Anime's Ethical Odyssey: Navigating Good and Evil in Anime through the Lens of Old Testament

Sam T. Rajkumar[1]

ABSTRACT

Anime's Ethical Odyssey reveals how anime, as a medium of storytelling, often explores profound ethical dilemmas that resonate with themes found in ancient texts, particularly the Old Testament. This exploration seeks to understand how anime narratives engage with morality, justice, redemption, and the consequences of human actions, drawing upon both modern philosophical discourse and biblical ethics. The Old Testament presents a rich tapestry of moral challenges, from divine justice in the stories of Job and Noah to human fallibility in the lives of David and Saul. Similarly, anime constructs complex moral universes where protagonists grapple with difficult choices, blurring the lines between heroism and villainy.

Scholars such as François Flahault, Nishida Kitarō, and Luke Russell provide varied interpretations of good and evil, further illuminating this discourse. Their perspectives contribute to the broader discussion on how morality is shaped by cultural and historical contexts. Through series like Death Note, Code Geass, and Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood, we witness ethical struggles that mirror biblical dilemmas questions of power, justice, and the

---

[1] **Sam T Rajkumar** is an ordained minister of the Anglican Church. He has completed a Master's degree in Biblical Studies (Old Testament) at United Theological College, Bangalore. Sam has penned three books: *Resounding Faith*: *Embracing Modern Music in Children's Ministry* (theology), *Anime Parables* (Daily Devotional) and *Sounding Praise: Music in the Bible* (Biblical Studies).

cost of righteousness. Light Yagami's descent into moral ambiguity, Lelouch's revolutionary ideals, and the Elric brothers' pursuit of truth all reflect ethical concerns deeply rooted in religious traditions.

By juxtaposing anime's contemporary storytelling with the Old Testament's moral foundations, we uncover a space for reflection that transcends entertainment. This dialogue between past and present, East and West, highlights how narratives continue to shape our understanding of justice, sin, and redemption in an ever-evolving world.

1. Introduction

Anime's Ethical Odyssey begins with the observation that anime, with its rich storytelling and multifaceted character arcs, presents a compelling lens through which to examine the complexities of morality. Originating in Japan, anime encompasses a diverse range of genres from action and fantasy to psychological thriller and science fiction, each offering unique insights into human nature and ethical conflict. Known for its stylistic artistry and narrative depth, anime has transcended cultural boundaries to become a global phenomenon, influencing audiences across continents and engaging viewers in profound philosophical and emotional experiences.

Unlike simplistic portrayals of good versus evil, anime narratives often blur the boundaries between righteousness and corruption, challenging viewers to question their preconceived notions of justice, power, and human nature. When analyzed through the ethical framework of the Old Testament, this exploration takes on a deeper significance, drawing connections between ancient moral principles and modern storytelling.

The Old Testament is replete with narratives that grapple with the nature of good and evil—stories of divine justice, human frailty, and redemption. Figures like Moses, Job, and King David navigate ethical dilemmas that test their faith, power, and integrity, mirroring the struggles faced by anime protagonists. In Death Note, Light Yagami's pursuit of

justice quickly devolves into a dangerous obsession, echoing biblical warnings against hubris and the corruption of power. Code Geass presents a protagonist, Lelouch, whose revolutionary ambitions force him to make morally ambiguous choices, reminiscent of the ethical dilemmas faced by leaders in the Old Testament. Similarly, Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood explores the consequences of human ambition and the pursuit of forbidden knowledge, drawing parallels with biblical themes such as the Fall of Man and the dangers of overstepping divine boundaries.

By engaging with these narratives, we recognize anime as more than entertainment. It becomes a philosophical and ethical discourse that resonates across cultures and epochs. This dynamic intersection of ancient wisdom and modern storytelling fosters a deeper understanding of the universal human struggle to define justice, morality, and redemption.

2. Rethinking Good and Evil

The dichotomy between good and evil has long been a pervasive concept woven into the fabric of religious, ethical, philosophical, and psychological discourse. This dualistic framework often posits a stark opposition, where the triumph of good over evil is the desired outcome. However, scholars have provided diverse interpretations that challenge and complicate this dichotomy.

François Flahault, a literary theorist, and Nishida Kitarō, a Kyoto School philosopher and psychoanalyst, embark on a journey to disrupt the conventional boundaries of good and evil, aiming to emancipate subjectivity from rigid categorizations.[2] Their divergent perspectives emerge particularly in their attempts to link subjectivity with the unfolding processes of social history. In doing so, they hint at the potential for crafting a universal conception of the common good, paradoxically entwined with subjective interiority. In a contrasting viewpoint, Luke Russell contributes to the discourse by advocating for the existence of evil and articulating a secular

---

[2] Dennis Stromback, "A Dialogue on the Good and Evil Bivalence in the Study of Ethics: On François Flahault and Nishida Kitarō," *Journal of World Philosophies* 7, no. 1 (2022): 29-42.

understanding of it.[3] Russell contends that evil actions should not be reduced to mere opposites of good actions; instead, he posits them as a distinct subset encompassing extreme moral wrongs. By constructing a more nuanced framework, he endeavours to provide a clear and usable secular conception of evil within philosophical theorizing.

