyond explanation in and of itself, but the fact that it was committed by ten year old boys is certainly an act of evil, a point that Cole denies.

Cole does not view the murder of James Bulger as an act of evil and offers a rather lengthy "psychological" account of the boys' history, suggesting their motivations could have been sexual, or a response to the fact they were both from a broken home, and so on. He then suggests that the boys could have suffered from pre-teen psychosis, a rather speculative claim. The suggestion is that we lack the proper terms to describe this level of violence and insofar as this lack exists, we use the term 'evil' to describe an event that defies interpretation. Cole writes, "We respond to the call for interpretation, but...we are haunted by our failure. And the space of that failure, I argue, is taken up by the discourse of evil" (127).

For Cole, then, the inability to understand, to interpret an event as terrifying as the James Bulger murder, forces us to resort to the only conception we have that may even be said to approximate this level of brutality. In using the term 'evil,' however, we still fail to properly understand the nature of the event. In effect, the nature of the crime transcends interpretation or it is a failure, as Cole suggests, to properly interpret the event that forces us to label it as an act of evil.

This form of refutation is actually quite old and has its origin in a traditionalist theological denial of evil. It is the suggestion that we cannot understand the nature of evil and in attempting to articulate what it is, all we are offering is a definition for that which cannot be understood. For the theist this typically results in the denial of God, but for the atheist it results in the affirmation of the brutality of our existence *and the existence of evil*. Addressing Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's response to the problem of evil, Moshe Sokol writes,

Soloveitchik argues, [that humans] respond to evil in their lives in two stages. When evil first strikes the sufferer is crushed, unable to make sense of anything that has befallen him, unable to make sense of life as a whole. Following this initial phase, the sufferer actively seeks to gain insight into his suffering by struggling to understand the cosmos and God's role in its governance. For the theist, the struggle often leads to the denial of evil, to the claim that all is really good. Soloveitchik argues, however, that *from the perspective of human experience*, this claim is simply false. While from God's perspective all suffering might well be justified, and therefore good, human beings are incapable of metaphysical reasons, of adopting God's perspective. Therefore, the only humanly possible response to suffering is to acknowledge its evil.¹⁸² (emphasis in original)

The point is simple, if one is denying the possibility of understanding the nature of evil, and thus through this inability to understand, denies its existence, one must acknowledge that unlike the theist who can assert that its existence serves a greater good and is therefore only apparently evil, the secularist is not afforded the same luxury.

Cole has already claimed that he is attempting to refute the existence of evil independent to theological refutations. The atheist cannot claim that evil is only apparently real, as it

¹⁸² Sokol, Moshe. 1999. "Is There a "Halakhic" Response to the Problem of Evil" *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 92, No. 3. Jul. p. 314.

serves some higher purpose, but what Cole attempts to do is refute the existence of evil on the basis of a *failure* of interpretation. Notice, however, that Cole fails to define in what sense he is using the term ‘failure’. In what sense is it considered a “failure” in classifying the brutal torture, murder, and subsequent mutilation of James Bulger as evil? How has this ascription *failed* to properly identify or name the event? We needn’t evoke conception of God either. Is Cole’s suggestion that there is no event for which the term evil properly applies because all such events are met with a failure of interpretation? This is clearly false as we can use the example of attribute variables to demonstrate that understanding evil is certainly possible. The problem with Cole’s argument is that he overlooks the propositional function of two variables suggesting that there is no event for which the term evil properly applies because all such events are met with a failure of interpretation.

The only way to deny the existence of evil, is to offer an ontological denial of evil, which Cole doesn’t even approximate. Otherwise, we are debating the use of a term, which is not what this is about. In Cole’s suggestion that, “We respond to the call for interpretation, but...we are haunted by our failure. And the space of that failure, I argue, is taken up by the discourse of evil” (127). There is no failure in our attempts to effectively describe an act as evil. The brutal murder of a young James Bulger was most certainly an act of evil. We must recognize that Cole is arguing about the use of the term ‘evil,’ not the existence of evil. He has confused his linguistic gripe about the use of the term ‘evil’ with a viable refutation of the ontological status of evil; thus, his claim is devoid of merit.

3.13. *Cole's Denial of Evil: Chapter 7*

Cole begins chapter seven with an analysis of moral luck. He initially suggests, with reference to the James Bulger murder that,

there were background factors that played a significant role in their actions, and those background factors and the role they played made it inappropriate to hold them morally responsible. However, it could be argued that examining these kinds of background contexts undermines moral judgement in general. *While I want to close the space for the discourse of evil*, it is not my intention to close the space for any level of moral judgement, and so in this chapter I need to explain how my approach can coherently both show the discourse of evil to be redundant and at the same time show that moral judgement – sometimes of the most severe kind – is possible (emphasis added), (148).

