



## The Problem of Evil in the Theory of Dualism

Paul Siwek

---

Volume 11, numéro 1, 1955

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019914ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019914ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

---

Éditeur(s)

Laval théologique et philosophique, Université Laval

ISSN

0023-9054 (imprimé)

1703-8804 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

---

Citer cet article

Siwek, P. (1955). The Problem of Evil in the Theory of Dualism. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 11(1), 67–80. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019914ar>

## The Problem of Evil in the Theory of Dualism

---

1. The Ancients, Plutarch tells us, generally believed that the world was governed by two contrary principles, two rival powers. This explains the mixture of good and evil in human life and the sublunary world in general, the inequalities and the vicissitudes. For if nothing happens without a cause, and no good can produce evil, there must be, they said, in Nature a particular principle that is the author of Evil and another that is the author of Good. The principle of Evil is Pluto, the principle of Good, Jupiter.<sup>1</sup>

Some traces of dualism are also seen in Greek philosophy. The terms used by Empedocles, for example, for the two supreme principles that he had admitted as explaining the world, are very significant. Love is called *ἀμεμψής* (blameless) and *ἐπίφρων* (gentle, tender).<sup>2</sup> Discord or Hatred is characterized as *λυγρόν* (sad), *μαινόμενον* (furious), *οὐλόμενον* (pernicious).<sup>3</sup> For Aristotle the opposition between Love and Hatred is the same as between Good and Evil.<sup>4</sup>

These two principles were, for Empedocles, equally real. Anaxagoras called the principle of Good, Intelligence, that of Evil, Infinity, notes Plutarch.<sup>5</sup> As to the Pythagoreans, they had "a great number of terms of which they made use to express the contrary nature of these two principles: thus the Good is called by them the unit, the definite, the fixed, the straight, the odd, the square, the equal, the dextrous, and the lucid, whilst to the Evil, on the contrary, they give the appellation of the duad, the infinite, the movable, the crooked, the even, the oblong, the unequal, the sinister, and the dark."<sup>6</sup>

"Plato," remarks Plutarch, "generally tries to hide his doctrine. It is for this reason that he often calls the principle of Good Unchanged Being and that of Evil the Changeable Being. Nevertheless in his book the *Laws* which he composed at an advanced age, he expressly says that the world is not directed by one soul alone; there are perhaps a great number of souls, but at least two, one of which produces Good, and the other, opposed to this one, is the cause of Evil."<sup>7</sup>

---

1. PLUTARCH, *Περὶ Ἰσίδος καὶ Ὀσίριδος*, ch. XIV, ed. Didot, T. I, p. 451.

2. H. DIELS, *Vorsokratiker*, 21 B 35.

3. *Ibid.*, 21 B 109, 115, 17.

4. See *Metaph.*, A, 4, 984 b 32 - 985 a 9; *De Gener. et Corrupt.* B, 6, 333 b 20.

5. *Ibid.*, ch. XLVIII.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

The assertion of Plutarch cannot be denied. It can only be completed. At the beginning Plato taught that the origin of Evil that we find in the sensible world is an element which one can compare with the matter which a workman uses in his productions ;<sup>1</sup> this element is without any shape and deprived of any qualities but is capable of receiving different qualities ;<sup>2</sup> it is invisible in itself but it is present in all things of which it is " a plastic mass," the " nurse," and finally the " mother " ; and it is the refuge of all things that have come into existence.<sup>3</sup>

Before the creation of the world, matter<sup>4</sup> existed in a state of irregular movement. It is only when the Demiurge — the mythological image of Intelligence — had produced the Soul of the world that an admirable order was introduced into this chaos, an order similar to that which is the effect of the individual soul in the living organism.

The origin of Evil must be sought precisely in this matter. " God is essentially good — we read in the *Republic*<sup>5</sup> — and nothing that is good is likely to injure." It is for this reason that He cannot be the cause of Evil. This must exist elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> Where? The answer to this question is to be found in the *Politics*. Whatever the world has of beauty comes from Him who introduced order (The Demiurge). Evil, suffering, injustice come from the world's " anterior state " governed by the blind forces of matter.<sup>7</sup>

In the last phase of his philosophy, Plato attributes, probably under oriental (Persian) influence, the origin of Evil to a bad soul. In fact, we read in the *Laws* : " Must we not admit that the soul is the principle of Good and Evil? . . . Is this soul unique or are there several souls? I answer that there is more than one. Let us not admit less than two, one the good soul, and the other a soul which has the power of doing Evil." <sup>8</sup> And finally in the *Epinomis* or the *Philosopher*, Plato expressly says : " the tendency and the movement towards Good comes from the good soul, and on the contrary, the movement towards Evil comes from the bad soul." <sup>9</sup> We should not then be astonished that Aristotle puts Plato among the dualists. " Plato," he says, " admits two elements . . . He assigns to one the cause of Good, and to the other that of Evil. And some former

1. See *Timaëus*, ch.18-19, 48 E-53 C.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. It is ARISTOTLE who has so named this element.

