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The Fall of Man: A Critical Analysis into the Origins of Evil

What is the origin of evil? Why do human beings seek to cause others harm? Are humans fundamentally evil; or is evil a social construct that arises from misalignment of needs? In the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Genesis describes the Fall of Man as the moment original sin originated within human beings. The story goes that human beings, by disobeying God and biting an apple from the Tree of Knowledge, brought evil into the world. However, concrete answers regarding the origin and construction of evil are by no means clear; and the origin of evil has eluded philosophers for thousands of years.

However, an answer to the origin of evil may reside in a quote from the German Netflix series “Dark,” a science fiction series focused on two secret societies of time travelers seeking to control their competing visions of the future. The show’s primary antagonist, Adam—who is simultaneously the grown-up version of the show's protagonist, Jonas—comments on the nature of life and death by remarking: “A human lives three lives. The first ends with the loss of naiveté, the second with the loss of innocence, and the third with the loss of life itself. It is inevitable that we will go through all three stages.” Clearly, this parable offers insight into what exactly caused Jonas to become Adam; namely, that excessive loss will gradually turn even the greatest hero into a ruthless villain. Similarly, consider *Peppermint Candy*: Yong-ho begins life as a sensitive, compassionate, and caring young boy who was turned into a ruthless, hateful

individual as a result of excessive loss. Therefore, it is evident that loss is a fundamental aspect of the path towards evil.

However, how exactly does loss lead to evil? Is there an archetypal model upon which we can examine and study the nature of the origin of evil? Or is its very existence predicated on chance events with little consistency across space or time? This paper will seek to argue the former point: namely, that an archetypal model exists to describe and understand the origin and perpetuation of evil. For the purpose of this paper, we will title this model the Fall of Man (named after the parable in the Book of Genesis). Similar to how the Hero's Journey is used to analyze a hero's quest in literature and cinema, so too can the Fall of Man describe a villain's genesis and path through life. In particular, the Fall of Man will have five fundamental components:

1. **Origins** — the initial, pre-evil conditions.
2. **Loss** — namely, the loss of naivety, innocence, and meaning. This signifies the loss of life before the physical body perishes, marked by the replacement of optimistic idealism with pessimistic realism.
3. **Destruction** — loss creates a void filled by sadness and fear; over time, these emotions convert to hatred at those who caused this pain, which then manifests itself as evil onto the external world.
4. **Failure** — recognition that efforts to recreate meaning in a meaningless world have failed.
5. **Redemption** — the path towards death in order to return to the Origin World, a state of existence that preceded the evil that eventually became all-consuming, in order to finally find peace and stop the all-consuming pain.

In order to properly study and understand this model, we will be examining three examples of the Fall of Man archetypes within *Peppermint Candy*, *Dark*, and the *Star Wars* trilogy. By examining these different films from three distinct cinematic genres—namely, East Asian cinema, European cinema, and American cinema—we will be able to demonstrate the generality of this model and thus argue for its implementation into the mainstream analysis of the origins of evil and its various iterations across artistic mediums. It is important to note that the aim of this paper is neither to be fully exhaustive nor to be all-inclusive; to account for all variables would require several thousand pages at least. Namely, the aim of this paper is primarily to study and understand the origin of evil as explored in contemporary genre across distinct cultural legacies so as to build a foundational framework to further analyze this issue in the future.

Consider first *Peppermint Candy*, the 1999 South Korean drama about Yong-ho, a man who commits suicide. The film's final scene introduces us to the origins of Yong-ho: a sentimental, quiet, kind soul who wishes to become a photographer so that he may take pictures of unnamed flowers. This is the Yong-ho who Sun-im fell in love, and who fell in love with Sun-im. This scene captures Yong-ho in his pre-evil state: before he sought to bring needless pain and suffering to the vulnerable, he sought to understand and protect the vulnerable.