Cole's intention is to differentiate between the conception of moral luck and his desire to retain the influence of moral judgments. The need to separate his theory from the conception of moral luck is that they both rely on the "background conditions" that influence moral agents in the actions, which suggests that moral judgments are irrelevant in assessing the morality of the agent's actions. Cole wishes to preserve the concept and the importance of moral judgments while also preserving the importance of the "background conditions," which led to the judgment.

Cole discusses Thomas Nagel's conception of moral luck and its typologies. In order for a moral judgment to be fairly applied, one must be in control of one's actions. If, however, one's actions result as a product of external influences, then, assessing moral judgment becomes all the more difficult. Since Cole denied the existence of evil and has suggested that we merely implement the idea when we fail to understand peoples'

actions, and he has placed emphasis on understanding the “background conditions,” in an attempt to understand those actions, then,

as soon as we begin to focus on background conditions, we realize that anything anybody does is subject to factors beyond their control, such that even the most basic moral judgement becomes impossible – we lose any concept of moral agency. In other words, in closing the space for judgements that people are morally evil, I have closed the space for any kind of moral judgement at all, and this threatens my argument with absurdity (150-151).

If there are outside influences determining our actions, should Cole consider the background conditions that led to the act, he acknowledges that he runs the risk of doing away with moral judgments, which is not his goal. He offers two examples of shooting a gun in a crowded room and drinking while driving. His examples are not only weak, they also lack clarity. In particular, it is unclear how they support the claim that background conditions are relevant. It is also unclear how they support the claim that the inclusion of background conditions does not weaken the moral judgment. After discussing his argument, even Cole suggests that, “This may not be a decisive refutation of the moral-luck argument, but my concern here is merely to show that we can allow the significant role of background factors in contributing to what people do, and still have space for legitimate moral judgment” (153). Ultimately, Cole failed in demonstrating how Nagel’s conception doesn’t apply to either of his scenarios. If one is to include background conditions, which are said to determine the moral agent’s actions, it is hard to see how Cole examples of drinking and driving and shooting a gun in a crowded room preserve the determinacy necessary to cause them to participate in such action, which were beyond

their control *and* simultaneously hold them morally accountable for these acts, which were determined as a consequence of Cole's accounting for their background conditions.

3.14. *Cole's Denial of Evil: Chapter 8*

Unfortunately, Cole's argument in chapter eight is lost in the unending stream of half page citations, which run throughout the entire chapter. Cole relies too heavily on pasting other's work together than formulating his own conception and denial of evil. In the chapter, he discusses "facing the holocaust" and his commentary, what little of it there is spliced between massive chunks of citation, covers a breadth of topics so broad that it is unclear to determine what his motivations are. On the one hand, he seems to return to the halfhearted attempt to address the background conditions necessary in addressing agency, a concept that refused to label the brutal murder of a young James Bulger as evil. On the other hand, he merely offers a recapitulation of historical debates concerning the holocaust.

Cole assumes a defeatist position within this chapter, suggesting that the magnitude of the holocaust, the reckless destruction of human life was so great that the ethical question arises of, "whether we *ought* to seek to understand the Holocaust" (174.). Apparently, for Cole, the attempt to understand the atrocities inflicted by Nazi Germany on countless lives, is taboo, we should deliberate whether such an attempt is ethically sound to begin with.

Cole discusses the all too familiar role of *Kapos* within the concentration camps. He suggests that,

judgment becomes more difficult when it comes to those in commanding positions, such as the *Kapos*...who ran labour

squads, the barrack chiefs, clerks and people who worked in the administrative offices...and their power to impose violence was unlimited (177).

It is Cole's suggestion that our ability to understand evil is nullified by the role of the *Kapos* in Nazi concentration camps. Surely, as I have discovered in my own interviews with several holocaust survivors, I cannot expect to understand the *experience* of evil within the concentration camps. I will never know, first hand, the horrors of being malnourished, of being worked to death, of having to cope with the systematic execution of my entire family. Certainly, I cannot understand what it is to experience these horrors. This lack of understanding, however, does not translate into an inability for me to determine the nature of the evil.

