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IS THE PRIVATION THEORY OF EVIL DEAD?

Todd C. Calder

I. INTRODUCTION

After centuries of neglect, there has been a revival of interest in the nature of evil by philosophers.¹ These philosophers seek to capture the concept of evil as it is used in contemporary moral and political contexts. The theories offered are secular and incompatible with the historically dominant privation theory developed by Saint Augustine. According to the privation theory, evil has no positive existence: evil consists in a lack of substance, being or goodness. This paper considers whether the privation theory ought to be revived along with philosophical interest in the nature of evil, or whether it should be put to rest.

There are two apparent reasons for contemporary philosophers to revive the privation theory of evil. First, some believe that only the privation theory of evil is compatible with theism, and thus, if one wants to be a theist, as many still do, they will need to adopt the privation theory of evil.² The privation theory is thought to be singularly compatible with theism because it is believed to be necessary to help solve the problem of evil: the seemingly incompatible coexistence of evil and an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good creator. The privation theory is thought to help solve the problem of evil because if evil is a priva-

tion of substance, being or goodness, then God creates no evil, he merely allows it to exist as a lack of created being.

A second reason to adopt the privation theory is for its ability to characterize evil. The term 'evil' is ambiguous. There is a broad sense of the term 'evil' which refers to anything wrong or bad. In this sense, white lies and minor pains are evil. There is also a narrower sense of the term that refers to only the most despicable sorts of acts, characters and events. Contemporary philosophers interested in the nature of evil are primarily concerned with evil in this narrower sense. The privation theory attempts to capture both the broad and narrow senses of evil, and thus, if correct, would be relevant to contemporary philosophers seeking to understand the nature of evil.

Privation theorists believe they can offer convincing analyses of evils that, at first glance, appear to be positive rather than privative, such as pain, murder and malice.³ If privation theorists can offer plausible analyses of all forms of evil, and the privation theory is better able to deal with the problem of evil than non-privation theories, there will be considerable pressure on contemporary moral theorists to adopt, or develop, privation theories of evil.

This paper argues that the aforementioned reasons to adopt the privation theory do not justify its adoption: the privation theory is no better at solving the problem of evil than some non-privation theories and the privation theory is not a plausible theory of evil, in either the broad or narrow senses of the term. The privation theory is no better at solving the problem of evil than some non-privation theories since the compatibility of God and evil depends on whether evil can be morally justified and not on whether it has positive or privative existence. There are two reasons to reject the privation theory's characterization of evil: (1) its inability to characterize some paradigmatic cases of evil, and (2) the existence of a contrary theory, the privation theory of goodness, which is no less supported by available evidence.

II. THE PRIVATION THEORY OF EVIL

According to the privation theory developed by Saint Augustine, all of God's creation is good. Evil consists in the absence of substance, being or goodness. For example, disease is evil because it is the absence of health which is good, and injustice is evil because it is the absence of justice which is also good.⁴ However, Augustine is careful not to call every lack of goodness an evil, for he writes "[a]re you right to condemn something that is as it ought to be? I think not: you should condemn only what is not as it ought to be."⁵ Evil only consists in a lack of goodness that ought to exist by nature, that is, according to the nature of the thing in question; only then do we have a true privation rather than a mere lack. Thus, it is not evil that stones do not see and that humans do not fly, for while seeing is good, it is not a good that stones have by nature, and while flying is good, it is not a good that humans have by nature.⁶ On the other hand, humans are supposed to have healthy bodies and thus disease, which consists in the absence of health, is an evil to which humans are susceptible. Similarly,

Augustine believes that it is human nature to act virtuously and so acting viciously is an evil to which humans are susceptible.⁷ The privation theory helps solve the problem of evil because if evil is a privation of substance, being or goodness, then God creates no evil. Once this has been established, a theodicy must only show that God is morally justified in allowing privation evils to exist by not creating more good.

