1 New Testament Foundations of the Doctrine of Evil as Privatio Boni in St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas

Describing the demon as a "parasitic being" is theologically apt provided that it is used analogically and properly clarified. For the demon is not a parasite in its existence as such. As a spiritual being, it remains a creature of God, endowed with nature, intellect, will, and specific capacities. All of this, insofar as it exists, is ontologically good. The parasitic character of the demon concerns not its substance, but the manner in which it uses the received existence.

The demon does not create a separate reality of evil. It possesses no "evil substance" that it could introduce into the world. It is neither a second god nor the creator of an anti-world. It can only deform existing good, disrupt its order, detach it from its proper end, and prompt free creatures to use their good faculties in a manner contrary to their purpose. Its action resembles that of a parasite because it needs the good in order to violate it. It uses truth to construct a lie; freedom to lead into slavery; the desire for happiness to direct man toward an apparent good; community to provoke division; life to inflict death.

Evil has no matter of its own. It exists exclusively "within" the good that it damages. Were it to annihilate the good completely, it would likewise cease to exist itself, for lack of a subject in which it could manifest. It is precisely in this sense that the metaphysics of evil is a "metaphysics of nothingness": evil is not absolute nothingness, but a movement toward lack, dissolution, and the loss of the due fullness of being.

1.1 1. A Necessary Distinction: Evil is Not a Mere Absence

The Latin formula *privatio boni* is often too superficially translated as "the absence of good". This can lead to the misunderstanding that evil is merely a subjective impression or the neutral absence of something desired. Meanwhile, classical theology distinguishes between:

simple absence – *negatio*; deprivation of a due good – *privatio*.

A stone does not possess sight, but this is not an evil, because seeing does not belong to its nature. Human blindness, on the other hand, is a physical evil, since man was naturally endowed with the capacity for sight. The silence of a stone is not an evil; the inability to speak in a human being can be a real wounding. The same applies to the moral order: the limited knowledge of a creature is not yet evil, but the deliberate turning of the intellect away from known truth constitutes a lack of due rectitude.

St. Thomas expresses this precisely: evil is not every absence of good, but the absence of such a good as a given being ought to possess according to its nature, vocation, or proper operation. Therefore, the lack of sight in a stone is not an evil, whereas the lack of sight in a creature of a naturally seeing nature is a real privation. *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 48

Privatio boni does not mean, therefore, that suffering, sin, or demonic activity are unreal. It means that their reality is the reality of corruption, not of a separate substance. A hole in a fabric is real as damage, but it does not exist independently of the fabric. Illness is real, but it exists as a disruption of a living organism. A lie produces real effects, but it possesses no truth of its own; it must employ sentences, meanings, and concepts drawn from reality.

Similarly, a demon is a real, personal creature, but "demonicness" is not a substance added to its nature. It is the fixed disorder of its will, relations, and action.

1.2 2. The New Testament: Everything That Exists Comes Through the Logos

The foundation of Christian metaphysics of evil is not abstract philosophical optimism, but faith in the one Creator. The New Testament excludes the existence of an independent, evil source of being.

The Prologue of the Gospel of John speaks of the Logos:

"All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be that came to be" (Jn 1:3).

This sentence sets the boundary for all Christian demonology. If something exists, its existence comes through the Logos. There is no being that possesses an alternative source outside of God. There is no "dark substance" created by the devil, nor a kingdom ontologically parallel to the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, the angel who became the devil came into being through the Word. Darkness is not a second source of being. John emphasizes that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it nor comprehend it. Jn 1

Even more developed form of this principle is contained in the Christological hymn of Colossians 1:15–20: "In him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Paul lists not only visible beings, but also the orders of the spiritual world. Regardless of whether the terms "Rulers" and "Authorities" in a given context denote good or fallen spirits, or generally the powers of the invisible world, the fundamental thesis remains unequivocal: every spiritual nature was created by Christ and for Christ. Col 1

If some of these powers oppose God's design, their rebellion does not establish a new metaphysical foundation. Their existence still comes from God, but the manner in which they use this existence remains contrary to the purpose of creation. A demon cannot free itself from its ontological dependence on the Logos. It can reject God as the goal of its own will, but it cannot cease to receive existence from Him as a creature.

This is one of the deepest contradictions of the demonic state: the demon wants to exist "for itself," while its nature exists through God and for God.

