THIS THING OF DARKNESS: SHEDDING LIGHT ON EVIL

EDITED BY
CLAUDIO V. ZANINI AND LIMA BHUIYAN

This Thing of Darkness

Inter-Disciplinary Press

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Introduction

Claudio V. Zanini and Lima Bhuiyan

The phrase that serves as the main title for this volume – 'This Thing of Darkness' – comes from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, written between the years 1610 and 1611. A combination of elements accounts for the special aura readers and scholars have attributed to this particular play: it is Shakespeare's last solo piece; it blurs the boundaries between the human and the supernatural, as it had been previously done with great success, in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*; it presents an ultimately successful love story between two young and endearing characters; finally, the play's peculiar ending has aroused much speculation over the centuries: the final words are directly addressed to the audience, and come from a character who admits to feeling weak and powerless, something that has been seen as a sort of prophecy regarding the end of Shakespeare's career and health. And it is by presenting highlights and very brief comments about *The Tempest*'s intriguing plot that we invite you to start the journey through the diverse approaches to evil this volume offers – and if at this point you are wondering whether any chapters in this collection discuss the presence of evil in Shakespeare's work, the answer is 'yes'.

Prospero is a nobleman entitled to the throne of Milan. Antonio, his cold-hearted, power-driven brother, concocts a plan to tarnish Prospero's reputation. Antonio's success forces Prospero to leave Milan with his then three-year-old daughter Miranda, and they end up on an island, where Caliban, the orphan of the witch Sycorax, already lives. Twelve years pass, Prospero has developed magical powers and behaves as the master of the place, enslaving both Caliban and a submissive spirit named Ariel, while Miranda becomes a beautiful young woman. Under Prospero's command, Ariel brings forth a tempest in the first act that causes a ship passing by to wreck. Conveniently enough, on-board are the most important men from Milan, including Antonio and a young man named Ferdinand. The play unfolds with revenge plans, displays of power, misunderstandings, exchanges of harsh words and the development of a love story between Miranda and Ferdinand. In the end, Prospero and Antonio forgive each other, while the planning for the young couple's engagement party commences. The epilogue consists of a speech delivered by Prospero. After his dilemmas, prejudices and grudges are all presented and deconstructed as the play unfolds, he places his life and destiny in the hands of the public. As the ending of the play is somehow open, it is up to the audience to determine what happens now: "But release me from my bands, with the help of your good hands. Gentle breath of yours my sails must fill, or else my project fails."[1]

The reasons that have made Shakespeare's work survive over the past four centuries have been debated extensively. One safe conclusion is that significant part of the Bard's strength derives from the themes in his work and the approach given to them. The themes are countless and universal: love, death, revenge,

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(in)tolerance, thirst for power, jealousy, sexual desire and moral dilemmas, to mention a few; as for the way these themes appear in Shakespeare's plots, they are invariably pervaded by evil, the very element that binds together the texts you are about to read. Remembering that some of the most infamous characters in the history of fiction came from Shakespeare's pen reinforces that: the list includes Iago, who is blinded by envy in *Othello* and whose actions culminate in multiple deaths; King Claudius, who takes away from his brother Hamlet life, the throne and his place in the queen's bed; the Macbeths, who become obsessed with the prospects of kingdom and do deeds that will bring regret, isolation and suicide, and Richard III, who openly admits at the beginning of the play that he has good reason to be excessively evil and will not have a problem in being so.

Nonetheless, Shakespeare acknowledges the complex nature of evil in human life, and gives it an appropriate treatment in his plays. An analysis of some of the conundrums posed by *The Tempest* proves that: in having his brother evicted from Milan by going behind his back, does Antonio prove to be that evil? After all, he judges himself more fit to be the king of Milan – and for all we know, he might indeed be so; what is more, at the end of the play he repents and asks for Prospero's forgiveness, which seems a very decent thing. Despite his foul mouth and non-European looks, does Caliban deserve the epithet 'this thing of darkness', which Prospero bestows on him? Is Caliban entitled to any kind of revenge (perhaps evil's most frequent offspring), considering that his homeland has been taken by someone with overwhelming powers? Is Prospero entitled to smear Caliban's spirituality and maternal memories, by underestimating him? Is this smearing reason enough for Caliban to attempt to rape Miranda? By teaching him English and so-called manners, are Prospero and his daughter helping Caliban, or creating irreversible trauma through acculturation? Is Ariel, whose powers cause the tempest in the beginning of the play, Prospero's indebted servant, a mere bureaucrat of evil, or none of the above?

Caliban is specially designed to stand out as the one who does not look like the others, does not comply with social and moral rules and who has a diverse background from the others, which is beautifully reinforced by the fact that his mother was a witch, and one of the very few things we know about her is that she imprisoned Ariel in a tree as part of a spell. The 'difference' Caliban represents so strongly in visual terms is at its core an association to being disturbing, bizarre, weird, non-civilised, out of standards, an outsider – which eventually will lead to him being called a 'thing of darkness'.

In that sense, all sorts of 'things of darkness' are contemplated in the texts comprising this volume, all originated from presentations delivered during the 16th Global Conference: Perspectives on Evil and Human Wickedness, held in Lisbon, Portugal, between and 18th and the 20th of March, 2015. Twelve of those presentations became the texts in this volume, with authors representing five countries (Brazil, Germany, Greece, Turkey and the United States), in addition to

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presenters from England, Japan and the United Arab Emirates who participated of the conference. The scope of the analyses, discussions and exchange of ideas fostered by these texts increases the universality of evil hinted by the geographical representativeness noticed in contributors' origins: real and imagined prisons, contemporary media, evil entities, representations of the feminine in association to evil, and witches – from Salem and Blair alike – are just some of the topics you are going to come across throughout the following pages.

The perspectives from which the contributors observe evil are multiple: the ideas from philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Giorgio Agamben, Cornelius Castoriadis and Andre Comte-Sponville stand alongside theories pertaining to mass media, documentary film, the convergence culture, history and psychoanalysis. Movies, television series, classic works of literature, media coverage and public institutions are scrutinized, and while all authors agree that evil is intrinsic to being human, each chapter in this volume invites to questioning the status quo, places and origins of evil.

While each text derives from the authors' individual paths of life, academic trajectories and overall preferences, you shall be able to notice that connections to between them are not only possible, but unavoidable: the chapters that travel back in time so as to investigate historical events show us that our ways of dealing with evil – ranging from labelling to punishing, and passing by enjoying it – have not changed as obviously as one would expect, a fact confirmed by the texts that focus on contemporary issues regarding evil. Concomitantly, a parallel between the texts which analyse works of fiction and the ones that tackle actual, documented facts, demonstrate that artistic representations of evil are never far from the so-called reality, despite the fantastic or supernatural tints evil sometimes gains in movies and novels.

The fact that evil naturally belongs to humanity leads us to a point strongly made by each text, but more clearly perceived by observing the collection in its entirety, namely, that the topic may be approached from a myriad of perspectives. For instance, evil is an academic research object for the contributors to this volume, whose predominant areas of study are communication, media, languages, literature, cinema, philosophy, anthropology and history; nonetheless, the diversity of texts and areas of knowledge which inspired the authors highlights the interdisciplinary treatment evil receives in each and every chapter in this book. The analyses and discussions also draw on concepts from psychology, geopolitics, religion, ethics, aesthetics, and mythology.

Twelve texts have made it to the final version of this volume, and the symbolism and power associated to this number are overwhelming: it is the number of months in the calendar adopted by most cultures today, as well as the number of signs of the zodiac, which has also been seen by some people as a thing of darkness due to its pagan origins. Twelve is the number of hours on a day times two, and the number of apostles who shared the Last Supper with Jesus Christ – let

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us remember one of those twelve was eternalized as the epitome of darkness for being a traitor as far as Christian symbolism is concerned. French philosopher and theologian Jean Chevalier states that, among other things, twelve is the number by which space and time are divided, the number of sections in the vault of Heaven; in addition, it symbolizes the inner complexity of the universe, it is the number of fruits bore by the Tree of Knowledge, and the number of knights around King Arthur's round table[2]. Finally, twelve is also the number of films in the *Friday the 13th* franchise (10 instalments plus a crossover and a remake), at least for the time being. Therefore, twelve seems to us a good number to celebrate all things evil; however, if you happen to be more traditional, and you think thirteen would be more appropriate, then please consider yourself a the newest addition to this gang of things of darkness, and the mathematics should be satisfactory after all.

A great deal of the fiction we have access to reinforces Manichean representations of good and evil, in which those two instances are carefully separated in order to sustain other binary oppositions: right versus wrong, moral versus immoral, appropriate versus inappropriate, and, why not, light versus darkness. This supposedly makes life easier, as the number of choices is reduced – at first two, but when moral rules, common sense and comfort zones come into play, these binary pairs tend to look like one-way roads. Once these factors are articulated, one decides who and what one wants to be affiliated to, who to root for when reading a book or watching a soap opera. This dichotomy between good and evil, or light and darkness, has been represented countless times; from the combination between the yin and the yang to the existence of a white swan (Odette) and a black one (Odille) in Tchaikovsky's *The Swan Lake*, from the blatant classic example of the dichotomy between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde to Woody Woodpecker torn between its angelic and demonic little selves, constituting amusing, albeit accurate representations of Freud's proposition of the tripartite division of the human psyche into id, ego and superego. However, Manicheanism lacks empathy, that is, the ability one has of putting oneself in someone else's position – in other words, Manicheanism does not allow for a multiplicity of perspectives as far as evil is concerned. In that sense, we are proud to say you should not expect to find any Manichean agendas in any of the texts in *This Thing of Darkness: Shedding Light on Evil*.

The examples mentioned above serve to reinforce the point about Manichaean representations of evil, particularly in fiction. Odille, the female figure in *The Swam Lake* who displays behaviours more clearly immoral, necessarily becomes the black swan, in comparison to Odette, the angelic princess/white swan. Mr. Hyde, Dr. Jeykll's reckless, driven self, is a creature of the night, something that must remain suffocated. Odille and Hyde share this connection to darkness because they are presented to audiences as evil counterparts to Odette and Jekyll, characters with whom we are supposed to sympathise because of the way in which they are presented and the values they stand for. Nevertheless, Tchaikovsky's ballet and

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Stevenson's novella deal with evil in all its complexity and nuances, which certainly is part of the reason why *The Swam Lake* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* have become classics.

The same could be said about Shakespeare, from whose work we borrow the title of this volume. We use the phrase 'this thing of darkness' in this context much like Prospero uses it to refer to Caliban: both Caliban and the themes dealt with in the chapters you have at hand strike people in general as ugly and monstrous. These are the features on the surface, and because they are so blatant, the instinct to call them 'dark' comes forth. However, Prospero does change his attitude towards everyone and everything around him – Caliban included – at the end of *The Tempest*. Facts lead Prospero to adopt new perspectives, and that is precisely what this volume intends: to invite the reader to question common sense and to consider various points of view about evil. The process of shedding light on evil will ultimately demonstrate the lesson Prospero has long learned: 'things of darkness' are intrinsic to human beings. Shedding light on them is probably the most efficient way of coming to terms with them.

[1] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (New York, Spark Publishing: 2003), 202.
[2] Jean Chevalier, *Dictionary of Symbols* (London, Penguin: 1996), 1043-1044.

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'Evil' of the Weak and Mediocrity as the Aim of Modern Culture: A Discussion of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*

Abdullah Onur Aktaş

Abstract
If an imaginary goldsmith was weighing up the value of our moral judgments, what would be her estimate? Our imaginary goldsmith probably would ask: 'What kind of person have you turned into through your morality?' This is exactly what Nietzsche directly or indirectly asks of modern culture in his works – in particular the *Genealogy of Morals*: for Nietzsche, our modern values, religion, ideals, and institutions are life-negating and all point to the suppression of individuality, creativity, and vitality. Thus, according to Nietzsche, through our moral judgments and modern values – in other words, through our 'good' and 'evil' – we become mediocre, lame, and ordinary. I thus propose to undertake an investigation of Nietzsche's ideas on the genealogy of our concepts of 'good' and 'evil' and see how they block the development of life-enhancing morality, individuals, and culture.

Key Words: Nietzsche, good, evil, mediocrity, modern culture.

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1. Life is Innocent

One thing we have learned from anthropology is that anatomically modern human beings evolved nearly two hundred thousand years ago, and the emergence of civilizations is thought to date back nearly ten thousand years. It is crystal clear that in different periods of time and different parts of the world, the way people live, feel, think, and act differ greatly. So, it is easy to understand that our modern values are not as universal, objective, and timeless as many people think: morality differs from society to society and from period to period. Nietzsche wants to consider the differences and evaluate good and evil from this point of view. Our modern judgments do not form 'the' one, objective morality; as such, Nietzsche considers our modern moral judgments to be problematic, and questions whether or not they are even desirable. From this point, he starts his inquiry into the origins of morality.

According to Nietzsche, if we get to the etymologic root of the term 'good', we discover that it originally meant noble, powerful, and genuine. He even finds that the term is to some extent related to war. The only antonym to 'good' was 'worthless' (*schlecht*).[1] There was no such thing as 'sin' or 'evil'. What was healthy, powerful, happy, and cheerful was simply 'good'. The only things that could be considered 'bad' (*schlecht*) were mediocrity, cowardice, misery, and weakness. Affirming bodily pleasures were good and despising the body was bad.