Evil seeks to exacerbate human suffering and death as an end in itself. There's nothing impossible to understand. There is no gulf beyond bridging. Cole presupposes this lack of understanding and subsequently approaches all the review of literature, all of his theoretical conception with the defeatist mentality that evil is too difficult to understand, therefore it doesn't exist. The role of the *Kapos* is a difficult conception to understand in terms of prison psychology, or cultural disassociation. It is difficult to understand how one assumes such a position or the justifications one uses to defend holding such a position, but there is no difficulty in understanding that the concept of the '*Kapos*,' as a concept and not as an individual human being, fulfills such a role. There is no limit to the potential of human destructiveness. To be surprised at the capacity we have for evil, is a refusal to acknowledge the truth of human being, to see the real capacities we have for the eradication of our own species. Denial and suggestions that the

concept of evil is merely a representation of our inability to understand heinous events, like the murder of James Bulger, is a reflection of the antiquated, anti-scientific, defeatist mentality of the dark ages. There is nothing human beings will not attempt to understand. To suggest that evil is beyond understanding, presupposes an understanding of evil, which is to undermine the very notion that evil cannot be understood.

3.15. *Cole's Denial of Evil: The Final Chapter*

In the final chapter, chapter nine, Cole discusses 21st century “mythologies of evil,” wherein he writes,

I do not accept the validity of the discourse of evil when it comes to mere *description* of people's character or motives or actions, or the consequences of their actions... Nor do I accept that the idea of evil, while it does not explain anything, is nevertheless an indispensable part of the moral description of the world, helping us to *understand* that world... On the contrary, the idea of evil does not help us to understand these things at all; rather, it takes on the role of the *satan* of the Hebrew Bible: it *obstructs* our understanding, blocks our way, brings us to a halt. ‘Evil’ is a black-hole concept which gives the illusion of explanation, when what it actually represents is the failure to understand. (236)

Cole's continued failure to deny the existence of evil has been demonstrated throughout my critique of his work. I was unimpressed with his methodological approach and his justifications for denying the existence of evil. His accounts were haphazard and his reliance of heavy citation detracted from the overall novelty his conception could have offered. In the final analysis, Cole did not disprove the existence of evil, on ontological, metaphysical or epistemological levels. His account failed to identify the specific failures in our use of the term to *describe a state of affairs*. Were he to have been successful in

that endeavor, I'm sure scholars would have to reassess how they conceptualize the problem of evil. The failure of his argument, on so many levels, is not a demonstration that his original thesis is without merit. A proper demonstration of the myth of evil would be a revolutionary discovery. Scholars should continue to investigate the conception that evil is a myth, as others, including myself, will address the contrary, which will only benefit us all in a greater understanding of this ailment we called evil.

Chapter 4: Synthesizing Evil

4.1. *The Mysteries of Synthesizing Evil*

Our fascination with evil is a fascination with the mysteries of that which shuns definition. Its existence is felt, but the solution to the problem of evil is hidden deep beneath the murky depths of our most primal and haunting fears. The pieces to the puzzle are scattered about a diversity of disciplines. Throughout the suggestions and inferences of the last three chapters, there lies some notion of truth, hopefully some insight into the abyss that is evil. The process of synthesizing evil is simultaneously introspective as it is both historical and progressing toward a yet unknown future inevitability. Evil has been progressing toward its fullest actualization as manifested in the act of genocide since the beginning of time.

The horrors of the world are realized in the recognition of our personal capacity, and may be even twisted desire to harm someone, someone who has harmed us, someone, or anyone at all. The gravity of an analysis grounded in studying the problem of evil is compounded by the persistent and omnipresent recognition of the frailty of human life. It is in that recognition that we face the horrors of genocide and torture, the horrors of unmitigated political power and a quest—at all costs—of seizing absolute power. It may be the recognition that we, too, may fantasize of omnipotence, of subordinating and dominating an *other*. Our bloodlust knows no limit. There is no quenching our thirst. There is no mercy or solace when truly discussing evil. There is no hope and there will be

no happy endings. There are no alternatives. Everything is definite. Everything is absolute. Destruction is totalizing. In truly discussing evil, one must theorize through the lens of hate and self-aggrandizement

There is in fact, another world, darker and hidden, a world that coexists alongside this one, a world of a perverse fascination with brutality of the most deplorable forms and an army of eager participants desperately vying to outdo the last psychopath. It is within this historical context that we move along a timeline, wherein we are always defining, identifying, reflecting and simultaneously introspecting on the nature of evil.