5. Lib.II, 379, ed. Didot, T.II, p.37.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Ch. 16, 276, ed. Didot, T.I, p.586.

8. Lib.X, 896.

9. T.II, p.513.

philosophers, e.g., Empedocles and Anaxagoras, had already taught this." <sup>1</sup>

Neo-Platonism, so to speak, does nothing but develop the ideas of Plato. The existence of Evil implies change, multiplicity, division. For this reason it is conceivable only in the phenomenal world. And its first source is matter, the principle of all change, multiplicity, and division. Evil in souls has the same origin. It comes from matter through the intermediary of our body.

2. The classical form of dualism, however, is best found in Zoroastrism <sup>2</sup> and Manichaeism. It is for this reason that they merit our special attention.

The point of departure of the system of Zoroaster is the idea of Evil. Evil is a reality *sui generis*, and positive. It exists by virtue of its own essence which radiates through the universe through the intermediary of its action. It is as primitive as Good. But it by no means depends upon Good. Good and Evil are two notions irreducible one to the other. Moreover they are antagonistic.

This antagonism is clearly expressed in the *Gathas*. The sacred books of a later date merely emphasize that fact. In the Pahlavi period this theory attains its climax. Evil, as well as every reality of the world, must be created. Who is its Creator? God? By no means. Indeed, if God could do anything evil, He would not be entirely good. But what kind of a God is a God who is not entirely good, a God partly good, and partly bad? Certainly, it is not to such a God that we address our prayers and offer our sacrifices.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, a God who would be partly good and partly bad, would carry in His essence a division which would compromise His unity.<sup>4</sup> No. God can only be entirely good. But being so, He cannot will Evil.<sup>5</sup>

Let us not say that God produces certain evils without willing it. Because then God would be comparable to a machine. But as a

1. *Metaph.* I, 6, 988 a 7-16.

2. Certain Greek authors who were approximately contemporaneous with the later AVESTA characterized Zoroastrism as a belief in two rival spirits. According to DIOG. LAERT., EUDOXUS and ARISTOTLE have consecrated special studies to these two spirits who for them were confused with Zeus and Hades. They called them Ὁρομάζης and Ἀρεϊμάνιος (DIOG. LAERT., *Prooem.* 6, 8, cf. also PLUTARCH, *Περὶ Ἰσίδος καὶ Ὀσίριδος* ch. 46). ARISTOXENUS tells us that for Zoroastrism the first principle was Light, or the Father, the second, Darkness, or the Mother (see HIPPOLYTUS, *Refut. Haeresium*, I, 2). PLUTARCH communicates to us interesting details about the respective creations of the two principles, as well as about the beginning, the vicissitudes, and the end of their war (*Op. cit.*, 46, 47).

3. *Sg.* 11, 103-111 ; 280-284, 315.

4. *Sg.* 11, 225-226 ; 239-244.

5. *Sg.* 11, 339-342 ; *Zsp.* 1, 17.

machine never comes into existence by itself — it is always produced by a mechanic — God would owe His existence to some exterior cause.<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid this consequence we must hold that God does nothing without willing it. Thus we come back to the former difficulty, because the will of God can never be inclined to Evil. Indeed, such a will would be imperfect. Now an imperfect will would render God imperfect. And so the conclusion is imposed on us : Evil cannot come from God.

