

## **Evil as an existential dilemma: Making Sense of Being beyond the moralistic view**

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### **Abstract**

Evil is often regarded as a metaphysical dilemma or as a moral, political, and social issue. But, can we take a different approach to understand it and approach it as a means to feel the universe? Even, Evil is morally not a 'meaningful act' in itself; I think we could find a link between evil and 'sense of Being'. Therefore, through this 'a-moralistic approach' evil is the will to 'make sense of being'. Because evil originated in human nature (Kant's radical evil perspective), I perceive it as an existential issue. My approach is to give some meaning to evil and consider evil as an act of meaning. In other words, evil has an ontological status. As long as a man are aware of that, seeking a sense of life and the meaning of being in the world can be a trigger to do evil. Meaning is not an interpretation procedure but an act of making. Thus, approaching evil as an act of making meaning provides a productive answer.

**Keywords:** Evil, Sense, Being, Contingency, Reason



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seductive and charming impact. It motivates and encourages people to go after it. Also has a perennial character in literature and movies. It seems to be an easy and exciting activity to commit it by a human being. I think even though evil is an interesting topic not in the theology of philosophy,

I believe that using the word 'evil' to describe any nasty human behaviors in this turbulent time, is misleading. Because it's a very abstract concept and does not have an exact and clear meaning in itself. It is an ambiguous word for a variety of human actions. Think of how to describe and analyze evil-doing, like an outlaw, social disobedience, or religious sin, or violating the moral codes, biological anomaly, or psychological disorder?

The best way to describe them is to approach it from different disciplines like psychology, criminology, etc.... and applied it to many fields of sciences, not the metaphysical understanding.

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ior. In the path of 'Itzhak Fried' a neurosurgeon who came up with Syndrome Evil (1997), is that such syndrome has 10 symptoms. He believes that 70 percent of a population can take part in crimes as part of the group <sup>(103)</sup>.

Science created a vacuum in the meaning and sense of the world. Progress in scientific discourse was about brute facts and not about the meaning. It was about discovery achievement for humans not adding or defining the meaning of life. As a result, the world has been discovered more, but not valued meaning. Besides, the world has been reduced to mechanical interaction and pure physical processes that empty form any value sense.

### Conclusion

This paper aimed to reconsider evil as a philosophical problem, rather than a purely moral or psychosocial one. But such an approach challenges the mainstream discourse on evil. Because it requires us to get out from our fixed moral judgments on that subject. Therefore, I tried to consider evil as an act of rebellion, an existential struggle toward meaning. Even there is not any virtue in doing evil. However, coming up with a new idea or an interpretation, open a new venture to the dilemma of evil

in our world. Even, evil is not a new subject, it is fashionable nowadays. I have tried to take an unusual way of analyzing and understanding evil. Hypothetically, I assumed that evil is a way or a source of meaning. In other words, it is an effort to challenge the meaningless aspect of being in the world.

I do believe that evil is not an ethical effort to represent the sense of being. I did not discuss the moral or any legal conception and definition of evil here. for example, for Bataille and Ricoeur, evil has another place in life and it is not just a subject matter of condemnation. While to other philosophers, evil is an act of creation. As we apprehended from Kant, evil is imminent and has to do with freedom and our rational capacity to use it freely.

I gave some strength to evil and showed some weakness of Good which portrayed as fragile, continents, boring and shortcoming for the human being. That is why through evil men tend to overcome the gap between the world as it is and thought-meaning. In this sense, overbridging the gap, manifest itself in an act of evildoer. To understand evil then needs to approach it from the intrinsic or extrinsic meaning of the being- world.

Since that evil was ever-present in human histories, like chronicle "Pain". It flows through all human actions and activities and has a

standable. Diagnosing what is really behind evil is an unordinary task. This is because evil shocks us, and also makes us aware of our existential limitations. By shock effect, I mean that an evil action becomes an attend-full event. It makes us rethink our moral values and the dogmatic worldviews we adhere to.

Since we realize that, there are no evident rules and measures to diagnose an evil deed depending on the party who commits it and another one who charges it. Condemning evil acts is easy as much as well doing it. This is understandable when we realize that our world contains contingent meanings. And when we notice that things happen all together, despite our moral distinctions. The second paradox might be this: bad does not exclude good necessarily.

However, we can only theoretically approach our world as logical forms. In the World of Logic, events make sense, when acts by a set of rules. True is true when it is according to the logical connection and formula. People think that kind of tautology applies to our reality. And our reality is determent by one logical formula: bad is bad, evil is evil. But this is not the actual case in the real world. Perceiving the world as a full-sense existence, arise from the idea-formula; every-

thing exists for a logical or a higher purpose. In this sense, everything occurs for a significant reason that is inherently good! And every event in the real world should be intelligent able, reasonable, and morally justified according to the original goal!