Before discussing genuine problems for the privation account, we should dispel a common misconception of the theory which has led to some unfair criticisms. This misunderstanding charges that by equating evil with the absence of being or goodness, the privation theory denies the existence of evil. The critic then exclaims that it is absurd to deny the existence of evil given the obvious suffering and vice that occur in the world.⁸ But this criticism misses the point. The privation theory does not deny the existence of evil, it characterizes evil as the privation of being or goodness. For instance, according to the privation theory, the evil of callousness is an absence of compassion and not some positive attribute or property. Describing callousness as an absence of compassion in no way denies the existence of callousness. The privation theory asserts that evils, such as callousness, *exist* as privations of being or goodness.

III. THE FIRST PROBLEM: THE PRIVATION THEORY'S INABILITY TO CHARACTERIZE PARADIGMATIC CASES OF EVIL

Let us now move on to genuine problems for the privation theory of evil. The first problem is familiar in the literature but is often only sketched in outline, without attention paid to possible responses.⁹ This has given privation theorists the false impression that it can be averted.¹⁰ The problem is that in some cases evil is not just the absence of goodness but rather some positively bad existing prop-

erty or quality, and thus, the privation account of evil cannot characterize all forms of evil. For instance, the malicious torturer is not just not as good as she might be. She is not simply withholding gestures of kindness which a morally decent person would bestow; her actions are positively bad and these actions are constituted by attributes she possesses, i.e., desires for other people's pain for pleasure, and not by attributes she lacks. Similarly, pain is not simply the absence of feeling or pleasure, it is a positively bad sensation or feeling.¹¹ The absence of feeling or pleasure is numbness or experiential paralysis; it is akin to the way a body part feels under local anaesthetic. Pain, on the other hand, is a felt quality, one that we typically try to avoid.

A privation theorist might argue that pain just is a lack of pleasure even though it appears to be its own phenomenological experience. For instance, if some people typically experienced much more pleasure than most of us do now, then what seems like mild pleasure to us would feel like pain to them. Imagine a rich boy who grows up in a life of luxury, always receiving whatever he wants, but who suddenly, at the age of ten (due to some twist of fate), has only what he needs to survive. The loss of luxury to this boy may seem very awful, even painful, compared to a child who has always done with less. But this case does not show that pain consists in the absence of pleasure. The pain we attribute to the riches-to-rags boy is the same sort of phenomenological experience that a normal child would experience if his surroundings suddenly changed for what he perceived to be the worse. The riches-to-rags boy does not experience a great decrease in pleasure which we call pain, but rather, plain old pain caused by the loss of material wealth and comfort. The absence of pleasure, in itself, is not pain, although it may be the cause of pain. Consider the case of a brand new powerful love. In new love every moment spent with our lover is ecstasy. If our lover then goes

away we feel emotional distress due in part to the absence of joy and pleasure that we experience in our lover's presence. But this does not mean that the absence of pleasure or joy is the pain, qua absence of pleasure or joy. The absence of pleasure or joy makes us sad and lonely which is phenomenologically painful. The pain is caused by the absence, it does not consist in it.

Some have argued that the evil of pain is best characterized as an absence of health or normal functioning rather than as an absence of pleasure. However, as G. Stanley Kane points out, the evil of pain is not simply the absence of health or normal functioning since the evil of a throbbing finger is very different from, and more severe than, the evil of a paralyzed finger which is equally lacking in normal functioning or health.¹²

In response Bill Anglin and Stewart Goetz argue that a throbbing finger is a greater evil than a paralyzed finger because the privation of normal functioning is greater with a throbbing finger than with a paralyzed finger.¹³ The privation of normal functioning is greater with a throbbing finger because the pain affects our functioning more globally, making it difficult to concentrate on many tasks, while a paralyzed finger only affects our ability to use our finger. Furthermore, according to Anglin and Goetz we should distinguish between pain as an experienced quality, which is value-neutral, and pain as the absence of normal functioning which is evil. They argue that there is no logical connection between pain as an experienced quality and evil since as an experienced quality pain is often, if not always, good for the person who experiences it. Pain is good for the person who experiences it because it acts as a warning signal to prevent further harm. For example, it is good that we feel pain when we put our hand on a fire because it motivates us to pull our hand out quickly.¹⁴