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So far, so simple. Yet, according to Nietzsche, over the course of time our understanding of good and bad underwent a radical change and what we once called 'good' became 'evil' and 'bad'/'worthless' (*schlecht*) became 'good'. And Nietzsche explains this major change as the herd or slave morality prevailing over master morality. But how did this happen?

Nietzsche tells us that slave morality emerged as follows: resentment became the fuel of slave morality's engine at some point in history. Those who hated cheerful, happy, and life-affirming masters defined their own 'good' and 'evil' accordingly. First, they looked at their masters features in a very reactive way and called those 'evil' (*böse*); then they looked at themselves and said 'we must be the 'good' ones': impotence turned into 'goodness', timid baseness became 'humility', submission became 'obedience', and so on.[2] They hated the masters as their enemies (*die geistreichsten Hasser*). Yet, the masters did not define themselves as such. They were not *reactive*; therefore they did not define 'good' in relation to anything other than themselves. And they only wanted enemies that they could love and be proud of. Nietzsche calls such masters 'blonde beasts of prey',[3] who were mad, formidable, and unpredictable.

At this point, it is important to note that Nietzsche does not offer the morality of such masters – which he assumes existed at some period in history – as an ideal for us to follow. He tries to re-evaluate values in order to remind us that life-affirming values are possible. Slave, or herd morality, has its source in resentment and it is nothing but a pattern trying to form everyone in the mould of the ordinary and predictable. He reminds us that creativity, vitality, naturality, and playfulness are possible or, in other words, life-affirming values are possible.

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'God is dead' may be the most well-known of Nietzsche's words. Yet the story of 'the birth of God' is even more interesting. This story is quite extraordinary, since it not only sheds light on the emergence of our modern understanding of 'God', but also of 'guilt', 'evil', and 'bad-conscience' – which are intertwined.

The story begins with 'being able to make promises'. Human beings measure everything and try to set the value of everything; hence Nietzsche calls human beings 'calculating animals'.[4] Prices should be fixed, values should be set, exchanges should be made, and so on. Nietzsche thinks that this calculation mechanism is older than any other social organization. In the pre-historical period, for example, the canon of moral law was simply 'pay back your debt!' (In this sense Nietzsche sees 'debt' (*Schuld*) as the origin of our modern understanding of 'sin' (*Schuld*)[5]). This was simply the relationship between the creditor and debtor. Nietzsche projects this relationship onto the community (as creditor) and its members (as debtors). First of all, community itself is the creditor that provides food, security, peace; and, in this case, the lawbreaker is a debtor 'who has broken

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his contract and his word to the whole, in connection with all the valued features and amenities of communal life that he has shared up till now'.[6] Secondly, our ancestors are creditors who settled, achieved, and sacrificed. As such members of the community felt that they owed their existence to them: 'I owe my existence to you, great ancestors of the past. Now I want to repay my debt'. But how could we repay our ancestors? According to Nietzsche, by sacrificing something. As societies evolved, ancestors became great spirits and gods, for whom chapels and temples were built.[7] From this simple creditor–debtor relationship, rules of social order and 'divine laws' evolved, as well as 'the feeling of indebtedness towards a deity'.[8] This narrative reaches its peak as Nietzsche declares 'the Christian God as the maximal god yet achieved'.[9] This god is the ultimate creditor and all human beings are debtors. In other words, we owe our existence to the ultimate forefather-'God' – and we, as debtors, are thus born guilty. Yet when the creditor sacrifices himself out of love for the debtor the story ends.

Nietzsche's explanation of the development of 'sin', 'god', and 'bad conscience' as originating in creditor–debtor relationship is illuminating. But his main point, I believe, is to challenge our modern values and moral judgments, by pointing to the life-denying systems at their origins. This world of becoming is not necessarily evil, and we are not necessarily sinners from birth. There are alternative value systems:

> That should be enough, once and for all, about the descent of the 'holy God'. – That the conception of gods does not, as such, necessarily lead to that deterioration of the imagination which we had to think about for a moment, that there are nobler ways of making use of the invention of gods than man's self-crucifixion and self-abuse, ways in which Europe excelled during the last millennia, – this can fortunately be deduced from any glance at the Greek gods, these reflections of noble and proud men in whom the animal in man felt deified, did not tear itself apart and did not rage against itself! These Greeks, for most of the time, used their gods expressly to keep 'bad conscience' at bay so that they could carry on enjoying their freedom of soul: therefore, the opposite of the way Christendom made use of its God.[10]

2. Tyranny of the Weak

Life-denying value systems – just as the name implies –, which originate from resentment, are reactive against happiness, peacefulness, self-development, enjoyment of instincts, and anything worldly. Life and this world of becoming are never accepted as they are; consolation is sought in some ideal place other than this world; and change and transition are considered evil. And in this reactive attitude, search for consolation and the alleviation of suffering creates its own values and

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'absolute' truths. Life is denied and in return, metaphysical comfort is gained. But from such values only the slave morality of 'a tame and civilized animal, a household pet, out of the beast of prey 'man''[11] can emerge. This is the danger Nietzsche sees facing modern people. Thus, according to Nietzsche, through our moral judgments and modern values-in other words, through our 'good' and 'evil' – we become mediocre, lame, and ordinary. Nietzsche's alternative is a call to sensations, creation, art and life:

> It is absolutely impossible for us to conceal what was actually expressed by that whole willing that derives its direction from the ascetic ideal: this hatred of the human, and even more of the animalistic, even more of the material, this horror of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and beauty, this longing to get away from appearance, transience, growth, death, wishing, longing itself-all that means, let us dare to grasp it, a will to nothingness, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental prerequisites of life, but it is and remains a will![12]

A sense of 'challenge' comes through in every sentence of Nietzsche's works. With a powerful rhetoric, strong philosophical and psychological acumen, he diagnoses our modern values and moral judgments as life-denying systems. What do we actually call 'evil'? And why do we do so?

Knowledge of our certain death, and that our times have to come to an end, is of no comfort. It is normal, in the face of finitude and death, to search for meaning where sufferings, contradictions, and deceptions are cast aside; it is normal to create ideals that offer consolation. Yet there are always alternative meanings and values. And there are definitely values that represent an affirmation of life. A vivid culture is possible, but it cannot emerge from values of comfort, mediocrity, and indifference. Our modern morality is not 'the' definition of morality. There are always different paths, there is always something new to say, and there are always other seas to sail. Difference and change is always possible in life. Nietzsche's worry is in the end quite clear: he tries to remind us – in spite of all terrors of existence – that we are at home in this world.

Notes

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality,* trans. C. Diethe, ed. K. Ansell-Pearson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) I:5, 13–15.
[2] Ibid. I:14, 27–28.'[S]ubmission to people one hates is being turned into 'obedience' (actually towards someone who, they say, orders this submission – they call him God). Inoffensiveness of the weakling, the very cowardice with which he is richly endowed, his standing-by-the-door, his inevitable position of

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having to wait, are all given good names such as 'patience', also known as the virtue; not-being-able-to-take-revenge is called not-wanting-to-take-revenge, it might even be forgiveness ('for they know not what they do – but we know what they are doing!')'

[3] Ibid. I:11, 23. This word has nothing to do with Nazi ideology, since under this concept he counts 'Roman, Arabian, Germanic, Japanese nobility, Homeric heroes, Scandinavian Vikings'

[4] Ibid. II:8, 45.

[5] In German, the word 'Schuld' means both 'debt' and 'sin'.

[6] Ibid. II: 9, 46.

[7] Ibid. II:19, 61.'Sacrifices (originally as food in the crudest sense), feasts, chapels, tributes, above all, obedience-for all traditions are, as works of the ancestors, also their rules and orders: do people ever give them enough'

[8] Ibid. II: 20, 62.

[9] Ibid. II: 20, 62.

[10] Ibid. II: 23, 63–64.

[11] Ibid. I:11, 24.

[12] Ibid. III:28, 120.

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Is Diabolical Action Possible?

Peter Brian Barry

Abstract
It is largely agreed among philosophers (and perhaps among the folk) that calling
someone or something 'evil' is a very different thing than calling that person or
thing 'bad' or 'wrong'. But what is it that makes actions evil rather than merely
wrong? Competing conceptions of evil action are multiform, but a number of
philosophers have resisted the claim that evil action should be understood as
diabolical—roughly, as actions performed for the sake of doing evil itself. Indeed,
a number of philosophers insist that diabolical actions are not possible. While I
doubt ~~that~~ evil actions should be identified with diabolical actions, I nonetheless
maintain that diabolical action is possible. The primary opposition to the possibility
of diabolical action appears to depend upon a popular thesis in the philosophy of
action and agency, the so-called *guise of the good* thesis. I contend that this
opposition is mistaken. My argument is essentially an argument by analogy that
begins with examples that even defenders of that thesis should find plausible. So, I
argue, while diabolical action may neither be common nor paradigmatic, it is for
all that possible.

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1. Introduction
It is largely agreed among philosophers that calling a person or an event 'evil' is a
very different thing than using comparatively tepid moral language like 'bad'.[1] The
sense of 'evil' that is of interest at present is that of 'the worst possible term of
opprobrium imaginable.'[2] Competing conceptions of evil action abound. On
psychologically thin conceptions, evil actions just are culpable wrongs
appropriately connected to sufficiently grave harm; on psychologically thick
conceptions, evil actions must be culpable wrongs *and* meet some further
psychological conditions.[3] On a remarkable psychologically thick conception, evil
actions must be *diabolical*—that is, they must be done *precisely because they are
evil*.[4] They are those performed *for the sake of evil itself*.

   Must evil actions be diabolical? Awfully many atrocities are reasonably
regarded as instances of evildoing but it is simply implausible to suppose that they
are all done for the sake of evil itself, and not for some more banal motive. But
some philosophers are sceptical not only of *identifying* evil actions with diabolical
actions, but of *the very possibility* of diabolical action: for example, we are told
that if there is any reason that certainly does not prompt evildoing it is 'because it's

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evil'[5] and that the very concept of diabolical action is 'incoherent'.[6] Other philosophers are perfectly well willing to countenance the possibility of diabolical action.[7] On one account, Kant's ethical theory can make no room for 'the possibility of a person knowingly doing evil for its own sake', a result apparently at odds with 'the contravening evidence of human experience', and for that reason Kantian ethics should be rejected.[8]

I contend that diabolical action is possible although I admit that there are substantial philosophical obstacles to explaining just how diabolical action could be possible. In what follows, I consider what I take to be the most compelling reason to doubt the possibility of diabolical evil. I then offer an argument that purports to show that diabolical action is possible.

2. The Old Formula of the Schools

Our philosophical ancestors tended to embrace the view that, necessarily, someone can want something only if she thinks that what she wants is good (in some aspect), what Kant called the 'old formula of the schools.' Out of deference to Kant, I dub the following the 'Old Formula':

> (Old Formula): Necessarily, an agent, *A*, can want *D* only if *A* thinks that *D* is good (in some aspect).

The Old Formula does not require that *A* thinks that *D* is good overall or good all-things-considered and it does not require that *A* thinks that *D* is morally good. The Old Formula is supposed to have the status of a necessary truth, however, and it is supposed to apply even to seemingly perverse agents like Satan from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Familiarly, Satan's most famous soliloquy includes the infamous imperative '*Evil be thou my good*.' The most influential proponent of the Old Formula—that would be Elizabeth Anscombe—understands Satan thusly:

> 'Evil be thou my good' is often thought to be senseless in some way. Now all that concerns us here is that 'What's the good of it?' is something that can be asked until a desirability characterization has been reached and made intelligible. If then the answer to this question at some stage is 'The good of it is that it's bad,' this need not be unintelligible; one can go on to say 'And what is the good of its being bad?' to which the answer might be the condemnation of good as impotent, slavish, and inglorious. Then the good of making evil my good is my intact liberty in the unsubmissiveness of my will. *Bonnum est multiplex*: good is multiform, and all that is required for our concept of 'wanting' is that a man should see what he wants under the aspect of some good.[9]

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So understood, while Satan is surely acting wrongly when he takes on the Throne, he himself thinks that there is *something* good about what he does, even if there is much to be said against it by his own lights. Not even Satan is capable of diabolical action, apparently; he neither wants to do evil for its own sake nor does evil for the sake of doing evil.

David Velleman dismisses Anscombe's interpretation of Satan on the grounds that it renders anything satanic from him: it makes him 'a rather sappy Satan', just another lover of the good, just another well intentioned fool.[10] Surely, Velleman contends, 'the ruler of Hell doesn't desire what he wrongly thinks is worthy of approval; he desires what he rightly thinks isn't.'[11] But what is the alternative to desiring what one thinks is good (at least in some aspect)? Velleman's counter-example to the Old Formula is an agent who wants to smash crockery just because it strikes him as a worthless thing to do: indeed, the crockery-smasher wants to do worthless things precisely under that description and if he came to think that there is something worthwhile or otherwise good about smashing crockery, for example, then he would lose any desire to do so.[12] If *that* is how Satan is to be understood, however, he remains a sap. So understood, Satan isn't moved to pursue what he thinks is good but what is futile and destructive and to pursue it on precisely those grounds. This isn't clearly evildoing, much less diabolical evildoing, but the pathetic fumblings of a loser resigned to defeat.

