King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199660032.003.0006](https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199660032.003.0006)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Antognazza, M. R. (2014). Metaphysical Evil Revisited. In S. Newlands, & L. Jorgensen (Eds.), *New Essays on Leibniz's Theodicy* (pp. 112-134). Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199660032.003.0006>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Leibniz's Metaphysical Evil Revisited

Maria Rosa Antognazza (King's College London)

Forthcoming in *New Essays on Leibniz's Theodicy*. Edited by Samuel Newlands and Larry Jorgensen. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The sinister shadow of metaphysical evil¹

In the *Theodicy* Leibniz famously distinguishes three kinds of evil: “*Metaphysical* evil consists in simple imperfection, *physical* evil in suffering and *moral* evil in sin.”² The natural interpretation of the notion of metaphysical evil presented in this passage is suggested by what Leibniz says about imperfection in the immediately preceding paragraph (§ 20): “one must consider that there is an *original imperfection in the creature* before sin, because the creature is essentially limited”. According to this reading, metaphysical evil therefore consists “in mere imperfection or the limitation of essence of any finite being”; and this original limitation of creatures qua creatures is “the most basic” kind of evil and “the ultimate source of both physical and moral evil”.³ Yet this interpretation leads to all manner of difficulties which commentators have not hesitated to ascribe to Leibniz. Most importantly, metaphysical evil appears to cast a long, sinister shadow over God's creation. It seems to imply that creatures, simply in virtue of not

¹ Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own. A date accompanied by an asterisk indicates the period from which the text probably dates; a double date indicates the difference between the Julian calendar (old style) and the Gregorian calendar (new style). I am very grateful to Samuel Newlands for his careful and insightful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Thanks are also due to Peter Adamson, Augustín Echavarría, Jeff McDonough, Christia Mercer, Ohad Nachtomy, Paul Rateau, Donald Rutherford, Lucy Sheaf, and my colleagues in the department of philosophy at King's College London for helpful discussions on the issue of metaphysical evil. My greatest debt is to my husband, Howard Hotson, who read several drafts of this paper and contributed many perceptive comments.

² § 21; G VI, 115.

³ Donald Rutherford, *Leibniz and the rational order of nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 10.

being gods, are in some sense intrinsically and inescapably evil, and that this partially but yet necessarily evil nature is the ultimate source of any other evil.

After briefly unpacking this difficulty and outlining a recent attempt to deal with it, this paper returns to the texts to propose a novel and multilayered understanding of Leibniz's category of metaphysical evil by reading it against the backdrop of the traditional typologies of evil with which he was unquestionably familiar. This leads also to a better grasp of Leibniz's category of physical evil as well as to situating more precisely Leibniz's metaphysical evil in the landscape of his metaphysical doctrines.

Many of Leibniz's interpreters have castigated Leibniz for introducing the notion of metaphysical evil and so have modern students of the theodicy problem in general.⁴ Amongst the latter, perhaps the most influential account is that offered by John Hick in his milestone book *Evil and the God of Love*. Hick places Leibniz firmly in the Augustinian-Thomist tradition of theodicy in which, according to his reconstruction, metaphysical evil is "fundamental" and ultimately destructive of any successful theodicy.⁵ According to Hick, metaphysical evil is a key plank in the Neoplatonic story of the great chain of being and the principle of plenitude taken over by Augustine, Aquinas,

⁴ Amongst Leibniz's interpreters see for instance Bertrand Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*. 2nd ed. London, 1937; C. D. Broad, *Leibniz: An Introduction*. Ed. by C. Lewy. London [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, 1975; Robert Theis, "Le meilleur des mondes possibles, le mal métaphysique et le mal moral chez Leibniz," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 34/1-2 (1987): 169-184. See Michael Latzer's discussion of their theses in "Leibniz's Conception of Metaphysical Evil," *Journal of the history of ideas* (1994): 1-15, esp. pp. 2-5, 13-14.

⁵ Cf. John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 1966, second ed. 1977, reissued with a new preface: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, pp. 187-191 ('Metaphysical Evil as Fundamental'). Hick acknowledges that "it may be ... that the creaturely finitude, limitation, and consequent imperfection which the term [metaphysical evil] denotes should not be described as 'evil' " but goes on to say that "it does not greatly matter whether the basic structural characteristic of creaturely existence to which evils are traced is or is not regarded as being itself an evil" (p. 188). On the contrary, it seems to me that it does greatly matter whether in the "Augustinian-Thomist theodicy" creaturely finitude is or is not regarded as being itself an evil. In fact Hick's discussion in this section seems to be grounded in William King's views as expounded in *De Origine Mali* rather than in Augustinian-Thomist views. As I argue below, King's position differs in significant respects from the Augustinian-Thomist-Scholastic tradition, on the one hand, and from Leibniz's position, on the other.

and Leibniz. It implies that the further we go down the chain, the more original and inescapable imperfection and therefore evil we encounter. Creatures become more and more evil in direct correlation with their lower position in the chain. It seems that by the time we get down to the “lowest amoeba or virus”, very little good is left and an enormous shadow of evil has almost entirely engulfed the goodness of being.

This might be the picture implied by some forms of Neoplatonism: in Plotinus’s version of Neoplatonism, at least, matter itself is ultimately identified with evil as the lowest point in the metaphysical chain, in which any residual being and therefore goodness has been completely exhausted. But students of Augustine and Aquinas would object that the appraisal of what Hicks calls the Augustinian-Thomist theodicy is inaccurate. The key reason for this is the sharp distinction between *negatio* and *privatio*. According to the Augustinian-Thomist tradition, evil is not merely a negation or absence of a perfection but a privation of a perfection which a certain kind of thing ought to have according to its nature. This distinction plays a key role in the scholastic ontology of evil, since it allows the denial that every limitation is an evil. Aquinas, for instance, writes in the *Summa Theologica*: “evil is the privation of good, and not mere negation ... therefore not every defect of good is an evil, but the defect of the good which is naturally due. For the want of sight is not an evil in a stone, but it is an evil in an animal; since it is against the nature of a stone to see.”⁶ Francisco Suarez, likewise, explicitly rejects the view that every lack of perfection should be regarded as evil precisely because, if this were the case, every creature would be regarded as evil for the simple reason that it cannot but fall short of divine perfection.⁷ Creaturely limitation is not therefore a privation but a mere negation in creatures of the unlimited perfection proper only of God. Hence creaturely limitation is not evil. Likewise, the absence in certain kinds of creatures of perfections

⁶ Aquinas, ST, Part I, Q. 48, Art. 5. English quotations are from *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Second and Revised Edition. London, 1920. Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

⁷ Suarez, MD, Disputatio XI ‘De Malo’, sectio I, 3 (trans. by Jorge J. E. Gracia and Douglas Davis in *The Metaphysics of Good and Evil According to Suárez. Metaphysical Disputations X and XI and Selected Passages from Disputation XXIII and other Works*. Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 1989, p. 164): “a thing is not evil in that it does not have a more excellent perfection if it ought not to have it; otherwise every creature would be evil in that it does not have the perfection of the Creator.”

which are found in other kinds of creatures is not a privation but a negation. Hence it is not evil.

Pace Hick, the broadly Augustinian-Thomist-Scholastic line of thought should therefore be cleared of the charge of compromising the goodness of creation. But what about Leibniz? Does his introduction of the category of metaphysical evil imply that all creatures are to some extent intrinsically evil simply in virtue of their being creatures? Students of Aquinas have in fact often taken a dim view of Leibniz's theodicy due not only to the doctrine of the best of all possible worlds but also to the notion of metaphysical evil. It has been noted that there is no such category in Augustine, Aquinas, and the theodicy tradition which more directly draws on their teaching.⁸

In order to rescue Leibniz from the disturbing conclusion that he is rendering creatures qua creatures inescapably evil, Michael Latzer has challenged the standard interpretation of Leibniz's notion of metaphysical evil as referring to creaturely limitation. According to Latzer, Leibniz remains in the safe path of the Augustinian-Thomist orthodoxy since the "original imperfection" described in paragraph 20 of the *Theodicy* should not be identified with the "simple imperfection" of paragraph 21. For Latzer, only "simple imperfection" and not the "original imperfection" corresponds to Leibniz's notion of metaphysical evil. The basis of this conclusion is that Leibniz never explicitly calls creaturely limitation 'metaphysical evil'.⁹

⁸ Cf. for instance R. Jolivet, *Le problème du mal d'après St. Augustin* (Paris: Archives de Philosophie, 1936), p. 40: "St. Augustine never denotes as *evil* the limitation of being, essential to every creature, which Leibniz was the first to call *metaphysical evil*." (Quoted from Michael Latzer in "The Nature of Evil: Leibniz and his Medieval Background." *The Modern Schoolman. A Quarterly Journal of Philosophy* 71/1 (1993): 59-69, here p. 65); Laurent Sentis, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin et le mal. Foi Chrétienne et Théodicée*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1992, esp. 257-8.

