

Article

The Hypostasis of the Archons: Platonic Forms as Angels

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Abstract: The thesis of this paper is that Platonic Forms are angels. I make this identification by claiming that Platonic Forms have the characteristics of angels, in particular, that Platonic Forms are alive. I offer four arguments for this claim. First, it seems that engaging in self-directed action is a sufficient condition for being alive. The Forms are, as teleological activities, self-directed actions. Second, bodies receive their being from their Forms, and some bodies are essentially alive. Third, in the Good, all the types of goodness, including life, are identical. The Forms are appearances of the Good. Fourth, since the Good imparts as much goodness as it can, the Forms are alive unless there is some bar to their being alive. There are good reasons to think that there is no such bar. I then show that ethical vices do not give body to human form, but give body to other forms—those that are evil angels. Lastly, I provide a survey of the relationships that various religious traditions posit between ethical vice and the demonic.

Keywords: angels; demons; philosophy of religion; Plato; platonic forms

1. Introduction

I identify Platonic Forms with angels. I do so by advancing four arguments for the claim that the Forms have the characteristics of angels, in particular, that they are alive: from the characteristics of the Forms, from the characteristics of the bodies that participate in the Forms, from the simplicity of the Good, and from the imparting nature of the Good. For those who believe in Platonic Forms, or take their existence as a serious theory, the paper functions as an argument for belief in angels. I then show how ethical vices are not a part of the human body because they do not participate in the Form of Man, but in Demonic Forms, evil angels, demons. Lastly, I survey the association between ethical vice and the demonic across a variety of religious traditions.

The paper assumes God's existence and some Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics.¹ These assumptions locate angels within a metaphysical scheme that would be broadly recognizable to most of the religious traditions that teach the existence of angels: to Greco-Roman paganism, Sassanian Manichaeism, Byzantine Christianity, medieval Catholicism, Safavid Shi'ism, or Hasidic Judaism. These religious traditions are all infused, in their philosophical expression, with the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle (Feibelman 1959, pp. 163–88).

Though the existence of angels is taught by many religious traditions, they are generally not a focus of authoritative theological pronouncements, allowing for much internal diversity within each tradition. I intend my account to be consistent with traditional Chalcedonian Christianity. To my knowledge, the closest precedent for my claims about the relationship between vice and the demonic comes from St Antony the Great: "You will not find their [the demon's] sins and iniquities revealed bodily, for they are not visible bodily. But you should know that we are their bodies, and that our soul receives their wickedness, and when it has received them, then it reveals them through the body in which we dwell" (Antony 1995, Ltr. 6, vv. 50–51).

My account avoids the dichotomy between demons as cryptids wandering the *res extensa* and demons as metaphors for human evil. On my account, demons are ontologically



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independent of human beings, but appear in us when we consent to be less than fully human. Though I argue for something metaphysically “spooky”, I do not argue for “poltergeists” that violate the ordinary patterns of efficient causality found in the physical world, nor does my discussion appeal to unusual experiences. My claim that ethical vices are the bodies of demons does not conflict with or impinge upon the empirical theories or observations of psychology. By analogy, panpsychism makes claims about the nature of matter, but does not have strange empirical implications, for example, that your table salt is about to strike up a conversation with you.

2. Metaphysical Assumptions

Form (*eidos*) and matter (*hyle*, *hypodochē*) are a conceptual couple. I note a few of the important ways in which they relate. Form is pattern (Plato 1997a, 389b; 1997g, 28a). Matter is that which is patterned by form. Form is actuality, being (Plato 1997e, 508d). Matter is the potentiality to receive the actuality of form, “a receptacle of all becoming—its wetnurse” (Plato 1997g, 49a). Form is essence (Plato 1997d, 74d–e). Matter is that which is inessential subsisting within an essence. Form is activity (Plato 1997e, 508b–e). Matter is the patient of form’s activity. Form is goal (Plato 1997d, 75a). Matter is that which is organized toward form as goal.²

The metaphysical relationship between form and matter is participation (*metechein*). For matter to participate in form is for it to become patterned by it, to become actualized by it, to receive its essence, to be activated by it, to be organized toward it. The participation of matter in form results in body (*hypostasis*), the presence of form in matter. For example, a particular body is a horse because it is matter in which the Form of Horse has become present; it has received this essence, is organized toward it as a goal, performs its activity.

Unparticipated form is form unmixed with matter, existing outside of the potentialities of space, time, and the physical. Participated form, form descending into matter, is form appearing within such potentialities. The participated form present in body is an image (*eidolon*, *eikon*, appearance, disclosure) of unparticipated form. Though participated form is an image of unparticipated form, an image of form is itself form. For example, looking at a portrait of Margaret, I see Margaret herself, present by participation in this image, who is also present by participation in innumerable family photos, and in the memories of her friends. These are not “Margarets”, but one and the same Margaret present in different matters. Traditionally, “the Forms” is reserved for form *qua* unparticipated, form prior to its disclosure in matter. I follow this tradition and use “form” to indicate the more general idea of the conceptual partner of matter. Therefore, while a given body, a given horse, is not itself the Form of Horse, it does, by being an image of it, present that Form; it is that same pattern, actuality, essence, activity, and goal, disclosed in the potentialities of matter.³

God, the Good, is to Forms as Forms are to bodies. The Forms receive their being from the Good by participation; they are images in which the Good appears. The Forms are matter in relation to God, receptacles that disclose God into various different patterns, activities, and goals: Beauty, Knowledge, Virtue, and so forth. In turn, bodies are receptacles that disclose the Forms (and so, ultimately, God) into our world. Bodies cannot participate in God in an unmediated way since bodies are also images of a given Form. For instance, a human being can only be like God in the human way, rather than in some other way—the dog way, the mango way. Some Forms are the intelligible species of things, types with bodily tokens, though this is not to deny that there are Forms of particulars as well as species. As Plotinus says, individual men “result from different forming principles” (Plotinus 1984c, 5.7), rather than each being a token of the Form of Man, made particular only by their matter.⁴ In Christian tradition, this idea is expressed by the guardian angel, in Greco-Roman tradition by the individual’s *daimon*.

