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EVIL AND SUFFERING IN THE EVOLVING UNIVERSE

Introduction

The problem of evil is one of the oldest and one of the most persistent that still escape the satisfactory explanatory grasp as one tries to reconcile evil with the idea of the infinite power and goodness of God. In particular, the massive death and suffering caused by the totalitarian regimes of the 20th greatly intensified this question and led many to deny the omnipotence of God.¹ At this point one may rightly ask: is this really the rejection of God as a supreme being having the dominion over the Universe or it is just the inability to reconcile evil and suffering with an anthropomorphic idea of God developed in a specific cultural setting? This and other questions remain central to the classical discipline of philosophy known as theodicy and make its inquiries a truly pressing task even for the present day. There exists an immense number of studies on the issue of evil, but its complex character still seems to elude exhaustive treatment.² These stud-

¹ E.g., Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992).

² E.g., Nick N. Trakakis, ed., *The Problem of Evil: Eight Views in Dialogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Daryl Koehn, *The Nature of Evil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Dlaczego zło? Rozważania filozoficzne* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1995); Aleksander Bobko, *Myślenie wobec zła* (Kraków–Rzeszów: Instytut Myśli Józefa Tischnera, 2007); John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Marilyn M. Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974).

ies engage not only religious and philosophical treatises but some major literary works of such renowned writers as Lev Tolstoy, Fiodor Dostojewsky and Albert Camus. The weight of the problem of evil strikingly comes to the fore in the famous declaration of a British philosopher and psychologist, James Ward, who asserted that „if the problem of evil is altogether insoluble, there is an end of theism.”³

The complexity of the nature of evil manifests itself in its three basic kinds that are typically distinguished: the *physical*, the *moral* and the *psychological*. Each of them finds its expression in a corresponding myth that stands at the beginning of an attempt of the human mind to grasp the mystery of evil. As Kropf points out, these are the myths of the primordial chaos, the myth of the fall of Adam and Eve and the myth of man as a hero.⁴ The fact that evil has been captured in so many mythical accounts indicates that even our current conceptualizations are most likely burdened with artifacts of mythical nature and are in constant need of purification. Although the classical philosophical tradition opts for the negative ontological status of evil, the immensity of evil experienced in the 20th century makes this position hardly tenable. Kropf asks the following question:

What then, is the nature of evil? Who can say? Surely it is negativity, non-being, disorder, pure nothingness, where being, order and harmony should exist. Just as surely it is positive, for it equally something, anything and anybody that stands in opposition to the self-donation of God in love. Disorder, non-being, and nothingness are abstractions. Disordered beings, evil persons, deformed societies are not. They are real, they exist, and we shall probably see more of them and worse in time to come.⁵

The aim of this article is to systematize, supplement and critically assess some of the current positions in the debate on the influence of the dynamic picture of the Universe with the theory of evolution as the primary mechanism of the increase of complexity and the origin of life on the interpretation of the problem of evil. Studies in this area are mainly conducted within a new paradigm of theology known as *evolutionary theology* which assumes the dynamic picture of the Universe as its conceptual foundation.⁶ The most detailed analyses of this problem with many ingenious solutions and far reaching consequences have been offered by

³ James Ward, *The Realm of Ends or Pluralism and Theism. The Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of St. Andrews in the Years 1907-10* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).

⁴ Richard W. Kropf, *Evil and Evolution: A Theodicy* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004), 37-53.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶ E.g., John F. Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008).

John Haught,⁷ Denis Edwards,⁸ Richard W. Kropf⁹ as well as Daryl P. Domning and Monika K. Hellwig.¹⁰ The presented inquiry is a detailed development of some themes on the matter of evil and evolution that have been already indicated by Grygiel.¹¹

The inquiry will proceed in five steps. Firstly, a general outline of the philosophical meaning of evil will be offered in order to set up a proper conceptual background. Secondly, some methodological aspects of theology will be laid out in order to demonstrate the flexibility of theology in accommodating for changing images of the world. Thirdly, a unique line of arguments will follow to clarify why chance does not oppose rationality and why God could use chance events to bring complex structures into being. Fourthly, attention will be directed towards selected tenets of the theory of evolution which have particular importance for the treatment of the problem of evil. This in turn will allow to proceed to the fifth step of the inquiry and demonstrate why by being desired by God chance revamps the meaning of evil and suffering from longing for the lost paradise into the hopeful expectation of the future harmony and peace.