Unfortunately, they forget that evil can be an abyss of meaninglessness and transcending norms. But this doesn't mean that I give evil any kind of prestige or admiration. It is not about making a judgment of justification of evil as such but rather understanding it differently. The crisis of meaning is linked with the ontological lack of singular and absolute views. Even the holistic religious views, asserts that a meaningful life is real only in the other world. But this dissatisfies people, especially those who think that the world should be as they understand it. And events should go, according to what they expecting it. No doubt, the absence of sense in life, leaves us with a kind of nihilism and might be one indicator of evil. Evil is another side of human nature. We are all potentially, but not evil. Somehow, we all have evil imaginations, ambitions, and strives. So, to dehumanize the evil aspect is neglecting our truth. We cannot understand evil if we go beyond human nature and behav-



engage in their distinctive activity when we cannot be certain that the conditions under which this is possible obtain”<sup>(94)</sup>.

For Kant, this conflict of reason turns on the status of the unconditioned in our cognition, and his solution to it comes only with the practical use of reason: we are entitled to make “objective (metaphysical claims) based on practical reason’s demand for the unconditioned, but not based on theoretical reason’s demand for the unconditioned”<sup>(95)</sup>. As Kant sees that we are transcendently free, capable of being determined by pure practical reason”<sup>(96)</sup>. So, by Kant we see the primacy of the practical to encompass all conscious acts: “all representations with intentional content . . . are in some sense grounded in the practical”<sup>(97)</sup>.

In this sense, dissatisfaction with the divided reality that Kant tries to establish between practical and theoretical cognition can lead to conflict between practical and theoretical reason. But he left the solution a synthesis behind. Redemption of the reason of its conflicts, antinomy remains unsolved in his distinguishing the practical reason from the theoretical one. The possibility of metaphysical knowledge is not acquired by theoretical reason, it is only possible by practice.

And that is why Jacobi famously argues that any commitment to the Principle of Sufficient Reason leads invariably to nihilism and fatalism. In other words, evil. Evil is consistent with the demands of reason<sup>(98)</sup>. As Maimon in opposition to Kant, has said, ‘we can know that reason demands a single first principle without being able to provide it’<sup>(99)</sup>. Well, we might agree with Schelling that “evil can be explained as a form of defiance and goodness as a form of love”<sup>(100)</sup>.

### Sense and Nonsense of Evil

There are some good efforts to understand evil. Some authors like S. Neiman try to make evil, intelligible. For Neiman, making sense of evil means making it intelligible<sup>(101)</sup>. It is kind of to say is, lead to ought, what we should do about. Because the power of our reason toward the rupture of is and ought, can lead to evil, is fragile. Intelligibility and the unity of reason that seeks to make sense of the world, and the place of humanity within it – as a question of our human capacities to find and create meaning in the world and pointedly asks whether they are adequate to a world that seems determined to thwart them?<sup>(102)</sup>

But I think that making sense of evil, is not a project of rejecting or fighting, rather is to make it under-



mented habits of moral trust, fallen out of your world<sup>(83)</sup>. It also means that evil is a collapse of your world. So, there is a link between nihilism and evil. But nihilism is not perse a destructive condition of negation but implies a wider situation the end of modernity in the West<sup>(84)</sup>.

Evil serves to denote the negation of the possibilities for being rather than moral corruption, it is the urge to renounce the freedom to be otherwise than we are that<sup>(85)</sup>. So, the solution to evil is offering pluralistic acceptance against the monotheist perspective of a good view of life<sup>(86)</sup>. But according to 'Jean-Luc Nancy', 'the possibility of evil...is correlative to the introduction of freedom'. Freedom means: 'freedom cannot present itself without presenting the possibility, inscribed in its essence, of a free renunciation of freedom.'<sup>(87)</sup>.

The demand to unite is and ought to be nothing, but reason's demand<sup>(88)</sup>. So, to abandon the attempt to comprehend evil is to abandon every basis for confronting it in thought as in practice<sup>(89)</sup>. Contingency, in this sense, is kind of a result of the gap between is and ought or the unbridgeable rift in the world, being. The gap between nature and freedom is and ought, to condition all human existence<sup>(90)</sup>. Or the rift between nature and reason. For Kant

reason was not a matter of knowledge, but certain and pursuing purpose<sup>(91)</sup>.

It is not more the question of why the world exists rather nothing? But why it is not better or another way than is, it should be? I think. In other words, why should this world exist if another were better?<sup>(92)</sup> Perhaps, if we deeply reflect on our world, we realize how it is marked by contingencies and contradictions. In that sense, evil can be a counteract to the un-logical world by the unreasonable act. From this perspective, evildoers legitimize their motivations. In other words, evil is a reaction to nonsense and unreasonable Existence.

### **Evil as a result of the conflict of Reason**

According to some researchers, the conflict of the reason is the main prod to the thinkers of the period of German Idealism<sup>(93)</sup>. Because there was a link between evil and nihilism. Evil as a by-product of sufficient rationality and reason lead inevitably to nihilism. So, the main problem of rationality or reason is conflicts and antinomy as Kant indicated in his major work 'Critic of Pure Reason. In the 'conflict of reason,' he raised a question about "whether our cognitive faculties -- both theoretical and practical -- can



remain: what is the reason behind evil then?