⁹ Latzer, "Leibniz's Conception of Metaphysical Evil". I am grateful to Lucy Sheaf for drawing my attention to this paper. According to Latzer, the original limitation of creatures is conceived by Leibniz as a precondition of the possibility of evil but not as evil itself. A similar thesis is defended by Ana-Marina Fernández Pérez, "Verwechselt Leibniz 'privatio' und 'negatio'? Anmerkungen zum metaphysischen Übel". In *Leibniz und Europa. VI. Internationaler Leibniz-Kongreß*. Vols I-II. Hanover: Leibniz-Gesellschaft, 1994. Vol I, pp. 228-235. According to Fernández Pérez, for Leibniz there are only two kinds of evil proper: physical and moral evil since metaphysical evil "is not evil in a strict sense" (p. 235). See also Ana-

In view of these different interpretations and of the problems raised by the controversial notion of metaphysical evil, I propose to take a fresh look at what Leibniz says about it. I will come to the conclusion that his notion of metaphysical evil plays two key roles. Firstly, it is Leibniz's way to capture what Aquinas and, especially, Suarez meant by 'natural evil'. Secondly, it covers the notion of original creaturely imperfection. More generally, in typical Leibnizian fashion, the notion of metaphysical evil will appear to be a complex mix of indebtedness to tradition and bending of received doctrines into something significantly different.

Existing taxonomies

Let us begin by looking at the taxonomies of evil current in Leibniz's time. The first interesting thing to be noted is that, despite Leibniz's reassuring claim in the *Tractatio de Deo et Homine* (c. 1702) that "Good and evil are usually understood in three ways, Metaphysical, physical, and moral", this trichotomy was not a standard division. In particular, Leibniz seems, so far as we know, to have been the first to use the expression "metaphysical evil".¹⁰ In his *Remarques* on William King's *De Origine Mali* appended to the *Theodicy*, to be sure, Leibniz claims that King divides evil "like us into metaphysical, physical and moral. Metaphysical Evil is that of imperfections; physical Evil consists in pains and other similar inconveniences; and moral Evil in sins."¹¹ But on closer

Marina Fernández Pérez, "Relación entre los conceptos de privación y negación y el mal metafísico en la filosofía de G. W. Leibniz". In *Agora* XIV/1 (1995): 157-164.

¹⁰ As first pointed out by G. Grua, *Jurisprudence universelle et Théodicée selon Leibniz*, Paris: PUF, 1953, p. 354, T. Campanella distinguishes three ways in which evil can be present in physical, moral, and metaphysical realities (*Atheismus triumphatus seu reductio ad religionem per scientiarum veritates*, Roma, 1631, p. 32: "therefore Evil in the World does not exist according to the truth of a being, but only respectively in physical things, privatively in moral things, negatively in metaphysical things.") Although Campanella does not distinguish three kinds of evil, it is interesting to note his association between evil and negation when evil is considered from a metaphysical point of view.

¹¹ *Remarques sur le Livre de l'origine du mal*, § 7; G VI, 406: "Chapter II provides the Anatomy of Evil, dividing it like us into metaphysical, physical and moral. Metaphysical Evil is that of imperfections; physical Evil consists in pains and other similar inconveniences; and moral Evil in sins." See also G VI, 400. It is not certain whether Leibniz read King before or after he had come to his distinction between

inspection it turns out that Leibniz's metaphysical, physical, and moral evil are quite different from what King calls evil of imperfection, natural evil, and moral evil. Indeed, if we take a closer look at Leibniz's trichotomy against the backdrop of other taxonomies of evil available to him, it becomes apparent that Leibniz was proposing something unusual.

Augustine, Aquinas, and Suarez

In standard taxonomies of evil, the constant reference point was obviously Augustine. Augustine had suggested that all evil is ultimately either *malum culpae* or *malum poenae*, that is, either evil of fault (sin) or evil of penalty / punishment for sin.¹² The *malum culpae* has the character of action; the *malum poenae* of passion. The former is evil done or evil-doing, the latter is evil suffered as a consequence of evil done.¹³ This key distinction between *malum culpae* (which is evil voluntarily done) and *malum poenae*

metaphysical, physical and moral evil. *De Origine Mali* was first published in London in 1702 (a further edition appeared in the same year in Dublin). Leibniz's discussions with Sophie Charlotte from which the *Theodicy* originated took place in the summer of 1702. We also find this distinction already in the *Tractatio de Deo et Homine* (1702*). My guess is that Leibniz read King *after* he had formulated his own distinction, since he explicitly mentions that the book, first published in London, was then reprinted in Bremen. The only copy of *De Origine Mali* preserved at the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek is this Bremen edition of 1704 and all evidence suggests that this was Leibniz's own copy (I am grateful to Maria Marten of the GWLB for this information).

¹² See Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram Imperfectus Liber* (PL 34, 221): "all that which is called evil is either sin or the punishment of sin." Cf. also Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio* I, i (PL 32, 1221-22: "Indeed we are accustomed to call [something] evil in two ways: in one, when we say that everyone has done evil; in the other, when something of evil is endured") and Angelo Cupetioli (pseud. for Gabriele Gualdo), *Theologia Moralis et Contemplativa S. Augustinii Augustini*, Venice, 1737-1741: "How many kinds of evil there are", p. 9: "One evil is sin, another is punishment of sin ... In fact there are only two [kinds of] evil".

¹³ As Aquinas writes in *De Malo*, calling upon Augustine's authority: "punishment differs from moral fault in that the latter consists of acting, and the former in being acted upon, as Augustine makes clear in his work *On Free Choice*, where he calls moral fault the evil that we do, and punishment the evil that we undergo." Aquinas, *De Malo*, Q. 1, Art. 4 (citations from Aquinas' *De Malo* are from Richard Regan's translation in Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Aquinas refers to Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio* I, i (PL 32, 1221-22).

(which is evil unwillingly suffered) constituted the backbone of the traditional taxonomy of evil.¹⁴

An immediate question raised by this distinction, however, is whether it really captures every major kind of evil. Thomas Aquinas discusses this issue at length in both *De Malo* (Q. I, Art. 4) and the *Summa Theologica* (Part I, Q. 48, Art. 5). His considered answer is that, yes, this distinction is adequate but it applies only to “voluntary things”. The thrust of Aquinas’s answer in the *Summa* is that the *malum culpae* and *malum poenae* are proper only of “rational creatures which have a will”¹⁵ and which therefore (ultimately) bear moral responsibility. As he explains in *De Malo*, this is because “it belongs to the nature of moral wrong to be willed, and it belongs to the nature of punishment to be unwilled, and only an intellectual nature has a will.”¹⁶

Aquinas is rather unforthcoming, however, on the question of what we should then say about “non voluntary” things. He acknowledges the existence of a kind of evil which is not captured by the Augustinian distinction between fault and punishment – namely natural evil affecting creatures independently of moral responsibility – but his focus remains on rational creatures and the kinds of evil proper to them. In his own *De Malo*, Francisco Suarez is more explicit in addressing the issue of natural evil, which he contrasts with the evil which affects a being insofar as (*quatenus*) this entity or agent is free:

evil is divided into natural and moral. Natural evil is every privation of a natural good that a nature ought to have or all that by its own nature is disagreeable for another nature. Moral evil, on the other hand, is disagreeable to a free nature insofar as it is free. Hence, natural evil is found in all things lacking reason and extends also to intelligent things insofar as they have a nature of their own and require some

¹⁴ Cf. for instance Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Encyclopaedia, Septem Tomis Distincta*. Vol. 2, Herborn, 1630, p. 586: “Here it is usual to hand down the doctrine of moral evil or evil of sin, and of evil of punishment [doctrinam de malo morali sive culpae, et de malo poenae]”.

¹⁵ See ST, Part I, Q. 48, Art. 5 (Aquinas’s answer to objections).

¹⁶ Aquinas, *De Malo*, Q. I, Art. 4. A few paragraphs below he reiterates: “it belongs to the nature of moral wrong to be voluntary, and it belongs to the nature of punishment to be contrary to one’s will”.

natural perfection from which they can be deprived without their consent or free cooperation. But moral evil is found only in a free nature [insofar] as it is free[.]¹⁷

The following points should be noted about this definition: 1) natural evil is either a privation of some good (some perfection) which a certain kind of being ought to have, or something the nature of which damages or destroys another nature; 2) natural evil is the kind of evil proper to beings lacking reason but it extends also to rational beings insofar as they are considered as natural beings as opposed to beings endowed with will and freedom; 3) moral evil is proper only to free beings and only insofar as they act freely, that is, in so far as they can bear moral responsibility for their action; in this consists the difference with natural evil.

Let us pause for a moment to consider further the first point. Suarez distinguishes here between cases in which evil is the privation of a due perfection, and cases in which something – e.g. an earthquake or a harmful animal -- is evil only insofar as it adversely affects other beings. In scholastic terms, in the case of earthquakes and the like, we are dealing with *malum alteri* (evil to another). It is important to recall in this connection a key distinction re-proposed by Suarez, namely the distinction between *malum in se* and *malum alteri* (expressed by Aquinas as *malum simpliciter / secundum quid* or, by others, as *malum absolute / respective*).¹⁸ According to the scholastic tradition, the ontological status of evil in itself (*malum in se*) or taken formally (*formaliter*), is that of non-being and mere *privatio boni* (privation of good). Understood however as *malum alteri* (evil to another) evil is not reducible to non-being. As *malum alteri* evil does have a positive ontological status. There are beings which *in respect to others*, or in relation to *something else*, are evil. There are natures which, despite expressing in themselves a degree of being and therefore a degree of goodness, are evil in respect to other natures. There is therefore a legitimate sense in which some evil is not merely non-being: earthquakes, tsunamis, and viruses are beings and yet are (in some important sense) evil. As we will see, these points are relevant to the interpretation of Leibniz's notion of metaphysical evil.

¹⁷ Suarez, MD, Disputatio XI 'De Malo', sectio II, 2 (trans. by Gracia – Davis, p. 181).

¹⁸ Suarez, MD, Disputatio XI 'De Malo', sectio II, 1.