In the previous three chapters I have discussed very specific instances of evil within social, political and psychological accounts, yet there are more questions than there are answers, and within this final chapter I hope, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's great fictional detective, "Sherlock Holmes" has methodically done, to solve the problem. To do so, however, is to review the clues, the clues necessary in finally cracking this case. Within this chapter, then, I will introduce little if any new evidence and no new theories. It is my belief that the answers to this problem have been addressed within the previous three chapters, which leaves me with the responsibility of synthesizing and connecting points of interest already discussed. As all great mystery novels reach their climax, and as I near the conclusion of this analysis, I must return to the beginning and finally uncover the clues to understanding the problem of evil.

4.2. *The First Boundary Condition of Evil: The Body*

This final journey begins, as all journeys begin, with a single step. The step needed to start this progression toward an ultimate understanding of evil begins with an account of

the self. In chapter one of this analysis, I discussed the philosophical accounts of evil throughout history in roughly chronological order from antiquity to Kant. Within that discussion are hidden pieces needed to understand the problem of evil, which requires that we return to that discussion as a reflection on the philosophical accounts of evil throughout history.

Aristotle's discussion of *arête* and the moderation and balance needed to live a virtuous life, emphasizes one's personal and continual commitment to living within acceptable means, neither excess nor depravity. A life of moderation reflects an inner balance between the duality of forces ever competing for dominance within our lives. One's personal struggle with these polemic halves is a reflection on the continual need to reaffirm the virtuous lifestyle. It is, for Aristotle, a style of living, a style of life that rewards the virtuous for their willingness to continue battling these polemics of the self. It is the "I" that chooses to engage in excess, the "I" that chooses to deny itself until the point of depravity, and Aristotle's account within the *Nicomachean Ethics* is persuasive. He is, in effect, persuading his reader to live this style of life, continually balancing desires with reference to the virtuous life. This reference, nevertheless, is always done through an understanding and recognition of our capacities for excess and depravity. It is within these capacities that we identify the endless possibilities of our existence, i.e., through the recognition of our capabilities, we are imbued with the responsibility to act accordingly. Aristotle goes beyond merely calling our attention to the polemics of our depravity and excessive nature, he offers a solution. The solution hints to the problem of evil, as it is a problem for the self.

The problem of evil is fundamentally a personal problem. It is a problem of choosing to willfully self regulate one's depravity or excesses. But moreover, it is the willingness to do so for no other purpose than for the attainment of this style of living, this lifestyle, i.e., a life of virtue. This style of living is a personal recognition that "I am affected by evil." "I can be swayed by my own excesses." Remember, Aristotle has written, "And also for the sake of mere life (in which there is possibly some noble element *so long as the evils of existence do not greatly overbalance the good*) mankind meet together and maintain the political community" (emphasis added).¹⁸³

Aristotle was directed toward the political. His account of the polemics of depravity and excess was more than an anecdotal account for personal "wellbeing". His account cannot be confused with contemporary notions of "self-help" or "twelve-steps". Aristotle's account of *arête* is directed *from* the individual *toward* the political, as noted in the previous quote. His accounts of the political are modeled on the family, which is substantiated in his *Ethics*. A life of virtue is the life worth living. It is the life that ensures the requisite conditions for the political life. The having of political life, the participation of members, the polis, within a political community is inconceivable without an antecedent recognition of personal development. That development, for Aristotle, manifests in our ability to govern our own bodies. Unlike Plato, virtue is embodied. It can be contained and is contained within the physical. The virtuous life exists within the individual, or at least the potential for the virtuous life exists within the

¹⁸³ *Politics III* Part VI.

individual. But there is a threat, a very real threat to that realization, the embodiment of that lifestyle, the manifestation of *arête* within the human being, and that threat is evil.

The threat of evil is the choice we have to indulge in the excesses of our lives or to indulge in the depravity of our depressions and apathies. Aristotle can only encourage. As the saying goes, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.” He can articulate the conditions by which one attains a balance between these polemical halves, but ultimately it is entirely up to the individual to embrace this style of living. Thus, it is absolutely essential to note that it is not simply one instance of choice that defines an individual as living the virtuous life, it is how one chooses to live one’s life, or the living of one’s life, which either accords or deviates with *arête*. The threat of evil is more than a threat to the individual’s ability to properly choose to live the virtuous life; rather, the threat of evil is a threat to the *living* of life. Evil undermines life. Evil is antithetical to life. The choices that we are presented, on any given day, at any given time, are at every moment, minute possibilities to participate in evil. It is the ability to inflate the self to self-aggrandize, to compensate for faulty reasoning. All seemingly harmless, until that personal defect or inclination, that propensity or will manifests *through* the individual into the world at large.

