

A THOMISTIC ANSWER TO THE EVIL-GOD CHALLENGE

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2010, Stephen Law proposed a challenge to theism that he coined the 'evil-god challenge'.^{1, 2} One of the central tenets of theism, Law emphasizes, is the 'good-god hypothesis', which says that God is all-good. However, Law believes that arguments for God's existence do not provide insight into God's moral character. Given this, Law says there is good reason to doubt that God is all-good as classical theism suggests. This is because, Law argues, theodicies (e.g., free-will, soul-making, etc.) that are often used to counter the problem of evil are not as useful as theists believe. Law proposes what is called the 'evil-god hypothesis', which is the idea that an omnipotent, omniscient, omnimalevolent god exists. Law says that for every theodicy that is proposed against the problem of evil in support of the good-god hypothesis, there is an equally likely reverse theodicy that supports the evil-god hypothesis instead of the good-god hypothesis. This symmetry between theodicies and reverse theodicies, the 'symmetry thesis', forms the basis of the evil-god challenge. So, the evil-god challenge to theism is the argument that since an evil god is just as likely as the God of theism, there is no reason to believe that theism is true over the evil-god hypothesis because theism includes the idea that God is all-good.

Since Law's article in 2010, there have been several attempts to explain why the evil-god challenge fails. Peter Forrest, Keith Ward, and Christopher Weaver have argued in various ways that it is either not likely or impossible that an omniscient and omnipotent being would or could be evil.³ Anastasia Scrutton has argued we are pragmatically more epistemically justified in holding the good-god hypothesis over the evil-god hypothesis.⁴ Most recently, Perry Hendricks has argued that skeptical theism sheds doubt on not only the problem of evil but also the problem of good and thus avoids Law's conclusion, which rests on the problem of good.⁵ However, the

debate continues as John Collins recently defended the evil-god challenge against recent objections and also extended the argument to theodicies not mentioned by Law.⁶

There are two arguments from Law and Collins in this debate that warrant closer consideration. One is Law's argument that semantic theodicies fall prey to the symmetry thesis, and the other is Collins's argument that the privation view of evil also falls prey to the symmetry thesis. These arguments are interesting because if combined they would be opposing something similar to a solution to the problem of evil from the writings of Thomas Aquinas.

In this paper, I will argue that classical theism as understood and explained by Aquinas does not fall prey to the symmetry thesis and answers the evil-god challenge. First, I will discuss Law's and Collins's arguments regarding semantic theodicies and the privation view of evil. After this, I will explain concepts that Thomists have recently used to answer the problem of evil, namely Aquinas's view of God's goodness and Aquinas's privation view of evil. Finally, I will show how these concepts relate to Law's and Collins's arguments and how these concepts avoid the symmetry thesis. I will conclude that Law's and Collins's arguments do not apply to Aquinas's classical theism.

2. LAW AND COLLINS ON THE SEMANTIC AND EVIL AS PRIVATION THEODICIES

In 'The Evil-God Challenge', Law explains why various theodicies fall prey to the symmetry thesis and how they entail that theism is no more preferable than the evil-god hypothesis. One type of theodicy he mentions is what he calls the 'semantic theodicy':

When we describe God as being 'good', the term means something different to what it means when applied to mere humans. This difference in meaning at least partly explains why a good god would do things that we would not call 'good' if done by us.⁷

Basically, semantic theodicies entail the concept that the term 'good' is not used univocally of humans and God. Law mentions that a reverse semantic theodicy could be made by simply saying that whatever we mean by 'evil' does not apply to evil god in the same way as it does to

humans.⁸ Although it would seem that an evil god would not want to allow his creatures to be happy or healthy at all, this is not necessarily the case because the term ‘evil’ applies differently to evil god than it does to humans. This reverse semantic theodicy entails that good and evil in the world both equally serve as evidence for the God of theism and evil god. Thus, the existence of the theistic God is no more probable than evil god.