As old as mankind

The problem of evil is as old as mankind because it is most intimately tied with the human condition and the final destiny of man as well as with the physical environment of man's existence, that is, the Universe. It is not surprising at all that the response to such a pressing issue appeared on the religious niveau long before the onset of the rational philosophical reflection. The major concern expressed in the religious answer to evil that persists until the present day is one of the ultimate liberation and salvation from evil in life after death.¹² For most of the ancient religions, the earthly habitat is marked with dualism, manifesting itself in the personification of the forces of evil. This dualism finds its continuation in the philosophical reflection on evil, which historically commences with the firm acknowledgment of the positive ontological status of evil as a constitutive

⁷ John F. Haught, *Is Nature Enough?: Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 167-215; John F. Haught, *Resting on the Future: Catholic Theology for an Unfinished Universe* (New York-London-Oxford-New Delhi-Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2015), 85-100.

⁸ David Edwards, *Bóg ewolucji: teologia trynitarna* (Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2016).

⁹ Kropf, *Evil...*

¹⁰ Daryl P. Domning, Monika K. Hellwig, *Original Selfishness: Original Sin and Evil in the Light of Evolution* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹¹ Wojciech P. Grygiel, "What is invariant? On the possibility and perspectives of the evolutionary theology", *Studia Koszalińsko-Kołobrzeszkie* 25 (2018), 83-101.

¹² The history of the problem of evil presented in this section is based on: Krąpiec, *Dlaczego zło?*, 10-51.

element of reality. These movements embrace a whole variety of doctrines, with the common denominator being the doctrine on the division of the Universe into two spheres of influence: good and evil. The seat of good is immateriality while the seat of evil is matter which is devoid of form and chaotic. For instance, such concepts are present in the teaching of Plato and the Neoplatonists. The key issue is the formlessness and chaos which qualifies matter as self-existing evil. Matter has no ordering in itself and according to the Neoplatonists it is the last of the emanations and fruitless. The positive metaphysical status of evil contributed to such influential religious movements as gnosticism and manicheism which posed a considerable challenge and threat to Christianity, especially in the early stage of its development.

In its response to manicheism Christianity formulated the dogma of creation *ex nihilo* whereby everything in the created order including matter was subjected to the dominion of God. As a consequence, matter could no longer be the source of evil.¹³ In addition to this, however, theology of creation was shaped by the Platonic thought as exemplified by the teachings of St. Augustine. He maintained that the created order is a reflection of the Divine ideas whereby all that exists appropriately shares in the Divine perfection. The doctrine was then absorbed by St. Thomas Aquinas with his unique insistence on creation as a relation and its thoroughly existential character. What is most important from the point of view of this study, however, is the Augustinian claim on the negative ontological status of evil understood as the absence (privation) of good (*privatio boni*).¹⁴ Evil cannot have a positive metaphysical status because a lack of anything essential in given thing would annihilate its very being.

If one assumes that it is the Aristotelian form of a thing reflecting the Divine idea that brings in the due perfection and ordering the deficiency of that form is considered as evil and may be fittingly expressed as *caerentia formae in subiecto capaci*.¹⁵ Furthermore, it is evident in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas that since God creates through His intellect, the Universe could not have been created by chance.¹⁶ This stance has its obvious roots in the thought of Aristotle, who maintained that chance contradicts rationality since chance has unknown causes. Consequently, there arises a dichotomy between the Divine mind and chance. As Heller points out, this means that manicheism is not totally expelled from creation

¹³ E.g., Olaf Pedersen, *The Two Books: Historical Notes on Some Interactions Between Natural Science and Theology* (Vatican: Vatican Observatory Foundation, 2007), 95-98.

¹⁴ St. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, Ch. 3, Art. 11.

¹⁵ Krąpiec, *Dlaczego zło?*, 56.