In order to make the existence of Evil agree with the Goodness of God, an apologist of Zoroastrism tells us, some refer to the finality of Evil : God, they teach, produces Evil in order that we should better understand the value of good : He created poverty, pain, and death to make us better appreciate riches, health and life.<sup>2</sup> The apologist qualifies this reasoning as foolish. It is equivalent, according to him, to saying that God gives poison to men in order to make them better appreciate the antidote.<sup>3</sup>

God cannot produce Evil, the apologist of Zoroastrism further demonstrates, through Wisdom and Holiness which, as all admit, constitute the essential attributes of God. Indeed, knowing all, God sees in detail all the consequences of Evil for His creatures as well as all the means capable of defending them against them.<sup>4</sup> Now, being full of Pity, how could He neglect to do this?<sup>5</sup> Men do not permit the lion and the wolf to approach their children. Would God act otherwise towards His own creatures?<sup>6</sup>

The Omnipotence of God furnishes the last argument in favor of the thesis of the apologist mentioned. He often comes back to it and with particular satisfaction. If God does anything evil, He has lost His Omnipotence. Certain people think, he adds, to justify the Omnipotence of God by remarking that the misfortunes of life (illness and other Evils) make us practice virtues, win merits and obtain eternal happiness. But how can we understand an Omnipotence which, to do us good, must first do us harm?<sup>7</sup> So in whatever way one considers God, one sees that He cannot, by any means, produce Evil. This must then have its origin in another Being.

In the *Gathas* this Being bears the name of Angra Mainyu-Enemy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> Later he appears under the name of Ahriman (Ahreman,

1. *Sg.* 164-167.

2. *Sg.* 125-132.

3. *Sg.* 11, 197-204.

4. *Sg.* 11, 310, 314, 317.

5. *Sg.* 11, 299.

6. *Sg.* 11, 13 ; 8, 111-114.

7. *Sg.* 11, 257 ; See *ibid.* 149-154.

8. This name occurs only once in the *Gathas*. More often we find the adjective "aka" (wicked), "acista" (very wicked) in the place of Angra. It is only in the later AVESTA that this name occurs more frequently.

Ahrman).<sup>1</sup> He is wicked,<sup>2</sup> "ignoble,"<sup>3</sup> "deprived of any goodness,"<sup>4</sup> "the first cause of Evil in the world,"<sup>5</sup> "full of death,"<sup>6</sup> "of a bad creation,"<sup>7</sup> "of a bad religion,"<sup>8</sup> "a liar,"<sup>9</sup> "a tyrant,"<sup>10</sup> "a malefactor,"<sup>11</sup> "the prince of demons,"<sup>12</sup> With all his cunning, he is "limited in his knowledge"<sup>13</sup>: thus, for example, he does not know the future, nor in particular his final defeat.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, before he went out from his dark abyss — Hell — he had no idea of the existence of God, Ahura Mazda.<sup>15</sup> So "ignorant" and "stupid"<sup>16</sup> is he.

Ahriman is not a simple personification. He is a real thing. If, however, nobody can see him — not even the demons in Hell — it is only because he is of a spiritual nature.<sup>17</sup> He owes his existence only to himself.<sup>18</sup> The sacred books of Zoroastrism try to show that he could not be created by Ahura Mazda. Indeed, the latter is a supremely wise being. As such, He does nothing without a determined end.<sup>19</sup> Now what end could he have pursued in giving existence to his own implacable adversary? To create for himself perpetual annoyances and grief?<sup>20</sup> Or to "experiment," as they say, with men? Being supremely wise, he could not ignore the result of this disastrous experiment!<sup>21</sup> Or are we to say that Ahriman, as created by Ahura Mazda, was originally good, but that he became bad by his own fault? This suggestion is unacceptable. Because we should be obliged to admit that Ahriman possesses a stronger will than Ahura Mazda, since he would have succeeded in breaking the commandment

---

1. This name was translated in Greek: Ἀρειμάνιος.

2. *Vd.* 11, 10; *Yt.* 17, 19.

3. *Yt.* 23, 43.

4. *Zsp.* I, 17 L.

5. *Dk.* vol. 5, pp. 324-325.

6. *Ys.* 61, 2; *Yt.* 3, 13; 13, 71.

7. *Ys.* 3, 13.

8. *W. Fr.* 4, 2.

9. *Yt.* 3, 13; *Y.* 30, 5.

10. *Vd.* 19, 3.

11. *Yt.* 19, 97.

12. *Vd.* 19, 1; 1, 43.

13. *Bd.* 1, 16.

14. *Dk.* 4, 258.

15. *Bd.* I, 1, 3, 9; *Zsp.* I, 2.

16. *Bd.* I, 19; *Dk.* 5, 324; 8, 445.

17. *Dd.* 19, 1, 2, 5.

18. *Dk.* 11, 6. 601.

19. *Sg.* 11, 103-105.

20. *Sg.* 11, 85-94; 11, 13.

