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1. Introduction

This paper is an attempt to discuss a wide variety of different theories dealing with notions of evil which are then applied to J.R.R. Tolkien's masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings*. In doing so, the thesis uses approaches of theology and philosophy as well and it also deals with the characters' own conception of evil in these books. Over the past decades, various critics attempted to explain the theories of evil prevalent in this particular novel by classifying Tolkien's evil characters into specific categories. Here, two main views have been considered in connection with the evil in Tolkien's works, the Manichean and Boethian view of evil. Firstly, it has been argued that Tolkien's figures fall into clearly cut black and white categories of good and evil, a notion that corresponds to the Manichean view of evil that accounts for the fact that there are only two powers in the world, one of which is good while the other is evil. (Neiman 80) In other words, this concept describes good and evil as distinct dualistic categories such as light opposed to darkness. It is argued that the lack of the one category eventually encourages the domination of the other. Applied to Tolkien's characters, this would mean clearly marked good and evil boundaries in their personalities, which definitely cannot be found in this particular novel, a fact which will be accounted for in this thesis. Critics have mostly neglected to incorporate the prequel to this story into their studies, the creation history of Middle-Earth and thus the origin and development of evil characters are completely left out of consideration. Their past then reveals interesting aspects that cannot classify them accurately into either the good or the evil character category as this paper will show. The second theory mentioned in connection with Tolkien's work is the Boethian view of evil that refers to evil as the lack or privation of good, similar to Augustine's notion on this subject. (Augustinus 355) Leibniz elaborates on this topic when he claims that evil is the lack of further effort of our good will. (Leibniz 259) Here, evil is regarded as *nothing* as we approach nothingness in our self-complacency which is caused by our lack of obedience and thus abandonment of God. Nevertheless, the origin of Middle-Earth and its creatures is completely disregarded in this approach as those certainly were actually intended to be *something* in the Creator's plan who created everything

as good. Hence, this concept only partly applies to *The Lord of the Rings*, a topic which is elaborated on in the subsequent sections.

In the following paper, this aspect of Middle-Earth's history will be of importance as it attempts to deal with the totality of Tolkien's world and focuses on the manifestations of evil present there. It starts out with a brief introduction to various philosophical theories relevant to the topic of evil on the basis of Konrad Paul Liessmann's lecture on "Das Böse" in summer term 2010 at the University of Vienna. This overview should offer a short glimpse of different approaches and attitudes towards the controversial issue of the origin and manifestations of evil and how this term evolved in the past as opposed to good. Afterwards, the main part is divided into three different sections that are concerned with the theological and philosophical approaches taken toward this masterpiece, while the third major chapter then deals with the remarkable notion of the characters' own knowledge about evil in their world. This forms an extremely interesting point as the narrative level herein appears to equal the symbolical underlying themes found in this novel. The crucial difference and thus novelty of this paper will be the consideration of the importance of the *Silmarillion* as the history of origins especially concerning the development of evil in Middle-Earth and the characters' awareness of their world's working. Finally, the insights gained from this novel approach will be subsumed in a conclusion that should reveal overlaps and points of controversy among different scholars in the fields of theology and philosophy.

2. Overview of philosophical approaches towards evil

The definition of the categories of good and evil have been discussed among various philosophers and scholars since antiquity. Back then, the bad was considered in contrast to the reasonable; the latter one Aristotle defined as choosing the decent between two extremes. These extremes are then characterised as vices, while virtue on the contrary is defined as maintaining the golden mean. Hence, it can be argued that the conflict between good and evil could then be better expressed by the terms of appropriateness and inappropriateness, namely to what extent relevant behaviour coincides with the cosmological laws. (Liessmann, *Das Böse 1*) Over time, many interesting theories have been developed concerning the topic of the root of evil by

different philosophers, some of which are subsumed in this section so as to provide an overview of their theses. St. Augustine, for instance, was one of the first to deal with the Fall of Man in order to reveal the origin of evil. Here, he refers to the Old Testament book of Genesis where God ascribed man the gift of free will that caused his eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge, which as a result provided him with the ability to distinguish between good and evil. He further explains that the root of evil can be found in man's pride as it induced man to follow his own interests rather than the Creator's (Augustine 359) and consequently evil is regarded a deficiency of good, and in this case, it can be considered a lack of obedience to God.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel later elaborates on the Fall of Man in that he considers the expulsion from paradise as a metaphor for humanisation. In doing so, he argues that in the theory of original sin, a child does not possess free will, which is essential for the knowledge to discern the difference between good and evil and thus a child cannot be held accountable for its behaviour. (Hegel 76)

Moreover, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard adds the distinction between existential angst and fear to this debate about free will. He exemplifies that the interdiction (to eat from the tree of knowledge) itself already creates two different options, namely either obeying or violating it. Besides, he claims that this prohibition frightened Adam as it roused the possibility of freedom. (Kierkegaard 45) Kierkegaard's notion can cause a vertigo experience of liberty, which induces many people to enter into servitude voluntarily. Still, the adoption of one choice means the entrance into a state of culpability, rendering us responsible for our actions. Thus, an evil act is only one option, as a part of the whole complex spectrum of human actions, as, among all other possible acts, it is enabled by man's free will.

Another philosopher contributing to the topic about the origin of evil was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in his *Theodicy*. Herein, he refers to the fact that God created the best possible world, which is not yet whole. The crucial point here is formed by the notion that even though the Creator is perfect, the creature must not be. Furthermore, he distinguishes between the metaphysical, physical, and moral evil. (Leibniz 241) He agrees with his predecessors by ascribing the latter to the evil that is caused by human beings, which is made possible due to man's gift of free will.

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The German philosopher Immanuel Kant, on the other hand, rejects the previous approaches towards the root of evil introduced by his colleagues Rousseau and Hobbes, who attributed it either to nature or nurture. In other words, Hobbes pleaded for the notion that man is born evil, whereas Rousseau claimed that evil finds its root cause in an external force. Kant, in contrast, defends the theory that man is not born evil, but has an inherent tendency to evil. (Kant, *DPidGdbV* 668) This theory is elucidated by his distinction of man's different dispositions. Here, he illustrates the tendency to savagery and humanity as the causes of bestial and cultural vices, whereas the dimension of personality ultimately transfers man into the state of accountability. (Kant, *DPidGdbV* 672-673) The argument presented by Kant shows that this possible tendency to act in an evil way rejects the notion that we are born evil, we still have the free will to decide whether to indulge our propensities or not. This accounts for the distinction between man's possession of a good or an evil heart. Evil, then, is described as originating in the use of an exception in our moral context. What is more, Kant introduces the notion of the absolute evil which he defines as the assumption of evil as our reasonable maxim of action. Nevertheless, this is not possible, because it works against reason. (Liessmann, *Das Böse 5*)

Another crucial contribution was made by Hannah Arendt who talks about the banality of evil in reference to the Nazi regime during the Second World War. In her analytic work on the subject titled: *Über das Böse*, she denies people their individual malice, but refers to an efficient mechanism of mass destruction as these people forfeit their status as a person by blaming their incapacity to act on the abidance of commands. Hence, she explains that the greatest evil was not committed by any individual. (Arendt 101)

Additionally, the German philosopher Schopenhauer introduces the crucial distinction between egotism and cruelty; the latter he explains to be overcome only by the strong emotion of empathy. This ethic of empathy forms a vital component in the surpassing of evil.

In his polemic *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Friedrich Nietzsche further argues for the distinction between the concepts of good and evil as functional rather than absolute categories. Hereby, he describes the phenomenon that actions are in fact

morally neutral, but only the evaluation of them changes subjectively or over time and space; consequently evil is always a question of perspective. (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 227-228) Nietzsche additionally theorises that a trans-valuation of values ensued as a result of slave rebellions. This refers to the fact that the slave rebellion would transform the previously considered weak values of the slaves, such as mercy or humility, to morally superior ones than the formally good connoted values of their masters' moral such as strength or power. (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 236) Further on, Nietzsche differentiates between lust, selfishness, and imperiousness as evil vices. While lust can be ascribed to sexual freedom and selfishness to personal fulfilment, the latter cannot become socially acceptable and thus has to be evil. All of these philosophers have raised vital issues concerning the theme of the origin of evil, and, even though some of their approaches overlap, others clearly diverge. These themes concerning different attempts to explain the controversial origin of evil that have been discussed by the philosophers can be found in different manifestations in Tolkien's characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, which will be investigated throughout this paper.

3. Character's conception of evil

This chapter deals with the notion of evil from Tolkien's characters' point of view. In doing so, it revolves around the question to what extent the characters are conscious of the way their world works and especially the evil forces present there. Mainly that involves good characters who anticipate past and future events accurately, which can be observed in various statements cited to support this view. Additionally, these are then backed up by different philosophical approaches to support the diverse opinions. The following subchapters address six different observations concerning manifestations of evil that the characters have made throughout the novels and are linked with philosophical concepts dealing with the specific issue before they are discussed in context to their present relevance,

3.1. Productive force of evil

The issue of the productivity of the evil has been discussed among different scholars in quite similar ways. Even though their approaches vary, the result is always the same, namely that evil is ultimately turned into something good. This means that it eventually serves a higher purpose as can be illustrated by some examples from

Tolkien's novels in which the characters are even conscious of this circumstance. One of the first philosophers who mentioned this specific notion was Schelling who considered evil as the basis out of which the good evolves by its own force. (Schelling 94) Similarly, Plato described the good as whole and true, while evil is isolated, which in his view then expresses the phenomenon that the necessary evil will serve the greater good. (Safranski 133) In other words, even though evil is inevitable, it means isolating oneself and finally being beneficial for the whole again. Furthermore, Nietzsche announces the productivity and thus creativity of evil as he claims that "Alles Gute ist aus einem Bösen geworden. " (Nietzsche, *NF* 26) Here, he explains that evil is the necessary base for good to grow and develop further as evil always aspires something more than the current state. Additionally, he declares that good serves as the presupposition of evil as we have to change our worst into our best because this transition is considered morally superior to the constancy of purely good beings. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 335) In this case, he argues for the fact that the negative consequences of evil should be interpreted as reasonable and well-intentioned as this means to fight its negative impact. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 327) This view is supported by Leibniz's claim that the connection between natural and moral evil can be found in the fact that harm is the cause for a higher good. (Neiman 64) He emphasises this point in his theodicy by asserting that there is no evil that will not ultimately generate something good. (Neiman 273) Hence, the sense of harm and thus evil is associated with good ramifications because sin is considered the origin of evil, whereas redemption forms the goal of the suffering in Christian religion. This then displays a world view affected by Christianity that is maintained throughout the books of Tolkien's Middle-Earth. Hence, evil can be said to be vital for the emergence of the real good. But this view clearly opposes Augustine's argument who claims that good is not dependent on the existence of evil, but it is not possible for evil to persist without the existence of good. (Augustine 355) These interesting deliberations about the productive force of evil discussed by different philosophers can be found in various instances of Tolkien's novels about Middle-Earth.

In the *Silmarillion,* the prequel to *The Lord of the Rings*, that deals with the creation history of Middle- Earth, the archangel Melkor, whose name is changed to Morgoth afterwards, sings the world into being along with the other Ainur. Still he decides to deviate from the musical theme of the other Ainur and is excluded from Valinor, the

mirror image of heaven in the books because of his attempt to incite a rebellion among the inhabitants of Valinor. Hence he flees for to the East which induced the inhabitation of Middle-Earth, the physical world compared to the metaphysical place of Valinor. These ramifications now can be interpreted as well-intentioned insofar as the Elves would have remained in Valinor if it had not been for Morgoth's revolt and treachery.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the condition of having a common enemy forges a bond between the good peoples, and in fact without the example of his misdeeds, they would not have perceived the difference between good and evil in the first place. Interestingly, some of the characters acknowledge this productivity of evil as when the Elf Feanor announces that evil shall be good after being done. (Tolkien, *DS* 101) Still, this should not serve as an excuse for good characters to adopt evil vices as in the case of Feanor's pride that caused the kinslaying of Aqualonde, where he killed his brother's clan that consequently brought a curse upon his descendants.

Interestingly, in *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf is a crucial figure who is aware of the evil in Middle-Earth and acknowledges the fact that there "are many powers in the world, for good or for evil" (Tolkien, *TFotR* 287). He also anticipated that Gollum would be crucial for Middle-Earth's fate "for good or for ill" (Tolkien, *TFotR* 78) which reveals his delicate knowledge about the way the world of Middle-Earth works. As a matter of fact, Gollum's evil side actually finalises Sauron's destruction as Frodo alone succumbs to the hostile will of the Ring. Thus it can be said that evil is transformed into something good in the end. Indeed, this notion is explained to Pippin by Gandalf as well in the next extract when he talks about Gollum's fate:

> Yet my heart guesses that Frodo and Gollum would meet before the end. For good, or for evil. But of Cirith Ungol I will not speak tonight. Treachery, treachery I fear; treachery of that miserable creature. But so it must be. Let us remember that a traitor may betray himself and do good that he does not intend. It can be so, sometimes. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1067)

Moreover, evil powers are productive also in the cases of Frodo and Pippin's gaining of special knowledge while they are influenced by a hostile will. In the brief period of bearing the Ring, Sam even voices this notion in the following passage:

> He heard them both clearly, and he understood what they said. Perhaps the Ring gave understanding of all tongues, or simply understanding, especially of the servants of Sauron, its maker, so that if he gave heed, he understood and translated the thought to himself. Certainly the Ring had grown greatly in power as it approached the places of its forging; but one thing it did not confer, and that was courage. (Tolkien, *TTT* 961)

Here, Sam describes the evil powers the Ring endows him with, which will ultimately benefit the good people in the end as in the case of Pippin's glance into the Palantír when he "just looked and […] understood ", while Sauron himself "was too eager". (Tolkien, *TTT* 774; 775) This fortunate coincidence equips Pippin with the knowledge of Sauron's planned attack of Minas Tirith, which ultimately warns the good people and thus leads to their victory, while Sauron does not possess the ability to empathise with his enemies.

After Sauron's destruction, Sam admits that "in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing [because] there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1206) This perfectly expresses the productive force of evil as it reveals its service to the higher good in uniting different peoples against a common enemy and finally providing the opportunity to prove oneself as a good person.

Additionally, the apparent evil circumstance of Gandalf's death eventually leads to a greater good as he resurrects as the White Rider, who can finally face and, in fact, even replaces Saruman as the head of the wizard's order. This special factor is noticed by Galadriel who claims that "[n]eedless were none of the deeds of Gandalf in life. Those that followed him knew not his mind and cannot report his full purpose." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 463) Here, she already implies a hidden intention of Gandalf's course of action which later can be interpreted as a well-intentioned tragedy.

All of these instances exemplify this creative notion of evil in Tolkien's novels and the characters' special knowledge about this force as every evil in the story ultimately will be transformed into something good.

3.2. Imperishability of evil

Various philosophers have addressed the notion of the endurance of evil in their different theories which, in fact, can be said to constitute a vital theme in Middle-Earth. This means that evil cannot be ultimately defeated by man as it constantly reappears in another shape and form. In other words, history always repeats itself. In

his article called *Das Drama der Freiheit* the German philosopher Rüdiger Safranski talks about evil that eventually recurs in another disguise (Safranski 17). Here, he refers to the specific example of Greek mythology and calls this process a gestalt-switch. Interestingly, critics of Tolkien's works share this opinion; such as Colbert who maintains the view of a never ending battle between good and evil forces that are omnipresent in the world of Middle-Earth. (Colbert 140) This is emphasised by the subjective opinion of Michael Torre who raises awareness to the fact that after Sauron's fall, a shade of evil is still around that torments the good characters. (Torre 73)

Considering these attitudes toward the imperishability of evil, the relevant concept of Manichaeism appears to pertain, as it argues for the eternal battle between good and evil forces in the world. (Neiman 49) This refers to the fact that God and Satan struggle for hegemony as there are only two forces in the world; one is good, while the other is evil. (Neiman 80) This notion can only be partly applied to Tolkien's Middle-Earth, but it still thematises the essential component of eternal conflict.

Furthermore, in her book *Das Böse denken,* Susanne Neiman talks about the concept of naturalism which has been discussed by Freud and Rosseau in similar ways. (347-348) Here, she explains that evil is transformed into something ordinary, referring to the fact that the quality of evil then is lost. In other words, evil cannot be tamed, but is trivialised and thus it can be incorporated into the world without people's awareness of it. A similar opinion is held by Safranski who quotes Margarete Susman in his book when she claims that the world is darkened by the exorbitance of evil which can be found in the renunciation of God and the alienation between humans. (Safranski 294-295)

Considering these theoretical ideas applied to Tolkien's Middle-Earth, already the *Silmarillion* provides the reader with the knowledge that the evil ruler Sauron rose to power like Morgoth's shadow and similarly follows his path in approaching nothingness like a shadow of malice. (Tolkien, *DS* 31) Later in the novel, Sauron's resurrection after his master's, Morgoth's, fall in order to continue his former master's work is once again mentioned. (Tolkien, *DS* 275) After his powerful ascent among the black Númenóreans, Sauron perished through Ilúvatar's intervention who changed the previous world through an apparent natural catastrophe — which can be compared to the biblical Flood. Still, his mind managed to rise again and flee to

Middle-Earth where he started his first dominion. (Tolkien, *DS* 300) In the end of this second era, Sauron fell through the hand of Isildur, but still as his spirit is bound to the Ring's existence, his mind once again concealed itself in order to regenerate and return again. Likewise, his minions were said to be scattered, but not utterly destroyed as were the foundations of his fortress Barad-Dur. (Tolkien, *DS* 304) Hence, Sauron's evil power which has been driven out of Mirkwood by the White Council was enabled to reappear anew in Mordor. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 57)

Interestingly, the good characters now possess the special ability to comprehend the world and thus understand concepts such as the imperishability of evil. This can be explicitly illustrated by the following example when Gandalf relates to Frodo the renewed power of the Dark Lord:

> The rumours that you have heard are true: he has indeed arisen again and left his hold in Mirkwood and returned to his ancient fastness in the Dark Tower of Mordor. That name even you hobbits have heard of, like a shadow on the borders of old stories. Always after a defeat and a respite, the Shadow takes another shape and grows again.
> (Tolkien, *TFotR* 67)

Clearly, Gandalf here anticipates future events that will occur as he metaphorically predicts the eternal battle between good and evil. Equally, sparing Saruman's life induces both Gandalf and Aragorn to foresee his future misdeeds as they will take place in the scouring of the Shire. Gandalf here annotates Saruman's ability "to nurse his hatred and weave again such webs as he can" (Tolkien, *TTT* 765) after his defeat in Isengard, while Aragorn guesses that "Saruman had secret dealings with someone in the Shire". (Tolkien, *TTT* 750)

Additionally, the imperishability of evil is said to be found in the renunciation of God and alienation between men, both of which are themes that are frequently dealt with throughout the novels. The deteriorating belief in the Creator can be observed mostly implicitly in various instances, when the characters loose hope, as it is considered as one of the major weapons against evil. The hope and trust into the Creator can be said to form values of the slave moral, but are turned into strong ones by the trans-valuation of values and now are ascribed character traits of the good people.