Evil, then, begins with a personal experience. The core of evil is firmly grounded in our psychological and physiological inclinations to act out of an excess or depravity. Whether that propensity to act is governed by choice or socio-biological determination is, here, not my concern. I am, here, only concerned with the fact *that* it occurs.

The boy who is shunned by his playmates, who is ridiculed and mocked, who so desperately wishes to fit in, yet is at every instance rejected, very often becomes the man that wages war against assimilation. How that war is waged, however, depends on what choices that boy made as he developed. Some constructively critique the hegemony of the heterosexual, white normativity, and in so doing wage war against notions of assimilation. Others, like the Virginia Tech student and mass murderer Seung-Hui Cho, mastermind and then carry out unimaginable brutality on the very people that he perceived to have rejected him in the first place. It appears that the depravity or excesses of our attempts to live a virtuous life is ultimately grounded in how that battle between those polemic halves manifests.

In analyzing the many philosophical accounts of evil throughout history, I was surprised at how often philosophers referred to this struggle. Some saw it (that is evil) as a struggle within the self. Others viewed it in terms of a struggle between the self and our attachments, or the self and the *other*, or the self and one's recognition of power. However one approached this discussion of evil throughout the history of philosophy, it was at every instance, approached as a struggle. Evil can only be understood in terms of a struggle. There is no exception. How that struggle is fought, the conditions wherein we come to recognize the unfolding of that struggle or the means in which the struggle affects the world at large, will always vary, but that evil is to be understood within the conceptual context of struggle is irrefutable.

It is the process of *living* that complicates our recognition of evil. We are, in effect, blinded by our own biases. Many in the West are blinded by capitalism and luxury. They

confuse their cultural detachment from “evil” as the spooky concept relegated to the most abstracted levels of philosophy. But one could easily argue that such a position is blinded by privilege. It is, as represented by the character Cypher in the *Matrix* film trilogy (1999-2003) by Lawrence and Andrew Wachowski, a privilege not to know the truth, to have a hatred for those that seek enlightenment. Such misogyny is fueled by *ignorance*. Thus, Cypher’s famous dictum, “Ignorance is bliss.” Ignorance, however, does little to refute the existence of evil as it does to promote its spread. Evil is spread and transferred from one person to the other through a narrative of ignorance and like Aristotle, St. Augustine, locates this struggle within the self.

Augustine writes,

the first evil act of will, preceding as it did, all evil works in man, was rather a falling away from the work of God to the will’s own works than any one work; and those works were evil because they followed the will’s own pattern and not God’s. Thus, the will itself, or man himself in so far as he was possessed of an evil will, was the evil tree, as it were, that bore the evil fruit that those works represented.¹⁸⁴

For Augustine, the particular human being is the source of evil. I have already discussed Augustine’s justification for this claim, but in trying to uncover the mysteries shrouding a fuller conception of evil, one must recognize the first boundary condition of evil, i.e., the conception that identifies evil as a *personal struggle*. For Aristotle, that struggle was between the polemics of depravity, on the one hand, and excess, on the other. The attempt to resolve that struggle was substantiated by the virtuous life. Though Augustine’s conception differs from Aristotle, especially how this struggle manifests and

¹⁸⁴ Saint Augustine *The City of God Against the Pagan: IV Books XII-XV*. eds T.E. Page, et. al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), Book XIV. xi.

how it is resolved, the underlying assumption is the same, viz. evil is limited (bounded) by one's personal struggle. For Augustine, this struggle manifests as sin and the source of this struggle manifests as *original sin*. My sin is a personal sin. It is nontransferable and the sinner will be judged accordingly. Sin, as the manifestation of evil, is embodied, i.e., it is localized within a body. It is bounded by the body and when evil is ultimately judged, the body is judged accordingly. The body is punished (in hell). To judge evil, then, is to judge the body. It is to judge the individual person and that person's body. Thus, the person, i.e., the physical limitations of the person's body, is the first boundary condition for evil. For Aristotle and Augustine, evil is bounded; it is limited within the body of either the moral agent or the sinner.

For Augustine, however, unlike the Stoics and so many others, the will of the human being was fundamentally sullied by the act of original sin. Our existence would be defined by this act of sin. We would internalize sin as a *personal* experience and thus internalize evil. We embodied evil and as such became evil. It would be something for which one would have to repent, and if penitence was deferred, there was the very real threat of personal damnation. "I could burn in hell." "I may not go to heaven."

