Existential Aspect of Evil in the Works of Mani: Explanation and Evaluation

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Abstract
Since the old times, resolving and justifying the issue of "Evil" has been among humankind's perpetual and difficult questions in the path towards making sense of the universe. The background and history of "Evil" in the literature and religion indicates its role in humankind's worldview towards its Existential roots, and this is among the important reasons why theological-philosophical traditions pay great attention to it. Philosophers and theologians have always been aware that justifying Evil in terms of religious beliefs is a huge task; therefore, their endeavors did not always lead to success. Justifying this issue has sometimes lead to duality and polytheism and sometimes it has actually caused theoretical conflicts. According to Mani - whose viewpoint is grounded in some Iranian ancient religious and ceremonial traditions - evil (darkness) resides in the nature of terrestrial creatures. The aforesaid religion claims it wants to discover the rules governing this Being which is composed of Good and Evil and the procedure of liberation and purification from it. Mani's thoughts had an impact on some Iranian and non-Iranian ancient religions in India, Africa and Middle East. For many years, Augustine believed that Mani's religion offers the only acceptable rational interpretation of how the world is formed, because, it properly explains the source of Evil. Some scholars believe that Evil is an outcome of abulia and some other – like philosophical and theological traditions of Islamic world – believe that Evil is an outcome of lack of perfection and the absence of good; therefore, they think that Evil is devoid of any originality. The crucial point in this essay is to explain the existential aspect of Evil according to Mani; its real existence and its obvious opposition to good throughout the world; we also want to pay attention to the reasons behind this duality which opens its way out of Mani's works; as he claims, this duality will resolve and become unified in upper levels. If, regardless of the origin that Mani considers for the reality of Evil, we consider Evil a living creature unified with good, because of its being mixed with it, we will need a phenomenological viewpoint towards Evil; from an existential perspective and not from the point of its privation; however, to decide whether this image can withstand theoretical and rational criticism is another point and we have tried to present some of this method's – which theoretically tries to explain Evil cognitively - shortcomings briefly.

It should be said that the reason behind difficulties in explaining Evil throughout the history of philosophy lies in assuming it an object we can gain knowledge of. The subject of Evil, before being an issue related to theory and cognition as an individual object, appears in natural life and people can experience it; thus, above all other things, it's the general and beforehand understanding of Evil's various phenomenological possibilities from an existential

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point of view in the field of ontological experience which opens the way for cognitive explanations, which also happens through the help of metaphors and allegories.

From a Kantian perspective it's as if having no access to the essence and Noumenon of Evil causes old and traditional efforts that try to justify the explanations about phenomenological presence of Evil in a cognitive belief system, which, through relying on analogical abilities of pure reason, on the one hand, results in assuming an origin for Evil, and on the other hand, the way out of it and the only way to donate life a purpose will only happen through denying and rejecting the current existence of Evil; a purpose which sums up as paving the way towards death and the supernatural purpose in the afterlife. This is exactly the same thing Mani tries to do through relying on the purpose of absolute good and how to join it in the course of humankind's religious and ethical life.

From an ontological and phenomenological perspective, Evil, with its permanent non-independent presence, benefits from the ability to appear in different shapes in the context of various possibilities of existence and is intertwined with life in a way that on the one hand, because of having no access to it as an independent constant Being we are unable to explain Evil cognitively prior to explaining its existential flow; on the other hand, because Evil appears in different forms, we can only explain the way it is experienced in different possibilities according to a cognitive system, only through relying on allegory or assuming that Evil possesses an unknown essence, as purpose, - a purpose like what Kant explains in his third criticism as teleological reflective verdict -.

Meanwhile, allegory plays an important role and it's exactly what Kant uses in order to explain the relationship between the unknowns' Noumenon or essence and their appearance. Different experiences of various appearances of Evil has attracted many intellectuals and artists; however, according to this respect, this explanation, will be only accessible after gaining a concise glimpse of Evil's way of being and appearing, through an aesthetical and teleological reflection and through relying on symbolic metaphors. Mani's conscious or unconscious efforts to integrate and consolidate his belief system and everything he knew of Evil – according to the natural desire of human or Kantian intellect – results in assuming the existence of an unknown essence behind the veil. An assumption without which, Mani's basis of aesthetical cognition of this "existence's genuine issue" will not be organized. It's exactly because of this that Mani's cognitive justification of fundamentals of his religion only happens through allegorical tales and in the form of images.

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