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Archbishop William King's Critique of Manichaeism in the Treatise *On the Origin of Evil* (1702)

Abstract: This paper examines the Irish philosopher, theologian and divine William King's (1650–1729) discussion of Manichaeism in the essay *De Origine Mali* (*On the Origin of Evil*) (1702). King intended to demonstrate that the Manichaean solution to the problem of the origin of evil, consisting in assuming the existence of two opposite principles of, respectively, good and evil, leaves the problem untouched and, therefore, cannot compete with the orthodox view, according to which the presence of evil, despite appearances to the contrary, is compatible with the one and perfect principle of all creation. Following preliminary remarks about the text, context, and King's terminology, this paper argues that his criticism is flawed.

Keywords: William King (1650–1729), Manichaeism, the origin of evil, theodicy

I

Unde malum? The question of the origin of evil may indeed be perceived as perplexing by the ones who wholeheartedly affirm that the cause of the world they happen to live in is but one perfect and omnipotent Being. Supposing that, for some reason, both not admitting a cause of all things and not answering the question at all (e.g. for the sake of irrational faith) cannot be considered a satisfying stance, will the supposition that there are *two* opposite universal causes or agents of equal power provide an acceptable solution? Why not admit the conception that one of them is the principle of good while the other is wholly and ultimately responsible for the undeniable omnipresence of every sort of evil? The idea of a co-existence of these two powers does not evidently contradict itself and appears to free the believed Being from an overbearing imputation of having (un)willingly inserted evil into the totality of creation and making it, in effect, both superfluously and intrinsically imperfect.

It is well-known that firm advocates of theism usually tended not only to justify their belief but also quite often sought to disprove beliefs that one might, notwithstanding their painstaking and long-lasting efforts, find more agreeable to reason or experience. There is, then, nothing unusual in the fact that a theodicy (as one may call it) produced by the Irish philosopher and Irish Church divine of Scottish origin William King (1650–1729), from 1685 a member of the Dublin Philosophical Society (founded two years earlier largely by William Molyneux), bishop of Derry from 1691 and archbishop of Dublin from 1703, the subject to which he devoted a full-scale treatise in Latin entitled *De Origine Mali* (Dublin, 1702, 2nd edition London 1702, Bremen 1704) contains a unanimous refutation of Manicheism, then considered by some as a plausible response to the yet to be answered question.¹ In King's

¹ The treatise was completed in 1697. It was partly translated into English by Solomon Lowe in 1715, and fully by Edmund Law in 1731. Law augmented his edition by adding large notes of his own as well as exceptions from materials that King had left in the manuscript; it encompassed also *Preliminary Dissertation* by John Gay and *On Morality and Religion* by Law himself. See Charles Simeon King, *A Great Bishop of Dublin William King. D.D. 1650–1729. His Autobiography, Family, and a Selection from His Correspondence* (London: Longmans, Green,

times, the Manichaeist or, at least, a Manichaeist-like conception of the origin of evil managed to gain some popularity owing to how it had been discussed by the French philosopher and erudite settled in Holland, Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), in several articles within his noted *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (vol. 1–3, 1697, 2nd edition vol. 1–3, 1702).² Bayle's discussion seems to imply that, granted the existence of evil, the Manichaeist solution (and *not* the Christian religion) is reasonable.³ King, despite this (or rather because of

and Co., 1908), 40–41. I draw on the following editions whose digital versions are accessible online: William King, *De Origine Mali. Authore Guiliemo King, S. T. D. Episcopo Derensi. Juxta Exemplar Londinense* (Bremen: Philipp Gottfried Saurmann, 1704), and William King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil. By Dr. William King, Late Lord Archbishop of Dublin. Translated from the Latin with Notes. To which is added, A Sermon by the Same Author, on the Fall of Man. The Fifth Edition, Revised. By Edmund, Lord Bishop of Carlisle* (London: R. Faulder, 1781). All quotations in English or Latin from King's work are from these two editions, respectively.