A Form is purely actual, lacking any potentiality—it does not become in the course of time, or go out of existence, and there is nothing that it could become other than it is. However, a Form is not pure actuality since there are some things that a Form is not (Plant is not Animal). God alone, the Good, is pure actuality, the All in All (1 Corinthians 11:58)

whose imperishable spirit is in all things (Wisdom 11:26). The Forms also stand in relation to one another as form and matter, receiving activity, goal, and so on, from one another (in the order of being, not the order of time). For instance, the Form of Courage is matter in relation to the Form of Virtue—it receives its being from it and is an image of it. Courage pre-exists virtually in Virtue, and Virtue appears through Courage. Again, the Form of Man is matter in relation to the Form of Life, the Form of Knowledge, and so forth, since the Form of Man receives its being by participation in these Forms, which are less specific and closer to the pure actuality of the Good. This accords with what Pseudo-Dionysius teaches about the hierarchies of angels, the higher angels energizing and illuminating the lower angels with what they have received from God (Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, 292D–293A, 693C).

Form is the object of thought (*nous*); it is the intelligible. Body is the object of perception (*aisthesis*)—for example, we perceive horses; we perceive virtue in a courageous action. Matter as such, matter *qua* matter, is not the object of any cognitive faculty (Aristotle 1991b, 1036a 7). While cognition is of being (Plato 1997e, 508d; Aristotle 1991b, 1075a 4–10), matter *qua* matter, lacking the being of any form, does not exist. Therefore, our world may be described as a hypostatic union of Being and nothingness, as the *kenosis* of the *pleroma*.

3. The Forms as Angels

All Forms are angels.⁵ Many Platonist philosophers make similar claims. For Eriugena, the angel is not itself a “reason of things” or “primary exemplar” but “an angel is an essential intellectual motion about God” containing “certain theophanies of those reasons” (Eriugena 1987, 444c, 446c). For St Thomas Aquinas, angels are “self-subsisting forms” (Aquinas 1947, ST I Q50 A5 co.; 1955, SCG 2.91.5), and for Marsilio Ficino, angels are “forms that are totally free of matter” (Ficino 2001, bk. 1 chp. 5 sct. 10).

The claim that the Forms are angels also matches with some traditions of the Abrahamic faiths. In Second Temple Judaism, we find angels as personifications of “the forces of nature (lightning, clouds, rain), the reification of human concepts and constructs (childbirth, forgetfulness, nations), or the hypostasis of divine attributes (justice, love, forgiveness)” (Dennis 2016; cf. 1 Enoch 8). We find the same in Islam (Burge 2012, pp. 31–51). For instance, al-Ghazali describes angels as “the intellects that are principles for existence”, “bestower of forms” (Al-Ghazali 2000, chp. 7 sct. 20, chp. 17. sct. 8; Griffel 2009, p. 151). In Christian tradition, it came to be the saints, who are like the angels (Luke 20:36), who personify various aspects of reality.

Angels have the following characteristics, some of these being perhaps more central to the concept than others:

- Life—immortality (Luke 20:35);
- Power (*dynamis*, 2 Peter 2:11);
- Agency, engaging in actions (Matthew 24:31);
- Ethical virtue (2 Samuel 14:17, 2 Peter 2:4);
- Joy (Luke 15:10);
- Desire (*epithymous*, 1 Peter 1:12);
- Knowledge (1 Peter 1:12);
- Spirit (*pneuma*, Hebrews 1:14);
- Ontological superiority to human beings (Psalm 8:5, Hebrews 2:7);
- Greater intimacy with God than human beings presently enjoy (Matthew 18:10);
- Praise God continuously (Revelation 4:8);
- Numerousness (Revelation 5:11);
- Social relations of some kind with one another (Hebrews 12:22);
- Exist since (at least) the creation of the earth (Job 38:7);
- Exercise providence over creation (Psalm 91:11);
- Communicate messages from God to human beings (Luke 1:26).

I identify the Forms as angels by offering four arguments for the claim that the Forms are alive. This should be understood as a proxy for many of the other angelic characteristics, or at least as a first major step in identifying the two. Plato’s *Timaeus* expresses the view

that the Forms are alive; the demiurge creates the world from a model, where “the model was itself an everlasting Living Thing”, which “comprehends within itself all intelligible living things”. Our world, to be complete, “should possess the same kinds and numbers of living things as those which, according to the discernment of Intellect, are contained within the real Living Thing” (Plato 1997g, 37d, 30c, 39e).

3.1. From the Characteristics of the Forms

It seems that the characteristics of Forms show that they are alive. I take it as a sufficient condition for being alive that something engages in self-directed action (Aristotle 2016, 412b 17). If something runs away, or punches, or lectures—and is not simply, like an artefact, used to do these things by some other agent—then it is alive. Plausibly, action just is “activity that is directed at a goal” (Wilson and Shpall 2012; cf. Aristotle 2011, 1094a). Now, the Forms are self-directed actions because they themselves are teleological activities. Therefore, the Forms are alive.

Since Forms are purely actual—free of potentiality—they, like God, are themselves actions, rather than things that can engage in actions. In our case, as participated forms, our actions take place through bodily structures that have the potential for action, like eyes or brains. The Forms, being purely actual, do not act through matter, but just are actions. Again, the Forms are self-directed actions because their goals are not, like artefacts, externally pressed upon them by some other agent; Forms are teleological activities. Since Forms are purely actual, they are actions in a state of teleological fulfillment, in which the activity is not merely done in pursuit of a goal, but in which the activity and the goal coincide: the goal is to be in a particular state of activity, and that goal is continuously achieved and does not suffer from the potential of failing to be achieved. Forms are what Aristotelians call immanent actions, in which “it is the exercise that is final . . . seeing in the one seeing and contemplation in the one contemplating” (Aristotle 1991b, 1050a 25–40). The goal of seeing, to see, is achieved just by engaging in the activity; the activity and the goal toward which it is oriented are not separated by a lapse of time or other potentiality. Again, we engage in a sequence of actions, and this compound of actions just is our life, but, lacking potentiality, a Form is a single action. Again, our actions are oriented toward goals that involve things external to us—for example, to pick up a glass—because we are in a state of potentiality. By contrast, the action of a Form is internally oriented; its action is not one of change or motion, in itself or in another, but to be what it is—a specific hypostasis of the Good. This is not to say that the action of a Form is inert; like God’s action, its effect is to bestow itself on matter by participation—and, through its images, to effect change in the world of potentiality. Whereas participated form struggles to become what it is, to imitate its Form in matter, Form is always teleologically fulfilled. For example, the Form of Compassion is the complete, perfected, act of compassion. In sum, a Form is a “life that is at once whole, united with itself, and not distant from itself” (Ficino 2001, bk. 1 chp. 5, sct. 10).