The problem with Anglin and Goetz's response is that they confuse intrinsic and

instrumental value.¹⁵ They argue that the experienced quality of pain, in itself, isn't an evil for the person who experiences it because pain is instrumental to the prevention of further harm. However, the conclusion they draw does not follow from the premises they use since the experienced quality of pain may be an intrinsic evil even though it is instrumentally good; just as money is intrinsically neutral even though it is instrumentally good.

Similarly, just because a throbbing finger leads to a more global privation of functioning than does a paralyzed finger, it does not follow that the experienced quality of pain, in itself, is not a further evil. In fact, it is hard to see how Anglin and Goetz can seriously maintain that the experienced quality of pain, in itself, is neutral rather than positively evil. Imagine that besides having a paralyzed finger an accident victim loses feeling in other parts of her body and perhaps the ability to feel some emotions as well, so that her normal functioning is deprived to the same extent as it would be if she had a throbbing finger. Would we then say that the evil of the throbbing finger and the paralysis were the same? No, we would not. The evil of the throbbing pain is both different from and more severe than the evil of the paralysis even when there is an equal loss of normal functioning. It seems that the experienced quality of pain, and not just the loss of normal human functioning that accompanies it, is evil in itself and that this evil consists in an agent possessing a disvaluable felt quality which cannot be characterized as a privation.

Anglin and Goetz argue that moral evils are privations as well. They do so by following M. B. Ahern in characterizing moral evils as the nonfulfillment of duties.¹⁶ For instance, the evils of murder and of letting starving people in distant countries die consist in the nonfulfillment of the duties to respect and preserve life. According to Anglin and Goetz, murder is more evil than letting starv-

ing people in distant countries die since it constitutes a greater nonfulfillment of the duty to respect and preserve life.¹⁷ But how is murder a greater nonfulfillment of the duty to respect and preserve life? Sadly, Anglin and Goetz provide no answer to this question. It seems that the only way to account for why murder is a greater nonfulfillment of the duty to respect and preserve life is to refer to the intrinsic disvalue of attributes possessed by the murderer such as her intention and desire to take someone else's life without justification. But these are attributes she possesses, not privations, and thus it seems that even if we describe murder as the nonfulfillment of the duty to respect and preserve life, to distinguish it from other, less evil, forms of failing to fulfill this duty, we cannot characterize it solely in terms of the privation of good properties or attributes. But if, some evils, such as murder, can be fully described only by reference to the possession of certain properties or attributes, we no longer have a privation theory of evil.

To solve this problem a privation theorist might offer analyses that are more specific to each form of evil, but that still characterize evils as the nonfulfillment of duties. For instance, we might analyze murder as the nonfulfillment of the duty to refrain from unjustified killing; letting starving people in distant countries die as the nonfulfillment of the duty to prevent deaths in distant countries; and malice as the nonfulfillment of the duty to refrain from desiring other people's pain for pleasure. However, only one of these analyses adequately describes the evil it is meant to characterize: the analysis of the evil of letting starving people in distant countries die. There is little more to the evil of letting starving people in distant countries die than the nonfulfillment of the duty to prevent people from dying in distant countries. The problem with offering similar analyses for murder and malice is that, although these analyses do not say anything false about the evils they de-

scribe, they do not say enough to be adequate characterizations. For instance, to adequately characterize murder we must say more than that murder is the nonfulfillment of the duty to refrain from unjustified killing: we must say what it is to fail to refrain from unjustified killing. To do so, we must say what it is to kill without justification. But we cannot say what it is to kill without justification without reference to attributes possessed by the murderer, such as her beliefs, desires and intentions. But if our analysis makes reference to attributes possessed by the murderer, we no longer have a privation theory of evil.