The second topic concerning the alienation between men, on the other hand, is dealt with explicitly in the books as characters acknowledge its relevance as, for instance, when Haldir admits the mistrust between the peoples:

> Indeed in nothing is the power of the Dark Lord more clearly shown than in the estrangement that divides all those who still oppose him. Yet so little faith and trust do we find now in the world beyond Lothlórien, unless maybe in Rivendell, that we dare not by our own trust endanger our land.
> (Tolkien, *TFotR* 453)

Here, he not only talks about the alienation of men, but about the religious theme of faith as well, as it is mentioned above; although he does not explicitly refer to a deity of a particular religion, but faith in general. It is further explained that "[m]en and Elves became estranged in the days of darkness, by the arts of the Enemy, and by the slow changes of time in which each kind walked further down their sundered roads." (Tolkien, *TTT* 888) This clearly shows the continuity of evil in peoples' alienation from each other that can only be overcome by swallowing one's pride and start trusting again as when "it seemed to [Gimli] that he looked into the heart of an enemy and saw there love and understanding" (Tolkien, *TFotR* 463) when he met Galadriel for the first time. This estrangement between peoples can also be observed in the meeting between the Rohirrim and Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli when Eomer admits that they "welcomed guests kindly in the better days, but these times the unbidden stranger finds [them] swift and hard." (Tolkien, *TTT* 563).

Once, the phenomenon is even commented on by Gandalf when he acknowledges that "the laughter of Mordor will be [their] only reward, if [they] quarrel." (Tolkien, *TTT* 667) Herein, Gandalf approves the notion that evil manifests itself in the quarrel between the good peoples and elaborates on the healing factor of laughter in *The Lord of the Rings* as it redeems people from an evil bondage of will; as, for instance, in the case of Saruman's voice. Besides, Gandalf adds that Sauron loves this quarrel between the people, when "friend [is] at war with friend; [and] loyalty [is] divided in confusion of hearts." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1115) This again proves the characters' knowledge about the way of the world, especially the evil forces.

Moreover, Gandalf once again acknowledges after the battle of Helm's Deep that "[t]he evil of Sauron cannot be wholly cured, nor made as if it had not been." (Tolkien, *TTT* 717) Here, the reference is made to the impossibility of the eternal destruction of evil and, what is more, he already implies the fates of people who have been afflicted by evil too deeply, as in the case of Frodo, who has to leave Middle-Earth for the reason that his wounds cannot be cured entirely. In the following passage Gandalf once again proves his prudence when he explains that the ultimate destruction of

Sauron does not mean as yet the entire absence of evil in the world as "[o]ther evils there are that may come; for Sauron is himself but a servant or emissary." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1150)

All of these instances exemplify the characters' knowledge about the imperishability of evil in the novels and these definitely conform with the philosophers' notions about this topic as well. Hence, it can be subsumed that even though the stories concerning Middle-Earth are fiction, the conceptions about evil still resemble that of our real world.

3.3. Mercy to overcome evil

In the narratives of Tolkien's Middle-Earth, the notions of pity and mercy frequently occur as sources to overcome one's selfishness and thus the bondage of one's will by evil. Already in the *Silmarillion* the Creator Ilúvatar is said to have shown mercy to Aule, one of the Ainur who created the Dwarves, because upon discovering his deed, Aule regrets his disobedience and offers to sacrifice his creation. This humility then roused Eru's pity and thus he rewards Aule by giving his creatures the gift of life. (Tolkien, *DS* 43-44)

Melkor on the other hand is denied mercy (Tolkien, *DS* 53) when he begged for it as it was feigned and thus refused. (Tolkien, *DS* 236) Furthermore, it is explained that in his pride he grew blind as the pitiless could not comprehend the works of mercy. (Tolkien, *DS* 260) Only serious repentance is granted the privilege of mercy; such as Earendil's journey to Valinor, where he received remission for the original sin committed by Feanor through the kinslaying of Aqualonde. (Tolkien, *DS* 254)

The importance of this emotion was once declared by Schopenhauer in his ethics of compassion where he claims that mercy serves as the only source of moral, (Schopenhauer 748f.) because it functions as a triumph over egotism in that it helps to empathise with another person. (Safranski 92) In other words, mercy serves as a means to overcome evil, as the people feeling empathy for their opponent thus are able to project one's thoughts into the other person.

Other philosophers mention this ethics of compassion, as well: Nietzsche refers to the moral of common suffering by compassion (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 105-106); Susanne Neiman, who advocates mercy and generosity instead of arrogance and pride in order to protest against evil. (Neiman 211)

This ethics of compassion is clearly acknowledged by the characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, such as in the following extract where Gandalf explains to Frodo Bilbo's motif for sparing Gollum's life when he had the chance to kill him:

> It was Pity that stayed his hand. Pity, and Mercy: not to strike without need. And he has been well rewarded, Frodo. Be sure that he took so little hurt from the evil, and escaped in the end, because he began his ownership of the Ring so. With Pity.
> (Tolkien, *TFotR* 78)

According to this passage, Gandalf demonstrates his expertise that pity and mercy in these novels serve as ways to ward off evil, which will be rewarded in the end. In this case, he even anticipates that "[Gollum] has some part to play yet, for good or for ill, before the end; and when that comes, the pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many" (Tolkien, *TFotR* 78), which explicitly expresses his foresight in the fate of Middle-Earth contrary to his enemy's blindness, a topic which will be dealt with in another chapter.

In fact, the pity shown to Gollum by Bilbo and Frodo alike (Tolkien, *TTT* 803) eventually serves a higher purpose, namely the ultimate destruction of the Ring, which would not have been possible as Frodo succumbed to its evil power and thus was punished by the loss of his finger. This notion is supported by Leibniz who contends that a person is not allowed to prevent another's sin as it would mean to commit a sin oneself. (Leibniz 249) The same assumption is maintained by Gandalf as well when he lectures Frodo on his rash death sentence for Gollum in the following passage:

> Deserve it! I daresay he does. Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgement. [sic!] For even the wise cannot see all ends. I have not much hope that Gollum can be cured before he dies, but there is a chance of it.
> (Tolkien, *TFotR* 78)

In these lines, one can discern perfectly that Gandalf is aware of the implications that would arise from Frodo's killing of Gollum as it would turn him into a sinner as well and in that case redemption in the end, his departure from Middle-Earth on the last ship to Valinor, would not have been possible for him anymore.

What is more, the good characters offer the evil ones a chance to repent their sins and to compensate for their misdeeds as when Grima begs for mercy and Théoden

asks him to prove his loyalty and faith by allying with the people of Rohan against Saruman. (Tolkien, *TTT* 678) Even though Grima rejects this proposal, which would have provided him with the opportunity of redemption, the pity shown by Théoden is rewarded in the end when Grima turns against his master Saruman and ultimately kills him which prevents any more future misdeeds. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1335) The notion of recompensing for one's misdeeds can also be observed in the cry for mercy by the men of Dunland who then are offered the chance to repent their sins by helping to repair the evil they have done. (Tolkien, *TTT* 711)

Considering the similarity to the Christian conception of redemption, people can receive atonement of their sins by voluntarily carrying out a penal and painful work, a topic that will be dealt with more thoroughly in another chapter. Good characters then in *The Lord of the Rings* such as Faramir (Tolkien, *TTT* 871), Merry (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1101), Aragorn (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1160) or Sam (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1225) are ascribed the redeeming character trait of pity that is regarded a slave moral value in Nietzsche's theory about the trans-valuation of values. This clearly shows Tolkien's preoccupation with Christian and philosophical themes such as redemption and the ethics of compassion which offers the characters the possibility to overcome evil.

Interestingly, good characters such as Frodo who are afflicted by the evil addiction to the Ring are at one point beyond redemption as they are untouchable by pity (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1234) and only through Gollum's cooperation, the Ring was ultimately destroyed. Similarly, evil characters such as the Orcs are described as merciless (Tolkien, *TTT* 586), but even those are pitied by the good characters such as Gandalf who explains this in the following statement: "And for me, I pity even his slaves." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1064) Obviously, Gandalf here shows strength of character as his pity for these evil creatures serves as a means to ward off evil. The same hold true for Frodo when he acknowledges Gollum's exceptional contribution to the defeat of evil, and thus concedes forgiveness to Gollum. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1239-1240) Finally, Frodo even provides Saruman with the opportunity of repentance as he pities him, but Saruman who feels offended in his pride by this gesture of magnanimity thus rejects Frodo's mercy. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1333-1334)

Eventually, it can be summarised that Tolkien's characters adopt the values of the slave moral especially that of pity and mercy as well as they anticipate the reward or punishment in its granting or denial. Consequently, they avail oneself with the source

of pity as a means to overcome evil, which can be observed throughout the narratives in various instances.

3.4. Arrogance of evil

The notion of the arrogance of evil characters is thematised frequently throughout the novels about Middle-Earth, because it causes these bad people to be afflicted by a blindness which then prevents them from empathising with their enemies. This issue has already been addressed by various philosophers such as Augustine, for instance, who declared pride as the beginning of every other sin. (Augustine 359) In his *Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche holds a similar opinion when he claims that the arrogance of the powerful involves their negligence as they appear to take things too easily in their hastiness and oversight. (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 237) Liessmann and Safranski are of related opinions when they explain that the arrogance of evil implies a lack of the evil people's overview of the world in general (Liessmann, *PdvW* 293) and they purport the view that the world generally *darkened* due to an excess of evil. (Safranski 294) The blindness of evil people then is explained to be characterised by their alienation from God and the quarrelling between the peoples. Furthermore, quoting Schopenhauer, Safranski mentions that the ultimate weapon against evil is thinking instead of acting. (98) In other words, evil characters display a certain short-sightedness through their arrogance as they cannot empathise with their opponents' views and thus slave moral values such as thinking instead of acting are advocated, a circumstance, which can be observed in the novels concerning Middle-Earth in various instances.

Already in the *Silmarillion*, evil characters such as Melkor are said to be ignorant of the Creator's plans (Tolkien, *DS* 42) and their weapons against the good people present themselves in they spread blindness and despair among these as, for instance, Ungoliant did in Valinor with her persecutors after she had killed the holy trees Telperion and Laurelin. (Tolkien, *DS* 79) Later, Melkor's pride is even blamed for his blindness towards his enemies' plans as he is said to be incapable of empathy and thus not able to see things from another perspective than his own; which allows him to be lulled into a false sense of security. (Tolkien, *DS* 260) Likewise his

successor Sauron is accused of arrogance, which prevented him from returning in humility and repenting his sins. (Tolkien, *DS* 295-296)

Being opposed to their arrogance and blindness, the good connoted character trait of watchfulness is contrasted with it when Morgoth thinks about attacking his enemies. (Tolkien, *DS* 120) This character feature saves good figures from going blind and falling into evil. Interestingly, considering the differentiation regarding the positive and negative connotations made between acting and thinking by Schopenhauer, the *Silmarillion* already distinguishes between Gandalf's praised alertness, whereas Saruman's pride and greed for power are mentioned in contrast to it. (Tolkien, *DS* 310-311)

In Tolkien's principle work, *The Lord of the Rings*, the good characters anticipate future developments by themselves such as Gandalf who already foreshadows Gollum's fate or the prediction of Saruman's prospective misdeeds. Even Gandalf's fate is anticipated by Elrond who explains that "Gandalf will go; for this shall be his great task, and maybe the end of his labours" (Tolkien, *TFotR* 359) and also Aragorn warns Gandalf to be beware of Moria. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 387) So, good characters can be said to be equipped with a kind of foresightedness that prevents them from falling into evil blindness. In this specific story, the good characters even acknowledge this blindness of evil which is caused by arrogance as in Gandalf's explanation that Sauron is deceived by his own blindness as:

> [i]t is not despair, for despair is only for those who see end beyond all doubt. We do not. It is wisdom to recognize necessity, when all other courses have been weighed, though as folly it may appear to those who cling to false hope. Well, let folly be our cloak, a veil before the eyes of the Enemy. For [Sauron] is very wise, and weighs all things to a nicety in the scales of his malice. But the only measure that he knows is desire, desire for power; and so he judges all hearts. Into his heart the thought will not enter that any will refuse it, that having the Ring we may seek to destroy it. If we seek this, we shall put him out of reckoning.
> (Tolkien, *TFotR* 350-351)

Here, he already speaks of this veil of blindness that surrounds the enemy's thoughts and prevents him from empathising with his opponents' intentions. Later in the novel, this view is emphasised when Gandalf repeats Sauron's inability to judge his enemies' strategy as he claims:

[that] he is in great fear, not knowing what mighty one may suddenly appear, wielding the Ring, and assailing him with war, seeking to cast him down and take his place. That we should wish to cast him down and have *no* one in his place is not a thought that occurs to his mind. That we should try to destroy the Ring itself has not yet entered his darkest dream. In which no doubt you will see our good fortune and our hope.
(Tolkien, *TTT* 647-648)

This prospect of hope for the good people due to the evil characters' blindness is stressed once more when Gandalf explains to his fellows that "[h]is Eye is now straining toward [them], blind almost to all else that is moving. So we must keep it. Therein lies all our hope." (Tolkien, TRotK 1151) Here, the enemy's arrogance here is considered to be the good people's hope as Gandalf elucidates, which later will turn out to be a truthful prediction as Sauron could not foresee his enemies' plan. Additionally, Elrond mentions at his secret council in Rivendell that

[t]he road must be trod, but it will be very hard. And neither strength nor wisdom will carry us far upon it. This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere.
(Tolkien, *TFotR* 351)

These passages explicitly refer to the fact that the evil foes in this narrative are blind except for their own perspective and the interesting point here is that the good characters are indeed aware of this fact as when Gandalf claims that Sauron in his arrogance "has entirely overlooked the existence of hobbits." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 64) Moreover, Elrond addresses the notion of the values of the slave moral, the weak and small, that are said to induce change but are hidden through the evil people's blindness to their actions.

What is more, Saruman is frequently ascribed the evilly connoted character trait of hastiness, which eventually is said to have served as his ruin by Treebeard. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1283) This is clearly acknowledged by Gandalf and Pippin as well who remark on Saruman's negligence of leaving the Ents out of his calculations (Tolkien, *TTT* 650; 740) and thus his ignorance and hastiness ultimately secure his failure. Besides, good characters who have been afflicted by evil for a certain period of time observe that a certain blindness vanished from their eyes such as in Théoden's case (Tolkien, *TTT* 681) or a blinding mist cleared from Frodo's eyes (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1192). Similarly, this evil blindness is noticed by Gandalf who remarks that a great shadow

has departed and that the redeeming factor of laughter functions like water in a parched land. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1246)

Interestingly, this blindness is described to affect not only the eyes but the mind as well. (Tolkien, *TTT* 939) Still, good characters going blind are provided with the gift of the sight of their enemies for a short period and thus understand the evil characters better; a phenomenon that occurs not only when Frodo puts on the Ring, but also in Pippin's case when he is described as having unseeing eyes after he had looked into the Palantír. (Tolkien, *TTT* 773) Sauron, in contrast, is referred to as having been too eager in attempting to extract information from Pippin (Tolkien, *TTT* 775), while Aragorn does not display the evilly connoted character traits of being hasty or unwary. (Tolkien, *TTT* 776) Eventually Sauron, who is described as "blind almost to all else that is moving" (Tolkien, TRotK 1151), as it has already been mentioned before, only realises his mistake when it is too late, which is illustrated in the following extract: "The Dark Lord was suddenly aware of him, and his Eye piercing all shadows looked across the plain to the door that he had made, and the magnitude of his own folly was revealed to him in a blinding flash, and all the devices of his enemies were at last laid bare." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1237) This perfectly exemplifies how the arrogance of the evil characters eventually leads to their failure and thus the blindness induced by it is unveiled at last. The good characters, on the other hand, employ the strategy of thinking and waiting, even hoping, while being aware of their enemy's weaknesses as when Aragorn reckons that Sauron is not so mighty that he is above fear. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1022)

After all, Tolkien's good characters who adopt the slave moral values of thinking and hoping possess the foresight of estimating their enemies' intentions, whereas the evil ones in their pride succumb to arrogance and negligence, which induces a blindness that prevents them from seeing things from their opponent's perspective. Important to note here is that the good characters are indeed aware of this fact which has been illustrated by various instances from the novels as they were mentioned above.

3.5. Nothing evil in the beginning

The notion that everything is created as good by the Creator is a wide held belief in Christian theology and many philosophers have addressed this perception as well. St. Augustine of Hippo, for instance, in his paper called *De Civitate Dei* maintains the

view that nothing is evil by nature, but that only sin induces the transition to evil. (Augustine 339) Similarly, St. Thomas defends the opinion that every subject is good due to its existence, as the concepts of "good" and "being" can be considered as exchangeable terms. (St. Thomas 15) Leibniz and Schelling both share this assumption when they claim that even though God is the material base of evil as everything comes out of his hands, man himself still functions as the formal cause of sin and thus constitutes the originator of evil. (Leibniz 255) Additionally, Schelling points out that man then pursues selfish interests as evil always is man's choice and consequently the creature falls through its own fault. (Schelling 98) In other words, the entrance of evil and sin into the world never has been God's intention, but was induced by man's personal negligence.

What is more, Nietzsche quotes Plato who asserts that every evil happens involuntarily, a view which completely opposes that of Tolkien's world and the notion of free will in general, but he still suggests in the course of this theory that evil only happens out of error, which yet appeals to the notion that nothing is intended as evil in the beginning. (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 92) Middle-Earth's history of creation, the *Silmarillion*, now presents itself similar to the Bible's Genesis as it can be observed in this juxtaposition between the beginnings of both books:

> 1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
> 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
> 3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
> 4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.
> 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.
> (Bible Server)

> There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made. And he spoke to them, propounding to them themes of music; and they sang before him, and he was glad.
> (Wikiquote/Silmarillion)

Similar to God, Ilúvatar created everything as good in the beginning, even the Ainur Melkor, who deviated and later became the cruel Morgoth. Interestingly, the good characters anticipate this well-intentioned creation plan of Eru which can be observed throughout the novel in many instances.