Anscombe's interpretation of Satan is useful for a different reason: it helps to distinguish two different readings of the Old Formula. Importantly, the Old Formula can be read either *de dicto* or *de re*:

> (Old Formula—*de dicto*): Necessarily, an agent, *A*, can want *D* only if *A* thinks that *D* is good—that is, that *D* instantiates the property of *goodness* itself;

> (Old Formula—*de re*): Necessarily, an agent, *A*, can want *D* only if *A* thinks that *D* is *G*, where *G* is some property distinct from the property of *goodness* whose instantiation tends to make *D* (or the realization of *D*) good.

Roughly, on its *de dicto* reading, the Old Formula implies that the object of desire must be thought to instantiate the property of goodness itself, such that the agent who desires it must desire it under the description of *being good*. By contrast, on its *de re* reading, the Old Formula implies that the object of desire must be thought to instantiate some property distinct from goodness itself but nonetheless a property that, when instantiated, makes its bearer good in some respect—say, the property of being pleasant or interesting or advantageous or whatever. But this *de re* reading does not require that the agent infers or otherwise thinks that the object of her desire is good *also* instantiates the property of goodness; she need not also

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think that what she wants is good-because-pleasant or good-because-advantageous or anything like that. It is enough on the *de re* reading that the agent thinks that the object of desire instantiates some property and that, in fact, instantiation of that property makes the object of the desire good in some aspect.

Anscombe herself seems to favour the *de re* reading of the Old Formula. Recall her discussion of Satan's infamous imperative above: to explain what Satan does we simply need to provide an intelligible desirability characterization, an explanation that puts an end to questions like 'What's the good of it?' and the like. But not just any answer will do; the answer must make the object of the desirability characterization *intelligible* and not just any answer to such questions is intelligible. For example, someone who 'explains' why he hunts out all the green books in his house and spreads them out on his roof by suggesting that 'I just thought I would' fails to provide both an intelligible desirability characterization of what he does.[13] By contrast, if he notes that spreading out his books is fun or pleasant or entertaining then he does provide an intelligible desirability characterization.[14] Anscombe does seem to take for granted that there is a fair bit of shared knowledge about why we do the things we do; presumably, 'No one needs to surround the pleasures of food and drink with such [desirability] explanations'[15] if only because we already understand that food and drink are pleasurable, for example. But importantly, Anscombe does not demand that anyone infer that his action is good *because* it is fun or pleasant or whatever. If the fellow who spreads out his green books does provide an intelligible desirability characterization, then Anscombe must favour the *de re* reading of the Old Formula; otherwise, desirability characterizations would require the further and distinct thought that spreading out green books is good *in addition* to being fun or pleasant or whatever.[16]

It is not we never desire the good where this is read *de dicto* and not *de re*, but our actual practice of explaining our actions and the actions of others usually rests content with pointing out the good-making features of what is sought or what is done, not the property of goodness itself. Thus, we have good, independent reason for thinking that the *de re* version of the Old Formula is the preferable of the two versions. So, if any version of the Old Formula is going to be an obstacle to allowing for the possibility of diabolical action, it will be the *de re* version. However, we have good reason to be suspicious of the *de re* reading of the Old Formula, albeit a surprising reason given the present discussion.

3. Doing the Right Thing

Sometimes, people want to do the right thing—that is, they want to perform some morally right action not just because it advances their self-interest or because it is prudent or whatever, but simply because it's the right thing do. Sometimes, we want to do something right and we want to do it for its own sake. To be clear, the kind of desire that I have in mind is the desire to do the right thing where this is

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read *de dicto* and not *de re*. On a *de dicto* reading, someone who wants to do the right thing wants to perform an action that is morally right and wants to perform it precisely under *that* description; whether she would remain motivated to act accordingly if the act were described as kind or just or loving is an open question. Someone possessed of a desire to do the right thing is, on the *de dicto* reading, will care non-derivatively about performing right actions but only derivatively about performing kind or just or loving actions. She might be motivated to act kindly or justly or lovingly but only if she has the additional belief that kind or just or loving actions are the right thing to do. She will care non-derivatively about performing kind or just or loving actions only if she is possessed of a desire to do the right thing, where this is read *de re*—that is, she will care non-derivatively about doing what is kind or just or loving only if she wants to do the right thing whatever that turns out to be and however it is described. An agent with a desire to do the right thing, on the *de re* reading, might still be motivated to perform kind or just or loving actions, and want to perform them under precisely those descriptions, even absent some further belief that those act-types are right.

The desire to do the right thing, on the *de dicto* reading, has taken something of a beating among ethical theorists. Famously, Bernard Williams lampoons someone who is moved by an impartial concern to do what is right, the sort of person who has a *de dicto* desire to do the right thing such that he would be motivated to perform the loving act of saving his wife from drowning, for example, only if he also believed that this loving action was the right thing to do. Such an individual, to use Williams' famous expression, suffers from 'one thought too many.'[17] Michael Smith makes the case that being motivated to do the right thing where this is read *de dicto* and not *de re* amounts to having a fetish for morality, a moral vice.[18] But we need not suppose that moral virtue or even moral decency requires having *only* a desire to do the right thing where this is read *de dicto*; a morally decent or virtuous person might have that desire in addition to many other intrinsic desires that ground non-derivative concerns about kindness or justice or love. Regardless, my current point is not that moral decency or virtue is consistent with a desire to do the right thing read *de dicto*; my point is rather that there is such a thing, that we do sometimes talk about such a desire, and that we sometimes explain our actions by reference to a desire to do what's right.

Actions performed because of a *de dicto* desire to do the right thing function as a morally preferable mirror image of diabolical actions: they are not evildoing performed for the sake of doing evil, but rather right actions performed for the sake of doing right. And again, I take it that it is largely uncontroversial that actions done for the sake of doing something right where this is read *de dicto* are genuinely possible. But note two implications of this result. First, if doing the right thing where this is read *de dicto* is possible, then we have good reason to reject the Old Formula left to right. For advocates of the Old Formula to make sense of the possibility of doing the right thing *de dicto*, it would have to be the case that

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instantiating the property of *being thought to be a right action* tends to make an action good (in some aspect). But it is entirely unclear why this should be so. Simply thinking that an action is right doesn't somehow transform a morally wrong action into a morally permissible one; it might have implications for the blameworthiness or moral worth of its agent, but that is a different matter. Further, supposing that instantiating the property of *being thought to be a right action* tends to make an action good (in some aspect) would arguably beg the question against some ethical theories. For example, consequentialist ethical theories that suppose that the rightness of an action is a function of the goodness of its consequences are often enough colloquially described as holding that 'the good is prior to the right.' Accordingly, consequentialists would insist that supposing that an action is good because it is thought right gets things exactly backwards.

So, it looks as though the possibility of doing the right thing, where this is read *de dicto*, suggests that the Old Formula cannot be correct. But if that's right, then the Old Formula presents no special problem to supposing that diabolical actions are possible. In fact, a sort of argument by analogy presents itself, something like the following:

1) If it is possible to want to do the right thing (where this is read *de dicto*) then it is possible to want to do evil because it is evil (where this is read *de dicto*);
2) If it is possible to want to do evil because it is evil (where this is read *de dicto*) then diabolical action is possible;
3) It is possible to want to do the right thing (where this is read *de dicto*);
4) Therefore diabolical action is possible.

Usually, opposition to the Old Formula comes by way of counter-example, an agent who desires or intentionally pursues what she thinks is bad and not at all good, usually in the grip of some powerful emotion or affective state.[19] If the argument here is sound, however, opposition to the Old Formula comes not from psychologically unhealthy agents disposed to act badly, but from perfectly robust moral agents with a genuine yen to act rightly. But it also follows that diabolical action is possible too.

4. Conclusion

It is possible to get a bit carried away with postulating the existence of fairly odd or perverse elements of our psychological economy. For example, the narrator of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Imp of the Perverse' supposes that there is 'an innate and primitive principle of human action, a paradoxical something, which we may call *perverseness*', the very strongest of desires that prompts us to act 'for the reason that we should *not*.' Well, perhaps, but the possibility of diabolical action

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does not depend upon the possibility or pervasiveness of a desire like *that*. There is, to be sure, something perverse about diabolical action and the agents who perform such actions, but accommodating the existence of diabolical action does not clearly require accommodating the existence of actions that are fundamentally incoherent: successfully doing evil for the sake of doing evil would not defeat the very aim or point of that action whereas successfully smashing-crockery for the sake of failing to do anything at all would. As I have argued, the possibility of diabolical action does require the possibility of a *morally* perverse desire: a *de dicto* desire to do evil. But *that* sort of desire is no more problematic than an arguably morally praiseworthy *de dicto* desire to do the right thing. So the possibility of diabolical action presents no special problem for a popular thesis from moral psychology.[20]

Notes

[1] For discussion, see Peter Brian Barry, *Evil and Moral Psychology* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[2] Marcus Singer, 'The Concept of Evil,' *Philosophy* 79 (2004): 185.

[3] Luke Russell, *Evil: A Philosophical Investigation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 69.

[4] Singer, 'The Concept of Evil,' 205.

[5] Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Evil* (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2010), 123.

[6] Phillip Cole, *The Myth of Evil* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 25.

[7] Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 212; Joel Feinberg, *Problems at the Roots of* Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 152-3; Fred Katz, *What Evil Means to Us* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 29; Ronald Milo, *Immorality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 152-3; Singer, 'The Concept of Evil,' 204.

[8] John R. Silber, 'Kant at Auschwitz,' in *Proceedings of the Sixth International Kant Congress*, ed., Gerhard Funke and Thomas M. Seebohm (Washington, D.C.: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1991), 198-9.

[9] Elizabeth Anscombe, *Intention*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 75.

[10] J. David Velleman, 'The Guise of the Good,' *Nous* 26: 1 (1992), 19.

[11] Ibid., 18

[12] Ibid., 20-1.

[13] Anscombe, *Intention*, 26-7.

[14] Ibid., 73.

[15] Ibid.

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[16] I confess that I am uncertain that Anscombe really does endorse even the *de re* reading of the Old Formula, although the textual evidence that grounds my skepticism is found in some fairly dark passages in which Anscombe seems to allow that there can be actions performed 'for no particular reason' and thus absent a desirability characterization: Ibid., 73.

[17] Bernard Williams, 'Persons, Character, and Morality' in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 18.

[18] Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 75.

[19] Michael Stocker, 'Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology,' *The Journal of Philosophy* 76:12 (1979), 738-53.

[20] Thanks to my audience at the 16th Global Conference: Perspectives on Evil and Human Wickedness (March 2015: Lisbon, Portugal) for helpful comments.

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The Justified Villain: Television, Terrorism and Re-Examining Evil

Lima Bhuiyan

Abstract
Television has often been viewed as a form of art that directly reflects American society. Shows can be used to point out our flaws and missteps as a civilization, as well as to highlight our humanity or track our accomplishments. In the past, creators of American television programs have been able to use their medium to portray definitive views on political policies, US-foreign relations, and social issues and continue to do so today. However, when examining entertainment media in the post 9/11 world, several blurred lines arise between concepts of right and wrong. Some of the most popular shows of the last year have included *Breaking Bad*, *The Walking Dead*, and *Orange is the New Black*, each sharing one similar trait; requesting the viewer to reconsider previously held conceptions of the 'wicked' or 'evil.' In all three of the examples listed, the audience watches an average person, an everyman with a family, friends and loved ones, stray from a pre-existing standard of 'good' to a new standard of 'evil.' As the progress of the protagonist's journey is tracked through the episodes, it quickly becomes clear that good and evil are at constant odds within any person and it only takes a ripe situation to bring forth a 'good' person's inner Hyde. This chapter will argue that the reason for such duality in modern television is a reflection of our existence as a post 9/11 society. Terrorists, like the characters in these popular shows, bear no outward mark of evil, nothing to brand them as 'monsters.' Yet the shows American audiences have made popular teach us there is no good or bad; in the right situation, anyone can embody evil. The research concludes that America used its foreign policy to create its own Frankenstein monster and has yet to learn its lesson.

Key Words: Television, duality, terrorism.

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1. Past Programing: *Star Trek* and Others

An article in the New York Times Magazine states that, 'TV characters are among the allegorical figures of our age, giving individual human shape to our collective anxieties and aspirations'[1] and when this statement is accepted, it reveals a deeper meaning to society's relationship with television. Indeed, every moment spent in front of a camera is an expenditure; by the very nature of America's capitalist society, any program not yielding a profit cannot and will not be kept on the air. Ratings are essentially in the hands of the citizenry and in turn, the

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audience will keep on the air that which appeals most to them as a culture. Like in any other industry, the customer is king.

In the post-9/11 world, society has made from Hollywood, an interesting request. Despite living in a world where much of American foreign policy is unilateral, and where fear mongering among politicians runs rampant, audiences cry out for shows that depict a duality within every human being. Upon examination of the course of American foreign policy in a post-9/11 environment, it is clear to see that the public is quick to brand terrorists with a 'monster' archetype. With a history of events such as World War I and World War II, America, unsurprisingly, has had a long history of viewing itself within the context of a 'superhero complex,' a flawed but larger-than-life character which comes in to save the underdog at the end of the day. This ideal is then translated onto the international arena in the form of foreign policy. In this way, the American public has awarded itself with the 'hero' archetype. Yet, this is not what the public has made popular in recent television programing. Instead, some of the most popular shows in the last five years have depicted characters showing a full spectrum of human emotions, from extreme good to horrid evil. With low poll ratings of important politicians, a damaged perception in the international arena, and a weakened economy, is the American public finally seeing itself as fallible? It is through television we are learning the lesson of both our duality and hopefully, its presence in others. There is no evil; there is only the 'right' situation.