These scholarly dialogues underscore that the dichotomy of good and evil is not a simplistic binary; rather, it unfolds as a complex interplay shaped by moral, philosophical, and societal factors. Importantly, these interpretations remain subject to variations rooted in cultural, religious, and individual perspectives, highlighting the multifaceted nature of this fundamental human inquiry.

Many anime series and films delve into complex characterizations and moral landscapes, contributing to a nuanced understanding of morality. Anime frequently features characters with nuanced moralities, blurring the lines between good and evil. Protagonists from anime may grapple with questionable actions, and antagonists might have understandable motivations for their choices. [4] This complexity invites viewers to question traditional dichotomies.

Some anime, especially those with psychological and philosophical themes (ex. *Neon Genesis Evangelion*), delve into the subjectivity of characters and the fluidity of morality.[5] This exploration aligns with Flahault and Nishida's ideas of emancipating subjectivity from rigid categorizations, as characters navigate moral dilemmas based on their unique perspectives.

Anime often incorporates cultural and religious influences, presenting diverse perspectives on morality.[6] Themes of honour, duty, and morality are portrayed differently across genres and series, reflecting the cultural and individual variations in the perception of good and evil. Certain anime challenges the simplistic binary of good versus evil by introducing morally grey

---

[3] Luke Russell, "Good and Evil in Recent Discussion Defending the Concept of Evil," *ZEMO* 5 (2022): 77-82.

[4] The protagonist, Light Yagami, starts with good intentions but becomes morally ambiguous as he uses the Death Note to impose his version of justice.

[5] Neon Genesis Evangelion anime series delves into the psychological struggles of its characters, especially Shinji Ikari, exploring their subjective experiences and perceptions.

[6] Set in an alternate history Edo period, Samurai Champloo explores the clash of cultural influences and perspectives as three main characters navigate a changing society.

characters or societies.[7] These narratives prompt viewers to question pre-conceived notions and consider the impact of societal and historical factors on moral development, aligning with the scholarly discourses.

Anime, like Russell's secular understanding of evil, sometimes explores moral questions without explicit religious frameworks.[8] Themes of ethics, justice, and the consequences of actions are often portrayed in a way that resonates with Russell's emphasis on constructing a usable secular conception of evil. Anime often places characters in situations where moral choices are not clear-cut.[9] This echoes the complexity of the scholarly perspectives discussed, as characters navigate the consequences of their actions and grapple with the idea that morality is not always black and white.

Therefore we see that anime serves as a creative platform that mirrors and expands upon the complex dialogues surrounding good and evil, offering audiences diverse narratives that challenge, deconstruct, and reimagine traditional moral frameworks.

3. Exploring Good and Evil

The concepts of good and evil have held a central role in the realms of literature, art, and religion, acting as foundational themes that shape narratives, aesthetics, and moral teachings.

In literature, the portrayal of good and evil often unfolds as a dynamic interplay, serving as a fundamental evaluative category that propels plots forward.[10] Characters grapple with internal conflicts or confront external adversaries embodying these opposing forces. However, the depiction of

---

[7] Lelouch's actions in Code Geass challenge the traditional dichotomy of good and evil, as he uses questionable methods to achieve his goal of overthrowing an oppressive regime.

[8] Cowboy Bebop is a space-western anime which deals with moral and existential themes without relying on explicit religious frameworks, exploring the consequences of characters past actions.

[9] The anime series Steins; Gate involves time travel and explores the ethical dilemmas faced by the characters as they try to alter the past to achieve a better future.

[10] Sholom J. Kahn, "The Problem of Evil in Literature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 12, no. 1 (Sep, 1953): 98-110.

good and evil remains highly variable, influenced by the cultural, historical, and individual perspectives of the authors who craft these narratives.[11]

In the realm of art, the interpretation of good and evil undergoes shifts based on the chosen perspective—be it political, moral, religious, or aesthetic—and the temporal context in which these notions are examined.[12] Art frequently mirrors societal views of morality, with artists utilizing symbolism, colour, and composition to represent these abstract concepts. The subjective interpretation of these artistic elements adds layers of depth and complexity to the artwork, emphasizing the fluidity inherent in the understanding of good and evil.

Religion, as a moral compass, often delineates the boundaries of good and evil. In traditional religious frameworks, "the good" may revolve around self-transcendence, expressed intrapersonally through self-control and interpersonally through love and the promotion of others' well-being.[13] Conversely, "evil" might centre on self-enhancement, manifesting as moral compartmentalization and hate, aimed at diminishing others' well-being. However, it is crucial to note that within faith traditions, not all expressions of love are deemed inherently "good," and not all manifestations of hate are automatically categorized as "evil."