3.2. From That Which Participates in the Forms

At least some bodies are alive, at least some are beautiful (and so forth for every type of goodness). Each body has its being, including such types of goodness, by participation the relevant Form. Because there is a Form of Life, there can be living things. Because there is a Form of Beauty, there can be beautiful things.

Whatever being a body has, it receives by participation from the corresponding Form. Therefore, that Form cannot itself lack that being (Plato 1997a, 439d; 1997c, 301b). For instance, the Form of Life cannot be not alive; if it were, *per impossibile*, not alive, then none of the matter than it informs would be alive; the Form would have no life to share with that which participates in it. Again, if the Form of the Beautiful were, *per impossibile*, not beautiful, then nothing would be beautiful. However, some bodies are alive; some are beautiful. Therefore, at least the Forms of those bodies are alive, beautiful, and so on.

This argument does not imply that, for example, the Forms are located in space and time, or that they are so tall and so heavy. Properties such as these pertain to states of potentiality and becoming, characterized by mutability, rather than being, characterized by immutability (Plato 1997g, 27d). The immutable, essential, properties of a body it has by virtue of its form, whereas the mutable, inessential, properties it has by virtue of its matter. Some bodies are essentially alive. For example, that I am alive pertains to the type of being that I am. It is a property that I cannot lose without ceasing to exist, whereas that I live in such a place, or have a freckle, and so on, are properties that I can lose without ceasing to exist. They pertain to my becoming rather than pertaining to my being.

3.3. *From the Simplicity of the Good*

God is simple—without parts, beyond plurality. God’s existence is identical with his action, which is identical with his beauty, life, power, knowledge, moral goodness, and so forth. In God, all the types of goodness, all perfections, are identical.⁶ This is a central teaching of classical theism (Vallicella 2019; Aquinas 1947, ST I Q3) and of the Platonic tradition (Cohoe 2017).

Since the Forms receive their being by participating in God, the Good, and since in God all the types of goodness are present, it follows that all the types of goodness are present in all the Forms. If beings receive their being from God by participating in him, if they are to be divine hypostases, if they are to disclose God, if they are to be appearances of the Good, all the types of goodness must be present in them. That is, nothing that exists is entirely without life, nothing is entirely without beauty, and so on. Suppose that something existed but was entirely devoid of life. Since God is alive, and since his life is identical with the other types of goodness that we ascribe to him, this thing that we are supposing would, by virtue of its lifelessness, be utterly unlike God. Therefore, this is an impossible supposition—such a thing cannot exist because unlikeness to God, Being, entails its nonexistence. Rather, nothing that exists is entirely devoid of life; “for being is not a dead thing, nor is it not life” (Plotinus 1984b, 5.4.2). Therefore, if the Forms exist they must be alive. Since the Forms are intermediaries between ourselves and the Good, they must not only be alive, but alive in a fuller sense than us—a sense briefly illustrated in the first argument.

One objection to this argument might be that so long as something is good in any one respect (beautiful but not alive, alive but not beautiful, etc.), then it is like God in some respect, and so can exist, despite lacking some types of goodness entirely. I deny that anything can be like God if it lacks any of the types of goodness. Of two things in the material world, we can say how alike they are by assessing how many properties they share. A slice of bread is like a langoustine in that they are both nutritious to eat. A crab is more like a langoustine than a slice of bread is like a langoustine in that, as well as being nutritious to eat, a crab is also a crustacean. However, since all of God’s properties are identical with one another, there is not the same possibility of assessing likeness between God and a body in terms of the number of shared properties. Therefore, either something is like God—and so alive, good, beautiful, and so on—or unlike God, and so devoid of all types of goodness, including existence. This is not to deny that likeness to God can come in degrees, that one thing can be better than another, as they participate in God in a more unmediated manner—for example, angel is better and more alive than man—it is only to deny that anything is bereft of likeness to God, which must include life.

Another objection to this argument might be that some beings are surely not alive—atoms, rocks, and so on. This objection calls for elaboration on the distinction between angel and soul. Angels are unparticipated forms, while souls are participated forms. For example, the Form of Man is an angel, and the Form of each man is his guardian angel, while the participated form of each man is his soul.⁷ Soul, participated form, “the first actuality of a body that has life in potentiality” (Aristotle 2016, 412a 20–30), is enmeshed within the potentialities of matter. Therefore, it is the type of thing that can become better or worse, which can be affected and passive; it is a pattern that can disintegrate. For instance,

if I live in a vicious way, or become senile, then as I cease to draw down my Form into potentiality, to that degree, I cease to exist—my soul withers and dies, ceasing to be form for matter. To illustrate, performances of a song can be done better or worse and, after some margin of badness, cease to be performances of that song. By contrast, an angel is in a state of ceaseless, unchanging, and teleologically fulfilled activity: the angel is not altered by a sojourn into potentiality.

I suggest that we should understand “nonliving” things as having life in the sense that they manifest the activity of angels, but without the intermediary of soul that living things have. For example, the activity of an electron is ceaseless, unchanging, and fulfilled—undying, unwearied, and not teleologically oriented toward anything other than its present state. Therefore, while electrons and so on are less alive than living things in that they lack a life of their own—self-directed action, soul—they are nevertheless alive as manifestations of a purely actual life. A few analogies may be helpful. Nonliving things are alive in the way that our hair or fingernails are alive, outgrowths of something living. Nonliving things are alive in the way that an arrangement of furniture, or a tax code, can be rational, resulting from and exhibiting the rationality of rational beings. Nonliving things are alive in the way that the smallest parts of organisms (a sliver of a cell wall, a molecule of chlorophyll) are alive, participating in a life that is not wholly contained or localized within them. Again, whereas a soul is intrinsically indexed to a particular body, an angel can have indefinitely many bodies or no bodies; though an angel can allow a body to participate in its life, the angel ontologically precedes body.

The suggestion that nonliving things have life by virtue of their relationship to angels matches the idea expressed in the Abrahamic traditions that angels exercise providence over *everything* in our world and, in particular, that they are responsible for *all* motion (Augustine 2002, p. 390; Al-Ghazali 2011, p. 172; Aquinas 1947, ST I Q110). As Maimonides says, “natural forces and angels are identical” (Maimonides 2002, p. 161).