If we turn our attention to the early eighteenth century, the most significant taxonomy of evil is that presented by William King in *De Origine Mali* (London, 1702; Bremen, 1704). King identifies three kinds of evil: the evil of imperfection, natural evil, and moral evil. The definition of evil of imperfection as “the Absence of those Perfections or advantages which exist elsewhere, or in other Beings”¹⁹ is strikingly out of step with the scholastic view rooted in Augustine, Aquinas and Suarez’s teaching that only the lack of a perfection due to a certain kind of being should be considered as evil. In other words, King resolutely disregards the distinction between *privatio* and *negatio*. His third chapter (*De Malo defectus*) is devoted to the evil of imperfection (*malum imperfectionis*) and draws a frankly Platonic and Neoplatonic picture. God is the highest being, and from him, in a continuous chain of being, we descend to less and less perfect creatures in a progressive loss of perfection and being, until we reach the complete absence of being, the non-being of nothingness.

King’s discussion of natural evil (chap. IV) is also more closely moulded by Neoplatonism and its view of matter (identified with non-being) as the root of evil than by the traditional Augustinian-Thomistic theodicy. According to King, natural evil includes a great variety of things, all conceived as the consequence of some natural lack of perfection: generation and corruption (sect. I); animals and their variety (sect. II); death (sect. III); passions (sect. IV); hunger, thirst, and labour (sect. V); the propagation of species, childhood, and old-age (sect. VI); diseases, wild beasts, and venomous creatures (sect. VII); and the errors and ignorance of men (sect. VIII). Moreover, despite King’s initial definition of natural evil as “Pains and Uneasinesses, Inconveniences and Disappointment of Appetites”,²⁰ this notion should not be conflated with that of *malum poenae*. Unlike the *malum poenae*, King’s natural evil is not seen as primarily a consequence of sin but as a necessary by-product of the great chain of being, the principle of plenitude and the connection of all parts in the world-machine. Accordingly, natural

¹⁹ Quotations are from the English translation which appeared in Cambridge in 1758 (*An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, here p. 92).

²⁰ King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, p. 92.

evil is not specifically associated with rational creatures as free and morally responsible, although King is clearly concerned primarily with those pains and uneasinesses which affect humankind.

On the other hand, King describes moral evil as “vicious Elections, that is, such as are hurtful to ourselves or others”,²¹ and understands moral evils as “those Inconveniences of Life and Condition which befall ourselves or others through wrong Elections”.²² He is therefore combining under the notion of moral evil both ‘evil done’ and ‘evil suffered’ as a result of these actions -- namely, the traditional *malum culpae* and *malum poenae*.

Leibniz’s key texts on the taxonomy of evil

The Theodicy and the Tractatio de Deo et Homine

With these distinctions in mind, let us return to Leibniz. The first presentation of his taxonomy of evil in the *Theodicy*, in the passage already quoted at the beginning of this paper (§ 21, G VI, 115), is very brief: “*Metaphysical* evil consists in simple imperfection, *physical* evil in suffering and *moral* evil in sin.” A more illuminating explanation is found in the *Tractatio de Deo et Homine*, probably composed in 1702. It is possible that this was the first written mention of metaphysical evil by Leibniz, or for that matter by anyone else:

Metaphysical Good and Evil is perfection and imperfection in general, but in particular is taken to be those goods and evils which fall upon non-intelligent creatures or creatures considered as if [*tanquam*] non-intelligent. Physical good and evil is usually taken to be the conveniences and inconveniences of intelligent creatures, obviously insofar as something pleasing or annoying befalls them and to this pertains the *malum poenae*. Finally Moral Good and Evil is a virtuous or a vicious action, and to this pertains the *malum culpae*. (G VI, 32)

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Ibi*, p. 203.

In this passage metaphysical evil is defined as “imperfection in general”.²³ This is consistent with the *Theodicy* definition of metaphysical evil as “simple imperfection”. At this point, however, Leibniz introduces a key distinction between metaphysical evil, on the one side, and physical and moral evil, on the other side. Metaphysical evil is proper to beings lacking reason although it can also relate to rational beings but not insofar as they are rational. On the contrary, physical evil and moral evil are proper only to rational beings.²⁴ Moreover, Leibniz explicitly indicates that his distinction between physical and moral evil mirrors the distinction between *malum poenae* and *malum culpae*.

Leibniz is not just paying lip-service to the tradition here. The traditional categories of *malum poenae* and *malum culpae* have two key features: 1) they encompass evils proper only to rational beings, and 2) the *malum poenae* is the consequence of the *malum culpae*. Both features are found in Leibniz’s categories of physical evil and moral evil. In fact in the *Theodicy* we read that “*physical evil*, that is, pains, sufferings, miseries” are “consequences of moral evil.” (§ 241; G VI, 261) “One suffers because one has acted”, Leibniz writes: “evil is suffered because evil is done” (§ 241; G VI, 261). Unlike King’s categories of natural evil and moral evil -- where natural evil is not primarily the consequence of sin, and moral evil is conceived as both the evil action and the consequences suffered for that action -- Leibniz’s categories of physical evil and moral evil mirror closely the passive and active character of the *malum poenae* and *malum culpae* as well as their link with moral responsibility. In line with Aquinas and Suarez, Leibniz thinks that it is ultimately the freedom of rational beings that makes these two kinds of evil appropriate, as it were, to them. As he writes at the very beginning of the *Theodicy*: “Freedom is judged necessary, in order that Man may be judged culpable and punishable.” (§ 1; G VI, 102)²⁵

²³ Cf. also *Remarques sur le Livre de l’origine du mal*, G VI, 406: “Metaphysical Evil is that of imperfections”.

²⁴ Leibniz says this here explicitly of physical evil, but in other texts which we will consider below he makes the same point regarding moral evil.

²⁵ Note that the distinction between “physical” and “moral” evil is attested in Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (2nd ed. Rotterdam: Reiniers Leers, 1702, vol. 2, p. 2025; entry “Manichéens” footnote D) where physical evil is described (as in Leibniz) as the punishment of moral evil.

The Theodicy and the Causa Dei

All this is borne out by another important text in which Leibniz discusses his taxonomy of evil. In the *Causa Dei* he writes (G VI, 443):

29. So far concerning the will, now concerning *the reason of willing*, that is, concerning *Good* and *Evil*. Both are threefold, Metaphysical, Physical and Moral.

30. *Metaphysical* [good and evil] in general consists in perfection and imperfection of things indeed non-intelligent. Christ said that the heavenly Father cares for sparrows and the lilies of the field, and, according to Jonah, brute animals lack reason but God has it for them.

31. *Physical* [good and evil] is taken to be in particular the conveniences and inconveniences of intelligent substances, and to this point pertains the *Malum Poenae*.

32. *Moral* [good and evil] concerns their virtuous and vicious actions, and to this point pertains the *Malum Culpa*: and physical evil in this sense is wont to originate from moral evil, although not always in the same subjects; but nevertheless this observable diversion is fruitfully corrected so that the innocents do not wish not to have suffered.

A couple of paragraphs later Leibniz again distinguishes “Metaphysical and Physical Evils” as, respectively, “imperfections in things”, and “evils of punishment in persons [mala poenae in personis]” (*Causa Dei*, § G VI, 444). In the First Table appended to the *Causa Dei* Leibniz summarizes his taxonomy of evil as follows: “Metaphysical -- of the non-intelligent; Physical, to this point *malum poenae*; Moral, to this point *malum culpa*.” (G VI, 461)

It is true that Leibniz also proposes a broader understanding of metaphysical good and evil, one that includes both intelligent and non-intelligent creatures, and that therefore embraces physical and moral good and evil: “considering the metaphysical good and evil which is in all substances, whether endowed with or devoid of intelligence,

and which taken so broadly would include physical good and moral good, it must be said that the Universe, such as it actually is, must be the best of all systems” (*Theodicy*, § 263, G VI, 273).²⁶ When perfection and imperfection are considered *simpliciter*, they embrace all kinds of perfection and imperfection, and therefore also physical good and evil as well as moral good and evil. In turn, there is no doubt that, for Leibniz, perfection and imperfection considered *simpliciter* correspond to metaphysical good and evil.²⁷ However, the focus of this passage of the *Theodicy* is not on the taxonomy of evil but on the claim that the total quantity of good is greater than the quantity of evil. When Leibniz is primarily interested in defining which kinds of evil there are, and how they are distinct from one another, metaphysical evil is seen (as in Suarez’s natural evil) as proper to non intelligent beings although it extends also to intelligent beings but not qua intelligent and free agents.

In the long quotation from the *Causa Dei* just cited, Leibniz also raises the issue of the suffering of the innocent as a consequence of moral evil.²⁸ He is clear that although human beings suffer as a consequence of moral evil, often this suffering is a consequence not of their own moral evil but of that of others. “It is true,” he writes in paragraph 241 of the *Theodicy*, “that often one suffers for the evil actions of others” (G VI, 261).²⁹ Most importantly, he does not go on to suggest (as a follower of Augustine might have done)

²⁶ Cf. also *Theodicy*, § 209 (G VI, 242): “perfection includes not only *the moral good* and the *physical good* of intelligent Creatures, but also the good which is simply *metaphysical*, and which concerns also non-rational creatures. It follows that the evil which is in rational creatures occurs only by concomitance, and not by antecedent wills but by a consequent will, as being enveloped in the best possible plan; and the metaphysical good which includes everything causes the need of sometimes making place for physical evil and moral evil”.