### Evil and Contingency

We can agree with Nussbaum, that the noblest aspect of humans, is when they are subjected to the contingencies of nature or other people's actions. But, not everything in our world is logically consistent with our moral perspective and expectations. Life is full of the unexpected a fact through the history of mankind. There are events, subjects neither true nor false.

We are dealing with human beings as the most complicated creature on earth. Things could happen for no reason, or as a result of stupid actions, or by chance and coincidences<sup>(75)</sup>. We cannot predict everything as supposed. In other words, we cannot put the good ideas in the vast and absolute logical formula for the world domains.

So, evil can be an outcome contingency in the world. But how to overcome this contradiction? Hegel once stated; 'the task of philosophy is to overcome that contingency in the world'<sup>(76)</sup>. Also, there is a kind of duality of nature and freedom, as Kant pointed out<sup>(77)</sup>. In this sense, Kant's philosophy is not merely a response to certain epistemological and metaphysical questions (apriori synthetic judgment possible),

rather it is a response to the presence of evil, which treats the intelligibility of the world and our psychological need to feel at home<sup>(78)</sup>.

The sole aim of philosophical inquiry by Hegel is to eliminate the contingent<sup>(79)</sup>. But for Kant, whether the contingent was reasonable, is a matter of faith (having faith and hope to overcome it)<sup>(80)</sup>. Therefore, evil can occur or manifest as a result of a gap between the world as it is, and the world as it ought to be. The task of philosophy then is to find unity and overcome the fracture being. Reconciling (Hegel syntheses) of is and ought, or finding unity of human reason, or unity of is and ought to be the main goal of philosophy<sup>(81)</sup>.

In other words, the unity of reason is an attempt to find a home on fracture ground, which is a part of giving us a sense of belonging. And maybe, it's a drive for evil. It's a demand on human reason, to find an answer why, making sense about feeling home<sup>(82)</sup>. So, unity of reason means in other words, making sense of the world. Maybe, that it is meaningless, and ought to be an attempt to make it sensible.

We could also add that contingency cause of nihilism, senseless. Also, nihilism is the absence of a pluralistic view of the world, politics, etc. Evil surprises, it liquidates sedi-

plexity of good appears rooted in human nature<sup>(67)</sup>.

Contrary to Aristotle's thought that virtue is the source of happiness and joy. Well, evil becomes the main source of joy and energy, it seems that evil, alluring when goodness becomes boring. Individuals do evil because they want to persuade themselves that they are alive. Or sometimes, they act evilly just to abolish existence. So, it's a destructive power of being<sup>(68)</sup>. There is some excitement, against the meaningless being. Or against the dominant definition of the sense of being by religion, politics, or dominant moral values. So, the Seductive force makes Evil more charming!

Substantial Evil or the Fragile Good?

There is also another unhappy explanation why evil is so charming: it is because it is substantial, while good is always fragile. In other words, good is acceptable, but evil is irresistible. It might be, that this is not a surprising fact, but it is not easy to accept. So as opposed to our expectation, goodness is always breakable and may be unsustainable<sup>(69)</sup>. Good is divine, evil is human nature, was one of Kant's exposures. He tried to transform theodicy to antropodicy and to explain the fragility of human free-

dom that led to evil <sup>(70)</sup>.

Whereas, we face many forms of evil that manifest self-confidence and strength. Because evil has a clear intention: destroying the present. But goodness and external circumstances do not follow any logical order of mind. This fatal and tragic fact proves the vulnerability of human lives to fortune, to unexpected changes, affected by the mutability of circumstances. The conflict between benefits or self-commitment of different parties makes choices difficult<sup>(71)</sup>.

Human choices mostly depend on uncontrollable circumstances. Therefore, interactions between the external constraints and personal choice do not go hand in hand<sup>(72)</sup>. We cannot deny that goodness has another feature: "Fragmentation" in the Derridean concept which means it is not integrated. Also, to notice, the idea that following the good, implies moral perfection is a kind of illusion. Which means that moral perfection has failed to be good. It became a kind of ethical dogma, to believe in the moral sainthood of good<sup>(73)</sup>.

So, to conclude here, the paradox of good is what 'Michael Polanyi points out in his reflection of the Revolution: that revolution always has a good intention but horrible consequences<sup>(74)</sup>. But the questions



Lack of sufficient knowledge, is bad, but can we say that evildoers are ignorant? Knowledge of the good has nothing to do with evil. If we conclude that the absence of knowledge about good results in evil actions, it is just a simplification of the problem. And we neglect all motivations and impulses behind evildoings!

Evil has nothing to do with the intelligibility or rationality of the actor. In opposite, evildoers make rational choices. One may call this instrumental rationally because of a lack of reflection and critical thinking. But the case is not lacking reason for the absence of intelligence. It is more about adding a different kind of sense to life, being, which I will elaborate on later.