These interpretations underscore the complexity and subjectivity embedded in the concepts of good and evil across literature, art, and religion. They remind us that our comprehension of these notions is shaped by a myriad of factors, including cultural context, personal beliefs, and societal norms.

Anime, as a distinct medium, has gained recognition for its capacity to delve into intricate themes such as the dichotomy of good and evil. This exploration unfolds through complex narratives and character developments, offering a unique perspective on these fundamental concepts.[14] For instance, Hajime Isayama's manga, *Attack on Titan*, serves as an artistic

---

[11] Daniel Candel, "Systematizing Evil in Literature: Twelve Models for The Analysis of Narrative Fiction" *Semiotica* 242 (2021): 141-168.

[12] Basil Markesinis, *Good and Evil in Art and Law: An Extended Essay* (Heidelberg: Springer Vienna, 2007), 1-25.

[13] Christopher T. Burris and John K. Rempel, "Good and Evil in Religion: The Interpersonal Context," in *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality,* ed. Lisa J. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 123-137.

[14] Manuel Hernández-Pérez, "Looking into the 'Anime Global Popular' and the 'Manga Media': Reflections on the Scholarship of a Transnational and Transmedia Industry," *Arts* 8, no.2 (April 2019): 1-14.

literary work questioning the politics of co-existence in a world where the line between Good ("us") and Evil ("them") is tragically blurred.[15] The narrative suggests the fluidity of morals and the inconsequential nature of the separation between these categories when humanity's existence is at stake.

Therefore, we can see that anime provides a rich and diverse platform for the exploration of good and evil, allowing for nuanced discussions and interpretations that can vary greatly depending on the specific work and its cultural context.

4. Biblical Perspectives on Good and Evil

The exploration of the concept of good and evil in the Bible is a nuanced and intricate subject that has been extensively examined in scholarly literature. Within the Old Testament, diverse perspectives emerge on the nature of good and evil, intricately woven into the moral and theological framework of the ancient Israelites. This sacred text grapples with the complex issue of evil, often portraying it as originating from human sin and contributing to chaos in the world. For instance, in the book of Genesis, the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden illustrates the consequences of disobedience and the introduction of sin into the world. This narrative lays the groundwork for understanding the human condition and the inherent struggle between good and evil.

The Old Testament repeatedly emphasizes the theme of retribution for both good and evil deeds. One such example can be found in Deuteronomy 28,[16] in which blessings are promised for obedience to God's commandments, while curses are outlined for disobedience. This covenantal relationship between God and the Israelites sets the stage for a moral framework where actions have consequences. The intricate balance between divine justice and human responsibility is a recurring motif, influencing notions of reward and punishment within Western ethical thought.

---

[15] Ameni Hlioui, "The Good 'US' vs. the Evil 'THEM' as Fluid Constructs in the 'Attack on Titan' Manga," *International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies* 27, no.2 (2021): 1-7.

[16] Hans Ausloos, "It's a Matter of Justice! The Old Testament and the Idea of Retribution," *Pretoria* 36, no.1 (April 2023): 151-165.

The prophetic books, including Isaiah and Jeremiah, contribute to the nuanced exploration of good and evil by addressing the moral conduct of individuals and the nation as a whole. These prophets not only highlight the consequences of wrongdoing but also emphasize the possibility of repentance and divine forgiveness. In Isaiah 1:18, for instance, there is an invitation to reason together and receive forgiveness, demonstrating the complexity of the relationship between human actions and divine mercy.

The Psalms, attributed to various authors, offer poetic reflections on the nature of good and evil, expressing the psalmists' struggles with righteousness in the face of adversity. Psalms 34:14 encourages the pursuit of peace and goodness, showcasing the internal moral deliberations found within the biblical text.

The enduring impact of these biblical perspectives on contemporary Western society is evident in the cultural and societal norms shaped by Judeo-Christian ethics. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) in the New Testament further expound on moral principles that have significantly influenced Western legal systems and ethical considerations.

The treatment of good and evil in the Old Testament holds particular significance for researchers aiming to comprehend its profound influence on contemporary Western society.[17] Scholars delve into these biblical perspectives to unravel the moral and ethical underpinnings that have shaped cultural and societal norms over centuries. The exploration of the Bible's teachings on good and evil is not merely a historical or theological endeavour but a crucial inquiry into the enduring impact of these ancient narratives on the moral fabric of Western thought and values.

The Old Testament thus provides a nuanced exploration of the concept of good and evil through narratives, laws, and prophetic messages. The interplay between human responsibility, divine justice, and the possibility of redemption contributes to a complex understanding of morality. As scholars delve into these biblical perspectives, they uncover the enduring impact of these ancient narratives on the moral fabric of Western thought and values.

