

A Fate Worse than Death: Separation Anxiety in a Renaissance Work on Angels

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Abstract

Angels were created but do not experience death, though transformation is not fully alien from their nature. Vincenzo Cicogna's c. 1587 *Angelo rum et daemonum nomina et attributa...* (Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute MS 86-A866) analyses Lucifer's transformation at the Fall of the Rebel Angels, and interprets the fallen angel's separation from his Creator as a fate worse than death. In a Church historical context, the manuscript echoes concerns of the Church reformer Bishop Gian Matteo Giberti, who was the decisive force on the author's intellectual development. The way separation replaces death as the hardest possible punishment in the mind of the Catholic reformer author bears, at the same time, considerable reminiscences to the psychological condition identified as Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD).

Keywords: Vincenzo Cicogna; Bishop Gian Matteo Giberti; Cardinal Giulio Antonio Santori; Bishop William Of Auvergne; Fall Of The Angels; Lucifer; Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD); Death; Angels; Demons

Abbreviations: SAD: Separation Anxiety Disorder; DSM-IV-TR: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders GRI MS 86-A866: Vincenzo Cicogna, *Angelorum et daemonum nomina et attributa...* (Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute MS 86-A866).

Introduction

Mythology and the vampire lore equally give voice to an overarching primordial belief that death can be overcome, and angelology answers them with a unique standpoint. Angels, singularly among creatures, are created but do not die, though transformation is not fully alien from their nature. Christian tradition holds that angels were all created good but a certain number of them turned bad on their own

free choice, as a consequence of which this rebel group was expelled from Heaven. Good angels were confirmed in their goodness by divine grace, and rebel angels, now demons, were also confirmed in malice. In other words, the latter group went through a defining transformation, with the figure of Lucifer growing out to be the lead representative of the process.¹ The following study examines an interpretation of Lucifer's case in an Early Modern work of angelology and argues that consciously or unconsciously, the author recognized separation anxiety as the punishment the leader of fallen angels received as a fate worse than death.

¹ A representative selection from the immense literature on the Fall of the Angels: Davidson 1967; Russell 1981; Godwin 1990; Packer 1993; Masello 1994; Auffarth, Stuckenbruck 2004; Bamberger 2006; Reed 2005; Orlov 2011.

Source Analysis

The manuscript sheltering this interpretation is an angel lexicon in the collections of the Getty Museum and Research Institute in Los Angeles, and bears the elaborate title *On the names of angels and demons as found in the Divine Scriptures and explained by the Fathers, dedicated to the illustrious reverend Giulio Antonio Santori, the highest cardinal of Santa Severina, and on the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Angelorum et daemonum nomina et attributa passim in divinis scripturis contenta et patrum sententiam explicata et illustrata et reverendis Iulio Antonio Sanctorem cardinalem Sanctae Severinae amplissimum et de ecclesiastica hierarchia, GRI MS 86-A866)*². The extensive, 170-folio work interprets particular and metaphorical references to angels and demons in the Bible and additionally in the apocrypha. The work opens with a foreword and a dedication, following which it divides into *De Angelis* and *De Demoniis* sections with 100 angel and 123 demon entries. The work concludes with a treatise explaining how the ecclesiastical hierarchy should follow the example of the heavenly hierarchy of angels.

The author was an ecclesiastical scholar called Vincenzo Cicogna, born c. 1519 in or around Verona in Italy. He was raised under the protection of his father's friend, Bishop Gian Matteo Giberti (1495-1543), who introduced wide-ranging ecclesiastical reforms in his diocese in collaboration with a group of learned ecclesiasts³. Member of the 'Giberti circle', Vincenzo Cicogna established himself as a prominent though controversial ecclesiast, whose literary activity attracted unwelcomed attention. Multiple works of Cicogna were corrected or prohibited by the Inquisition, among them the *Angelorum*, corrections to which are still documented in the Archives of the Inquisition today but the actual document itself is classified as lost. The *Angelorum* became Cicogna's last literary work, and in spite or perhaps because of his history with the Inquisition, he dedicated it to Cardinal Giulio Antonio Santori (1532-1602), Italy's Grand Inquisitor at the time⁴. Cardinal Santori was one of the Cardinal Bishops, who are paralleled with Cherubs, the original order of fallen angels in Cicogna's *Angelorum*, which poses numerous questions about the author's intentions behind the dedication.

The elevation of Cherubs to the highest angelic choir, for which I have not yet found another example preceding Cicogna, is the only difference between the heavenly

hierarchies of Cicogna and William of Auvergne, Bishop of Paris 1228-1249. The latter's *De universo* (1231-1236) is the likely main source behind Cicogna's *Angelorum*⁵, despite a marked difference between their infernal systems. William developed a complex system of infernal hierarchies mirroring that of the heavens, but Cicogna found the idea of an infernal hierarchy incompatible with the primordial chaos defining his Hell. Moreover, if there is a protagonist in his work, it can only be Lucifer.