21. *Sg.* 115-117.

of Ahura Mazda, and in introducing into the world more Evil than there is Good.<sup>1</sup>

Ahura Mazda, foreseeing that Ahriman would one day be inclined to do Evil to his creatures, wished to make a contract with him ; he proposed to him an honorable peace.<sup>2</sup> But Ahriman, believing that this proposition was due to the weakness of Ahura Mazda, rejected it, and announced that he would never cease destroying good men.<sup>3</sup> He has kept his word. He always tries to lead humanity into error and sin ;<sup>4</sup> he sends men all kinds of diseases,<sup>5</sup> deformities<sup>6</sup> and death ;<sup>7</sup> he creates Evil beings : snakes, scorpions, lizards and so on ;<sup>8</sup> he raises tempests and cyclones, creates plagues and famines ;<sup>9</sup> he gives existence to certain Evil spirits whose business is to paralyze the efforts of the good spirits created by Ahura Mazda ;<sup>10</sup> he corrupts good creatures by adding to them certain bad qualities ; it is in this way that plants have received thorns, bark, poison and so forth.<sup>11</sup>

This is, in outline, Zoroastrian dualism. It is formally expressed in this memorable passage of the *Gathas* : " I am going to speak to you — Zarathustra says — of two spirits who existed from the beginning of the world. One, the most holy, said to his enemy : Our thoughts, our teaching, our wills, our beliefs, our world, our actions, our consciences, our souls do not agree." <sup>12</sup>

So Ahura Mazda and Ahriman existed from the very beginning. They are equally primitive. It is for this reason that they are called " twins " <sup>13</sup> in the *Gathas*. They do not owe their existence to a

---

1. *Sg.* 51, 95-97 ; 36, 343 ; 11, 97.

2. *Bd.* I, 13. Ahriman was invited to help good men, and for this end Ahura Mazda would have made him immortal and would have delivered him forever from all hunger and thirst (*Ibid.*).

3. *Sg.* 4, 12 ; *Bd.* i, 14.

4. *Bd.* 1, 24.

5. *Vd.* 20, 3 ; 22, 2, 9, 15.

6. *Vd.* 2, 29, 37.

7. *Y.* 30, 4 ; *Bd.* 3, 17 ; *Dd.* 37, 72, 81.

8. *Bd.* 3, 15 ; *Zsp.* 2, 9.

9. *Vd. Tangard* I.

10. *Yt.* 15, 13, 43.

11. *Bd.* 3, 16 ; 27, 1.

12. *Ys.* 45, 2.

13. This expression has given material to different interpretations. According to the Zarwanism, Ahura Mazda and Ahriman are two brothers. Their common father would have been the god Zurvan akarana, Unlimited Time. But this interpretation does not merit any credence. It is contrary to the primitive teaching of Zarathustra for whom the two first principles are " without beginning " (*paourya*), are really " the first." Moreover, we know how little Zarwanism cares for orthodoxy. The developments which it gives to certain dogmas are plainly in contradiction with the ideas of the Founder. For this reason it has been called a " zoroastrian heresy."



creative act ; they exist by virtue of their own essence. They both have creative power. They exercise the supreme rights of master, each one in his own empire.

3. Let us pass on now to Manichaeism. Its philosophical system is well known not only through the authors of antiquity, especially Saint Augustine,<sup>1</sup> but also through many fragments discovered in the Chinese Turkestan (the region of Turfan)<sup>2</sup> and through the papyrus found in the ruins of Medinet Madi in Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

The Manichaean system owes its origin to the syncretism of three religions : Christianity, Zoroastrism and Buddhism. Manes himself expressly says that Jesus, Zoroaster and Buddha were his "precursors," his three brothers, the interpreters of the same Wisdom. He announces himself as the Paraclete whose advent had been predicted by Jesus Christ.

But let us go directly to the problem of evil. Manes solves it by means of dualism which he finds not only in Zoroastrism but also in Christianity. In the second chapter of the work *Kephalaia* there is a discourse of the Master with his Disciples under the title "the parable on the tree" which begins thus : "We pray you, our Lord, to reveal to us, to teach us the meaning of the two trees of which Jesus Christ spoke to his disciples : the good tree gives good fruit ; the bad tree gives bad fruit. There is no good tree which gives bad fruit, nor any bad tree which gives good fruit."