---

[17] Ester S. Buchholz and Joshua K. Mandel, "Reaching for Virtue, Stumbling on Sin: Concepts of Good and Evil in a Postmodern Era," *Journal of Religion and Health* 39, no.2 (Summer 2000): 123-142.

Anime, like the Old Testament, becomes a narrative space where creators explore the intricacies of good and evil, shaping stories that resonate with viewers and provoke contemplation on moral and ethical themes. The influence of these narratives extends beyond mere entertainment, contributing to the broader cultural and philosophical discourse.

5. Moral Complexity in *Death Note*

Anime frequently takes conventional narratives and gives them innovative twists, exemplified by the series *Death Note*, which injects a supernatural element into the traditional dichotomy of good and evil. Originally released in 2006, *Death Note* is an anime adaptation of the manga written by Tsugumi Ohba and illustrated by Takeshi Obata. The anime was directed by Tetsurō Araki and produced by Madhouse, a renowned Japanese animation studio. Spanning 37 episodes, the series aired from October 2006 to June 2007 and quickly gained international acclaim for its gripping narrative, psychological depth, and philosophical undertones. Its widespread popularity led to various adaptations, including live-action films, novels, and even a Westernized remake.

In this anime, the protagonist, Light Yagami, comes into possession of a mysterious notebook—known as the "Death Note"—that grants him the power to kill anyone simply by writing their name in it. This supernatural premise sets the stage for profound moral contemplations, compelling viewers to confront the ethical implications of justice, free will, and the sanctity of human life.

Death Note intricately navigates the complexities of morality through Light Yagami's narrative. As a highly intelligent high school student wielding the power of life and death, Light's character challenges the audience's preconceived notions about heroes and villains. The series intentionally blurs the lines between good and evil, as Light's motivations and actions are not easily classified.[18] While his initial goal appears virtuous—to eradicate crime and shield the innocent—his subsequent descent into becoming a mass-murdering figure driven by narcissism and a desire to be

---

[18] Bridget Hanna, "Death Note and Morality," *Screen Education* 78 (2015): 40-43.

worshipped as a god paints a darker picture.[19] Viewers are compelled to confront the profound darkness within Light's heart, turning the narrative into a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked power.

Death Note fosters an ongoing debate among its fans regarding Light's moral alignment, with some sympathizing with his idealism and others unequivocally labeling him as inherently evil. The series presents a captivating and thought-provoking exploration of the conventional concepts of good and evil through the lens of Light Yagami's character. By subverting expectations and challenging established archetypes, *Death Note* encourages its audience to reevaluate contemporary representations of moral ambiguity in storytelling.

6. Ethical Shades in *Code Geass*

Anime frequently challenges conventional moral frameworks by introducing anti-hero characters who blur the lines between good and evil, and series like *Code Geass* exemplify this trend. Originally titled *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion*, the series was first released in 2006. It was produced by the acclaimed animation studio Sunrise, known for its work on the *Gundam* franchise, and directed by Gorō Taniguchi, with character designs by the manga artist group CLAMP. The show aired in two seasons—*Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion* (2006–2007) and *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion R2* (2008)—and quickly gained critical and commercial success for its blend of mecha action, political intrigue, and psychological complexity. It has since inspired multiple spin-offs, manga adaptations, and films, solidifying its place as a landmark in modern anime.

Code Geass centers around Lelouch Lamperouge, a brilliant exiled prince who acquires a supernatural ability called the "Geass," allowing him to compel anyone to obey his commands. Driven by a fervent desire to overthrow the oppressive Britannian Empire and create a more just world for his sister and the oppressed, Lelouch adopts the masked identity of "Zero" and leads a revolutionary movement. The anime delves into the

---

[19] Alex Herrick, "Death Note: Is Light Evil? Unravelling The Mystery," Web Design Booth, accessed Feb 1, 2024, https://www.webdesignbooth.com/death-note-is-light-evil.

intricate moral landscape of Lelouch's actions and meticulously examines the repercussions of his decisions.[20]

Unlike a straightforward classification of good or evil, Lelouch's intentions may be interpreted as noble—aspiring to bring about peace and unity in a fractured world. However, the methods he employs, including manipulation, coercion, and large-scale violence, complicate this narrative. His use of the Geass to control others without consent, even in pursuit of an ostensibly righteous goal, raises troubling ethical questions about ends justifying means. These themes echo the narrative complexity found in the Old Testament's exploration of power, divine mandate, and human fallibility.

Code Geass doesn't shy away from exploring the theme of redemption within Lelouch's character arc. As the narrative unfolds, Lelouch is confronted with the heavy cost of his revolutionary tactics and the collateral damage left in their wake. He is forced to reckon with the pain inflicted on others, including those he loves, and ultimately makes a controversial yet sacrificial choice in his pursuit of peace. This adds profound layers of moral complexity to the storyline, inviting the audience to contemplate the nature of justice, leadership, and personal atonement.