### **The Seductive force of Evil**

Evil is always a seductive and tempting motivator. And that aspect makes it eternal (Eternal Recurrence). But why attract people's minds? If we realize the "boring truth" of life routine, then we understand what peoples search for a new sense. Thanks to social media and new media technology, peoples lead a quantitative way of living. Which means more shares, and twits than reflections. Another attraction power of evil might be, that evil demands fewer tasks on

us. And it feels easy to go beyond the norms, but with one condition: just follow the rule of the game. To overcome the regularity of life requires transgression. A man, who bites a dog, hype news, no other way around!

Then, following evil, means not to follow the prescribed rule of moral orders. Besides that, even we think that evil is an exceptional act in human history. Well, it is not the case. Evil like death always seems to be imperfect and wants to become true through an act. However, goodness is perfect in itself, and therefore no need for any additional values to be completed. And this fact makes it a boring subject to live for and by it. To answer this question: why evil is charming, alluring, and fascinating? Eagleton once asserted that evil is the flipside of human existence. He addresses very fascinating questions: why is evil so glamorous, sexy, and seductive?

He thinks that it's a symptom of the popular culture that is obsessed with ghouls and vampires, zombies, and monsters. As we see in cinema archetypal, an evil guy is so impressive <sup>(65)</sup>. Some think that evil is easier or attractive because history teaches that organizing evil is easier than organizing the good<sup>(66)</sup>. In other words, we are dealing with the simplicity of evil, and the com-

our moral obligation or something else?

For explaining that, we have to look beyond moral and language discourse. For this reason, I examine the subject philosophically. Hypothetically, we can view evil as a search for the meaning of life. To get a clear understanding, we have to get outside the mainstream box: to the moral perspective. Evil has been considered as a destructive force that manifests itself in violence and other acts that harm others. But it is a challenge to ask: is it not possible to see evil as a source of meaning or as a journey to go beyond the routine of life and current situations?

When we realize that life has no inherent meaning, then we face that bold fact as an ugly truth. Eventually, we have to ask ourselves: how to make sense of it? And, despite self-awareness, or scientific and technological progress, why does evil always occur? Perhaps because the meaning of life is not pre-given to us. And as a result of scientific progress and disenchanting nature and eliminating the mythological or religious view of the world, the meaning of life has become more obscure. In other words, science may have abolished the sense that the world is inhabited by forces with wills of their own, and in this

way reduced the *unheimlich*, but the price enormous, for all nature stands condemned<sup>(64)</sup>.

### **Problematizing Evil**

As we saw in the previous pages, for centuries, the popular question of whether evil is profound or banal, or whether it is intrinsic or not, dominated the philosophical debates. Maybe one way out of those unsolved disagreements is to suggest that, evil is about making sense of the world. In other words, evil is an ontological indicator against nonsense being. An evil thought wants to convince us by the assumption that the world has no sense as such unless we overcome time routine and the unchangeable process of life. Thus, the conflict between making sense and nonsense occurs in evilness as powerful motivation and mobilizer in history.

As a result of that, we face a dilemma: is evil a product of our nature or culture? However, both nature and culture have effects on human actions. One solution to this dilemma is to go beyond dualistic thoughts on being, existence. Simply we can no longer define evil as an anti-rational or non-intelligent act. The Socrates approach that goodness is equal to knowledge, and badness comes from ignorance, fails to explain the evil.



ciated with the power of the true). Those figures of evil become an actual possibility only, thanks to the sole of Good we recognize- a truth-process Good<sup>(63)</sup>. Even though, on the level of everyday life, we encounter evil in many events. But except our response to it according to the moral norms (condemning it), we don't ask the fundamental question, why evil?

It is a kind of a superficial judgment to state that evil subverts the good life or as a result of lack ("privation") of the good. It seems that we forget the enduring aspect of evilness. Obviously, throughout history, the perennial character of evil, makes it strong and impressive always. Despite that, we all "know" what evil is, even it's always a present and leading people's motivations. And, the most paradoxical aspect of evil is: knowing does not prohibit doing it. There is more beneath the concept of evil as well as human behavior in general. Therefore, we need nuanced navigation to explore the roots of evil in human activities. Some people think an evildoer has no capacity for a better life or ethical grounds. But philosophically it is not simple to articulate and fix it as looks like. Since, we live in an era characterized by the rising of radicalism, outrage, and extremism in all ar-

eas of life, we have to have another outlook on evil forms. Not surprisingly, what creates clashes and backlashes in the media, sounds more attractive and interesting, especially on social media. Because as humans, we are not conditioned by goodness for the sake of humanity, but instead by exposing our evil side of ourselves or others. It looks like a heroic act to stand against the prescribed rules dictated by society. In other words, an evil act is another dimension of our being than just a moral judgment about a behavior. Is it possible to see evil as a search of adding a new sense to our way of being? Lack of sense can be a vital and existential motivation for occurring evil. The question is why men through the evil acts, tend to add a different sense or some values to regular life? Is it not because the world is meaningless or evil an act against the ordinariness of life?