But it is in Zoroastrism that Manes found the principal elements of his solution of the problem of Evil. Let us sum it up in a few words. There exist, from eternity, two Principles : Light and Darkness. The former is the synonym of the Spirit and of Good. He bears the name of God. Darkness is identical with Matter (*ϑλη*), and is a demon (*δαίμων*).<sup>4</sup>

Before the creation of this world, the two Principles were entirely separated from one another. Light was in the upper regions, Obscurity occupied the lower regions. In this manner the two kingdoms

1. See in particular *De moribus Ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*, libri II, P. L. 32, 1309 sq. ; *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, libri II, P. L. 34, 173 sq. ; *De duabus Animabus contra Manichaeos*, liber unus, P. L. 42, 93 sq. ; *Acta seu Disputatio contra Fortunatum Manichaeum*, liber unus, P. L. 42, 111 sq. ; *Contra Epistolam Manichaei quam vocant fundamentalem*, liber unus, P. L. 42, 173-206 ; *Contra Adimantum Manichaei discipulum*, liber unus, P. L. 42, 129-173 ; *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, libri triginta tres, P. L. 42, 208-518.

2. See C. SCHMIDT, *Neue Originalquellen des Manichäismus*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1933 ; H.-Ch. PUECH, *Le Manichéisme*, Paris, Civilisation du Sud, 1949.

3. They were transcribed in a coptic dialect of Assiout probably between 350 and 400 A. D., about a hundred years after the death of MANES. It is for this reason that they show us Manichaeism in its primitive epoch.

4. Certain Manichaeists also called him God. See SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, libri triginta tres, Lib. XXI, c.1, P. L. 42, 388-389.



were completely independent each in its own sphere. They were both infinite. Nevertheless they touched each other on an unlimited surface which constituted their common "frontier."

The kingdom of Light was governed by "the good Master" who has various names or "faces": Light, God, Power and Wisdom. The kingdom of Darkness was subject to a Prince of satanic nature. He reminds us especially of the zoroastrian Ahriman. In the Pahlavi texts of Manichaeism he is identical with him.

During "the first epoch," these two kingdoms lived in perfect peace with one another. This peace was disturbed when Darkness succeeded in piercing "the frontier" and invading the kingdom of Light. The war which then broke out between the two kingdoms has lasted until today. This is "the second epoch" of history.

In order to repel the attack of the dark forces "God the Father" evoked<sup>1</sup> two spiritual Beings: first, the Mother of Light, and then Primitive Man. The latter is, however, not to be confused with Adam. He is rather the "celestial prototype" of Adam, a kind of *Πρώτος ἄνθρωπος* who appears in certain Gnostic speculations. He is consubstantial with God the Father, and so of a divine nature. However, he does not proceed from him by means of generation, for that, according to Manichaeism, would be degrading.

Being armed with five elements of the kingdom of Light<sup>2</sup> (which were "evoked" by himself and are considered as his sons), he was hurled against the forces of darkness. But he was conquered and remained unconscious on the field of battle. When he recovered he asked God the Father to help him. The latter then "evoked" other luminous beings. One of them, the Friend of Light, delivered the prisoner, and the other, the Living Spirit, helped the Mother of Life to carry him to celestial heights.

But the prisoner had lost the five luminous elements in his battle with the dark forces. These elements were "swallowed" by them and mixed up with Darkness.

In order to deliver these elements, God the Father produced the visible world, or the "macrocosm," by the intermediary of the agents "evoked" previously.

But we will not follow Manichaeism in its description of this production. Let us only note that it is very absurd,<sup>3</sup> and sometimes in bad taste.<sup>4</sup>

1. The word "to evoke" is a classical term of the Manichaean philosophy to signify every production in the world of Light in which no sexual generation ever takes place.

2. They bear, in Syriac, the name of Ziwane. They are light, wind, fire, water, and aether or air; the Acta Archilai suppose the fifth element to be Matter (ὄλη).

3. The principal role in the creation of the world is attributed to the Living Spirit. Being helped by his five sons whom he had "evoked," and by the Mother of Life, he has produced the ten heavens with the skin of the "Archons Regents of the Darkness," and the eight earths with their enormous carcasses. The Sun and the Moon were produced

It is the creation of the human species that is important for us. Manichaeism attributes it to the dark forces. And one of the principal arguments for this theory is the existence of two sexes which, according to it, have as their aim the prolongation of the imprisonment of Light. Eve would have been composed of the dark element alone.