In the *Silmarillion,* Manwe acknowledges that in the Creator's mind, Melkor was similar to him and then only renunciated Eru and approached evil as a result of his own free will, which Manwe cannot understand as he is said to be free from evil. (Tolkien, *DS* 67) In this case, Eru serves as the material base for Melkor and his special gifts (Tolkien, *DS* 14), but Melkor's free will enabled him to deviate from the Ainur's musical themes and thus he is the formal cause of sin and evil. (Tolkien, *DS* 13) Furthermore, the race considered to be most evil in Tolkien's stories is formed by the Orcs, devilish creatures who aim to destroy nature and kill its inhabitants and often are believed to be *the* ultimate evil race. Still, the Orcs whose appearance can be said to metaphorically mirror the human race's interiority nowadays, once have been Elves, who have been captured by Melkor and consequently have been enslaved and then deformed by torture. (Tolkien, *DS* 51) It is important to notice here, that is explicitly stated in the novel that these creatures have been *bred* and not created by Melkor. This forms the crucial difference to the *creatio ex nihilo* that distinguishes the Creator's unique ability of producing something entirely new out of nothing, while the creatures in their imitation can only twist and deform the creation as they depend on the Creator's cooperation that provided the base material. So, not even the Orcs were evil in the beginning as they originate as good Elves.

Interestingly, this notion is realised by Tolkien's good characters throughout the novels as when Frodo relates to Sam the Orcs' origin explaining that "[t]he Shadow that bred them can only mock, it cannot make: not real new things of its own. I don't think it gave life to the orcs, it only ruined them and twisted them; and if they are to live at all, they have to live like other living creatures." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1195) This definitely shows the good character's comprehension of the world as the Creator intended it. This can also be observed in Gandalf's explanation to Frodo about Gollum's prior identity in the following passage: "Even Gollum was not wholly ruined. He had proved tougher than even one of the Wise would have guessed – as a hobbit might. There was a little corner of his mind that was still his own, and light came through it, as through a chink in the dark: light out of the past." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 72) Here, Gandalf correctly perceives the former Hobbit Sméagol's existence as a good creature, who due to his own fault has fallen into evil through the enslavement of his will, because of his addiction to the Ring. A similar reference is made by Elrond at his

secret Council in Rivendell, when he remarks that not even Sauron was evil in the beginning as nothing was. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 349)

Interestingly, Elrond adds here that the Ring is altogether evil as it "belongs to Sauron and was made by him alone" and the "very desire of it corrupts the heart" (Tolkien, *TFotR* 348). His statements refer to the fact that nothing is created evil by the Creator himself and further that everything that comes out of his hands is good, but degenerates in the creatures' hands. (Rousseau qtd. in Safranski 157) Hence, Elrond claims that the Ring can be perceived as the absolute evil as it was not produced by the Creator himself, but by the creature, which would also correspond to Seel's assumption that pure evil and good only exist in fiction (Seel 132), but this will be dealt with more detailed in the following chapter. What is more, Gandalf declares that even Saruman was not always evil in the beginning (Tolkien, *TTT* 680) and his attempt to imitate his master's creation is called "only a little copy, a child's model or a slave's flattery" (Tolkien, *TTT* 724) by Treebeard and his try to blend the races of Men and Orcs is considered as black evil (Tolkien, *TTT* 616). This clearly corresponds to Zarathustra's notion that the creation of higher beings by the creatures themselves has to become more evil as in this case of the Uruk-Hai. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 333) Interestingly, this aspect is acknowledged by Théoden when he admits that "*oft evil will shall evil mar.*" (Tolkien, *TTT* 776) Moreover, here Treebeard also mentions the origin of the Trolls in stating that "[they] are only counterfeits, made by the Enemy in the Great Darkness, in mockery of Ents, as Orcs were of Elves." (Tolkien, *TTT* 633)

In these cases, the characters again are indeed aware of the world's original creation as good and pass on their knowledge to minor experienced characters. After all, the interesting dimension here is formed not only by the notion that nothing is created evil in the beginning, but that Tolkien's characters are, in fact, conscious of the origin of the world as it has been illustrated by various instances mentioned above.

3.6.   The Ring as the absolute evil

In this chapter the issue of ultimate evil will be treated in connection with the manifestation of this phenomenon in the name-giving "One Ring" of Tolkien's story. Hence, concepts of philosophy will be discussed in connection with it and then will be linked with certain passages of the books. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant

refs to the "Radikalböses" when he talks about assuming evil as the rational moral maxim of action (Liessmann, *Das Böse* 5) as he claims that man is born neither good nor evil (Kant, *DPidGdbV* 666) and thus only one's actions determine whether to adopt good or evil as one's principle of reason.

However, the adopting of evil as one's principle of reason works against all common sense and consequently cannot be human, which then would refer to the devil. Unfortunately, the devil himself has its history as an archangel, whose lapse was caused by his pride, which still forms a humane character flaw. Nevertheless, the issue of pure evil that has been introduced by Kant's explanation of the absolute evil, is affirmed by the philosopher Martin Seel as existing only in fiction as are purely good people. (Seel 132)

Throughout Tolkien's novels now, the One Ring is constantly attributed human qualities as, for instance, active rather than passive verbs are used in connection with the Ring, which then can be argued to be transformed into a person. This personification of an inanimate object can be found in various passages such as in the following description of the Ring by Gandalf: "it did not seem always of the same weight; it shrank or expanded in an odd way, and might suddenly slip off a finger where it had been tight." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 62) In this regard, Gandalf also notes that "[a] Ring of power looks after itself" and that it was "the Ring itself that decided things" (Tolkien, *TFotR* 73).

This clearly illustrates the active power of the Ring as if it had a will of its own, similar to human beings, as it can also be observed in the next passage: "He resisted the temptation firmly, and clasped the Ring in his hand, as if to keep a hold on it from escaping or doing any mischief." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 206) Here it almost seems as if the Ring was acting like a misbehaving child.

Interestingly, in the next extract Gandalf also remarks upon the fact that "[t]here was more than one power at work", and indeed that "there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. [He] can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was *meant* to find the Ring, and *not* by its maker." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 73) This suggests that there is another power that counteracts the Ring's evil power, which can be claimed to be expressed through a passive voice, throughout the novel, as it is mentioned in the extract above, contrary to the Ring's power, which in its embodiment is used with active verbs.

Another obvious indication of the Ring's personal status is already expressed in the capitalisation of the word itself that evidently marks its incredible power. Still, this passive force is referred to in some other passages, as well as when Dáin mentions at Elrond's Council that the people present are *ordered* to find a solution, which suggests a higher power that moves the wheels of the world. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 315) Interestingly, Elrond here also interferes by declaring the Ring as altogether evil and only the desire of it is described as corrupting the heart. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 348) This blatantly displays the Ring's existence as the absolute evil in this novel, which is acknowledged by its characters as well; such as when Frodo declares that "what is done with it turns to evil." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 519) So this instance can be said to clearly identify this human created object as an abomination, which resembles the concept of the "Radikalböse" described by Kant.

In the same council, an instant before, Gandalf elucidates that the creature Tom Bombadil has no power over the Ring as "the Ring has no power over him. He is his own master. But he cannot alter the Ring itself, nor break its power over others."(Tolkien, *TFotR* 346) So this person which cannot be tempted by the Ring can be said to be the pure good in contrast to the absolute evil that has no power over him, both only existing in this fictitious work.

What is more, the ability to make its wearer invisible is declared to cause the person's fading; it is the reason for becoming invisible permanently. This again coincides with Augustine's theory that evil means to approach nothingness. (Augustine 359) In this case, the Ringbearer is corrupted by the Ring as he is impacted by its evil will and thus continually begins to fade as he approaches nothingness similar to the Ringwraiths. All evil forces flew into this abomination created by Sauron and thus it can be presumably interpreted as ultimate evil as it is said to corrupt all beings. Rousseau's argument again serves as an explanation for this manifestation when he claimed that the attempt of creation is good in the Creator's hands, but degenerates in the creatures' hands. (Safranski 157) This clearly is the case in *The Lord of the Rings* as this creation of the absolute evil could not stem from the Creator as everything was originally created and indeed intended as good by Eru.

Additionally, as it has already been mentioned before, the Ring is ascribed a will on its own, as when Gandalf explains that "[i]t is far more powerful than [he] ever dared

to think at first, so powerful that in the end it would utterly overcome anyone of mortal race who possessed it. It would possess him." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 61) Similarly, Boromir offers an explanation for his lapse in attempting to steal the Ring from Frodo, namely with the excuse that "a madness took [him". (Tolkien, *TFotR* 521)

This hostile will that impedes the Bearers' good intentions ultimately arouses their liability to evil that slumbers in every human being, according to Kant (668), as it is explained that "the Ring had an unwholesome power that set to work on its keeper at once." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 63) Galadriel then elucidates that the evil powers will persist even when Sauron is destroyed and then explains that the Ring would want her to steal it by force, which again suggests its hostile will. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 476) At one point, the Ring's power to betray its good Bearer is even mentioned when Frodo passes Minas Morgul in order to climb the staircase to Cirith Ungol. (Tolkien, *TTT* 925) Here a subtle reference is made to the Ring's loyalty to return to its creator, and only after he had resisted its evil power, Frodo's own will is stirred. Moreover, towards the end when it approaches its place of origin, Mount Doom in Mordor, "the Ring's power grew, and it became more fell, untameable [sic!] save by some mighty will." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1178) Here, the Ring actually is presented like a wild indomitable animal, while again the existence of a higher power is hinted implicitly. What is more, the Ring is referred to as Sauron's hope by Gandalf as it is the foundation of Barad-dûr and thus evil. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1150) The interesting aspect here is formed by the fact that hope actually is ac character trait of good people, which then again serves as an explication why Sauron cannot be regarded as absolutely evil as well, while his Ring in this story embodies the very evil. Eventually, the One Ruling Ring therefore can be considered as the manifestation of the ultimate evil as it corresponds to the criteria established by the different philosophers. Most of all yet, its major argument is that absolute evil can only exits in fiction as can purely good characters such as Tom Bombadil, which clearly is the case here in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

3.7. Summary

These subchapters exemplify the character's awareness of the manifestations of evil in their world. The chapter started with the explanation of the productive force of evil

that is said to be of great importance as evil ultimately serves the higher good in *The Lord of the Rings* as it can be observed with the example of Frodo's sparing of Gollum's life whose evil personality then decides the fate of Middle-Earth. This circumstance, referring to Kant's theory about evil as the basis for good, raises the question whether evil actually can be transformed into something good nowadays or if this is only possible in the closed system of fantasy fiction. Considering the ramifications of the CO_2 emissions, it is problematic to detect a possibility to positive turn.

Afterwards, the topic of the imperishability of evil is discussed as evil never ceases to exist entirely as it can be illustrated via numerous instances from the novels such as the reappearances of Sauron or Saruman which the good characters correctly anticipate. This clearly coincides with our contemporary notion that evil cannot be eliminated from our world entirely considering current issues such as the economic crisis or war crimes, where the misdeeds of single human beings afflict the whole planet.

Then, the relevance of mercy for the character's resistance against evil is raised as the books offer various examples of the healing effect of showing empathy. Mercy here is said to function as a way to overcome evil as it is demonstrated in many cases such as Bilbo's pity towards Gollum that prevented him from succumbing to evil himself. Even though the important issue of mercy is presented to function in Tolkien's novels as a means to overcome evil, it is problematic to apply this to our highly competitive world today except maybe for the social sector.

In the next chapter, the crucial aspect of the evil character's arrogance is stressed as it impedes them to consider their enemies' perspective. Thus this blindness to their enemies' strategy is contrasted with the good characters' watchfulness and foresight as it can be noticed in the comparison between Saruman's hastiness and Gandalf's prudence. Clearly, this aspect is still of relevance as people who are able to empathise with others, definitely will have an advantage over them.

Next, the vital aspect of nothing as evil in the beginning is reviewed as none of the characters are created evil, but good, which is commented on by a number of figures in the narratives such as Gandalf or Elrond. Here, even the interesting notion of the good origin of the Orcs as deformed Elves is being treated. Interestingly, this can be read as an implicit parallel to the deterioration of mankind in general as the Orcs

embody the corporal manifestation of our faults. Nevertheless, we are all created equally good which places the origin of evil in the handling of our abilities.

Finally, the conception of the Ring as absolute evil is dealt with as it tempts the people into indulging in their vices. The characters acknowledge this specific circumstance, but eventually pure evil is said to only exist in fiction which actually coincides with Seel's argument. The Ring here is used as a metaphor to remind people of their goodness by abjuring evil as they might harm other people in their reckless pursuit of their own passions.

In conclusion, this chapter has focused on the characters' special ability of understanding their world and the evil manifestations in it; which they remark on in plenty of instances. In addition, it attempted to provide relevant parallels to present examples of these manifestations of evil.

4. Christian world view

In the following chapter the subject of Christianity, which is employed in the novels of Tolkien's Middle-Earth, is examined more closely. Here, various connections can be found between Tolkien's and the Christian approaches towards the origin of evil. Starting with the prelapsarian fall of Lucifer which mirrors Melkor's expulsion from Valinor, it then continues with the Fall of Man that can be paralleled with the kinslaying of Alqualondë in the *Simarillion*. Afterwards it moves on to broader themes such as the free will as the source for the possibility of evil and the cardinal sin of pride that is said to have caused the Fall of Man initially, both of which are thematised in Tolkien's novels. Finally, redemption as a means to overcome evil and the *creatio ex nihilo* as the Creator's unique privilege, similar to Ilúvatar's status in the *Silmarillion*, are discussed in connection with the relevant passages of the books. These subsequent subchapters attempt to reveal the parallels between the world picture of Middle-Earth and Christian theology in their conceptions about manifestations of evil.

4.1. Prelapsarian Fall

The origin of evil is often traced back to the belief of Satan's exclusion from the heavenly kingdom before the actual lapse of man and is discussed fervently among

religious scholars, though it has never before been connected to *The Lord of the Rings*. This specific issue is chosen as a central them in various literary works such as in John Milton's long poem *Paradise Lost*, in which he describes how the Archangel Lucifer forfeited his right to live among the angels in heaven and is eventually condemned to his existence on the mundane world where he continues to spread the seeds of discord among human beings.

In J.R.R. Tolkien's *Silmarillion*, the prequel to his epic masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings*, the notion of the prelapsarian fall is revisited again, and furthers the assumption, that there is an underlying Christian world view prevalent in this novel, which could have inspired Tolkien in his writing process.

In Scripture, God is said to have created heaven and earth in perfect harmony with his own will and goodness, and all of its subjects are flawless in the Creator's infinity and wisdom. In the Holy Writ, sin therefore is described to be the transgression of His law of love, which functions as the foundation of His divine kingdom. (Schaff) The story of the prelapsarian Fall then deals with the Archangel Lucifer who had been the Creator's favourite next to Christ and who had been bestowed with divine splendour, which he believed to have been achieved by his own might, and not by the benevolence of God. (Schaff) Being endowed with special powers and especially with the Creator's gift of free will, sin is said to have originated in Lucifer due to his constantly growing pride and jealousy.

Instead of appreciating the gifts he received by God, he lived in the self-conceit of being equal with God and therefore abjured divine assistance in his pursuit of the perfect state of bliss and he even attempted to usurp God in his desire for power and domination. (Schaff) Satan ignored the warnings about the punishment for departing from the order of heaven given by the son of God in love and mercy, who offered him the opportunity to repent his sins, but Lucifer's pride prevented any submission and his desire for dominance prospered further. (White 496)

The religious scholar Ellen G. White mentions at one point that "Lucifer came to indulge a desire for self-exaltation" (495), which is expressed in his quest for dominance over the other inhabitants of the heavenly kingdom through the attempt to overthrow God's divine government. For that reason, he attempted to spread seeds of discord among the other angels towards the sovereignty and goodness of the Creator in order to instigate a rebellion while hiding behind the false pretence of

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aspiring liberty from God's authority for all of them instead of his actual aspired self-exaltation. (White 497)

God's mercy then, which he shows to all of his fosterlings, is exemplified through his offer of submission and repentance to Lucifer for all of his wrongdoings, but in rejecting this proposal, Satan continued to diffuse discontentment among the other inhabitants of the celestial kingdom. (White 496) In this attempt, Satan employs the strategies of flattery and deceit, which God in his goodness and righteousness is not capable of doing (White 499), and thus Satan could blame the origin of all dissatisfaction onto the divine government. When the ultimate rebellion caused Satan's and his host's banishment from heaven, God justified this act with the explanation that if he had destroyed Lucifer completely, instead of only expelling him from heaven, the other angels would have served him from fear not love. (White 500) This would entirely contradict his government's foundation on the law of love that desires the service of love from its creatures by distributing them with the freedom of will. (White 494) Furthermore, the idea of rebellion would not have been fully extinguished as "[e]vil must be permitted to come to maturity." (White 500) In other words, Satan should function as the cautionary tale as to what happens in the case of disobedience towards and rebellion against God, and, therefore, these evil character flaws needed to be distinct in order to show their falsity.

The transgression of God's moral laws here does not bring liberty and exaltation, but results in bondage and degradation (White 503) which then is contrasted by the outcome of Lucifer's deviation and Christ's obedience. Still, God grants every being the atonement of their sins, and thus the foundation of his law and government in justice and mercy is proven. (White 504)

In Tolkien's *Silmarillion* the Creator called Ilúvatar or Eru, creates the Ainur, the archangels, who sing the world Arda into being by adhering to the same musical themes. One of these Ainur, called Melkor, who is endowed with a free will as the others are as well, chooses to deviate from these themes and desires to create one of his own to the disapproval of Eru. Additionally, it is said that he is bestowed with special gifts by the Creator (Tolkien, *DS* 14), similar to Satan in the account of the prelapsarian fall. His position as Eru's favourite along with his twin in thought called Manwe (24) could also be compared to the special status Lucifer and Christ held in

God's esteem. Still, in Melkor's mind the feelings of rage and pride were nourished, and he longed to create on his own.

After the process of creation, these Ainur lived in peace and harmony in Valinor, that is called the Blessed Realm (Tolkien, *TFotR* 290) and can be said to mirror the heavenly kingdom, but Melkor desires in his aspiration for power and glory to usurp his Creator, whose existence his successor Sauron later even starts to negate. (280) Due to his envy for the second-born (Tolkien, *DS* 16) and his secret longing to dominate them, he starts to spread discord and lies among the Eldar in order to arouse a rebellion, an endeavour which actually succeeds. (Tolkien, *DS* 71) Rejecting the proposal of repenting his sins and submitting to Ilúvatar's sovereignty by serving him voluntarily, he is incarcerated, but still manages to flee and steal the heavenly forged jewels, the Silmaril, with the help of the loathsome spider Ungoliant.

The difference to Satan's fall in the incident is that Eru does not intervene, but leaves the decisions concerning Melkor's deviation to the Ainur. Only later in the history of Middle-Earth, when the Númenórers' minds are so obscured and corrupted by materialism and treachery at the end of the second age, he interferes by changing the world (Tolkien, *DS* 287-288) through a natural catastrophe that wipes out the evil people similar to the biblical Flood. Eventually, Melkor reaches Middle-Earth and establishes his tyranny there, dominating all beings with the help of his cruelly deformed servants, the Orcs.