Unlike Aristotle's conception of balance and moderation, Augustine's account of sin required conformity of the will to the law of God. Any act of disobedience or insubordination was ultimately subject to judgment, which meant that one could face the penalty of eternal damnation. Evil, then, as manifested through sin, was internalized. It became "my sins," "my evils," and "my responsibility to repent," or "I" would be damned to an eternity of suffering and torture. The boundary condition of evil was a very

real limitation. It was not some abstracted, detached philosophical conception. Rather, the limits of evil *within* my body meant that I could suffer for its presence, which is why there are countless references to exorcisms. Demons are cast *out*. One is *freed* from sin. Salvation becomes the act of purging oneself *of* sin. Evil, literally, leaves the body and in so doing progresses beyond the body, i.e., it progresses beyond the first boundary.

4.3. *The Second Boundary Condition of Evil: The Social Realm*

The second boundary condition of evil is initiated by a projection of an internal struggle from the particular individual suffering, into a social setting. Concerns may be voiced to a priest or a policeman, a psychiatrist or a neighbor. Concerns may not be voiced at all. The individual may, rather, remove himself from social interactions, a key indication of psychological and/or emotional distress.

As previously mentioned in chapter one of this analysis, the Eastern mystics and specifically Patañjali, identified, contrary to Aristotle and Augustine, evil within the world (an external conception) rather than within the body (an internal conception). Where Aristotle and Augustine may have argued for moderation or penitence, Patañjali would have argued for personal detachment to the things of this world, particularly material possessions and our connections to loved ones.

Patañjali identifies evil in our attachments and Hobbes in the social nature of human dynamics. Granted some may argue that perception of the other may not be constrained to interpretations of threat or violence, but in terms of empathy and love, which are certainly warranted. My interests, however, are quite specific; my scope is very clearly defined. I am interested in the concept of evil, attempting to uncover the development of

evil from its most fundamental instantiation to its largest conceivable actualization is the sole purpose of this chapter. The difficulty in unlocking these mysteries, however, is only complicated by the difficulties faced with interpersonal interactions.

Fear underlies this difficulty. The obsession with a fear of loss is an essential component within any social setting for the manifestation of evil. The fear of losing one's livelihood may drive one to compulsively work. The fear of being attacked may prompt someone to attack preemptively. One's internal fears may then be projected outward. They are articulated, made social, and ultimately internalized by other members of society. This process is repeated with each retelling of the story. Thus, a narrative is constructed. A caricature of that which may have been a legitimate fear, has now morphed into the boogie man, the devil, the antichrist, the sub or nonhuman being. As demonstrated in chapter two in the discussion of the hatred whipped up by the Rwanda TV station *Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLM), dehumanization serves an essential role in legitimizing genocide to sympathizers.

Loss and death are inevitable aspects to life, the attempt to preserve that which is bound to be lost is unnatural, i.e., such attempts run counter to nature. Fear quickly manifests as terror and terror can easily paralyze a community. One's terror of damnation, for example, is projected throughout the community and becomes our terror of damnation. Those refusing to accord with the dogma or practices established to "cleanse" the community only serve to magnify the terror within the community, at which point the community may turn against those individuals. This is commonly seen in vigilantism, where the fear of the people manifests in the practice of self-policing

targeted members of their community. Unfortunately, as was the case some many times in history, be it the Salem Witch Trials or the lynching of African-American men in the South, vigilantism is often a misdirected use of force on unsuspecting, often innocent victims.

As one approaches the limits of the second boundary condition, projected violence within the social order is less a response to perceived injustices, less vigilantism, and more an attempt to organize and methodically eradicate a portion of the population, all of which stems from the amplification of the narrative recycled within society, that “they” are different from “us.” “They” are nonhuman. “We” are human. “They” are immoral. “We” are moral. “They” are savages. “We” are civilized. As mentioned earlier, the unmitigated fear of loss, of losing racial purity, losing social dominance or importance, serves to catalyze a figure, an individual from within the crowd, to govern the crowd. The leader, the sovereign, the ruler, is set in opposition to the crowd, though from the crowd. The leader governs the crowd, and as such is given the responsibility to protect “us” from “them.” This dynamic and fundamentally primal separation of “us” and “them” catapults an individual into the political. Thus, the political, among other things, serves to govern the social and protect society from “them,” whoever they may be.