### **Contemplating Evil beyond Moral Discourse**

When you search online about the nature of evil and the reason why it is evil, you are confronted with many popular questions like why evil is so tempting, seductive, and fascinating? These are trivial questions. However, what makes evil so special that we pay great attention to it? Is it just because of

a situation. As a result, evil does not exist either as nature or as law. It exists and varies in the singular becoming of the True. Therefore, the critics are the consensual self-evidence idea of evil and see it as a kind of ideology<sup>(51)</sup>. If evil exists, we must conceive it from the starting point of the Good<sup>(52)</sup>. In this sense, Evil can be a possible dimension of truth, as good is related to truth. He disagrees with a platonic solution: Evil is the absence of truth (Socrates as the absence of knowledge). Or in other words, evil is ignorance of the Good<sup>(53)</sup>.

Badiou thinks that evil is identifiable as a form of multiple beings and it arises as to the (possible) effect of the Good itself Good<sup>(54)</sup>. In other words, it only exists because there are truths, and only to the extent that there are subjects of these truths, that it is Evil. So, if Evil exists is an unruly effect of the power of truth Good<sup>(55)</sup>. So, evil exists only within our terrain and thus as a possible dimension of a truth-process Good<sup>(56)</sup>.

Maybe Badiou somehow rejects the dominant idea of a consensual / a priori recognition of Evil. In 'Susan Wolf' notion of the moral saint<sup>(57)</sup>, we should go beyond the ethical despotism of good. But not hold the same idea. Evil is a category of not the human anima, but the

subject and it is Evil only to the extent that man is capable of becoming the Immortal he is Good<sup>(58)</sup>. Therefore, Badiou introduces the concept of the simulacrum to define Evil. Simulacrum, means: all the formal traits of truth are at work in the simulacrum Good<sup>(59)</sup>. So, the first definition of Evil is the process of a simulacrum of truth and under a name of its invention(creation), it is terror directed at everyone Good<sup>(60)</sup>.

Since there is no one form of worldliness. Because the world as we experienced it subject it to true and false judgments. Therefore, no world might be captive to the coherence of the Good. The world is and will remain beneath Good and Evil. The Good is Good only to the extent that it does not aspire to render the world good. Every absolutization of the power of a truth organizes an Evil Good<sup>(61)</sup>.

The general principle here is; evil in this case is to want at all costs and under the condition of a truth, to force the naming of the unnamable is exactly the principle of disaster Good<sup>(62)</sup>. So, according to Badiou, there are 3 figures of Evil:

- 1-Simulacrum (associated with the event)
- 2-Betrayal (associated with fidelity)
- 3-The forcing of unnamable (asso





-By nature, a human being has the potential to do good.

-A human being by nature has the potential to do evil. Therefore, evil is innate.

Which means that evil exists alongside good. In addition, evil will not be interpreted as historical truth<sup>(43)</sup>. Moreover, Kant thinks beyond the dominant view of pedagogues' that one claims that humans are by nature good, or are by nature evil. Human beings are neither evil nor good.

Kant was concerned about evil during the Lisbon earthquake (1755) as a philosophical subject like many other thinkers of his time<sup>(44)</sup>. He was engaged to think about evil in nature and distinguish it from evil from the ethical perspective, in an article he published in (1756) on the earthquake<sup>(45)</sup>.

Some raised a question: why does God allow such disasters and let humans suffer, while God is capable to prevent them? Kant's answer to such a question is that those type of question is beyond the philosophy domain. Because such a question is metaphysical and beyond human knowledge<sup>(46)</sup>. In the same manner, Kant believed that we could explain human behavior by relating them to the French revolution. Despite the fact, this revolution is important. The only way to explain and under-

stand human conduct is through the human reactions to such events, catastrophes, which provide the basis to understand<sup>(47)</sup>

### **-Badiou's approach:**

In this regard, another philosopher who can be helpful to understand evil is Badiou. His conception of evil is fundamental to understanding Evil especially. And the second step is that he tries to locate evil and good in human objectivity, agency, and freedom. But he confronts the evil issue from a philosophical perspective. In the first stage, he deconstructs the self-evident thought about the evil that presents itself as a kind of consensual representation of evil be demasked such view and dig down the roots in human structure<sup>(48)</sup>.

Badiou addresses evil from a historical and sociopolitical aspect, and defines it "as the interruption of a truth by the pressure of particular or individual interests"<sup>(49)</sup>. For him, truth is a name of good. In other words, "Evil is the moment when I lack the strength to be true to the Good that compels me". Because the concept of evil entirely depends on the events from which a subject constitutes itself<sup>(50)</sup>.

So, there is no general form of Evil. Evil does not exist except as a judgment made by a subject on



dom. The misuse of human freedom leads to evil. A human being is fallible, yet evil. Therefore, evil is neither original nor necessary, it is only always possible<sup>(35)</sup>.