In these deliverances, both Melkor and Satan are endowed with additional gifts and a special status along with another angel where both of them start their rebellion in thought due to the feelings of envy and pride. This cardinal sin of pride is in both cases the determining factor which causes their lapses and ultimately turns them from archangels into devils, because this pride misleads them into the delusion of the belief that they are equal with the Creator. Furthermore, both resort to the tactic of diffusing discontentment among their fellow angels in order to instigate a rebellion and eventually both even succeed in doing so with the shared outcome of the expulsion from heaven and their debauching existence on earthly soil.

These parallels clearly show Tolkien's preoccupation with Christian mythology, which he partly appears to have incorporated into his novels in order to explain the origin and history of his world and its creatures.

4.2. Original sin or the Fall of Man

The lapse is a highly controversial issue among theological and philosophical scholars and in this chapter its basic characteristics are identified in Tolkien's creation history of Middle-Earth, the *Silmarillion*. In Catholic tradition, original sin is considered the entrance of sin into the world, and consequently it refers to the development of the hereditary stain, which people are born with according to Catholic faith. (Harent) In this respect, St. Augustine describes the deliberate sin of the first man as the cause of original sin, which then affects the entire progeny, where he claims that "[t]here can be no sin that is not voluntary". (Harent) Here, original sin is regarded as a state; a permanent privation of God's sanctifying grace, rather than an act itself. This privation is caused by the hereditary stain of original sin, which means a turning away from God, *aversio a Deo*. (Harent) Further on, St. Augustine argues that man's deviation from God's moral laws happened through his pride (Augustine 356), which the Creator enabled through man's gift of the free will. (Neiman 191) In other words, man is given the offering of free will by the Creator, which provides the creature with the opportunity of choosing to transgress the moral laws consciously.

The philosopher Rüdiger Safranski, who refers to the teachings of St. Augustine, adds that in the apostasy from God, man displays a lack of being, which is characterised as evil in that it is associated with a deficiency of humility and obedience and therefore can be considered a privation of good. (Safranski 57-58)

In Scripture, the original sin committed by the first man Adam, regardless of the fact that he was tempted by the devil in the form of the snake, still acted in full consciousness of the consequences of his deeds and thereby inflicted the human race with the hereditary stain of being born as a sinner and introduced death after paradisiacal immortality. (Harent) This notion can be extended up to the point that suggests the devil's envy as the main cause of death entering the world, because he seduced man into sinning; but still it was Adam's disobedience that evoked the transmission of death and sin onto his descendants. Moreover, death as a consequence of the loss of immortality through the exclusion from the Garden of Eden is regarded as a punishment for one's sins, which mankind merits due to original sin. (Harent)

Parallels here can be detected with the Manichean theory of evil, as it claims that evil is inherent in people at the time of their birth rather than suggesting the development of evil by nurture as a consequence of being shaped by one's experiences throughout life. This notion is supported by the Christian tradition of baptism, which aims at the liberation of the newborn child from the hereditary stain, but concupiscence still remains, which then explains original sin. Thus original sin, as it has already been mentioned, is described as a state, a permanent privation of God's sanctifying grace, which refers to the perfect conformity with God and his moral laws, rather than an act as such. Hence, this turning away from God, *aversio a Deo*, is identified as a deformity, a privation, which then constitutes this hereditary stain. (Harent)

Moreover, due to the moral unity of our own will with the will of Adam, a connection which relies on the law of solidarity, the children are attributed a part of the shame that results from the father's crime, because they can be either considered as individuals or as members of a family. St. Augustine here elucidates that we are not only people responsible for our own actions, but as members of the human family, also part of a whole society. (Harent) Eventually, original sin is often referred to as "a moral deformity, "a separation from God" or as "the death of the soul" as it deprives the soul of the sanctifying grace of the Almighty. (Harent)

J.R.R. Tolkien then takes up parts of these theories in his creation myth of Middle-Earth when he introduces the kinslaying of Alqualonde (Tolkien, *DS* 89-90), where the Noldor Elf Feanor betrays his brother by killing his clan, which clearly reminds of the biblical story of the fratricide between Kain and Abel. Feanor's decision to leave Valinor and slay his relatives as a means to an end, leaves a hereditary stain upon his kin, similar to the Catholics teachings about original sin that was caused by the Fall of the first man.

In this story, Feanor who created the precious Silmaril, is said to have grown proud and greedy with the property and rights of his works, (Tolkien, *DS* 71) which again displays the sin of pride that is declared of having caused the lapse. The hereditary stain left on Feanor's kin can be illustrated in this narrative by the trail of blood that is left on his descendants, who thus are even for the first time faced with the experience of death due to their loss of immortality in the abandonment of Valinor and the Creator's moral laws. Hence, Feanor's sin caused by his lack of humility and

obedience to Eru's moral laws introduced death to the fate of the Elves as his sin was committed voluntarily and was enabled through the Creator's gift of free will.

Still in this story, there is no original sin found, in the sense of the Bible as this hereditary stain fades as the line of Feanor dies out, and besides; it only refers to this specific clan of the Elves rather than all the other races. Interestingly, a similar figure comparable to Christ is predicted to efface this hereditary stain of Feanor's kin and plead for forgiveness, in this story he is called Earendil. (Tolkien, *DS* 254) Additionally, contrary to the notion of being born evil, or in this case a sinner - which resembles the Manichean theory of evil - nothing in Tolkien's world is created evil in the beginning, and, therefore, this concept only partly applies to the peoples in Middle-Earth.

Moreover, as original sin causes the entrance of death into the world, and death then is considered a punishment in the Catholic teachings, Tolkien's creatures experience death as a means of redemption rather than as a punishment as they return to Mandos' halls in Valinor to live there for all eternity. Still this is quite controversial; as it is not explicitly mentioned whether all of the races are elevated into heaven, or if only the Elves are granted this special grace. The fall of people to evil is rendered a theme frequently throughout the novels; such as in the case of the proud man Boromir, who is said to have fallen into evil (Tolkien, *TFotR* 524), but nevertheless escaped evil in the end through his death. (Tolkien, *TTT* 647)

Eventually, Tolkien obviously was inspired by the notion of original sin in his narrative about the kinslaying of Alqualonde in the *Silmarillion*, but still it does not apply entirely to the works about Middle-Earth.

4.3. Free Will

The controversial issue of the free will has been debated equally among the disciplines of philosophy and theology arriving at quite different outcomes. Early philosophers attributed man a certain degree of moral freedom. (M. Maher) In doing so, they explained that "[e]very man always wills his greatest good, and [thus] all of his actions are merely means to this end." (Maher) Further, they exemplified that a person commits evil out of the ignorance of what is truly good and hence the wicked man is ignorant and in fact a slave to his longings. Here, Plato is cited who contrasts

the enslaved creatures by vice with virtuous people whose determination of the will by the knowledge of the good means true freedom. (Maher) In other words, people leading a virtuous life are granted more freedom than viscous people who are enslaved by their desires.

Additionally, it is mentioned that Aristotle regards vice as voluntary, a free choice of man, as the creatures themselves are held responsible for their actions instead of blaming the Creator in case of the deviation from His moral laws. (Maher) Hence, man chooses freely to depart from God's laws when he decides to follow his own will. In contrast to this assumption, the Catholic doctrine advocates the view that in God's creation of man, he provided him with the choice of obeying or violating the moral laws which prompts either reward or punishment for the respective actions. (Maher) Further on, it is stated that "[u]nless man is really free, he cannot be justly held responsible for his actions" (Maher) which again raises the question of the restriction of one's liberty by vice. This view accordingly appeals to the notion of the Fall of Man, and his consequent redemption by God's grace, which presents man as being endowed with the free volition to either obey or deviate from God's laws.

Here again, a blatant parallel between the philosophical and theological approaches of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas can be seen when they endorse the opinion that free will is simply an elective power to choose between different forms of beatitude, which man desires due to his rational appetite for will. (Maher) Still, God in his infiniteness possesses the infallible knowledge of man's future actions; which arouses the controversy how man can really act freely when the Creator anticipates all of his deeds a priori. God is then said to have the power to premove man to choose a certain course freely, while lower animals are premoved by the Almighty in harmony with their nature which determines them to adopt courses by necessity. (Maher) This clearly focuses on man's exceptionality and privilege through the Maker's gift of free will compared to animals' involuntary instincts.

Contrary to Catholic teachings, Protestant reformers deny the subject of the free will and suggest that, rather than being our own masters, all of our choices in life are predetermined, which consequently induces the presumption that man is preordained to either eternal punishment or reward before his birth. (Maher) Besides, this provokes the supposition that God's commands do not reveal to us what we are capable of doing, but what we are required to do.

In modern philosophy on the other hand, various scholars argue differently about the issue of the free will, such as Leibniz who advocates in his *Theodicy* for God's creation of the best possible world, which eventually leaves little possibility for free will as to the Creator's all-encompassing design. (Leibniz 247) Thomas Hobbes on the other hand suggests that the idea of real freedom refers to the power to satisfy one's desires, which ultimately denies God as the author of sin as an action ceases to be a sin when it originates in the Creator's mind. (Hobbes, *Leviathan* 27) In addition, Immanuel Kant describes the controversy between predestination as a result of the world's dependence on the laws of nature and the essential freedom in morality, which he attempts to explain by his differentiation of the world into phenomena and noumena. (Kant, *KdrV* 231) Here, he explains that the determinism of our actions is confined to the empirical or phenomenal world, whereas the noumenal world offers us transcendental freedom. (Maher) In other words, due to the existence of noumena beyond time and space it is capable of providing us with eternal liberty which is free of determinism.

In general, free will is considered the capacity of self-determination which then is distinguished between spontaneous acts, desires, and deliberately free acts. (Maher) Contrary to spontaneous acts or desires, only the third category can be considered as morally free acts as these comprise the essential elective power which renders it necessary to label them as voluntary acts. The element of choice then functions as the crucial characteristic for free will, the *vis electiva*, which thus holds man responsible for his actions. (Maher) Hence, man is understood as the master of at least some of his actions in life, and thereby he assumes the position of a self-determined being, while he denies the absolute dependence of outer influences on his fate. The Self then is characterised as "an abiding rational being which is the subject and cause of these states." (Maher)

A person then is held responsible for his or her deeds whether in the form of punishment or reward for the specific action as he/she had the option not to perform this act. (Maher) Hence, the liability is found in man's hand rather than the Creator's irrevocable predestination of man's choice. In other words, the exertion of this freedom then to decide between right and wrong, good and evil, refers to the fact that in choosing freely, this action is our own and we are responsible for it as we could have opted otherwise.

Furthermore, if man then indulges in vices, his freedom decreases as he sinks into slavery, because he lacks the ability to resist temptation as "[t]he practice of yielding to impulse results in enfeebling self-control." (Maher) Hence, the more one aims towards a virtuous life instead of yielding to one's desires, the more self-determined a person is and thereby one's freedom increases. In other words, virtuous people are free in their self-demand as they do not suffer from the bondage of their will through satisfying their vices.

In Tolkien's works, there are various instances of handling this controversial issue concerning the freedom of will. In the beginning, the entrance of sin through the fallen Ainur Melkor is described as the outcome of his own desires, a choice he made on his own as all of the creatures are provided by the Creator with the gift of a free will. (Tolkien, *DS* 87) Thus Melkor is punished for his deviation and consequent violation of Eru's moral laws, while his fellow Ainur are rewarded for their obedience.

Moreover, the Protestant belief of predestination to prenatal punishment or reward is negated in Tolkien's world as it is mentioned that not everything was inherent in the music of the Ainur. (Tolkien, *DS* 109) This then suggests the self-determination of one's fate at least partly, because the people have the right to choose instead of being preordained before birth.

Furthermore, the creatures are held responsible for their actions and punished accordingly when they violate the Creator's laws such as Sauron, Saruman, and Melkor who are penalised for their voluntary crimes by exile and finally death which in the case of evil characters means punishment not escape. Even though all of them committed unforgivable misdeeds, each is given the opportunity of the repentance of their sins, which they nevertheless reject and thus they are punished with exile or destruction.

Interestingly, as animals are described to act out of necessity and also the classification of their actions as spontaneous acts lead to the assertion that the Mûmakil are in fact not responsible for their actions in their service of the cruel Haradrim as these instinctive acts are not considered evil.

As all people are responsible for their acts due to their free will, which certainly comprises the crucial element of the free volition, creatures such as Sauron or Melkor clearly act on their own accord, while the case of the Orcs constitutes a more obscured subject. Even though their origin as Elves means their intended creation as

good beings, and they have been enslaved and deformed only later by their master whose orders they obey (Tolkien, *TTT* 580), they still appear to have developed their own cruelty among each other, which would concede them at least a little freedom. Still, they are depicted as hating their master deep in their dark hearts and only serving him in fear (Tolkien, *DS* 51) which implies their dependence on him and thus the imprisonment of their will.

Additionally, people who yield to their vices are portrayed as slaves to their longings as the bondage of their wills denies them the freedom of choice. This indulging in desires is pictured in *The Lord of the Rings* in the creatures' addiction of the Ring, which makes the owner a slave to it such as Sauron, Gollum, or even Frodo. Only virtuous people who defy this hostile will such as Sam or Bilbo, who return the Rings willingly without any major affection from being its bearer for a (short) while, do not succumb to this vice and thus experience real freedom. Only when the Ring is destroyed Sam declares that "[h]is master had been saved; he was himself again, he was free." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1239)

Throughout the novel, there are various instances, when evil characters, especially, are said to suffer from a bondage of will such as the Nazgûl (Tolkien, *TFotR* 227), and even good people succumb to hostile wills such as Boromir who claims that a madness took him (Tolkien, *TFotR* 521) or Théoden whose own will is impeded and his actions then controlled by Saruman. (Tolkien, *TTT* 680) Frodo's will is most often portrayed as being impeded by the Ring (Tolkien, *TFotR* 278) or he attempts to reject a hostile will (Tolkien, *TTT* 925), but still he acknowledges that he has to reject it such as in the following extract: "He bitterly regretted his foolishness and reproached himself for weakness of will; for he now perceived that in putting on the Ring he obeyed not his own desire but the commanding wish of his enemies." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 259) Gollum on the other hand, already succumbed to the Ring's will because he is said to have no will left in the matter (Tolkien, *TFotR* 73) as he is enslaved by his addiction to the Ring and the consequent bondage of his will serves as an explanation for his obedience to the Ringbearer. (Tolkien, *TTT* 837) The Ring then is described as an active power, which tries to tempt good people and bereaves them of their own will. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1178)

Truly good characters then, such as Gandalf, offer evil people to free themselves from bond, chain or command in order to gain ultimate freedom (Tolkien, *TTT* 760) or

advise their fellows to "[l]et go! And then you can go yourself and be free." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 44)This clearly attributes the topic of freedom of will and the awareness of its value to the features of good figures in the novels. After Sauron's destruction, his armies are freed from his hostile will as if blindness faded from their eyes which appeared to enable them to see clearly for the first time. (Tolkien, *TRofK* 1242)

Important to note is also that the people acknowledge the fact that having a free will implies the possibility of choosing particular options such as in Legolas' following statement: "for your loss you suffer of your own free will, and you might have chosen otherwise." (Tolkien *TFotR* 493) Considering the implication that all evil characters are enslaved in the bondage of their will, the only free evil creature appears to be Shelob, who is said to serve none but herself. (Tolkien, *TTT* 946)

Clearly, Tolkien was familiar with theological and philosophical teachings about the freedom of will and incorporated different aspects of several of these approaches into his masterpiece.

4.4. Pride

The religious and philosophical attitudes among scholars towards the sin of pride are quite similar in their readings of the Bible. Augustine considers *superbia* as the renunciation of God (356) and even classifies it as the root of all evil, because he claims that the rising already induces the fall. (360) In other words, his view adheres to the saying that pride comes before a fall. Superbia therefore functions, according to the scholar C.E. Luthardt, as the chief and basic sin in the Roman Catholic Church, whereas obedience in contrast is considered the highest virtue.

In the Bible, it expresses arrogance towards God and society and here moral and religious pride are mentioned next to social and intellectual pride, all with different characteristics such as condescension in the case of social pride or hypocrisy with intellectual pride. (Luthardt) Other philosophers such as Hegel renders pride a theme next to free will and caprice as the primary cause for the lapse. (75-76)

Another scholar, J. Delany, describes pride as the excessive love of one's own excellence and the theologian St. Thomas even classifies it as the queen of all vices. Pride therefore is said to be the affection for one's own worth and the trust in one's own powers, whilst rejecting the dependence on the Almighty Creator and expressing one's contempt for Him and His sovereign commands by refusing to obey His orders.

Furthermore, man does not abandon God due to weakness or ignorance, but only because of self-exaltation, which prevents any submission to His almighty power. (Delany)

In Scripture, all manifestations of pride are considered an abomination and, in fact, pride here is contrasted with humility. (Luthardt) While the notion of humility is associated with the unconditional faith and love of God, pride, on the other hand, is expressed in the self-righteousness of man, which denies and rejects the dependence on God's grace for salvation. Therefore, pride is considered an obstacle for salvation, because it inhibits any submission to an authorial power. Moreover, Luthardt states that "faith excludes pride", meaning that the unconditional belief in God rather than one's own powers prevents the emergence of pride. According to Delany, pride can be regarded as "the desire to essay what exceeds one's capacity", which expresses the wish to be like God and imitate his creation in an act of hubris, which already foreshadows the induced fall. Pride is considered an inexcusable sin when the person "in the pursuit of its object is ready of anything, even mortal sin." (Delany) The philosopher Rüdiger Safranski supports this view by following Augustine's notion who describes pride as the reason to break away from the ultimate ground as a means to create one's own base. (35) In this case, pride can be explained by the false and exaggerated estimate of one's own worth, while neglecting one's dependence on the higher power of the Creator.

Eventually, pride caused the Fall of Man and even that of the devil, because man can not equal God due to his imperfectness. In the creation myth of Middle-Earth, the *Silmarillion*, the rebelling archangel Melkor is said to aspire more power and glory of his own voice (14), while envy (16) and pride (71) grew in his heart. In this narrative, he attempts to exceed his fellow Ainur in power, while he deviates from the musical themes that were provided by their Creator Eru. He also neglects his own dependence on Ilúvatar by longing to create one on his own. (14) Interestingly, later in the novel, Sauron even denies Eru's existence in the creation of the world in front of the Valar (280), however at the same time he tries to imitate his creation by attempting to breed his own race.

Furthermore, throughout the principal work, *The Lord of the Rings*, various evil characters are mentioned to indulge in this blinding emotion of pride such as

Saruman (Tolkien, *TTT* 760), Boromir (Tolkien, *TFotR* 319) or even the confused seneschal Denethor. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1117)

Additionally, the contrasting principles of pride and humility are mentioned in the case of Sauron, whose character is presented to rise in pride (Tolkien, *DS* 296) to the detriment of humility (Tolkien, *DS* 295). Moreover, pride impedes the redemption of Sauron and Melkor, who are not willing to submit to a higher power anymore and therefore have to be destroyed or banished from the world.