In ‘The Evil-God Challenge: Extended and Defended’, Collins argues that the privation view of evil falls prey to the symmetry thesis.⁹ Collins defines the privation view of evil as the belief that ‘Evil is held not to be something substantial, with positive existence in its own right, but rather it is the mere absence or corruption of substance or goodness.’¹⁰ Collins notes that although this view of evil is never proposed to be a theodicy, it does help theists to explain how God is not the direct cause or creator of evil. Regardless, Collins says the privation view of evil falls prey to the symmetry thesis because a privation view of good can be formulated that is just as likely as the privation view of evil:

The diabolist may avail herself of a similar argument for a privation theory of good, in which being is evil and good the absence of being. Note that Augustine says when a cure of the body or soul is effected, the evil—disease or wound in the body, vice in the soul—does not go away and dwell elsewhere. Poor as this argument is, it can be aped as follows: when a body becomes ill, or a soul becomes vicious, the body’s health or the soul’s virtue is not transferred elsewhere. The body is a substance, and thus something evil, and the goods are accidents, privations of the natural evil.¹¹

Collins entertains a couple of objections to the privation view of good and argues that they are no more successful in overcoming the privation view of good as are objections to the privation view of evil. Thus, Collins concludes, ‘Whatever the strengths and defects of the privation theory of good, they are paralleled by those of the privation theory of evil’, and the privation view of evil falls prey to the symmetry thesis.¹² To understand why the classical theistic God of Aquinas avoids the evil-god challenge, it will first be necessary to explain Aquinas’s concepts of God’s goodness and the ontological status of evil.

3. AQUINAS ON GOD'S GOODNESS

Aquinas argues that from what we know about God from the Five Ways, we can know that God is infinite goodness. The result of Aquinas's arguments is something similar to the basis for the semantic theodicies that Law mentions, namely that when we say that God is 'good', we mean something different from what we mean when we say that humans are 'good'. Before explaining Aquinas's thought regarding God's goodness, it is necessary to understand Aquinas's concept of the good.

Following Aristotle, Aquinas believes that goodness and being are interchangeable concepts in that something is good insofar as it is a perfect example of its kind:

Goodness and being are really the same, and differ only in idea; which is clear from the following argument. The essence of goodness consists in this, that it is in some way desirable. Hence the Philosopher says (*Ethic. i.*): *Goodness is what all desire*. Now it is clear that a thing is desirable only in so far as it is perfect; for all desire their own perfection. But everything is perfect so far as it is actual. Therefore it is clear that a thing is perfect so far as it exists; for it is existence that makes all things actual, as is clear from the foregoing (Q. 3, A. 4; Q. 4, A. 1). Hence it is clear that goodness and being are the same really.¹³

Aquinas here is assuming his readers understand the Scholastic concept of final causes. The good is 'appetible' in the sense that all things tend toward the perfection of their natures as far as they can. For example, non-human animals work constantly to keep themselves healthy and to survive as long as possible. Human beings constantly work not only to stay healthy but also to accumulate wealth, knowledge, power, and other things they deem will give them happiness and fulfillment. Even organisms that lack self-awareness and consciousness act in a manner so that they obtain the perfection of their nature unless they are impeded. For example, acorns always grow into oak trees (if unimpeded) although they do not have minds and cannot know how to obtain their perfection. Basically, using Aristotle's definition of 'good' as 'that what all desire', Aquinas is saying that since things desire (or tend toward) their perfection, and since something

is only perfect insofar as it exists as an ideal instance of its kind, being is interchangeable with goodness.

With Aquinas's concept of 'goodness' in mind, his Five Ways lead to the conclusion that God is infinite goodness. This conclusion follows because Aquinas's Five Ways entail that God is pure actuality with no potentiality;¹⁴ God is existence itself in that God's essence is existence;¹⁵ and God is infinitely perfect, infinite being, and the source of all perfections in the universe.¹⁶ If goodness is being as far as it is desirable, and God is infinite being, it follows that God is infinite goodness and infinitely desirable.¹⁷ Also, if beings are good insofar as they are ideal instances of their kind, and God is infinitely perfect, it follows that God is infinite goodness.¹⁸

Aquinas argues that God's perfection and infinite goodness have implications for which virtues God can possess. For example, Aquinas says,

the divine goodness contains in its own way all virtues. Therefore, none of them is ascribed as a habit to God as it is to us. For it is not befitting God to be good through something else added to him, but by his essence, for he is altogether simple. Nor does he act by anything added to his essence, since his action is his being, as we have shown. Therefore, his virtue is not a habit, but his essence.¹⁹

As the source of the eternal and natural laws, all virtues are virtually in God. Humans are understood as virtuous insofar as they cultivate virtuous habits that help them attain their perfection. But God does not need to obtain virtuous habits because God is infinitely perfect.