Similarly, to give an adequate analysis of malice we must say more than that malice is the nonfulfillment of the duty to refrain from desiring someone else's pain for pleasure: we must say what it is to fail to refrain from desiring someone else's pain for pleasure. To do so, we must say what it is to desire someone else's pain for pleasure. But we cannot say what it is to desire someone else's pain for pleasure without making reference to attributes possessed by the malicious person, such as her beliefs, desires and intentions. But if our analysis makes reference to attributes possessed by the malicious person, we no longer have a privation theory of evil.

As a response to this sort of objection, Donald Cress argues that privations need not consist in the lack of properties or attributes. Having certain properties or attributes can be a privation as well. Cress writes:

[P]rivation is not simply a matter of lacking this or that integral part; having too many parts could also be a case of privation. . . . [W]hat makes the lack (or the having) of something to be privative is whether having or not having that part is an impediment to a thing's being in proper order and measure, i.e., to a thing's performing activities essential to achieving the level of perfection appropriate to the kind of being that the thing happens to be.¹⁸

Thus for Cress, even if pain, murder and malice consist in having, rather than lacking,

properties and attributes, they are still privation evils since they lead to, or consist in, a lack of perfection in a human being. This defense may save the theory, but it does so at the cost of making it utterly vacuous. Certainly evil is a lack of perfection, that is implied by the normativity implicit in the concept. But if the privation theory says anything at all, it says that, as a lack of perfection, evil consists in the lack of some attribute, property or substance. It is only by denying that evil has positive existence as attribute, property, or substance that the privation theory helps solve the problem of evil by implying that all created being is good. Thus, Cress's defense of the privation theory deprives it of its original meaning and purpose by making it trivially true and of no consequence.

IV. THE SECOND PROBLEM: THE VIABILITY OF A PRIVATION ACCOUNT OF GOODNESS

The second problem for the privation account of evil is that we can just as easily say that goodness is the absence of evil as we can that evil is the absence of goodness. For instance, health is just as much an absence of disease as disease is an absence of health, and justice is just as much an absence of injustice as injustice is an absence of justice. So perhaps all created being is evil and goodness is the absence of evil.

Notice that by substituting evil for goodness in a privation account of evil, a privation account of goodness allies evil with being and goodness with its absence. Thus, it is not fair to criticize the privation account of goodness by charging that it implies that the absence of being (i.e., evil) exists and that goodness consists in the absence of the absence of being—which would be absurd.¹⁹ To interpret the privation account of goodness in this way thus misses the point which is that according to this alternative to the privation account of

evil, all created being is evil and goodness consists in a lack of being.

However, it might be objected that we cannot conceive of the world in the way required by the privation account of goodness, for how could many of the good things in the world be conceived of as privations of evil? For instance, how can we conceive of a father's love for his children or the Sun that warms the Earth as privations of evils? I agree that it is difficult to do so. However, as the first problem with the privation account shows, it is just as difficult to conceive of many evil things, such as a torturer's malice or excruciating pain, as absences of good things. Thus, it is just as difficult to conceive of the world in the way required by the privation theory of evil as it is to conceive of the world in the way required by the privation theory of goodness.

It might be argued that the good cannot be characterized as the absence of evil since goodness is conceptually prior to evil.²⁰ For example, it appears that health is conceptually prior to disease since while we cannot conceive of disease without first conceiving of a healthy body, we can conceive of a healthy body without first conceiving of disease. However, when it comes to other goods and evils, the conceptual primacy of the good is not so clear. For instance, it seems that we can conceive of maliciousness without first conceiving of benevolence or any other virtue. We can do so by understanding maliciousness, i.e., desiring the suffering of another person for pleasure, in contrast to indifference rather than in contrast to a virtue. Furthermore, upon reflection, it is not clear that we can conceive of health without at the same time conceiving of disease. Health implies a lack of deficiency or disease, otherwise there is no distinction between the concept of a healthy body and the concept of a living body. Thus, we cannot easily reject a privation theory of goodness by pointing out the conceptual priority of goodness over evil.