A similar principle is formulated in 1 Timothy 4:4: "For everything created by God is good." The text has an immediate ascetic and polemical significance against contempt for creation, but the principle contained within it is universal. No being is evil because it exists. Evil therefore cannot be a nature created by God. 1 Tm 4

1.3 3. The Biblical Contrast Between Light and Darkness Is Not Dualism

The New Testament frequently employs radical contrasts:

light – darkness; truth – falsehood; Christ – Belial; Holy Spirit – spirit of the world; kingdom of God – power of Satan; life – death.

However, these are not two equivalent orders of being. Dualistic language on a moral and existential level does not imply metaphysical dualism.

Light can exist without darkness; darkness cannot exist without a reality in which light is lacking. Truth can exist without falsehood; falsehood cannot arise without some reference to truth. Life can exist without death; death presupposes the prior existence of life. Good is primary, evil is secondary.

Therefore, John can speak of the dramatic conflict between light and darkness, while at the same time affirming that everything was created through the Logos. Darkness is neither eternal nor creative, nor does it possess life within itself. Its action consists in opposing the light, which it did not create itself and which it is unable to annihilate.

It is precisely in this sense that the devil is a radical parasite of light. He does not produce his own truth, but deforms the truth received. He does not create a separate existence, but attempts to turn existing creation against its source.

1.4 4. "Does not abide in the truth" – the demon as the negation of truth

In John 8:44 Jesus says about the devil:

"He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

The Greek text uses the verb *histēmi* in the form *ouk estēken en tē alētheia* – "does not stand," "does not abide," "is not grounded in the truth." This does not mean that the devil is deprived of all knowledge of reality. After all, the New Testament shows that evil spirits recognize Jesus, know about the judgment, and are capable of uttering formally true statements. "Even the demons believe—and shudder," James 2:19 will say. In the Gospels, they recognize Jesus as the Holy God, the Son of God, and the One who has power over their fate.

The absence of truth "in him" means above all the absence of an existential union with the truth. The demon knows certain true contents, but does not wish to remain within the order of truth. His intellect retains its natural capacity for knowledge, but his will rejects subordination to the known truth.

Demonic falsehood is parasitic on several levels.

First, every falsehood requires a true language. To deceive, the demon must employ real concepts and true elements of reality.

Second, an effective falsehood usually contains a fragment of truth. Pure absurdity does not deceive for long. Temptation thus consists in a shift of proportions: a partial good is presented as the total good, a means as an end, and a creature as an absolute.

Third, the demon does not create human desire. He exploits the desire for good, happiness, freedom, knowledge, security, or love, and subsequently detaches them from their proper order.

Fourth, falsehood cannot annihilate truth, but can only obscure it in a person's consciousness. When the truth is once again known and accepted, falsehood loses its apparent independence.

Therefore, calling the devil the "father of lies" does not make him the creator of some substance called falsehood. He is a "father" in the moral sense: he initiates and disseminates the act of turning the sign, word, and thought away from the truth they ought to serve. Jn 8

1.5 5. "A Murderer from the Beginning" – The Demonic Relationship to Life

Jesus also calls the devil anthrōpoktonos – "a murderer of man," literally "a man-killer." Here, too, the action of Satan is negative. The demon cannot create life, because life comes from God. However, he can strive for its destruction, weakening, and separation from the source.

Death is a particularly expressive image of privation. A corpse does not constitute "a new substance of death." It is a body deprived of the principle of life. Death is a real drama, but its reality consists in separation and the loss of due unity.

The demonic culture of death, therefore, does not consist in creating something equivalent to life. It parasitizes upon life:

- it uses the living will against life;
- it uses reason to construct instruments of death;
- it uses social bonds to organize violence;
- it transforms the desire for security into aggression;
- it turns the self-preservation instinct against another human being.

In this sense, evil can be extremely active while remaining ontologically privative. The activity of the murderer is real, but the evil of his act is not a separate substance. It lies in the lack of the due order of his will and in the deprivation of the victim of the good of life.

1.6 6. "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil"

The First Letter of St. John states:

"The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8).

The object of destruction is "the works of the devil," not the nature of the devil as a creature. This is a distinction of great metaphysical significance. Christ does not fight against existence as such. He destroys sin, death, falsehood, and slavery—that is, the deformations of existence.

The Greek verb *lyō* means to loose, to untie, to break, to annul. Christ "dissolves" the structure of the devil's works. For the operation of evil creates bonds of dependency: sin leads to further sin, falsehood requires subsequent falsehoods, fear leads to slavery, and guilt becomes the basis of accusation. Christ breaks this chain.