3.4. From the Imparting Nature of the Good

Since being a cause of goodness is good (Aquinas 1947, ST I Q103 A4 co.), and since the Good is the best, God imparts as much goodness as he can; “the One . . . overflows, as it were, and its superabundance makes something other than itself” (Plotinus 1984b, 5.2). The limits on the goodness that God imparts are limits on the ability of things to receive goodness, rather than limits on God’s ability or willingness to give goodness. For instance, by their nature, ants are not rational creatures. If God created an “ant” with a rational nature—that could write poetry, discuss ethics, and so on—it would be something other than an ant. Therefore, that God has not given rationality to ants is due to the limits of their nature, rather than due to a lack of generosity on God’s part.

This raises the question of why God creates beings that by their nature are limited in these ways. The principle of plenitude (Lovejoy 1936, p. 52) states that it is best for there to be a gradation of beings—for example, some rational, some irrational.⁸ This is best since God, Being, is more completely manifested by a wide variety of beings than by only one type of being (Aquinas 1947, ST I Q47 A1 co.). Again, through this variety, higher beings can imitate God by exercising providence over lower beings (Aquinas 1947, ST I, Q103, A6) and being imaged in them (Plotinus 1984b, 5.2). It is best that God creates both the better and the worse, rational and irrational beings.

If everything receives as much of God’s goodness as its nature allows, the relevant question for us is whether the nature of a Form excludes its being alive. I offer three reasons for thinking that there is no such limitation.

First, to the extent that the first three arguments for identifying Forms with angels are cogent, they support the claim that there is no bar to a Form being alive. Since Forms are self-directed actions, they are alive. Since some bodies are alive, at least their Forms are alive. On pain of being unlike God, Forms are alive.

Second, it seems that the properties of Forms that one might propose as being incompatible with being alive are also properties of God. Since it is part of the concept of God

that he is alive, then those who hold that the concept of God is coherent must admit that having these properties is not a bar to being alive. The most obvious three such properties are: not having a physical body, being nontemporal, being nonspatial (Drange 1998, p. 56). In the same vein, according to some conceptions of God, God is a Form; Augustine terms God the “First Form” (Bradshaw 2004, p. 225), the Form of Forms.

Third, the clear and epistemically easily accessible examples of nonliving things (in the sense of not having a life of its own) are examples of material things: rocks, atoms, and so on. Again, it seems that the characteristics in terms of which we identify nonliving things refer to materiality, bodies that exhibit an absence of metabolism, homeostasis, growth, reproduction, and self-motion.

By contrast, the characteristics in terms of which we identify living things, although also usually understood in terms of materiality, admit of nonmaterial, purely actual, analogues. Metabolic activities—nourishment, excretion—and homeostatic activities—thermoregulation, osmoregulation—aim at maintaining the form of a living thing, but we can conceive of form that maintains itself without these material processes. Growth aims at the full expression of form, but we can conceive of form that is always already in a state of full expression. Reproduction aims at the sustaining of form by way of recreation, but we can conceive of form that sustains itself without succession. A plant or animal reproduces itself so that it “may, insofar as it is able, partake of the everlasting and the divine . . . and remains not itself but such as it is, not one in number but one in form” (Aristotle 2016, 415b 1–5).

This suggests that nonlife is something that emerges in materiality, not prior to materiality, and so that nothing bars a Form from being alive.

4. Human Participation in the Demonic

The claim that the Forms are living beings, angels, takes on practical significance when we turn to the issue of human participation in nonhuman Forms. We speak of our ethical vices as our “demons”, and we say of some vicious action “that wasn’t really me, that is not who I am”. Again, many experience a sense of passivity in bouts of passion, a sense of dissociation from their worst actions. The discussion of this section presents metaphysical claims about ethical vice that broadly mesh with these conceptualizations and experiences. Therefore, it functions as a fifth argument for the claim that the Forms are alive—that we encounter the life of some of these Forms in our everyday experiences.

4.1. *That Ethical Vices Do Not Participate in the Form of Man*

We have noted that form is pattern, actuality, essence, activity, and goal, and that in bodies, form appears in matter. Therefore, we can determine whether something is human body by determining whether it is an appearance of the Form of Man, whether human form, human soul, is present in it. Let us say that sight is a part of the human form—that seeing is one aspect of its activity and goal. If so, then that through which I see is a part of my body—whether a natural eye or an artificial eye of glass and metal. Likewise, if a body does not express the human form, then it is not a part of the human body. If I swallow a penny, or have a penny surgically implanted in my arm, then, although the penny is physically located within my body, it is not a part of my body because it is not expressing my form; it is not matter for my form.

Ethical vices are not appearances of human form. A virtue is an excellence, and an ethical virtue is an excellence in one’s dispositions to action and passion (emotion, desire) (Aristotle 2011, 1104b 15). Each ethical virtue is oriented toward the goods of a certain domain of action, and the ethically virtuous person is oriented toward the goods of every domain in the way that is best, so that they are poised to achieve what is best (Aristotle 2011, 1106b 5–30). For example, the moderate person is disposed to eat and drink in the way that is best, to respond in the way that is best to the good of bodily pleasure. By contrast, ethical vice is a departure from excellence in such dispositions, such as a disposition to pursue bodily pleasure even at the expense of health, to neglect opportunities to help others,

to be insensitive to beauty. Ethical virtues disclose the human form; they are what our dispositions to action and passion are like when those dispositions are ordered toward the human good, when they participate in the human activity, a life lived according to reason (Aristotle 2011, 1098a 12–17). Therefore, as ethical vices are dispositions that depart from this, they do not disclose the human form; they are failures to pattern matter after that form, to manifest its activity, to pursue its goal; they are inhuman. More generally, a being's excellences help constitute its existence by orienting it toward the goal that defines it and as it loses those excellences it tends toward nonexistence. For example, the properties that make some being a knife are those excellences that help it to cut well. As these are lost it becomes a bad knife and, after some margin, no longer a knife at all. Therefore, ethical vices are not a part of the human body.

I note some thoughts supporting this conclusion. For one thing, there is a sense in which a person who has lived very viciously has not just lived badly, but hardly lived at all—for example, the person who squanders themselves on the pursuit of fame. For another thing, it is appropriate to not love the bad. Therefore, if ethical vice is a part of the human being, then, to that extent, it is appropriate to not love the human being. However, the human being is worthy of the greatest love—so it must not be that ethical vice is a part of the human soul or body. Lastly, if my ethical vices are a part of me, then by destroying them, I destroy some part of myself. However, the opposite seems true—that by destroying my ethical vices, I become more myself.