¹⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 15, a.1 (Green Bay, Wisconsin: Aquinas Institute – Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Academic, 2012), 173-174.

because chance events slip out of the Divine dominion thereby constituting a reign of their own.¹⁷ In order to revamp this situation, Heller undertakes a great effort to justify that the contemporary theory of probability tames chance, that is, it shows how chance naturally enters the realm of the scientific rationality. By that very fact, it counts as the expression of the immanence of Logos in the created order and becomes yet another tool by which God could have shaped the Universe.

Some methodological issues

When considered from the evolutionary perspective, the problem of evil finds its natural place in a new theological paradigm known as the evolutionary theology. Grygiel has argued that the evolutionary theology is a new stage in the relations between theology and science, in which theology no longer dialogues with science but assumes it as its conceptual foundations.¹⁸ The methodological issues in theology pertinent to the scope of this study have been already discussed by Grygiel elsewhere, and only a few brief remarks will suffice at this point.¹⁹ First and foremost, following Karl Rahner's qualification of the nature of the theological language as amalgam, one needs to assume that each theological expression is metaphorical and as such contains subjective (non-religious) and objective (revealed) elements.²⁰ This means that the subjective elements are variable and can be exchanged to follow the needs of a social and cultural context to which a given revealed message is addressed. Consequently, theology acquires its contextuality and reveals its negative character because the metaphoricity of its language warrants joint predication on what directly pertains and what does not to the Divine reality, whereby tension between what is and what is not sets in.²¹

A particularly important manifestation of the contextuality of the theological language is its dependence on the image of the world. The image of the world can be defined as a set of beliefs on the origin, evolution and structure of the Universe. There is no doubt that the image of the world heavily depends on the development of science, as the scientific discoveries will significantly modify constitutive elements of this image. As Heller insists, it is imperative that theology constantly updates the image of the world implied by its doctrines so that it may retain its

¹⁷ Michał Heller, *Philosophy of Chance* (Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2018), 171-179.

¹⁸ Grygiel, "Evolutionary Theology: A New Chapter in the Relations Between Theology and Science," *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 56.3 (2020), 101-123.

¹⁹ E.g., *ibid.*

²⁰ Karl Rahner, *Magisterium and Theology. Theological Investigations 18* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983), 54-73.

²¹ E.g., Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); Janet M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

credibility²². This insistence reverberates in the 1988 letter of John Paul II to the director of the Vatican Observatory, George Coyne, SJ. The pontiff affirms of the bilateral critical attitude operative in the interaction of science on theology as he boldly proclaims that: "Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish."²³ Following Heller's work Grygiel has also claimed that the scientifically driven theology not only is a continuation but, most importantly, the deepening of the doctrinal tradition²⁴. It turns out that such hope had been already expressed by John Paul II who in another section of the aforementioned letter acknowledges the following:

If the cosmologies of the ancient Near Eastern world could be purified and assimilated into the first chapters of Genesis, might not contemporary cosmology have something to offer to our reflections upon creation? Does an evolutionary perspective bring any light to bear upon theological anthropology, the meaning of the human person as the *imago Dei*, the problem of Christology – and even upon the development of doctrine itself? What, it any, are the eschatological implications of contemporary cosmology, especially in light of the vast future of our universe?²⁵

With these conceptual tools in hand one may expect that by locating the issue of evil in the context of the evolving image of the world, a deeper insight into the mystery of evil will be brought to the fore.

Taming chance

One of the key conceptual achievements that will greatly serve the deepening of the existing approaches to the problem of evil in the evolving Universe is Michael Heller's project of "taming chance" mentioned already in previous sections. Heller aims to demonstrate that God and chance are not opposed, but God could have used chance in the design of the Universe. In other words, chance is not a moment where God loses the control over the Universe but, on the contrary, chance is one of the key constituents responsible for the complexity of life as observed today in nature.²⁶ For instance, such position is expressly endorsed by Edwards, but it lacks appropriate justification.²⁷ Heller locates the prime source

²² Heller, "Scientific Image of the World", *Studies in Science and Theology* 6 (1998), 63-69.

²³ John Paul II, "A Letter to the Reverend George Coyne SJ, Director of the Vatican Observatory," in *Physics, Philosophy and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding*, eds. Robert J. Russell, William R. Stoeger, S. J. and George V. Coyne (Vatican City State 2000), M13.