The luminous spirits help men by sending them prophets : Noe, Abraham, Jesus, and especially Manes. With their kind help, light is released from men, and goes through the Zodiac and the Moon towards the Sun. It is there that men will receive the last purification before they come back to the kingdom of Light. When all the imprisoned light will have reached the luminous kingdom, the end of the world will occur. In this very moment, "the third epoch," that is the last era of history, will be inaugurated. This will be the final victory of Light over Darkness, their definitive and eternal separation.

Before we conclude this summary exposition of dualism let us note that the Gnostics were also more or less partisans of this system, which they understood, however, in different ways. So, for example, Marcion taught that the Creator of the world, worshipped as God by the Jews, is not "good," since he is the source of Evil from which we suffer. We must fight unceasingly against him. We must worship the supreme God, or God of Light, the Father who has sent Jesus on earth. According to Cerinthus, the Creator of the world is not a true God. The true God was announced to humanity only by Jesus. According to Saturninus the God of the Jews was only an angel created by God the Father ; Christ came into this world in order to abolish the worship of this Creator. We find these ideas in the doctrine of Basilides.

4. Having exposed the theory of Dualism, we shall now criticize it. Its weakness immediately appears. Evil is not a "being," but a "deprivation" of being. It can only exist insofar as it is inherent in being, whose imperfection it indicates. If this support disappears, Evil disappears at the same time, and without our having recourse to any force capable of destroying it. It is thus, for example, that blindness disappears when the blind man dies, deafness when the deaf man dies, and so on. Evil raised to an absolute, independent principle, is what we might call non-being existing by its own strength, an obviously contradictory conception.

It is then false to believe, as did P. Bayle, a zealous Manichaean, that "the weakness of this theory does not consist . . . in the dogma of

---

with the light wrested from the Archons, and the stars with their sparkling particles which we still see. All these celestial bodies were put in movement to favor the extraction of the light mixed with the darkness. See H.-CH. PUECH, *op. cit.*, pp.78ff. ; S. PÉTREMENT, *Essais sur le dualisme . . .*, Paris, 1947.

4. The way in which Manichaeism explained the origin of the animal and vegetable life on earth was rightly thought by the Fathers of the Church to be "obscene."

the two principles, one good and the other bad ; but in the particular explanations given of it and practical consequences drawn from it.”<sup>1</sup> It is the foundation of the dualist theory — the postulate of two Principles, the one good, and the other bad, that is absurd.

Bayle was not the man to ignore the force of our argument, but wishing at all costs to save Dualism, he had recourse to the following distinction : “ On a priori reasons, they (the Manichaeans) would soon have been put to flight ; a posteriori reasons were their strength. . . Indeed, reflecting on these ideas, one finds nothing more absurd than the hypothesis of two Principles eternal and independent of each other, one of which has no goodness and can hinder the designs of the other. That is what I call a priori reasons. They necessarily make us reject this hypothesis, and admit only one Principle Cause of all things.”<sup>2</sup> But “ the a posteriori reasons ” are all in favor of Manichaeism : without this theory “ we have great difficulty in answering objections on the origin of Evil.”<sup>3</sup> With it all becomes clear : “ If we feel pleasure, it is the good Principle that gives it to us ; but, if we do not feel unmixed pleasure, or if we soon become disgusted with it, that is because the bad Principle has hindered the Good.”<sup>4</sup>

P. Bayle was not a remarkable logician. For how could he fail to see that a thesis once proved absurd by logic, could never again be invoked to interpret correctly the facts of experience ?

He considered it necessary, however, to support the dualist hypothesis by the help of a new one. “ The two Principles ” he said “ made an agreement which limited reciprocally their operations. The good could not give us all the benefits it wished ; in order to give us much good it consented to its adversary’s causing us the same amount of harm ; for without this consent chaos would always remain chaos, and no creature would ever experience good. So the Sovereign Good, finding it a better means of satisfaction to see the world sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy, than to see it never happy, made this agreement which produced the mixture of good and evil that we see in the human race . . . If He does not do us more good, it is because He cannot : we have therefore no cause for complaining.”<sup>5</sup>

It is not necessary to be very perspicacious to see the weak point in this second theory. With the object of defending at all costs “ the Goodness ” of God, it throws overboard His “ Omnipotence.” It makes of God a limited Being who, unable to bring his plans to

1. *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, ed. 5, Amsterdam, 1734, art. *Manichéisme*, pp.89-90.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, art. *Pauliciens*, p.527. — See also art. *Manichéisme*, p.92.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

success, resigns himself to making terms with the enemy, to granting him humiliating concessions. This God is really too much like the Olympian Jupiter. He has nothing of the true God but the name.