Even the issue of faith as a device to defy pride is made a theme in this novel as the good characters trust in some higher power, while the evil ones only live according to their own principles. Interestingly Aragorn mentions, at one point in the story, that even Sauron is not so mighty that he is above fear, indicating that even he is still an imperfect creature in contrast to the Creator. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1022) The good characters here display not only humbleness, but prove their unconditional faith in a higher power when they rely on hope concerning the fate of Middle-Earth, which can be observed in various instances such as Gandalf's declaration of "a fool's hope". (Tolkien, *TTT* 968)

Being familiar with the longstanding tradition of the cardinal sin of pride as the root of all evil and its state as the cause of the Fall of Man and that of the devil, Tolkien incorporated this biblical notion of *superbia* into his novels similarly along with all the religious implications that derive from it.

4.5. Redemption

The notion of redemption is another crucial issue, which can be said to form an overlap between the two disciplines of theology and philosophy and it even occurs in various instances throughout Tolkien's novels about Middle-Earth. In Catholic tradition, redemption is considered "[t]he restoration of man from the bondage of sin […] through the satisfactions and merits of Christ." (J.Sollier) In other words, it liberates mankind from the sins committed during their earthly existence.

Furthermore, redemption then "presupposes the original elevation of man to a supernatural state and his downfall from it through sin; and, inasmuch as sin calls down the wrath of God and produces man's servitude under evil and Satan, redemption has reference to both God and man." (Sollier) Redemption, in this

respect, refers both to God's satisfaction and man's restoration as "the Divine honour is repaired and the Divine wrath appeased" as well as man's "deliverance from the slavery of sin and a restoration to the former Divine adoption". (Sollier) Hence, redemption ensures God's satisfaction combined with man's restoration to his primary transcendental existence in the kingdom of heaven. In other words, man forfeited his right for immortality through the commitment of sin and can only regain it through redemption which is only made possible with the assistance of the son of God, Jesus Christ. Redemption is even referred to as a remedy for original sin (Sollier), as it redeems man from all of his sins, even the first one.

Moreover, it is claimed that redemption is achieved by a voluntary act of mercy (Sollier); meaning that the sinner has to show regret regarding his misdeeds and his/her willingness to compensate for these. In addition, incarnation and sacrifice are mentioned as the basis for redemption as the paragon of Jesus Christ has illustrated. Sacrifice then is associated with the idea of suffering and immolation, and beyond that, can even be considered the ultimate expression of Incarnation. (Sollier) This refers primarily to the sacrifice of the son of God, who died for our sins, but it can also be applied to the individual case of a single human being, who can prove his/her sincerity with reference to the desire for redemption as a means to enter heaven. In this respect, the discharge of a debt or the satisfaction refers to the acceptable reparation of honour for the person insulted, which at the same time comprises of painful work. (Sollier) This suffering experienced in carrying out the penal work of redemption allows one to ascertain the atonement of one's sins as it shall mirror the pains one caused in the afflicted person.

What is more, the religious scholar J. Sollier differentiates between the idealistic and realistic tendency towards salvation; the former refers to salvation as the supernatural restoration of mankind to an immortal life, while the latter describes the reparation of our sins through Christ's death. In other words, the idealistic approach can be labelled the Divine approach, whereas the realistic approach is associated with the worldly view towards redemption of one's sins. Besides, Sollier explains that the "evil as the effects of sin [is] [...] more than compensated by the fruits of Redemption", while "the value of actions is measured by the dignity of the person who performs them". This contributes to the notion of the universality of Redemption, which means that it is possible for all men without exception (Sollier), regardless of

the harm they have caused in case of their remorse and willingness to compensate for their evil misdeeds. Still, it is emphasized that redemption is only possible through the cooperation of Christ's merits and our own voluntary acts of amends. (Sollier)

In philosophy on the other hand, Leibniz considers the punishment of one's sins as a warning example or as a means of improvement (245), while he argues for the notion that we cannot prevent sins without sinning ourselves. (249) Here, he supports the thesis that voluntary acts of pity or mercy can function as a means to ward off evil, while he adds a positive effect to the punishment of one's sins in the earthly existence rather than one's salvation only in heaven. Additionally, St. Thomas holds the opinion that evil people fear punishment as a consequence of their wrongdoings, while the good ones hate to go astray due to their love of virtue (41) implying that redemption is only possible, when it is taken seriously rather than only being afraid of the consequences of its failure.

What is more, Susanne Neiman cites Nietzsche when she maintains the assumption that the origin of evil is found in the real world, contrary to the redemption from all evil, which can only happen in the supernatural world. (Neiman 316) Considering the difference between the idealistic and realistic salvation in Catholic theology, obvious parallels can be detected between these concepts as to the ultimate atonement of all sins in heaven after the Day of Judgment. Another addition is found in Safranski's proposition, that follows Freuds statement, whereby he asserts the hope that the improvement in mankind's perception of reality will be a compensation for the disappearance of the religious illusions; which clearly refers to redemption without the help of some transcendental might.

In Tolkien's *Silmarillion*, Melkor's fall from his supernatural state as an Ainur by the cardinal sin of pride parallels the Catholic view of the original elevation of man and the subsequent decline due to sin. Moreover, the Creator's heart is said to be full of mercy, displaying forgiveness and love towards obedience and humility. (Tolkien, *DS* 45) This can be observed when Eru rewards Aule in providing the latter one's secret creation of the Dwarves with the gift of life, because Aule proved his loyalty as a humble servant of Eru by repenting his disobedience and offering to destroy his creation. (Tolkien, *DS* 43) Similarly, the Dwarves' remorse of delving too deeply and thereby awaking the Balrog serves as a redeeming factor for their misdeed (Tolkien, *TFotR* 313); because it is mentioned that they did not create evil, and, thus, the

punishment of their mistake, and their regret contribute to the atonement of their sin. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 443)

Furthermore, the connection between redemption and its redeeming impact on original sin is displayed in Earendil's sacrifice, when he obtains forgiveness for his kin's misdeeds and mercy for their pains. (Tolkien, *DS* 258) His function as a predestined saviour of his ancestors' sin can be compared to Jesus' role in the redemption of mankind.

Besides, voluntary acts of mercy have a special status in the history of Middle-Earth as they have redeeming and beneficial consequences for the characters displaying this noble character trait; such as in the case of Frodo's sparing of Gollum, which was induced by Gandalf's advice, who thus functions as a helper in Frodo's pursuit of redemption and therefore fulfils a similar cooperative function like Jesus. Interestingly, another parallel between Gandalf and Jesus can be perceived in the acts of self-immolation to benefit others, and their consequent resurrection, along with the nickname of the White Rider, that can also be seen as a reference to the self-sacrifice of Jesus.

Still, sacrifice in general is considered to be a vital component for redemption; as it can be observed in Boromir's self-immolation for the Hobbits Merry and Pippin that serves as a compensation for his evil obsession with the Ring which is even regarded as an escape from evil by the characters in the book itself (Tolkien, *TTT* 649), and he himself concedes that he has paid for his sin. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 538) By this act of altruism, he restores his honour and his death serves as atonement for his sins purifying his immortal soul for the entrance into heaven.

Interestingly, contrary to Catholic tradition, Tolkien's world appeals to the notion of the idealistic salvation as the Elves are bestowed with immortal life when they return to Mandos' halls after their death. In contrast, a realistic concept of salvation does not apply as it requires the expiation of one's sins through the death of Christ, in Christian theology, but this Christ-like figure does not occur in this specific novel as such; it is, nevertheless, implicitly hinted at in various character traits of different figures.

Additionally, the universality of the principle of redemption does not appeal to Tolkien's works entirely, either. While redemption is not possible for evil characters who are not willing to improve; such as Sauron, Melkor, or Saruman, even the evil

hillmen of Dunland, despite their cry for mercy (Tolkien, *TTT* 711), and the recompense for their misdeeds, which is enabled through Aragon's forgiveness, are not explicitly mentioned to enter Mandos' eternal halls as the only creatures deserving this prerogative obviously are the Elves as it is even mentioned in the book itself: "Only Elves can escape. Away, away out of Middle-earth, far away over the Sea. If even that is wide enough to keep the Shadow out." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1192) It is not explicitly mentioned to where the minds of humans, dwarves, and other creatures float after their death.

Redemption for the Ringbearers is obviously only possible if they free themselves from its evil influence, which Frodo did not manage and thus had to leave Middle-Earth. Interestingly, Gandalf implicitly hints at this specific circumstance: "For he gave it up in the end of his own accord; an important point. No, I was not troubled about dear Bilbo anymore, once he had let the thing go. It is for *you* that I feel responsible." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 64)

Finally, the opportunity for redemption is given to everyone, but the decision lies in each person him- or herself. Even Sauron is given the chance to repent his sins by Aragorn when he "demands that he should atone for his evils, and then depart for ever." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1162) Interestingly, good people always trust that redemption is possible for everybody as it is voiced by Frodo in the following extract about Saruman: "He is fallen and his cure beyond us; but I would still spare him, in the hope that he may find it." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1334)

Eventually, Tolkien used the basic idea of redemption that originates in Catholic theology and adapted this to his own works about Middle-Earth, to a certain extent. Along with the aforementioned opinion of Freud, he seems to plead for a transformation towards a more human centred world and redemption too rather than depending on the mercy of the Creator and his son.

4.6. Creatio ex nihilo

The Latin expression *creatio ex nihilo* refers to God's creation out of nothingness that means God's act to bring "the entire substance of a thing into existence from a state of non-existence." (F.Siegfried) In other words, this alludes to God's creation in the absence of any prior subject-matter, which has been described in the Genesis. It is

further explained that creation here does not delineate a change or a transformation, because, contrary to the passage from one real state to another, it does not make use of any pre-existent substance. (Siegfried) Furthermore, this implies the complete dependence of the creatures, the objects, on the Creator. Hence, it is absolutely impossible for a creature to produce even the smallest act without the cooperation of the Creator, because the *Causa materialis*, the material principle, of all existence is God, who possesses infinite wisdom and power and thus is "the absolute cause of all finite existence." (Siegfried)

Additionally, Siegfried mentions that distinct knowledge of the origin of creation was obscured and finally lost by man when moral corruption darkened their understanding, which refers to man's gradual renunciation of God and consequently the falling off of belief in His creation. In Scripture, however, God appointed witnesses of his creation, such as the descendants of Abraham and Sem, who are entrusted with the mission to preserve the notion of His creation.

Besides, creation out of nothing, *unus solus Deus*, also evokes the assumption of the origin of evil from the fact of free will, which can be exemplified by the fact that while the Divine act must be perfect, the effect can or even need not be, connoting that creation is necessarily finite and therefore imperfect. (Siegfried) This has already been illustrated by the creation's inability to create on its own account without the Creator's cooperation; who, however, provided the raw material for the creature's later transformation or change. This is emphasised by the proposition that creation stands in an essential relation of dependence to the First Cause as "[n]o creature can possibly be a principal cause of creation." (Siegfried) In this respect, Siegfried adds that "the creative act [...] supposes an absolutely independent subject" which also explains that God in his existence "was absolutely free to create or not to create".

This view rejects Leibniz's exaggerated optimism of God's creation of the best possible world as Siegfried elucidates that even though "[t]he Divine act must be perfect, the effect need not, and indeed cannot, be absolutely perfect; the creature being necessarily finite, a more perfect creature is always possible and creatable by infinite power. The world is the very best possible for the Creator's purpose; it is relatively, not absolutely perfect." In other words, the creature is not capable of real creation without God's cooperation due to its imperfection.

Eventually, Siegfried admits that "the distinction between right and wrong conduct is found in the conformity of the one and the difformity of the other with the original exemplar in the Creator's mind." This clearly marks the dividing line between God and His creatures as they are capable of deviation due to their free will. Moreover, the primary motive of creation is said to be God's love of his own goodness (Siegfried), which clarifies the view that in the beginning nothing is created evil, whereas the creatures have developed sin through the gift of the free will; such as the sin of pride in the case of the first Fall of Man. Consequently, creation, in the form of mankind, is born to know and worship God in order to be rewarded with immortality by serving Him in His eternal kingdom as they are created as an "image" of the Creator and thus are said to be a more perfect realization of the creative plan. (Siegfried)

Besides, in the theological approach towards the notion of the creation out of nothingness, many theologians, such as Augustine, use the Holy Writ as a basis for their reflections on this issue. In that respect, Augustine argues that in a false notion of pride of creating on one's own and trying to become the ultimate ground oneself, the creature abandons God in pleasing itself, while he or she approaches nothingness. (359) A similar view occurs in Schelling's deliberations, who then raises the factor of cockiness of the creature to be everything, when it tries to equal the Creator. This attempt to become the creative base oneself serves as the source of falling into nothingness in the process of this relevant creation. (109) Interestingly, other thinkers such as Liessmann and Safranski share the opinion that the imitation of the Creator will fail (Safranski 35) and that this transformation is endangered to be engulfed by nothingness again as it wavers between the *"Sein"*, being, and the void. (229) Furthermore, they follow Jean-Jacques Rousseau's position who claims that everything is good in the Creator's hands (Safranski 157), but degenerates in those of man; and Liessmann even goes so far as to cite Zarathustra who suggests that the creation of a higher man implies his becoming more evil. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 333)

Applied to Tolkien's history of the origin of Middle-Earth, the Creator Eru claims in the beginning that there was no musical theme that did not have its origin in his thoughts (Tolkien, *DS* 15); which means that he is the material cause of all creation.

Even Melkor's deviation from the rest of the Ainur, in longing to create things of his own, is only made possible due to the creature's free will provided by Eru. (14) In his

attempt to imitate Ilúvatar's creation, he disregards Eru's primary creation out of nothingness and hence neglects his inability to create something on his own without the Creator's cooperation. Thus, the Orcs he creates out of Elves are only twisted and deformed creatures which means that they are only transformations of already pre-existent material rather than actual creations out of nothingness. These enslaved abominations, which he created out of envy and mockery of the Creator, were considered his worst deed by Eru as they were a defamation of the original creation. Later in the novel, Melkor's successor Sauron even negates Eru's existence (Tolkien, *DS* 280) and rebukes the people's blindness in their enslavement by this supposedly non-existent entity, which perfectly exemplifies the creature's obscured cognition by corruption that is mentioned in the Bible.

What is more, throughout the complete works about Middle-Earth, the evil characters, who attempt to imitate creation, eventually end up expiring into nothingness as the religious scholars suggest. Herein, Melkor's exile outside of the world is mentioned in the *Silmarillion* (264), as well as Eru's changing of the world and consequent fall into nothingness of the evil Númenórer. (287) In the main work *The Lord of the Rings*, the evil wizard Saruman's attempt to create is referred to as a child's model or a slave's flattery (Tolkien, *TTT* 581) and is considered a mockery creation, which ultimately dissolves into nothing as he himself does as well. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1335) Moreover, Sauron's evil henchmen, the Ringwraiths, are described as fading into invisibility from the real world into the world of shadows (Tolkien, *DS* 299), and throughout the novels, they are frequently referred to only as shadows, shapes, or spectres who have to wear robes to give shape to their nothingness. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 289) Even Sauron's defeat is accompanied both times by the supernatural destruction of his fortress and its consequent fall into nothingness, while his shadow is blown away and passes away. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1242) Interestingly, the concept of the void is mentioned throughout the books and the Dark Lord himself is explained to have come from the Outside. (Tolkien, *TFofR* 172) Good characters affected by an evil influence are then described to fade into another world such as Frodo or Pippin who even at one point are said to go blind as in the case of Théoden when he suffers under Saruman's influence.

Additionally, Ilúvatar appointed the Ainur as his witnesses and even participants in the process of creation, who are then rewarded with immortality by obeying His laws.

The Elves who cease to exist in Middle-Earth return to Mandos' Halls in Valinor, which could be considered to mirror the conception of heaven in Christian theology, where they serve and live in Eru's kingdom for all eternity.

Even though, Ilúvatar is not explicitly mentioned in the principal work, he is nevertheless in his infiniteness the only one who can create out of nothingness and every attempt of the creatures to create is just a change or transformation. Considering the biblical approach towards the *creatio ex nihilo*, the parallels to Tolkien's work can be detected insofar that he employs similar concepts and creation myths in his history of Middle-Earth. Thus, it can be said that these books appear to carry traces of a Christian conception of the world, but do not coincide with the biblical notions entirely.

4.7. Summary

In this chapter the notion of a Christian world view in Tolkien's story is discussed in detail. Initially, the prelapsarian fall of Lucifer is compared to Melkor's lapse in the *Silmarillion*, the prequel to *The Lord of the Rings*, as both have been the Creator's favourites and thus have been equipped with special gifts. Additionally, both instigated a rebellion in the heavenly kingdom and consequently have been banished to live on Earth. The importance of this fall can be interpreted as a warning example to disbelievers and thus be read as an affirmation of the Catholic doctrine.

Then, the precarious issue of the original sin of man is treated as it can be found in the Bible through Adam's fall. This is paralleled with the stain that Feanor left on his descendants by the killing of his brother's clan that only a predicted redeemer can erase. The resumption of this issue in Tolkien's book can be said to remind us how the ramifications of our own mistakes can affect other people.

Subsequently, the topic of the freedom of will is addressed that the characters are endowed with by the Creator in order to choose for themselves. Animals do not possess a free will but act instinctively and thus cannot be held responsible for their actions, which serves as an explanation for the Mûmakil's innocence. Evil characters on the other hand are said to be slaves of their longings, because their will is in bondage, and they are slaves to their vices as in Gollum's case of his addiction for the Ring. As we are all equipped with the same moral capacity of the free will, we can

be held responsible for our actions, but the difficulty arises where to draw the line between people enslaved by their vices and those that can be held accountable especially considering the situation of soldiers nowadays.

Hereafter, the cardinal sin of pride is cited as the reason of the Fall of Man as it is characterised as the most basic sin that impedes any empathy with other people. In the books, evil figures such as Saruman or Sauron are ascribed this character trait of pride which then induces their downfall. Pride is still a vital issue as it is considered to darken people's understanding of other perspectives and ultimately will induce their fall as it can be observed by the examples of the dictators' pride in the Arabic Spring movement.

Similarly, the theme of redemption is introduced in relation with Tolkien's works as evil people are given the opportunity to repent their sins by carrying out a penal work of mercy which ensures the atonement of their sins as in the case of the evil hillmen of Dunland. Even though the universality of redemption applies here as all characters are given the opportunity to repent their sins, only the Elves enjoy the privilege of returning to eternal life in Mandos' halls in Valinor. Clearly, this view cannot be upheld any longer in our secular and modern world nowadays as there are multiple different beliefs about after death scenarios, but Tolkien here definitely pleads for redemption as a means to an after-life.

Finally, the phenomenon of the creatio ex nihilo is discussed as the Creator here is said to have created the world without the prior existence of material. The creature, in contrast, cannot create without the cooperation of the Creator as he already provided the base material and thus every attempt of imitating creation is only a change of transformation. This is then compared to Eru's real creation out of nothingness, whereas his creatures Melkor, Sauron, or Saruman only changed the material he provided in the first place such as the transformations of Elves to Orcs or Ents to Trolls illustrate. Tolkien here implicitly criticises the age of industrialisation as he maintains the opinion that man's creation can only be evil, while nature provides the necessary good and godly.