² Bayle discussed the issue most extensively in the articles "Manicheans" and "Paulicians". See Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*, transl. Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1967), 144–153, 166–193; Thomas Michael Lennon, *Reading Bayle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 173–182. In the amended second edition he hastened to reassert firmly his general, (allegedly) inoffensive conclusion, which locates the existence of the God of the Gospel in the array of impenetrable by reason mysteries of faith: "The Roman Catholics and the Protestants are at war over an innumerable number of articles of religion, but they are in agreement on this point, that the mysteries of the Gospel are above reason. There have even been theologians who have asserted that the mysteries denied by the Socinians are contrary to reason. I do not wish to take advantage of this assertion. It suffices for me that it is unanimously acknowledged that they are above reason; for it follows necessarily from this that it is impossible to solve the difficulties raised by philosophers; and, consequently, a dispute in which only the natural light will be employed will always end to the disadvantage of the theologians; and they will find themselves forced to give ground and take refuge under the protection of the supernatural light". Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*, 410. Regarding his general, a rather vague position, see Patricia Easton, "Sincerity and Skepticism in Pierre Bayle: Navigating the Bayle Enigma", in: *The Battle of Gods and Giants Redux. Papers Presented to Thomas M. Lennon*, ed. Patricia Easton, Kurt Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 246–261. On the second edition of the *Dictionary*, see Mara van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu, and the Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 190–236.

³ Notwithstanding King's criticism, Bayle's handling of Manichaeism was echoed, among others, by David Hume (in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Section V, Part II and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part X and XI), as well as James Mill. Hume was, moreover, familiar with King's work and adopted the tri-fold distinction of evil. See David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 108–118; David Hume, *Principal Writings on Religion Including*

this), intends to convince his reader that it is the very opposite that is true and that admitting such an oddity as a concatenation of two equal competing causes leads to nowhere and cannot overbalance the common theist principle of one perfect creator of this imperfect world, the principle solidified independently by a battery of arguments contained in other parts of his work. It should be remembered that the second 1702 edition of the Latin essay was thoroughly reviewed by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz himself and, moreover, that the several-page opuscle turned to be a part of the Appendix to his famous *Theodicy* (1710).⁴ Leibniz generally approved the content of the first four chapters of King's essay, and continuously praised its author for his abilities as well as acuteness; nevertheless, he was displeased with being presented with a voluntarist understanding of the phenomenon of free will, defended by the author in the last, relatively extensive chapter. Understandably, in his review, once again, he mainly launched a fierce attack on what according to the pillars of his philosophy was but a deceptive metaphysical chimaera.⁵ Although the great philosopher, being himself a severe critic of Bayle's ambiguous and apparently heterodox reasoning, had no substantial objections towards King's critique of Manichaeism, it seems worthwhile to examine it in more detail.⁶ To accomplish that task, it suffices to focus on what is said in Chapter II of the said treatise, entitled "Concerning the Nature and Division of Evil, and the Difficulty of tracing its Origin", so that even if a detailed analysis of the whole of King's extensive piece would perhaps be desirable, it

Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and The Natural History of Religion, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 95–115; Samuel Newlands, "Hume on Evil", in: *The Oxford Handbook of Hume*, ed. Paul Russell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 623–645; John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 25–27.

⁴ The part is entitled *Observations of the Book Concerning "The Origin of Evil"*, published recently in London, see Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy. Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Arthur Farrer, transl. E. M. Huggard (Chicago–La Salle: Open Court, 1998), 405–442.

⁵ See also Sean Greenberg, "Leibniz on King: Freedom and the Project of the 'Theodicy'", *Studia Leibnitiana* 40(2) (2008): 205–222. Regarding the historical significance of King's once widely known but nowadays forgotten essay see especially p. 207.