Shifting back one chapter, we are introduced to Yong-ho's first major loss: the loss of naivety. When he is a young soldier in the South Korean army, he is abused and bullied by his superior officers. They refuse to let Sun-im see him; for all intents and purposes, he is fundamentally and inextricably alone. While in combat, he is forced down because he has been shot in the foot. His comrade, rather than feeling compassion or empathy, sees Yong-ho as everyone else does: a weak burden to be dealt with accordingly. While waiting for his fellow

soldiers to return, a young girl attempts to cross the tracks. Attempting to warn her to stay away as his comrades return, he accidentally murders her. It is in this scene that Yong-ho fully realizes the truth of the soldier song he and his comrades had sung earlier that day: they have given their lives to their country. His hopes and dreams must always come second to the needs of his country and the demands of his superior officers.

Shifting back another chapter, we are introduced to Yong-ho's second major loss: the loss of innocence. Yong-ho has joined the police force in this scene, but he is still clearly uncomfortable with violence—especially against student protesters and members of the labor union, individuals he used to call his friends and companions. However, his superior officers pressure him into torturing a political prisoner; and he terrifies the prisoner so greatly that the man defecates on Yong-ho's hands. As Yong-ho makes futile attempts to eradicate the stench of defecation from his hands with soap and water, we are reminded of the infamous scene in *Macbeth* in which Lady Macbeth cries “out damn spot!” signifying her implicit guilt and the inability of her conscience to disconnect her actions from their ramifications. In a similar way, Yong-ho has crossed a philosophical Rubicon: when he was a soldier, he killed a woman accidentally; but now, as a police officer, he has actively caused suffering to another human being simply because he was too afraid to reject the orders of his superiors. Disgusted and ashamed, Yong-ho's innocence dies as he realizes he will never be strong enough to fight against the system in any capacity. His only hope to survive is to follow orders and cause others to suffer so that he may live.

His third major loss is the loss of meaning, where Yong-ho emotionally dies. When he is informed that Sun-im has come to see him, he is implicitly deeply ashamed of the cowardly person he has become. He no longer holds the ideals of his youth; he is now meant only to serve

his state willingly, without question, as the police systematically wage a war of terror against the student protestors. Realizing he can never love Sun-im so long as he hates himself, he rejects her outright by acting coldly towards her. Instead, he openly fondles Hong-ja, a woman he ignored several hours before. In addition, when Sun-im gives him a camera she spent many months saving up for, he returns the gift to her without a word. After he sees Sun-im off, he returns to his comrades celebrating and abruptly explodes in anger as he demands that they fall into military formation. Thus, his final death before death is complete: by rejecting Sun-im, his first and only love, and denying her gift of the camera, the symbol of his hopes and dreams, he has instead chosen a life riddled with sadness, fear, and hatred. He has replaced his dreams to understand others with dreams to control others. In his attempt to survive, his soul died a premature death.

The next several chapters in the film recount his arc of destruction upon others in his life. As a policeman, he brutally tortures political prisoners without mercy. Because the beauty in his life was extinguished, he ensures that no one else believes life is beautiful either. As a businessman, he seems to only be concerned with money. His sole focus in life is observing his stocks rising or falling; he is a man utterly devoid of any pursuit other than physical satisfaction. As a husband, he ranges from negligent to utterly cruel. When his wife is young and pregnant, he ignores her as she begs for any modicum of attention; even going so far as to tell her to not call him under any circumstances while at work. When he discovers his wife is cheating on him, he finds where she and her lover are residing and beats both of them without mercy—ironically, he then proceeds to have sex with his young secretary immediately after the incident, suggesting that he is less concerned with the sanctity of marriage and more so with absolute and utter control in his life. He seeks to establish absolute authority over all those around him: those who refuse to bend to his will are broken under his boot.

Yong-ho's failure arrives initially in the form of his financial and marital collapse. With the faulty advice of his stock broker, the deceit of his business partner, and his recent separation with his wife, Yong-ho plots a way to reassert his authority by purchasing a gun in order to kill one or all of the people who caused him pain. Because he still refuses to acknowledge his own role in the collapse of his life, he must externalize this pain onto others. However, when Sun-im's husband arrives to bring Yong-ho to see her one last time and he witnesses the love of his life lying unconscious on a hospital bed, Yong-ho is finally forced to reckon with the ultimate failure of his life. He believed that, because he was afraid, he needed to assert himself as an extension of the power of the state in order to become a real man. However, all that he accomplished was the destruction of pure love in exchange for perpetual sadness, hatred, and fear. As Sun-im's physical body shut down before her will to live subsided, Yong-ho's will to live was extinguished far before his own physical death. Recognizing that evil will only beget more evil and never create more justice, Yong-ho realizes what he must do.

