

THE EXPERIENCE OF EVIL AND DISORDER ACCORDING SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

(*On Evil*, q. 1, aa. 1-2)

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Abstrak

Dalam kenyataan hidup sehari-sehari, kita semua sebagai manusia yang berada di dalam dunia yang fana ini, kita nyaris tidak dapat menghindari apa yang disebut dengan kejahatan. Lantas, pertanyaan mendasar yang dapat kita ajukan ialah apakah itu kejahatan? Mengapa ada kejahatan? Apa yang harus kita lakukan untuk menghindari kejahatan? Santo Thomas Aquinas, seorang Pujangga Gereja dari Ordo Dominikan menyatakan bahwa kejahatan adalah tiadanya atau kekurangan dari kebaikan. Jelas kejahatan bukanlah esensi atau hakekat dari ada. Akan tetapi kejahatan adalah sesuatu yang mengganggu, merugikan, dan menindas kehidupan manusia. Oleh sebab itu hanya melalui peristiwa Inkarnasi, Sengsara, Wafat dan Kebangkitan Kristus, kejahatan dapat dikalahkan.

Kata kunci: Kekurangan kebaikan, Allah, Yesus Kristus, Inkarnasi.

Abstract

In our daily life, we all as human beings who exist in this finite world, we almost cannot avoid what is called by evil. So, the fundamental question that we can pose is what is the evil anyway? Why is there evil? What must we do to avoid evil? Saint Thomas Aquinas, a Doctor of the Church from the Dominican Order states that evil is the absence of good or privation of good. Obviously evil is not an essence or substance of being. But, evil is something that disturbs, injures, and oppresses human life. For that reason only by the virtue Christ's Incarnation, Passion, Death, and His Resurrection, evil can be defeated.

Key Words: The absence of good, God, Jesus Christ, Incarnation.

PENDAHULUAN

Today, every man in this modern world cannot escape from reality of evil. All of nature being would not hinder *the experience of evil and disorder*. Probably, many people do not know what is the meaning of evil. Why does God allow evil? How could evil be so real, exist, and threaten our world? What is our strategy facing the reality of evil and its effects? Christian faith teaches that "God allows evil so that it can bring greater good for all human being and all creatures being." How can this doctrine of God's providence be explained for modern people? For this reason, this brief writing tries to answer the questions and it flows in the schema: Evil is Privation of Good That is Due, The Existence of Evil in the World, Evaluation and Reflection and Conclusion.

Evil as Privation of Good That is Due

We could consider evil. What is evil anyway? Whether evil exists? If God exists why does evil exist? Why does God allow evil? We say so; we can even doubt the existence of God. Saint Thomas Aquinas proposes the same question: whether God exist? He continues with an objection: "it seems that God does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would betogether destroyed. But the word 'God' means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, God exist, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore, God does not exist."

The angelic doctor answers the question without an abstract concept, but he starts from daily experience, which is called five ways of the existence of God. Among these five ways, the third way which is most important and so fascinating for our living world, namely, "contingency." Even this term sounds *philosophical*, but its related with possibility and necessary of every creature to bring us to consider "therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in other their necessity. This all men speak of as God." After that, the saint replies the objection with referring Augustine argument in his writing *Enchiridion*, chapter XI. Let us listen very carefully to his teaching: "Since God is the highest good, He would not allow any evil to exist in His works, unless His omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil. This is part of the infinite goodness of God, that He shouldallow evil to exist, and out of it produce good."

At the opening of treatise *On Evil*, Saint Thomas Aquinas asks: "is evil an entity? As an objection he refers to Dionysius, Damascene and Augustine statement that evil is like darkness. If darkness be contrary with light, evil is contrary with good and it's not merely privation of good." In the next objection, this saint cites the philosopher's argument in the *Physics*: "if a person goes from good to evil, the person is not changed from subject to a non-subject, nor from a non-subject to a subject, since such changes are passing away and coming to be. Therefore, the person is changed from subject to subject. And so evil is evidently something that positively exists."