To say that ethical vices are not part of the human body is not to say they are not parts of our bodies, or that we are not responsible for them. The rational part of the soul is able to exercise choice concerning action and, through habituation, to shape dispositions to action and passion. When this is done well, it results in human body. When this is done badly, it results in inhuman bodies—in dispositions enformed by goals that are inhuman. Although we can make our bodies inhuman by making our dispositions cease to participate in our form, these inhuman bodies are our own in the sense that they result from, and in turn have an ongoing influence on, exercises of our own rationality. As an image of this process within the soul Plato gives us a:

“multicolored beast with a ring of many heads that it can grow and change at will—some from gentle, some from savage animals . . . he should take care of the many-headed beast as a farmer does his animals, feeding and domesticating the gentle heads and preventing the savage ones from growing”. (Plato 1997e, 588c, 589b)

4.2. *That Ethical Vices Participate in Demonic Forms*

To avoid the conclusion that our ethical vices are body for some Form other than the human, we might wish to say that they are only failed attempts to give body to human Form, that they are distorted versions, approximations, of that pattern. After all, a body always remains in a state of potentiality with respect to its Form: the Form is the purely actual taken as a goal by the impurely actual. Therefore, a body can disclose its Form in matter imperfectly while remaining a body of that Form, just as a bad portrait of Margaret still presents her. An analogy with deformity or illness might be made. *Qua eye, qua* matter oriented to the goal of sight, a deformed eye is body for the human Form. *Qua* deformed, such an eye is not body for some other Form, but the failure to fully express the human Form.

In one sense, it is right to say that ethical vices are distortions, found in body, of human Form. Our vices, as our dispositions, continue to stand in a relationship of potentiality to the human Form; they are a locus in which the human Form could be given body, if they are reformed, for example, if my disposition toward the needy turns from being hard-hearted to being compassionate. Again, the deformed eye is a locus in which human Form could be given body, if it is healed.

However, in another sense, it remains necessary to say that our ethical vices participate in and give body to Forms other than the human. Like every Form, the human Form is

purely actual. Therefore, while given human forms can be more or less like it, the Form of Man is always perfectly itself—it cannot depart from its own activity or goal in any respect. Therefore, if there is some activity or goal that is inhuman—humanlike, or almost human, a distorted approximation—it cannot be the activity or goal of the human Form, but must be that of some other Form. Therefore, for every departure from Form that we find in form, that exhibits an activity and goal that is not perfectly human, we must posit a Form corresponding to these, as the purely actual states toward which they tend.

Ethical vices are dispositions toward activities and goals that are inhuman. For instance, my ethically vicious disposition to be hard-hearted toward strangers is inhuman—it is not merely an absence of compassion, but the presence of dispositions that are different from compassion: for example, to respond to the suffering of strangers with a pained irritation, to imagine various reasons why they might be unworthy of help. Again, the goal toward which this disposition tends, my own disunity from these strangers, their own nonexistence, is opposed to the goal of compassion. Therefore, corresponding to this, we must posit a Form of Hard-Heartedness to Strangers—a living being that is perfectly hard-hearted to strangers. The analogy with the deformed eye is misleading. The deformed eye does not do its activity, or does not do its activity very well. Nevertheless, the deformed eye has no activity or goal other than sight. By contrast, in ethical vice, we adopt goals that differ from the goals of virtue; we treat as goods things that are not really goods and vice versa, we order goods in the wrong ways—for example, in *schadenfreude* we take pleasure in the sufferings of others, in envy we are pained by the well-being of others, and in gluttony we take too much pleasure in food—and likewise we engage in activities that differ from those of virtue.

I take this account to be consistent with the claim that evil is a negation. Change involves something ceasing to be (Aristotle 1991c, 191a 35; Plato 1997f, 248a–249c). However, in change, space and time prevent us from entirely ceasing to be. Sequentially and extensionally, our changed state is preserved. This is like an object falling through a series of nets, each of which momentarily breaks its fall. For instance, my body ceases to be in one pose, but the space around it, and the next moment of time, receives its changed shape. By contrast, the Forms cannot change. Therefore, supposing that evil is a negation—an absence, a privation, a passing away, a falling away—then for every negation of Form, there is a distinct Form. Whereas a given human being may become worse but remain identical with themselves over space and time, any ceasing to be among Forms would be, would result in, a distinct Form. Each “fallen angel” would be the failure to be of an angel (Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, 725A, 733C). The claim that evil is a negation is shared widely within both the Platonic (Plotinus 1984d, 1.8.1) and the Christian traditions. From this claim, many Platonists conclude that there are no evil divinities or angels—the ontological superior must also be the ethical superior (Martin 2004, p. 189; Plato 1997e, 378a–380c). By contrast, traditional Christianity teaches the existence of demons. Therefore, the two traditions must understand this claim differently. In my view, the demonic is not just an absence of the angelic, but the presence of something that falls short of the angelic; a living being distinct from the angel.

As noted, Forms are goals. When we take these Demonic Forms as goals, when we engage in their activities, when we shape our dispositions toward them, our dispositions become bodies for them, we make our dispositions into their images, and they appear within and through us. This view does not imply that demons interact with our minds in some causal-efficient sense. Rather, as goals, they order our mental lives in the way that any goal does. For example, the goal of eating is apprehended mentally in the guise of the desire to eat, or imagining various delicacies, or remembering or inferring where food might be found. Likewise, the goal of greed—prioritizing wealth over other goods in a way that drags us away from human flourishing—appears to us as a desire to get money from someone even when this would involve lying, in daydreaming about how happy we will be when more money has been acquired, in attending too frequently to our stock portfolio, and so on. When we find that our disposition toward wealth is patterned after the Form

of Greed, that disposition is inhuman and demonic. Such a disposition is the body of a life and an agency distinct from oneself. “The wicked person is not one person but many” (Aristotle 1991a, 1240b 18).

I will not embark on the theodical question of how and why Demonic Forms arise. I briefly note two traditional answers to this question. One answer is that these Forms arise because they can be, in various ways, a means to goodness; the existence of greed allows for the good of transformation, repentance, as when dispositions turn from greed to generosity; for the good of goodness triumphing over evil; for the good of choice between good and evil; and that from greedy dispositions, good empirical consequences can follow. This type of answer is reflected in stories of God using unwitting demons to advance his purposes (Tobit 3:8, 6:11–18). Another answer is that these Forms arise from the fecundity of the Good. The Good’s creativity gives rise to the ontologically least good as well as the best (hadrons to henads), and gives rise to the ethically best and least good, to the edge of absolute nonexistence. This answer is reflected in Kabbalah as the qliphoth, the evil spirits who are the “shells” or “husks” surrounding goodness (Matt 2004, 19b), or in the Hermetic teaching that “it is his essence to be pregnant with all things and to make them” (Trismegistus 1992, bk. 5, sct. 9).