The anime *Code Geass* thus provides a captivating and intricate exploration of the concept of good and evil through the character of Lelouch Lamperouge. By challenging viewers to grapple with the moral ambiguities inherent in his decisions and the personal sacrifices made in the name of justice, the series stands as a powerful testament to the rich narrative possibilities anime offers in the exploration of ethical dilemmas.

7. Alchemical Transformations in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*

The Old Testament frequently explores themes of redemption and the profound impact of individual choices on one's moral journey. In a similar vein, *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* employs the concept of "equivalent exchange" to underscore the critical nature of moral decisions. This anime series intricately weaves the themes of good and evil into its

---

[20] Meredith White, "*Code Geass: Geass, Explained*," *Game Rant*, n.d., https://gamerant.com/code-geass-what-is-geass, accessed December 24, 2023.

narrative, challenging traditional moral paradigms and echoing the Old Testament's emphasis on the transformative potential of personal choices.

Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood is a 2009–2010 anime television series produced by Bones and directed by Yasuhiro Irie, with music composed by Akira Senju. It is a faithful adaptation of Hiromu Arakawa's manga *Fullmetal Alchemist*, differing from the earlier 2003 anime *Fullmetal Alchemist*, which diverged from the manga due to the source material being incomplete at the time. Praised for its tightly woven plot, emotional depth, and philosophical undercurrents, *Brotherhood* consists of 64 episodes and has been widely acclaimed as one of the most impactful and thematically rich anime series of the 21st century.

The story follows the compelling journey of the Elric brothers, Edward and Alphonse, as they navigate the ethical complexities of alchemy and pursue their aspirations in a world governed by scientific laws and moral consequences. The brothers commit the grave taboo of human transmutation in a desperate attempt to resurrect their deceased mother, resulting in devastating physical and spiritual consequences.[21] This event sets them on a path of restitution, both literal and moral, as they seek the Philosopher's Stone to restore their bodies—a journey fraught with moral compromise, philosophical reflection, and ethical ambiguity.

A central tenet of the series—"to obtain something, something of equal value must be lost"—frames the characters' struggles within a moral universe where actions carry weight and consequences must be faced. Throughout the series, Edward and Alphonse wrestle with questions of guilt, sacrifice, justice, and the value of human life. Their story is not simply one of regaining what was lost, but of learning what truly matters and what kind of people they choose to become.

The conclusion of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* serves as a poignant resolution, reinforcing its core themes and offering satisfying closure. It reveals the divergent paths the characters take after confronting the consequences of their choices, emphasizing personal growth, moral account-

---

[21] Joe Allen, "The Ending of Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood Explained," accessed January 23, 2024,

https://www.looper.com/334644/the-ending-of-fullmetal-alchemist-brotherhood-explained.

ability, and the long-lasting impact of ethical decisions.[22] In doing so, the series echoes biblical narratives in which figures such as David, Jacob, or Moses are shaped and transformed by their moral struggles and acts of repentance.

Through its exploration of morality, sacrifice, and the intricate facets of human nature, *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* presents a nuanced perspective on the concepts of good and evil. Viewers are challenged to reflect on the nature of morality within the context of the characters' experiences and the powerful, often painful, choices they make throughout their transformative journeys. As with many biblical figures, the Elric brothers remind us that redemption is not found in perfection, but in persistence, humility, and a willingness to grow.

8. Bridging Old Testament Wisdom and Contemporary Storytelling

The exploration of anime's ethical odyssey through the lens of the Old Testament unveils a fascinating tapestry of narratives that bridge the gap between ancient moral principles and contemporary storytelling. Contextually, this journey is not merely an academic exercise but a dynamic intersection of cultural, religious, and artistic expressions that shape our understanding of good and evil.

In the context of the Old Testament, the exploration of good and evil extends beyond theological inquiry to encompass its profound impact on Western thought and values. The Bible's teachings on morality have left an indelible mark on literature, art, and societal norms. The dichotomy presented in the Old Testament, echoed in anime narratives, acts as a cultural touchstone that resonates through centuries, prompting ongoing reflections on human nature and morality.

The dichotomy between good and evil, as discussed by scholars like François Flahault, Nishida Kitarō, and Luke Russell, provides a contextual lens through which we analyze anime narratives. The complexity they introduce challenges simplistic binary classifications, inviting viewers to grapple with nuanced character motivations and ethical landscapes. This

---

[22] Dillon Rey Dowell, "Fullmetal Alchemist: Which Brother Got a Better Ending?" *Game Rant*, n.d., https://gamerant.com/fullmetal-alchemist-which-brother-got-a-better-ending (accessed November 12, 2023).

scholarly dialogue enriches our contextual understanding, emphasizing that the ethical odyssey in anime is a dynamic conversation that echoes broader philosophical discussions on morality.