A philosophical theory of evil focuses on many questions of meaning and value: the value of the concept of “evil”. When an action exceeds moral and when a person is evil? What is its intention or motivation? Is evil just a deed or institutions can also be evil? Are human beings potentially evil or just some of them are evil? Is suffering evil? Or is evil an inevitable aspect of the human condition? So, responses to some of these questions, make the theory of evil possible in philosophy<sup>(36)</sup>.

This means, that the theory of evil in philosophy is not merely a thought experiment or just as Descartes’s evil demon thought<sup>(37)</sup>. But, the reason for such a theory is to understand evil philosophically. Even evil is a theological concept, but we could speak of two philosophical paradigms: Kant and Badiou’s approach.

#### - Kant’s approach

Kant as a radical thinker provides a new perspective in analyzing the why and where of the source of evil. He opposes the dominant religious discourse by referring to evil as a radical in the human being and not

as something that exists separately from human conduct.

Doing evil is not a result of the manipulative power of the devil/extern factor outside ourselves. It is within ourselves. In this sense, Kant’s approach is against the religious conception of evil. We have to think about evil within our potentials, thought, and decisions we make. We should look for the roots and source of evil within our capacities to do, not outside.

The question that concerned Kant to think about evil was: where does evil come from? His answer is convenient. Because he relates evil as well as good to freedom<sup>(38)</sup>. Moreover, he thinks that evil is invisible and we recognize it only when it becomes a particular act<sup>(39)</sup>. The roots of evil, are immanent in human nature. But it does not mean that human beings are evil or good by nature<sup>(40)</sup>. In this sense, radical evil means the first cause and as a result of a cause. And it depends on the freedom of conduct and his or her judgments on how to behave<sup>(41)</sup>. Freedom to act is spontaneous and has to do with an actor’s choice. And therefore, the human being has the potential to do good or evil<sup>(42)</sup>. We can sum up Kant’s outlook in three points:

-A human being radically is free and autonomous.

what human beings do (action freely from free will, choices)<sup>(26)</sup>. So, doing evil is contrary to reason<sup>(27)</sup>.

The problem of evil is as old as human existence. It goes back to the prehistoric period. Especially, the roots of evil were projected in mythological narratives. The mythical narratives manifest evil in symbols by linking it to different events in life. According to “Manichaeism” dualism, the universe is the product of an ongoing battle between two coequal and coeternal first principles: God and the Principle of Darkness<sup>(28)</sup>. In this sense, there is a metaphysical idea about the structure of reality: how does reality contain good as well as evil? Is being a domain that everything coexists in asymmetric balance?

In other words, accepting evil as well as good is a part of existential truth. So, the main task of evil is to create a balance of being, existence. Since nothing exists for nothing, and every existence has a purpose in life<sup>(29)</sup>. It is a simple formula that tries to convince us that there is misery in life as there is goodness. And, ontologically it means, there is a necessary structure to the universe and some aspect of necessary to exist itself. Additionally, if reality is based on necessary being, why evil must be there?

Generally, there are two views

in philosophy about evil. The first one is skeptical which sees it problematic to perceive evil. Because it seems that evil about a supernatural metaphysical entity is not an object to grasp it. And also, the use of the concept of evil lacks explanatory power<sup>(30)</sup>. In addition, it is dangerous and harmful when the word evil is abused by political powers to label its enemy as evildoers. Therefore, we should dismiss all from politics as well as from ethics. It's not exactly clear what does it mean in usage. The second one is the revivalist view that evil is back and we should understand as a real there is life<sup>(31)</sup>.

But according to some philosophers like Ricoeur and Badiou, we see different explanations. For example, Ricoeur's evil is necessary (but not sufficient) condition of the possibility of the capacity of a creative agency. In another word, it's not a product of passivity<sup>(32)</sup>. Therefore, Ricoeur tries to find a link between evil and mythology which is manifested in the symbols. He focuses on the phenomenology of 'evil' as hypnotical, a posteriori human condition<sup>(33)</sup>. According to that, evil has been viewed as an aposteriori problem not an a priori, necessary condition of creative experience<sup>(34)</sup>. So, we can't understand evil without experience. To understand evil in experience, Ricoeur tackles free-

Arendt has failed in her judgment and damages the credibility of her own story<sup>(17)</sup>.

The standard idea of understanding evil is based on the way of perceiving the world. Historically, the ordinary definition of existence is rooted in the theological formula. It assumes that events, occur as a result of a logical consequence of the fundamental purposes. Maybe they call it God's will or logos. On the contrary, some consider evil as anomalies that cause irregularity in the life course. However, the main problem is not whether evil intrinsic or banal. In addition, it is not just a reactionary to the absurdity or banality of being.

For example, in Hegel's system what conforms to reason is good, therefore evil is the antithesis of it. Arendt's argument that evil is banal means that it does not need to be demonic. And Evil cannot be defined in a way that ensures we will recognize it<sup>(18)</sup>. Besides that, Evil is not located in the eye of the beholder, but it is a matter of sharp analysis not of general concepts but particular instances<sup>(19)</sup>. And Evils come in too many forms to confine<sup>(20)</sup>.