Although God is the source of all human virtues, Aquinas says that many virtues cannot be found in God such as sobriety and chastity because God does not eat, drink, or have sex.²⁰ Also, for example, fortitude is not a virtue in God because God can never face dangers. However, Aquinas believes certain virtues are in God such as truth, justice, liberality, magnificence, prudence, and art.²¹ For example, Aquinas believes there is perfect distributive justice in God because in creating and sustaining the universe, God determines the good of each

of His creatures and ensures they possess exactly what He determined.²² Also, Aquinas thinks that God's act of creating and sustaining the universe is an act of liberality and love.²³ It is liberal because God is infinitely perfect and in no need of create anything. It is loving because 'to love' is to 'will the good of the beloved'. God's pure act is an act of love because in creating and sustaining the universe, God is willing the good (i.e., the existence and perfection) of each one of His creatures.

Although Aquinas believes that God has virtue in some ways, Aquinas would not agree that this leads to comprehensive knowledge of how God should act.²⁴ Aquinas argues that we can never fully understand God because God is infinite and invisible. In regard to the epistemological implications of God's infinity, Aquinas says,

Everything is knowable according to its actuality. But God, whose being is infinite, as was shown above (Q. 7), is infinitely knowable. Now no created intellect can know God infinitely. For the created intellect knows the Divine essence more or less perfectly in proportion as it receives a greater or lesser light of glory. Since therefore the created light of glory received into any created intellect cannot be infinite, it is clearly impossible for any created intellect to know God in an infinite degree. Hence it is impossible that it should comprehend God.²⁵

Regarding the implications of God's invisibility, he argues,

God cannot be seen in His essence by a mere human being, except he be separated from this mortal life. The reason, is because, as was said above (A. 4), the mode of knowledge follows the mode of the nature of the knower. But our soul, as long as we live in this life, has its being in corporeal matter; hence naturally it knows only what has a form in matter, or what can be known by such a form. Now it is evident that the Divine essence cannot be known through the nature of material things. For it was shown above (AA. 2, 9) that the knowledge of God by means of any created similitude is not the vision of His essence. Hence it is impossible for the soul of man in this life to see the essence of God.²⁶

Moreover, we can only have analogical knowledge of God because God is transcendent and all we know of Him comes from reasoning from His effects to Him as the cause:

Our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. But our mind cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God; because the sensible effects of God do not equal the power of God as their cause. Hence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; nor therefore can His essence be seen. But because they are His effects and

depend on their cause, we can be led from them so far as to know of God *whether He exists*, and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him, as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him.²⁷

To know how God will act in any given situation, it would be necessary to fully understand God's infinite goodness, which is impossible.

Thus, Aquinas would agree that the term 'good' does not mean exactly the same thing when applied to God and to humans. Although we cannot know how God will act, we can know some things about what it means for God to be infinite goodness; God is infinite being, infinitely desirable, loving, and just. Humans are good insofar as they act virtuously and attain their perfection. Goodness is attributed to God and to humans analogously.

4. THE THOMISTIC PRIVATION VIEW OF EVIL AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Aquinas held a privation view of evil similar to Augustine and explains his view in several places in his writings.²⁸ Following Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas defines evil in the context of his understanding of the good:

Now, we have said above that good is everything appetible; and thus, since every nature desires its own being and its own perfection, it must be said also that the being and the perfection of any nature is good. Hence it cannot be that evil signifies being, or any form or nature. Therefore it must be that by the name of evil is signified the absence of good. And this is what is meant by saying that *evil is neither a being nor a good*. For since being, as such is good, the absence of one implies the absence of the other.²⁹

When Aquinas says that 'good is everything appetible', he is referring to his discussion of the nature of the good and the understanding that good and being are interchangeable.