⁶ As Kings notes, the opinion he shall examine "was held by many of the ancients, by the manicheans, paulicians, and almost all the tribe of ancient heretics". King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 73.

certainly falls outside the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, King's refutation of the Manichaeist doctrine of two equal opposite causes which brought the universe into being with a mixture of goods and evils annexed, consists in an explicit demonstration that the doctrine simply does not meet the purpose it was fancied to fulfil, as it leaves the initial question of the origin of evil wholly unanswered, and so deserves no further notice; theism, therefore, remains unshaken and despite appearances may be considered *the* course available and worth elaborating. However, I shall endeavour to indicate why King's criticism is open to criticism itself, if not off the mark.

II

One may begin, however, with some necessary observations regarding an important subject announced in the very title of Chapter II. That is, at the beginning of this part of the book, King briefly introduces his notion of evil in the following manner:

[I.] *Good* and *evil* are opposites, and arise from the relation which things have to each other: For since there are some things which profit, and others which prejudice one another; since some things agree, and others disagree; as we call the former good, so we title the latter evil. Whatever therefore is *incommodious* or *inconvenient* to itself, or anything else; whatever becomes troublesome, or frustrates any *appetite* implanted by God; whatever forces any Person to do or suffer what he would not, that is *evil*.

II. Now these Inconveniences appear to be of three kinds, those of *imperfection*, *natural*, and *moral* ones. By the evil of *imperfection* I understand the absence of those perfections or advantages which exist elsewhere, or in other beings: by *natural* evil, pains and uneasiness, inconveniences and disappointment of appetites, arising from natural motions: by *moral*, vicious elections, that is, such as are hurtful to ourselves or others.⁷

⁷ Ibidem, 74. "I. *Bonum* & malum *opposita* sunt, & oriuntur ex relatione, quam res inter se habent; cum enim quaedam sunt quae se mutuo juvant, quaedam vero quae laedunt, cumque alia congruunt, alia pugnant; ut priora bona; ita posteriora, mala dicimus; est igitur malum,

The tripartite division of evil (and good, respectively) is a deviation from the standard Augustinian dualistic distinction between natural evil (and good) and moral one.⁸ Nevertheless, it may look surprisingly familiar.⁹ On the whole, this division, after all, corresponds closely to the fundamental motives of orthodox Christian metaphysics, the one that is, and which is hardly astonishing, reaffirmed steadfastly in the essay.¹⁰ Accordingly, it is necessary

omne quod sibi aut alteri *incommodum* est aut *inconviens*; *molestum* omne, aut appetitum aliquem à Deo rebus inditum frustrans, omne quod cogit aliquem agere vel pati, quod nollet.

II. Videntur autem ejusmodi incommoda triplicis esse generis, imperfectionis, naturalia & moralia. Per malum *imperfectionis* intelligo absentiam perfectionum aut commodorum, quae alibi aut aliis rebus adsunt. Per *naturale*, dolores, molestias, incommoda, & appetituum frustrationes, à motibus naturalibus orta. Per *morale*, pravas electiones, scilicet nobis aut aliis noxias”. King, *De Origine Mali*, 45–46.

⁸ “Duobus enim modis appellare solemus malum; uno, cum male quemque fecisse dicimus; alio, cum mali aliquid esse perpeccatum”. Aurelius Augustinus, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi Opera Omnia Usque Adhuc Edita. Tomus Secundus* (Venezia: Guiseppe Antonelli, 1845), 58.

⁹ This familiarity is due to the fact that Leibniz later famously applied much the same division in his *Theodicy* (as he had done in his 1702 *Treatise on God and Man*). The idea of King’s implicit influence seems intriguing, nonetheless, Leibniz scholars argue for Leibniz’s priority over King. See Maria Rosa Antognazza, “Metaphysical Evil Revisited”, in: *New Essays on Leibniz’s Theodicy*, ed. Larry M. Morgensen, Samuel Newlands (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 112–134. Following Gaston Grua, Antognazza traces this then-uncommon division back to Tommaso Campanella’s *Atheismus triumphatus, seu reductio ad religionem per scientiarum veritates* (1631). It seems that King, for his part, specially introduced the notion of evil of imperfection to deal with the problem of the origin of evil with no evasions. For a general discussion of the new tripartite distinction of evil, see Samuel Newlands, “The Problem of Evil”, in: *The Routledge Companion to the Seventeenth Century Philosophy*, ed. Dan Kaufman (London–New York: Routledge, 2018), 536–562.