Redemption is therefore not an act against creation, but its restitution. It does not consist in adding a foreign nature to man in place of the destroyed one, but in healing, elevating, and bringing the created nature to its fullness. Grace does not destroy nature, but cleanses and perfects it.

From the perspective of *privatio boni*, Christ's saving work can be described as the restoration of the good whose absence constituted evil:

falsehood is overcome by truth; disobedience – by the obedience of Christ; hatred – by love; accusation – by justification; slavery – by the freedom of the children of God; death – by the resurrection; dispersion – by gathering into one Body.

Christ does not respond to evil with a "greater force of destruction." He overcomes it with the fullness of good.

1.7 7. Temptation as Parasitizing on the Good

The description of Jesus' temptation in the desert reveals the devil's method of operation. The tempter does not present evil as evil. Every temptation appeals to some real good:

- bread corresponds to a true bodily need;
- the revelation of divine sonship is true;
- the care of angels is a promise of Scripture;

- the Messiah's reign over the nations belongs to God's plan.

Evil appears only through the removal of the proper order. Bread is to be acquired outside of obedience to the Father. Sonship is to be transformed into a spectacular proof. Providence is to become an object of manipulation. The Kingdom is to be achieved without the cross, at the price of idolatry.

The demon creates none of the goods with which he tempts Christ. He appropriates them and attempts to separate them from God. This is the model of every sin: a created good is removed from the hierarchy of goods and absolutized.

St. Thomas expresses this principle by stating that the will always tends toward something grasped under the aspect of good – *sub ratione boni*. Man and angel do not choose evil because it is evil in the pure sense. They choose a partial good in a disordered manner, bypassing the higher good and the due rule of action. Demonic temptation thus consists in a metaphysical forgery: in presenting a finite good as an absolute good and in passing over in silence the relation thanks to which a created good is truly good.

1.8 8. St. Augustine: The Rejection of the Manichaean Substance of Evil

St. Augustine's teaching on the privatio boni matured in direct dispute with Manichaeism. The Manichaeans explained the world through the conflict of two primordial principles: good and evil, light and darkness. Evil was supposed to possess its own substance and a separate source. Such a solution seemingly absolved the good God from responsibility for evil, but at the cost of limiting His omnipotence and denying the unity of being.

Augustine realized that if evil were a substance, insoluble difficulties would arise:

- if God created it, God would be the creator of an evil nature;
- if God did not create it, He would not be the sole source of everything that exists;
- if evil were eternal, we would have two absolute beginnings;
- if an evil substance could violate God, God would not be immutable;
- if it could not violate God, it would be difficult to explain why it should constitute a real counterpart to Him.

In Book VII of the Confessions, Augustine describes how he came to the conviction that everything that exists is good to the measure that it exists. Created beings are not the highest and immutable Good, which is why they can be subject to corruption. Corruption, however, is not a substance. It is a diminution or loss of good.

Augustine argues: something can undergo corruption only when it possesses a good that can be violated. That which is deprived of all good would no longer have anything that could be corrupted. Moreover, if it lost all good, it would also lose existence. Absolute evil would therefore be equivalent to absolute nothingness. St. Augustine, Confessions, VII

In the Enchiridion, Augustine presents this principle in an almost axiomatic form: nature as nature is good because it comes from the highest Good. Created good can be diminished, but as long as it exists, it retains some good. There is no evil where there is no good that could be deprived of its due fullness. St. Augustine, Enchiridion, 10–14

1.9 9. Corruption Confirms the Goodness of Nature

The Augustinian reasoning can be summarized as follows:

Every being, as existing, possesses a certain goodness. Corruption is the loss or diminution of goodness. Only something that previously possesses goodness can be subject to corruption. The complete loss of goodness would mean the complete loss of existence. Therefore, evil cannot exist on its own. It always requires a good subject which it deforms.

This principle also applies to demons. A fallen angel can be morally evil precisely because he still possesses a good nature capable of action. If his nature were absolute evil, he would possess neither intellect, will, power, nor even existence. He could not know, choose, hate, tempt, or suffer.

Paradoxically, therefore, the demon's very capacity to do evil testifies to the preserved goodness of his created nature. His intelligence is a good; the evil is the manner of its use. His will as a spiritual faculty is a good; the evil is the entrenched disorder of its act. His power is a good as the natural perfection of a creature; the evil becomes the directing of this power against the proper end.

The demon is at once:

- ontologically good as a creature;
- morally evil as a person entrenched in the rejection of God.

This is not a contradiction. "Good" and "evil" are predicated here in different respects. Ontological goodness signifies the fact of creation, the possession of nature, and participation in existence. Moral evil signifies the lack of the due ordering of the free will toward the supreme Good.