Some television characters such as Dexter Morgan, Jax Teller and Don Draper, make up the 'old' generation of evildoers as they have never completely walked the straight and narrow life. Their rottenness was never situational but rather, ingrained. Dexter Morgan, for example, is a character that has been an undetected serial killer since childhood and even refers to his need to kill as his 'dark passenger.'[2] On screen, such characters are charming and blend in among everyday society, a fact they take pride in. They are amiable, witty, well dressed and handsome— who would ever suspect such men of being graceful sociopaths?

In the past, shows did their best, specifically in the science fiction and fantasy genres, to use science to create a new world for their audience and deliver previously unrealized perspectives. Few shows embodied this concept better than *Star Trek*. First aired in the 1960's, a time of fierce political and civil change, American audiences were suddenly witnessing interracial kissing, and a world devoid of religion or political borders. The impact of *Star Trek* after its initial 1960's premiere spawned six television series totaling 726 episodes, twelve movies, books, and merchandise. World leaders such as Barrak Obama have even referenced the show.[3] *Star Trek* showed 1960's America a world it could not yet imagine. At the height of the Cold War, mired in Vietnam and facing civil rights issues at home, this period in American history was a hotbed of reform, confusion and fear of change. The public looked to their television screen for escapism.

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In times of such conflict, what becomes difficult to see is the period after which the conflict passes. Here is where creator Gene Roddenberry was able to offer his creative vision of what he hoped the future to be, after the metaphorical storm had passed. The vision took form in *Star Trek* and proved to be ahead of its time in many ways. For example, *Star* Trek was the first science fiction show to depict a peaceful future, 'Roddenberry often credited the enduring success of the series to the show's positive message of hope for a better tomorrow.'[4] Though we have adopted the technology from a time far beyond our own, have we accepted the lessons of the show? An avid Humanist, *Star Trek* attempted to show audiences of the 1960's a better way of life.

While *Star Trek* stands out, it was not the sole show to depict a positive future for humanity. Others included *Doctor Who*, featuring the Doctor: a time-traveling humanoid alien who not only served as a protector for current Earth, but depicted endless other worlds among the stars for humanity to one day exist in; as well as the animated classic, *The Jetsons.* Based on the television programs it chose to make popular during this time, it is clear that American society had hope for the future. So what changed? To put it simply, the traumatic events of 9/11 changed the American psyche.

2. A Fundamental Shift

Isolation has not been a possibility for America, for better or worse, since the Pearl Harbor attack. While the US accepted its role as a super power and world hegemon after the collapse of the USSR, 9/11 created a personal threat unknown to Americans at the time. Collective panic regarding welfare of loved ones in populous cities, the threat of unidentifiable assailants, and the use of mundane objects to attack an unsuspecting population created a new trauma. HealthDay states:

> The attacks affected our national sense of identity enormously…First of all, we've had almost two centuries of peace on the mainland. We've been protected by two oceans, and largely immune from the kind of terrorism that many people all over the world have long experienced. And that has engendered in us a strong collective sense of invulnerability. That was shattered on 9/11.[5]

The metaphorical shield was gone. America became a nation changed due to the fact that, despite the death of Osama bin Laden, it cannot be said that the terrorist threat is forever eradicated. Thus, the unease created by 9/11 did not fade.

Long and lost wars as well as a floundering economy called America's superhero complex into question. In contrast to the end of WWII, the 'hero' did not come back from battle to celebration, but to questions of what was gained. As Iraqi

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cities fall back into the hands of Islamic militants, former war veteran and current Congressman Scott Perry asks, 'what was the point of all of that?'[6] Americans had been told that they would be treated as "liberators" during the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan by then Vice President, Dick Cheney; however, Americans are now learning that nothing is black and white, and that even the 'super hero' is not infallible. While it is possible that the US once had the best of intentions, today, it is clear that it has fallen short, both domestically and internationally. This duality has not been lost on television viewers.

Some of the highest rated television shows of the last five years have depicted a main protagonist who strays from the normal and established path of goodness, of what society expects, only to 'snap' in the most perfect of circumstance. Some examples include: *The Walking Dead, Breaking Bad*, *Once Upon A Time, Blacklist*, Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black*, and *House of Cards*[7]. All have consistently ranked as top ten television shows, and follow a similar formula. The shows feature a lead that can only be described as a good, play-by-the-rules, family-oriented individual. Yet, when that event that forever changes their respective psyches occurs, they morph. For example, in *The Walking Dead*, Rick Grimes is faced with the zombie apocalypse. *Breaking Bad* follows the story of Walter White, who is suddenly faced with cancer and has a chance to leave his mark on the world and his children's lives before he passes. Piper Chapman changes from polite New York yuppie to a criminal, engaging in prison assault in *Orange* and in *Once Upon a Time*, we are forced to view the good side of the Evil Queen from familiar fairy tales and understand her route to becoming 'evil'. These characters all have a tipping point in which they snap. Each show depicts a change in the character (good, bad or vice versa) though they continually have the chance to make the right choices. In other words, the shows American audiences have made popular teach us there is no good or bad because in the right situation, anyone can embody evil.

These characters are not the traditional version of evil, and often, actions are justified in the name of protection. We learn that we are all capable of the unthinkable, when the group is threatened. Similarly, do terroristic organizations believe they manage their perceived threat in the only way they know how? Phillip Cole, author of *The Myth of Evil: Demonizing the Enemy* states:

> It seems then, that sometimes people do dreadful things because of factors beyond their control. It is not that they were compelled to do them by some overwhelming force, but that background factors came together so that they made a particular choice which, if things has been different, they would not have made…background factors made such a significant contribution to their choosing violence that it is highly questionable how responsible they were for their actions.[8]

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It is unlikely that the rise of extremist Islam and with it, terrorism, is random. According to Maslow's theory of human needs, conflict arises when one of a person's basic human needs are perceived as violated.[9] One possible cause of Arab grievance and aggression towards the West lies in their issues with modernity and Western influence. The answer to this question can be understood by examining the Middle East's colonial past through Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* theory. In Huntington's 1996 book of the same name, he essentially argues that in the coming decades people will no longer be bound together by nationalistic ideology but rather by those commonalties which make groups of people a civilization, such as a shared language, history, religion and shared customs.

Huntington places the most emphasis on differences in religion as being a key factor in divvying up civilizations, and argues that these differences are not only primordial, but essentially, basic. People of varying civilizations have various ideas on the relationships between man and God, husband and wife and the group and the individual. As the world becomes a smaller place in which there is constant interaction between individuals from different nations, backgrounds and religions, these differences become even more important to retain a sense of identity.[10] We understand each other through life's dualities, woman/man, light/dark, black/white, etc. In other words, one maintains one's own self-identity by knowing who one is not; so, then, one is not a Communist because one is an American.

However, the clash of civilization's theory still does not completely explain the reasoning behind such anger and heinousness. Huntington's theory, coupled with the theories of 'othering' by Edward Said[11], how terrorist organizations might believe they are being threatened, become more understandable. Only in recent human history has the interaction between nation states become multi-polar, with the development of the Internet, social media, etc. For fundamentalists, who might fear losing their nation's identity of self in this modern world, a culture that clashes with their own is turning their people into 'the other.'

In Othering, one does not fit into Group A because they are from Group B and thus, the 'other.' Since the 'other' is non-similar, it is simple and quick to de-humanize and de-individualize the other. Returning troops of the Iraq/Afghanistan wars provided reports of this. In these cases, the native citizenry was not a husband, father, teacher, son; they were all 'haji,' 'sand niggers' and 'towel head,' titles bestowed by commanding officers.[12] By doing this, according to the theory of othering, the de-humanization of the Iraqi people made it easier to kill them if these were the orders, after all, it was not the death of the schoolteacher with a wife, kids and sick aunt, but the death of just another 'haji'.

The role of America, however, is best represented by *Breaking Bad*. The show revolves around Walter White's life, a mild-mannered high school chemistry teacher in New Mexico, who turns to mass production and dealing of meth as a method to pay his hospital bills and leave his wife, handicapped son and infant daughter enough money to get by upon his impending death at the hands of cancer.

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   White starts the show with noble intentions and the audience can feel nothing
but sympathy for a man in his situation. Indeed, as medical bills are the number
one cause of bankruptcy in the US[13], it is a suspect how many watching do not
agree with White's methods. He could be our family or even ourselves, struggling
to pay medical bills, as the US audience is one of the few who do not have access
to affordable health care. Over the course of five seasons, White transforms from
the man with good intentions to a drug kingpin whose product makes it all over the
world. During his journey, he has not just killed competitors but poisoned children,
set off bombs, allowed others to die and even indirectly caused an airline crash. By
show's end, White has no possible method of redemption.
   White's actions are easily justified. Surely it is better for a dying, middle-class
family man to be enriched than cartel leaders. This justification is what the
audience tells itself. *The Atlantic* states that at some point, White crosses a line and
embarks on unforgiveable actions:

> …as abhorrent as we find his worst transgressions, as much as
> we tell ourselves that we could never condone them, we can't
> help but see how they flowed logically, if not quite inevitably,
> from the initial course of moral compromise he chose…Is the
> lesson that it was always wrong to grant White any license to
> break bad? Or is there an alternative trajectory in which White
> could have cooked for a while without becoming a moral
> monster or doing much harm?...viewers can't escape the fact that
> White rationalizes even his worst atrocities with logic not unlike
> what viewers condoned when he first cooked. I'm not a bad
> person. I'm just trying to fulfill my responsibility to provide for
> my family. Bad circumstances forced me into these
> compromising positions—when I do bad things, it isn't the same
> as when other drug dealers do them. After all, I am not a
> criminal. Implicit all along is an unspoken rationalization. Walter
> White is a man who believes in his own exceptionalism. That's
> how he manages to think of himself as a good person…As
> chilling as most viewers found that self-justifying quality, how
> many forgave him lesser sins early on in part because they saw
> him as an exceptional case?[14]

This belief in exceptionalism is the new American psyche. Like White, the average
American tends to view their nation's foreign policy with a similar air of self-
justification. 'The rules that apply to the rest of the world, rules we want
constraining them, don't and needn't really apply to us. We're not a regular nation,
not like the Chinese or the Brazilians or even the French.'[15] When other nations
force water into a prisoner's lungs or hold them for an undetermined period of time

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without rights, it is torture. When the US does it? Enhanced interrogation. America does not torture, Americans cannot torture, they are the good guys! The world's unasked-for Superman. How could the US ever be evil?

After 9/11, the American government was faced with the tremendous pressure to fulfill the responsibility of providing security. At a certain point in doing so, America 'broke bad,' crossed a line, and compromised what it had once been determined be. The US became less "home of the free" and more "land of the Patriot Act", by trading liberty for security. The country justified this by saying that this was okay because it was not forever and that once it had won the war on terror, life would be back to normal.

Television is only made popular when the audiences tune in to make it popular. In this way, what we watch directly impacts what is important to our society. In the past, progress and a hopeful future were important but as we have seen, 9/11 changed this ideal. Television became less hopeful and darker; characters become more complicated and multi-faceted. Shows made popular since then have reflected the idea of good people doing bad things, given the situation. America was shaken by 9/11 and this was furthered by unwinnable wars. Shows depicting human duality have taken center stage and it becomes clear that titles of 'evil' or 'monster' are misnomers. Even those who are 'good' are 'bad' in the right situation and this is human nature. Individuals will adapt and respond to the world around in the way they know best; the less we give others to be angry about and to respond to, the more peacefully we can live together. We cannot wash our hands of problems we create.

Notes

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Dionysus: The Face of the Feminine Archetypal Principle

Diedra L. Clay

Abstract

In Nietzsche's consideration of Greek tragedy, *The Birth of Tragedy*, a central theme is the function and importance of the Dionysian and Apollonian elements of art. As a disciple of Dionysus, Nietzsche seeks to underline the importance of the Dionysian principle. The questions I will discuss in this chapter include: Could it be that the 'woman question' represents, for Nietzsche, a violent conflict in which he struggles for conservation of the Dionysian principle? And that, therefore, the 'face' of Dionysus may be interpreted as the 'face' of the archetypal feminine principle? As Nietzsche is often considered the exemplar of destruction, chaos and misogyny, a careful examination of these questions must be made in reference to his thoughts as a whole. If, as Nietzsche held, the world is an aesthetic phenomenon, and appearance is that which leads to the formless and admits its deceptive character, then Nietzsche's numerous labyrinthine characterizations of women must be taken in a new light. In this chapter, I consider Nietzsche's discussion of the Dionysian and Apollonian principles with particular attention to the possible interpretation of Dionysus representing the archetypal feminine principle. A careful examination of Nietzsche's aesthetics as a whole is presented as a framework for discussion. In conclusion, I show that the 'woman question' represents a particular primal conflict in which Nietzsche fights for conservation of the Dionysian principle. The 'face' of Dionysus can therefore be said to be the 'face' of the archetypal feminine, or the Great Mother.

Key Words: Dionysian, feminine, misogyny, woman, Nietzsche, orgiastic, violence, formlessness, archetype, destructive.