²⁷ See for instance *Tractatio de Deo et Homine*, G VI, 32: “Metaphysical Good and Evil is perfection and imperfection in general”.

²⁸ This is captured by the words: “and physical evil in this sense is wont to originate from moral evil, although not always in the same subjects; but nevertheless this observable diversion is fruitfully corrected so that the innocents do not wish not to have suffered.” This thought is amplified in § 55 of the *Causa Dei* where Leibniz adds: “And thus afflictions will not only be abundantly compensated, they also serve to the augmentation of happiness; nor are these evils merely useful, they are also needed.” (G VI, 447)

²⁹ *Theodicy* § 26 (G VI, 118) gives the example of Caligula or Nero. Each on their own has caused more suffering “than an earthquake”.

that -- due to original sin -- no human being is really innocent of moral evil and for this reason all human beings deserve the *malum poenae*. On the contrary, Leibniz is shocked and scandalized by Augustine's view that infants who die without baptism should be condemned to eternal suffering as a punishment for original sin. He clearly rejects the view that Adam and Eve's original sin *on its own* justifies the *malum poenae* (or, in his interpretation, physical evil) in other human beings.³⁰ Leibniz suggests instead that we can be certain that this kind of suffering will be recompensed by "a greater happiness."³¹ According to Leibniz, therefore, some truly innocent individuals suffer the consequences of moral evil committed by others -- although we are certain that justice will be restored to them by a recompense which will surpass the evil suffered. I leave aside here the question of whether this is a satisfactory answer. Likewise, I cannot explore the issues of whether Leibniz's account of physical evil implies that only rational beings suffer, and of whether such suffering is distinct from the pain that animals also seem to experience.³² I am here merely interested in noting that Leibniz's claim that physical evil is the consequence of moral evil does not imply the Augustinian view that no human being who suffers is truly innocent.

³⁰ As he writes in the *Theodicy* (§ 283, G VI, 285): "In the dogmas themselves of the Disciples of Saint Augustine, I could not savour the damnation of unbaptized infants, nor in general damnation coming from original sin alone." Leibniz sees original sin as being merely a disposition to sin which affects all human beings, rather than as a fault for which they deserve punishment. See Elmar J. Kremer's illuminating paper on "Leibniz and the 'Disciples of Saint Augustine' on the Fate of Infants Who Die Unbaptized." In *The problem of evil in early modern philosophy*. Edited by Elmar J. Kremer and Michael Latzer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001, pp. 119-137, here p. 128.

³¹ § 241, G VI, 261. Echoing Augustine, Leibniz writes that "it is impossible that an innocent be miserable under such a master as God" (§ 250; G VI, 265) but instead of interpreting this Augustinian view as showing that no one is innocent since everyone suffers, he castigates Augustine for not having seen that the consequence of his own doctrine is that infants who die unbaptized cannot possibly be damned. Cf. also *Theodicy* § 284, G VI, 286: "Under a just God, no-one can be unhappy if s/he does not deserve it, *neque sub Deo justo miser esse quisquam, nisi mereatur, potest. Lib. 1. c. 39.*" See Augustine, *Contra Julianum* (*Opus Imperfectum*), tomus I, liber 1, caput 39 (in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. 85/1).

³² Leibniz touches upon these issues in § 250 of the *Theodicy*.

Even more importantly for the purposes of this paper, according to Leibniz there is also evil which is simply *not* the consequence of moral evil. This kind of evil cannot fall under the category of physical evil. It would in fact be unworthy of God's justice to think that such evil is punishment for sin – *malum poenae* -- since it affects beings which do not bear moral responsibility. God cares also for these beings and for the privation of good which might affect them. This is where the *Causa Dei*'s scriptural remark on God caring about the lilies, sparrows and brute animals leads. As we read in the *Theodicy* (§ 246; G VI, 263-4): “God does not neglect inanimate things; they do not feel, but God feels for them. He does not neglect animals; they lack intelligence, but God has it for them.”

Metaphysical evil as natural evil

On the basis of these key texts on Leibniz's taxonomy of evil we can draw a first conclusion regarding his conception of metaphysical evil. One of the main reasons behind Leibniz's introduction of the category of metaphysical evil appears to be his full acknowledgment of a kind of evil which cannot be regarded as punishment for moral evil. Here we encounter the first key function of metaphysical evil for Leibniz: it accounts for the kind of evil that Aquinas and, especially, Suarez called natural evil. In turn, this allows us to reach a more accurate understanding of Leibniz's category of physical evil. Many have assumed that for Leibniz “physical evil” corresponds to the category of natural evil strangely absent from Leibniz's typology, as if “physical” had been used as a synonym of “natural”. According to this common interpretation, Leibniz's physical evil occupies therefore the same conceptual space of King's natural evil.³³ I

³³ Leibniz himself is misleading the reader when in his *Remarques sur le Livre de l'origine du mal* refers to King's natural evil as “physical evil” (see *Remarques*, § 8; G VI, 407). As noted above, unlike Leibniz's physical evil, King's natural evil is not primarily the consequence of sin. In fact, in § 12 of the *Remarques*, Leibniz notes that “the origin” of King's “physical evil” (in King's own terminology, natural evil) “consists [consiste] in the inevitable imperfection of creatures” and is “completely different” from that of moral evil (G VI, 411; see King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, p. 203). Leibniz's apparent carelessness in associating his terminology with that of King seems to me in line with his habit of associating his own

argue, however, that this is incorrect. The notion of physical evil is explicitly identified with the Augustinian category of evil of punishment for sin. On the other hand, the notion of natural evil as a kind of evil which is independent of moral responsibility is subsumed by Leibniz in the notion of metaphysical evil.

Leibniz's examples of metaphysical evil

This reconstruction is confirmed by the examples he gives of metaphysical evil. In the *Theodicy* he lists typical instances of what others had called natural evils: 'monsters' (i.e. congenital deformities and malfunctions), earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and in general natural defects or irregularities.³⁴ As Rudolph Goclenius had defined it in his *Lexicon Philosophicum* – a key reference work in Leibniz's time -- natural evil is "a discrepancy of a thing from the rule of creation or from the rule of nature as generating. To this point pertains Monstrosity [Huc pertinet Monstrum]."³⁵

In the case of congenital deformities and malfunctions, we are dealing with privations of perfections which a certain kind of being is supposed to have according to its own nature. This applies also to the example of metaphysical evil given by Leibniz in a letter to Louis Bourguet of December 1714 (G III, 574): "When an intelligent being loses his/her good sense without pain and without sin (and consequently, without physical evil or moral evil) would you not count this as an evil?" This example is particularly interesting because it concerns the loss of a due perfection in a human being, that is in a being who in principle is liable of physical and moral evil. However, even in the case of human beings, there is a kind of evil which is identified as the naturally occurring privation of a due perfection, and which does not fall under the categories of *malum poenae* or *malum culpae*.

The case of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and so on is different. In such instances we are not dealing with the privation of a due perfection, but with something

original views with received terms which on close inspection turn out to have assumed for Leibniz a quite different meaning.

³⁴ Cf. *Theodicy* §§ 241-245, 247 (G VI, 261-4).

³⁵ Rudolph Goclenius, *Lexicon Philosophicum*. Frankfurt, 1613, p. 663.

which is evil only insofar as it adversely affects other beings. Both cases – the lack of a due perfection and the damaging effects on other natures -- mirror closely Suarez's definition of natural evil as "every privation of a natural good due to a nature [in Leibniz's terms, the 'monsters' discussed above], or all that by its own nature is disagreeable to another nature [in Leibniz's examples, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions etc.]."

Metaphysical evil and possible worlds

Why did Leibniz introduce a new term, 'metaphysical evil', to replace the conventional term 'natural evil'? I believe Leibniz speaks of 'metaphysical' rather than 'natural' evil because of its place within a theodicy built upon the doctrine of possible worlds. Metaphysical evil concerns the nature of possible beings contemplated by God's intellect as constituents of possible worlds. It is at this stage of metaphysical possibility that we find the origin of what others would call natural evil. The reason for God's permission of congenital deformities and malfunctions, and, in general, natural defects or irregularities, is to be found in the natures of things which are compossible in a given world. As the notorious Leibnizian refrain goes, these defects and irregularities are justified by the fact that the world containing them and selected by God is the best of all possible worlds. Such a world contains the maximum of compossible perfection and goodness. Paradoxically one could even push this further by saying that, considering the world as a whole, there is no genuine defect, no perfection which should have been there and instead is not. In fact Leibniz says that God "would reproach himself for the least true defect of the universe, even if it were not perceived by anyone" (*Theodicy* § 246, G VI, 264).

Moreover, Leibniz is quick to note that these so-called defects and irregularities are only *apparent* disorders because, despite such appearances, they do follow order. Echoing the doctrine at the heart of Malebranche's theodicy, namely that God acts by 'volontés générales',³⁶ Leibniz endorses the latter view that "it was better to admit these

³⁶ On Malebranche's theodicy see for instance Donald Rutherford, "Malebranche's Theodicy" and Patrick Riley, "Malebranche's Moral Philosophy: Divine and Human Justice" in *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*, Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 165-189 and 220-261.

defects and these monsters than to violate general laws;" but he also goes beyond it by claiming that "these very monsters are in the rules, and conform to *volontés générales* although we are not capable of discerning this conformity" (*Theodicy*, § 241, G VI, 261). The same applies to natural disasters. An earthquake is the orderly result of certain adjustments of the terrestrial crust. A volcanic eruption is the orderly result of the activity of the magma in the deeper strata of the earth. One is left wondering whether Leibniz's opinion is that, in the world considered as a whole, all these are mere appearances of disorders and irregularities and therefore, after all, not evil.