An Alternative Death

The demon turned angel is listed both in the *De Angelis* and in the *De Demoniis* sections of his *Angelorum*. Cicogna believed that Lucifer used to be a Cherub prior to his fall, and pre-eminent amongst angels with a unique relationship to God. Lucifer in his beauty and perfection was similar to God but neither in the way man is similar to God nor in the way the Son is similar to the Father. The Son is of similar essence (*illi coequalis, coaeternus et consubstantialis existens*); man was created in the likeness of God (*imaginis Dei*); but Lucifer's similitude to God meant his being similar in everything with the exception of divine nature. Lucifer nonetheless was not satisfied with this exceptional status and desired God's nature and substance. This desire led to his fall, upon which Lucifer lost his similarity to Creator⁶.

The consequence of the fall was eternal suffering without the comfort of death for Lucifer. The fallen angel kept certain angelic features, among them immortality, even though his nature had been transformed. His diabolic character now includes a malicious intelligence paired with a dominant trait for deceit. Bad is merely the lack of good, but Lucifer is evil, according to Cicogna, because being bad (*malus*) equals being satisfied with one's own corruption, whereas being evil (*malignus*) also encompasses the urge to corrupt others⁷. Accordingly, numerous biblical metaphors identify Lucifer's ultimate aim in destruction in Cicogna's work, which encompasses the destruction of people, Church, and eventually God⁸. Cicogna recalls that Aristotle called death 'the most terrible of all things' in *Nicomachean Ethics III*,

5 De Mayo 2006.

6 "Quo non contentus superbus Angelus, ipsam Dei similitudinem affectavit, dicens /apud Isaiam/ Ero similis Altissimo: et cum inventa esset in illo tanta iniquitas, a felicissimo illo statu in aeternam miseriam est coniectus, similitudinis signaculum amittens..." Cicogna juxtaposes of Origen's, Saint Jerome's and Tertullianus's interpretations (GRI MS 86-A866 fols 77v-78r).

7 "Differt autem malignus a malo in hoc, quod malus sibi tantum malus sit: malignus vero sibi et caeteris lubens et volens malus sit... Malus autem ille proprie dicitur, qui omni caret bono, et a quo non nisi mala esse possunt..." (GRI MS 86-A866 Fol. 138r-v)

8 "Quodcum Satanae... nihil magis cupiat et curet, quam hominem occidere..." (GRI MS 86-A866 Fol. 125r)

2 I am indebted to the J. Paul Getty Research Institute for their Library Research Grant which enabled me to start research on the manuscript, and for subsequently making it available online in the Internet Archive Online Library at <http://www.archive.org/details/angelorummetaemo00cico> for my PhD research project Eszenyi 2014.

3 Grazioli 1955; Prospero 1969; Eszenyi 2018.

4 Eszenyi 2015, pp. 159-162.

but argues that the devil is, in fact, worse than death by being the very author and origin of death⁹. The question remains: what is worse than death? Where or what might death originate from?

Cicogna associates death and transformation with separation. Light was created upon its separation from darkness on the first day of creation, which defines darkness as the lack of light. Accordingly, death is the lack of life. The devil was created upon Lucifer and the rebel angels' separation from God, as a consequence of which the devil can only be death given that God is life. The separation of the soul from the body is not real death for Cicogna. Real death is the separation of the soul from God, which explains why the devil ceaselessly works on separating us from God individually, while also trying to break the unity of the Church at the same time¹⁰.

The devil perturbs the Church like the boar stirs up the soil in the graveyard, and weakens it by persecutions, tyrants, heretics, even though members of the Church themselves, notes Cicogna, in remarks almost echoing the 'Giberti circle's calls for Church reforms¹¹. The boar knows well how dangerous the hunter is, but it is not afraid of the hunter because it is not afraid of death. The devil is similarly not afraid of death, although he knows very well that God can destroy him, says Cicogna¹². So why is the devil not destroyed? How could Lucifer and his rebel colleagues avoid death following the fall of the Angels?

Cicogna's explains the presence of evil in the world is by comparing the constricted Lucifer to a hammer that can destroy as well as build¹³. He claims that demons occasionally fulfil divine service, when God dispatches them to convey bad news to people and castigate the sinful. The execution of divine punishments is entrusted upon the fallen Lucifer among demons, since missions of this

9 "Aristoteles extremum omnium malorum appellavit mortem: quod omnia mala superses. Sed nobis ipsa morte deterior est Diabolus, qui mortis author est et origo fuit..." (GRI MS 86-A866 Fol. 120r-v)

10 "...Diabolus a Deo omnino sit separatus: ubi enim Deus non est qui est ipsa vita, ibi necessario mors subsequitur: quemadmodum sublata luce, tenebrae succedunt... Nam mors, quae ex separatione (SIC) animae a corpora fit non est vera mors... Vera autem mors ex separatio animae a Deo fit..." (GRI MS 86-A866 Fol. 142r)