The concern is not about the abstract definition, but exploring what changes in our understanding of the problem of evil, reveal changes in our understanding of ourselves, our

place in the world<sup>(21)</sup>. Obviously, from the historical perspective, the meaning of evil from the Lisbon earthquake to Auschwitz has been changed<sup>(22)</sup>. Others think that evil is foreseeable intolerable harm produced by culpable wrongdoings. But from the psychological perspective, evil is distinguished from ordinary wrongs<sup>(23)</sup>. Evil tends to ruin lives or significant parts of lives. And having an evil character consists in being disposed to feel pleasure at the pain of others and vice-versa<sup>(24)</sup>.

Evil is not doubting a failure to actualize or exercise moral predisposition. To conclude Kant's account here, he makes evil intelligible in two ways, 1- by identifying the fundamental maxim of evil, and 2- by locating our propensity to evil within the context of our social condition and the natural teleology in its history<sup>(25)</sup>.

### **Toward of a Theory of Evil Paradigm**

The evil in question here is not the bad things that happen to people, the pain, grief, sorrow, injury, starvation, death, even? their feeling of violation and humiliation, those that think it falls under the category which Kant calls ill(ubel) or human happiness. Kant's concertation is not a theological problem of evil, instead, its evil (das Bose) refers to

old subjects in the history of philosophy. And it intertwines several areas like law, ethics, and religion. Philosophers and theologians have been struggling with a definition without reaching a final resolution. Because, 'Evil is a thick rope of many complexes, twisted, and intertwined strands. Any effort to comprehensively define evil is an impossible task, a fool's errand'<sup>(10)</sup>. Others, admit that the definition of 'Evil' is more problematic than it appears to us in reality. And according to philosophical dictionaries, there are two types of evil, the moral and the natural one<sup>(11)</sup>. There is also another description of evil: it is equivalent to bad<sup>(12)</sup>.

The rhetorical power of the term 'evil' dominates public discussions<sup>(13)</sup>. Even when we oppose its use, we often react with the very gut-instinct such notion is designed to activate. Some philosophers say that the notion of Evil is a category error. The conception of evil as the transgression of intrinsic moral order<sup>(14)</sup>. Evil is regarded as an ever-present temptation on the part of those who hold to any faith (secular or religious), a temptation to take revenge against the faith of others regarded as subversive or interior<sup>(15)</sup>.

On the contrary to what most people believe, evil is not a synonym of

badness. What we consider as good and bad on moral grounds and ethical justification, does not explain the evilness. Evil acquires dreadful and risky acts beyond the moral norms. Also, it is like overcoming all implemented boundaries by religion, culture, and law no matter how powerful they are. Cultural constraints cannot retain evil motivations roots. Just to agree with Kant, the notion of radical evil is within us immanent<sup>(16)</sup>.

In the mainstreams discourse, the word 'evil' is used as the opposite of 'morally good'. This discourse is based on a simple and constant dichotomy of good/evil. In this sense, evil is an antithesis of what is considered as good. But categorizing evil in this way is more overgeneralizing than a tangible definition. Going beyond the good or bad, and knowing or ignorance dichotomy is necessary. Because some acts are neither relevant nor wrong.

There is another attempt by the philosopher A. Rosenthal in her work, 'A Good Look at Evil', she draws a moral distinction between good and evil. In her view, we should first understand what is evil, and how we can recognize it. But more importantly, it is how can we resist it. In this sense, she rejects Arendt's conception of the banality of evil. Since Rosenthal argues that

Ricoeur, and Badiou. After that, I will discuss the problem of evil through concepts like the sense of Being, Contingency of Being, Fragility of Reason. I consider evil as a way of making sense of Being. As mankind strives for a sense in life to feel at home in this world, could we say that evil is an indicator of the sense of worldness?

### **Evil as a Rhetorical Device**

I claim here, that the primary task of philosophy is to analyze evil, not react to it politically. Evil is an ambiguous term and used in different ways to describe an act or behavior in many disciplines like psychology, sociology, criminology, etc. But, if we consider evil as a philosophical problem rather than as a purely political or a moral dilemma, is another challenge to our reason. While 'political problems demand political solution, philosophy can offer moral orientation that helps sort our reaction to them<sup>(8)</sup>.

Therefore, we could say, after 11 September, evil is brought back into philosophy and psychoanalytic theory. The impact of evil becomes more popularized and fashionable somehow. However, it's not the task of this paper to answer why evil has become a political brand or how it is used to label the political revivals on a global scale. Also, it does not focus on why evil is popular in an

age of digital media. Or it's not my goal to ask why; populism has links with evil and can be considered as a form of political evil?

It could be said, that populism is a political version of evil based on us/ others dichotomy. Therefore, evil has become a simplification brand of political identity and to regulate conflicts that face modern societies. Specially, we are going from a popularized hype evil in the media to populism as a political evil. As a result of that, demonizing others is very recognizable<sup>(9)</sup>.