5. Vice and the Demonic: A Survey

The association of ethical vices with the demonic is widely shared across cultures. I cannot say that this tendency is entirely universal, as I cannot find relevant sources about the indigenous religions of Africa, Australasia, or the Americas (though they involve divine personifications of different aspects of nature, of different human activities, etc.) I outline some of the different ways in which religious traditions have construed the relationship between vice and the demonic. Arguably, that so many cultures make some association between them is what we would expect to observe if there is such an association and something we would not expect to observe otherwise. I press this argument from common consent no further. I presume that readers of this article will find this survey interesting, and it supports my claim that vice is demonic.

5.1. Judaism

Jewish tradition contains many diverse accounts of the relation between vice and the demonic. In Genesis 6:1–8 we meet the Nephilim, the offspring of human women and the Sons of God. The idea of the Nephilim derives from the ritual sexual practices of Israel’s neighbors, in which a monarch would mate with a god, in the person of a temple prostitute (De Young 2021). Nephilim are the offspring of these unions. Understood spiritually, we become Nephilim by being vicious, mating with the demonic, and giving it birth in ourselves. In early modern Judaism, dybbuk are the souls of the evil departed, who can possess the living (Dennis 2016). The *Mishnah* offers the idea of demons as “partly formed souls, unfinished beings left over from God’s creative process” (Dennis 2016)—created at twilight on the sixth day (Kulp 2022, 5:6). This conveys the idea of demons as human beings who are imperfect, unfulfilled—which the vicious surely are.

Kabbalah contains further associations between vice and the demonic. One is that demons are our creations, the “spiritual byproducts of human criminal and immoral sexual activity” (Dennis 2016). As the *Zohar* puts it, “the delights of the sons of men, in which they indulge asleep at night, generate demon after demon” (Matt 2004, 19b). Similarly, the *Treatise on the Left Emanation* teaches that the demons Samael and Lilith were “born in a spiritual birth . . . in the image of” Adam and Eve, due to the latter’s sin (Ha-Kohen 1986, pp. 173, 179). Here, Samael and Lilith are presented as entire antihuman personalities, “shadows” of Adam and Eve, rather than personifications of specific vices. Another idea in the *Zohar* is that the sinner “draws upon himself all sorts of impure spirits, clinging to him relentlessly . . . clinging only to those who cling to them” (Matt 2004, 55a) Here, our vices do not create demons, but do attract them to us. In Hasidic writings, angels and demons are presented as in some sense internal to us; “Man stands upon the earth and his

head reaches to the heavens, and the angels of the Eternal ascend and descend within him” (Dennis 2016).

5.2. Islam

In the *Quran*, the primary role of shayatin (satans) is to incite vice in human beings; whispering evil suggestions to them (23:97); teaching magic (2:102); and inspiring disputes between friends (6:121) and rebellion (58:10). Islamic tradition contains the idea that shayatin can, in some sense, be within us. As one hadith has it, “the Shaitan [the Satan] flows through the children of Adam like blood” (Al-Bukhari 2022, 7171). According to al-Ghazali, ethical life is “a struggle between the forces of the angels and the forces of the devils” (Al-Ghazali 2011, p. 31). According to Ibn ‘Arabi, “the soul acquired the evil and blamable qualities it possesses from the touch of Iblis’ trampling . . . Satan’s living in it and his authority over it is because his footprints are in it” (Ibn ‘Arabi 1980, p. 64). Alongside shayatin, Islam teaches the existence of jinn. Man is made from clay, jinn from fire, and angels from light (Sahih Muslim, 2996). If angels are creatures of rational intellect, then jinn are creatures of imagination and emotion, *thymos* (El-Zein 2009, p. 33). Jinn are morally ambivalent and so can act as tempters or as helpers. In Islam, jinn are responsible for possession phenomena (Al-Shimmari 2021, pp. 67, 72).

5.3. Christianity

The New Testament expresses the notion that we participate in a higher order of reality, and make it present in us, by engaging in its characteristic action. For instance:

“If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works [*erga*] your father did.’ . . . ‘You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires.’” (John 8:39–44, ESV)

Here, Jesus is not making the (absurd) claim that all of Abraham’s biological descendants do his works and inferring that his interlocutors are not Abraham’s biological descendants since they do not do his works. Rather, the claim is that Abraham’s children just are those who do his works, that the devil’s children are just those who do his works (Aquinas 2010, pp. 130–32; cf. 1 Peter 3:6). This metaphysics of participation is repeated elsewhere:

“Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning [*arches*]. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works [*erga*] of the devil . . . By this it is evident [*phanera*] who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil”. (1 John 3:8–10, ESV)

“Before we believed in God, the dwelling place of our heart was corrupt and feeble, since it really was a temple built by hand; for it was full of idolatry and was a house of demons, because we did everything that was opposed to God”. (Barnabas 2003, 16:7)

Those who practice sin participate in the demonic *arche* and *erga*, disclosing the demonic into this world, making demons present in and through themselves. Vice and the demonic receive a great deal of attention from the Church Fathers. I draw from the *Philokalia*.

According to Evagrius the Solitary, there is a demon “entrusted with” or “set over” (Palmer et al. 1979a, pp. 39, 52) each passion.⁹ The goal of the demon is to distract and impair the intellect so that it will not know God (Palmer et al. 1979a, p. 52). The demon pursues this goal by inflaming the passions by presenting thoughts, images, memories, or possible courses of action, to the intellect. For instance, “the demon of anger . . . suggests images of our parents, friends or kinsmen being gratuitously insulted . . . making us say or do something vicious . . . The demon of avarice . . . suggests that we should attach ourselves to wealthy women” (Palmer et al. 1979a, pp. 47, 51).

Evagrius distinguishes between thoughts that we cause and those caused by the demons, with *everything* vicious falling to the latter; “all thoughts producing anger or desire in a way that is contrary to nature are caused by demons” (Palmer et al. 1979a, p. 39). St Hesychios the Priest stresses that demons are always involved in vice; “it is impossible for sin to enter the heart without first knocking at its door in the form of a fantasy provoked by the devil”. “If no demonic form enters the heart, it will be empty of evil thoughts”. St John of Karpathos has it that “when no demon dwells within us, our soul and body are not troubled by the passions” (Palmer et al. 1979a, pp. 170, 193, 320).