Furthermore, the examination of good and evil in literature, art, and religion provides context for anime's role in this broader discourse. The malleability of these concepts across different mediums highlights the fluidity inherent in the understanding of morality. Anime, as a distinct medium, both reflects and challenges these interpretations, contributing to the ongoing evolution of cultural narratives surrounding ethics.

Some parallels can be drawn between the anime narratives and specific biblical passages that echo similar ethical considerations.

8.1. Genesis 3:22-24 - Consequences of Human Sin

The narrative of Genesis 3:22-24 presents a pivotal moment in the biblical understanding of sin and its consequences. Adam and Eve's disobedience eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil ushers in a profound moral shift, resulting in their expulsion from Eden. This passage underscore's themes of transgression, the burden of knowledge, and the consequences of human choices, all of which resonate deeply with ethical dilemmas in storytelling, including anime.

One of the clearest parallels to this biblical narrative can be found in *Death Note*. Light Yagami's decision to wield the Death Note mirrors Adam and Eve's choice to eat the forbidden fruit both acts stem from a desire for greater power and knowledge, but they ultimately lead to irreversible consequences. Just as Adam and Eve's newfound awareness introduces suffering and exile, Light's pursuit of justice through divine-like judgment entraps him in a downward spiral of moral corruption. His initial intentions to rid the world of criminals evolve into a ruthless quest for dominance, echoing the idea that knowledge and power, when misused, lead to downfall.

Moreover, Genesis 3:22-24 highlights humanity's separation from divine perfection, emphasizing the limits imposed on human autonomy. Similarly, *Death Note* explores the dangers of overstepping moral and ethical boundaries. The story suggests that assuming the role of an all-powerful arbiter of justice carries severe consequences, much like Adam and Eve's actions resulted in their loss of paradise.

8.2. Deuteronomy - Retribution for Deeds

The book of Deuteronomy emphasizes the principle of retribution often articulated through the covenantal framework of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28). This doctrine, known as *divine retribution*, reinforces the idea that human actions carry consequences, a theme deeply embedded in anime narratives. The moral philosophy underlying Deuteronomy finds strong parallels in series like *Code Geass* and *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, where protagonists navigate the far-reaching consequences of their choices.

In *Code Geass*, Lelouch vi Britannia seeks to overthrow an oppressive regime using the supernatural power of the Geass, which allows him to command absolute obedience. While his intentions to create a better world for his sister and liberate the oppressed are noble, the means by which he pursues his goal become increasingly ruthless. His deception, manipulation, and willingness to sacrifice others lead to devastating consequences, including the loss of close friends and allies. His eventual self-sacrifice mirrors Deuteronomy's ethical principle that every action carries weight; even when striving for justice, immoral choices bring their own form of judgment.

Similarly, *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* explores the *law of equivalent exchange*, which aligns closely with Deuteronomy's moral cause-and-effect structure. Edward and Alphonse Elric violate natural and divine laws by attempting human transmutation, resulting in severe personal losses. Alphonse loses his body, and Edward sacrifices limbs. Their journey to restore what was lost serves as a narrative of atonement and redemption, reinforcing the idea that transgressing ethical boundaries leads to unavoidable retribution.

8.3. Proverbs 14:12 - The Way That Seems Right

Proverbs 14:12 states, "There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way of death." This verse encapsulates the dangers of misguided righteousness when individuals, convinced of their moral correctness, pursue a path that ultimately leads to destruction. This theme resonates deeply in anime narratives, particularly in *Death Note* and *Code Geass*, where protagonists Light Yagami and Lelouch Lamperouge embark on ambitious quests they perceive as just, only to be ensnared by their own moral failings.

In *Death Note*, Light Yagami, armed with the power to kill by merely writing a name, initially seeks to create a utopia free of crime. His vision of a perfect world where he reigns as a god blinds him to the ethical cost of his actions. As his power grows, so does his willingness to manipulate, deceive, and eliminate anyone who opposes him. What began as a pursuit of justice transforms into tyranny, ultimately leading to his downfall. His tragic end exemplifies Proverbs 14:12 what seemed like the right path, driven by a self-righteous vision, results in destruction.

Similarly, Lelouch Lamperouge in *Code Geass* believes he is fighting for the liberation of the oppressed, using his Geass ability to manipulate others for what he perceives as a noble cause. However, his reliance on deception, violence, and moral compromises leads to devastating losses, including the deaths of those he loves. His well-intentioned path spirals into a cycle of betrayal and sacrifice, mirroring the proverb's warning about the deceptive allure of a seemingly righteous path.

8.4. Psalm 34:14 - Turn from Evil and Do Good

Psalm 34:14 exhorts, "Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." This verse underscores the biblical principle of moral transformation acknowledging one's past transgressions and actively choosing a righteous path. The themes of redemption, atonement, and the pursuit of justice that permeate *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* align closely with this wisdom from the Psalms, as characters wrestle with their past mistakes and strive to make amends.