1.10 10. The Augustinian "Deficient Cause"

Augustine presents the most radical analysis of the origin of the evil will in Book XII of The City of God. He asks what caused the evil will of the angel. He rejects the search for its ordinary efficient cause, because every positive cause, as existing, possesses goodness.

Augustine writes that the evil will does not have an "efficient" cause—causa efficiens—but a "deficient" or "faulty" cause—causa deficiens. The evil will is not the production of a new thing, but a defect: a defection from Him who exists in the highest degree toward something that possesses less being. Searching for a positive cause of this deficiency is like trying to see darkness or hear silence. St. Augustine, The City of God, XII

This should not be understood as if sin had no author or did not entail responsibility. The evil will is the cause of the evil act. However, there is no prior "substance of evil" that would produce the evil will and absolve the person from responsibility.

The angel becomes evil through his own act. He does not receive evil from God, he is not created by another evil principle, nor is he forced into rebellion by his own nature. His will is good as a faculty; its act becomes evil due to a lack of proper orientation toward God.

The defect does not precede free choice like an external force. It manifests itself within the choice itself.

1.11 11. Turning Away from God and Turning Toward a Lower Good

For Augustine, sin has a twofold structure:

aversio a Deo – turning away from God; *conversio ad creaturam* – disordered turning toward the creature. The creature toward which the sinful will turns is not evil in itself. Evil consists in the wrong manner of loving. The will chooses a lower good against a higher good or attempts to possess a created good without reference to God.

Therefore, it should not be said that the demon "chose nothingness" in the sense as if nothingness could be the object of desire. The will cannot desire absolute nothingness as a good. The demon chooses himself,

his own perfection, his own power, or his own independence, but he chooses them in a way detached from God. He chooses something real and good in the order of creation, but he wants it in a manner contrary to the truth of his own being.
Nothingness appears not as a direct object of choice, but as its consequence. Turning away from the source of existence, the will directs itself toward ontological impoverishment. It wants to preserve the received being, and at the same time reject the relation through which this being exists and achieves fulfillment.
The demonic state is therefore internally contradictory: the demon wants the good of his own existence, but does not want this existence as a gift.

1.12 12. Pride as an Attempt to Appropriate Being

In the Augustinian tradition, the fundamental sin of evil spirits is pride. This does not merely mean an exaggeratedly high opinion of oneself. Its metaphysical core is the attempt at self-constitution: the desire to possess the good not as a gift received from God, but as an independent property.
However, creation cannot become the source of its own existence. It can receive the good, participate in it, and respond to it with love, but it cannot make itself the first cause. Demonic pride is an attempt to deny this dependence.
The demon does not simply desire to "be." Being is in accordance with the will of God and constitutes the good. It desires to be *a se* — "from itself," on its own terms, as an autonomous center of purpose and value. This, however, is impossible. Only God exists of Himself. In creation, the desire for absolute self-reliance is a desire contrary to its own nature.
Therefore, pride does not add greatness to the demon. It deprives its natural greatness of its proper order. It does not make it more similar to God, but deprives it of the likeness resulting from obedience, love, and participation.

1.13 13. Two Cities as Two Ways of Loving

Augustine's teaching on the two cities deepens this perspective. The City of God and the earthly city are not primarily two political structures. They arise from two ways of loving:
love of God to the point of proper forgetting of the egotistical "I"; love of self to the point of rejecting God.
Proper love of self is not evil. The creature should love itself as a good originating from God. Evil arises when self-love is detached from truth and elevated to the role of the highest principle.
The demon is an extreme case of such love. He loves his own perfection, but rejects its Creator. He wishes to preserve his natural beauty, power, and intelligence, while at the same time refusing to recognize them as participation in a Good greater than himself. Consequently, self-love passes into hatred: toward God, whose sovereignty reminds him of dependence; toward the faithful angels, who attained happiness through obedience; toward man, called to participate in glory.
Demonic evil is therefore not a lack of activity of the will. It is an active will built around the lack of the due order of love.

1.14 14. St. Thomas: Good and Being are Convertible

St. Thomas develops Augustine's intuition within the framework of a systematic metaphysics of being. The fundamental Thomistic principle states: *ens et bonum convertuntur* – being and good are convertible.

This does not mean that every existing being is morally good. It means that everything that exists possesses ontological goodness to the degree that it possesses the act of existence, form, perfection, and the capacity for action. Goodness signifies being viewed as perfecting and desirable.