In any case, notwithstanding the relative perfection of the world as a whole, Leibniz does continue to think that, if we look at the way in which certain events – no matter how orderly -- affect other beings, that is, if we look at evil from the angle of the *malum alteri*, we have to conclude that such events represent genuine evil. Moreover, if we look at individuals affected by the lack of a due perfection, such as the person deprived without fault of his/her reason, we have to regard this as the privation of a metaphysical good to be expected in that kind of being, and therefore as metaphysical evil.

Do these defective creatures have a legitimate complaint against God for having been so created without any moral responsibility for their defects? Not according to Leibniz. Given his denial of the transworld identity of any individual, if a certain creature did not have a certain defect it would not have actually existed, and (Platonically) Leibniz seems to think that to be is better than not to be. In a text of 1689-90 he writes (A VI, 4, 1639): "You will insist that you can complain. Why did God not give you more strength? I reply, If He had done that, you would not exist, for He would have produced not you but another creature".³⁷ One might well object to this view since it is only too easy to find examples of human beings who have reached the opposite conclusion, namely that from their own individual perspective the evil endured is of such magnitude that it would have been better not to be at all. This might indeed be what identifies horrendous evil.³⁸ But

³⁷ *Mentes ipsae per se dissimiles sunt inter se* (March 1689-March 1690*). Trans. by Robert C. Sleigh in his "Introduction" to the *Confessio philosophi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. xl.

³⁸ On horrendous evil see esp. Marilyn Adams, "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God," in M. M. Adams and R. M. Adams, *The Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 209-221.

from the point of view of Leibniz's system, no matter how it will seem to these people, it will *not* turn out to be the case that it would have been better for them not to exist. This life is just a moment of an eternal life in which rational beings can be assured of a reward and compensation for whatever defect (that is, metaphysical evil) or even physical evil they suffered for which they were not morally responsible.³⁹

To sum up, in an Augustian framework natural evil tended to be collapsed into the evil of punishment for moral evil. Since, according to Augustine, no human being is truly innocent due to original sin, everyone deserves to be punished for sin. There is therefore no kind of evil affecting human beings independently of moral responsibility. Leibniz parted company with Augustine in denying that original sin by itself renders everyone guilty and worthy of punishment. Moreover, not only are there truly innocent people. There also exists a kind of evil which is simply not the consequence of moral evil and cannot therefore be conceived as a punishment of sin. Leibniz introduces the novel category of metaphysical evil on top of the two standard Augustian categories (*malum poenae* and *malum culpae*) in order to capture this kind of evil. Metaphysical evil is therefore the evil which affects beings (both intelligent and non-intelligent) through no fault of their own. Physical evil is the punishment of rational beings for evil voluntarily done by rational beings (although not always by those who suffer for it).

Metaphysical evil as creaturely limitation

There is however something more to Leibniz's notion of metaphysical evil which was not included in the notion of natural evil subsumed within it. I come here to the vexed issue

³⁹ Cf. *Theodicy*, §§ 241, 284 (G VI, 261, 285-6); *Causa Dei*, §§ 32, 55 (G VI, 443, 447). It should be noted that this solution leaves open the problem of those people who will endure eternal damnation for their sins. Would it not have been better, at least in their case, not to be at all? And would they not have a legitimate complaint toward God for having been placed in circumstances which could not but result in their sinning? This aspect is discussed by R. M. Adams in a passage of his paper in which he comments on the same text presented here (A VI, 4, 1639) but from the point of view of moral (rather than metaphysical or physical) evil. I suspect that the only way out for Leibniz would be to say that there is no eternal damnation (or, at least, that we do not know for certain whether there is eternal damnation).

of creaturely limitation.⁴⁰ Although it is true, as noted by Michael Latzer, that Leibniz never explicitly calls this limitation metaphysical evil, one would need to give an unnatural reading to the texts in order to exclude from what Leibniz defines as “imperfection in general” that kind of imperfection which he repeatedly calls “original imperfection” and which corresponds to the limitation of creatures *qua* creatures. In my view, creaturely limitation *is* included in what Leibniz means by metaphysical evil. This is in fact a kind of imperfection which *par excellence* cannot be regarded as a consequence of moral evil and therefore as a punishment for it. This is an imperfection prior to sin and due to the very nature of a created being. I believe, therefore, that the second key function assigned by Leibniz to the category of metaphysical evil is that of accounting for creaturely limitation, that is, a kind of imperfection which (as in the case of natural evil) cannot fall under the *malum culpae* and the *malum poenae*.

Negatio and privatio; imperfection and defect

In classifying creaturely limitation as a kind of evil Leibniz is departing from the traditional line. The key point of departure is to be found, in my view, in his disregarding the distinction between *negatio* and *privatio*. This lack of distinction appears clearly in a number of texts and is one of the things which make the notion of metaphysical evil so persistently slippery. For instance, in a letter to Molanus of February 1698 Leibniz refers to creaturely limitation both as *negatio* and *privatio* (A I, 15, 300): “every creature is essentially limited; I call this limitation or negation a privative imperfection [hanc limitationem seu negationem vocabam imperfectionem privativam]”. At the beginning of April of the same year, writing to Johann Chr. Schulenburg, he adds (*Vorausedition* of A II, 3 N. 79): “Without doubt boundaries and limits belong to the Essence of Creatures; now, limits are something privative, and consist in the negation of further progress.”

⁴⁰ It will be shown below that the limitation of creatures *qua* creatures is a more precise notion than that of creaturely limitation, since it specifically points to the common ontological status of creatures as finite beings, as opposed to the different degrees of limitation of different creatures. The notion of creaturely limitation, on the other hand, can refer to both cases.

Other texts repeatedly refer to limitation as if it were synonymous with privation,⁴¹ whereas the scholastic tradition was careful in specifying that not every limitation or negation is a privation.⁴² Likewise, around 1671-1672 Leibniz writes that “*Privation* is the negation of what is possible [*Privatio* est possibilis negatio]” (A VI, 2, 493). Around 1680 he gives the following definitions: “*Good* is that which brings to perfection. On the other hand, *more perfect* is that which involves more essence. *Privative* is that which means negation, *Positive* that which means affirmation. Any finite straight line means negation of further continuation” (*Definitiones*; A VI, 4A, 405). Thirty years later, paragraph 30 of the *Theodicy* (G VI, 119) affirms that “privation constitutes the formal aspect of imperfections [la privation fait le formel des imperfections]”, that is, the nature of any imperfection is that of being a privation.

⁴¹ See *Discourse on Metaphysics*, § 30; A VI, 4, 1577 (quoted below); *Theodicy*, ‘Abregé de la Controverse reduite à des Argumens en forme’ (G VI, 383): “all imperfection comes from limitation, that is, from the privative: for to limit is to refuse progress, or *le plus outre*. ... limitations, or privations, result from the original imperfection of creatures which restricts their receptivity.”; *Examen religionis christianae* (A VI, 4, 2348): “And to this point goes back the opinion of S. Augustine that the cause of evil is not from God, that is, it is not from the positive but from the privative, that is, from that which we have called the limitation of creatures”.

⁴² Aquinas, ST, Part I, Q. 48, Art. 3: “evil imports the absence of good. But not every absence of good is evil. For absence of good can be taken in a privative and in a negative sense. Absence of good, taken negatively, is not evil; otherwise, it would follow that what does not exist is evil, and also that everything would be evil, through not having the good belonging to something else; for instance, a man would be evil who had not the swiftness of the roe, or the strength of a lion. But the absence of good, taken in a privative sense, is an evil; as, for instance, the privation of sight is called blindness.” Aquinas, ST, Part I, Q. 48, Art. 5: “evil is the privation of good, and not a mere negation, as was said above (Article 3), therefore not every defect of good is an evil, but the defect of the good which is naturally due. For the want of sight is not an evil in a stone, but it is an evil in an animal; since it is against the nature of a stone to see.” Aquinas, ST, Part I, Q. 48, Art. 2: “Evil is distant both from simple being [ab ente simpliciter] and from simple ‘not-being [non ente simpliciter],’ because it is neither a habit nor a pure negation, but a privation.” Suarez, MD, Disputatio XI ‘De Malo’, sectio I, 3 (trans. by Gracia – Davis, p. 164): “formally the evil, or evilness, whereby a thing is designated evil, is not a thing or positive form, not is it mere negation, [but] rather, it is the privation of a perfection in being [that the thing] ought to have [sed esse privationem perfectionis debitae in esse].”