Edward and Alphonse Elric, the protagonists of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, serve as prime examples of individuals who turn from their initial missteps to seek redemption. Their journey begins with a grave sin attempting human transmutation, a forbidden act that defies natural and divine laws. In their pursuit of bringing their mother back to life, they suffer dire consequences: Alphonse loses his entire body, and Edward sacrifices an arm and a leg. Recognizing the gravity of their mistake, they dedicate their lives to rectifying it, searching for the Philosopher's Stone not to gain power, but to restore what was lost.

Throughout the series, the brothers consistently choose to uphold their moral integrity despite the temptations of power and revenge. Edward, in particular, refuses to kill, even when faced with enemies who embody corruption and destruction. His unwavering commitment to doing good, even

at personal cost, mirrors the Psalmist's call to turn from evil and actively pursue righteousness.

Additionally, the series explores the redemption arcs of other characters, such as Scar and Greed, who transition from vengeance and self-interest to seeking justice and camaraderie. Their transformations reinforce the biblical message that individuals are not bound by their past sins but have the capacity to change and seek the path of righteousness.

8.5. Isaiah 5:20 - Woe to Those Who Call Evil Good

Isaiah 5:20 warns, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." This prophetic declaration critiques the moral inversion that occurs when society distorts the true nature of right and wrong. The verse emphasizes the danger of redefining moral boundaries, where actions traditionally considered evil are reinterpreted as virtuous, leading to societal corruption. In many ways, this biblical warning resonates with anime series like *Death Note*, where characters, particularly the protagonist, grapple with the complexities of labelling actions as either good or evil.

In *Death Note*, Light Yagami begins his quest with a self-righteous belief that he is morally justified in using the Death Note to rid the world of criminals. His initial intentions to create a utopia free from evil align with a socially accepted notion of justice. However, as Light grows increasingly power-hungry, his actions become more morally ambiguous. He starts to redefine "good" and "evil" based on his own standards, positioning himself as a god-like figure above human laws and moral constraints. In doing so, Light not only blurs the line between good and evil but inverts it, viewing the murder of thousands as a noble act for the greater good, while portraying those who oppose him as the true evil.

This inversion of moral order reflects Isaiah's warning about the dangers of calling evil good and vice versa. As Light's actions escalate, his personal justification becomes a dangerous form of moral relativism, where he no longer recognizes the inherent wrongness of killing and punishing people based on his own arbitrary definitions of justice. His descent into moral corruption mirrors the societal consequences warned about in Isaiah when evil is misrepresented as good, it leads to widespread destruction and chaos.

8.6. Jonah 4:11 - Concern for the Innocent

The Book of Jonah, particularly the narrative of God's mercy toward Nineveh, underscores the profound ethical principle that God is deeply concerned with innocent lives, even in the face of impending judgment. Jonah's reluctance to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh stems from his belief that they deserve divine punishment for their wickedness. However, God's response reveals a different perspective: the potential for redemption and the preservation of innocent lives outweighs judgment. In Jonah 4:11, God expresses His compassion, saying, "Should I not be concerned about that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left?" This divine concern for the innocent, even in a city steeped in sin, highlights the complexities of moral choices and the ethical responsibility we bear toward others, especially those who may be unaware or unintentionally harmed by our actions.

This ethical dilemma closely aligns with the struggles faced by the Elric brothers, Edward and Alphonse, in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*. At the start of the series, the brothers commit a grave sin in their attempt to resurrect their mother through alchemy, an act that violates the natural order and causes significant harm to themselves and Alphonse, who loses his entire body. The consequences of their reckless actions ripple through the lives of others, as they journey to find the Philosopher's Stone in hopes of restoring what was lost. Along the way, they encounter individuals whose lives have been directly or indirectly affected by their past mistakes. The brothers grapple with the responsibility of the harm they've caused and the moral complexity of their choices.

As the series unfolds, the brothers come to realize that their actions, even if initially motivated by a desire to rectify their own loss, impact the lives of innocent people. Their quest to undo their wrongs mirrors the ethical dilemma seen in Jonah: the brothers must weigh their personal desires against the broader consequences for others. Just as God shows mercy to Nineveh, offering the opportunity for repentance and restoration, the Elric brothers ultimately seek redemption by confronting their past actions and striving to heal the damage they have caused, recognizing that their moral choices cannot be made in isolation from the lives they touch.

By intertwining the ethical landscapes of anime with biblical references, we gain a deeper understanding of how these narratives engage with timeless moral considerations. The Old Testament serves as a rich source of inspiration, enriching the ethical odyssey portrayed in anime and

highlighting the enduring relevance of these ethical inquiries across different cultural and artistic expressions.

As we contextualize this exploration, it becomes clear that anime serves as a contemporary canvas for ethical reflections, providing a platform where ancient wisdom and modern creativity converge. The contextual reflection on anime's ethical odyssey prompts us to appreciate the cultural dialogue it fosters, inviting viewers to contemplate their own moral compass within the diverse and evolving landscapes of storytelling. In essence, this exploration transcends the boundaries of entertainment, becoming a dynamic conversation about the enduring human quest to navigate the complexities of good and evil.