If, therefore, evil were a separate entity, it would have to – insofar as it exists – possess the goodness of being. An absolutely evil substance would be a contradictory concept. Every nature, form, capacity, and actuality is as such a good.

Thomas therefore asserts that evil is not a nature. It is the absence of due good in a good subject. *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 48

An example can be the act of murder. Within its structure, there are numerous ontological goods:

- the existence of the perpetrator;
- their capacity for reasoning;
- the act of the will;
- physical strength;
- bodily movement;
- the material instrument;
- the effectiveness of action.

Moral evil does not lie in the fact of the existence of these elements. It consists in the lack of the due order of reason and justice in the act of the will, as well as in the deprivation of the victim's life. The more effectively the perpetrator acts, the more natural goods they engage in a morally evil act.

This explains why evil can appear powerful. Its "power" does not derive from evil itself, but from the goods that have been subordinated by it to an improper end.

1.15 15. Good as the Subject of Evil

Thomas formulates a seemingly paradoxical statement: the subject of evil is good. Evil can only exist in something that possesses being and goodness in itself.

Disease exists in a living organism. Ignorance exists in an intellect capable of knowledge. Injustice exists in a will called to justice. Falsehood exists in a sign intended to express truth. Hatred exists in the capacity for love. Sin exists in a free creature called to the good.

Similarly, demonic evil exists in a good angelic nature. The demon does not possess a separate "demonic substance." Its spiritual nature remains the nature of an angel, yet deprived of supernatural ordering toward God and the moral rectitude of the act of will.

Evil cannot completely destroy the good of its subject, because at the moment of the complete destruction of the good, the subject would cease to exist, and with it evil would cease to exist. Summa theologiae, I, q. 48, a. 4

The demon thus persists in a paradoxical state: it destroys the good, but cannot cease to depend on the good; it hates the order of creation, yet benefits from its own place in that order; it opposes the Logos, yet preserves its existence thanks to the Logos.

1.16 16. Is God the Cause of Evil?

If every being originates from God, the question arises whether God is not indirectly the cause of evil. Thomas answers by distinguishing between the cause of physical evil, punishment, and guilt.

God is the cause of being and of all positive perfections of things. However, He is not the cause of moral lack as a lack. In a sinful act, God sustains the existence of the agent, their faculties, and the very possibility of action, but He is not the cause of the disorder of the free decision.
This can be compared to lame walking. The capacity for movement comes from the active power of the organism, but the inequality of the step results from the injury of the limb. The cause of movement and the cause of the defect are not identical in the same respect.
Thomas also states that the good can be the cause of evil incidentally – per accidens. A doctor causes pain to restore health; a judge inflicts punishment for the sake of justice; fire warms one body and incidentally destroys another. In such cases, the lack or suffering is not intended as an end in itself.
The evil of fault, on the other hand, cannot originate from God. Its direct principle is the free will of the creature, which does not observe the proper rule of action. Summa theologiae, I, q. 49

1.17 17. The Demon as a Creature That Did Not Create Even Its Own Demonicity

The demon did not create its nature, intellect, will, or power. Nor did it create the "substance of evil," which it would subsequently introduce into itself. It became evil through a free act devoid of due order.
It may be said that the demon is the moral author of its own fall, but not the creator of a new kind of being. "Demonicity" denotes the mode of existence of a good spiritual nature remaining in a state of an irreversibly disordered will.
St. Thomas explicitly asks whether demons can be evil by nature, and answers in the negative. The evil of fault can exist in an angel by reason of freedom of action, but no intellectual nature is in itself evil. An angel becomes a demon through its own choice, not through an act of creation. Summa theologiae, I, q. 63
This means that the designation "evil spirit" is not a definition of its nature in the same sense as "rational spirit." "Spirit" designates the nature; "evil" designates the moral state and the direction of the will.

1.18 18. What did the angel's sin consist in?

According to Thomas, the angel's sin could not have a corporeal character. A pure spirit does not experience bodily concupiscence in the manner proper to man. His first sin had to concern a spiritual good and the manner of possessing it.
Aquinas points primarily to pride, and secondarily to envy. Pride consisted in the desire for likeness to God in a way contrary to the established order. It was not a literal desire to become God in respect of nature. The intelligent angel knew that a creature cannot become the infinite Creator.
The demon desired a good proper to God or a good granted by God, but he wanted to achieve it "by his own power," without submission to the divine rule. Thomas explains that the desire for likeness to God is good if the creature desires to receive it from God. It becomes evil when the creature wishes to possess the likeness as if from itself. Summa theologiae, I, q. 63, a. 3
The essence of the rebellion was therefore not the love of something absolutely evil. It was the disordered love of one's own perfection.
This is another proof of the parasitic character of evil: Satan could not have sinned had he not possessed beauty, intelligence, and perfection, which he could love in an improper way.