The concept that something is only good insofar as it is a perfect example of its kind is what helps to clarify the privation view of evil. Evil is a privation because it is not good for something to be less perfect than it is intended to be. This is why Aquinas also mentions that 'evil is the absence of the good, which is natural and due to a thing'.³⁰ So, evil is the lack of a good that ought to be in something. For example, blindness is an evil in humans because humans naturally have the ability to see. Aquinas notes that although all evils are privations, not all

privations of the good are evils.³¹ So, for example, blindness is an evil in a human while blindness is not an evil in a rock.

This understanding of good and evil is important for Aquinas when discussing God's relation to evil. Aquinas has a high view of God's sovereignty and believes that because God is the creator and uncaused efficient cause of all things in existence at each moment they exist, God ultimately causes all things in the universe, even the free-willed choices of human beings.³² With this view of God's sovereignty, it would seem that if evil occurs, then God could be said to be the direct cause of evil or that God wills evil for its own sake.³³ However, Aquinas argues that God does not will the evil in things, but instead God wills the good of everything in the universe while simultaneously willing the order of the universe, and evil sometimes results when good things come into contact with one another.³⁴ For example, God sustains lions and gazelles in existence, but lions eat (and cause the privation of goodness in) gazelles. In simultaneously willing an ecosystem containing lions and gazelles, God is willing the good of the lions and gazelles and allowing the privations that occur when gazelles are eaten by lions.

Considering moral evil, Aquinas provides a similar answer. Although God ultimately causes everything in the universe, God does not directly cause the evil moral choices of humans:

The effect of the deficient secondary cause is reduced to the first non-deficient cause as regards what it has of being and perfection, but not as regards what it has of defect; just as whatever there is of motion in the act of limping is caused by the motive power, whereas what there is of obliqueness in it does not come from the motive power, but from the curvature of the leg. And, likewise, whatever there is of being and action in a bad action, is reduced to God as the cause; whereas whatever defect is in it is not caused by God, but by the deficient secondary cause.³⁵

Aquinas notes that an evil action is one that falls short of what it should be.³⁶ However, since God is infinite power and wisdom, His actions cannot possibly fall short of what He intends them to be.³⁷ Thus, the evil in evil moral choices comes not from God as primary cause, but from humans as deficient secondary causes.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EVIL-GOD CHALLENGE

Returning to the evil-god challenge, it should now be apparent why Aquinas's concepts regarding God's goodness and privation view of evil are pertinent to Law's and Collins's arguments. Aquinas argues that God does not will evil but allows it to occur as God simultaneously wills the good of His creatures and the order of the universe. When God and humans are said to be good in classical theism, this is not meant univocally. God is thought of as just and loving because He wills the good of His creatures at every moment they exist and guides them to Him as their ultimate end. Death, sickness, and other evils are not willed by God for their own sake and are natural to contingent beings who depend on God for their existence at each moment. The notion that God ought to eliminate evil as far as He can is unprovable because we are not in the position to know how God ought to act.³⁸ Since we cannot know God's infinite goodness and how God should act, we cannot say that God *should* eliminate evil, and the occurrence of evil is not evidence against His existence. Basically, a Thomistic answer to the problem of evil is that God, who is infinite goodness, does not will evil for its own sake but allows it because certain evils are natural to the contingent creatures He sustains and guides to knowing and loving Himself. This position includes both a type of semantic theodicy and the privation view of evil. So, the question at this point is whether the Thomistic evil as privation view and the Thomistic semantic theodicy fall prey to the symmetry thesis. They do not.

First, the Thomistic semantic theodicy entails a deep asymmetry. This is because Aquinas's understanding of God's goodness is not a hypothesis. God's infinite goodness is a conclusion reached through the *a posteriori* reasoning of the Five Ways and the *a posteriori* notion that good and being are interchangeable.

Recall that Law says we can postulate a reverse semantic theodicy saying that whatever we mean by 'evil' does not apply to evil god in the same way as it does to humans. A reverse

Thomistic semantic theodicy would be the belief that since God is infinite evil, we cannot know whether God should allow good and therefore the existence of the good does not provide evidence against evil god's existence. But Law's reverse semantic theodicy is not compatible with the privation view of good as Aquinas's semantic theodicy fits with the privation view of evil. This is because a privation view of good would entail that existence is undesirable, and nothingness is the ideal state of all things. However, for evil god to be the grounding of all existence, evil god would still need to be infinite in being without any limitations as the Five Ways conclude. After reasoning to the cause of all contingent existence, the reverse theist would have no reason to say that God is infinite evil. This is because nothingness is that which is desirable, yet evil god is unlimited being. Evil god would be infinitely undesirable yet would still be infinite goodness, not infinite evil. It would be incoherent to say that evil god is infinite evil because evil god is in fact infinite goodness.