To sum up, Tolkien can be said to have incorporated various Christian notions about the manifestations of evil and the origin of the world into his novels about Middle-Earth and adapted these to his ideas, some of which still seem relevant today.

5. Philosophical Themes

This chapter deals with specific philosophical themes introduced by various scholars at different times. All of these are relevant regarding Tolkien's novels as the raised concepts parallel the manifestations of evil found in Middle-Earth. In the following subchapters, notions such as the liability to evil by Kant, the agony of choice by Kierkegaard, Seel's bogart theorem, Nietzsche's trans-valuation of all values, Arendt's banality of evil, and the general topic of materialism are addressed. Then they will be linked up with the narratives' processing of these and will be illustrated by many examples before their relevance in today's world will be discussed

5.1. Liability to evil

In his treatise, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, that deals with the origin of evil, Immanuel Kant describes man in his species as neither good nor evil, but claims that only certain illicit actions imply evil tendencies existent in human beings. (Kant, *DPidGdbV* 666) In other words, man is not born evil, but our subjective reason, which we are endowed with, due to our free will, enables the possibility that we can choose our guiding principle of actions voluntarily. Thus evil is an option in the whole human complex of actions. Hence, human beings themselves are responsible for their actions as this self-legislation presupposes our consciously selected choice.

What is more, nature is not responsible for man's evil character traits, but man himself is their originator as he is predisposed with a certain liability to evil. (Kant, *DPidGdbV* 668) This means that birth is not the cause of evil in human beings but we are born with a particular tendency to evil due to our natural use of freedom. Consequently, evil originates in the use of an exception in the moral context as it refers to the conscious transgressing of the moral laws. (Kant, *DPidGdbV* 667) Therefore, Kant explains our natural tendency of evil with the deliberate option of a maxim as it is chosen voluntarily due to reason and the power of free will rather than being an instinctive act, which in turn cannot be considered evil due to its arbitrariness as it conforms to the natural law. (Kant, *DPidGdbV* 667) Being virtuous then includes doing the morally right by suppressing our irrational propensities and passions. Kant here rejects both Thomas Hobbes' argument that describes man as

wild and thus evil in his nature when he refers to the Latin saying *homo hominem lupus*, (Hobbes, *VM* 59) which depicts the *bellum omnium contra omnes*, the struggle for life and death, as well as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's proposition about the origin of evil by nurture, that delineates evil influences to derive from the outside as man is naturally and essentially good. (Liessmann, *Das Böse* 5) Immanuel Kant then argues that neither of both theories in reality does apply as man is only born with the predisposition for evil, which he explains in the following way when he talks about human natural propensities in a threefold manner. (Kant, *DPidGdbV* 273-274) Firstly, he mentions our predisposition for animality, which accounts for our bestial vices such as lust or greed that serve our instinct of self-preservation while we live in a wild anomy without restrictions and keep indulging in our desires. The second tendency is formed by our propensity for humanity, which appeals to our life of reason; where the vices are of cultural origin such as envy or ingratitude including the main vice of schadenfreude, when the misery of another person is the source of our delight. Finally, he adds the dimension of sanity as we are responsible for our actions due to our personality status. Hence, actions are ascribed a subjectivity as we can direct our predispositions into adhering to moral law in our existence as rational beings.

Considering the implications of these propensities, Kant claims, on the one hand, that satisfying someone's instincts cannot be regarded evil, while, on the other hand, the ultimate evil does not exist, because it is depicted as using evil as the rational guiding principle of one's actions. (Liessmann, *Das Böse 5)* Apart from this, according to Liessmann, the seed of evil is found in yielding to one's liability to evil or not and thus he distinguishes between one's possession of either a good or an evil heart. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 307) Here, he explains that evil people only obey the law due to expediency as they fear punishment. A similar view is expressed by Albert Einstein who comments on this phenomenon in the following statement: " Wenn die Menschen nur deshalb gut sind, weil sie sich vor Strafe fürchten oder auf Belohnung hoffen, sind wir wirklich ein armseliger Haufen." (qtd. in Goebel and Hofer 133) This necessarily implies a shared moral code among humans which we obey without any ulterior motives.

Furthermore, citing Kant, Liessmann proposes that not our nature serves as the main cause for man's rancorousness, because man is born neither good nor evil, but rather man himself is its author. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 306) Other philosophers such as

Schelling or Safranski argued similarly in their deliberations when they contrast God's universal will with the creatural self-will, by exemplifying that it is not the Creator's intention, but the creature's personal negligence in its divergence because of its free will as there is a constant conflict between God and beast. (Schelling 97-98) Safranski maintains this thesis by adding that evil originates in this permanent stress ratio between nature and reason. (Safranski 193) In other words, man incessantly struggles to keep the balance between his propensies for animality and humanity, which are cited as the main cause of his liability to evil, because these serve as a means to graft various vices on. Thus, man is neither evil by nature, as Hobbes suggests, nor does evil originate in his nurture through foreign influences as in Rousseau's argument, but he, in fact, is born with the liability to evil due to his propensities to bestial and human acts that are a result of his free will. This theory is investigated further by Safranski who quotes Leibniz' *Theodicy* when he argues for the religious notion that even though God is whole, the world or especially man cannot be perfect as the creature cannot equal the Creator. (Safranski 309) Hence, man has to be imperfect and thus needs to be provided with the option to go astray. The philosopher Susanne Neiman adds an interesting aspect to this view by exemplifying that every aspiration for wholeness is foredoomed to failure. (Neiman 39)

In Tolkien's narratives, the characters are created as good by Eru who still endowed them with the gift of a free will, and, consequently, they also have the ability to deviate from the moral laws instated by the Creator. Even though Ilúvatar provided him with special gifts by offering the material base, the formal cause of evil ultimately is Melkor's personal negligence which then causes his fall. So, he is not created evil, but has a tendency to do evil because of his free will. Moreover, evil characters such as Saruman were not created evil as well. Even though he is said to have been the most powerful of the Istari, his pride and desire for power grew as he envied Mithrandir, who was favoured by the Elves. (Tolkien, *DS* 311) Thus, his free will enabled him to deviate from his original mission to protect Middle-Earth and aim for domination instead, because of his inherent liability to evil.

The animals of the evil Southerners, the Haradrim, that are called Mûmakil or oliphaunts, on the other hand, cannot be considered evil as they act according to the law of nature instead of adopting a conscious moral choice as rational beings would

do. Consequently, these animals are not evil themselves, but only follow their instincts which Kant denies to be evil as it is not deliberately motivated. Contrary to Gollum's case, they are not endowed with the gift of a free will and thus their actions are instinctive, while Gollum, as a once reasonable creature, is free to decide his actions voluntarily and consciously. Still, his will is enslaved by his passions, a theme which is dealt with in more detail in the chapter about the free will.

The topic concerning the distinction between a good and evil heart; that is illustrated by Liessmann via the example of Marquis de Sade's heroines Justine and Juliette, is actually thematised in *The Lord of the Rings* at one point in the story when Sam ponders about the motivation of an enemy soldier to enter war and wonders whether he really was evil at heart. (Tolkien, *TTT* 864) It appears that this differentiation occurs throughout the story as it concerns itself with the question whether to indulge into one's liability to evil or not. The characters develop an awareness of this circumstance as it can be seen in the instance when even the supposedly evil hillmen are described as "ordinary men, rather tall and dark-haired, and grim but not particularly evil-looking." (Tolkien, *TTT* 738)

Nevertheless, this liability affects every person equally and the characters reveal the possession of a good or evil heart in their strength to resist the temptation of the Ring because it is said that "as long as it is in the world it will be a danger even to the Wise." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 349) Still, it is admitted that "some would resist the Ring far longer than most of the Wise would believe." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 64) This perfectly illustrates that all creatures have this tendency towards evil, but some are virtuous enough to abjure the temptation, while others yield to their vices. And even if a person managed to resist once, it is still possible that "[t]he evil fit may come on him [her] again." (Tolkien, *TTT* 736) In the case of Grima, who does indulge in his desires, for instance, it can be argued that he adheres to the laws for his fear of punishment coupled with his self-preservation instinct. However, it is again important to note here that *every* person is endowed with the same liability and thus weakness to succumb to evil as it is addressed by Gandalf when he states that "[a] mortal [...] who keeps one of the Great Rings [...] [will] sooner or later – later, if he is strong or well-meaning to begin with, but neither strength nor good purpose will last – sooner or later the Dark Power will devour him." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 62) Interestingly, every

creature here has the same predisposition towards evil, but the distinguishing, and, more importantly, decisive factor here is the person's mental strength to refuse evil. Additionally, the existence of absolute evil is denied by Kant as it refers to choosing evil as the rational guiding principle and thus would allude to the devil. Nevertheless, in the narratives about Middle-Earth, the one Ring can said to mirror the image of absolute evil as it tempts the creatures' similarly to the biblical snake from the Garden of Eden, which has been compared to the devil as well. Still, Lucifer himself was an Archangel and thus created as a good being, and in that case pure evil can be said to only exist in fiction - this topic is treated in the chapter about absolute evil more thoroughly.

Finally, the book itself offers its own explanation on the topic of the liability of evil when Treebeard talks about the difference between the true Ents and the bad ones: "Some of us are still true Ents, and lively enough in our fashion, but many are growing sleepy, growing tree-ish, as you might say. [...] When that happens to a tree, you find that some have *bad* hearts." (Tolkien, *TTT* 609) This metaphor for the whole human race perfectly expresses Kant's deliberations of human's tendency for evil. Eventually, Kant's theory about the liability to evil can be said to be applied entirely to the notion of evil in Tolkien's stories about Middle-Earth as it reflects and corresponds to the Christian view about free will as well.

5.2. Agony of choice

In his treatise, *Fear and Trembling*, about the concept of angst, Sören Kierkegaard forms the major distinction between existential fear in general and a concrete manifestation of an anxiety such as a threat. In doing so, he attempts to illustrate how original sin evolved by explaining the significance of temptation. Here, he claims that already the prohibition of eating from the tree of knowledge gave birth to sin in Adam. In other words, the interdiction induces sin as it arouses our concupiscence, because man desires to taste the forbidden fruit. (Kierkegaard 40) Hence, Kierkegaard compares the state of innocence to nescience which are said to depend on each other as the loss of our mental virginity through guilt involves the transition from ignorance to knowledge and vice versa does the sacrifice of our lack of knowledge for the benefit of knowledge necessarily does involve guilt as well. (Kierkegaard 37)

In other words, guilt results from giving in to temptation which yet evokes knowledge. As man is ignorant of the difference between good and evil in the state of artlessness, the whole reality of knowledge manifests itself in the angst of the nothingness of ignorance. (Kierkegaard 44) This means that in the state of the ignorance of innocence we fear the absence of knowledge because the undefined, the nothingness, creates angst. Furthermore, Kierkegaard states that the forbiddance scares us, because it already bears the possibility of freedom. (Kierkegaard 45)

Only the interdiction creates the option of either obeying or violating it and thus excites the transition from innocence to guilt. As a result, the experience of liberty is a consequence of possessing various opportunities and the seizure of one option then results in several other prospects.

The presuppositions necessary for the possibility of evil then are freedom and consciousness as they ensure the entrance into a state of culpability and thus agency, the ability to act liberally. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 284) Hence, angst in its existential dimension refers to the fact that we fear freedom and its different choices as we cannot foresee the consequences of our adoptions, which Kierkegaard then accordingly calls the vertigo of liberty. (50)

Furthermore, freedom then is said to be in the possibility of ability (Kierkegaard 50) rather than the choice between good and evil, even though evil is inevitably one of the options of freedom. Consequently, people are afraid of too many possibilities, and, thus, they are liable to renounce their freedom of choice and enter into servitude voluntarily. (Liessmann, *Das Böse 3)* In this case, they reject responsibility due to the agony of choices. Other philosophers present similar approaches such as St. Thomas Aquinas who associated the change from a good to an evil person with the transition from one's subject status to the non-subject status (St. Thomas Aquinas 11) as this change from good to bad is considered a destruction; in this case the annihilation of one's individual freedom. Hannah Arendt broaches a similar subject by mentioning that the biggest evil was carried out by nobody as the people concerned refuse to be persons. (Arendt 101) Additionally, Hegel points out that man's standstill in his naturalness, contrary to the animal instincts, which can not be regarded as evil, can actually be considered evil, because, due to man's endowment with a free will, he is expected to step out and improve himself further. (78) Similarly, Safranski

argues that man's loss of his rational nature, and consequent relapse into natural nature, serves as a criterion for an evil person. (Safranski 177)

It is important to note here that evil is considered self-inflicted as it is constituted by man's lack of reason due to his enslavement by his passions. Nietzsche briefly touches on the topic of man as predator, who, due to his wildness and his not being subdued pertaining to his original freedom, he still longs to return to the wild in order to indulge in his beastly lust. (Liessmann, *Das Böse* 10) The aforementioned issue of the agony of choice is closely related to the theological approach towards the free will and is repeatedly raised throughout the narratives of Middle-Earth which can be observed in various instances.

Already in the *Silmarillion* the topic of the forfeit of an evil character's person status is addressed when Melkor loses his name due to his misdeeds and from then on is called Morgoth, the dark fiend of the world. (Tolkien, *DS* 31) Similarly, evil creatures such as the Balrog, which is referred to as a nameless fear (Tolkien, *TFotR* 313) exists only as a shape and form rather than a real subject which also becomes evident in its denotation as "it". (Tolkien, *TFotR* 429-430) Likewise, the Ringwraiths are denied a personal status, but are described as shadows, shades, or presences (Tolkien, *TFotR* 226), who need their robes as a means to give a shape to their nothingness (Tolkien, *TFotR* 289) in their process of slowly fading away from the world.

In general, evil characters in the novels do not have proper names and when Gandalf tells Frodo about the servants of the enemy in the beginning, he even explicitly mentions that "there were murmured hints of creatures more terrible than all these, but they had no name." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 57) Moreover, even the evil wizard Saruman is deprived of his former status when he is left colourless (Tolkien, *TTT* 761) and later in the scouring of the Shire, he even forfeited the right to maintaining his real name by being nicknamed an accursed tree slayer or just Sharkey. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1282; 1324) Even Sauron himself is once called the Unnamed (Tolkien, *TTT* 877); which can be seen as a dispossession of his status as a person as well. So, all of these creatures enter servitude willingly and consequently lose their personal status and thus name.

What is more, the relapse of creatures into their animal state occurs throughout the narratives in the animal reference of some evil characters like Saruman who is

compared to a snake, which may even imply a biblical reference (Tolkien, *TTT* 757) or Grima's equation with a witless worm (Tolkien, *TTT* 671). Most of all, the former Hobbit Gollum is termed a creature rather than a person throughout the whole story and eventually comparisons to a beaten dog (Tolkien, *TTT* 830) or a cornered spider (Tolkien, *TTT* 843) are frequently made. Only his master Frodo concedes him the privilege of his former name and thus his pristine identity of Sméagol instead of calling him Gollum, which actually derives from a guttural sound that escapes his throat, and ever since the killing of his cousin Déagol, it has also functioned as a substitute for his name. Even Sam invents the nasty nicknames of Slinker and Stinker for his multiple identities, which he attempts to distinguish by the use of these.

Moreover, Kierkegaard's issue of angst is addressed in the servitude of the evil hosts of Sauron in the passage when it is mentioned that the Orcs only served their master out of fear (Tolkien, *DS* 51). It is also stated that "he had few servants but many slaves of fear." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1177) This clearly shows that fear forces creatures into a bondage of their wills that even goes so far that "they would slay themselves at his bidding." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1069) Hence, it can be interpreted that they feared the agony of choice as they can not anticipate the consequences of their adoptions. Even though they subdue themselves due to the fear of the possibilities, they still possess the gift of the free will to choose to act differently, as are the Haradrim, according to the Catholic teachings with reference to the freedom of will; which would then classify them as evil, because they would relapse back to their animal nature.

Interestingly, even the relationship between Frodo and Gollum is characterised in a similar way: "The servant has a claim on the master for service, even service in fear." (Tolkien, *TTT* 898) Here, Gollum is said to have abandoned his freedom caused by the fear of losing the Ring again and thus entered into servitude voluntarily.

Equally, the subject of one's bondage of will out of fear is treated in the scouring of the Shire, when the Hobbits discuss how to deal with the ruffians. Here they explain that they should spare those who only obeyed orders in contrast to the others who really have gone over (to the evil side). (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1317) Furthermore, they reckon that "[m]ost of them are in it against their will, but not all." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1312)

In these examples, it can be argued that Tolkien illustrates perfectly that the Hobbits understand the distinction between Kierkegaard's notion of servitude out of fear and the irredeemably evil characters. Considering all of these examples from the novels, obvious parallels can be detected between these and the philosophical concepts of Kierkegaard and the other philosophers who have contributed to the notion including the Christian notion of free will.

5.3. Bogart theorem

In his article "Diesseits von Gut und Böse" Martin Seel introduces his so-called *Bogart theorem* by starting with stating the argument that a good human character who displays evil character traits at the same time is morally superior to the purely good person who does not incorporate these features. (Seel 114) Explaining this view, he mentions that virtuous characters who are influenced by the evil side are not only more interesting, but they are even more complex and thus common to all mankind, and that they are also morally superior than their counterparts. (Seel 115) Moreover, he stresses the difficulty in holding the balance between familiarising oneself with the relevant evil strategies and resisting the temptation of entirely succumbing to evil by changing sides. Once again, he emphasises the importance of maintaining close awareness of evil as this attitude produces morally superior people.

Additionally, he points out that morality and amorality do not differ in particular forces or abilities, but in their diverging use of these. (Seel 117) Thus, it can be said that the distinction between good and evil depends on different attitudes. Another crucial point according to Seel lies in the assumption that a person can not be regarded a seriously moral one if he/she does not utterly support one's moral opinions. In other words, if one only obeys because there is a command, he/she is not a free agent in reference to his or her moral actions. (Seel 119)

Then, he outlines his theory of the "*Bogart theorem*" - which he derives from the famous film actor Humphrey Bogart, more specifically by explaining that negative virtue can present itself as virtue. In other words, the reduction of the virtuous glow causes an increase of virtue when good people possess evil character traits. (Seel 121) He exemplifies this statement by the fact that the integrated negative virtue

functions as an enhancement of virtue in that it enables people to retain a clear view of reality and thereby allowing to think oneself into another person's position. (Seel 126) Here he describes the good as a cultivation of the evil, because these more interesting and complex human beings managed to incorporate the energy of vices into a moral way of life. What is more, he cites Plato when he claims that the evil live in the delusion of what is actually good, because they orient themselves on what they believe to be good. (Seel 127)

Eventually, he also admits that there are no categories of purely good or purely evil characters as these only exist in fiction. (Seel 132) Only "dyed" characters such as the impure good or the moral pretending amoralist are referred to as real agents. Other philosophers, such as Safranski, who quotes Schelling in his theory, confirm this by illustrating that the good which does not carry traces of overcome evil can not be considered as real vibrant good. (Safranski 66) Even Konrad Liessmann alleges Nietzsche's view when he admits that evil which is turned into something good actually can be considered morally better than purely good. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 335)

This theory can be applied to the characters in Tolkien's novels. Here, good characters who incorporate negative virtues as well frequently occur throughout the narratives such as the Dwarves who are said to be afflicted by the character flaw of materialism and greed in mining, which thus presents them as more complex creatures as bad habits are all too human.