4.4. *The Third Boundary Condition of Evil: The Political*

The mysteries involved in understanding the concept of evil have slowly been uncovered, beginning with an explanation of the necessary boundary conditions of evil. The difficulty in grasping the concept of evil has been circumvented by a clear articulation of its dynamism and fluidity between the personal and social order. It has

been my attempt to demonstrate that evil is a dynamic force. There is a definitive progression of evil. From the ancients to contemporary accounts of the problem of evil, its force has actively been a progression and expansion of its totalizing, destructive capabilities. The projection of our deficiencies and excesses, our vices and insecurities into the world only serves to facilitate the ever expanding and exponential growth of evil.

The magnitude of evil, however, is compounded by the nearly limitless power of political leaders and their abilities to dramatically shape the course of human civilization. This manifestation of power, the struggle for power within the political sphere, serves to propel the need to better understand the nature of evil to the forefront of every discipline. To overlook the tremendous dangers presented to the citizens of every nation is to undermine the totalizing force of evil.

Kant's almost prophetic understanding of the requisite preconditions for multinational tribunals and the importance of diplomacy and international peace were centuries ahead of its time. Kant's account of the political is derived from his *Groundwork* and his ability to recognize the confluence of human agency and our varying capacities to express freedom. It is precisely because we are free and we are social beings that evil is such a significant problem, I would argue that it is *the* fundamental problem for all of humanity. This problem arises because of the conflicts in expressing one's freedom and as such, for Kant, the political must be firmly grounded in the universal prescriptions of moral law—just as the particular moral agent is so grounded. The human being is free as long as in the expression of his freedom he does not impede the freedom of others. Kant writes, “Act externally so that the free use of your choice can coexist with freedom of everyone

in accordance with *universal law*.”¹⁸⁵ Those who control and use political power are equally bounded to the moral law. The state can and should be held accountable for violations of its power, which is precisely what is at stake in a 21st century account of genocide and the political abuse of power.

In chapter two of this analysis I sought to outline the development of genocide studies as a discipline and body of knowledge. What struck me as of utmost importance in gathering the information to write the chapter, is the degree of nearly unlimited power wielded by corrupt governments and their ability to effectively justify the brazen and calculated extermination of human life. The question at stake, the mystery surrounding the application of such political power, lies in understanding where that power is localized. Political power is localized power, but within the confines of that locality, it is nearly limitless. I was astounded as I read time-and-time-again of the use of propaganda and the airwaves, the use of the media and the demonization of the intended victims of an ideology of exclusion, that I then realized as Arendt had before me, that political evil, i.e., evil as manifest through political power, was limited by borders. The geographic borders of a state mark a very real scope of state sovereignty. Within those borders international legislative bodies have great difficulties enforcing international law, because to do so, on the one hand, is to undermine state sovereignty, but to avoid doing so, on the other hand, is to turn a blind eye, to indirectly condone the barbarism of an uncompassionate state, thus, the catch 22. The personal fear of “contamination” as demonstrated in my analysis of Shaw’s account reverberates within the psyche of a man. It is projected as a hatred for

¹⁸⁵ (6:231)

the other, for their “infections” and the alleged threat they pose to the integrity of one’s society. The boundary condition of evil quickly shifts from the personal to the social in this act of directed hatred. It manifests within the social as fear, fear of being contaminated, fear of being subverted, and fear of being oppressed.

The more one’s social narrative of the *other* is structured in terms of fear, the more one will come to perceive the other as a threat. Perception is reality. Thus, the more that threat is perceived *as* real, the more real that threat becomes. Eventually, fear spread like a wildfire through various communities and individuals react to this fear by attempting to exterminate the other. The fear which began as a personal fear has been amplified and mirrored in the other’s existence. Thus, “our” fear is directed, it is essentially embodied in “their” being, as defined obsessively. Killing them, and killing them all, is the only pacification for the fear firmly rooted within one’s self. Again, a boundary condition is met, insofar as the calculated and methodical attempt to exterminate an entire population of people, and, moreover, to justify this attempt, requires not only precise and deliberate planning, it requires the resources, the power, and the military ability to enact such an ideology of exclusion.

The progression of evil, from the personal and through the social order, now manifests a political evil. The power of political evil is the recognition of its limitations. Political evil *is* limited, as discussed in chapter two, by the confines of the state’s domestic jurisdictions. Knowing this fact, and ensuring that state sovereignty is confined within those borders, means that annihilating an entire population of people is only limited by the state’s ability to expeditiously carry out such measures. Once intended

victims flee the state, however, the state cannot “track them down” without infringing on the sovereignty of surrounding states. Even in discussing genocide, there are rules. Infringing on a surrounding state’s sovereignty to purify not only one’s respective state from those deemed contaminated, but the world, is to directly challenge the sovereignty of another state, which will invariably result in war between states.