Another incoherent aspect of a Thomistic evil god would be found in some of evil god's virtues. The Thomistic semantic theodicy entails that God's actions are loving, just, and liberal because God wills the good of His creatures and distributes goodness to His creatures exactly as He has determined. A reverse Thomistic theodicy would entail that evil god is unjust in that he distributes being to his creatures although he has determined they should have no being. Evil god's actions are hateful in that he gives being to creatures because non-being is desirable. Evil god's hatefulness and unjustness might make sense at first but considering that evil god must also be ungenerous or greedy causes problems. As mentioned, Aquinas argues that God's actions are liberal because contingent creatures cannot exist by themselves. Since God is perfect, He has no need to create, yet nonetheless He bestows goodness to creatures. The reverse of liberality is ungenerosity or greediness. In the reverse Thomistic semantic theodicy, evil god would be greedy with non-being because non-being is desirable. However, this reverse semantic theodicy

would not be symmetrical because evil god is infinite being although non-being is desirable.

Moreover, this reverse theodicy would be incoherent because it is impossible to be greedy with non-being.

A reverse Thomistic semantic theodicy would also not work in that it would entail that 'evil' as applied to evil god means something analogous to 'evil' as applied to humans. In a reverse theodicy, evil god would desire the non-being of all his creatures because non-being is desirable. This would entail that to be analogously evil, all things would also need to desire non-being. But it was already shown that this is not what is found in nature. Human beings desire happiness and the perfection of their natures. They do not desire their destruction, sickness, ignorance, and unhappiness. Aquinas notes that even humans who make evil choices desire good things for themselves (e.g., other people's wealth, unnatural sexual pleasure, etc.).³⁹ If humans by nature desire being, this would mean that evil choices for humans would be those that bring about their destruction. 'Evil' would not mean something analogous when applied to evil god and humans because humans naturally desire being (it is against their nature and wrong to desire non-being) and evil god desires non-being (evil god never directly wills being). Thus, once again, the reverse Thomistic semantic theodicy would fail to be symmetrical because it would entail the false belief that 'evil' analogously applies to humans and evil god.

Collins's reverse theodicy fails also. It fails mainly because Collins does not understand Augustine's privation view of evil. Collins says, 'The diabolist may avail herself of a similar argument for a privation theory of good, in which being is evil and good the absence of being.'⁴⁰ However, it should be evident from the above discussion that this would be an incorrect view of a reverse privation view of evil (it certainly would be an incorrect view of Aquinas's privation theory of evil). Simply calling being 'evil' and non-being 'good' does nothing to reverse the

reasoning used to warrant the privation view of evil. Regarding the definition of evil, Aquinas says,

good is, properly speaking, something real insofar as it is desirable, for the Philosopher in the *Ethics* says those who said that good is what all things desire defined it best. But we call what is contrary to good evil. And so evil is necessarily what is contrary to the desirable as such.⁴¹

If all things in nature tend toward their perfection in regard to fulfilling their natures, it does not matter if this is called 'evil' or anything else. The concept would remain while only the labels would change because being would still be desirable (yet called 'evil') and non-being would be undesirable (yet called 'good'). Thus, as Collins has presented it, the privation view of good completely misses the mark as a reverse theodicy.

However, even with a correct understanding of the privation view of evil, it still does not fall prey to the symmetry thesis because of how Aquinas arrives at the belief that goodness is interchangeable with being. Aquinas argues that existence is desirable because all things tend toward and/or will their best existence. This view of being as desirable is an *a posteriori* position reached by observing nature. As mentioned, all things in nature whether inanimate, animate, or rational seek in their own ways their perfection.