1.19 19. Demonic Envy as Sorrow at Another's Good

The second sin proper to evil spirits is envy. Its object is likewise not evil, but good—the good possessed by someone else.

The envious person does not create a new object. He perceives another's good as a diminution of his own greatness. In the case of the demon, envy can be directed toward the glory of God, the happiness of the faithful angels, and man's vocation to divine life.

The demon desires to deprive man of grace not because he can make nothingness a positive good, but because he hates the creature's participation in the good which he himself rejected. His action is directed toward lack:

- to deprive man of truth;
- to detach the will from love;
- to shatter the unity of the person;
- to destroy communion;
- to take away hope;
- to lead to the loss of eternal life.

The demon has nothing "to give" in place of these goods. His promises turn out to be promises of emptiness. Sin promises an expansion of existence, but leads to its narrowing.

1.20 20. Preserved Natural Goods of Demons

The doctrine of privatio boni requires accepting that demons retain the natural perfections resulting from their creation. Their fall did not annihilate their angelic nature.

They therefore retain:

existence; spirituality; intellect; will; natural power of action; knowledge proper to their nature; the capacity to act within the limits permitted by Providence.

Thomas teaches that the intellect of demons has not been deprived of all truth. They retain natural knowledge, although they are deprived of beatific knowledge and their manner of relating to truth is morally deformed. Their will remains a free power of a spiritual nature, yet after the choice made, it is fixed in evil. Summa theologiae, I, q. 64

A demon can therefore know that God exists, that Christ has conquered, and that judgment awaits it. However, this knowledge is not saving faith, because it is not accompanied by charity or obedient trust.

Demon "knowledge" is the drama of an intellect separated from a properly ordered will. The truth that for a saint is a source of communion becomes for a demon a source of trembling.

1.21 21. Evil as a Deformation of Order, Measure, and Form

Following Augustine, Thomas understands the good of creation through three fundamental categories: modus – measure; species – form; ordo – order.

Every being is good because it possesses a definite measure, form, and place in the order of things. Evil does not constitute a fourth principle. It consists in the violation of one of these dimensions.

In demonic sin, there remains:

the measure of natural power, but its use exceeds due limits; the form of spiritual nature, but it does not lead to moral beauty; the capacity for entering into relations, but the relation takes the form of domination

and hatred; intelligence, but it is separated from wisdom; will, but it does not maintain the order toward the highest Good.
Therefore, the demon is not chaos in the sense of the total absence of any structure. Total chaos would be nothingness. It is a created structure used against its own end.

1.22 22. Why Does Evil Appear Creative?

History shows that evil is capable of building systems, ideologies, empires, and complex mechanisms of enslavement. It can therefore give the impression of a creative power. The doctrine of *privatio boni* does not deny this observation. Instead, it explains where the apparent creativity of evil comes from.
Every evil system draws upon real goods:
organizational intelligence; language and symbols; technology; group solidarity; discipline; the desire for justice; the need for belonging; courage and the capacity for sacrifice.
Evil does not create these goods. It appropriates them and subjects them to a false purpose. Totalitarian ideology exploits the desire for community, but destroys the person. Occultism exploits the natural desire for transcendence, yet detaches it from God. Manipulation exploits the gift of speech, but deprives speech of its reference to truth. Violence employs force, which in itself is a natural good, but strips it of the order of justice.
The more elaborate a system of evil is, the more goods it must appropriate. Evil does not thereby become an independent substance. On the contrary, it reveals its radical lack of independence.

1.23 23. Satan as the "Ape of God"

The patristic description of the devil as *simia Dei* — the "ape of God" — expresses this same intuition. Satan does not create, but imitates; he does not reveal, but falsifies; he does not give a sacrament, but creates its imitation; he does not build communion, but organizes collective dependency; he does not give life, but promises power at the expense of life.
The Apocalypse reveals a demonic "trinity": the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. It is not a second divinity, but a parody. The beast bears the marks of death and apparent resurrection. The false prophet performs signs. The dragon hands over its power to the beast. Every element has been constructed through the distortion of something that previously appears in divine revelation.
Likewise, the mark of the beast is an imitation of the seal of God. Babylon is a caricature of the holy city. The harlot constitutes the opposite and parody of the Bride of the Lamb. The demonic order possesses no language of its own; it steals the signs of God and reverses their meaning.