Why did Leibniz not endorse this traditional distinction which must have been known to him? It seems implausible that Leibniz simply confused two key concepts on which the scholastic ontology of evil rested.⁴³ The fact that he tacitly abandons the distinction without criticizing it tallies instead with his habit of glossing over disagreement with canonical authorities. Rather than confusion, his unadvertised departure seems to indicate that he was all too aware of his divergence from the traditional path. A clue which might help explain this decision can come from what he adds after his example to Bourguet: by rejecting the notion of metaphysical evil, Bourguet “would merely be changing the meaning of words” (G III, 574). If the primary meaning of ‘evil’ is lack of being – goodness – perfection, then *any* lack of being – goodness – perfection is formally an instance of evil. One must therefore accept the notion of metaphysical evil as indicating any lack of metaphysical goodness. As Leibniz writes in the *Theodicy*: “any imperfection comes from limitation, that is to say, from privation: since to limit is to deny progress or the plus ultra” (“Abregé de la Controverse reduite à des Argumens en forme”; G VI, 383). In short, according to Leibniz, any limitation or negation is a privation of further perfections (that is, an ‘imperfection’), and as a privation it is evil. Following Albert Heinekamp’s lead, this point could be pushed further by locating in Leibniz’s Neoplatonic emphasis on continuous degrees of being (as opposed to Aristotelian kinds of beings) the explanation of his disregarding the distinction between negations and privations. Differences amongst monads are ultimately of degree not of kind. If, ultimately, there are no kinds with specific due perfections the lack of which qualifies as a privation, then any lack of perfection, any negation of being is a privation.⁴⁴ One could object that precisely Leibniz’s conception of individual

⁴³ Augustín Echavarría, *Metafísica leibniziana de la permisión del mal*. Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2011, pp. 86-89 summarizes the interpretations which see Leibniz as ‘confusing’ the concepts of privation and negation. Cf. for instance Paul Rateau, *La question du mal chez Leibniz*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008, p. 583. On the other hand, Fernández Pérez rejects the view that Leibniz merely confuses privation and negation, arguing that Leibniz maintains a distinction between the two concepts insofar as he does not refer to the privation of a due perfection as a negation (see “Verwechselt Leibniz ‘privatio’ und ‘negatio’? Anmerkungen zum metaphysischen Übel”).

⁴⁴ See Albert Heinekamp, “Zu den Begriffen realitas, perfectio und bonum metaphysicum”. *Akten des Internationalen Leibniz-Kongresses: Hannover, 14. - 19. November 1966*. Vol. 1. Wiesbaden : Steiner,

substance as *species infima*,⁴⁵ with the consequent elimination of a species or genus serving as standard against which to measure an individual substance's perfection, insures that each individual substance is exactly what it is suppose to be, with nothing lacking. But this objection fails insofar as *there is* a standard of perfection against which all individual substances are measured, namely God – and in comparison to God any limitation is a privation of perfection.

Unlike King, Leibniz appears however to distinguish between mere imperfection and defect.⁴⁶ This is important, and is rooted in a tradition of which Leibniz is aware. In an extract from J. Caramuel de Lobkowitz, he notes: “The Author subdivides privation into lack of not due form, which is non-defective privation, and lack of due form, which is defective privation or defect.”⁴⁷ Leibniz as well seems to wish to maintain, at least at some level, a distinction between privations (or imperfections) which count as defects, and privations (or imperfections) which do not count as defects. Such a distinction echoes the traditional one between *privatio* and *negatio*. It is not, however, quite the same in one crucial respect. The distinction between *privatio* and *negatio* regards only privations as evil. The distinction between defective and non-defective privations does not rescue the latter from counting as instances of evil: no matter how non-defective they are, they are still privations and therefore formally evil. In sum, given his view that any limitation is

1968, pp. 207-222 and Albert Heinekamp, *Das Problem des Guten bei Leibniz*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1969, esp. pp. 151-156.

⁴⁵ *Notationes Generales*, 1683-1685* (A VI, 4B, 553): “Individual things are in reality the lowest species [Species infimas]”. See also DM, 9 (A VI, 4B, 1541).

⁴⁶ Chapter III of King's *De Origine Mali*, devoted to the “Evil of Imperfection” (p. 103 of the English trans.) is entitled “Of the Evil of Defect” (in the original Latin: *malum imperfectionis* and *De Malo defectus*).

⁴⁷ *Aus und zu Caramuel de Lobkowitz, Leptotatos* 1689*, A VI, 4B, p. 1338. Attention to this text is drawn by Echavarría in *Metafísica leibniziana de la permisión del mal*, p. 97. Echavarría notes that the German Lutheran theologian, philosopher, and mathematician Eilhardus Lubinus (1565-1621), mentioned by Leibniz in § 70 of the *Causa Dei* (G VI, 449), does not distinguish between *privatio* and *negatio* either (Echavarría, *Metafísica leibniziana de la permisión del mal*, pp. 91-97). Pierre Bayle devotes an article of his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* to Lubinus (2nd ed., vol. 2, p. 1910), highlighting the charges of heterodoxy leveled by other Lutherans against Lubinus's treatise on the cause and nature of evil (*Phosphorus sive de prima causa et natura mali tractatus hypermetaphysicus*. Rostock, 1596).

formally a privation of further perfections, Leibniz has no conceptual space for the more robust distinction between *privatio* and *negatio*.

Diversity of perfections and degrees of perfection

It should be noted, on the other hand, that it is not the *diversity* of perfections as such which counts as evil. Leibniz does not regard inequality in perfections amongst beings as disorder, but as a variety and diversity to be celebrated rather than lamented. The classical great chain of being governed by the principle of plenitude can be fully embraced as the implementation of all the compossible degrees of being and therefore all the compossible metaphysical goodness. “One does not count as disorders inequalities of conditions,” Leibniz writes in the *Theodicy*, “and M. Jaquelot is right in asking those who would have everything equally perfect, why rocks are not crowned with leaves and flowers? Why ants are not peacocks? ... The pipes of an organ must not be of equal size” (§ 246; G VI, 263). It is interesting to note that the objection to the notion of metaphysical evil raised by Louis Bourguet in his letter of 15 May 1713 to Leibniz is precisely that the diversity in perfection amongst creatures should not be considered as evil: “as for metaphysical evil, I do not consider it as an evil; therefore it is not evil at all. And it is only very improperly that the name of evil is given to the diversity of perfections of creatures compared with one another. On the contrary, it is a great good which makes the beauty of the universe, and which infinitely shows the wisdom, the power and the goodness of God”.⁴⁸ In his answer Leibniz seems tacitly to indicate that his notion of metaphysical evil is not intended to point at diversity in perfection as a kind of evil.⁴⁹ The example he gives of metaphysical evil falling outside the categories of physical and moral evil, and therefore requiring the introduction of a third category, does not have anything to do with a comparison between more and less perfect kinds of

⁴⁸ Leibniz-Briefwechsel 103, 18 (Hanover, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek).

⁴⁹ G III, 574: “As for metaphysical evil, you say, I do not regard it as an evil; but, Sir, if you admit Metaphysical good, the privation of this good will be a Metaphysical evil. When an intelligent being loses his/her good sense without pain and without sin (and consequently, without physical evil or moral evil) would you not count this as an evil?”

beings.⁵⁰ It is instead a case perfectly in line with the traditional distinction between *privatio* and *negatio*, that is, the lack of a due perfection which would therefore count as evil also on the traditional view. More generally, the whole thrust of Leibniz's thought seems to agree with the position defended by Bourguet according to which *diversity* in perfections, far from constituting a kind of evil, expresses plenitude and richness of being. The fact however remains that *degrees* of perfection correspond to degrees of limitation -- and on Leibniz's account any limitation is a lack of being and therefore evil.

The notion of creaturely limitation

Let us now turn more specifically to the notion of creaturely limitation. On a traditional Christian understanding, the limitation of creatures *qua creatures* is not primarily a matter of different degrees of perfection in different beings. The limitation of creatures *qua creatures*, that is, their common status as finite beings (as opposed to the limitations of one creature in relation to other creatures), affects all created beings in the same way. The closest ancestor of the notion of limitation of creatures *qua creatures* is not the Neoplatonic great chain of being, in which different creatures exhibit descending degrees of perfections, but the Christian doctrine of the origin of creatures out of nothing. The key thought behind the Christian view of creation *ex nihilo* is not that the less perfections creatures have, the closer they are to non-being or evil. Rather, it is the idea that creatures all share in the same way a common origin from nothing out of which they emerge through the power of God. Instead of placing creaturely limitation in a Neoplatonic framework, the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is precisely the point at which Christian thought parts company with Neoplatonism and its doctrine of emanation where a progressive loss of goodness and being finally ends with matter, conceived as total absence of goodness and therefore as evil and non-being. A classical Christian objection to Neoplatonic emanation is that from God can come only God. The Christian Trinity

⁵⁰ On the contrary, the comparison between more and less perfect kinds of beings is at the centre of King's discussion of the evil of imperfection.

was traditionally invoked at this point.⁵¹ From God the Father proceed the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are as fully divine as the Father. If it is God himself processing – as in the Christian Trinity -- there can be no progressive loss of being and goodness. Creatures cannot come from God as if the divine substance were an over-flowing fountain. Had they emanated from God in this way, they would not have been creatures but manifestations of the divine nature itself, with its same undiminished perfection. The Spinozist consequences of such a view are obvious.

Leibniz seems to want to avoid such consequences when, citing Augustine with approbation, he writes in the *Theodicy*, (§284; G VI, 286): “he [Augustine] maintains that from the substance of God, only a God can proceed, and that therefore the creature is plucked from nothingness. Augustine de lib. Arb. Lib. 1 c. 2 [Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, liber I, caput 2, 5; PL 32, 1221]. This is what makes it [the creature] imperfect, defective and corruptible.”⁵² In the *Causa Dei* (G VI, 449) he adds: “a being lacking limitation would be God, not a creature”. Around 1689 he notes down Augustine’s sentence “you made heaven and earth not of yourself, for then they would have been equal to your only-begotten son, and thereby to you ... therefore you made heaven and earth out of nothing” (A VI 4, 1683).⁵³ Already in 1686 in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* he had written: “not only did original sin seize hold of the soul after man’s fall from innocence, but even before this there was an original limitation or imperfection, natural to all creatures, which makes them liable to sin, or capable of going wrong. ... it is to this,

⁵¹ Cf. Augustine, *Confessiones* liber XII, caput 7, 7 (PL 32, 823); Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio* liber I, caput 2, 5 (PL 32, 1221); Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram Imperfectus Liber* (PL 34, 221); Augustine, *Contra Epistolam Manichaeorum quam vocant Fundamenti liber unus* (PL 42, 202): “it is unreasonable to require that things made out of nothing should be as perfectly good as he who was begotten of God Himself.” Trans. by M. Latzer in “Leibniz’s conception of metaphysical evil”, p. 6. The passages from the *Confessiones* and *De Libero Arbitrio* are quoted by Leibniz in *De Rerum Creatione Sententiae*, 1689-1690 (A VI 4, 1683) and in the *Theodicy* (§284; G VI, 286).