A privation view of good would entail the belief that existence is undesirable. However, a privation view of good could only be warranted if inanimate, animate, and rational agents alike naturally tended toward and/or sought their destruction. But this is most definitely contrary to what is found in nature. Acorns always grow into healthy oak trees when unimpeded; animals always care for themselves and thrive when unimpeded; and humans always seek health and happiness. For the privation view of good to be warranted, there would need to be evidence that death, sickness, and ultimately non-existence are the ideal states of all things in nature. It would need to be observed that everything in nature is perfect as far as it does not exist; fullness of being and health are privations of this ideal state. A world that warrants this view would be a

world in which inanimate objects naturally do not exist or quickly self-destruct if they do exist. Plants would naturally be dead or sick if unimpeded with only occasionally being healthy, if at all. Animals would seek their destruction and naturally be dead or sick if unimpeded with only occasionally being healthy, if at all. Humans would naturally be dead or sick (with occasional health) and would desire to be dead, sick, ignorant, and unhappy. However, since it is obvious that the privation view of good is not warranted based on what we see in nature, then a deep asymmetry holds regarding the Thomistic privation view of evil.

Moreover, aside from the warrantless nature of the privation view of good, it also would fail as a reverse theodicy. The Thomistic privation view of evil works because it shows that God only allows evil by directly willing the good of all creatures. However, since a privation view of good would entail that existence is undesirable, then it would be necessary to show that evil god does not directly will the good of creatures. Yet if anything exists at all apart from evil god, then it is unavoidable that evil god is directly willing such a thing to exist despite non-existence being the ideal state. It would be impossible for evil god to directly will the non-existence of all creatures and in doing so occasionally allow them to experience privations of that ideal state. This is because if something does not exist, it cannot cause something else to exist. Thus, apart from its warrantless nature, the privation view of good is worthless as a reverse theodicy.

6. CONCLUSION

Law's evil-god challenge and Collins's extensions of the challenge may apply to versions of theism in which God is thought to exist only on the basis of design in the universe. However, the evil-god challenge is not a challenge to the God of Aquinas's classical theism. Aquinas's semantic theodicy entails that God is infinite goodness because God is infinite existence. Since God is infinitely good and transcendent, we can never know how He should act, and evil cannot serve as evidence against His existence. Aquinas's privation view of evil entails that evil is a

privation of the good based on the observation that all things in nature tend toward and/or desire the perfection of their natures. Law's and Collins's reverse theodicies fail because of the *a posteriori* nature of Aquinas's conclusions. The privation view of good is unwarranted because it entails that all things desire non-being although all things in nature desire being. Moreover, the privation view of good fails as a reverse theodicy because it cannot be said that evil god indirectly wills the good of creatures. Non-being is nothing. So if evil god wills the non-being of everything, then there would be no way for being to arise from the non-being of everything. These problems with the privation view of good alone render the reverse Thomistic semantic theodicy baseless. But the reverse Thomistic semantic theodicy also entails incoherencies in that evil god would be considered infinitely evil although he is infinite goodness and evil god would be greedy with non-being although non-being cannot be hoarded. Similar to the privation view of good, the reverse Thomistic semantic theodicy also fails as a reverse theodicy because 'evil' cannot be applied analogously in humans and evil god. Thus, the evil-god challenge does not challenge Aquinas's classical theism because reverse versions of his privation view of evil and semantic theodicy are asymmetrical and incoherent.

Notes

¹ Stephen Law, 'The Evil-God Challenge', *Religious Studies* 46 (2010), pp. 353-73.

² Although Law coined the term 'evil-god challenge,' several earlier philosophers have discussed similar arguments (as Law mentions in his article). See Edward H. Madden and Peter H. Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1968), p. 34; Steven M. Cahn, 'Cacodaemony', *Analysis* 37 (1977), pp. 69-73; Edward Stein, 'God, the Demon, and the Status of Theodicies', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1990), pp. 163-7; Christopher New, 'Antitheism: A Reflection', *Ratio* 6 (1993), pp. 36-43; Wallace A. Murphree, 'Natural Theology: Theism or Antitheism?' *Sophia* 36 (1997), pp. 75-83; and Charles B. Daniels, 'God, Demon, Good, Evil', *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 31 (1997), pp. 177-81.