Facing these objections, the theologian from Dominican order based on scripture that "*creatio ex nihilo*, God creates everything from nothing but God could never cause or create an evil. For that reason, Augustine say that evil is not an entity and only a lack of good. The apostlesays that without God everything is nothing. So that evil is nothing. Once again, evil is not an entity." This fascinating answer really convinces us but still remain question: what is evil origin? In his famous theological treatise *Summa Theology* underlines that "evil is not a nature or a good. It means evil only recognized from good. Because goodness is essence, purpose and finality every creatures being. So, evil is not a nature and it only signifies as the absence of good."

In the treatise *On Evil*, he maintains what is really evil? "We speak of evil in two ways, just as we do of white. For when we speak of white is one way, we can understand the subject that is white. In the second way, we call white what is white as such, namely, the very accidental quality. And we can similarly understand evil in one way as the subject that is evil, and the subject that is evil, and this subject as an entity. In the second way, we can understand evil itself, and evil sounderstood is the very privation of a particular good, not an entity." In other words, when we speak evil, it must be a distinct relation between the nature and its accidentals. Every nature is good, being good and toward good. It's different with accidentals, something which is added to nature that fundamentally is good. Thus, evil is accidental, not essential, and we call it as the absence or the lack or the privation of good.

Furthermore, there is relation between evil as *privation of good* and *carentia*. We give this explanation as follows: On the distinction between *privatio* (an absence of something due to you, such as sight) vs. *carentia* (an absence of something not due to you, such as wings). With the idea of freedom in mind, we note that it is the problem of thinking that everything is necessary which leads us to be shocked when we realize that Heaven is not a necessary conclusion of each person's life. The absence of Heaven in St. Thomas' works is an absence much like the ability to run 50 mph is an absence in a person.

In III Sent. d. 22, q. 2, a.1 and II Sent. d. 33, q. 2, a. 1, St. Thomas shows that the only punishment due to original sin alone is the deprivation of grace, and consequently of the Beatific vision. In other words, the only punishment is the lack (*carentia*) of these great gifts. Furthermore, St. Thomas' argument implies that Limbo must exist; otherwise, those who die only with original sin would be punished with pain of sense, even without personal fault, which is contrary to God's justice. St. Thomas argues here that original sin is not the removal of what is man's by right; God does not, by refusing to admit a man to Heaven, take away what is his by nature. Rather, he simply gives to that nature what is its due, depriving it only of grace, which is something which God Himself can add or not add over and above man's nature. More specifically, the distinction between *carentia* and *privatio* is found in II Sent. d. 30, q.1, a. 2.

To support the argument, Saint Thomas Aquinas proposes three points.

First, all creatures being has an origin, process, and finality. It is caused by *the first, the highest and universal efficient cause* and in the same time its unveiled *the first, highest, and universal good*. For examples an administrator of city wants to develop his city, this is called *particular good*. Otherwise, the king prefers to build many infrastructures for the welfare of all kingdom, namely, *universal good*. If we trace this reality, it reveals *the first universal efficient cause that acts as the first universal good*. The will of God is universal cause of all things, it is impossible that the divine will should not produce its effect, that is universal good for every thing. This first universal cause will effect *particular being*, so that *the first universal good produce particular good*. For that reasons there are no conflicts each other, all creatures being that exists can not be contrary with good. Therefore, evil as long as evil does not relate or require subject, evil is *privation of particular good, and evil not an entity*.

Second, since every nature is good, so that every creatures being that exist is good and in everything there is conformity and harmony with good. However, when everything goes to the condition or the state that *absence or deny or negation* of good, thus, which is called *privation of good*. The name of evil specifies its contrary with good, insofar evil itself, evil is privation of good. Evil itself is not a thing among other things. Indeed, it is impossible, if evil is a thing, it would desire nothing and would be desired by nothing.