The privation account of goodness is incompatible with the privation account of evil since it depends on the positive existence of evil, which the privation account of evil denies, just as the privation account of evil depends on the positive existence of goodness, which the privation account of goodness denies. Since both theories seem equally viable, each is as likely to be mistaken. Given the first problem for the privation theory of evil, which holds equally well for the privation theory of goodness, we should reject both theories in favor of non-privation theories of evil and goodness.²¹

V. DOES IT MATTER IF THE PRIVATION THEORY FAILS?

So it seems that we have good reason to reject the privation theory of evil. But what is the upshot? If we reject the privation theory, must we succumb to the problem of evil and reject theism as well? G. Stanley Kane argues that the privation theory is not required to help solve the problem of evil.²² Evil is compatible with God's goodness if it makes the world better overall and thus is morally justified. If God is morally justified permitting privation evils, as privation theorists allow, then he can be morally justified allowing non-privation evils to occur. As Kane puts it "whether or not there is morally sufficient reason [for evil] is an issue to which the question of the nature of evil is simply irrelevant."²³

In reply, a privation theorist might argue that only privation evils are consistent with an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good creator, since it is morally worse to create evil directly than it is to merely allow evil to exist as a privation of goodness. But, as James Rachels has argued persuasively, it isn't clear that there is a moral difference between allowing evil to occur and bringing it about directly.²⁴ To make his point Rachels has us imagine two cases. In one, Smith sneaks into a bathroom and drowns his six-year-old cousin to gain a

large inheritance. In the other, Jones sneaks into a bathroom intending to drown his six-year-old cousin to obtain a large inheritance. However, just as he is about to commit the murder the boy slips, hits his head and drowns of his own accord. Unlike Smith, Jones does not kill his cousin directly, he merely stands by and allows him to drown. But is his act any less despicable? Rachels writes:

[S]uppose Jones pleaded, in his own defense, "after all, I didn't do anything except stand there and watch the child drown. I didn't kill him; I only let him die." . . . [I]f letting die [or allowing evil] were in itself less bad than killing [or creating evil directly], this defense should have at least some weight. But it does not. Such a defense can only be regarded as a grotesque perversion of moral reasoning. Morally speaking, it is no defense at all.²⁵

If Rachels is correct that there is no moral difference between bringing an evil about directly and allowing it to occur, then it is not morally worse for God to create non-privation evils directly than it is to allow privation evils to occur.

So the privation theory does not help to solve the problem of evil. But what are the alternatives to the privation theory? Privation theorists see the alternatives as wholly unappealing. For Augustine the only alternative to the privation theory is Manichaeism: the theory that the universe is the result of an ongoing battle between two separate substances, goodness and evil, whose origins can be found in two coequal and coeternal first principles: the principle of goodness (i.e., God, or light), and the principle of evil (i.e., the Prince of Darkness).²⁶ The reason Augustine sees Manichaeism as the only alternative to the privation theory is that he believes that if evil has positive existence, it must be the result of a substance originating from some first principle, such as God. But since God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good, he cannot be the origin of evil. Thus, if evil has positive existence, it must be the

result of a substance originating from some other first principle: the Prince of Darkness. However, Augustine's reasoning only works if we accept the metaphysical presupposition that underlying all things are value-laden substances. Otherwise the choice between conceiving of evil as either the privation of goodness or the result of an evil substance is a false dichotomy. Instead we can reject the idea that goodness and evil are the result of underlying substances and contend instead that good and evil depend on properties such as felt qualities and propositional attitudes. For instance, we can hold that pain is neither the result of an evil substance nor the privation of goodness, but rather a experiential property caused by the stimulation of certain nerves. Pain is a felt quality that makes a life go less well, and thus an evil for the person who experiences it. Similarly, we can contend that maliciousness is not a lack of goodness nor the result of an evil substance. Instead, we can contend that maliciousness simply consists in having a particular propositional attitude, namely, a desire for another person's harm for pleasure. We can judge this propositional attitude as despicable enough to warrant the label evil without positing an underlying substance of evil.