On the other hand, is the hypothesis of a transaction even conceivable between two beings one of whom is essentially good and the other essentially bad? Such a transaction would appear to each of them either as "good" or "bad." In the first case, why would it be accepted by the bad Principle, which by its very essence — therefore always and everywhere — only appreciates Evil? In the second supposition, how could it be agreed to by the good Principle which by its essence desires only the Good?

Lastly, what does the theory of Bayle gain by making these concessions to Dualism? If it is not repugnant to the good Principle to enter into transaction with Evil, to permit all the ills that we see spread all over the world, it can then just as well allow them in order to respect the free will of man and make possible the existence of those very benefits that God "draws from Evil."

The weakness of the "transaction" theory was clearly seen by J. St. Mill.<sup>1</sup> He points out that it implies polytheism. But polytheism is irreconcilable with the universe such as we know it.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, whenever two rival powers dispute the government of a country, the laws of the latter are submitted to a "fluctuation"; they do not remain immutable. Now we see exactly the contrary in the universe. It is governed, in all its parts, by the same laws. Evil, Good, mixture of Evil and Good — all this is the effect of the same general laws, of the same plan, of the same idea incarnated in the universe. By virtue of these laws individuals perish. But their death does not come by chance. It visibly pursues a goal. And this goal is the good of the species.

Moreover there are in living beings certain processes of destruction which turn to the good of the individual himself. In order to convince us of this it suffices to recall that "organic life" essentially implies a process of "combustion." Now the latter implies a "destruction" of the living being.

The obstacles which oppose the realization of the plans of the Creator in the world cannot then be attributed to an "Intelligence," to a "Personality" sui generis, hostile to the Creator. They must be sought in some limitation of the Creator himself.

Indeed, J. St. Mill continues, the Infinite Goodness and Justice "cannot be reconciled with the Omnipotence of the Creator of this world."<sup>3</sup> Developing these assertions, he affirms that the Creator

---

1. JOHN STUART MILL, *Three Essays on Religion: Theism*, New York, Henry Holt, 1874, pp.183-184.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p.187.

is not entirely indifferent to His own work. He wills it to exist, at least during some period of time. This is seen by the pleasure and pain which is attached to certain actions of living beings ; pleasure has as its goal to attract the living being to certain actions which favor the conservation of the living world ; pain, on the contrary, deters him from harmful actions.<sup>1</sup>

This is not all, continues J. St. Mill. There are serious reasons to believe that the pleasure experienced by the creature is agreeable to the Creator. On the contrary, nothing authorizes us to make the same supposition as to the pain felt by the creature. It is in this sense that we must take the assertion according to which Goodness "is an attribute of God." We would be wrong in pretending that "the unique and principal" End which God has pursued in creating the world, was "His Goodness," "the happiness of His creatures."<sup>2</sup>

But Goodness is not the only attribute of God which is limited. The Divine Justice is also. Indeed, says J. St. Mill, "we find in Nature no proof of the Divine Justice . . . In the general order of Nature there is no shadow of justice."

Let us pass on to consider another attribute of God : His Knowledge or Wisdom. Is it infinite? asks J. St. Mill. Perhaps so, he replies. But perhaps also it is very limited.<sup>3</sup> One can, indeed, admit that the Creator did not know how to avoid the obstacles from matter that oppose His intentions.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, what have we to say about the Omnipotence of God? It must be entirely denied, replies J. St. Mill. God has assuredly "great power." But this power is "limited." Where does this limitation come from? About that we are able to say nothing.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wisest attitude to be taken before the problem of "the supernatural," of "God," is "that of Scepticism," "a rational Scepticism," "equally distant from religious faith and Atheism."<sup>6</sup>

This is the solution of the problem of Evil in J. St. Mill's philosophy. It avoids Dualism. But at what a cost, is quite evident. At the cost of denying God's existence. For a God limited in his attributes is but a pretense at God. It is a contradiction. On this point J. St. Mill's theory is obviously inferior to that of Zoroastrism. Because the God of Zoroaster is at least *principally*,<sup>7</sup> essentially good, infinitely wise, and all-powerful.

1. *Ibid.*, pp.190-191.

2. *Ibid.*, pp.192-193.

3. *Ibid.*, p.194. — See p.209.