However, the Church Fathers emphasize that the vicious cooperate with the works of demons, rather than only being passively affected by them. St Mark the Ascetic says that the vicious “assented to this demonic activity and shared in it” (Palmer et al. 1979a, p. 151). Hesychios remarks that “the provocation comes first, then our coupling with it, or the mingling of our thoughts with those of the wicked demons” (Palmer et al. 1979a, p. 170).

The Church Fathers also indicate that demons are in some sense within us: “the demon of anger . . . he dwells in our hearts”. Demons are “barbarian cave-dwellers living within you”. Demons “move like dark clouds through the different parts of the heart, taking the form of sinful passions”. “Just as someone in the midst of a crowd, holding a mirror and looking at it, sees not only his own face but also the faces of those looking in the mirror with him, so someone who looks into his own heart sees in it not only his own state, but also the black faces of the demons”. Nevertheless, demons are ultimately external to our essence; “the wicked spirits cluster round only the outside of the heart” (Palmer et al. 1979a, pp. 82, 318, 282, 166, 263).

The consequence of cooperating with demons is described with images of slavery, ensnarement, devourment, and madness (Palmer et al. 1979a, e.g., pp. 46, 90, 286, 299, 344), but also adultery (Palmer et al. 1979a, pp. 39, 263) and giving “birth to evil passions” (Palmer et al. 1979a, p. 343). To refuse cooperation with demons is to “destroy and banish” (Palmer et al. 1979a, p. 314) them; “the demons are weakened when the passions in us decrease” (Palmer et al. 1979b, p. 68).

We do not experience demons directly, but infer their presence from the thoughts that they present; “by recognizing the object presented to it, the intellect knows which demon is approaching. For example, if the face of a person who has done me harm or insulted me appears in my mind, I recognize the demon of rancour approaching” (Palmer et al. 1979a, pp. 38–89).

Many Church Fathers allow that demons have bodies, but bodies of some fine matter such as fire or air, or spiritual bodies. Some, such as Minucius Felix, say that “when the evil angels fell, they lost their simplicity of substance and took on a substance half-way between mortal and immortal” (Russell 1981, p. 104). I am not sure how to understand these claims. Plausibly, as with idea that demons are aerial spirits (e.g., Ephesians 2:2), these ideas indicate the liminality of angels and demons between ourselves and God. I think that my account also offers a plausible interpretation: the fiery/airy/spiritual bodies of the demons are our ethical vices. This is how *Picatrix*, a highly influential grimoire, understands the association of demons with fire:

“When a wrathful intent it set alight in humankind, it is immoderately inflamed, and they become furious and enraged in the utmost. At that moment, a devil is produced in every action. We can say through a certain analogy that devils exist in fire—that is, in the ignition of the fire of human wrath from which devils bring about their effects”. (Attrell and Porreca 2019, p. 145)

The teaching that came to be authoritative in Western Christianity (Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States 1997, sct. 330) is that angels and demons are immaterial, do not have “bodies naturally united to them” (Aquinas 1947, ST I Q51 A1). This view fits well with the idea that, as Hesychios says, “the demons work through evil thoughts alone by forming in the intellect what fanciful pictures they wish . . . Lacking the density

of physical bodies, the demons through deceitfulness and guile are purveyors of torment, both to themselves and to us, by means of evil thoughts alone" (Palmer et al. 1979a, p. 193).

The Church Fathers also speak of cooperation with angels (Palmer et al. 1979b, pp. 18, 71, 77, 88, 98), angelic blessing, and angelic assistance in ethical life. If my research is any guide, the association of angels with specific virtues is a much less prominent theme, if present at all (Enoch 40:9, Hermas 1:5:1, 2:6:2). My account makes sense of this asymmetry in that virtues are our own in a way that vices are not.

Gnostic theologians also identify vices as demonic. Valentinus writes that

"The many spirits dwelling in the heart do not permit it to become pure: rather, each of them performs its own acts, violating it in various ways with improper desires . . . the habitation of many demons". (Valentinus 2021, p. 303)

According to Clement of Alexandria:

"Basilides and his followers used to call the passions adventitious occurrences. They say that they are in essence spirits attached to the rational soul in some primitive disturbance and confusion, and that there are other different, bastard spiritual natures which grow up in attachment to these . . . Basilides' man perpetuates the image of a wooden horse in the poetic myth, enfolding in one body an army of so many different spirits". (Clement of Alexandria 1991, bk. 2, chp. 2, scts. 112–13)

5.4. The Hellenic World

The root of daemon, *daio*, means to divide, to dispense. Daemons are beings that dispense fate. Daemons are intermediate between, and mediate between, human beings and the gods (Plato 1997b, 984e). The views of Apuleius are broadly representative of earlier Platonism (Apuleius 2015). For Apuleius, some daemons are the souls of the dead, who "are punished with certain wandering, as with a certain exile, on account of the evil deeds of their life". Another class of daemons are not deceased humans, but "preside over certain powers. In the number of these are Sleep and Love". These daemons personify various aspects of us. Apuleius does not say whether there are any evil daemons within this second class. However, Apuleius is clear that all daemons are subject to the passions and that they are set over the passions; "according to the ancient theology . . . [daemons] . . . suffer all the mutations of the human soul; and are agitated by the ebullitions of human thought . . . Hence, the passions of the subjects of their government are, in fables, proximately referred to these". Apuleius says that we have individual daemons drawn from this second class; "The upright desire of the soul is a good daemon . . . the blessed are called eudaemones, the daemon of whom is good, i.e., whose mind is perfect in virtue".

Porphyry makes a clearer association between vice and the demonic. He says of the evil daemons that "they inflame people's appetites with lust and longing for wealth and power and pleasure, and also with empty ambition from which arises civil conflicts and wars and kindred events . . . all self-indulgence and hope of riches and fame comes from them, and especially deceit" (Porphyry 2000, bk. 2, scts. 40, 42). We can avoid daemonic attacks by not participating in sacrifices to them and by controlling our passions (Porphyry 2000, bk. 2, sct. 43). Porphyry remarks that "the soul is a dwelling place, as you have learned, either of gods or of evil spirits . . . if it has welcomed in the evil guest, it does all things in wickedness" (Porphyry 1986, sct. 21). Porphyry also holds that daemons (good or evil) "reveal their gift to us in the form of dreams or waking visions . . . revealing images endowed with form" (Porphyry 2014, p. 136). Other Neoplatonists say similar things. Plotinus says that the vicious are "acting under the control of other *daimones*, whom they chose according to the corresponding part of that which is active in them" (Plotinus 1984a, 3.5.7). Proclus holds that the virtuous man "flees from the debasing tribe of spirits" (Proclus 1971, p. 28).