⁵² See also *Theodicy*, § 31 (G VI, 121).

⁵³ See Augustine, *Confessiones*, liber XII, caput 7, 7 (PL 32, 823).

in my view, that one must reduce the opinion of St. Augustine and others, that the root of evil is in nothingness, that is, in the privation or limitation of creatures”.⁵⁴

The root of evil is therefore to be found in non-being in a specific sense – that of creation *ex nihilo* -- which was not included in the original, Neoplatonic analysis of evil as privation and absence of being. Precisely this origin *ex nihilo* marks creaturely limitation and creatures’ liability to do evil and, as a consequence, to suffer evil. Since it is the very nature of a creature not to be God, Leibniz notes, resenting God for not changing this fact would be as absurd as resenting God for not making a circle which is not limited by a circumference.⁵⁵ On the contrary, by creating out of nothing the maximum of compossible being and goodness, God is, as it were, eliminating as much non-being (or metaphysical evil) as possible.

However, while Leibniz openly embraces the distinctively Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, he gives to it his own no less distinctive spin, which bends it back in a Neoplatonic direction. Although the issue of the limitation of creatures qua creatures (that is, their common ontological status as finite beings) is not identical with the issue of the degrees of limitation of different creatures, Leibniz weaves them closely together by combining the Christian doctrine of the limitation of creatures qua creatures due to their creation *ex nihilo* with the Neoplatonic view of the different degrees of perfection in things. Creation *ex nihilo* is re-interpreted as represented by his novel binary arithmetic or dyadic in which the numbers 1 and 0 indicate God and nothingness.⁵⁶ God or “the primitive unity” is “the positive”; zero is the “the privative”. As in the binary system all numbers result from the combination of 1 and 0, so creatures are different combinations

⁵⁴ § 30; A VI, 4, 1577. Trans. by Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson in G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Writings*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1973, p. 40.

⁵⁵ This example is found in *Dialogue effectif sur la liberté et sur l'origine du mal*, 25 January 1695, Grua, 365 and in *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken* (first version, January 1699*) A IV, 7, 474, 475.

⁵⁶ See in particular an enclosure of his letter of 18 May 1696 to the Duke Rudolf August of Wolfenbüttel (A I, 12, 66-72, here p. 66). Leibniz gives the following title to his memo for the Duke: “The wonderful origin of all numbers from 1 and 0; this gives a beautiful model of the mystery of creation; since everything originates from God and otherwise out of nothing: the essences of things are like numbers.” Cf. Maria Rosa Antognazza, *Leibniz: An Intellectual Biography*. Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 357-359.

of “the positive” with the “privative”.⁵⁷ In other words, properties of creatures result from a limitation or negation of God’s properties.⁵⁸

Moreover, in order to indicate creaturely limitation, Leibniz uses a distinctive analogy inspired by his studies in physics: “the original limitation of creatures” is similar to the “natural inertia of bodies”, that is, to the natural resistance of bodies to motion. Such resistance is not an action or an active power of bodies but a passivity or lack of receptivity of the active motive force resulting in a “privation of speed”.⁵⁹ This conception of the original passivity or lack of receptivity of creatures to further perfection dovetails closely with Leibniz’s doctrine of primitive passive power or primary matter constitutive – with primitive active power or entelechy -- of any created monad.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Leibniz writes in a letter of 14 May 1698 to Andreas Morell (A I, 15, 560): “God is the primitive unity expressed by all the others according to their capabilities. His goodness moved him to act, and there are in him three primacies [primautés], power, knowledge, and will; from this results the operation or the creature, which is varied according to the different combinations of unity with zero, that is of the positive with the privative, since the privative is nothing but limits, and there are limits everywhere in the creature just as there are points everywhere in a line.”

⁵⁸ On this point see the illuminating paper by Samuel Newland, “Leibniz on Privations, Limitations, and the Metaphysics of Evil” (forthcoming. I am grateful to Samuel Newland for allowing me to read a draft of his paper). See also Heinekamp, *Das Problem des Guten bei Leibniz*, p. 155.

⁵⁹ *Theodicy*, § 30 (G VI, 119-121) and ‘Abregé de la Controverse reduite à des Argumens en forme’ (G VI, 383). See also *Causa Dei*, §§ 70-73 (G VI, 449-450) and *Monadology*, addition to § 42 in the first copy of the manuscript of the *Monadology* corrected by Leibniz (G VI, 613, footnote).

⁶⁰ See for instance Leibniz to De Volder, 20 June 1703 (G II, 252; trans. by R. M. Adams in *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 265): “I distinguish therefore (1) the primitive Entelechy or Soul, (2) Matter, i. e. primary matter, or primitive passive power, (3) the Monad completed by these two, (4) the Mass [Massa] or secondary matter, or organic machine, for which countless subordinate Monads come together [ad quam . . . concurrunt], (5) the Animal or corporeal substance, which is made One by the Monad dominating the Machine.” Cf. also *Extraits de Twisse*, 1695* (Grua, 355-356): “Being posited or actuality, and restriction or the privative are in beings like metaphysical form and metaphysical matter [Positio vel actus, et restrictio vel privativo se habent in entibus ut forma metaphysica et materia metaphysica]. And thus the matter of things is nothing [est nihilum], i. e. limitation; [their] form is perfection.” Attention to this passage is drawn by Gianfranco Mormino, “La limitation originaire des créatures chez Leibniz”. In *La Monadologie de Leibniz: genèse et contexte*. Ed. Enrico Pasini. Paris – Milan: Mimesis, 2005, pp. 55-83 (see p. 74).

In his physical analogy as in his mathematical analogy, the limitation of creatures qua creatures (that is, their common characteristic of passivity or resistance to further perfection, and their common feature of resulting from “positive” and “privative”) translates in terms of degrees of resistance, and of degrees of limitation or privation of perfection. In paragraph 31 of the *Theodicy* Leibniz identifies the source of these degrees of limitation or imperfection in the necessary limitation of creatures qua creatures. He also explicitly mentions not only imperfections but also ‘defects’, that is that specific kind of imperfection that the scholastic tradition would have regarded as a *privatio* as opposed to a mere *negatio*, and that in Leibniz’s scheme of things corresponds to metaphysical evil intended as a kind of natural evil (“les monstres”). Both imperfections in general and defects in particular are ultimately grounded in the fact that creatures qua creatures cannot but be limited (G VI, 121): “imperfections and defects in operations come from the original limitation which the creature could not but receive with the first beginning of its being for ideal reasons which put boundaries on it. Since God could not give to the creature everything without making it a God, there had to be different degrees in the perfection of things, as well as all kind of limitations.”⁶¹

Malum in se as strictly non-being

Augustine was clear that creatures’ origin *ex nihilo*, and therefore their original limitation, should not be regarded as making creatures to some extent evil. He writes in *Against the Fundamental Letter of the Manicheans*: “if we should say that these things made out of nothing are not good things, but that only God’s nature is good, we would be unjust to good things of great value. And there is impiety in calling it a defect in anything

⁶¹ See also *Dialogue effectif sur la liberté et sur l’origine du mal*, Grua, 365: “A. – But where does this original imperfection come from? B. – One can say that it comes from creatures’ Essences or Natures themselves; for the essences of things are eternal ... They do not depend on the will of God, but on his intellect ... It is God’s intellect which is the source of the essences of creatures the way in which they are in him, that is to say, limited. That they are imperfect is only down to their limitation or limits, that is to say, to their participation in nothingness.”

not to be what God is, and in denying a thing to be good because it is inferior to God.”⁶² I think Leibniz would have agreed, despite his regrettable decision to associate creaturely limitation with a kind of evil. I take this view for the following reason. It seems to me that metaphysical evil, intended as this original limitation, has strictly the character of *malum in se*. That is, ontologically, it is strictly non-being. In other words, although creaturely limitation is formally evil (*malum in se*) insofar as it qualifies as an instance of non-being, it does not on its own make a creature to some degree or in some respect evil (as when, for instance, a being is considered from the point of view of *malum alteri/secundum quid*). On the other hand, this necessary limitation of creatures qua creatures makes it possible (although not necessary) that rational and free creatures will chose moral evil (*malum culpae*) thereby causing physical evil (*malum poenae*). The necessary limitation of creatures has as a consequence the *possibility* of moral and physical evil, but not its *necessity*.⁶³

The same applies to the degrees of perfection of creatures. Any lack of perfection, insofar as it is an instance of non-being, is according to Leibniz formally evil (*malum in se*). However, also in the case of the different limitations of different creatures, this does not make such creatures to some degree or in some respect evil because *malum in se* is

⁶² Augustine, *Contra Epistolam Manichaeorum quam vocant Fundamenti liber unus* (PL 42, 202-3). M. Latzer, “The Nature of Evil: Leibniz and his Medieval Background,” p. 62, draws attention to this passage.