In Yong-ho's Redemption arc, he recognizes that his greatest failure was not anyone's fault but his own. He knows he will only ever be able to find happiness again if he returns to the origin—the place where it all began, where he first met Sun-im. However, upon arriving and engaging with some of their old college friends who still frequent the beach, he knows that the only way he will return to a place of peace is by dying. Indeed, through death exists the possibility of rebirth. Hence, the final words he screams as the train comes rushing towards him on the track make perfect sense: "I am going back." He is returning to the Origin world, a time before his heart was rotted by the inexorable pain of excessive loss. Through death, he may finally find peace.

Consider next *Dark*, a 2017 German Netflix series about a league of time travelers who seek to stop the apocalypse. The show's main protagonist, Jonas, is also the show's main antagonist, Adam. Similar to Yong-ho in *Peppermint Candy*, we may use the Fall of Man framework to describe Jonas's descent towards Adam.

In Jonas' origin state, he is a normal, quiet German teenager. However, his father's sudden and unexplainable suicide, coupled with the disappearance of Martha's little brother Mikhael (as well as countless other young boys before Mikhael), leaves the teenagers no choice but to explore the woods surrounding their small town of Winden to determine what is causing so many strange events to occur in their town.

Jonas' loss of naivety occurs when he discovers that the reason behind the kidnappings and also his father's suicide is the presence of a tunnel between dimensions in the caves near the small town. Jonas, together with an older version of himself, must work together with his friends to attempt to bring a stop to the impending apocalypse that will come as a result of a rupture in the time portal. Jonas' loss of innocence occurs when, while attempting to destroy the time portal and prevent the apocalypse, the oldest version of himself (Adam) arrives and kills Martha, the love of his life. Thus, Jonas must become middle aged Jonas, who realizes the mistakes of his past and seeks to stop the apocalypse in order to save Martha and prevent himself from becoming Adam.

However, when Jonas fails to stop the apocalypse and is instead stranded in 1888 without his time machine (which his mother stole), he realizes that he will never be able to either stop the apocalypse or save Martha. It is at this point that Jonas experiences his third great loss, the loss of his will to live. Similar to Yong-ho, this is a fate defined by death before the death of one's physical body. Driven by an obsessive desire to not fail and stop the cycle of endless suffering,

he drives himself to the edge of insanity in order to reinvent time travel by any means necessary. By justifying any means in order to accomplish his ends, he becomes Adam, the time lord who facilitates the kidnappings around Winden in present day in order to use human subjects to test whether or not their time travel mechanisms are fully operational. Jonas believes that, in order to end the infinite loop of suffering caused by the invention of time travel, he must kill the origin, the son of Martha and Jonas, who he believes is the genesis of the apocalypse. However, upon destroying the origin and failing to see the cycle stopped, Adam realizes that his sole objective in life has failed and the cycle of suffering he himself will create will continue in perpetuity. This is the point where Adam acknowledges his failure.

Realizing his path of destruction and his justification of the means to accomplish his ends have only created the very evil he swore to extinguish, Adam recognizes that the only chance for him to achieve redemption is not to destroy the origin; rather, he must destroy the very invention of time travel. He sends Jonas and Martha not to Jonas' dimension or Martha's dimension but to the Origin World, where the clockmaker originally invented time travel in order to turn back time and stop his son and pregnant wife from getting in a car crash on a dark, stormy night. By stopping the son and convincing him to make amends with his father, the clockmaker never decides to build the time machine; which further implies that neither Jonas' world nor Martha's world will have ever existed. Thus, redemption comes when both fade into the infinite oblivion and cease to be. Therefore, similar to Yong-ho's arc, redemption comes through death and a return to the Origin world as a means to right past transgressions and lessen the amount of evil present in the world.