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In *The Birth of Tragedy*,[1] Nietzsche's consideration of Greek tragedy, a central theme is the function and importance of the Dionysian and Apollonian elements of art. As a disciple of Dionysus, Nietzsche seeks to underline the importance of the Dionysian principle. My questions as I begin this chapter are: Could it be that the 'woman question' represents, for Nietzsche, a conflict in which he struggles for the conservation of the Dionysian principle? And that, therefore, the 'face' of Dionysus may be interpreted as the 'face' of the archetypal feminine principle? As Nietzsche is sometimes considered the 'exemplifier' of misogyny, a careful examination of these questions must be made in reference to his thoughts as a whole.

If the world is an 'aesthetic phenomenon', and 'appearance' is that which leads to the formless and admits its deceptive character, then Nietzsche's labyrinthine characterizations of women must be taken in a new light. In this chapter, I consider

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Nietzsche's discussion of the Dionysian and Apollonian principles, with particular attention to the possible interpretation of Dionysus representing the archetypal feminine principle.

In conclusion, in light of the discussion of truth and appearance in *The Birth of Tragedy*, I show that the 'woman question' represents, for Nietzsche, a particular conflict in which he fights for the conservation of the Dionysian principle. Therefore, the 'face' of Dionysus can be said to be the 'face' of the archetypal feminine, of the 'Great Mother.' But, before we discuss this matter, we must discuss Nietzsche's aesthetics as a whole.

In his aesthetic consideration, Nietzsche claims that 'the existence of the world is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon.'[2] Art serves as the only justification possible for life and is the only thing that makes life bearable. For Nietzsche, art in general consists in the perpetual tension and intertwining of Apollonian and Dionysian elements. Tragedy is an artistic form born out of these two drives. According to Nietzsche, Greek tragedy is the location where Apollonian elements give form to Dionysian intoxication.

By 'Apollonian', Nietzsche refers to that which gives measure and form. The figure of Apollo is associated with dreams, in that dreams give figure to unconscious desires and images. Dreams are about ideal figures, which are known to be illusory. Apollonian art is exampled in sculpture, in concern for form, structure and appearance.[3] Nietzsche uses the German word *Schein*, meaning appearance and beauty, to describe Apollonian elements of art. Apollonian elements also provide limitation, individuation, mediation and protection from the frenzy, or *Rausch* (intoxication) of Dionysian elements.

By 'Dionysian', Nietzsche refers to the concept of an orgiastic form of pleasure that has no limits. Dionysian is that which is the ground and origin point of all being, 'the womb of the world'. The figure of Dionysus is an example of excess and destruction, and of unification (i.e., in excessive drunken or orgiastic pleasure, fusion between participants can occur, taking away social barriers). The Dionysian personifies ecstatic self-transcendence. Dionysian art is concerned with the nonvisual, the prime example being the art of music.[4]

Without the Dionysian drive, Apollonian elements cannot give form to art. This is a complementary, rather than oppositional, relation between individuation and unity. What is portrayed here is a cosmic relation consisting of a unified, formless flux (becoming) and individuated moments within that flux (being), both of which constitute the world process. According to Nietzsche, the balance between the two forces was well known by the Greeks. They respected the cultivation of form and meaning in the plastic and poetic arts, and form-shattering annihilation in the ecstatic practices of the mystery cults.

In Nietzsche's outlook, it seems that the impetus of becoming has priority over being. As a consequence, he holds that Greek tragedy—which was connected with Dionysian religious practices—represented the pinnacle of Greek genius and their

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deepest piercing into the constitution of reality. The tragedies could assert individuation and form (the poetic reflection of the tragic character) and yet perceive the priority of the annihilating might of flux (the tragic character's doom). In other words, the tragic worldview held form (the Apollonian) to be 'appearance', a momentary ordering of a primordial chaos. This must consequently lead to a formless power (the Dionysian), symbolized by the priority of shattering fate in the tragic drama. In the tragic age, the Greeks were able to produce a world of beauty and meaning and yet confirm the inescapable destructive aspects of life, thereby affirming life as a whole.

With the entrance of the scientific spirit (personified by Socrates), the tragic attunement of Apollo and Dionysus ruptures. The forces of form and formlessness become dissociated into an antagonistic disharmony, where the system of form is given priority. The Socratic examination for 'truth' (an abiding form beyond appearance and change) represents the repulse of the artistic spirit (the view that form is a creation out of an indeterminate chaos, not 'truth'). In this way, the Apollonian principle is detached from the Dionysian, resulting in opposition between reason (form alone) and chaos (mystery and destruction) and the attempt to eliminate or at least devalue the latter.

According to Nietzsche, with this inversion of tragic priorities, where form takes supremacy over formlessness and unchanging form becomes the measure for truth, Western culture begins to be alienated from a world constituted by becoming. The ideals of Western culture represent the domination of Apollonian tendencies and the subordination of Dionysian instincts. This may signal the complete devaluation of the Dionysian, in either the otherworldly form of Christianity or the worldly form of scientific rationalism. Nietzsche feels that the consequences are the weakening of life-affirming instincts and the destruction of creativity and attunement to a world of change.

Since form is an action of creation out of formlessness, and is therefore not 'substance,' Socrates' quest for inversion is not only a philosophical error. It also may be an existential boundary, blocking the appropriate emanation of form that is the aesthetic mode of creativity. Here lies the background of Nietzsche's critique of 'truth' and promotion of 'appearance.' The on-going references to appearance in his writings point back to this central theme in *The Birth of Tragedy*. For Nietzsche, form as such is appearance; there is no 'truth' other than the annihilation of form. 'Appearance,' that is to say, form that admits its 'deceptive' character that yields to the formless, is a more suitable prototype of reality. Form is not 'objective truth'; it is a creation. Recall that the world is an 'aesthetic phenomenon'.[5]

Also, recall our problem initially stated above. If the world is an 'aesthetic phenomenon', and 'appearance' is that which leads to the formless and admits its deceptive character, then Nietzsche's descriptions of women must be revaluated. Could it be that the 'woman question' represents, for Nietzsche, a particular

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conflict in which he fights for conservation of the Dionysian principle? And that, therefore, the 'face' of Dionysus may be interpreted as the 'face' of the archetypal feminine principle?

Nietzsche claims in 'Attempt at Self-Criticism,' the preface to the second edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, that he is a disciple of Dionysus and that he speaks as the 'initiate and disciple of his god'.[6] As a Dionysian disciple, he speaks with authority about the Dionysian principle. What has to be made clear is the connection of the Dionysian principle with the feminine archetypal principal. Considering the nature-versus-culture tragic tension in *The Birth of Tragedy*, perhaps the answers to these questions may be made clear.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, we find Nietzsche claiming:

> What inspires respect for women, and often enough even fear, is her nature, which is more 'natural' than man's, the genuine cunning suppleness of a beast of prey, the tiger's claw under the glove, the naiveté of her egoism, her uneducability and inner wildness, the incomprehensibility, scope and movement of her desires and virtues…

> What, in spite of all fear, elicits pity for this dangerous and beautiful cat 'woman' is that she appears to suffer more, to be more vulnerable, more in need of love and more condemned to disappointment than any other animal. Fear and pity: With these feelings, man has so far confronted women, always with one foot in tragedy which tears to pieces as it enchants.[7]

> Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatist, have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart. What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won—and today every dogmatism is left standing dispirited and discouraged. *If* it is left standing at all![8]

> [Woman] does not want truth: What is truth to woman? From the beginning, nothing has been more alien, repugnant and hostile to woman than truth...[9]

At first glance, these quotations appear to limit Nietzsche's woman to the natural world, perhaps as a pet, one who charms when she bares her claws. He

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claims that woman can be likened to truth, yet she is one who is not concerned with truth: It is 'repugnant' to her. Considering our analysis of the Dionysian principle, the consequences of the advent of the scientific spirit and its search for 'truth', perhaps he is speaking about the feminine archetypal principle.

It becomes clear when we see Nietzsche claiming: 'Woman is essentially unpeaceful, like a cat'.[10] In later writings, Nietzsche declares that woman 'tears to pieces' when she loves, and he calls women 'maenads'.[11] Women's nature is more natural than man's: She is more like an animal. Her concern is not with Socratic 'truth' but with the creative, formless flux of becoming. She tears to pieces that which she loves, as did the maenads in ecstatic Dionysian rituals. The Dionysian references are clear and posit that Nietzsche considered the essential feminine, or feminine archetypal principle, and the Dionysian to be intimately connected, if not synonymous.

The cult of Dionysus represented elements of nature, mysticism and ecstatic self-transcendence. Dionysian immortality meant continual death and rebirth. In this way, Dionysian mythology expressed the cyclic regeneration of nature, the destruction and reconstruction of life. Dionysian worship embraced the constructive (birth) as well as the destructive (death) aspects of life to harmonize the initiate to the whole panorama of possibilities in life.

The Dionysian cult was initially a cult of women, and only subsequently were men allowed to enter as initiates. The women of the cult were called 'maenads', or those possessed by divine madness. The custom of dismembering live animals and consuming them raw seems mad by ordinary standards. This practice, however, was religiously important in that it was a ritual cooperation in the destructive force of the god. It was believed to produce peace and blissful union with the god.

Dionysian religion delineates the Greek rendering of a shared reverence given to the dark, destructive side of nature in many other cultures. The holy component of Greek tragedy lies in the recognition of the priority of the destructive power, fate, which is derived from the invocation of Dionysus.

Many of the representations of the Dionysian religion suggest it is derived from a worship of the feminine principle, or the 'Great Mother', theme historically prevalent in many cultures.[12] The first religious images known to us are the so-called 'Venus' images found in Upper Palaeolithic remains (35,000 to 10,000 BCE).[13] From the way these images are positioned and located in cave hearths, niches and graves, they have been interpreted as cult images. These are images of the 'Mother guardians', concerned with daily life, death and rebirth.

In this tradition, death is the potent, tragic mystery equal to birth, and both are overarched and contained by the Great Mother. In one of the oldest creation myths from India, the Great Mother figures centrally:

> At first Kujum-Chantu, the earth, was like a human being; she
> had a head, and arms and legs, and an enormous fat belly. The

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original human beings lived on the surface of her belly. One day
it occurred to Kujum-Chantu that if she ever got up and walked
about, everyone would fall off and be killed, so she herself died
of her own accord. Her head became the snow-covered
mountains; the bones of her back turned into smaller hills. Her
chest was the valley where the Apa-Tanis live. From her neck
came the north country of the Nagins. Her buttocks turned into
the Assam plain. For just as the buttocks are full of fat, Assam
has fat, rich soil. Kujum-Chantu's eyes became the Sun and
Moon. From her mouth was born Kujum-Pope, who sent the Sun
and Moon to shine in the sky.[14]

In the worship of the Great Mother as creator, participants partake in her
capacities for birth and fertility. This goddess, as well as being the principle of life
as seen in the above quotation, is also the principle of death, mystery and
destruction.

In the figure of Persephone, Demeter's daughter, the goddess dies once a year
and goes to the underworld. There, as the awesome, dreaded Death Goddess, she
rules over the dead for six months of every year. At the end of that time, in the
spring, she is resurrected by her Mother and becomes Kore, the Maiden, again.
Kore was the deity of youth and gaiety and leader of the dancing nymphs.[15] In
these three female aspects—the young Maiden; the benevolent, creative Mother;
and the Death Goddess—we see the triple face of the Goddess.

In the worship of the feminine archetypal principle, the triple face of the
Goddess is likened to the triple phases of the Moon: waxing, full and waning. (This
is also likened to the three phases of a woman's life: maiden, mother and crone.)
The Dark Moon symbolizes the unconscious and destructive forces. It is precisely
at the extreme negative point that the Dark Moon turns and shifts into its opposite
pole of ecstasy and illumination. In some practices, women were sacrificed during
the dark moon; in later rituals, animals were substituted. In this characterization,
the Goddess initiates realize the interconnectedness of birth (ecstasy and
illumination) and death (darkness, chaos, formlessness and destruction) in the
worship of the Goddess represented by the Moon.

It is not difficult to see the connection between the worship of the Great Mother
and that of Dionysus. Goddess worship, Nietzsche's archetypal feminine and
Dionysian worship share the same tenets: concern with the whole of life, including
darkness, mystery, destruction, unconsciousness, ecstasy and formlessness. In this
sense, the Dionysian cult can be said to represent the feminine archetypal principle,
or Great Mother.

We have seen that for Nietzsche, the Greek tragic worldview held form (the
Apollonian) to be 'appearance'—a momentary ordering of a primordial chaos. This
must consequently lead to a formless power (the Dionysian), symbolized by the

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priority of shattering fate in the tragic drama. In the tragic age, the Greeks were able to produce a world of beauty and meaning and yet confirm the inescapable destructive aspects of life, thereby affirming life as a whole. The holy component of Greek tragedy lies in the recognition of the priority of the destructive power, fate, which is derived from the invocation of Dionysus.

With the entrance of the scientific spirit (personified by Socrates), the tragic attunement of Apollo and Dionysus becomes ruptured. The Socratic examination for 'truth', for Nietzsche, represents the repulse of the artistic spirit. In this way, the Apollonian principle is detached from the Dionysian, resulting in the opposition between reason (form alone) and chaos (mystery and destruction) and the attempt to eliminate or at least devalue the latter. According to Nietzsche, this inversion of tragic priorities—where form takes supremacy over formlessness and unchanging form becomes the measure for truth—suffers the consequences of the weakening of the life-affirming instincts. This may herald the destruction of creativity and attunement to a world of change.