²⁴ Grygiel, "In what Sense Can the Scientifically Driven Theology Be Considered as a Continuation of the Doctrinal Tradition?" *Theological Research* 6 (2018), 31-52.

²⁵ John Paul II, "A Letter to the Reverend George Coyne SJ," M13.

²⁶ Heller, *Philosophy of Chance*, 199-227.

²⁷ Edwards, *Bóg ewolucji*, 70-85.

of excluding the chance events from the scientific rationality in the teachings of Aristotle where Aristotle maintains that science grasps only these events which happen "always or for the most part."²⁸ Whatever is accidental does not fall under the scrutiny of science. This approach fosters the conviction that chance lies entirely outside the domain of rationality and cannot enter into causal explanations. The upshot of this is that God cannot work by means of chance because by being irrational, chance cannot participate in the Divine Logos. Consequently, God cannot use chance as the plan of His creation. Such an attitude results in the still resonating insistence that the theory of evolution does not square with how God operates and that this theory directly contradicts the Christian faith.²⁹

Heller argues that science tames chance by means of the contemporary theories of probability, among which Kolmogorov's theory plays the dominant role. For instance, probability appears as a key constituent in quantum mechanics as it governs the distribution of the experimental results obtained in measurements performed on quantum systems.³⁰ What is more important from the point of view of this study, however, next to the strategy of necessity implied by the scientific laws of random events that occur by chance figure in as the second essential strategy solely responsible for the growth of complexity in nature. Interestingly enough, this is the strategy of chance that epitomizes the potentialities and the creativity of nature by which the richness of the forms of life could emerge, including entities so complex as the human brain. This creativity arises in the physical and biological systems, which operate far from equilibrium in the non-linear regime. Based on these considerations, chance can be tamed in the sense of being included under the umbrella of scientific rationality.

The second taming that is not expressly mentioned by Heller occurs parallel to the taming of chance is the taming of the concept of matter. This concept is intuitively clear, as it stands for a chunk of stuff occupying a certain volume in space. From the time of antiquity until the present day the concept of matter has undergone a major transformation resulting in its profound "dematerialization".³¹ According to the contemporary standard model of elementary particles matter is but a collection of quantum fields and their excitations and particles acquire their mass in the mechanism of the spontaneous symmetry breaking. Paradoxically,

²⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XI, 1065a.

²⁹ E.g., William Dembski, *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance Through Small Probabilities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁰ E.g., R. I. G. Hughes, *The Structure and Interpretation of Quantum* (Cambridge-Massachusetts, London-England: Harvard University Press, 1989).

³¹ Heller, "Ewolucja pojęcia masy," in *Filozofować w kontekście nauki*, eds. Michał Heller, Alicja Michalik, Józef Życiński (Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, 1987), 152-163.

then, the chaotic character ascribed to matter that decides on its qualification as evil in the ancient images of the world enters into the fabric of the Universe once matter understood as the passive constituent of the physical reality is done away with. This intriguing issue certainly calls for more in-depth justification, which lies far beyond the needs of this study.

Design without a designer

The contemporary theory of evolution known otherwise as the synthetic theory of evolution rests on two pillars: (1) genetic mutations as the source of the random changes of the traits of living organisms and (2) the Darwinian natural selection which preserves the fittest in a given population thereby enabling their genetic information to be transferred to the offspring.³² Moreover, the dynamic image of the world suggests that the history of sentient life and the history of mankind in particular is deeply intertwined with the history of the Universe. As Heller points out, the Universe must be old and large to account for the emergence of the human species.³³

The very nature of the natural selection implies that the development of life does not proceed by means of a careful design, but through a series of adjustments of the already existing structures into randomly changing environment. As a result, these structures are not perfect but reveal many deficiencies and flaws as a remnant of how they struggled for survival in new and sometimes entirely unexpected external conditions.³⁴ For instance, Korzeniewski discusses such an instance as exemplified by the human brain.³⁵ Moreover, the emergence of novelties in nature occurs at the great cost of extinction (death) of a vast number of species, including sentient life that are no longer in existence. As it has been indicated above, the strategy of chance that feeds upon random mutations and random changes of environment has the power to effect constant increase of the complexity of the Universe, resulting in highly complex and evolutionarily costly biological structures. No doubt this gives precise contemporary expression to the theological concept of the *creatio continua* in light of which the Universe can be considered to be an *unfinished* entity with the immanent potential and openness for further development and complexification. Although yet unsupported by the

³² E.g., Douglas J. Futuyma, *Ewolucja* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2008), 271-298.