In her 1984 book *Wickedness*, contemporary privation theorist Mary Midgley is also pessimistic about alternatives to the privation account. She reasons as follows: if we conceive of evil (in the narrow sense) as a positive feature of human beings, the only candidate seems to be aggression; but, she argues, we cannot equate aggression and evil since aggression is not always bad or wrong, and evil is sometimes passive. Therefore, evil must consist in the privation or denial of positive capacities or virtues.²⁷ Like Augustine, Midgley sets up a false dichotomy. There is no reason to think that evil must consist in either mere aggression or the mere absence of virtue. Instead evil may consist in a variety of properties or attributes, together with the

lack of other properties or attributes that, in combination, we find despicable enough to label evil. For example, a malicious torturer is neither merely aggressive nor merely lacking in virtue. The malicious torturer desires her victim's pain for pleasure. We might say that this is a form of aggression. But unlike aggression, in the unqualified sense, which is sometimes good and sometimes evil, maliciousness is a form of aggression that is always evil. It may be good to be aggressive, in the unqualified sense, in circumstances where we must protect ourselves or others from unjust harm. But it is never good to desire other people's suffering for the purpose of obtaining pleasure from that suffering, i.e., to be maliciously aggressive. So the malicious torturer cannot be characterized as merely aggressive. In Section III it was argued that the malicious torturer cannot be characterized as merely lacking in virtue either. Part of the evil of malicious torture consists in lacking a desire that our victim is spared suffering. But the privative part of malicious torture does not capture what is most essential to it: the desire for someone else's pain for pleasure. And the desire for a victim's pain for pleasure is a positively bad propositional attitude that cannot adequately be described as the absence of something good.

Other forms of evil are mostly, or wholly, privative in nature. For example, callousness consists in being indifferent to another person's well-being. A plausible theory of evil must accommodate both positive and privative forms of evil. Pace Midgley, there is nothing preventing non-privation theories of evil from doing so.

VI. NON-PRIVATION ACCOUNTS OF EVIL

In recent years several non-privation theories of evil have been offered.²⁸ These theories attempt to capture what is distinctive about evil in the narrow sense, i.e., meaning only the most despicable sorts of acts, characters and events. It is beyond the scope of this

paper to discuss the merits and demerits of the various non-privation theories that have been offered. Instead a plausible non-privation theory of evil will be sketched: the desire account of evil.²⁹

The desire account begins with the assumption that there are nonmoral evils in the broad sense, i.e., what we might call intrinsic bads or disvaluable states of affairs. In Section III we learned that some of these nonmoral evils, such as pain, are positive rather than privative since they consist in the presence of positively bad properties or attributes. But there are also privative nonmoral evils, such as the absence of pleasure and proper functioning. The best known non-privation theory of nonmoral evil is hedonism. According to hedonism, pain is the only positive nonmoral evil while the absence of pleasure is the only privative nonmoral evil. Other value theories include positive evils such as false belief and failure, and privative evils such as the nonfulfillment of desires and the lack of proper functioning.³⁰ The desire account of evil is consistent with most, if not all, theories of nonmoral evil. This paper will not argue for any particular theory of nonmoral evil. However, since it has been shown that pain is a positive intrinsic nonmoral evil, only non-privation theories of nonmoral evil seem tenable.