⁶³ Cf. *Theodicy*, § 21 (G VI, 115): “although physical evil and moral evil are not at all necessary, it is enough that, in virtue of eternal truths, they are possible”; *Causa Dei*, § 69 (G VI, 449): “the imperfection of actuality consists in privation, and arises from the original limitation of creatures, which they have from their essence already in the state of pure possibility (i. e. in the Region of eternal Truths or in the ideas which show themselves [obversantibus] in the Divine intellect): for something lacking limitation would not be a creature but God. A creature, on the other hand, is said to be limited, because has limits or boundaries to its magnitude, power, knowledge, and to any perfection. Thus the foundation of evil [fundamentum mali] is necessary, but its rising nevertheless contingent, i. e. it is necessary that evils be possible, but contingent that evils be actual”; see also *Theodicy*, § 288 (G VI, 288): “We have established that free will is the proximate cause of the evil of guilt, and consequently of the evil of punishment; although it is true that the original imperfection of creatures which is represented in the eternal ideas is the first and most remote cause.” In an epistolary exchange with Molanus of February 1998, Leibniz maintains that the original limitation of creatures is the ultimate source of evil (“fontem mali”) and sin but forcefully denies that this implies the necessity of sin (A I, 15, 300; see also A I, 15, 301 and A I, 15, 291).

ontologically strictly non-being. In my view, it is precisely because Leibniz fully subscribes to a Neoplatonic conception of the nature of evil as non-being that he is not afraid to categorize creaturely limitation as evil – to think that it would make creatures to some extent evil is equivalent to hypostasizing non-being, no matter how unintended such hypostatization might be.⁶⁴

Conclusion

In sum, by metaphysical evil Leibniz seems to mean two quite different things. One is natural evil, namely a kind of evil which is not related to moral responsibility, such as the naturally occurring lack of a due perfection, and the adverse effects of certain natures on other natures independently of any moral fault. The other meaning of metaphysical evil is the original limitation of creatures due to their origin *ex nihilo*, which in turns grounds the different degrees of perfection of different creatures. These two types of metaphysical evil are linked by their independence from moral evil, and by the fact that one (original limitation) is the condition of possibility of the other (natural evil).

Metaphysical evil therefore plays two key roles. First, it captures what Aquinas and especially Suarez meant by ‘natural evil’. Contrary to the common assumption that it is Leibniz’s category of physical evil that holds the place of natural evil, Leibniz’s physical evil corresponds to Augustine’s category of evil of punishment whereas natural evil -- as conceived by Aquinas and Suarez -- is subsumed under metaphysical evil.

Secondly, the category of metaphysical evil covers also the notion of original creaturely imperfection. Contrary to Latzer, I maintain that Leibniz does classify creaturely limitation as a kind of evil and, in so doing, breaks from the Augustinian-Thomist-Scholastic tradition. The point of rupture is to be found in Leibniz’s removal of one of the keystones of the scholastic ontology of evil: the distinction between *negatio* and *privatio*. By conceiving any negation of further perfection (that is, any kind of

⁶⁴ I cannot explore here whether Leibniz’s association of creaturely limitation with a passive power or with primary matter might be in tension with a conception of evil in se as non-being. See my forthcoming paper “Primary matter, primitive passive power, and creaturely limitation in Leibniz” (*Studia Leibnitiana*; issue on *Leibniz et les Scolastiques*, ed. by Arnaud Pelletier).

limitation) as a privation, Leibniz is forced to conceive creaturely limitation as a privation and, therefore, as formally evil. On the other hand, notwithstanding this important break with the traditional line, Leibniz's notion of metaphysical evil is intended to account for something which is firmly within the broadly Augustinian-Scholastic tradition, namely the ascription to all creatures of a limitation that stems from their being created *ex nihilo*.

Finally, I return a verdict of non-guilty to the charge leveled by Hick and others that Leibniz's metaphysical evil implies that creatures qua creatures are to some extent necessarily intrinsically evil. The basis of my acquittal is that for Leibniz – in agreement with the traditional view -- privations do not have a positive ontological status. Choosing the label of metaphysical evil for what Leibniz had in mind might well have been ill-judged, due to the shadow that such characterization seems to cast on the goodness of creation.⁶⁵ This being said, I hope to have shown that, on close inspection, Leibniz's notion of metaphysical evil is not as sinister as it appears at first sight. Creatures are not to some degree intrinsically evil simply in virtue of not being gods.

⁶⁵ I agree with Paul Rateau's remark that in Leibniz's notion of metaphysical evil there is an ambiguity which renders it unhelpful. See Rateau, *La question du mal chez Leibniz*, esp. pp. 586-7.

Bibliography

(Excluding works cited in the abbreviations list)

M. M. Adams, “Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God”. In M. M. Adams and R. M. Adams, *The Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 209-221.

R. M. Adams in *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Encyclopaedia, Septem Tomis Distincta*. Herborn, 1630.

Maria Rosa Antognazza, *Leibniz: An Intellectual Biography*. Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*. Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Second and Revised Edition. London, 1920.

Augustine, *Confessiones* (PL 32).

Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio* (PL 32).

Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram Imperfectus Liber* (PL 34).

Augustine, *Contra Epistolam Manichaeorum quam vocant Fundamenti liber unus* (PL 42).

Augustine, *Contra Julianum (Opus Imperfectum)*. In *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. 85/1.

Pierre Bayle, *Dictionaire historique et critique*. 2nd ed. Rotterdam: Reiners Leers, 1702.

C. D. Broad, *Leibniz: An Introduction*. Ed. by C. Lewy. London [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

T. Campanella, *Atheismus triumphatus seu reductio ad religionem per scientiarum veritates*. Roma, 1631.

Angelo Cupetioli (pseud. for Gabriele Gualdo), *Theologia Moralis et Contemplativa S. Augustinii Augustini*. Venice, 1737-1741.

Augustín Echavarría, *Metafísica leibniziana de la permisión del mal*. Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2011.

Ana-Marina Fernández Pérez, “Verwechselt Leibniz ‘privatio’ und ‘negatio’? Anmerkungen zum metaphysischen Übel”. In *Leibniz und Europa. VI. Internationaler Leibniz-Kongreß*. Vols I-II. Hanover: Leibniz-Gesellschaft, 1994. Vol I, pp. 228-235.

Ana-Marina Fernández Pérez, “Relación entre los conceptos de privación y negación y el mal metafísico en la filosofía de G. W. Leibniz”. In *Agora* XIV/1 (1995): 157-164.

Rudolph Goclenius, *Lexicon Philosophicum*. Frankfurt, 1613.

G. Grua, *Jurisprudence universelle et Théodicée selon Leibniz*. Paris: PUF, 1953.

Albert Heinekamp, “Zu den Begriffen realitas, perfectio und bonum metaphysicum”. *Akten des Internationalen Leibniz-Kongresses: Hannover, 14. - 19. November 1966*. Vol. 1. Wiesbaden : Steiner, 1968, pp. 207-222.

Albert Heinekamp, *Das Problem des Guten bei Leibniz*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1969.

John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*. 1966. 2nd ed. 1977, reissued with a new preface: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

R. Jolivet, *Le problem du mal d'apres St. Augustin*. Paris: Archives de Philosophie, 1936.

William King, *De Origine Mali*. London, 1702. Bremen, 1704. English translation: *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*. Cambridge, 1758.

Elmar J. Kremer, "Leibniz and the 'Disciples of Saint Augustine' on the Fate of Infants Who Die Unbaptized." In *The problem of evil in early modern philosophy*. Edited by Elmar J. Kremer and Michael Latzer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001, pp. 119-137.

Michael Latzer, "The Nature of Evil: Leibniz and his Medieval Background." *The Modern Schoolman. A Quaterly Journal of Philosophy* 71/1 (1993): 59-69.

Michael Latzer, "Leibniz's Conception of Metaphysical Evil," *Journal of the history of ideas* (1994): 1-15.

G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. by Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson in London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1973.

G. W. Leibniz, *Confessio philosophi: papers concerning the problem of evil, 1671-1678*. Translated, edited, and with an introduction by Robert C. Sleigh, Jr. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Eilhardus Lubinus, *Phosphorus sive de prima causa et natura mali tractatus hypermetaphysicus*. Rostock, 1596.

Gianfranco Mormino, “La limitation originaire des créatures chez Leibniz”. In *La Monadologie de Leibniz: genèse et contexte*. Ed. Enrico Pasini. Paris – Milan: Mimesis, 2005, pp. 55-83.

Samuel Newland, “Leibniz on Privations, Limitations, and the Metaphysics of Evil” (forthcoming).

Paul Rateau, *La question du mal chez Leibniz*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008.

Patrick Riley, “Malebranche’s Moral Philosophy: Divine and Human Justice”. In *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*. Ed. by Steven Nadler. Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 220-261.

Bertrand Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*. 2nd ed. London, 1937.

Donald Rutherford, *Leibniz and the rational order of nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Donald Rutherford, “Malebranche’s Theodicy”. In *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*. Ed. by Steven Nadler. Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 165-189.

Laurent Sentis, *Saint Thomas d’Aquin et le mal. Foi Chrétienne et Théodicée*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1992.

Francisco Suarez, *The Metaphysics of Good and Evil. Metaphysical Disputations X and XI and Selected Passages from Disputation XXIII and other Works*. Trans. by Jorge J. E. Gracia and Douglas Davis. Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 1989.

Robert Theis, "Le meilleur des mondes possibles, le mal métaphysique et le mal moral chez Leibniz," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 34/1-2 (1987): 169-184.