³³ Heller, *Philosophy of Chance*, 200-201.

³⁴ Francesco J. Ayala, "Darwin's greatest discovery: Design without designer," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104 (2007), 8567- 8573.

³⁵ Bernard Korzeniewski, *Od neuronu do (samo)świadomości* (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2005), 35-37.

theory of the dissipative structures, these ideas provided a foundation for the theory of Teilhard de Chardin whose legacy is widely claimed by the evolutionary theologians referred to within the context of this study³⁶. In a search of a fitting metaphor to portray God jointly utilizing these strategies in His creative activity, a renowned Anglican theologian, Arthur Peacocke, has proposed the now famous analogy of a composer writing a fugue:

I have elsewhere tried to express this situation by seeing God as creator as like a composer who, beginning with an arrangement of notes in an apparently simple tune, elaborates and expands it into a fugue by a variety of devices. Thus, I suggested, does a J.S. Bach create a complex and interlocking harmonious fusion of his original material. The listener to such a fugue experiences, with the luxuriant and profuse growth that emanates from the original and simple structure, whole new worlds of emotional experience that are the result of interplay of the interplay between an expectation based on past experience ("law") and an openness to the new ("chance" in the sense that the listener cannot predict or control it).³⁷

Expectation instead of expiation

Based on the considerations carried up to this point, one easily contends that the onset of the scientifically justified view of the Universe as an evolving entity calls for an in-depth reinterpretation of the understanding of the origin and purpose of evil and suffering. There exists a common agreement among many authors that the reinterpretation of evil and suffering should commence from the analysis of the impact of the theory of evolution on the classical Western doctrine on the original sin, shaped mainly by the theological thought of St. Augustine. This doctrine traces all evil and suffering to the transgression of the Divine command committed by Adam and Eve with the immediate result of the loss of the state of the primordial perfection manifested as death, suffering and concupiscence³⁸. Consequently, the moral evil stands at the root of both physical and psychological evil. The contemporary studies concede that many of the claims of the doctrine in question are no longer tenable, both from the exegetical point of view as well as in confrontation with the evolutionary image of the Universe.³⁹

³⁶ E.g., Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins-Fontana Books, 1974)..

³⁷ Arthur Peacocke, "Chance and Law in Irreversible Thermodynamics. Theoretical Biology and Theology," in *Chaos and Complexity. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, eds. Robert J. Russell, Nancey Murphy, Arthur R. Peacocke (California: Vatican City State-Berkeley, 1995) 140.

³⁸ E.g., *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Art. 402-406.

³⁹ E.g., Daryl P. Domning, Monika K. Hellwig, *Original Selfishness...*; Krystian Kałuża, „Grzech pierworodny w kontekście ewolucyjnego obrazu świata,” in Damian Wąsek ed., *Teologia w dialogu z innymi naukami* (Kraków: Scriptum, 2021), 113-153; Marcin Majewski, „Grzech pierworodny. Nowe modele lektury Księgi Rodzaju w teologii katolickiej w kontekście współczesnych nauk przyrodniczych,” *Periodyk Młodych Religioznawców Ex Nihilo* 17 (2017), 1-47.