Third, we find that the meaning of evil as privation of good is because everything especially all of creatures being is good and as soon as possible to avoid anything that tempts and brings us to *the absence, negation, and privation with good*. That's why evil is universally contrary to good. Its necessarily also contrary to existing. And what is contrary to existing cannot be an entity. And so I say that evil is not entity, but the subject that evil befall is, since evil is only privation of a particular good. For example, blindness itself is not an entity, but the subject that blindness befall is.

In *Summa Theology*, it states "to know a thing by something else only, belongs to imperfect knowledge, if that thing is of itself knowable; but evil is not itself knowable, forasmuch as the very nature of evil means the privation of good; therefore evil can neither be defined nor known except by good." We might be said that if universal goodness as primarily subject and every object that its has nature is good as primarily

object. "Since evil is not a thing or nature or entity, thus, evil is contrary and oppose with good, therefore, evil is secondarily object and indirectly."

However, this treatise *On Evil* gives certain positions to reply the objections: "Darkness is the privation, not the contrary, of light. But Aristotle often employs the term *contrary* to describe privation, since he himself says that privation is a contrary in one respect, and that the primary contrariety is between privation and possession of forms. At the advent of darkness, no light remains; there remains only potentiality for light, which potentiality is not a part of darkness but its subject. When human beings go from goodness of virtue to malice, there is a change for one quality to another."

The Existence Evil in the World

As already mentioned, we shall begin the other aspect of evil, namely, the existence of evil in the world. We need to examine "is there evil in Good?" There are two objections that is *evil can exist in good* or *evil can not be in good*.

First objection states "Dionysius says in his work *On the Divine Names* that evil is neither an existing thing nor in existing things. And he proves this as follows: every existing thing is good; there is no evil in good; therefore, is no evil in existing things. And so it plainly seems as if there is no evil in good."

Second objection concerns "people have said that evil is in an existing thing or good insofar as the thing is deficient, not insofar as it is existing or good. But every deficiency belongs to the nature of evil. Therefore, evil is in existing thing insofar as the thing is deficient, there is evil in the existing thing insofar as the existing in evil. Therefore, evil is presupposed in an existing thing in order that the thing can be the subject of evil, and the question about the evil that is its subject will come up again. And if the existing thing, insofar as it is deficient, is the subject of this evil, it will be necessary to presuppose another evil, and so on endlessly.

Therefore, we need to take the opposite position, namely, that evil, if it is an existing thing, is in it insofar as it is existing, nor insofar as it is deficient. And this is contrary to Dionysius." Responding those objections, the saint refers to Augustine's argument in *Enchiridion* argues that there is no evil except in good. This signifies that evil as privation of good limits its subject. Since every subject is good, being good, and toward good, there is no another reason, that implies that evil can be in good. For that reason, Saint Thomas Aquinas gives three causes or evident that evil can be exist in good.

First cause, he makes references to *Platonists, Aristotle and Pseudo- Dionysius* that every creatures being is good, from *potentiality in actuality*, its purpose and finality is good. Its essence, origin, purpose and finality is good. It is called by absolutely good, there is no evil at all, because since evil is not entity, evil contrary with good, evil is privation of good.

Second cause, evidently in reality, especially in our experience life, there are some people lives in good virtues. They have faith, prayer regularly, participation in Sacraments, i.e. Eucharist and Confession, active member of faithful community, and act charity. It is called by particular good. Obviously, if there some people doing good works, probably some people doing contrary with particular good.

Third cause, we could call the subject or creatures being who is good in

potentiality. It's subject being good and toward good. In that states, its subject being good achieve to the purpose and finality is good. In the same thing, in potentiality too, there is evil insofar not an entity, contrary with good, and privation of good. In other words, in potentiality, there are exist both either good and evil. Therefore, evil can be in good.