¹⁰ Moreover, King seamlessly reconciled these motives with the main themes of Locke’s guarded epistemology. However, his adherence to the “new way of ideas” was not by no means uncritical, as evidenced, for instance, by his disapproval of restrictions imposed by Locke (and then the young Berkeley) on the content of the idea of infinity. See, respectively, Chapter I, sect. I–II of the treatise discussed (King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 1–32). David Berman, *George Berkeley: Idealism and the Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 13–20. It is widely known that Berkeley criticised in return King’s representationalist idea, endorsed in continuing his theodicy sermon on *Divine Predestination and Fore-knowledge, consistent with the Freedom of Man’s Will* (1709), of the possibility of comprehending attributes of God exclusively by analogy, in *Alciphron* (1732), dialogue IV. See Berman, *Idealism and the Man*, 140–143. King touches upon this idea also in the essay under discussion (King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 34–35). Finally, King was a notable Irish ideologue of the Glorious Revolution, sharing Locke’s political views (*The State of the Protestants in Ireland under King James’s Governments*, Dublin

to provide for metaphysical evil since God is a perfect being, and nothing that he resolved or could have resolved to create, notwithstanding how perfect it is or would be in itself or with a connection with other creatures, can measure up to himself in respect of perfection. A thing may also lose a quality that things of its kind usually possess, e.g. a human may suffer a loss of vision, and such a loss means a certain imperfection. One is bound to acknowledge the existence of physical evil as well because matter as a component or essence of perceptible things exists, and material things by their nature undergo both permanent and multiway changes leading to or identical with the formation and corruption of (other) things of this sort; providentially, the potential or occurring corruption of an animated body is usually indicated to a mind united with that body through a manifold of unpleasant, uneasy or painful sensations. Furthermore, the human mind is not only distinct from gross matter but also being given another faculty, that of free will, all too readily takes advantage of this capacity in a manner unpleasant to God, whence comes moral evil. As a result, one may add, if the existence of God is denied or thought to be unknown or even unknowable, the thesis that the world as a whole is inherently imperfect becomes either false or meaningless and consequently can be given, at best, a conventional meaning, hence a corresponding justification; arguably, this is what may indeed be inferred from Spinoza's equation of God with nature. If, on the other hand, the existence of matter understood as something different from the mind and its sensible objects is called into question or refuted, the presence of physical evils becomes mysterious and must somehow be re-accounted for, as it should have been within Berkeley's immaterialism. Finally, many philosophers, including the most acclaimed modern ones such as Descartes, Leibniz and Kant, to name only a few, saw freedom of will as a prerequisite for the possibility of moral good and evil.

1691), a leading supporter of King William, and, last but not least, a vigorous defender of the Test Act (e.g. in the said *Sermon*). See Christopher Fauske, *A Political Biography of William King* (London–New York: Routledge, 2011); Joseph Richardson, "Archbishop William King (1650–1729): 'Church Tory and State Whig'?", *Eighteenth-Century Ireland/Iris an dá chúlur* 15 (2000): 54–76, 36–39.

On King's behalf, this general account, for purposes of the present paper, may be augmented by making one further observation. Now, he emphasizes throughout his treatise the necessity of metaphysical evil and its being the ultimate basis for the evil of other kinds. If evil is necessary (or necessarily possible, as moral evil is), then it is consistent with the goodness of God; this is, in general, how King intended to settle the question of the origin of evil.¹¹ Since he adheres firmly at the same time to voluntarism concerning the will of God, he presumably does not see any inconsistency in affirming both.