First and foremost, the evolutionary origin and development of life is inconsistent with any hypothetical state of primordial perfection prior to the fall. The primordial perfection clearly favors the idea of a designer leaving behind perfected patterns, and does not square with the defective character of many biological systems and structures⁴⁰. Furthermore, physical death cannot be a result of the original sin because it is the very eclipse and ultimate death of a large number of species including sentient life that warrants the emergence of the human species. In other words, death does not follow as the consequence of the original sin, but – on the contrary – it contributes directly to why mankind appeared on Earth. Since the evolutionary origin of mankind involved the death of sentient life, suffering could have been present in the Universe long before mankind commenced its earthly existence. These inferences provide support for the idea of an unfinished Universe in which there is much space for further ordering and bringing forth entities enjoying ever greater level of internal harmony and complexity. Moreover, the evolutionary origin of the human species does not corroborate the idea of *monogenism*, that is its descent from a single couple, because the proper activity of the natural selection takes place in a large enough population only. And finally, it remains highly problematic from the point of view of genetics how a sinful state could be conferred upon the offspring by the means of natural procreation. There exists a broad spectrum of proposals on how to reinterpret the classical doctrine of the original sin as demanded by the achievements of science, but its detailed presentations lies far beyond the confines of this study.⁴¹

Haught begins his incisive analysis with two pointed arguments why the commonly held expiatory character of suffering inflicted by God as means of retribution is no longer sound in the evolutionary image of the world. Instead, an anticipatory approach needs to be assumed. Firstly, as is has been already indicated above, since there had been no loss of primordial perfection through the transgression of the Divine precept, there is nothing to expiate for that would result from an event in a distant past. This inference needs to be supplemented with the observation not mentioned by Haught that the workings of the natural selection are in themselves not perfect – they are not perfect designs, but they are adaptive *ad hoc* corrections introduced to the already existing structures. Secondly, Haught opines that the expiatory character of suffering does not square with the sensation of pain and suffering experienced totally innocently before the emergence of

⁴⁰ E.g., Grygiel, "The doctrine of the intelligent design from the point of view of the cognitive science of religion," *Scientia et Fides* 8.1 (2020), 165-181.

⁴¹ E.g., Antoni Nadbrzeźny, „Od ‘grzechu Adama’ do ‘grzechu świata’,” in Damian Wąsek, ed., *Teologia w dialogu z innymi naukami* (Kraków: Scriptum, 2021), 89-112.

mankind capable of moral guilt. In addition to criticizing the expiatory character of suffering, Haught also rejects attempts to interpret suffering as a Divine pedagogy essential to man's spiritual growth. This is done on the premise that God plays the role of the overseer and the governor of the hypothetical initial cosmic order.⁴²

The idea of the anticipatory character of suffering receives its full conceptual setting as Haught places it in the Universe that by its openness to the constant increase of complexity is called by God to ever fuller being. Haught laments that the prevalent type of religiosity still looks back onto the lost paradise instead of focusing on how the future can be made better. Haught argues that Universe's coming into being finds its proper justification in the biblical idea of the new creation, where not only mankind but the entire Universe will be brought to the ultimate perfection and harmony. In such context, suffering becomes part of the ongoing process of creation itself. Although such an explanation of suffering is an ingenious and promising idea, this is exactly the point where Haught's thinks takes a risky turn.

Haught fully agrees that on a purely natural level, the sensation of pain has adaptive origins as a mechanism of detection of life threatening situations. Haught's main claim in regards to suffering is that it reflects the discrepancy between the actual unfinished and the ideal future state of the cosmic being whereby it becomes "information about the unfinished state of the Universe"⁴³ and a sure sign towards "an eschatological plenitude."⁴⁴ However, he insists that this by no means yields an exhaustive explanation of suffering because science has no access to subjectivity, which is the proper center of sentience and striving that would account for why the future perfection can be anticipated at all.⁴⁵ What seems most bothersome is Haught's attempt to propose "nature's anticipatory deportment" as if the entire Universe were equipped with consciousness of sorts.⁴⁶ This is nothing short of panpsychism.

While insisting that science can never break into the realm of human subjectivity to make it objective Haught does not take into account the ongoing discussions on the *mind-body problem* and, in particular, on the problem of *qualia*. They are the subjective or qualitative properties of experiences among which pain occupies an important position. There is no doubt that *qualia* still resist exhaustive scientific

⁴² Haught, *Resting on the Future*, 96-97.