If the world is an 'aesthetic phenomenon', and 'appearance' is that which leads to the formless and admits its deceptive character, then Nietzsche's descriptions of women must be revaluated. Considering our analysis of the Dionysian principle, Nietzsche considered the essential feminine, or feminine archetypal principle, and the Dionysian to be intimately connected, if not synonymous. Dionysian mythology expressed the cyclic regeneration of nature, the destruction and reconstruction of life. Dionysian worship embraced the constructive (birth), as well as the destructive (death), aspects of life to harmonize the initiate to the whole panorama of possibilities in life.

Many representations of the Dionysian religion suggest it is derived from a worship of the archetypal feminine principle, or the 'Great Mother'. This goddess, as well as being the principle of life, is also the principle of death, mystery and destruction. In the deity of the Death Goddess, initiates realize the interconnectedness of birth (ecstasy and illumination) and death (darkness, chaos, formlessness and destruction).

In conclusion, Goddess worship, Nietzsche's archetypal feminine and the Dionysian share the same tenets: concern with the whole of life, including darkness, mystery, destruction, unconsciousness, ecstasy and formlessness. In this sense, the Dionysian cult represents the feminine archetypal principle. We can conclude that the 'woman question' represents, for Nietzsche, a conflict in which he fights for conservation of the Dionysian principle. Therefore, the 'face' of Dionysus can be said to be the 'face' of the archetypal feminine.

Notes

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (London: Penguin Classics, 1993).
[2] Ibid., 8.

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³ Ibid., 14.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Beyond Good and Evil,' *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 239.

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (London: Penguin, 1973), 2.

⁹ Ibid., 163.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, 'Beyond Good and Evil,' *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, 231.

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Ecce Homo: Why I Write Such Good Books,' *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 5.

¹² Carl Kerenyi, *Dionysos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 256. In this, he claims, among other factors, that the Dionysian practice of boiling goat pieces in milk symbolizes the idea of returning to the Mother.

¹³ Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 46.

¹⁴ Quoted in Charles H. Long, *Alpha: The Myths of Creation* (New York: Collier Books, 1969), 39.

¹⁵ Sjoo and Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother*, 166-167.

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Religious Evils in Turkish Horror Films

Bilgehan Ece Şakrak

Abstract

Cultures of societies are affected by multiple factors. Religious factors, beliefs and traditions are important, as well as geographical, political and economic factors. The Turkish people believed in many religions until they accepted Islam. They preserved some of their pre-Islamic traditions and beliefs after they were converted to Islam and they have kept them alive hand-in-hand with the beliefs, rules and principles Islam requires. Film and culture are in a close relationship. Cultural values have an important role for horror films to be inspired of history, mythology, traditions, religions and other beliefs, etc. Horror genre was not a preferred area by the Turkish filmmakers for many years. Therefore, the Turkish audience was not familiar with the horror films that were produced in their own culture. But in the last decade, a growing number of Turkish horror films were produced in Turkey. The most remarkable thing of the last decade's Turkish horror films is all the common stories based on the evil figure from religious and traditional themes: usage of jinn as an Islamic figure to construct the model of evil and also, black arts that are originated from old traditional Anatolian beliefs, in relation with the figure of jinn. This study focuses on the representation of evil figures in the recent Turkish horror films and aims to find how the films construct the values of good/bad by using of the icon of jinn as the evil. In order to do so, elements such as ancient *traditional Turkish religion* for the roots of some *Anatolian traditions*, concepts of *evil eye, black arts, fortune telling*, as well as the *jinn as an Islamic figure* are mentioned. *Büyü* and *Dabbe: Zehr-i Cin* as the first and the last Turkish horror films referring to the concepts previously mentioned are examined. Qualitative research method is used for film analysis and quantitative research method is used for categorization of Turkish horror films in years.

Key Words: Turkish horror films, religion, goodness/badness, evil

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1. Religions and Beliefs
1.1. Ancient Turkish Religion

As a result of Turks' nomadic way of life before Islam, they were affected by many religions they encountered. The list of major religions affecting Turkish culture contains Totemism, ancestry cult, believing in natural forces, Goktengri belief, Shamanism, Taoism, Buddhism, Zoroaster, Manichaeism, Judaism. Goktengri belief, Shamanism, ancestry cult and believing in natural forces completed with each other as the main beliefs and formed *traditional Turkish*

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religion.[1] Although the Turkish people were affected by multiple cultures, Goktengri belief, sun, moon-water, ancestry cults and the cult to the dead seen in the 2nd Century BC in Huns, have been observable in the recent past[2]; even today, some of them still exist.

In Shamanism, for example, the shaman is the agent of the ritual and the ceremony, doer of the blessing, he makes connections with good and evil spirits, treats the patients and concocts black arts and magic.[3] Inan states that the Shamanism seen in Altai and Yakut cannot be accepted as ancient Turkish religion completely and ancient Turkish worldview and beliefs are more mature and sophisticated when compared to Shamanism.[4]

According to Chinese references, the bases of ancient Central Asia Shamanism were Goktengri, sun, moon, water, ancestry, and fire (furnace) cults.[5] The basis of Shamanism is related to the fact that there is a spirit for every existence in the universe. These spirits can affect people's lives directly. All of the elements of these cults such as the moon, water, and mountain rocks are blessed and shamans worshipped nature in their ceremonies by asking things from these elements.[6]

Zoroaster, Buddhism and Christianity (third and fourth centuries, Central Asia) and Manichaeism (seventh and eighth centuries) were added to these religions.[7] The Turks met Islam during the *Talas War* in 751. Shortly afterwards they accepted Islam in masses.[8]

1.2. The Current Survivals from Former Turkish Religions after Islam

Durkheim and Weber see religion as a fundamental meaning system and an essential component of society and culture.[9] In this way, it is not wrong to state that the beliefs that societies carry from the past to the present constitute certain parts of the cultures of these societies. The beliefs and worship of Turkish pre-Islam religions and *traditional Turkish religion* are not consistent with Islam; for example, things such as worshipping existences beside Allah's and asking things from these entities are forbidden in Islam. Although it is not accepted by Islam, these beliefs still exist nowadays and they are parts of contemporary lives; some of them as *superstitious beliefs* and some of them are *Anatolian traditions*.

In this context, exemplifying the applications of these ancient but still alive beliefs is meaningful:

Ancestry Cult: Like giving family elders' name to newborn babies, using tombstones, visiting tombs and entombed saints, believing in removing the deceased's objects from the house.[10]

Water, Mountain Rocks, Tree, Fire Cults Forming Earth and Water Cults within Believing in Natural Forces: Like making wishes by binding clothes on the trees, making wishes by pasting rocks to the places considered blessed, pouring water after one's departure, jumping over fire.[11]

Goktengri Belief: Believing in God's presence in the sky; as it is monotheistic, it is the closest belief to Islam.

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Shamanism Belief: Rain prayer, the designs in haircloth, carpet and rugs, magic, black arts, sacrificing and oblation, entertainment, lighting candles, threshold as blessed, colours and talismanic stones, various rituals, collective worshipping, incenses, prayers, knocking on wood to avoid bad news, using amulets for wishes or to avoid evil, belief in evil eye beads, leading cast to avoid evil eye, bursting salt in fire, binding cloth for wishes are beliefs rooted in Shamanism and they are still applied.[12]

1.3. The Concepts of Evil Eye, Black Arts, Fortune Telling

Evil eye, black art and fortune telling are the secondary phenomena that are related to the concept of jinn in narratives of recent Turkish horror films.

Evil eye means harming a person or a thing by looking at it or him.[13] People have used some symbolic objects to avoid evil eye. The blue evil eye bead is the most common one. Besides that, using herbal and objects like hanging objects made of peganum harmala (a kind of seedy herb) on threshold or carrying fennel flower are other ways of avoiding evil eye in various parts of Anatolia region in Turkey.

Magic or black art is the process of transmitting a highly affecting energy into other objects or existences by using certain objects or formulas.[14] Some of them are used for good and some of them are used for evil. Some of them are done with reading or writing of some parts from *The Qur'an*; so magic and black arts are associated with the religion and Islam today. On the other hand, Islam forbids black art and magic. This association carries parallelism with Durkheim's opinions. In Durkheim's statement, black art comes from ancient times; although there are relationships between religion and black art, they are contrary concepts to each other.[15]

Fortune telling is making prophecies and giving news about someone's present and future. According to Islam, nobody besides Allah can know the future, so fortune telling is forbidden, too. However, it is still current and present in Turkish coffee reading, palmistry, water reading, tarot, etc.

In this context, it is possible to mention that concepts of evil eye, black art/magic and fortune telling are Shamanistic applications which take place in Turkish history and are conveyed into the Islamic era. These concepts have taken place in Judaism and Christianity, before Islam, and are seen in The Bible.[16]

1.4. Islam and the Concept of Jinn

In the book of Islam, *The Qur'an*, some spiritual existences that human beings cannot perceive by sense organs are mentioned. These spiritual existences are: angels, who do good things by inspiring good things in the direction of Allah's orders; Satan, who deceives and directs human beings to evil; and jinn who might be both good or evil. Jinn, as they are mentioned in *The Qur'an*, are spiritual, intangible and secret existences,[17] created from fire,[18] they can shift their shapes

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and cannot be perceived by human beings. They are responsible for obeying and accepting the divine order like human beings. Some of them obey Allah but most of them deny Him. They eat, drink, grow, multiply and die like human beings. Some have longer lifespans than others. They can harm people from time to time. Jinn does not have any information on the absolute unseen, however, their long lifetimes, allied to their spiritual and intangible existences and their stealing information from angels makes them aware of past or present things that people do not know yet.[19]

Jinn are portrayed in films in such positions like they are used to get information about unknown things via a fortune teller; and also used to prevent destiny or to take revenge from the targeted people by means of black art in relation to fortune telling and casting of spells.

Undoubtedly, jinn, fortune telling, black arts and the casting of spells are appropriate concepts to be subjects of religious, historical, psychological and sociological studies. But in this study, these concepts are summarized to examine the Turkish horror films that are constructed on the mentioned concepts as their narrative elements. In this context, Turkish horror films focused on jinn are evaluated in the following chapter.

2. Jinn in Turkish Horror Films

Büyü[20], released in 2004, can be accepted as the first Turkish horror film especially dealing with concept of jinn as religious evil. Since 2004, horror films with jinn figure became popular and lots of horror films were produced in Turkey. Most of them include jinn, zombies, goblins, spiritual existences, etc. as being monster/evil figures. Ranges according to years are as in the table:

Table 1: Year/Subject (Source: Author[21])

YEAR SUBJECT	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Jinn	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	3	7
Spiritual existence			2	1			1	2	1	1	2
Other			4				3		1		1
Total	1	0	6	2	1	1	5	3	3	4	10

Films that include monster/evil as jinn between 2004 and 2014 are in the first rank as it is seen in *Table 1*. Existences that resemble that of jinn are in the second rank. The third rank includes other monster/evil figures such as zombies, goblins, transformed human beings in consequence of a scientific experiment, sound, insanity, and earthquake.[22]

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In this context, *Büyü* (The Spell) and *Dabbe Zehr-i Cin*[23], which was released in 2014, are chosen for examination in the following part.

2.1. *Büyü*

700 years ago, girls were believed to be ominous and were killed one-by-one in an Anatolian village. Only one father could not kill his daughter. But an old woman put black art on him by using jinn and made him kill his daughter. A group of archaeologists seeking Artuqid ruler Sultan Salih's book visits the same village today. The Professor in the group emphasizes that Artuquid people were one of the first Muslim Turkish civilizations in Anatolia region of Turkey and their religious practices had reflections from different religions. Ebru and Ayşe, members of the group, are close friends but Ebru loves Ayşe's husband, Tarık. Therefore she asks for help from a sorcerer in order to kill Ayşe and get Tarık for herself. The black art on Ayşe refreshes the old black art done 700 years ago and conjures jinn, in the village.[24]

Local people believe the effect of the black art for centuries. They use objects made of peganum harmala herb on thresholds, scissors, evil eye beads for avoiding evil eye and evil. Jinn pester Ayşe and the other archaelogists in the research staff. On the first night of the group in the village Sedef reads tarot and sees evil and death. In this scene, a man of the modern world is seen fortune telling, as well as using black arts. At the same night jinn rapes Aydan, one of the group members.[25]

On the second day, ancient black-art equipment is found in archeologic diggings. Group members occasionally hear weird voices. Ceren and Cemil have sexual intercourse by jinn's influence at the same night. Then, Cemil is killed; on the following day Ceren is found dead.[26]

On the next day, Aydan is found dead in one of the abandoned houses in the village. At that moment Sedef appears with a dagger in her hand, she is possessed by jinn. She kills the professor. Ayşe runs away and finds refuge in another abandoned village house; it is the exact same house of the girl killed by her father under the black art 700 years before. While Sedef nearly kills Ayşe in the same room, the little girl's reflection appears. She gives Ayşe a *cevşen* (a very little book includes prays from *The Qur'an* to avoid evil) to save her. Ayşe wears *cevşen* on her neck, reads some words from *The Qur'an*. The possessed Sedef cannot approach Ayşe and Ayşe runs away. At the end of the film, because of a traffic accident, Ebru's dead body is seen. Ayşe is closed down in an insane asylum. Nevertheless, Sedef still follows Ayşe.[27]

In the film, there are references to the integration of the ancient Turkish beliefs and Islamic beliefs in Anatolia region of Turkey. Old but still-continuing beliefs about black art are shown in relation to shamanistic rituals and Islamic terms.