Moving on to the heart of the matter, that is, to King's criticism, it begins with an interesting passage which may have been intended as containing a simple initial *a posteriori* argument pursued against the Manichaeist stance. King namely seems to argue that its falsity is already plain for anyone who pays heed to what experience teaches him about nature:

VII. It is manifest that though good be mixed with evil in this life, yet there is much more good than evil in nature, and every animal provides for its preservation by instinct or reason, which it would never do, if it did not think or feel its life, with all the evil annexed, to be much preferable to non-existence. This is a proof of the wisdom, goodness, and power of god, who could thus temper a world inserted with so many miseries, that nothing should continue in it which was not in some measure pleased with its existence and which would not endeavour by all possible means to preserve it.¹²

¹¹ More precisely, King enriches his metaphysical standpoint with "Christian utilitarianism": "If this mundane system be taken together, if all the parts and periods of it be compared with one another, we must believe that it could not possibly be better, if any part could be changed for the better, another would be worse; if one abounded with greater conveniencies, another would be exposed to greater evils; and that necessarily from the imperfection of all creatures. A creature is descended from God, *a most perfect father*; but from *nothing*, as its *mother*, which is imperfection itself. All finite things therefore partake of nothing, and are nothing beyond their bounds. [...] The difficult question then, *whence comes evil?* is not unanswerable. For it arises from the very nature and constitution of created beings and could not be avoided without a contradiction". King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 174, 176.

¹² *Ibidem*, 76. "Manifestum est, etiamsi bonum, malo in vita hac misceatur, multo plus boni quam mali inesse rebus, & unumquodq; animal instinctu aut ratione saluti suae studere, id minime facturum, si non vitam suam cum omnibus malis annexis potiozem duxerit aut sentiret, quam non esse. Hinc vero sapientiam, bonitatem, & potentiam auctoris probari, qui potuit mundum tot miseriis infestum ita temperare; ut nihil in eo sit, cui non suum esse

According to such an argument from a common preference of individual existence over non-existence, as one may call it, since the former is preferable, for it is universally preferred by living creatures over the latter, (natural) good overbalances (natural) evil significantly. However, one may wonder whether King is not guilty of committing a naturalistic fallacy because he seems to ignore a palpable ambiguity of the adjective "preferable", which may be referred to (and as it might have been in King's times as well) either to what is preferred or to what ought to be preferred regardless of whether it is preferred or not. If King simply assumes (perhaps echoing Aristotle, incidentally) that what is commonly preferred by living creatures should also be preferred by them, then he is likely to beg the question because if good does not somehow overbalance evil in nature, he has no obvious reason to regard the non-self-evident inference from "is" to "ought" as correct. If all he needs to provide is the premise that sheer existence ought to be in general preferred over non-existence, then from the fact that existence is, as King supposedly sees it, both preferred and worth preferring, it does not follow the conclusion he immediately carries out, that is, that nature contains much more good than evil, as nature may be preferable simply for that reason that it contains less evil than one's imagined non-existence. Similarly, if someone has paid part of his debts, he is, all things being equal, certainly better off than before, yet it does not mean that he is in the black. Finally, King's summarising conclusion that God must indeed possess the attributes of wisdom, power and goodness because he might have created a world much inferior to the world in which living creatures are so perceptibly anxious for existence, corresponds to a peculiar principle which praises anyone who performed something not as poorly as he or she was able to.

Understandably, to pursue his master argument, King specifies the target conception and the grand conclusion its promotors are eager to deliver. However, what is of considerable importance to the issue discussed, even though never touched upon by the author himself, is the question of a real difference between Manichaeism and theism, verbally palpably repugnant to each oth-

quodammodo placeat, quod non se omnibus modis conservare nitatur". King, *De Origine Mali*, 49.

er. By implication, King assumes throughout his reasoning their non-equivalence and continuously takes for granted that one may consistently affirm one of the two and deny another, yet seems to depend too preeminently upon noticing the verbal discrepancy, which arguably may present rather an insufficient ground for such a belief. Unexpectedly, it is the one who believes the contrary, i.e. the one who suspects that the only difference between the two consists in that theism calls “a lack of being” which Manichaeism does not, may find King’s argument reassuring since it was to prove that in some respects they do not differ altogether. Come what may, King understands his adversaries as holding the following:

VIII. [...] the asserters of two principles maintain that the great and good God tolerates evil purely because he is forced to it by the evil one, and that either from an agreement between themselves, or a perpetual struggle and contest with each other. For since the beneficent author of nature was hindered by the evil principle from producing all the good he was willing to produce, he either made an agreement with it to produce as much as he was allowed, but with a mixture of evil, according to the agreement: or else there is a mixture of good and evil proportionable to the power which prevails in either of them. Hence they think that the good God excusable, who conferred as many blessings on the world as his adversary permitted, and would have tolerated no manner of evil, unless compelled to it by the adverse power. So that he must either create no good at all, or suffer an alloy of evil.¹³

The purported response, pace King’s abridgement of the Manichaeist doctrine, may be rephrased even more concisely in the following words: God must be entirely excused from being a cause of evil, for he did make every ef-

¹³ King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 99. “Volunt enim duorum principiorum assertores, *Deum* optimum, maximum, coactum à malefico mala tolerare, hoc vero aut ex pacto inter ipsos provenire, aut ex perpetua lucta, & contentione, qua sibi mutuo adversantur. Cum enim beneficium rerum author bona omnia, quae vellet, efficere à malo principio impeditus non potuit: aut pactum cum eo iniit, quo quantum permittebatur, efficeret, sed cum mixtura mali, secundum quod inter ipsos convenerat; aut secundum vires, quibus quilibet praevalebat sit bonorum & malorum mixtio. Hinc vero excusari *Deum* bonum putant, qui mundum tot bonis cumulavit, quot *adversarius* ejus permittebat, nihil mali toleraturus, nisi ad hoc ab inimica potentia adactus, ut aut nihil boni crearet aut mixturam mali ferret”. King, *De Origine Mali*, 49–50.

fort to create as much good as possible, given the incorruptible power of an external principle, which, conversely, took pains to impair the work of God.¹⁴ Arguably, had God not allowed interference produced by that principle, there would be no good in the universe at all. However, to dispel the doubts King slightly expands this general account in his “Note B”, added by Edmund Law as a footnote to the English translation of the treatise. Namely, what he assumes (and what he presumably did assume) is that the external principle in question could not have created a world independently (even if it might have taken advantage of passive matter) because such a world must have been absolutely evil and, in effect, self-destroying.¹⁵

The answer thus advanced seems to stand to reason and substantiate a viable solution that the one-only-principle theism is allegedly incapable of providing. Nonetheless, to King's understanding, the Manichaeist hallucination being sufficiently preposterous in itself fails, above all, to entail the desired answer, as further examination shall reveal. Hence, he goes straight to the issue in a passage, perhaps, well worth quoting in full:

For he is no less culpable who created any thing [sic] which he knew would be rendered miserable by another, than if he had made that which he foresaw would bring Misery upon itself. If therefore God might, consistently with goodness, create things which he knew the evil principle could and would corrupt, as the *manicheans* [sic] asserted; then he might, consistently with the same goodness, have created things that would corrupt themselves, or were to perish in a tract of time. If then, according to the defenders of this hypothesis, God ought to have omitted, or not created those beings, in whose natures evil and contrariety is inherent, he ought also to have omitted those, whose natures he foresaw the evil principle would corrupt. And if there was so much good in these, as made him think it better to create them, though they were to be corrupted some time or other by the opposite principle, he might also judge it preferable to produce the same, though they were at length to perish by their own inherent evils. Nor will God be forced to tolerate evil in this world more according to the *manicheans*, than the *catholics*. For as he might have not made those beings which have evils necessarily adhering

¹⁴ Of course, Mani's teaching was, at least verbally, much more nuanced. See Geo Viden-gren, *Mani and Manichaeism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965), 43–52.