9. Conclusion

In this exploration of anime's ethical odyssey through the lens of the Old Testament, we find a captivating interplay between modern storytelling and ancient moral principles. Anime, as a dynamic and evolving medium, continues to grapple with questions of good and evil in ways that resonate with audiences across cultures and beliefs. The Old Testament, with its timeless teachings, provides a thought-provoking backdrop against which we can assess the ethical complexities presented in anime narratives.

Through our journey, we have witnessed characters facing moral dilemmas, undergoing redemption arcs, and navigating the consequences of their choices. These narratives serve as mirrors reflecting the human experience and the perennial struggle to discern right from wrong. Anime's capacity to weave intricate tales allows for a nuanced exploration of ethics, transcending cultural and religious boundaries.

While many of the parallels drawn between anime and Old Testament themes may be unintentional—given that the creators of series such as *Death Note*, *Code Geass*, and *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* do not explicitly cite biblical inspiration—the similarities are nonetheless striking. These convergences invite deeper reflection on the universal nature of ethical storytelling. From a religious communication standpoint, this raises an important and timely question: How might religious educators and communicators intentionally adopt anime-style narratives to convey theological truths and moral teachings?

Given anime's global popularity, especially among younger generations, there lies significant potential for religious communicators to engage anime's visual storytelling techniques, character complexity, and moral ambiguity to make scriptural principles more relatable and resonant. This does not mean appropriating anime superficially, but rather understanding and embracing its narrative depth as a vessel for expressing enduring themes such as justice, mercy, sacrifice, and redemption.

Ultimately, as we conclude this odyssey, we recognize that the intersection of anime and the Old Testament offers a space for contemplation, discussion, and appreciation of the multifaceted nature of ethical storytelling. In this ongoing dialogue between ancient wisdom and contemporary creativity, we find that the exploration of good and evil remains a timeless and universal pursuit. This conversation also opens pathways for future exploration—inviting theologians, artists, and educators to reimagine how sacred narratives might be communicated afresh through the storytelling idioms of our time.

REFERENCES

Allen, Joe. "The Ending of Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood Explained." *Looper*, February 16, 2021. https://www.looper.com/334644/the-ending-of-fullmetal-alchemist-brotherhood-explained.

Ausloos, Hans. "It's a Matter of Justice! The Old Testament and the Idea of Retribution." *Pretoria* 36, no. 1 (April 2023): 151-165.

Buchholz, Ester S., and Joshua K Mandel. "Reaching for Virtue, Stumbling on Sin: Concepts of Good and Evil in a Postmodern Era." *Journal of Religion and Health* 39, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 123-142.

Burris, Christopher T., and John K. Rempel. "Good and Evil in Religion: The Interpersonal Context." In *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality,* edited by Lisa J. Miller, 123-137. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Candel, Daniel. "Systematizing Evil in Literature: Twelve Models for The Analysis of Narrative Fiction." *Semiotica* 242 (2021): 141-168.

Dowell, Dillon Rey. "Fullmetal Alchemist: Which Brother Got a Better Ending?" *Game Rant*. Accessed November 12, 2023. https://gamerant.com/fullmetal-alchemist-which-brother-got-a-better-ending.

Hanna, Bridget. "Death Note and Morality." *Screen Education* 78 (2015): 40-43.

Hernández-Pérez, Manuel. "Looking into the 'Anime Global Popular' and the 'Manga Media': Reflections on the Scholarship of a Transnational and Transmedia Industry." *Arts* 8, no. 2 (April 2019): 1-14.

Herrick, Alex. "Death Note: Is Light Evil? Unravelling The Mystery." *Web Design Booth*. https://www.webdesignbooth.com/death-note-is-light-evil. Accessed February 1, 2024.

Hlioui, Ameni. "The Good 'US' vs. the Evil 'THEM' as Fluid Constructs in the 'Attack on Titan' Manga." *International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies* 27, no. 2 (2021): 1-7.

Kahn, Sholom J. "The Problem of Evil in Literature." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 12, no. 1 (September 1953): 98-110.

Markesinis, Basil. *Good and Evil in Art and Law: An Extended Essay.* Heidelberg: Springer Vienna, 2007.

Russell, Luke. "Good and Evil in Recent Discussion Defending the Concept of Evil." *ZEMO* 5 (2022): 77-82.

Stromback, Dennis. "A Dialogue on the Good and Evil Bivalence in the Study of Ethics: On François Flahault and Nishida Kitarō." *Journal of World Philosophies* 7, no. 1 (2022): 29-42.

White, Meredith. "*Code Geass: Geass, Explained*." *Game Rant*, n.d., https://gamerant.com/code-geass-what-is-geass. Accessed December 24, 2023.