After knowing that evil can be in good, we would describe its process. Saint Thomas Aquinas says that there are process how the movements of good change into evil. In *Summa Theology* state: In the first place, therefore, good causes, in the appetitive power, a certain inclination, aptitude or connaturalness in respect of good: and this belongs to the passion of 'love': the corresponding contrary of which is 'hatred' in respect of evil. Secondly, if the good be not yet possessed, it causes in the appetite a movement towards the attainment of the good beloved: and this belongs to the passion of 'desire' or 'concupiscence': and contrary to it, in respect of evil, is the passion of 'aversion' or 'dislike.' Thirdly, when the good is obtained, it causes the appetite to rest, as it were, in the good obtained: and this belongs to the passion of 'delight' or 'joy'; the contrary of which, in respect of evil, is 'sorrow' or 'sadness'. . . inclination to seek good, or to shun evil, is presupposed as arising from the concupiscible faculty, which regards good or evil absolutely. And in respect of good not yet obtained, we have 'hope' and 'despair.' In respect of evil not yet present we have 'fear' and 'daring' . . . But evil already present gives rise to the passion of 'anger.'

How can we react to the tendencies of evil? What shall we do? The angelic doctor gives an effective treatment. He writes: The wise man seeks only that which is useful. But according to Eccles. 7:5, 'the heart of the wise is where there is mourning, and the heart of fools where there is mirth.' Therefore, sorrow is useful. A twofold movement of the appetite ensues from a present evil. One is that whereby the appetite is opposed to the present evil; and, in this respect, sorrow is of no use; because that which is present, cannot be not present. The other movement arises in the appetite to the effect of avoiding or expelling the saddening evil: and, in this respect, sorrow is of use, if it be for something which ought to be avoided. Because there are two reasons for which it may be right to avoid a thing. First, because it should be avoided in itself, on account of its being contrary to good; for instance, sin. Wherefore sorrow for sin is useful as inducing a man to avoid sin: hence the Apostle says (2 Cor. 7:9): 'I am glad: not because you were made sorrowful, but because you were made sorrowful unto penance.' Secondly, a thing is to be avoided, not as though it were evil in itself, but because it is an occasion of evil; either through one's being attached to it, and loving it too much, or through one's being thrown headlong thereby into an evil, as is evident in the case of temporal goods. And, in this respect, sorrow for temporal goods may be useful; according to Eccles. 7:3: 'It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting: for in that we are put in mind of the end of all.' Moreover, sorrow for that which ought to be avoided is always useful, since it adds another motive for avoiding it. Because the very evil is in itself a thing to be avoided: while everyone avoids sorrow for its own sake, just as everyone seeks the good, and pleasure in the good. Therefore just as pleasure in the good makes one seek the good more earnestly, so sorrow for evil makes one avoid evil more eagerly.

What's next? Is it enough to avoid evil, which can be in good? According to

Saint Thomas Aquinas, we would deal with *providence of God*. What is the meaning of that terms? In his famous treatise *Summa Theology*, the word providence of God maintains that God is *universal efficient cause* that creating all nature being or everything that exist from nothing, without matters or divine essence rival at all. His acts reveal *universal good* for every nature being. Thus, all creatures are good, being in good, toward good. Therefore, its purpose, finality, and last end are in *divine goodness*. In other words, before all eternity, everything comes from *God's eternal reason* and all creatures being *called by him* into existence from his eternal Word and the power of Holy Spirit. Every nature goes toward good, is not only in this world, but until "its final and last end, namely eternal life or universal divine goodness."

However, in potentiality, there are good and evil, and in some particular good, possibly there is evil, but evil is not entity, and contrary with good, *privation of good*, require subject. Because of that, there are two parts in human faculty its must be directed to good, to God, to eternal life or eternal happiness: "remembrance of the past, and understanding of the present; inasmuch as from the remembrance of what is past and the understanding of what is present, we gather how to provide for the future." It is known as "anticipation" with this virtue we can learn the meaning of life from the past, act wisely according to circumstances in the present and finally in the future, we could have the fulfilment of life. Concretely and practically, we can begin to "look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion and to embrace the future with hope."