¹⁵ See King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 79.

to them, so he might also have not made those which he foreknew the contrary principle would corrupt. After the same manner in both cases he would have prevented evil, and since he could, why did he not? The supposition of two principles conduces nothing at all therefore to the solution to this difficulty.¹⁶

It seems then that the Manichaeist good God, although by definition co-existent and competing with the mighty principle of evil, would not be in any measure less culpable for the existence of evil than the good God whose unassisted existence theists (or the *catholics*, for that matter) ordinarily affirm, for that reason that 1) he would be equally capable of foreseeing evil and likewise able to prevent its existence, and 2) he would also have mindfully resolved to create things notwithstanding. Taking these two premises into account, one may be confused about the presence of evil in the world since the non-existence of evil would have been well within God's capacities. Nevertheless, since both 1) and 2) are merely a repetition of the Manichaeist proposal, they cannot yield an argument against it as long as one supposes their plausibility precisely for the argument's sake. It is evident then that the premise upon which the entire argumentation depends must possibly downplay the respects within which the Manichaeism and theism differ and which consequently may matter as far as the origin of evil is concerned. That involves depreciating any indispensable contribution for which the second principle might be supposed to be responsible. King apparently intended to achieve this by formulating at the very beginning an additional assumption, according to which 3) "he is no less culpable who created any thing which he knew would be rendered miserable by another, than if he had made that which he foresaw would bring misery upon itself".¹⁷ If convincing, this presupposition renders the second principle otiose and completes the argument. Accordingly, a closer examination of King's decisive premise will settle the question of the overall probative force of his anti-Manichaeist reasoning.

To begin with, premise 3), even if plausible, is far from being self-evident, regardless of the possibility that King himself might have honestly judged

¹⁶ Ibidem, 77–78.

¹⁷ "Non minus enim culpandus, qui sicens aliquod creaverit ab alio misera afficiendum, quam si fecisset, quod sibi miseriam accersurum praeviderat". King, *De Origine Mali*, 50.

the matter otherwise. More precisely, it does not count as self-evident on the condition that "self-evidence" denotes every property of a proposition which necessarily induces immediate and irresistible assent or an involuntary and unshakable belief as soon as that proposition is comprehended. It is rather doubtful whether the premise under discussion possesses a relatively rare property of this kind, and one may enhance this suspicion by saying that these doubts amount to additional evidence that it is not self-evident. Admittedly, one may be inclined to respond that the assumption at issue does not produce the abovementioned effect merely because it is not straightforwardly understandable, being unusually demanding despite its apparent simplicity, yet once comprehended, it will be intuitively experienced as obvious. However, this answer does not address the objection, as it does not imply that his assumption is true but only that it may be true. As King delivers no proof of the claim at issue, it might be supposed that the reader of his treatise is thus offered, instead of a sound principle, a sheer hypothesis *ad hoc*. One may even suppose that the premise under discussion, due to a detectable anti-Manichaeist tinge, renders the argumentation circular.

Furthermore, not only is premise 3) not self-evident, but it is also the opposite that supposedly bears some affinity to self-evident truths. Arguably, it is not infrequent to be endowed with a concept of culpability that implies that one ought to differentiate between the two cases of the perpetration the premise vehemently identifies. That is, a person who acts wrongly on their own is likely to be regarded as evidently more blameful or responsible than the one whose innocent deeds are known to him antecedently as necessarily followed by harmful accomplishments of another. Since King's idea of culpability appears dissimilar, it is unfeasible, *ceteris paribus*, to determine which one (if any) was adequate and that unfeasibility immediately calls that premise again into question.

Most of all, it is possible to argue that premise 3), be it as fully justified as it could be, should be considered by King not as evidently or demonstratively true but, and necessarily, quite the reverse. More precisely, provided one can draw solely from that principle a conclusion that contradicts what King as a philosopher or theologian wholeheartedly affirms or would in all probability confirm unhesitatingly should the need arise, the premise fails of necessity

miserably owing to rendering King's position contradictory. Needless to say that from a purely logical standpoint his putative unawareness of such a subversive corollary does not lower in any manner its harmfulness. Importantly, the general applicability of the King's crucial premise must be allowed under not disregarding it as a hypothesis *ad hoc*. Most importantly, at least two such corollaries seem effortlessly deducible from that assumption.