⁴³ Haught, *Is Nature Enough?*, 184.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 175-180.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

treatment until today, in accordance with their famous qualification by Chalmers as *the hard problem of consciousness*.⁴⁷ Philosophical reflection offers several possible solutions, following the standard proposals put forward in the discussion of the mind-body problem.⁴⁸ Although Haught expressly states that he does not fall into the clutches of the God-of-the-gaps argument, he ends up right in its center just by his *a priori* denial of what could in future receive a fitting scientific explanation.⁴⁹

This argument seems to be much more carefully handled by Edwards. While agreeing on many counts with Haught's position, Edwards makes a convincing case that the cruelty of the natural selection is a blatant anthropomorphism whereby the natural processes improperly receive a moral qualification.⁵⁰ Moreover, by referring to the works of Daniel Dennett⁵¹ he recommends caution in equating pain and suffering in pre-human sentient life. Although purely hypothetically at this stage of investigations, Edward's remarks might find their fitting expression in a solution to the problem of *qualia* within the mind-body debate that bears the name of *eliminativism*. Its major proponents are Paul and Patricia Churchland who stipulate that with the continuing scientific progress the concept of *qualia* will be eliminated as currently understood and will find no place in the future scientific theory.⁵² This of course will not do away with the reality of pain and suffering, but will explain them in terms that belong to the language proper to the discourse of such a theory. Regardless of the radicality of the claims of eliminativism it seems more in line with the specificity of the scientific method to expect that this way or another *qualia* will receive their scientific treatment whereby holding onto the aprioristic stance marshalled by Haught will be relegated to the domain of ideology obstructing the development of science.

With the phenomenon of pain and suffering hopefully awaiting their scientific explanation, the anticipatory justification of suffering forces Haught's into the entrapment with the God-of-the-gaps argument as he famously proposes his metaphysics of the future.⁵³ According to this view, the Divine power acting from the temporal direction into the future is supposed to fulfill the hope of the en-

⁴⁷ David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁴⁸ E.g., Michael Tye, "Qualia," in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2021 Edition), <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/qualia/>> [accessed 4 April 2022].

⁴⁹ Haught, *Is Nature Enough?*, 211.

⁵⁰ Edwards, *Bóg ewolucji*, 56-61.

⁵¹ Daniel Dennett, *Natura umysłów* (Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2021), 182.

⁵² Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1984), 43-45; Paul S. Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1986), 292-293.

⁵³ Haught, *Resting on the Future*.

tire creation for the ultimate perfection of its unfinished state. This unsatisfactory solution can be revamped by shifting the source of the Divine power to the immanence of God as the Divine Logos present in nature and manifest to the human mind through the laws of science.⁵⁴ The full theological stance in which this shift finds its best expression bears the name of *panentheism*.⁵⁵ This stance is expressly acknowledged by Edwards.⁵⁶ The intelligibility of evil and suffering does not to be sought in something that will come, but in the Divinely instituted order of nature. The additional advantage of the shift is that it eliminates the temporal character of the Divine action proper to the metaphysics of the future in favor of God's presence and creative activity as relation to the created order which do not have to assume any temporality, thereby remaining in better agreement with the apparent atemporal character of the physical reality at the Planck level.

Despite of the necessary corrections that need to be introduced into Haught's understanding of evil in the context of the evolutionary picture of the world, it seems that evil's anticipatory character can be fully retained even in the extreme case of the total explainability of human subjectivity and consciousness by science. There is no doubt that suffering as the probe of the unfinished character of the Universe demands a reference frame, that is, the awareness of what the finished and fully harmonious reality would look like. In his clarification of this point Haught remains highly sketchy for he refers to "the mind's innate anticipation of a fullness of being, truth, goodness and beauty looming on the horizon ahead."⁵⁷ After all, this anticipation had been already captured by Plato in his famous theory of forms according to which the human mind has cognitional access these forms in their full perfection while everything in the natural world has flaws. The Divine immanence in the form of the laws of nature involving chance and probability as principles of Universe's creativity suggests that evil as a form of incompleteness and imperfection of the Universe is fully willed by God. In other words, if chance is something that is not chaotic in the sense of being contrary to rationality it means that imperfections belong to the design of the Universe. Such a position is openly endorsed by Peacocke⁵⁸ and Edwards⁵⁹ and it reveals a visible shift in

⁵⁴ Heller, "Scientific Rationality and Christian Logos," in M. Heller, ed., *Creative Tension: Essays on Science and Religion* (Randor: PA, 2003), 47-57.