The film refers to the point that is repeated in all religious beliefs as black art/magic brings evil for anyone. A black art from 700 years ago to kill a girl brings a curse that still exists. In today's world, loving a close friend's husband and put a

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black art to allure him brings evil and death. The one conjuring evil has always been the human being, throughout history. Devilish power of the jinn is activated by human being who ignores all of the moral values to satisfy his/her selfishness. Selfishness of the human being which brings out the viciousness activates the devilish powers, and these powers bring evil.

Besides, the film emphasizes contrasts of old-new, religion-science, traditional-modern. However the power is on the old, religious and traditional side. Modern world's scientist loses. Superstitious devilish creatures of the past bring themselves into existence in the values like deceiving, betrayal, jealousy, arrogance in the modern world.

2.2. *Dabbe 5: Zehr-i Cin*

This is the last movie in the *Dabbe* series, which is constructed of five independent films. *Dabbe* means 'an existence that influences and spreads'. It signifies a dommsday sign in terms of *The Qur'an* as *Dabbetün mine'l-arz*.[28]

Dabbe Zehr-i Cin, is a case of jinn and black art about a haunted couple, Ömer and Dilek. Their happiness is deteriorated by weird circumstances on Dilek such as her nightmares, perceivings about uncertain shades and whispers. Their life goes to hell in a bucket. While Dilek loses the control of her body she begins to feel the jinn's existence pestering her.[29]

Ömer and Dilek share the situation with their close friends. By one of the recommendations made by their friends, they visit Belkıs, the enchanter. Belkıs says the jinn pestering Dilek is very powerful and from a horrible clan of jinn. To solve the case through Belkıs' specific methods Dilek should go beyond the known dimension and find out what is going on.[30]

Hence *eye*, *third eye*, *the demon's eye* and *the eye in the evil eye bead* are brought close together in the narration of the film. It is significant that instead of avoiding the evil eye, the evil eye bead is identified with the devilish eye. Some goods that are found in Dilek's house about black art, strange symbols and images in Dilek's dreams, writings from *The Qur'an*, numbers, eerie objects, Islamic belief, ancient Anatolian beliefs and other things taken from different beliefs form an extensive work of collage in the film.[31]

The secret of the story lies in Dilek's babyhood, she does not know. According to the belief of the Anatolian village she was born in, baby Dilek's only way to recover from illness is to sacrifice another baby instead of her. Therefore, a new-born baby is seized and sacrificed from a poor family. Grief of the sacrificed baby's mother transforms into revenge that causes the horrible black art to kill Dilek. In fact Belkıs is the sacrificed baby's mother and the friend of the couple who recommends Belkıs for treatment is Belkıs' son. However, Ömer cheats on Dilek with the woman Belkıs' son used as a girlfriend to get close the couple, but jinn punish Ömer and the woman cheated on Dilek with death.[32]

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The film questions dualities between values of modern life. The devilish dimension that money reaches is identified with the rich exploiting the poor. The gap rises from the lack of self control like the husband cheating on his wife and betrayal of confidence are described as today's devilish situations. Just as in *Büyü* the main source of the horrible malignity and devilish powers is evaluated selfishness of the human being. The thing to be examined is why the values that make a human being, like justice, order, honesty, fellowship, reliability and good will, have disappeared. In their absence, evil and devilishness are at their peak of power.

Because of the limits of this study, only two films are examined. But it is important to state that other Turkish horror films produced between 2004 and 2014 have very similar stories in combining cultural elements like *jinn, Islam, ancient Anatolian beliefs*. Meanings that are produced by combining these elements with horror are related to bringing out the devilishness and being evil through human being's selfishness.

On the other hand, the recent horror films are in the way of droning with similar stories and religious horror elements. Therefore, urgency for originality and creativity needs to be represented by the Turkish filmmakers are essentialities for the following Turkish horror films in future.

Notes

[1] Özgür Velioğlu, *İnançların Türk Sinemasına Yansıması* (İstanbul: Es Yayınları, 2005), 8-9.

[2] Abdülkadir İnan, *Tarihte ve Bugün Şamanizm*, 3rd. ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1986), 1.

[3] Ali F. Demir and Nebahat A. Çomak, *Şaman ve Türk Dünyası* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2009), 15.

[4] İnan, *Tarihte ve Bugün Şamanizm*, 1.

[5] Ibid. 2.

[6] Demir and Çomak, *Şaman ve Türk Dünyası*, 11.

[7] İnan, *Tarihte ve Bugün Şamanizm*, 4.

[8] Zehra Yaşayan and Filiz Topçu, *Türk Eğitim Tarihi 12. Sınıf* (Devlet Kitapları, 2012), 28, viewed 15 January 2015,
http://www.meb.gov.tr/Ders_Kitaplari/2012/OrtaOgretim/Devlet/OgretmenLis/TurkEgitimTarihi_12.pdf.

[9] Laura D. Edles, *Uygulamalı Kültürel Sosyoloji*, trans. Cumhur Atay (İstanbul: Babil Yayınları, 2005), 39.

[10] Behiye Köksel, 'Gaziantep Yöresi Halk İnanışlarında Şamanist Etkiler', *Uluslararası Anadolu İnançları Kongresi Bildirileri* (Ankara, 200), 487 in Özgür Velioğlu, *İnançların Türk Sinemasına Yansıması* (İstanbul: Es Yayınları, 2005), 40.

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[11] Velioğlu, İnançların Türk Sinemasına Yansıması, 40-41.

[12] Demir and Çomak, *Şaman ve Türk Dünyası*, 171-187.

[13] Sinan Yılmaz, *Nazar, Büyü ve Fal, Divan Kitap* (Ankara: Divan Kitap, 2014), 31.

[14] Ibid., 32.

[15] Emile Durkheim, *Dinsel Yaşamın İlk Biçimleri*, trans. Prof. Dr. Özer Ozankaya (İstanbul:Cem Yayınevi, 2010), 71-72.

[16] *Old Testament*, Lamentations 18:9-14, First Samuel, 28; *New Testament*, Works of the Prophets 8, 16.

[17] *İlmihal I İman ve İbadetler*, (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 1998), 96, viewed 10 January 2015,
http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/dijitalyayin/ilmihal_cilt_1.pdf

[18] *The Qur'an*, er-Rahman 55/15.

[19] *İlmihal I İman ve İbadetler*, 96-97.

[20] *Büyü*, dir. Orhan Oğuz, İstanbul: Palermo, 2004. DVD

[21] *Table 1* with the categorization of Turkish horror films in years (according to their monster/evil figure) is revised and expanded version of the author's oral presentation: 'Space-Time-Body Transformations in Monsters of Horror Films', *V. European Conference on Social and Behavioral Sciences (IASSR),* 11-14 September 2014, St.Petersburg/Russia

[22] Ibid; 2004 and 2014 are the first and latest years that jinn figure is used in Turkish horror films until this time. It may continue.

[23] *Dabbe 5: Zehr-i Cin*, dir. Hasan Karacadağ. İstanbul: J Plan and Taff Pictures, 2014.

[24] *Büyü*, 2004.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Yalçın Lüleci, *Türk Sineması ve Din* (İstanbul: Es Yayınları, 2009), 167.

[29] *Dabbe 5: Zehr-i Cin*, 2014.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

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The Inevitability of Evil and Moral Tragedy

Zachary J. Goldberg

Abstract
Although Greek virtue theory, Kantian ethics, and utilitarianism contend that evil and moral tragedy can be avoided, my paper will argue that our recognition of their inevitability provides the only means toward taking full moral responsibility for one's agency. Despite philosophical disagreement concerning what constitutes a good life, each of us aspires to a life we individually deem as good. However, individual aspirations and desires to live good lives are vulnerable to three conditions that shape human existence: the contingency of life, the moral indifference of nature, and human destructiveness. Respectively depicted by Oedipus, King Lear, and Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, these conditions can manifest themselves through human behaviour resulting in evil. It is especially tragic to observe that wrongdoing is often inescapable. An agent may have overriding moral reasons to pursue one course of action over another, and yet in making the morally best choice the individual nevertheless transgresses a moral value. As depicted in the literary examples mentioned above, a person can bring about wrongdoing even when performing what appears to be the morally appropriate action. Moral choice becomes moral tragedy, and the result is evil. My paper will argue that recognizing the inevitability of evil and moral tragedy and the connection between them provides the resources for diminishing them both. Conversely, faith in the ability of reason and decency to conquer evil leads to tragedy. To deny the inevitability of evil and moral tragedy is to deny essential features of moral life. Such a denial clearly leads to an inability to respond to others in the face of evil and tragedy. The proper response to the inevitability of evil and moral tragedy is not the fabrication of an abstract moral principle that denies their existence, but inquiry into their nature.

Key Words: Evil, moral tragedy, moral responsibility, inescapable wrongdoing.

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A man said to the universe:
'Sir, I exist!'
'However,' replied the universe,
'The fact has not created in me
A sense of obligation'
-Stephen Crane, *A Man Said to the Universe*

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1. Introduction

Prominent Western moral theories—Greek virtue theory, Kantianism, and utilitarianism—rest on several faulty assumptions concerning evil and moral tragedy. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle endorsed the 'Socratic Ideal', which affirms that a life lived rationally and morally will inevitably be a good life. Despite differences among their philosophies, they each posited a rational universe that rewards moral merit with happiness. Whereas Kantian ethics and utilitarianism do not require belief in a rational and moral universe, each theory implicitly rests on the mistaken view that evildoing and moral tragedy can be averted. In this paper I argue against these false assumptions and propose that evil and moral tragedy are inescapable. Additionally, I suggest that recognizing the inevitability of evil and moral tragedy and the connection between them provides the resources for taking responsibility in a perilous moral landscape.[1]

Despite philosophical disagreement concerning what constitutes a good life, each person aspires to a life individually deemed as good. However, individual aspirations to live good lives are vulnerable to three conditions that shape human existence: the contingency of life, the moral indifference of nature, and human destructiveness. Respectively depicted by the tragedies *Oedipus*, *King Lear*, and *Heart of Darkness*, these conditions can manifest themselves through human behaviour resulting in evil.

It is especially tragic to observe that wrongdoing and evildoing are often inescapable. However, the conditions of life depicted in the above-mentioned tragedies are not the only source of this inevitability. Remarkably, the manner in which moral responsibilities to others are instantiated leads to inescapable wrongdoing and tragedy. As the prominent Western ethical theories repudiate this fact, we are impelled to consider an alternate and more realistic theory of moral responsibility; one that finds the locus of moral obligation in our relationships with other persons.

2. The Socratic Ideal and The Conditions of Life

The prominent Western ethical theories are founded on the fictitious notions that wrongdoing is avoidable and that moral merit will be rewarded with happiness. Although Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle espouse ethical theories that are distinct in important ways, they all agree that reason, happiness (flourishing), and morality coincide.[2] What John Kekes refers to as the 'Socratic ideal' proclaims that good lives combine two components: personal satisfaction and moral merit.[3] These two aspects coincide because one can lead a flourishing life only by leading a virtuous life.[4]

For example, when Crito attempts to persuade Socrates to escape from prison after he has been sentenced to execution, Socrates replies to Crito that only the good life, which he equates with the just life, is worth living.[5] The good life is equivalent to the just life; happiness and virtue coincide.

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Similarly, Plato argues that being just is its own reward because virtue constitutes the good life. In Book II of *The Republic* Glaucon suggests that morality is only a social construction, the source of which is the desire to establish a reputation for virtue. In the absence of public sanction, moral character would dissipate.[6] In reply, Socrates draws an analogy between the desire for a healthy body for its own sake, and the desire to cultivate a virtuous character for its own sake. He concludes that virtue is an intrinsic good that essentially characterizes the good life.[7]

According to Aristotle, to live well or flourish one must exercise to a high degree those activities that are characteristic of human nature. What are these activities? To answer this question, we must discern the proper function of the human that emanates from its essence. For Aristotle (and his Scholastic followers) the notion of essence is closely linked to definition. We define a human by virtue of its rational capacity. Accordingly, the purpose of human life is to function rationally. As a result, a good life is one characterized by excellence in reasoning. This excellence elicits both virtuousness and happiness.[8]

For all three Greek philosophers, reason, happiness, and virtue coincide.[9] Socrates's evaluation of the events surrounding his own life and death endorses this view. Suffering unjust treatment does not affect the goodness of one's life. In effect, the good-making components of a person's life lie within the individual's control; one simply turns inward to cultivate moral goodness. Kekes notes, 'The reason why, according to the Socratic ideal, we can be so confident that if we live rationally and morally, then our lives will be good is that the scheme of things is itself rational and moral. The key to living good lives is to live in harmony with the rational and moral order of the world'.[10]

In contrast to these theories, I suggest that the obstacles that hinder people from living good lives arise regardless of how morally decent or deserving they are. Moreover, impediments to a good life can even arise out of intentions and actions ordinarily considered to be morally praiseworthy. Seeking to emphasize the inevitability of these obstacles, Kekes names them 'essential conditions of life'. These conditions are most clearly revealed through the literary genre of tragedy because tragedy presents us with a view of life profoundly averse to the Socratic Ideal.