First, it appears that if it is indeed the case that, as King maintains, "he is no less culpable who created any thing which he knew would be rendered miserable by another, than if he had made that which he foresaw would bring misery upon itself", then such a general idea of culpability may be referred not only to God and the evil principle, introduced by the Manichaeans and being in return under such heavy criticism from King, but equally well to God and human agents respectively, conceived, on the contrary, in the strictly orthodox manner. Supposing that this application is entirely admissible, one acquires the right to carry out immediately the inference stating that ascribing a faculty of so-called "free will" to human agents (or to the ones alike) is futile as far as the question of the origin of moral evil is to be solved favourably to God or in accordance with the firm idea of his perfection. The both surprising and unacceptable and yet perfectly sound conclusion reveals that it is indeed all the same whether moral evils come from an abuse of a faculty (assuming, altogether plausibly, that the faculty in question is a being and not a sheer nothing) given to rational creatures by God, or exclusively by an inherent imperfection of the faculty itself, which renders the said faculty meretricious regardless of how it would be furthermore taken advantage of by its possessor. Consequently, by the new standard that premise 3) establishes, the conception of free will, as understood by King, does not account for the existence of moral evils more convincingly than a heterodox supposition, according to which moral evil, even if conceived as a quality of some deeds of creatures, is not brought about by themselves but occurs instead due to the inevitable fallibility of a faculty they merely happen to possess. Since it is improbable that King would ever approve of such a bizarre and perhaps even blasphemous conclusion, he should have also decisively rejected its source, notwithstanding its alluring utility.

Secondly, another inadmissible consequence obtainable flawlessly from the premise under examination may appear even more awkward than the above-presented corollary supposedly undermining the idea of free will. More precisely, the premise King acknowledges seems also to entail immediately no more, no less than the saying that if the principle of evil exists, then it ought to be removed from all responsibility for the existence of evil. Indeed, supposing that God, understood as necessarily accompanied by the principle of evil, is not *less* culpable than when conceived as an externally unrestricted creator of corruptible and imperfect entities, which is precisely what premise 3) ensures throughout, and assuming that the quantity and quantity of evil are identical in both circumstances (both quite legitimately and trivially, since by definition the two vary solely in terms of the origins of the existing evil), then there is indeed no evil existing, for which the principle rather than God might be responsible for. It is premise 3) that, to some extent, shifting all possible responsibility from that principle onto the good God, renders the former immaculate at the expense of the latter. One may rightly furthermore conclude about the correctness of a heterodox, non-theistic and non-Manichaeic stance, which, although it recognises the principle of evil as the cause of evils, still renders the good God entirely responsible for their existence. For all probability, King would disown such a startling conclusion as erroneous and utterly unbelievable; consequently, given an opportunity, he ought to disallow premise 3) as well.

III

Unde malum, therefore? Provided the examination conducted above is correct (as I am inclined to believe), one may infer with some plausibility at least that Archbishop William King's intention to dismantle one answer, i.e. the one produced by ancient Manichaeists (and, supposedly, by modern ones as well), by eagerly showing its palpable seemingness, to all appearances, proved to be unfulfilled. The reason for that seems to be that a crucial premise he grants for that purpose is either unjustified or even impossible to hold by him without inevitable contradiction. It does not follow from the above

scrutiny that the Manichaeism did succeed and thus managed to resolve the perennial question of the origin of evil, nor that King's theodicy, as one may term the content of his essay *On the Origin of Evil*, of which his in all likelihood misguided rebuttal of the Manichaeist proposal remains solely a minute, albeit not a negligible component, shall be abandoned in response as utterly erroneous. What does follow, however, is that a double-principle theory may, King's efforts notwithstanding, still yield a solution that merits, as his theodicy perhaps, further consideration.

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