It is not intend that the providence of God something that has characterize formalization and determination, but it expresses living dynamic process. The providence of God is not preserve in general but in all everything events, all circumstances reality and all individual. It will organize from good, being good, and goes to the good as the purpose and finality. And then its arrives to last end, namely, eternal divine goodness, that is God Himself. This angelic doctor maintains the important and necessary *providence of God*: Since God, then, provides universally for all being, it belongs to His providence to permit certain defects in particular effects, that the perfect good of the universe may not be hindered, for if all evil were prevented, much good would be absent from the universe. A lion would cease to live, if there were no slaying of animals; and there would be no patience of martyrs if there were no tyrannical persecution. Thus Augustine says (Enchiridion 2): 'Almighty God would in no wise permit evil to exist in His works, unless He were so almighty and so good as to produce good even from evil.'

In another treatise which is titled *Compendium of Theology*, this saint provides the meaning of providence of God logically, clearly and meaningfully. To acquire precise understanding the doctrine of Dominican theologian, we give the whole text: But it is not repugnant to God's goodness that he permits evil to be in things governed by him.

First, this is true because it belongs to providence to preserve, not to lose, the nature of things governed. But the perfection of the universe requires that there be some things in which evil cannot happen and other things than can by their nature suffer the defect of evil. Therefore, if divine providence were to exclude completely from things, their nature would not govern them and this would be a greater defect than the individual defects that would be taken away.

Second, this is true because the good of one thing sometimes cannot happen

without the evil of another thing. For example, we observe that there is no coming to be of one thing without the passing away of another thing, that the lion is not nourished without the killing of another animal, and that there is no patience of the just without persecution by the unjust. Therefore, if evil were to be completely excluded from things, it would follow that many good things would also be taken away. Therefore, it belongs to divine providence to ordain that evil things result in some good, not to exclude evil completely from things.

Third, this is true because particular evil things order the good things more commendable when the latter are compared to the former. Just so, the darkness of black makes the brilliance of white more manifest. And so the fact that evils are permitted to be in the world manifests more clearly the divine goodness in good things and the divine wisdom in ordering evil things to good things.

Evaluation and Reflection

Actually, it is not easy to understand Saint Thomas Aquinas' teaching on evil. In one side, from my philosophical and theological education as one of the requirements to achieve priesthood ordination, we were not studied the philosophy and theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas in strict sense and in a widely-length comprehension. Rather, we often study and learn contemporaries' philosophy and theology. It is rarely, we approach and understanding even interpreting Saint Thomas Aquinas' doctrine.

However, in other side, when we continue our study in dogmatic session at Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Rome, Italy, it is a good opportunity for beginning to study and understand the synthesis philosophical and theological of this saints. Mainly, we find that these are newness, comprehensible, and powerful foundation of philosophical and theological from him. We think that the angelic doctor's teaching has purified, healed and transformed postmodern philosophical and theological approach either the methodology or its contents itself. Returning to our topic, namely, the experience of evil and disorder according Saint Thomas Aquinas On Evil, q. 1, aa. 1-2, evil is not a symbol, evil is not only a myth, nor is not subjective experience, which emphasized defilement, sin and guilt. These are misconception interpretation of evil in modern world. Since modern methodology no longer referring to the unity of Bible as criterion for its interpretation and Christology as criterion. Otherwise, evil is defective and destructive power that threatened human being. Following this points, Pope Paul VI states directly for all human kind either as Christian faithful or everyone who has good will. He says: "... that it was the intervention of an opposing power. His name is the devil, this mysterious being which also alludes in St. Peter's Letter. So many times, on the other hand, in the Gospel, on the lips of Christ, returns the mention of this enemy of mankind. '... into something preternatural came into the world precisely to disturb, to suffocate the fruits of the Ecumenical Council and to prevent the goodness Church hymn of joy at having regained full consciousness." Later, in audience on 15th November 1972, Pope Paul VI states "what are the greatest needs of the Church today? will not astonish as simplistic, or even as superstitious and unreal our answer: one of the major needs is defense from that evil we call the Devil . . . Evil is no longer only a deficiency, but an efficiency, a living, spiritual, perverted and perverting. Terrible reality. Mysterious and frightening."