1.24 24. The Limits of Demonic Power

If the demon is not the creator, its action must be of a limited and secondary nature. It can act only upon existing beings and within the limits of the capacities proper to its nature and the boundaries set by Divine Providence.
It cannot:
create matter or spirit out of nothing; change the essence of a creature according to its own will; grant grace; penetrate directly into the human free will as its master; create truth; establish ultimate good; defeat God; invalidate redemption; compel a person to sin in a way that would nullify the responsibility of the free subject.
It can, however:

suggest imaginations; strengthen temptation by acting upon the sensory sphere; exploit existing weaknesses; obscure judgment through falsehood; arouse fear; imitate certain phenomena; use people and structures that voluntarily open themselves to disorder.
Even in extraordinary action, the demon does not create a new substance. It manipulates existing processes, faculties, and relationships. Its power is the power of a creature, not of an anti-Creator.

1.25 25. The Demon Does Not "Produce" Human Sin

Calling the devil a tempter does not mean that he is the creator of human sin. The New Testament maintains a balance between acknowledging demonic activity and human responsibility. James writes that a person is tempted by their own desire, which drags them away and entices them, and then gives birth to sin leading to death (Jas 1:14–15). At the same time, the same text excludes the possibility of attributing temptation to God and states that "every good thing we receive" comes from God. Jas 1
The demon can propose an object, distort its image, and exploit an existing wound. However, it cannot produce an act of free consent in place of the human being. Personal sin appears when the human will accepts the presented apparent good at the expense of the due good.
In this sense, the demon is a carrier and propagator of negation, but not the absolute producer of evil. He extends his own rebellion by inducing other free creatures to an analogous turning away from God.

1.26 26. Is the term "parasitic entity" precise?

Three possible meanings of this term must be distinguished.
Erroneous meaning
It would be erroneous to claim that a demon as a substance is an ontological parasite existing outside the order of creation or feeding on some "energy of evil." Such a notion would approach dualism, Manichaeism, or the mythologization of evil.
Permissible meaning
It can be said that a demon is parasitic in its mode of action. It does not create goods, but appropriates them, deforms them, and uses them against their purpose. It needs:
being, in order to destroy; truth, in order to lie; freedom, in order to enslave; desire, in order to tempt; imagination, in order to deceive; relation, in order to divide; cult, in order to establish idolatry.
Deepest meaning
The demon also parasitizes its own nature. It uses the intellect received from God to oppose God's truth; the will received to reject the divine order; the power received to destroy creation. Everything with which it acts comes from God as a natural good. Evil lies in the lack of the proper purpose and order of these actions.
Therefore, it would be more precise to say: the demon is not a "parasitic entity" as to substance, but a person whose moral mode of existence and action has a parasitic character.

1.27 27. "Negation of Being" – A Necessary Clarification

The thesis that the demon is the bearer of evil "through the negation of being" also requires further clarification. The demon cannot negate being in an absolute sense. He is unable to annihilate creation or create nothingness as a positive state. He can, however:
negate the creature's dependence on God; diminish the integrity of being; destroy due relationships; deprive action of its proper purpose; induce a person to reject their own vocation; lead the will toward ever deeper impoverishment.

His negation is primarily practical and relational. Satan says to the creature: “You will not be what God created you to be; you will establish yourself.” This promise contains an internal contradiction. The creature cannot achieve a fuller existence by cutting itself off from its source.
In this sense, sin is a nihilating act, though it is not a creative act. It does not call nothingness into existence, but rather deprives the existing good of its due fullness.

1.28 28. Hell as the Fixation of Negation, Not the Victory of Nothingness

The metaphysics of privation also allows for a better understanding of hell. Hell is not a kingdom in which Satan becomes an autonomous ruler. It is not a parallel world with its own source of existence. It is the state of creatures who persist in the definitive rejection of communion with God.
Demons continue to exist because existence is a gift from God. However, they do not possess the good of fulfillment toward which their nature was directed. They retain natural goods, but remain deprived of the vision of God, grace, love, and happiness.
Their existence reveals the ultimate sterility of rebellion:
nie mogą stać się Bogiem; nie mogą przestać być stworzeniem; nie mogą przekształcić zła w dobro; nie mogą stworzyć alternatywnej pełni; nie mogą osiągnąć szczęścia poza Bogiem; nie mogą unicestwić prawdy o własnej zależności.
Piekło nie jest triumfem nicości nad bytem. Jest wiecznym ujawnieniem, że odrzucenie Dobra nie może wytworzyć żadnego dobra konkurencyjnego.