The *Corpus Hermeticum* also associates demons with vices and portrays them as becoming internal to us, seizing us:

“Energy is the essence of a demon . . . They reshape our souls to their own ends, and they rouse them, lying in ambush in our muscle and marrow, in veins and arteries . . . the rational part of the soul stands unmastered by the demons, suitable as a receptacle for god . . . All others the demons carry off as spoils, both souls and bodies, since they are fond of the demons’ energies and acquiesce in them”. (Trismegistus 1992, bk. 16, scts. 13–16)

In Hellenic religion, we find many gods personifying negative ethical qualities—who suffer from them rather than controlling them. For instance, in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, among the parthenogenetic daughters of the goddess Eris (“strife”), are Neikea (“quarrels”), Pseudea (“lies”), and Androktasiai (“manslaughters”) (Hesiod 2006, sct. 226).

5.5. Other Religious Traditions

Hinduism’s *Bhagavad Gita* teaches that “There are two classes of created beings in this world, The divine and the demoniacal” (Sargeant and Chapple 2009, bk. 16, sct. 6). Vice is demonic; “Demoniacal men do not understand when to act and when to refrain from acting . . . Attached to insatiable desire, full of hypocrisy, arrogance and pride . . . Devoted to desire and anger” (Sargeant and Chapple 2009, bk. 16, sct. 7, 10, 12). The fate of the vicious is to be hurled “Into the wombs of demons, In the cycles of rebirth” (Sargeant and Chapple 2009, bk. 16, sct.19).

The *Surangama Sutra* of Mahayana Buddhism teaches that the ethically vicious are reincarnated as various kinds of “ghosts” (*egui, preta*)—for example, the hateful become “Noxious Ghosts”, the arrogant “Starved Ghosts”, the lustful “Drought Ghosts” (Luk 2001, p. 259). Vice causes us to become demonic, or is its appropriate karmic reward. Additionally, in this life, we are externally assailed by various demons, of self-satisfaction, of conceit, of anxiety (Luk 2001, pp. 286–89). These ghosts are important in Chinese folk religion, but are known throughout East Asia.

The Zoroastrian *Bundahishn* teaches that “new demons arise from the various new sins the creatures may commit” and identifies particular demons with particular vices; for example, “Bushap is she who causes slothfulness” (West 1897, chp. 28). In the Manichean religion, “demons are so closely identified with the ethical aspects of evil that many of them appear as personified evil qualities” (Sundermann 2018).

6. Conclusions

This paper has argued that Platonic Forms are alive, and so that they are angels. Since Forms are self-directed actions, they are alive. Since some bodies are alive, at least their Forms are alive. On pain of being unlike God, Forms are alive. Given that God shares as much goodness as he can, the Forms are alive. This paper has also argued that our ethical vices do not participate in the Form of Man, since ethical vices depart from human excellence, but in Demonic Forms, since a given Form cannot depart from itself. In the modern world, “demon” is understood as a way of personifying and externalizing an aspect of ourselves. The truth is just the reverse: that we have depersonified and internalized hostile spiritual beings.

When I first became acquainted with Plato, my mental image of the Forms was dreary. A Form is an object with a hazy gray sheen, set in eternal aspic, locked in a faraway attic—like the official meter bar, a technicality of the metaphysical bureaucracy. In the view I have presented, Forms, angels, are transcendent and immanent, the branches on which everything flowers, the effusive children of a biotic divinity, at play with marbles in the fields of potentiality.

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Notes

- ¹ My assumptions will not be acceptable to all Platonists or Aristotelians as these traditions are internally diverse. The paper's title is borrowed from a Nag Hammadi Library tractate (Robinson 1990), also translated as "The Reality of the Rulers". This paper is not a defense of that tractate's theology.
- ² While Aristotle rejects the existence of the Forms, form existing without matter, he shares with Plato these claims about the relation of form and matter: form is pattern, actuality, essence, activity, goal (respectively; Aristotle 1991b, 1013a 26, 1037a 28, 1032a 30, 1050a 15–22, 1023a 32). Curiously, the Platonic Forms reappear in Aristotle's hylomorphism in the guise of the stars—"all movements must be for the sake of the stars" (Aristotle 1991b, 1074a 36).
- ³ The idea that form is present in matter is not uncontroversial within the Platonic tradition (Fine 1986). On my conception, there is a hierarchy of being—the Forms are the greater reality and our world the lesser reality, as opposed to the idea that our world is an illusion. No negative stance toward our world is implied by this conception. On the contrary, a subject is nobler than a citizen in virtue of their participation in a hierarchy.
- ⁴ Another point on which many Platonists would demur. In my view, the guardian angel or daimon is a being liminal to the self; it is the Form in which one most immediately inheres, one's innermost being, but which also, as a pure actuality, surpasses oneself in being.
- ⁵ I stop short of claiming that all angels are Forms only because some angels may be participated forms. In various religious traditions, we find spirits of particular cities and localities. If these are angels, they might be better identified with entities of social ontology that admit of potentiality.
- ⁶ By the types of goodness I mean those that are most general and most noble—roughly, the "transcendentals" (Goris and Aertsen 2019)—unity, being, truth, beauty, life, and love.
- ⁷ This is not to say that an angel is a man (or a dog), or that a man (or a dog) is an angel. I understand the difference between the angels and ourselves in terms of the difference between unparticipated and participated form, rather than saying that angels and humans are different forms on the same ontological level. As Proclus puts it, "prior to soul there is . . . an unparticipated Life" (Proclus 1963, sct. 190).
- ⁸ For Platonist philosophers, such as Aquinas, the main argument for the existence of angels, and for linking angels with Forms, is from the principle of plenitude, that the perfection of the universe requires there to be immaterial rational beings between God and man (Lovejoy 1936, pp. 62–80; Aquinas 1947, ST I Q50 A1 co.). Although the principle of plenitude does imply that some things are more rational than others, some more alive than others, it does not imply that there is anything wholly devoid of rationality, life, and so on.
- ⁹ St Maximus the Confessor says that "each demon promotes the attack of this or that particular temptation according to his innate propensity" (Palmer et al. 1979b, p. 183). "Angel" (*aggelos*, messenger) is generally held to describe the office, not nature, of a spiritual being (Isidore of Seville 2006, bk. 7, sct. 5), but here, Maximus seems to say that "demon of X" describes the demon's nature.

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