11 "...Merito ergo Aper sylvestris dicitur, devastans vineam idest, Ecclesiam perturbans, et persecutionibus eam affligens: Quicquid enim turbarum patitur Ecclesi<am> Dei vel a Tyrannis, vel ab Hareticis, vel a personis Ecclesiastici et catholicis..." (GRI MS 86-A866 Fol. 98r-v)

12 "...Diabolus prae nimia iracundia cuncta perdere et prosternere non veretur, etsi optime sciat Deum suae iniquitatis fore iustum ultorem..." (GRI MS 86-A866 Fol. 98r-v)

13 "Malleus est ergo Satana<s> sed contritus et confractus, qui per se ipse nihil posit, sed sit fabri instrumentum, quo sua vasa perficiat aliena vero conterat." (GRI MS 86-A866 Fol. 137v)

kind are incompatible with the mild nature of good angels. Scriptural examples include the angel who brought plagues upon Israel in 2 Samuel and on Egypt in Exodus, as well as the destroying angels mentioned in Psalm 78. Lucifer and his colleagues remain unwilling servants of the Lord in this function according to Cicogna, with powers limited to what is sanctioned by God. In other words, demons' very own actions ultimately serve unity as overseen by God instead of their own desire, separation. While Lucifer and his colleagues continue to bring humanity closer to God, they themselves remain separated from the Creator¹⁴.

Separation Anxiety Disorder

The way separation replaces death as the hardest possible punishment befitting the opponent of God in the mind of the Catholic reformer author is, to a considerable extent, reminiscent of Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD). Although deeper personality analysis or psychological profiling is hardly possible through centuries, of course, valuable similar attempts have already been made in case of historical as well as fictional characters¹⁵. Cicogna's interpretation of separation as a fate worse than death presents a call for a similar approach.

The core feature of separation anxiety is excessive distress triggered by actual or perceived separation from either persons, or occasionally objects or places, to which the individual feels a strong emotional attachment¹⁶. The significant person is most commonly identified as a parent, caregiver, significant other or sibling. In Cicogna's interpretation, God is identifiable as the person to whom Lucifer used to feel a strong emotional attachment; and Heaven as the once beloved home from which he was expelled. Lucifer's desire for divine nature resulted in his fall, the termination of an interpersonal relationship, which was accompanied by a clear and particularly strong rejection experience in his case¹⁷.

In diagnostic classification systems such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)-IV-TR, SAD used to be described as a childhood disorder, but the age of onset requirement has recently been removed. SAD is now acknowledged as a diagnosable disorder for adults, which is commonly detected in infants and small children¹⁸.

14 For Lucifer's identification in this function as the Angelus Domini see Eszenyi 2015, 164-166.

15 Sidwell 2010, Tobia 2015, Bui 2011.

16 Redlich 2015, 278.

17 Nehren 1965, 109.

18 Stephens 1973, 1954; Redlich 2015, 278.

This may be paralleled with the creator-creation relationship in case of Cicogna's Lucifer, where Lucifer is a 'child' of God in the sense that he was created by God before his fall. The emotional process the fallen Lucifer is going through is difficult to identify with grief given that Lucifer's relationship with God, his creator, did not come to a full end. He fulfils divine missions even in his fallen nature in Cicogna's interpretation, which means that in practice, his expulsion from Heaven forced him into a series of recurring separation episodes from his father-like creator. When an individual with SAD is overwhelmed by a sense of hopelessness or helplessness, feeling and expressing anger and hostility may be a means of coping. Lucifer and his fallen colleagues' destructive actions in the created world could, in this context, be one of the defence mechanisms utilized in order to cope with separation in an attempt at maintaining self-esteem in past experiences. Reactions are stronger when separation happens without any preparation for termination¹⁹, exactly as it did at the expulsion of fallen angels from Heaven in Cicogna's angelology.

Conclusion

As any work of literature bespeaks primarily of the author, the way Cicogna portrayed the protagonist of his Angelorum tells the most about Cicogna himself. By associating death with separation, Cicogna, the Catholic reformer, symbolically called for unity within and obedience to the Church, aligning his angelology with Bishop Giberti's Church reformer ideas. It is difficult to doubt, however, that Cicogna's interpretation of Lucifer's character reveals something about the author's own interior world at the same time. Perhaps the necessary separation from the family upon his entering a religious order could possibly have triggered attachment issues in Cicogna's case. Due to the fact that the above investigation into separation anxiety was conducted without relevant professional training, conclusions and interpretations must be treated with caution and some methodological limitations should be acknowledged, primarily in the fact that Cicogna projected human feelings onto a non-human character in the person of Lucifer. Similar investigations may, nonetheless, turn into revealing thought experiments, if nothing else, and certainly raise awareness of mental health, an issue of immense importance in Cicogna's times as well as today. Cicogna's Angelorum was the last work of a highly educated, well-networked, successful but persecuted author, seeking perhaps a deathless death in his most creative moments.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest

¹⁹ Nehren 1965, 110-111.

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