

Editorial Introduction: “Good and Evil in Concept, Act and Art”

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“Good and Evil” are one of the most important elements, which sometimes symbolise the opposite sides and sometimes make a whole that forms our lives. These two opposite terms, which are especially in the center of religions, myths, legends and tales, were of course found in art, history, literature, and folklore. In other words, their reflection on material and spiritual culture is naturally inevitable.

In myth and legends, one of the two basic elements of creation, nature and human is good and the other is evil. The existence of good and evil in life has been reflected in works of art since beginnings of the efforts of the human to understand and express the universe. The comprehension of goodness and evil and its depiction in literary texts is important in works, myths, legends, epics, etc., which belong to the oral period of literature.

From some works of art that have existed since the very early ages, we can find some descriptions of the beings and concepts related to good and evil. Although these sometimes seem to be opposite of one another, in some cases they complement each other. “Earth and Sky”, which are important elements in early period Turkish culture, are good examples for this subject. The God or Gods (Gods in the Sky and the Sky God) who are creative and protective, are “well qualified”. For example, Ülgen, a god of goodness, lives above the moon, sun and stars; Umai (that is mostly represented with tricorn hats), despite being among the “Earth-Water Gods, is the protector of the children and the puerperant. On the other hand, Erlik, that is mostly represented with bull horns on his head, lives underground and brings evil to people, animals etc. (Çoruhlu, 2017, pp. 39, 52).

This conceptual opposition, which is a significant part of human nature, is reflected in art and researched in the field of humanities. The concepts of good and evil have a wide representation area in the art and also appears with a number of symbols. In the combat scenes, the predatory and winning animals are symbolically related with good, while the defeated, mostly unregulated animals represent evil. Also color symbolism is an important way to define good and evil; black and white are the most important keys among them.

Heaven and Hell, which are present in Divine religions, representations give advices to human beings and show what is waiting for them as a consequence of their good or bad behaviour.

Of course these two concepts cannot be limited with the subjects which are mentioned above. “Good and Evil” has been discussed philosophically since the Antiquity. For example, according to Platon a good person dies, a good behavior can be forgotten but goodness never dies. In the framework of good and evil, Leibniz uses the term “theodize”; Voltaire, on the other hand, defines virtue briefly in his Virtue article of the Philosophy Dictionary by “*doing good to someone alike*”. In the evil article of the same dictionary, the following statements are stated: “*The Human Being is not created as evil at all; but he can get worse as he gets sick*”. According to Hegel,

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the world is a good place and must be affirmed. Hegel emphasizes that art has to tell the truth, and while it is telling the truth, it must affirm that world is a good place to live in. Kant, on the other hand, defends that a person can be guided to the right path with a good education. According to the modern understanding of evil, evil is categorically based on a destructive and harmful intent.

As can be seen evil and good but especially evil has some various meanings. Metaphysical evil is generally explained in two ways: The first is the Manichaist view, which suggests that goodness and evil, light and darkness constantly conflict with each other as eternal cosmological principles. The second is a deprivation caused by the fact that what we call evil does not take part in the goodness of God because of the finite and limited nature of the material world (Albayrak, 2017, s. 54-55). In religious terms, the question of evil can be summarized as "the problem of reconciling evil in the universe with God, who is the best". In other words, the main issue of what is called "the problem of evil" is not actually the characterization of evil and its varieties. Rather it is the question of how good and evil can be associated with religious beliefs and convictions (Sönmez, 2017, pp. 262-265).

Natural evils are evils that occur due to relatively independent reasons such as natural disasters and illness. Natural evil brings to mind concepts such as coincidence, necessity, and fate (Albayrak, 2017, p. 54). The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) that we have been experiencing this year and the fight against it, should be one of the most up-to-date examples of this situation.

In this context, we allocated the 21st issue of the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Journal of Social Sciences (2020/Spring) to the title "Good and Evil in Term, Act and Art" in order to discuss good and evil among social, fine arts and humanities disciplines. We aimed to convey to you this subject through new source readings and interpretations made by scholars from various disciplines in light of current data. For this purpose, we gave place to the extremely valuable articles written by scholars working in disciplines such as archeology, art history, history, literature, epigraphy, and philology:

Mehmet Ali Karaman in his article, which is entitled "*Reading the Perception of Being a Party in the Ottoman Press on the Basis of Good – Bad Reconciliation in the Beginning of the First World War*" focuses on siding from the point of view of good-evil approach in Ottoman Empire, before and during the First World War that played an important role not only over the history of governments but also humanity. He examines these approaches within the media organs of the period.

Servet Avşar, in his study that is entitled "*The Concepts of Good and Evil on the Posters and Propaganda Declarations of the First World War*", evaluates how the parties villainize the opposite and try to flatter themselves in emphasizing their rightfulness and winning supporters during the First World War by examining the archive documents and propaganda banners.

Serap Yüzgüller, in her article "*The Representation of the Devil in the Depictions of the Temptation of Christ from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*" focuses on the devil figure that has a leading role in the hell representations of Christian iconography with the scenes of "The Temptation of Christ". She also evaluates the changing image of devil in the paintings within the framework of representation of evil and iconographic patterns during the period from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

Ali Kayaalp, in his study called "*Themes of Terror and Pain in Expressionistic Imagery in Painting and Cinema*" evaluates the expression of anxiety and distress, and also terror and misery, which are the concrete consequences of the World War I, with the examples selected from both painting and cinema.



Arzu Kılınç's article that is entitled "The Concepts of Good and Bad in Ayaz Ishaki's Stage Play "Heyat Yolunda"" discusses the extreme selfishness of the children in Ayaz Ishaki's play "Hayat Yolunda" as an example of moral evil.

Gülseren Azar Nasırabadi, in her article "Advices on Goodness in some Medieval Siyasetnames and Pandnames" interprets the dimensions of good and evil but especially the concept of good in the Medieval Siyasetnames and Pandnames.

Baykar Demir in his study, which is entitled "Representation of Witch Image By Goya", analyses the effect of Goya's (who lived after the period between the 15th and 17th centuries, when witchcraft paintings were most intensively produced in Europe) personal views against Spain's conservative attitude on the witch identity. This subject is examined in relation to works of witchcraft literature such as Malleus Maleficarum, and the interactions that were influential in Goya's personal life.

Yaşar Çoruhlu, in his article "Evil Spirits in Turkish Art", focuses on the "evil souls" that were represented and recorded in the art and culture of the Huns, Gokturks, Uyghurs as well as other Turkish tribes that could not establish a state.

In her work titled, "The Symbols of Good and Evil in the Celestial World: Angel and Satan in Turkish-Islamic Miniature Painting", Gülsen Tezcan evaluates the reflection of the angel and satan as symbols of good and evil in Turkish Islamic art, which is one of the universal issues that frequently encountered in world cultures and myths.

Nilüfer Ondin, in her article that is titled as "Notre-Dame and Imagination: Gargoyle", focuses on the Gargoyles of Cathedral of Notre-Dame which are sometimes the symbols of evil or sometimes become the symbols of banishing the evil from sacred places, besides their functions as spouts for rainwater.

Sibel Akova, in her study entitled "Images of Good and Evil in the Art of Life. An Overview of Voluntary Simplicity and Consumption Approaches in the Context of Indicators of Goodness and Evil", discusses voluntary simplicity, which is considered to be the indicator of the argument of good life, and the phenomenon of consumption as its opposite, in the context of good and evil.

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