4. *Ibid.*, p.186.

5. *Ibid.*, p.242.

6. *Ibid.*, pp.242, 257.

7. According to Zoroastrism the limitation of God's power in the face of Evil is but temporary. Moreover, if we are to believe certain zoroastrian theologians, it is the



Before we finish this article, let us mention some more errors common to all kinds of Dualism.

First, there is an error of method. The partisans of Dualism set themselves to explain the origin of Evil without having even discussed the problem of its nature. St. Augustine has insisted strongly on this point in his struggle against the Manichaeans.<sup>1</sup> And he was perfectly right. What we have said in our book, *The Philosophy of Evil* (New York, Ronald), makes any further explanation superfluous.<sup>2</sup>

Another error of Dualism. It is the most radical egocentrism. Indeed, why should "beasts of prey," "serpents," "scorpions," "poison," and other things of this kind be considered as essentially bad? Is it not because they make man uncomfortable? The argument by which a celebrated Manichaean at the time of Saint Augustine proved that the scorpion is essentially bad is very instructive. If we put — said he — a scorpion on the hand of some one, that man would instinctively withdraw his hand. Doing so, he would prove — not by his words but by acts — that this animal is essentially bad.<sup>3</sup>

Saint Augustine had not much trouble in demonstrating the error of that argument. What we fear from the scorpion is the wounding of our body. Now the true cause of the harm done is the disproportion between the qualities of the scorpion and those of man.

effect of the free will of Ahura Mazda : for it would suffice for him to will that Ahriman and Evil should be expelled from this world. (*Dk.* vol. 10, book 5, 5, 6, pp.6, 7). At any rate, at the end of the world, His omnipotence will appear in all its glory. The adversary will flee, deserted ignominiously by his partisans and disappear forever in the eternal abyss of darkness (*Yt.* 19, 95 ; *Ys.* 30, 3). He will never leave it. We must acknowledge nevertheless that the logic of Zoroastrianism leads to the negation of the omnipotence of God, since the latter can do nothing against Ahriman and his perverse will.

1. S. AUGUST., *Contra Epistolam Manichaei quam vocant fundamentalem*, liber unus, c. XXXVI, n. 41, P. L. 42, 201-202.

2. See chapter I. — We believe it useless to enter into the details of the dualistic systems. Some remarks will suffice. Zarathustra attributes to Ahura Mazda the creation not only of light but also of darkness (*Y.* 44, 3 sq. ; *Y.* 44, 7). But darkness, being identified with Evil, cannot come from him. Moreover, what is this necessity to create darkness? Is it not a simple privation of the Light?

As to Manichaeism it does not explain to us how the general order of the world could be deranged by the power of darkness at a given moment of history.

Certain apologists of the primitive Church note still another difficulty. The kingdoms of Good and Evil are said to be infinite. Nevertheless they touch one another at a common surface. Now how is an infinite space intelligible when it is limited on one side?

Moreover, why should we identify darkness with the female principle? How could the Father of light, who knew everything, ignore the invasion of his kingdom by the Evil Spirit and leave his creatures defenseless? At the very moment of the invasion he is visibly taken by surprise and almost disorientated !

3. S. AUGUST., *De moribus Ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*, Lib. II, c. VIII, n. 11 ; P. L. 32.

The scorpion is not bad in itself. It is not bad for itself nor for its children. In the same way, the poison considered in its own reality is not substantially bad. Because, otherwise, it should first kill the scorpion itself. As it is good for us to keep far from poison, it is good for the scorpion to have it. Even the "darkness" is good for the serpent.<sup>1</sup> Moreover there are things which taken in a small dose, are useful ; they become harmful only if one takes too much of them. Finally, sometimes one can "accustom" oneself to a harmful thing. This ceases being bad by the simple fact that a proportion of convenience is established between us and it. All this shows us that Evil does not reach the essence of the things, contrary to what the Dualists pretend.<sup>2</sup> Let us add that the Supreme Principle of Evil is not entirely deprived of knowledge, according to the partisans of Dualism. Otherwise how could it attack the good creatures, lay traps for them, etc. ? Moreover it is a living and acting being. Now knowledge, life, action — are all good. And so the conclusion is inevitable : a being substantially and absolutely bad is mere phantasy.

PAUL SIWEK, S.J.



---

1. S. AUGUST., *De moribus Ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*, Lib.II, c.IX, n.15.

2. *Ibid.*, lib.II, c.VIII, nn.11-12.