⁵⁵ E.g., Philip Clayton, Arthur Peacocke, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan-Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004).

⁵⁶ Edwards, *Bóg ewolucji*, 46-54.

⁵⁷ Haught, *Is Nature Enough?*, 209.

⁵⁸ Peacocke, "God's Interaction with the World: The Implications of Deterministic Chaos and of Interconnected and Interdependent Complexity," in *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspective on Divine Action*, eds. Robert J. Russell, Nancey Murphy, Arthur R. Peacocke (California: Vatican City State-Berkeley, 1995), 263-288.

⁵⁹ Edwards, *Bóg ewolucji*, 185.

regards to the classical doctrine where evil is construed entirely negatively and as such cannot be directly caused by God as the plenitude of perfection.

Conclusions

At the final point in the course of this study, one is inevitably confronted with the following conundrum. On one hand, the unfinished character of the Universe manifest in its ubiquitous imperfections effected by the natural selection is consistent with physical evil as non-being due to absence of the due perfection. Consequently, the conclusion that evil has positive metaphysical status, that is, it is something or someone, does not seem plausible. On the other hand, however, the taming of chance makes random events an integral part of the structure of the laws of nature, allowing for the constant increase of complexity and the emergence of the intelligent life. Is it then possible that God wills something that is not? Two answers can be given to this question. The first of them would most likely immediately contest the naturalistic fallacy of the scientific explanation of evil and suffering offered here and with the help of the inaccessibility of subjectivity with the method of science marshaled by Haught reject in as contradictory. The second answer, however, would respect the conceptual depth and richness of evil by claiming that to assert that God wills something that is not means only partial attainment of truth, with the object of the Divine will still evading the rational explanation. In other words, evil is not irrational but still remains beyond our conceptual grasp.

Further analysis of the prospects of the reinterpretation of the problem of evil in the evolutionary image of the world will need to take up two additional issues hardly addressed within this study. First of them is the moral evil as the transgression of the Divine precepts by intelligent beings capable of making free choices. The contemporary science clearly shows that human morality has adaptive origins. Haught suggests that moral actions should be no longer perceived as happening on the stage of the cosmic order, but are strictly intertwined with the unfinished Universe in the state of constant becoming⁶⁰. To put things in short, moral rectitude positively contributes to the process of *creatio continua* thereby showing the responsibility of each moral agent for the “finishing of the Universe” as foreseen by God in His divine plan of creation. The second issue is the shift from the idea of the omnipotent God in favor of a “kenotic” God who self-empties Himself by imposing a self-restraint on Himself in the process of creation. According to a renowned German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, this makes both the initial

⁶⁰ Haught, *Resting on the Future*, 137-147.

as well as the continuing creation though evolution fully intelligible⁶¹. Although many of the inferences and suggestions made in the course of this study qualify as still premature and in need of deepening, they all seem to corroborate Kropf's belief that by placing the problem of evil and suffering in the perspective of the evolutionary image of the world the famous biblical metaphor of the grain of wheat (J 12, 24) receives a novel profound interpretative dimension⁶².

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⁶¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

⁶² Knopf, *Evil and Evolution*, 166.

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Evil and Suffering in the Evolving Universe

A b s t r a c t

The development of science and the onset of the scientific dynamic of the Universe where the growth of complexity and the emergence of life is explained with the adaptive mechanisms of the theory of evolution forces far reaching reinterpretations of such classical philosophical and theological problems as evil and suffering. The presented study aims at the critical assessment and supplementation of the existing reinterpretative proposals in order to substantiate the belief that such manifestations of evil as imperfection, corruption, death and pain belong to the Divine plan of creation and do not have to oppose rationality and the will of God. In order to achieve the full intelligibility of the continuing creation thus conceptualized, one needs to drop the idea of the Divine omnipotence in favor of the Divine kenosis that makes place for God's compatibility with the unfinished state of the Universe.

Keywords: evolution, evil, suffering, chance, creation, theodicy

Słowa kluczowe: ewolucja, zło, cierpienie, przypadek, stworzenie, teodycea