Political asylums threaten the sovereignty of the state, because the state is harboring those slated for execution. As the threat of war becomes increasingly evident, the final boundary condition is met. The progression of evil has grown beyond the confines of the political. There is a disregard for the rules, if you will. Evil seeks to destroy not only those within the confines of the state’s jurisdiction. It seeks to destroy those slated for extermination, *wherever they reside*. The actual attempt to achieve this goal, i.e., the total eradication of a people wherever they may flee, necessitates a disregard for state sovereignty and geographical borders. I am arguing that this very specific attempt is the ultimate manifestation of evil.

4.5. *On the Concept of the One-World State*

Once the third boundary condition has been breached, once the state purposefully disregards the sovereignty of surrounding states for the purpose of “cleansing the world” of a targeted group, the state, in effect, must expand its borders. If political dissidents flee extermination to an adjacent state and that state chooses to harbor those dissidents, then that state becomes a threat. To kill those dissidents requires the destruction of that state. Thus, war is waged on that state. Once that state has been absorbed, all original dissidents within that former state are executed. Those that flee to adjacent states are hunted and

killed. As the borders of state sovereignty are increased those targeted for extermination will be absorbed from the surrounding area, interned and ultimately exterminated. Ian Kershaw describes:

...Polish laborers were commandeered by the SS to construct a camp at Belzec in eastern Poland...Initially, the aim was to use Belzec, whose murderous capacity was in the early months relatively small, for the gassing of Jews from the Lublin area who were incapable of work. Only gradually did the liquidation of *all* Polish Jews become clarified as the goal.¹⁸⁶

In absorbing Poland, SS troops gradually sought the extermination of “all Polish Jews,” which serves to demonstrate how the state’s expansion yielded higher fatalities. Theoretically, then, there is a very real possibility that a state could grow so powerful that it absorbed all other states, destroyed all other state borders, eliminated the sovereignty of all other states, and thereby increased its own borders, until the point at which all that existed was a one-world state. The power to annihilate any population of people could never be mitigated by international law, because international law would cease to exist once the state reached total global dominance. Once such a one-world state came to power, there could be no possibility of moving beyond or outside of the state’s domestic jurisdiction, because that jurisdiction would include the totality of the world. All former nation states would have been absorbed into the one-world state, which gives rise to a consolidation of power.

Hitler only approximated that which he desired most, the total eradication of Jews. His attempt to actualize evil transcended the physical limitations of his body. It grew

¹⁸⁶ Kershaw, Ian. 2000. *Hitler, 1936-45: nemesis*. New York: W.W. Norton. p. 483-484

beyond the borders of the German state and was set to consume every state. If left unchecked, Hitler would have approximated the greatest manifestation of evil in the formation of a one-world genocidal state. The inversion of his desire, in Kantian terms, was accomplished by his attempt to universalize a maxim for personal gain, which as we have seen in chapter one nullifies the benefits that would otherwise be preserved prior to universalization. Kant describes this process of nullification in the following example. He writes,

Then I soon became aware that I could indeed will the lie, but by no means a universal law to lie; for in accordance with such a law there would properly be no promises at all, since it would be futile to avow my will with regard to my future actions to others who would no believe this avowal...as soon as it were made a universal law, would have to destroy itself.¹⁸⁷

Since one's personal boundary condition of evil is an approximation of universal evil, and the progression from one boundary condition to the next is a result of its continual manifestation through time, and since the original source of fear and hatred begins at a personal level and is projected outward, then once that fear is located in the social and the political, once that fear is mirrored in the existence of the *other*, and once "they" are all conceivably killed in a one-world genocidal state, the only possible remnant of that original source of fear and hatred remains with the person determined to eradicate that fear wherever it manifests. Thus, universal evil must result in the destruction of itself, as it would destroy all human life, which gives credence to Aristotle's claim that, "excess can be manifested in all...yet all are not found in the same person. Indeed, they could not;

¹⁸⁷ Kant, *Groundwork*. 4:403 – 4:404.

for evil destroys even itself, and if it is *complete* becomes unbearable” (emphasis added).¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Ross, W.D., revised by J.O. Urmson. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, The Revised Oxford Translation, vol. 2, Jonathan Barnes, ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. *Ethics*, Book IV, Part VI. 1125b35.

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