Especially, in the terrorist attacks that shook western societies, evil was strictly associated with terror and violence. There is no doubt that terror is evil, but not all forms of evil are necessary terror (as Badiou state its terror of truth). My aim here is not to analyze evil as a purely metaphysical concept or theological one. My purpose is also not the social or political dimensions of evil or approaching it as an ethical dilemma. Additionally, describing evil in the natural, moral and political, or in a good and a bad or the banal and radical, or trivial or within us, are just dichotomies and binaries in the language. They shed light on one side of evil, not evil altogether?

### **The Ambivalent Definition**

The concept of evil is one of the

But historically evil is not a new subject in philosophy or theology. One of the characteristics of evil is its perennial aspect and 'has been a powerful mobilizer for centuries'<sup>(3)</sup>. It goes back to ancient philosophy among the Greeks as well as in the Eastern traditions, (for example in Lau Tzu) tradition. Traditionally evil was a theological matter and has been seen as the antithesis of God's Existence hypotheses (Inwagen). The famous word of Alfonso said; 'if I had been of God's counsel at the Creation, many things would have been ordered better'<sup>(4)</sup>. And many philosophers with theologians, have tried to answer the question: if God is beneficent and omnipotent, why does he allow to exist evil in the world?

In this sense, evil become the main and the dominant subject in metaphysics, as Levinas has asserted, that it's all about evil and nothing else: "The first metaphysical question is no longer Leibniz's question why is there something rather than nothing? But why is there evil rather than good? The ontological difference is preceded by the difference between good and evil. Difference itself is this later, it is the origin of the meaningful" <sup>(5)</sup>.

Evil also has religious roots; I do not talk about evil as a religious or pure theological issue. And, I do

not address evil from the behavioral or the psychological perspective. There are many works and literature on what is evil and why. For example, questions like whether evil is in the eye of the beholder or it a banal, as Arendt analyses it<sup>(6)</sup>, or radical evil as Kant name it<sup>(7)</sup>. Such theoretical analysis is fascinating to read, but does not add more explanation to the main question: why there is evil?

Above all, it is not about how to make an intellectual effort a sense of evil, but how can evil about making sense in the world to our being. However, this article claims a philosophical reconsideration of the concept and tries to give a new outlook and explain why evil can become one of the human motivations for searching for a sense of life.

To avoid any misunderstanding here, I am not talking about the real example of moral/political evil like ISIS or the Nazis, Covid-19, or any kinds of well-known evildoers. Also, I am not addressing what is called natural evil, like earthquake disasters or tsunamis. My analyses go beyond so-called political correctness or moral perfection. I will outline the concept of evil and only provide a redefinition of it. I will introduce some approaches that were made by philosophers such as Kant,

# Evil as an existential dilemma: Making Sense of Being beyond the moralistic view

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الشر ، الحس ، الوجود  
، الاحتمالية ، العقل

## المخلص

غالبًا ما يُنظر إلى الشر على أنه معضلة  
ميتافيزيقية أو قضية أخلاقية وسياسية واجتماعية.  
ولكن، هل يمكننا اتباع نهج مختلف لفهمه والتعامل  
معه كأنه مصدر للحس بالوجود؟ على الرغم  
من أن الشر من الناحية الأخلاقية، ليس "فعلًا"  
ذا مغزى، في حد ذاته، إلا يمكننا إيجاد رابطًا  
بين الشر و"الإحساس بالوجود". لذلك، من خلال  
اتباع نهج خارج الأخلاق، يتبين بأن الشر هو  
الإرادة "لفهم الوجود. لأن منشأ الشر كامن في  
الطبيعة البشرية (الشر الجذري في المنظور  
الكانطي)، فيمكن اعتباره كقضية وجودية. لذا  
فإن أسلوبنا في هذا البحث هو إضافة معنى للشر  
و اعتباره فعلًا ذا معنى. بعبارة أخرى، للشر  
مكانة وجودية. فطالما أن الإنسان يدرك ذلك،  
فإن السعي وراء الإحساس بالحياة ومعنى الوجود  
في العالم يمكن أن يكون دافعًا لفعل الشر. لأن  
المعنى، ليس إجراء تفسير للوجود بل فعل و صنع  
يرجع بالمعنى. وبالتالي، فإن تناول 'الشر' كعمل  
من صنع المعنى، يوفر اجوبة منتجة.

We feel that even if all possible  
scientific questions be answered,  
the problem of life have still not  
been touched at all. L. Wittgenstein

## Introduction

After 11 September, evil became  
a focal point in popular discourse<sup>(1)</sup>.  
It became a popular subject and  
covered the mass media as well as  
in the movie industry and the litera-  
ture. As a result of that, there are  
disputes in the political discourse  
about evil. It's not surprising that  
evil became a kind of label in the  
political debate. Labeling the reviv-  
als as evil, was a trend that served  
the political agenda<sup>(2)</sup>. Since then,  
the political debate become more  
dualistic.

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