Furthermore, characters such as Frodo or Bilbo, who are addicted to the Ring's power, are described to be more farsighted as they have the privilege to encounter the evil side, because their consciousness expands whenever they wear the Ring such as in the following extract: "His senses were sharper and more aware of things that could not be seen. One sign of change that he soon had noticed was that he could see more in the dark than any of his companions, save perhaps Gandalf." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 406) In this instance, sight in darkness addressed may even metaphorically refer to the insight into the evil side. Interestingly, Galadriel notices this change in Frodo when she reveals her thoughts to him: "your sight is grown keener. You have perceived my thought more clearly than many that are accounted wise. You saw the Eye of him that holds the Seven and the Nine." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 477)

In the case of Frodo it is interesting to observe how these powers of good and evil, vice and virtue constantly struggle with each other which can be detected in his conflicting wills: "The two powers strove in him. For a moment, perfectly balanced between their piercing points, he writhed, tormented. Suddenly he was aware of himself again, Frodo, neither the Voice nor the Eye: free to choose, and with one remaining instant in which to do so." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 523) Even Gollum, whose personality is split into at least the two identities of Slinker and Stinker, understands his fiends better as he is familiar with both sides. (Tolkien, *TTT* 857) He is said to have become "sharp-eyed and keen-eared" (Tolkien, *TFotR* 70) and at one point Sam remarks upon his exceptional knowledge about the evil character's intentions: "You seem to know a lot about what He's doing and thinking." (Tolkien, *TTT* 839) In the course of the story Sam also experiences these heightened senses through the evil influence of the Ring: "As before, Sam found that his hearing was sharpened, but that to his sight the things of this world seemed thin and vague." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1175)

Contrary to Sauron's blindness in foreseeing his enemies' plans, as he cannot project his thoughts into their minds, good characters such as Gandalf and Galadriel who resisted the temptation of the Ring and thus display certain evil character flaws such as desire and power, have this kind of anticipatory thinking. Both sides are equipped with equal or similar abilities and powers, but the difference lies in their use of these, a notion which Martin Seel argued for as well. This can be perfectly observed in the distribution of the wizard's powers, who each decide to use them differently. While Saruman attends to human lore and seeks power, Gandalf devotes his life to simpler pleasures in the Shire, whereas Radagast spends his time with the eagles.

Interestingly, Saruman at one point attempts to persuade Gandalf to join Sauron with a similar perception like Seel maintains about the misbelief of evil people about doing something good: "[t]here need not be, there would not be, any real change in our designs, only in our means." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 338)

In addition, the Ring, which is often referred to as the ultimate evil only exists in fiction, as pure evil and good cannot be found in the real world.

Ultimately, Seel's *Bogart theorem* about good characters, who become morally superior through the incorporation of evil character traits, can be frequently found throughout Tolkien's stories about Middle-Earth.

5.4. Trans-valuation of values

In his work, *Beyond Good & Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, Friedrich Nietzsche talks about the origin of these categories and in his Genealogy of Morality outlines how they evolved. In the beginning, he explains that the difference between good and evil is the interesting aspect about human beings as it distinguishes us from animals and that the good can generally only exist in its contrast to evil. (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 232) Hence, he clarifies that the Fall of Man was necessary in order for us to be able to differentiate between these concepts, even though this wish for knowledge in and on itself was then, in Genesis, already considered evil.

Additionally, he cites Plato's view on evil as being an error; as nobody desires to cause oneself harm and consequently every evil happens involuntarily. (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 92) In other words, evil is the result of being under the illusion of doing something good. Furthermore, he claims that evil serves as a productive force (Nietzsche, *NF* 466) in that the destructive functions as a presupposition for the ability to create something new. Actually, he refines this idea to the extent that we are said to underestimate the value of an evil misdeed as it actually provokes the act of reflection on what is constituted evil and good, and thus we experience the boundaries between these categories. In this respect, the destructive is the power, which induces something constructive as its negative consequences can be interpreted as well-intentioned. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 327)

What is more, Nietzsche advocates the view that the categories of good and evil only refer to the subjective perspective from the point of view of the observer; as the opinions in reference to the relevant actions denunciate them as being evil, they would otherwise appear neutral. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 328) This refers to the fact that he considers the concepts of evil and good as functional rather than absolute categories as nature equips people differently and thus evil is a question of perspective rather than an eternally valid criterion, which does not change over time and place. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 328) In addition, the question concerning good and evil can also refer to changes of perspective in man himself according to Nietzsche, which can be said to manifest themselves in inner moral conflicts. Similarly, he describes all people equal in their pursuit of power as they struggle to sustain and

enhance their lives, but they diverge in their use of this power. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 327)

He then continues with his main argument that the slave revolts in moral ensured that the formally considered weak values have prevailed against the strong ones in a moral sense ever since. This phenomenon, due to the rise of the slave morality, is called the trans-valuation of values by Nietzsche. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 329) In that respect, he explains that this revaluation has caused the coming into effect of the ethics of mercy and humility to the detriment of the previously powerful master moral of the "blonde beast", which advocated the superiority of noble strength through the domination of will power and even through the power of language. (Liessmann, *PdvW* 343)

Nietzsche then illustrates his argument by his comparison of the German words *schlecht* and *schlicht*, which were once equal before the "trans-valuation of values" took place. (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 228) The hitherto powerful values were replaced by benevolence, humility, obedience, patience, and forgiveness as a result of the victory of the slave morality. (Safranski 264)

He exemplifies this further by displaying the arrogance of the powerful, which results in their thoughtlessness; it is now regarded a vice rather than a virtue as it supports the notion of the reassessed values. (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 237) In other words, their negligence prevents people in power to empathise with others, and thus they can be said to be enveloped in a cloud of blindness unable to see things from another's perspective. Nietzsche adds to this the character flaw of impatience as well. (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 237)

Beyond that, he argues for the reversal of the privilege of the most for the benefit of the prerogative of the few, as he claims that the will to humbleness is inherent only in a few people with the right ideals rather than in the masses. (Nietzsche, *JvGuB* 252)

Throughout Tolkien's novels various parallels can be detected with these philosophical deliberations by Nietzsche. Already in the *Silmarillion*, the value of humility is praised and rewarded by the Creator, when Aule offers to destroy his creation as a punishment for his disobedience to Eru, which is opposed to the vice of pride emerging in Melkor. (Tolkien, *DS* 43) Hence, in the principal work, characters such as Gandalf or Galadriel prove their moral superiority as they refuse great power by denying the Ring. For instance, Gandalf anticipates that he would eventually

generate a power too great and terrible; this displays his foresightedness in contrast to the evil characters' blindness due to their arrogance. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 81) Galadriel on the other hand mentions that she passes the test, possibly referring to a trial of her moral strength. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 476)

Furthermore, the contrast between the master's and the slave's moral values is perfectly exemplified in the difference between the ring makers' intentions. Contrary to Sauron's desire for domination, the Elven smiths wanted something different: "Those who made them did not desire strength or domination or hoarded wealth, but understanding, making, and healing, to preserve all things unstained." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 350)

Moreover, the trans-valuation of values becomes even more apparent in the unlike brothers Boromir and Faramir whose contrasted character traits display the distribution of their virtues. Boromir, in this narrative, is described as a masterful man who takes what he desires (Tolkien, *TRotK* 987), whereas his younger brother is considered less eager and reckless (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1003); he even manages to refuse the temptation the Ring's power. Faramir is described "as much like his brother in looks, [but] a man less self-regarding, both sterner and wiser" (Tolkien, *TTT* 870) than his elder brother who is depicted "proud and fearless, often rash, ever anxious for the victory of Minas Tirith (and his own glory therein)". (Tolkien, *TTT* 877) Boromir's punishment clearly shows that the humble values of Faramir are considered the right ones because he possesses mental wisdom similar to Aragorn instead of Boromir's bodily strength, which in turn is associated with a certain mental weakness that is accompanied by the flaw of indulging in his desires. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 348) Furthermore, the wizards Saruman's and Gandalf's powers were equal in distribution, but they chose to use it differently as Saruman mirrors the "blonde beast" of the master moral in his behaviour when he refuses to serve, and he chooses the domination of others by commanding them instead. (Tolkien, *TTT* 763)

Additionally, values such as hope are regarded as the best defence against evil (Tolkien, *TRotK* 980), which could be considered a formally weak slave value. In addition to this, laughter can be considered a function to release oneself from the power of domination such as in the case of the liberation from Saruman's voice, which is deemed to control people's minds. (Tolkien, *TTT* 759) What is more, patience is valued very highly contrary to hastiness that ultimately functions as the

ruining factor for evil characters such as Sauron or Saruman; for the reason that "[t]he hasty stroke often goes afar." (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1022)

Even the notion of evil as a change of perspective in oneself is perfectly illustrated by Gollum's inner conflicts between his two personalities Slinker and Stinker. In addition, all of the characters affected by the Ring's powers develop another identity in addition to their previous one, which exemplifies the evil aspect of that specific person.

Considering Nietzsche's prerogative of the few, the race of the Hobbits immediately falls into place with this assumption as they represent the small people, the Halflings, who according to Elrond now possess the power to make the difference: "This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 351)

Interestingly, Frodo himself voices his doubts and thus contrasts the masters' and slaves' moral values when he claims to "feel very small, and very uprooted, and well – desperate" while "[t]he Enemy is so strong and terrible."(Tolkien, *TFotR* 82) Yet, the privilege of the small is emphasised by Elrond again when he encourages Frodo by the following statement: "I think that this task is appointed for you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will. This is the hour of the Shire-folk, when they arise from their quiet fields to shake the towers and counsels of the Great." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 353)

In general, Tolkien obviously was familiar with Nietzsche's concept of the trans-valuation of values; a notion which enabled the slave revolt and successfully incorporated this inspiration into his narratives about Middle-Earth as his good characters advocate similar values, which they later are rewarded for.

5.5. Materialism

Various philosophers discussed the precarious issue of progress in the modern world of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, which caused a lot of controversial positions in reference to this phenomenon. Rüdiger Safranski for instance quotes Max Scheler's *Genius des Krieges*, in which he distinguishes between weapon-and tool making reasoning and man's pure thought. In these philosophical reflections on

war he ponders the question that the struggle for life and death has changed into a mechanical killing, because the material has prevailed over man himself. (Safranski 145) Other than that, weapon-and tool making reasoning has triumphed over man's pure thought due to the efficiency of cooperation in industrial civilization, in contrast to man's actual goal in life which is formed by the search for personal fulfillment of one's mind characterised by the constant struggle for individuality.

Additionally, he suggests that weapon-and tool making reasoning has overgrown the mind like cancer. (Safranski 145) Similarly, Schelling develops the issue regarding the self-objectification of the mind in relation to God and his creation. (Safranski 73) Hence, he talks about man's necessity to handle the intelligence of his works as he should not equate it with his mental individuality. In this case, he addresses the problem of man's determination to heighten the objectified part of himself and hence tends to loose the potency of his mind. (Safranski 73) In other words, man wants to become similar to his self-made creation and thus acts according to the reification of his mind, which effectuates the loss of his mental capacity."In diesem Fall richtet der Mensch sich nicht nur nach sich selbst, schlimmer noch, er richtet sich nach dem verdinglichten Teil seines Selbst." (Safranski 73)

What is more, Safranski adds that evil is the paralysis of man's creative nature because the cultivation of nature and humans in its original sense means the triumph over evil. (Safranski 320-321) Consequently, the active creative heart which lives in harmony with nature is considered to be good, whereas sloth is regarded as a mortal sin, which will be punished through the engulfment by nature. Likewise, Susanne Neiman maintains this view by claiming that the morally evil will eventually be punished by some form of natural evil. (Neiman 190)

Considering Tolkien's novels, Tolkien's preoccupation with the topic of materialism appears to be blatantly obvious. Already in the *Silmarillion*, the Noldor elf Feanor is said to be deeply connected with his self-made objects, the Silmaril. (Tolkien, *DS* 69) This completely mirrors Schelling's description of the reification of one's mind as in the example of Feanor's confused mind which leads to the first kinslaying among the Elves and hence affects original sin on his descendants. Contrary to Feanor, Aule maintains the right values concerning his craftsmanship: " Aule aber setzt allen Stolz und alle Freude in die Arbeit des Fertigens und in das gefertigte Ding, nicht in den Besitz noch in die eigene Meisterschaft, und deshalb schenkt er und hortet nicht und

nimmt unbesorgt stets wieder etwas Neues vor." (Tolkien, *DS* 17) This clearly displays the difference in manufacturing per se in contrast to the materialistic desire of possessions.

Later in the novel, the Black Númenóreans, in their pride, started to increase their property and built machines (Tolkien, *DS* 282) which ultimately caused Ilúvatar's intervention by changing the previous world, an episode that closely resembles the biblical story of the Flood. (Tolkien, *DS* 288) This can be said to function as an illustrative example of the punishment of man's moral sins by natural catastrophes; an example, among other, that Neiman and other philosophers have presented in their arguments. Furthermore, this can also be observed in Sauron's destruction as it can be compared to an earthquake, which annihilates his whole existence and creation. (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1242)

The weapon-and tool making reasoning that Scheler suggests can be found in the Orcs' production of machines, which serve to kill and destroy nature. (Tolkien, *DH* 72) In this respect, even Saruman is said to have a mind of metal and wheels (Tolkien, *TTT* 616) which he uses to destroy the natural environment especially the Fangorn forest around Orthanc to create and forge machines on his own in order to overthrow his master Sauron which is commenced by Gandalf:

> I looked on it and saw that, whereas it had once been green and fair, it was now filled with pits and forges. Wolves and orcs were housed in Isengard, for Saruman was mustering a great force on his own account, in rivalry of Sauron and not in his service, yet. Over all his work a dark smoke hung and wrapped itself about the sides of Orthanc.
> (Tolkien, *TFotR* 339)

This vandalism of nature continues in the scouring of the Shire when Saruman again induces the building of machinery to the expense of felling trees and harming nature (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1325) as his potency of mind is overshadowed by his weapon making-motivation. Interestingly, contrary to the real world, in *The Lord of the Rings*, nature strikes back when the Ents avenge the injustice they suffered under the domination of Saruman. Again, moral degradation can be said to be punished by natural evil.

In the case of assimilating to the objectified part of oneself, the Ring serves as the decisive example that determines the minds of its bearers and especially its maker. Sauron infused too much of his life's energy, his soul, into this Ring and thus hinged

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his fate on the Ring's existence, the ultimate reification of oneself, similar to that of Lord Voldemort's Horcrux in *Harry Potter*. Gandalf acknowledges this when he relates that Sauron "only needs the One; for he made that Ring himself, it is his, and he let a great part of his own former power pass into it, so that he could rule all the others" (Tolkien, *TFotR* 68) because in "the treasure of the Enemy, fraught with all his malice [...] lies a great part of his strength of old." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 331)

Other instances of the evil material aspects in these novels are found in the dragon Smaug, who enhanced his property and continued indulging in sloth, which eventually lead to his destruction. (Tolkien, *DH* 223) He does not regret and repent his sins, contrary to the Dwarves, who themselves acknowledge their fault and were punished for it. Nevertheless, people learn from their mistakes as it is conceded by Galadriel: "But if hope should not fail, then I say to you, Gimli son of Glóin, that your hands shall flow with gold, and yet over you gold shall have no dominion." (Tolkien, *TFotR* 490)

After all, it can be subsumed that Tolkien, even though not necessarily aware of the philosophical parallels in his novels, still incorporated his aversion against modernity and the demonization of machinery and the topic of materialism, which eventually result in the corruption of mankind and the destruction of nature, into his novels about Middle-Earth.

5.6. Banality of evil

This chapter deals with the issue called the banality of evil introduced by Hannah Arendt as a result of her reflections about the time of National Socialism and how this theme can be connected with the character's attitudes towards evil in Tolkien's novels. Here, Hannah Arendt explains the phenomenon that the people involved in the holocaust did not possess an individual will to perpetrate evil deeds, but that the efficient mass destruction was enabled through the people's perception of these killings whereby the execution of these was perceived as that of an average profession. (Arendt 101) In other words, the people concerned excused their deeds by pointing out that they had merely done their duty. Hence, individuals are relieved from moral reflections where the crime is transformed into an act that can be

identified to by routine. (Safranski 272) This clearly marks the people's soberness in committing a crime.

Nevertheless, the renowned philosopher Arendt argues that the individual still is responsible for his/her own obedience. (Safranski 284) In this respect, she claims that people try to clean their consciousnesses as they defend themselves by claiming to have acted on a higher command. In this cowardly attempt of people excusing their misdeeds by placing blame on a higher authority, she maintains that, these individuals refuse to be persons as they reject accepting responsibility for their actions. Hence, as Arendt explains, greatest of evils has been perpetrated by nobody. (Arendt 101) Clearly, as shown in this case, these people did not assume responsibility and thus the consequences for their actions, they therefore forfeit their personal status.

Furthermore, these people considered to be evil, are, by that reasoning, identified as being nobodies or nothings, a view that can be argued to have been rendered a theme in the portrayal of evil characters in *The Lord of the Rings*. Herein, the characters are frequently referred to as shades, spectres or shadows as they approach evil in adopting evil character traits. This can be observed in various instances such as in the passages when the Ringwraiths are referred to as empty and shapeless. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 358) Gandalf here, and the other good characters in other instances, in fact, acknowledge this phenomenon that evil characters begin to fade when they become affected by evil; whereby it can be said that even the Nazgûl once were human beings having succumbed to this process as well. All of Sauron's minions are actually identified as shadows or forms such as the Balrog by Gimli (Tolkien, *TFotR* 505) or the Orc Grishnákh by Merry and Pippin who is described as passing like an evil shadow. (Tolkien, *TTT* 594) The Balrog is actually described as "a great shadow, in the middle of which was a dark form, of man-shape maybe" (Tolkien, *TFotR* 429) which clearly demonstrates that shape seems ineffable. The winged creatures of the Ringwraiths do not even have names, but are deprived of their status as creatures identified by a name and only referred to as "a black shadow loosed from Mordor; a vast shape winged and ominous" (Tolkien, *TTT* 823) and even Sauron himself is once described as the Unnamed (Tolkien, *TTT* 877) and the Balrog as well. (Tolkien, *TFotR* 313) Sauron is even referred to as the Nameless (Tolkien, *TTT* 873) and most often only called by the cognomen of the Dark Lord or the One

(Tolkien, *TFotR* 463) that clearly mark his loss of a proper name due to his evil deeds.