1.29 29. The Cross as the Unmasking of the Parasitism of Evil

The Cross of Christ reveals an apparent paradox: evil mobilizes immense activity against Jesus—betrayal, falsehood, an unjust trial, political violence, religious manipulation, and physical execution. It appears to triumph. Yet it creates nothing.
Judas’s betrayal parasitizes the bond between the disciple and the Master. False testimonies parasitize the institution of the court. Pilate’s sentence utilizes power that ought to safeguard justice. Crucifixion employs human technique and organization to take away life. Derision uses language that should serve the truth.
Christ, however, in the very center of the action of evil, remains in the perfect order of love and obedience. Evil deprives Him of biological life, yet it cannot produce a moral defect within Him. It cannot force Him into hatred, despair, or disobedience.
Therefore, the Cross becomes a judgment upon the “ruler of this world.” Satan is able to bring about death, but he cannot make Christ stop loving. When death encounters love devoid of any defect, the parasitic structure of evil is deprived of its foundation. The Resurrection reveals that death possesses no independent, enduring being of its own.

1.30 30. The Ultimate Primacy of Good

The doctrine of privatio boni is not an attempt to mitigate the gravity of evil. On the contrary, it allows us to understand its destructive nature without attributing divine characteristics to it.
Evil is real as:
a wound of actual good; the loss of due perfection; the disorder of free will; the rupture of relations; the suffering of a person; death; the rejection of the purpose of creation.

However, it is not real as:
an independent substance; a primary principle; a source of existence; an alternative absolute; a reality capable of enduring without good; a power equal to God.
Good possesses ontological priority. It can exist without evil. God is Good completely free from lack. Evil, on the other hand, cannot exist without the good that it deforms. There is no lie without truth, no disease without life, no sin without freedom, nor a demon without the angelic nature created by God.

1.31 Theological Synthesis

The demon is not the creator of evil, because evil is not a thing, a substance, or a positive nature that can be created. It is *privatio boni*—the absence of due good in an existing and therefore ontologically good subject. The New Testament establishes the foundations of this teaching by proclaiming that all things were created by the Logos, all visible and invisible beings exist in Christ, and every creature of God is good. The radical opposition between God and the devil is moral and eschatological in character, rather than metaphysically dualistic. Satan is a real person, but not a second source of being.
St. Augustine, in rejecting Manichaeism, demonstrated that corruption presupposes prior good. Absolute evil would be absolute nothingness. An evil will does not arise from the action of a substance of evil, but is itself a defect: a turning away from God toward a lower good, chosen outside the proper order.
St. Thomas developed this teaching, pointing out that being and good are interchangeable, the good is the subject of evil, and evil constitutes the deprivation of such good as ought to be present. The demon retains a good spiritual nature, intellect, will, and power. His evil lies not in what he is as a creature, but in the fixed disorder of how he wills, practically knows, and acts.
The demon is therefore a "parasite" of the good in a threefold sense:
he exists thanks to the good of being received from God; he acts thanks to the good faculties of his own nature; he deceives by deforming the goods existing in man and the world.
His rebellion is an attempt to possess existence without acknowledging the Giver, freedom without truth, greatness without participation, a kingdom without love. Therefore, demonic evil tends toward nothingness, but never becomes a creative nothingness. It can diminish, divide, and deprive; it cannot bring into existence any alternative fullness.
The deepest metaphysical defeat of Satan consists in the fact that everything with which he opposes God was received precisely from God. Every act of his confirms the existence of the good upon which he parasitizes. The demon may reject God as the object of love, but he cannot remove God as the source of his own existence. He may speak a lie, but he will not create a reality that would make that lie the truth. He may inflict death, but he cannot take away Christ's power of resurrection. He may deform creation, but he cannot change the fact that its ultimate truth remains the Logos, "through whom all things were made."

1.32 Sources Indicated in the Study

1. Holy Scripture: John 1:1–18; John 8:44; Colossians 1:15–20; 1 Timothy 4:4; 1 John 3:8; Matthew 4:1–11; James 2:19.
2. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book VII; *On Free Will*; *The City of God*.
3. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, qq. 48–49, 63–64; I–II, q. 18.

Editorial Note: The text preserves the presented argumentation and presents the concept of *privatio boni* in a theological sense. It does not constitute a tool for diagnosing specific experiences, diseases, or psychological difficulties.