Nonmoral evils inflicted upon persons constitute harms. According to the desire account of evil, evil, in the narrow sense, consists in causing someone else significant harm from a certain sort of motivational disposition. This motivational disposition is best captured by the notion of an e-desire set. An e-desire set consists in a desire for a victim's significant harm (or for something inconsistent with a victim being spared significant harm) together with the lack of a stronger desire that the victim is spared the suffering, for an unworthy goal. It is difficult to specify exactly how much harm constitutes significant harm, but it is easy enough to get the general idea. A light pinch on the arm is not a significant

harm for most human beings; being tortured or killed is. To be evil, the harm must be either desired or allowed to occur since evil invites a high degree of moral condemnation which is only appropriate when the harm is desired or allowed to occur by the perpetrator. Also the act is only evil if the harm is desired, or allowed to occur, for an unworthy goal. A goal is worthy of a harm when it makes for a state of affairs that is on balance more valuable than if the harm had not occurred; otherwise the goal is unworthy of the harm. For example, desiring someone else's significant harm to prevent greater harm to others is a worthy goal for which to desire the harm.³¹ Desiring someone else's significant harm for one's own pleasure, or to avoid a trivial harm, is not a worthy goal for which to desire someone else's significant harm.

According to the desire account of evil, some evils are mostly privative in nature while others are mostly positive. For instance, extreme callousness resulting in significant harm, is an evil that consists primarily in lacking a desire that someone else is spared significant harm. The extremely callous person commits an evil act when his indifference to his victim's suffering is coupled with a desire for his victim's significant harm or for something inconsistent with his victim being spared significant harm, for an unworthy goal. For instance, it would be evil for John to be so indifferent to the well-being of a pedestrian that he runs her down to get home slightly earlier than he would otherwise, just

because he has a preference to be home as early as possible.

Malicious torture, on the other hand, is an evil that is mostly positive rather than privative. Malicious torture results from a desire for a victim's significant harm for pleasure. When such a desire is coupled with the lack of a stronger desire that the victim is spared the suffering, the result is evil if successfully acted upon.

The desire account is able to give plausible characterizations of evils as varied in their motivational structures as callousness and malice because it does not attempt to characterize all evils as privations of goodness or as the possession of some single property, attribute or substance, such as aggression. So it seems that evil, in the narrow sense, is best captured by non-privation accounts that allow for both positive and privative forms of evil. The same is true of evil in the broad sense since only theories that allow for both positive and privative forms of evil can account for the evils of both pain and paralysis.

Thus, privation theories of evil fail to capture the notion of evil in either the narrow or broad sense of the term. Since non-privation theories capture the nature of evil better than privation theories and since privation theories are no better at solving the problem of evil than some non-privation theories, there is no reason for contemporary philosophers to revive the privation theory of evil. The privation theory of evil should be put to rest.

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NOTES

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1. See, e.g., Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Joel Feinberg, "Evil," in *Problems at the Roots of Law: Essays in Legal and Political*

Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Ernesto V. Garcia, "A Kantian Theory of Evil," *The Monist: An International Quarterly Journal of General Philosophical Inquiry*, vol. 85, no. 2 (2002), pp. 194–209; Eve Garrard, "The Nature of Evil," *Philosophical Explorations: An International Journal for the Philosophy of Mind and Action*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1998), pp. 43–60; John Kekes, *The Roots of Evil* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005); Adam Moron, *On Evil* (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Laurence Thomas, *Vessels of Evil: American Slavery and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

2. St. Augustine, "On the Morals of the Manichaeans," in *Writings in Connection with the Manichaean Heresy*, trans. Rev. Richard Stothert, vol. 2, *The Works of Aurelius Augustine: Bishop of Hippo*, ed. Rev. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1872), chap. 7, sec. 10, p. 57.

3. See section III.

4. Augustine, *Confessions*, book 7, chap. 12, secs. 18–19, pp. 124–125; and "Reply to Manichaeus' Fundamental Epistle," in *Writings in Connection With the Manichaean Heresy*, vol. 2, *The Works of Aurelius Augustine: Bishop of Hippo*, chap. 35, sec. 39, p. 136. See also Donald X. Burt, *Augustine's World* (London: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 17–18.

5. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), book 3, chap. 15, p. 100.

6. These examples come from St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Jean Oesterle (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), question 1, article 3, response, pp. 20–21.