Interestingly, Melkor is mentioned once in *The Lord of the Rings* as well, but only as the Great Enemy (Tolkien, *TFotR* 253), a token again that he forfeited the privilege of a name. Besides, as it has already been mentioned in the chapter about the agony of choice, when Gandalf talks about Sauron's servants, he explains describes them as creatures without names, (Tolkien, *TFotR* 57) which clearly is another evidence for the denial of the names for the evil people.

After the destruction of the evil characters, they dissolve into nothingness and once Gandalf even comments that a "great Shadow has departed" (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1246) as evil people defy their personal status and thus are not referred to by their names anymore, and, in some cases, they do not even possess names such as most of the Orcs, Haradrim, or the Mouth of Sauron whose "name is remembered in no tale; for he himself has forgotten it". (Tolkien, *TRotK* 1163)

What is more, Arendt purports that human beings are divided into mind and body, while the will acts as an arbiter between these two. (Arendt 111-112) This can be paralleled to the juxtaposition of reason and desire. In other words, people can choose between pursuing their own interests, by indulging in their longings, or following their common sense as they are endowed with the special gift of free will.

Additionally, she mentions that the will is split apart into partly wanting good and partly wanting evil, while the mind sways between conflicting wills. (Arendt 115) This interesting observation can be illustrated by making use of the example of Gollum's schizophrenic alter egos, Stinker and Slinker, in various episodes throughout the novels. The interesting point here is that Sam comments on this observation by the virtue of fact that he observes this split personality: "[t]here's a good deal of Stinker – the bad Gollum, if you understand me – in him still, and it's getting stronger again." (Tolkien, *TTT* 857) Sam in this instance elaborates on these conflicting wills inherent in all human beings interiors, but in Gollum's case, they become visible on the outside as well.

Hence, Hannah Arendt's discussion about the banality of evil becomes applicable in the narratives about Middle-Earth as the author Tolkien deprives his figures of their personal status when they succumb to their evil passions.

5.7. Summary

In this chapter I attempted to include various approaches from philosophy that in fact reveal parallels to manifestations of evil presented in Tolkien's books. Initially, Kant's theory about the liability to evil is mentioned as he claims that every person can succumb to evil. Here, the people only show their good or bad hearts in their mental strength to refuse evil as all characters in the books constantly are faced with the temptation to resist evil in the form of the Ring equally. This tendency can be clearly observed in every day life as well when people face trials of their moral strength whether to give in to a vice or not.

The agony of choice then explains Kierkegaard's relevant concept of mankind's existential angst. Here, he elucidates that in general people tend to enter servitude willingly as they are afraid of the vertigo of liberty that too many choices provide them with. This is connected to the evil individuals' bondage of their will in their slavery to Sauron as the Haradrim for example. Here another issue is treated which is vital in our society considering the situation of obedience to an authority due to the fear of punishment.

Next, the Bogart theorem comments on the exceptionality that the virtue of a person is heightened by the reduction of the virtuous glow. This refers to the fact that good people gain insight into the evil perspective and are thus formed into morally superior beings rather than purely good characters such as Frodo or Bilbo who gain knowledge of the evil side. It can be argued that people who are able to empathise with all sides clearly have an advantage in life as can be seen in the competition at university or the job market.

Nietzsche's trans-valuation of values then states that slave revolts have transformed the slaves' moral values into morally superior ones compared to their masters' values. These slave moral values such as humility or obedience are rewarded in *The Lord of the Rings* contrary to the masters' values of pride or power which are punished accordingly. This discrepancy is perfectly illustrated by the distinction between the unlike brothers Boromir and Faramir. These highly praised values in Tolkien's narratives can hardly be found nowadays except for the social sector or some religious institutions.

The subchapter on materialism addresses corruption through the mental addiction to objects and the greed in enhancing one's property. This is especially emphasised in the case of the endurance of Sauron's mind in the material object of the Ring. Evidently, this issue increases in importance as people become more and more dependent on technology and material objects in the modern world.

Ultimately, Hannah Arendt's notion with reference to the banality of evil is discussed in connection with the books as the people who commit evil forfeit their personal status and thus are denied proper names which can be observed throughout the novels in various instances when the evil characters are referred to as unnamed or as merely shapes and shadows. Still, people attempt to excuse their misdeeds through their professional conduct as it can be observed in military politics when executed orders happen to kill innocent civilians which nobody is responsible for afterwards.

Finally, it can be argued that many of these philosophical themes do, in fact, coincide with topics dealt with in the books. Consequently, Tolkien's masterpiece can also be understood as an interesting treatise on philosophical notions about evil in general which still are relevant today.

6. Conclusion

This diploma thesis has been an attempt to comprise a variety of different theories about manifestations of evil from philosophy and theology which then were applied to J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Even though, there have been many scholarly approaches towards the representations of evil in this masterpiece, this paper can be considered a novelty in this specific field as it incorporated the prequel, the *Silmarillion*, into its reflections about evil in the novels, and, further, it added the dimension of the characters' awareness about evil in their world. In doing so, it revealed interesting aspects which have never been dealt with before. Firstly, a brief overview of philosophical considerations about evil served as an introduction to the topic as it uncovered similarities between different philosophers' approaches towards specific topics. Afterwards, the characters' conception of evil demonstrated that the figures in Tolkien's novels indeed acknowledge the origin and manifestations of evil that exist in their world which then were discussed in the context of their present

relevance. Here, it was unveiled that the good characters observed the productive force of evil that transforms evil into something good as the case of Gollum's sparing by both Frodo and Bilbo has shown or the well-intentioned death of Gandalf which can be seen as a necessity in order to save Middle-Earth. Also, the imperishability of evil presented in these books is noticed by its characters as the evil people such as Sauron or Saruman permanently seem to reappear in other shapes or forms whereby history constantly repeats itself. Evil is even said to manifest itself in the alienation between different peoples. Furthermore, the importance of mercy in order to overcome evil has been discussed and also remarked upon by the characters as it serves as a means to overcome evil; as in the case of Frodo or Bilbo, whose pity towards Gollum ensured their redemption in the end, for instance. Additionally, the arrogance of evil characters is cited as the reason for their blindness in empathising with their enemies' intentions and thus it is contrasted with the good people's foresight. Here, the comparison between Gandalf's prudence and Saruman's blind hastiness is drawn, which again is acknowledged by the good people. Lastly, it is noted that nothing is evil in the beginning which coincides with the Christian notion of the creatio ex nihilo that refers to the fact that in the creation out of nothingness everything was intended and created as good. In this case, the characters once again remark upon this observation when they explain that not even Melkor, Sauron, or Saruman were evil in the beginning as well; such as the creation of the Orcs who originally were simply deformed Elves. Then these findings were analysed regarding their eternal validity by referring to present-day events.

Subsequently, the chapter about the Christian world view in *The Lord of the Rings* then dealt with the parallels that can be detected between Roman Catholic reflections about evil and the realisation of these themes in the novels. Initially, the subchapter about the prelapsarian fall compared the lapse of the archangel Lucifer to the Ainur Melkor's fall in the *Silmarillion*. Here, it was recorded that both figures attempted to instigate a rebellion among the fellow angels in heaven in order to usurp the Creator and likewise both have been banished to an earthly existence afterwards where they are said to have continued to spread discord among humans ever since. Then, the biblical notion of original sin has been paralleled with the hereditary stain Feanor left on his descendants through the kinslaying at Alqualondë. Similarly to Christian belief, a redeemer is predicted to obliterate the sins of his/her kindred, which in the

Silmarillion actually takes place when Eärendil saves his kin from the hereditary stain of sin. Hereafter, the importance of the freedom of will was thematised as every human being is endowed with it and thus held responsible for his/her actions. Only people who indulge in their vices are said to suffer from the bondage of will. Thereby, examples from the books such as the creatures' addiction to the Ring is emphasised as these characters such as Sauron or especially Gollum are said to be slaves of their desires. Closely linked to this topic is the cardinal sin of pride that presents a history as the queen of all vices in Roman Catholic thinking. As it is claimed to have functioned as the main cause of the Fall of Man, in Tolkien's books, it actually serves a similar purpose as it induces the lapse of evil individuals such as Sauron or Melkor who are ascribed this character trait. Another Christian theme that was addressed was the opportunity of redemption that is said to be universal and actually requires a penal and painful work in order to show the sincerity in the paying off of one's sins. The books offer a similar view in that even evil characters are given the chance to repent their misdeeds and thus ensure their redemption; as in the case of the evil hillmen of Dunland who actually help repair the evil they have done. But other characters, such as Saruman or Sauron, refuse the mercy shown to them. Ultimately, the creatio ex nihilo is mentioned as only the Creator is able to create completely out of nothingness and any imitation can only be a transformation or a change of the material base that he provided. These findings definitely show Tolkien's preoccupation with Christian religion which he uses for his creation of a morally good world, where all evil ultimately will be accounted for. Even though some of these topic are still of great relevance in today's world as the contextual deliberations show, most of them are clearly obsolete and can only function in fictional settings.

The chapter following it then focused on the philosophical themes identified in the novels. In the beginning, Kant's argument about the liability of evil in human beings is being reviewed in connection with *The Lord of the Rings.* Herein, the opinion is maintained that people are neither evil by nature or by nurture but that every being has an inherent predisposition to do evil. In the books this concept is asserted; which can be observed in various instances when the characters explain that everyone, even the Wise, can succumb to the Ring's power and thus evil. The point about Kierkegaard's agony of choice then expressed the existential fear of human beings which can result into the voluntary entrance of servitude due to the vertigo of liberty

people experience when they are offered too many possibilities. This phenomenon can be applied to the Orcs' and Haradrims' willing bondage in the duty for their master whom they secretly are said to serve in fear. Afterwards, the relevance of the Bogart theorem was introduced because virtue here is said to be enhanced by the reduction of the virtuous glow which refers to the incorporation of evil character traits in one's personality. Interestingly, this refers to the fact that good people, who display a heightened awareness towards the evil side and thus incorporate part of this in their identity, can actually be considered morally superior beings rather than purely good characters. In the books, this can be observed when Frodo and Bilbo feature increased sensory perception when they wear the Ring. Then Nietzsche's theory about the trans-valuation of values was addressed; which refers to the reversal from the masters' to the salves' moral values as the morally right ones. The realisation of this theme in the books manifests itself in the unlike brothers Boromir and Faramir who respectively display the master and the slave moral values; which can also be contrasted with bodily versus mental strength. The next aspect was concerned with materialism in general as it is considered corruptive. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the characters, who feature this character trait of greed, eventually cease to be engulfed by their excessive obsession with material objects as their minds are attached to them. At last, Hannah Arendt's concept of the banality of evil was referred to in the context of Tolkien's novels about Middle-Earth. Here, she elucidates that the people who commit evil forfeit their status as a person and thus are denied the right of a proper name. Applied to the narratives in the novels, the evil characters are frequently identified as shadows or shapes, most often without names, while other evil figures are only provided with nicknames or are called nameless such as in the case of Sauron or the Balrog. Irrespective of Tolkien's intention to deliberately include these philosophical themes into his novels, the findings can be almost entirely applied to present-day situations due to their actuality.

Eventually, all of these topics discussed appear to be of relevance in the context of the manifestations of evil in Middle-Earth which are closely connected to general philosophical and theological themes. Most of the theories clearly coincide with each other such as the theological conception about the *creatio ex nihilo* and the character's acknowledgment that nothing is evil in the beginning. The same holds true for the notion of mercy which is inevitably linked with the Christian understanding

of redemption. Even though Tolkien created a harmonious world view in which many of the philosophical and theological theories mentioned unequivocally overlap, there still are some inconsistencies in his world. One of these can be observed in the aforementioned concept of redemption which is explained to be possible for everyone, but in the books interestingly only achievable for the Elves who live in Mandos halls forever. What happens to the other characters is not mentioned explicitly in the story, even though the figures are aware of this circumstance.

Furthermore, the established criteria of the moral situation that pleads for the slave moral values, while demonising materialism and pride cannot account for the pardoned evil characters as those are either killed such as Grima, Sauron, and Saruman or their further fate is not recorded as in the cases of the Trolls or the Haradrim and thus did not renounce evil on their own accord but out of necessity.

Moreover, the existence of the absolute evil which is argued only to exist in fiction is ultimately destroyed, provided that further evil will emerge as it never ceases to exist. Hence, Tolkien's characters exemplified the attempt to change the former world together which can be read as an instruction how to cope with evil in the present world as an eternal collective struggle. Tolkien's world view that is inspired by spiritual ideas of Christianity and philosophy offers the characters guidelines to the world's working and once they acknowledge these as Gandalf does, they appear to be equal with God as they correspond to his design. People who deviate from these God-given morals eventually have to admit defeat sooner or later. In contrast to reality, this fictitious work actually provides a whole interrelated moral system, which offers an explanation to almost every circumstance and where people mostly share the same values. Actual as many of the mentioned theories still appear to be, most of them are not feasible in the present world view anymore. This paper clearly could not capture all of the research possible on that issue, it nonetheless attempted to summarise and indeed contribute to these reflections regarding the representation of evil that are far from being complete. Still, this diploma thesis tried to offer an interesting double approach between the disciplines of philosophy and theology to one of the most controversial topics ever; the classification of the categories of good and evil on the basis of J.R.R: Tolkien's masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings* and discovered the exceptional ability of the characters' knowledge of these concepts of evil.

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Abstract

This diploma thesis is an attempt to connect deliberations on manifestations of evil dealt with in the disciplines of philosophy and theology. Additionally, it deals, on the narrative level, with the characters' own knowledge about the addressed issues. In doing so, it starts out with an overview of the various relevant philosophical themes based on Konrad Paul Liessmann's lecture on "Das Böse" in summer term 2010 at the University of Vienna. The three main chapters then separately deal with the notions of the characters' awareness of evil in their world, the Christian parallels distinguished in these novels, and the philosophical implications concerned; all of which however overlap at several points. In the first section, the characters' perception of the manifestations of evil present in their world is dealt with. Here, the active force of evil is cited whereby the well-interpreted consequences of evil

misdeeds are treated. Moreover, the imperishability of evil is mentioned in that respect that evil is claimed to be indestructible. Similarly, the special importance of mercy is rendered a theme as it serves as a means to overcome evil in the novels. Afterwards, the arrogance of evil focuses on the evil characters' inability to empathise with their enemies in contrast to the good people's farsightedness. Then it is claimed that nothing was evil in the beginning, a concept that is maintained throughout the novels as every being, even the Orcs, was created good in its origin. The last subchapter of this section revolves around the question of whether the One Ring can be considered as absolute evil: this phenomenon is said to only exist in fiction. The second major chapter attempts to detect the Christian influences in the novels. Therefore, the issue of the prelapsarian fall of Lucifer is discussed in connection with the Ainur Melkor's fall in the creation myth of Middle-Earth, the *Silmarillion*. After that, the topic of original sin is compared to the kinslaying of Aqualondë, where the Noldor Elf Feanor kills his brother's clan and thus defiles his kin with a hereditary stain. The issue of the free will then circles around the question whether people are in fact endowed with the ability to choose a course of action voluntarily, hence to choose to do evil as well. The cardinal sin of pride is then cited as the main cause of the fall into evil as it is considered the queen of all vices. In addition, redemption is another vital theme addressed in the books which is said to be universal and thus possible for everyone. Finally, the creatio ex nihilo is mentioned in connection with Eru's creation out of nothingness, which the creatures themselves are not capable of as their attempts to create are simply transformations or changes. Furthermore, various philosophical themes are discussed in connection with Tolkien's novels. Here, Kant's liability to evil is mentioned next to Kierkegaard's notion of the existential angst and Seel's Bogart theorem. What is more, Nietzsche's trans-valuation of values is addressed aside from the general topic of materialism and Hannah Arendt's concept of the banality of evil. The difference of this approach towards the topic of evil in *The Lord of the Rings* is the novelty that the creation history of Middle-Earth is incorporated; which renders a new view on various themes. It, for instance, refutes the traditional Boethian and Manichean conceptions of evil in the novels. Additionally, this paper features the interesting chapter on the narrative level that attributes the characters the knowledge of evil in their world; which interestingly appears to coincide with the philosophical and theological notions prevalent in the books.

Abstract

Diese Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Versuch eine Verbindung zwischen den Disziplinen der Philosophie und Theologie herzustellen in Bezug auf die Kategorien "gut" und "böse", welche dann auf das konkrete literarische Werk *Der Herr der Ringe* von J.R.R. Tolkien bezogen werden. Zunächst wird hierbei ein genereller Überblick über die philosophischen Ansätze gegeben auf der Grundlage von Konrad Paul Liessmanns Vorlesung über "Das Böse" an der Universität Wien im Sommersemester 2010. Danach wird auf die drei Hauptpunkte eingegangen, welche die philosophischen Themen, die theologischen Aspekte und die Perspektive der Charaktere gegenüber Repräsentationen des Bösen in den Romanen beleuchten. Das erste Kapitel, welches sich mit dem Wissen der Figuren um die Manifestationen des Bösen in ihrer Welt befasst, behandelt Themen wie die Produktivkraft des Bösen, die Unzerstörbarkeit des Bösen, die wichtige Funktion des Mitleids, die Überheblichkeit der Bösen, die Tatsache, dass nichts anfänglich böse war und dem einen Ring als Radikalböses. Das zweite Kapitel zieht Parallelen, zwischen den Büchern und einigen christlichen Doktrinen. Dabei werden essentielle Themen angesprochen wie der prälapsarische Sündenfall, die Erbsünde, der freie Wille, die Todsünde Hochmut, die Erlösung und die Schöpfung aus dem Nichts. Weiters behandelt der dritte Abschnitt die philosophischen Überlegungen, welche als wesentlich in Verbindung mit Tolkiens Werken erachtet werden. Hierbei werden philosophische Thesen besprochen im Zusammenhang mit Beispielen aus den Romanen wie Kants Hang zum Bösen, Kierkegaards Angstbegriff, Seels Bogart theorem, Nietzsches Umkehrung der Werte, der generelle Aspekt des Materialismus und Hannah Arendts Banalität des Bösen. Die Neuheit dieser Arbeit, im Gegensatz zu vorigen Bearbeitungen, wird durch die Einbindung der Vorgeschichte von Tolkiens Meisterwerk ausgemacht, dem Silmarillion, welches interessante Aspekte in Bezug auf die Entstehung und Entwicklung böser Charaktere aufwirft. Außerdem interessant ist die Komponente, dass sich die Charaktere auf der Erzählebene der Manifestationen des Bösen in ihrer Welt bewusst sind und sich diese wiederum mit den philosophischen und theologischen Überlegungen überschneiden.

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