Finally, consider *Star Wars*, an American science fiction saga concerning an ancient perpetual war between two hegemonic powers, the Jedi and the Sith. The classic villain in *Star*

Wars, Darth Vader, shocked and awed a generation of fans with his intense cruelty and hatred. He served as the hammer of the Galactic Empire as it sought to unify the galaxy under the rule of Emperor Palpatine. However, before Darth Vader was a titanic weapon of malice and destruction, he was a young, idealistic Jedi General named Anakin Skywalker who sought to bring peace to the Galaxy in the Clone Wars. What caused such an idealistic hero for good to descend to becoming a tool of evil? Similar to the prior examples regarding Yong-ho and Jonas (Adam), the Fall of Man analysis should prove fruitful when tracing the exact nature and origin of Anakin Skywalker's fall towards the forces of darkness.

Anakin Skywalker's was born into slavery as a young boy on the desert planet Tatooine. Anakin was recruited by Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn and his apprentice, Obi-Wan Kenobi, to become a Jedi. However, Anakin's loss of naivety came relatively early in his life. Shortly after Anakin was forced to leave his mother Shmi behind in slavery to become a Jedi, he witnessed the death of Qui-Gon Jinn at the hands of the Sith lord Darth Maul. Several years later, while serving as a Jedi knight under orders to protect Senator Padme Amidala, he and Padme revisited his home world of Tatooine only to find that his mother Shmi had been taken and enslaved by Tusken raiders. Upon finding his mother and watching her die in his arms, Anakin lost his innocence; although the Jedi Order had a strict adherence against violence, he proceeded to slaughter the entire camp of Tusken raiders. After Padme and Anakin secretly wed and Padme becomes pregnant, Anakin begins having nightmares that she will die in childbirth. Desperate to stop this from happening, he falls under the command of Darth Sidious (who has been under the alias of Senator and then Chancellor Palpatine up until this point) who promises Anakin the ability to save Padme in exchange for his allegiance. Anakin proceeds to lead the clone armies to kill all of the Jedi and Palpatine's remaining enemies. However, Padme intercepts Anakin on his

final mission to Mustafar, where he is to slaughter the leaders of the Confederacy in order to finally unify the Galaxy under the Emperor's reign. While confronting Anakin about his actions, Obi-Wan emerges from her ship, leading Anakin to question Padme's loyalty. He proceeds to choke her using the force until she collapses to the ground, unconscious. Anakin and Obi-Wan proceed to battle across the lava straits of Mustafar until Obi-Wan cuts off Anakin's legs and leaves him for dead as he catches fire near a river of lava. However, he survives and is rescued by Palpatine, who returns him to the capital to be fitted with cybernetic limbs and lungs to keep him alive. Once Anakin arises as Darth Vader in his new suit, Palpatine informs Anakin that he killed Padme in his anger (which is only half true—Padme dies out of sadness after she gives birth to her twins). This signals Anakin's final loss: the loss of meaning. Similar to Yong-ho's loss of Sun-im and Jonas' loss of Martha and his inability to stop the apocalypse, Anakin's failure to protect the one person he swore to keep safe from harm drives him insane. In addition, his tremendous injuries from his duel with Obi-Wan leave him perpetually handicapped; ensuring that he will never grow strong enough to defeat Palpatine, the man who forced him to become the very person he now despises.

Similarly to Yong-ho and Jonas, Anakin's loss of meaning is followed by a period of wandering in a philosophical desert without meaning or purpose. He lives as a slave to his master, Emperor Palpatine, serving as the hammer of the Emperor as he hunts down enemies of the Imperium. He forgoes his old name of Anakin Skywalker, as this name died along with his idealism; instead, he becomes only Darth Vader, the masked tool of evil. For 22 years he devotes himself to killing all remaining Jedi, military insurgents, and rebels as he overlooks the construction of the Death Star, the ultimate tool of systematic genocide. However, when Darth Vader senses Luke's presence and realizes that Luke is the son he believed to be dead, he is

temporarily reminded of his former meaning—analogous to when Yong-ho learns that Sun-im wishes to see him, or when Jonas learns that Martha is not dead. However, his attempt to convert Luke to the dark side in order to overthrow the Emperor and rule as father and son fails; instead, he is forced to fight Luke as the Emperor watches. When Luke cuts off Vader's hand, the Emperor implores Luke to finish Vader; this scene directly parallels the moment the Emperor pressured Anakin to kill Count Dooku. However, although Anakin chose to give in to his hate, Luke refuses; he throws down his weapon and says he will not strike down his father. As the Emperor begins killing Luke with force lightning, Vader realizes ultimately the great failure of the past 22 years. At one point, he believed himself to be the Chosen One who would bring balance to the force. However, his fear of the loss of Padme led him to forgo his dreams and become a slave to the Emperor. He therefore decides to redeem himself by picking up the Emperor from behind and throwing him over the ledge into the chasm of the Death Star whilst absorbing the bulk of the Emperor's force lightning. As Vader lies on the ground, exhausted and dying, Luke attempts to rescue him. However, Vader's final words signal the end of his redemption arc:

Anakin Skywalker: "Luke, help me take this mask off."

Luke: "But you'll die!"

Anakin: "Nothing can stop that now. Just for once, let me look at you with my own eyes.

Now...go, my son. Leave me."

Luke: "No, you're coming with me. I won't leave you here. I've got to save you!"

Anakin: "You already have, Luke. You were right. You were right about me... Tell your sister... you were right..."

Similar to Yong-ho's suicide scene and Adam's decision to destroy time travel within the Origin World, all three characters recognize that redemption may only come from death and a return to the origin world. For Yong-ho, that meant death; for Jonas, that meant erasure from existence; and for Anakin, that meant rebirth as a spirit in the Force realm. However, the end goal is the same: to eradicate evil, it must be destroyed. There is no other way.

Therefore, via our analysis of *Peppermint Candy*, *Dark*, and *Star Wars*, it is evident that the Fall of Man archetype is a powerful lens to explore and understand the origin and nature of evil. However, is it necessary to clarify that this archetype may not necessarily apply to zoomorphic villains. Consider, for example, Godzilla in *Shin Godzilla*: although Godzilla was a rapidly evolving tool of destruction and chaos, it would be ridiculous to superimpose anthropomorphic tendencies on the monster. It was a product of human error by way of nuclear missile testing; but it is not a worthwhile analysis to describe Godzilla as a being that experiences "loss" or seeks "redemption" as these are fundamentally human characteristics. Therefore, it should be emphasized that the Fall of Man architecture should be limited to villains with some threshold amount of anthropomorphic qualities.

Furthermore, although our analysis limits itself to the origin of evil, we should acknowledge this framework works similarly well for anti-Heroes, or individuals who often commit evil actions for idealistic causes. Consider, for example, the protagonist in *V for Vendetta*. *V for Vendetta* is a film adaptation of a graphic novel in which England's national government has become Fascist. They rose to power by creating a viral epidemic and then tested cures on marginalized citizens in order to create the antidote to the very epidemic they caused. V, the anti-Hero in this film, was an individual with extraordinary genetic potential who was ceaselessly tested on. However, he ultimately was able to rebel against his captors, destroy the

concentration camp by burning it to the ground, and then living a life similar to that of Edmund Dante in *The Count of Monte Cristo* in which he methodically plots out the destruction of the Fascist regime in England. He plots several different terror attacks on London's media outlets and powerful and corrupt officials within the party, committing gruesome murders and then leaving a unique flower at the scene of the crime. For years, he is blinded by his need for revenge. However, when he falls in love with Evey Hammond, he realizes that his unending quest for violence and vengeance will never make him happy. Without Evey's love, he knows he will always be unhappy and empty. His act of redemption comes when he is able to bring about the death of the High Chancellor and then kills Creedy, the Head of the Secret Police, and his gunmen despite being shot hundreds of times. Evey then plants him on a train in an abandoned tunnel car that proceeds to pass under Parliament; at which point the rigged explosives detonate and destroy the building. Therefore, although V dies a hero of the people, it is clear that the Fall of Man framework still is applicable to his character study.

Therefore, this paper has demonstrated that the Fall of Man framework is an extraordinarily powerful tool to study the origins of evil and also its logical and natural conclusion. Although this framework is by no means an all-inclusive tool for character study, I argue that it is an important framework in a larger conversation about the nature of evil and villains in past, contemporary, and future story-telling. However, in order for this framework to become even more powerful, it would need to analyze hundreds of different films for various genres and determine to what extent this structure actually holds up under scrutiny. There is much work to be done; but this paper should play an important role for future research into the origin of evil as explored through cinema.