At the end of this part, we would emphasize Saint Thomas Aquinas position regarding metaphysical of evil. Jacques Maritain in his short books Saint Thomas and

Problem of evil writes: Evil is neither an essence not a nature nor a form nor an act of being – evil is an absence being; it is not a mere negation, but a privation: the privation of good that should be in a thing. That does not mean that evil does not exist, or is merely an illusion, or that we need only deny its existence, as do the Christian Scientist, to make it disappear. Evil does exist in things, it is terribly present in them. Evil is real, it actually exists like a wound or mutilation of the being; evil is there in all reality, whenever a thing – which, insofar as it is, and has being, is good, - is deprived of some being or of some good it should have. Thus evil exist in good, that is, the bearer of evil is good, insofar as it is being. And evil works through good, since evil, being in itself a privation or non- being, has no causality of its own. Evil is therefore efficacious not by itself through the good it wounds and preys upon a parasite, efficacious through a good that is wanting or is deflected, and whose action is to what extent vitiated. What is thus the power of evil? It is the very power of the good that evil wounds and preys upon. The more powerful this good is, the more powerful evil will be, - not by virtue of itself, but by virtue of this good. That is why no evil is more powerful than that of the fallen angel.

Therefore, there is no one can stop evil. Every attempt from creatures being is useless. It needs great power to defeat evil. Only God can save us through incarnation, the passion of Christ and resurrection. It means “the motive of the Incarnation is Redemption; it is to redeem sinful man. But why, in the doctrine of Saint Thomas Aquinas, did God permit the sin of Adam, if not for Christ, for the Incarnation and for redemptive grace? And then one could say that just as the sin of Adam was permitted for the sake of the redeeming Incarnation, so freedom that can err was created for the love of charity between God and nature.”

This is the key for the problem of evil, “the classical response, articulated by Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas and an army for their followers, is that God permits evil so as to bring about a greater good.” The answer for the problem of evil is love. “Love is: also the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering. This answer has been given by God to man in the cross of Jesus Christ.” It means that when happens *the fall or corruption* to the goodness or to the all nature being *that is good, being good, and toward good*, this is price of glory of God.

The creatures’ liability to sin is thus the price paid for the outpouring of creative Goodness, which in order to *give itself personally* to the extent that it transforms into itself something other than itself, must be *freely loved with friendship’s love and communion*, and which to be freely loved with friendship’s love and communion must create free creatures and which in order to create them *fallibly free*. Without fallibly freedom there can be no created freedom; without created freedom there can be no love in mutual friendship between God and creatures; without love in mutual friendship between God and creatures, there can be no supernatural transformation of the creature into God, no entering of the creatures into the joy of his Lord. Sin and evil is the price of glory.

SIMPULAN

Finally, we can conclude or summarize the essays concerning experience of evil and disorder according Saint Thomas Aquinas *On Evil*, q. 1, aa. 1-2. Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches that evil neither nature or essence and contrary with good. Actually, evil is the absence of good, namely, *privation of good that is due*.

Evil is not an abstract concept or superficial things, but evil is *active, real and exist in some good or thing*. Basically, evil can exist in good. For the reason, everyman or creatures being needs God's salvation. The answer for the problem of evil is love. Love is the redeeming incarnation in the whole mystery of Jesus Christ for all human being and creation. Only God's love, they can be saved from evil and sin. Consequently, evil and sin as the price of God's glory in the history of salvation, when God save all human being and creation in the events of *incarnation, passion of Christ and resurrection*.

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