7. Augustine, "Reply to Machichaeus' Fundamental Epistle," chap. 35, sec. 39, p. 136.

8. See, e.g., H. J. McCloskey, "God and Evil," in *God and Evil*, ed. N. Pike (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 65. G. Stanley Kane discusses this misconceived objection in his "Evil and Privation," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 11 (1980), pp. 44–45.

9. See, e.g., Kane, "Evil and Privation," pp. 48–52; H. J. McCloskey, *God and Evil* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), pp. 32–34; John F. Crosby, "Is All Evil Really Only Privation?" *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, vol. 75 (2001), pp. 197–209.

10. See, e.g., Bill Anglin and Stewart Goetz, "Evil Is Privation," *International Journal of Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 13 (1982), pp. 3–12; M. B. Ahern, "The Nature of Evil," *Sophia*, vol. 5 (1966), pp. 35–44; Donald A. Cress, "Augustine's Privation Account of Evil: A Defense," *Augustinian Studies*, vol. 20 (1989), pp. 109–128.

11. I do not mean to imply that all pains are the same. They are a heterogenous group of felt qualities, some of which are purely physical while others are emotional. So it might be more precise to talk of pains as a class of sensations and feelings. Some have argued that pain is not a sensation or feeling, but instead an attitude or tone towards sensations or feelings. However, I think there are good arguments against this view of pain and so I will use 'pain' to refer to a class of sensations and feelings. See David B. Seligman, "Masochism," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 48, no. 1 (1970), pp. 67–75; Irwin Goldstein, "Pain and Masochism," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, vol. 17 (1983), pp. 219–223. See also Roger Trigg, *Pain and Emotion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

12. Kane, "Evil and Privation," pp. 49–51.

13. Anglin and Goetz, "Evil Is Privation," p. 7.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–7.

15. Crosby makes a similar point, "Is All Evil really Only Privation?" p 201.

16. Anglin and Goetz, "Evil Is Privation," pp. 4–5, 7–8. See also Ahern, "The Nature of Evil," pp. 40–42.

17. Anglin and Goetz, "Evil Is Privation," pp. 7–8.
18. Cress, "Augustine's Privation Account of Evil," p. 118.
19. I thank John Corgan and participants at a symposium entitled "Morality and Faith" at King's College, London, Ontario, February 2004, for pointing out this apparent objection.
20. Crosby holds this view, "Is All Evil really Only Privation?" p. 207.
21. The first problem for the privation theory of evil can be applied to the privation theory of goodness because there are goods that cannot be characterized as privations of evil. For instance, pleasure is not just the absence of pain and benevolence is not just the absence of desires for other people's suffering.
22. Kane, "Evil and Privation," pp. 52–56.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
24. James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia," *The New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 292 (1975), pp. 78–80
25. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
26. Augustine, *Confessions*, book 5, chap. 10, sec. 20, p. 85; and book 7, pp. 111–132.
27. Mary Midgley, *Wickedness: A Philosophical Essay* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 3–15.
28. See, e.g., the theories listed in note 1.
29. For more about the desire account of evil, see my "Evil, Ignorance and the 9/11 Terrorists," *Social Philosophy Today*, vol. 20 (2004), pp. 53–66; "The Apparent Banality of Evil," *Journal of Social Philosophy*, vol. 34, no. 3 (Fall 2003), pp. 364–376; and "Towards a Theory of Evil Acts," in *Earth's Abominations: Philosophical Studies of Evil*, ed. Daniel M. Haybron, Value Inquiry Book Series (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 51–61.
30. For more about theories of nonmoral evils, see James Griffin, *Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement and Moral Importance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 7–72; Thomas Hurka, *Virtue, Vice and Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 15; Shelly Kagan, *Normative Ethics* (Boulder, Colo.: WestviewPress, 1998), pp. 29–41; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 1–29; and Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 493–502.
31. But that does not necessarily make the act right, just not evil.