³ Peter Forrest, 'Replying to the Anti-God Challenge: A God without Moral Character Acts Well', *Religious Studies* 48 (2012), pp. 35-43; Christopher Gregory Weaver, 'Evilism, Moral Rationalism, and Reasons Internalism', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 77 (2015), pp. 3-24; and Keith Ward, 'The Evil God Challenge - A Response', *Think* 14 (2015), pp. 43-9.

⁴ Anastasia Philippa Scrutton, 'Why Not Believe in an Evil God? Pragmatic Encroachment and Some Implications for Philosophy of Religion', *Religious Studies* 52 (2016), pp. 345-60.

⁵ Hendricks, 'Skeptical Theism and the Evil-God Challenge.'

⁶ Collins, "The Evil-God Challenge: Extended and Defended."

⁷ Law, 'The Evil-God Challenge', p. 367.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 367-368.

⁹ Collins, 'The Evil-God Challenge: Extended and Defended', pp. 3-5.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 4.

¹² Ibid., p. 5.

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae (ST)* I, q. 5, a. 1; all quotes from the *ST* are from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, eds. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón, trans. Laurence Shapcote, Aquinas Institute, Inc., January 21, 2019, <https://aquinas.cc/>.

¹⁴ *ST* I, q. 3., a. 2; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles (SCG)* I, c. 16.

¹⁵ *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4; *SCG* I, c. 21; see Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*.

¹⁶ *ST* I, q. 4, a. 1; *SCG* I, c. 28.

¹⁷ *ST* I, q. 6, a. 1; *SCG* I, c. 37.

¹⁸ *ST* I, q. 6, a. 3; *SCG* I, c. 38.

¹⁹ *SCG* I, c. 92; all quotes from the *SCG* are from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, Aquinas Institute, Inc., January 21, 2019, <https://aquinas.cc/>.

²⁰ *SCG* I, c. 92.

²¹ *SCG* I, c. 93.

²² *SCG* I, c. 93; see also *ST* I, q. 21, a. 1.

²³ *SCG* I, c. 91, 93; see also *ST* I, q. 20, a. 2.

²⁴ Thomist Brian Davies has also argued that Aquinas's philosophy entails that God is not understood as morally perfect in the same way humans are. See Brian Davies, *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* (New York: Continuum, 2006), pp. 84-111; and Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 51-64. See also B. Kyle Keltz, 'Could a Good God Allow Death before the Fall? A Thomistic Perspective', *The Heythrop Journal* (2017), pp. 3-9, doi: 10.1111/heyj.12658.

²⁵ *ST* I, q. 12, a. 7; see also *SCG* III, c. 52.

²⁶ *ST* I, q. 12, a. 11.

²⁷ *ST* I, q. 12, a. 12; see also *SCG* I, c. 34.

²⁸ Including Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de malo (De Malo)*, q. 1, a. 1; *SCG* I, c. 39; *SCG* III, c. 7; and *ST* I, q. 48, a. 1-3.

²⁹ *ST* I, q. 48, a. 1.

³⁰ *ST* I, q. 49, a. 1; see *De Malo*, q. 1. a. 1.

³¹ *ST* I, q. 48, a. 3.

³² *ST* I, q. 8, a. 3; *ST* I, q. 103, a. 5; *SCG* III, c. 64; Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 5.

³³ *ST* I, q. 49, a. 2, arg. 2.

³⁴ *ST* I, q. 49, a. 2; *SCG* I, c. 95; *SCG* II, c. 45; *SCG* III, c. 71.

³⁵ *ST* I, q. 49, a. 2, ad2.

³⁶ *ST* I, q. 49, a. 1-2; *SCG* I, c. 95.

³⁷ *ST* I, q. 49, a. 2; *SCG* I, c. 95.

³⁸ This is not the same as skeptical theism. Skeptical theists hold that we cannot know why God would allow evils in any given situation because we do not have epistemic access to God's infinite knowledge and wisdom. However, skeptical theism assumes that God would eliminate evil unless He has a good reason for allowing it.

³⁹ See *ST* II-I, q. 1, a. 7.

⁴⁰ Collins, 'The Evil-God Challenge: Extended and Defended', p. 4.

⁴¹ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 1; Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).