First, through tragedy the reader or audience is acquainted with the unforeseen and contingent nature of life's events. This condition is notably illustrated in *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles. Before Oedipus was born it was foretold that he would kill his father and marry his mother. Although his parents arranged to have him killed, Oedipus avoided death and grew into adulthood. He believed himself to be the son of the king and queen of Corinth. Oedipus learned of the prophecy and left Corinth so that the foretold events would not transpire. However, it is precisely these reasonable actions that brought about the occurrence of the prophesied events. His self-imposed exile brought him to Thebes where his biological father

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ruled as king. Oedipus met a band of men along the road, was provoked into a fight, and killed them. Unbeknownst to him, one of the men was his father. He entered the city and solved the riddle of the Sphinx liberating the city from its oppression. As a reward he was made king and took the widowed queen, his unknown mother, as his wife.

Oedipus's actions throughout his life were as reasonable and decent as one could expect. He was only led to kill his father and marry his mother due to his devotion to avoid performing these very acts. After discovering the truth of what he had done, he blinded himself, his wife/mother committed suicide, and his children/siblings were disgraced. Although he was seemingly reasonable and virtuous, he led a tragic life. He found himself forced to do evil that he abhorred in circumstances he was not responsible for.[11]

Second, the reader or audience is confronted with the fact that the universe is indifferent to both moral merit and human suffering. This notion is clearly depicted in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Lear divided his kingdom among his two wicked daughters, and disowned Cordelia, who loved him. He acted foolishly and came to pay for his foolishness through his own suffering. He learned his lesson and took responsibility for the events that occurred. He understood that his suffering came about due to his actions. After losing everything he began to cultivate those virtues we ordinarily consider praiseworthy: pity, compassion, and remorse for what he had done. He was reunited with Cordelia, who had forgiven him. Tragically, Lear's moral conversion was not rewarded. Cordelia was executed and Lear died with a broken heart.[12]

The story of Lear illustrates that there is no cosmic justice. Good people may suffer and the wicked may flourish. Those who suffer undeservedly are not compensated, nor does virtue necessarily lead to a good life. However, it would be hasty to conclude from these facts that the world is an evil place. Rather, it is simply indifferent to human agency and to moral merit.[13]

Third, encountering tragedy reveals to the reader or audience that human destructiveness is a persistent human motivation. In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz travelled to Africa to civilize the natives. 'He had a strong sense of moral and cultural values.'[14] He intended to overcome their barbarism not by waging war, but through the excellence of his character and intelligence. He travelled to a distant outpost in the African jungle and lived there among what he considered to be primitive tribes. The natives come to regard him with such awe that he seemed a supernatural being to them. He was given so much power that he lived without restraint. He ordered midnight rituals of sex, violence and cruelty. Finding himself in a position of absolute power he discovered within himself the barbarism he had set out to conquer. 'The horror! The horror!' was the realization that the heart of darkness was inside himself.

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This story exemplifies the lurking destructiveness within all individuals. It need not be engendered by external factors acting upon the agent. In effect, a person can be her own obstacle to living a good life.

The contingency of human existence, the moral indifference of nature, and the presence of destructiveness in human motivation give rise to tragic situations. They are essential conditions of life insofar as they are inescapable features of the human condition. Recognizing this fact eradicates the false hope that the universe coincides with reason, or that happiness will reward moral merit.

3. Responsibility to Persons and Inescapable Wrongdoing

Evildoing is not only inevitable, given the 'essential conditions of life' depicted above. It is also inescapable simply due to the nature and ground of moral obligation. Although Enlightenment and modern moral philosophers moved away from the Greek belief that the virtuous life is synonymous with the good life, they retained the assumption that leading a life devoid of wrongdoing lay within our control. Admittedly, Kant conveyed a low estimate of human nature and human goodness.[15] Nevertheless, he outlined the means for leading a thoroughly moral life—adhering to the categorical imperative. Similarly, J.S. Mill and contemporary utilitarians recognize the practical difficulty of ensuring that every act maximizes utility. Nevertheless, the mere possibility of always so acting is fundamental to the theory.

In order to avoid the pitfalls of constructing a moral theory upon the false belief that individuals can lead morally pure lives bereft of wrongdoing, a more realistic account of moral obligation accommodates the notion that wrongdoing and evildoing are inevitable.[16] In contrast to the prominent ethical theories of the Anglo-American tradition, the 'responsibility to persons' theory suggests that moral wrongdoing is not equivalent to violating conclusions of moral deliberation.[17] The locus of moral obligation is found in personal relationships rather than in an abstract universal moral principle like the categorical imperative or the principle of utility. By virtue of relating to others in various ways—e.g. spouse, parent, child, colleague, teacher, etc.—an individual has certain responsibilities.[18] For example, a spouse ought to be loving, loyal, and supportive whereas a teacher owes her students honesty, impartiality, and fairness.[19] Considering that a particular individual maintains various contemporaneous relationships, it follows that one carries assorted concurrent obligations to others. These obligations can readily come into conflict with one another inducing the inimical and inescapable transgression of a moral value.

Exploring the conceptual underpinnings of this theory more closely reveals that an individual's responsibilities to other persons are rooted in two kinds of consideration. 'The first is the perception that each of these persons has intrinsic and unique value. The second is the recognition that some connection or another obtains between oneself and these intimates.'[20] The recognition that one stands in a

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relationship with another person follows from simple observation or light reflection in most cases. The perception that an individual has intrinsic and unique value is slightly more complex requiring further explanation.

To claim that a person has intrinsic value means that a person is valuable non-instrumentally or in and of itself. As Kant does, one might ground intrinsic value in the capacities for rational thought and autonomous action.[21] Alternatively, one might appeal to a variety of relevant characteristics and capacities such as the capacities for affective or moral interaction, the ability to feel pain, the ability to care about things, or being self-conscious.[22] For the responsibility to persons theory it is sufficient to note that regarding individuals as valuable in themselves is a hallmark of moral experience. We arrive at the conclusion that persons have intrinsic value by reflecting upon the manner in which we form personal relationships. We build relationships with others by means of experiencing their intrinsic value.

To claim that each individual possesses unique value means that each person's intrinsic value is distinct from that of everyone else. In contrast, Kant holds that a person is intrinsically valuable due to universal characteristics: persons are rational and autonomous. From this position it follows that nothing that distinguishes persons from one another is of moral significance.[23] The intention behind this claim is laudable; establishing the irrelevance of contingent and particular characteristics to moral consideration is meant to evade prejudice and unfairness. The primary worry is that attributing moral relevance to particular or contingent features will lead to regarding some features and therefore some people as more valuable than others. Although this worry is legitimate, the fact that persons deserve moral recognition due to being autonomous and rational does not entail that an individual's particular features have no moral significance whatsoever. Indeed, Gowans suggests that each person is uniquely valuable and that the value of each person is incommensurable.[24]

This incommensurability reveals itself most poignantly when a loved one dies. The deceased cannot be replaced because of the individual's unique value. To illustrate, Gowans refers to Sophocles' *Antigone*. After Antigone dies as a result of Creon's orders, his son Haimon commits suicide because of his inability to go on living without her. Creon thinks that there are other women whom Haimon could love and take as a wife. For Haimon, however, Antigone's unique value cannot be replaced. Haimon is not distraught because a free and rational being is now gone. If that were the case, then she could easily be replaced. Although Haimon could have found another wife whom he presumably could have loved, she could not replace the person who was Antigone. This story resonates with the reader or audience by resting on the notion that each person has unique value.

Detailing Antigone's autonomous and rational capacities cannot fully describe her unique and intrinsic value as a person. Haimon recognizes her value as a person and assumes specific responsibilities to her because of their relationship. At

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the same time, Haimon bears responsibilities toward his father Creon by virtue of being his son. These responsibilities come into conflict in the play and take on tragic dimensions. The unavoidable conflict of moral responsibilities instantiated by an individual's numerous concurrent personal relationships ensures that wrongdoing and evildoing are inevitable.

The tragedies discussed above illustrate the possibility of numerous kinds of tragic-making characteristics in moral interaction. Gowans outlines these as follows:

> the morally best action seriously harms or allows to be harmed a person or social entity to whom the agent is morally responsible, … results in a harm that is either irreversible or extremely difficult to repair, … results in a harm that is far-reaching in its consequences,…not only fails to fulfil a moral responsibility, but actively works against that responsibility, … harms or neglects a person whom the agent especially values, … harms or neglects a person who is especially undeserving of this harm or neglect, … renders the agent a tool in the evil projects of others, … involves doing something that is degrading to the agent, … finally, the moral reasons for two conflicting actions do not override each other, and yet each overrides the reasons for all other alternative actions.[25]

In sum, the nature and ground of moral responsibility evokes inevitable moral wrongdoing or evildoing. Moreover, this wrongdoing may assume tragic dimensions. As a consequence, both evil and tragedy are inevitable.

4. Conclusion

Prominent Western ethical theories rest on fundamentally mistaken views concerning human existence and moral interaction. Greek virtue theory assumes that the universe is rational and moral merit will be rewarded with happiness. Kantianism and utilitarianism assume uncritically that a life devoid of wrongdoing is possible. However, these assumptions stand in sharp contrast to ordinary experience. Moreover, they lead one to overlook crucial features of appropriate moral interaction.

As illustrated by the stories of Oedipus, Lear, and Kurtz human existence is rife with contingency, there is no cosmic justice, and human motivations can be thoroughly destructive. Furthermore, an analysis of the nature and ground of moral responsibility indicates that evildoing and wrongdoing are inescapable. These bleak facts may clash with the false hope that attaining a good life lies within one's control, and this fallacious assumption may result in tragedy. Nevertheless, these attributes are simply components of the moral landscape. Having false hope in

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cosmic justice or holding fast to the false belief that one can lead a life of moral purity leads to neglecting the actual features of moral interaction and consequently, moral responsibility. Ironically, recognizing the inevitability of evil and moral tragedy and the connection between them provides the resources for diminishing them both. First, by identifying the essential conditions of life one acknowledges sources of evil that may otherwise be discounted. Second, in recognizing how and why inescapable evildoing and tragedy occur one has grasped the essence and source of moral responsibility; moral obligations arise out of and toward those with whom we have relationships. Both insights produce a moral acumen that enables the moral agent to interact with and respond appropriately to others in the face of wrongdoing or tragedy. Appropriately interacting with others in the moral community is the essence of moral responsibility.

Notes

[1] The topic of 'unchosen evil' is the focus of John Kekes' *Facing Evil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). My thinking is greatly influenced by his work, but our conclusions differ significantly. Kekes concludes the individual ought to accept or 'face' evil by cultivating a 'reflective temper' so that one does not find the occurrence of evil so jarring. Whereas Kekes focuses on comprehending evil as a psychological coping mechanism for the individual, I contend that understanding evil's inevitability is crucial for our moral interaction with other persons. Thus, on my view it is a form of moral responsibility.

[2] I am using 'happiness' and 'flourishing' interchangeably to refer to the common ground among eudemonistic theories without regard to some of the subtle differences among these terms which are irrelevant for present concerns.

[3] Kekes, *Facing Evil*, 12-14.

[4] I shall also use 'moral', 'virtuous', and 'just' interchangeably since their differences are again irrelevant for the purposes of this essay.

[5] Plato, *Crito*, 47e-48c.

[6] I acknowledge that it is unclear how much of Plato's philosophy is espoused by Socrates in the early, middle, and late dialogues. The generally accepted interpretation is that the Socrates of the early dialogues represents Socrates's own philosophy while in the middle and late dialogues he becomes a mouthpiece for Plato's philosophy. I accept this characterization.

[7] Plato, *The Republic,* 444b-445a.

[8] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a7-1099a12.

[9] Although Kant recognized that virtue does not cause happiness, he goes to great pains to include in his philosophy a cosmic reckoning of moral worth. Acting according to the moral law gives an agent moral worth. Although this moral worth is the best a human agent can attain, Kant postulates the existence of God and the immortal soul so that happiness can be distributed according to moral worth. See:

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Immanuel Kant, 'Critique of Practical Reason,' *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary J. Gregor. (New York: Cambridge University Press. 1996), 239-240.

[10] Kekes, *Facing Evil,* 27.

[11] Ibid., 23.

[12] Ibid., 23.

[13] It is worth noting that *King Lear* and *Oedipus* differ in how they each portray the tragic situation or tragic character. W.H. Auden observes that Elizabethan tragedies are characterized primarily by failed opportunities to make a choice or choices that would avert the tragedy. This emphasis on choice is very different from the tragedy of necessity that characterizes Greek tragedy. In the Greek tragedies, the characters cannot avoid their fate regardless of the actions they undertake. In Elizabethan tragedies the character has ample opportunities to avert the coming tragedy, but never seizes an opportunity to do so. We can think of these two kinds of tragedy as tragedy of necessity and tragedy of possibility. See: W.H. Auden, 'The Christian Tragic Hero,' *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose: Vol. II*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 258-260.

[14] Kekes, *Facing Evil,* 24.

[15] 'Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made.' Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim, *'The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Anthropology, History. Education,* trans. Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Proposition 6.

[16] I follow Christopher Gowans' description of the theory. Christopher Gowans, *Innocence Lost: An Examination of Inescapable Wrongdoing* (New York Oxford University Press, 1994). For alternative descriptions or related theories in care ethics, see: Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, M.A. Harvard University Press, 1982); Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Margaret Walker, *Moral Repair: Reconstructing Moral Relations After Wrongdoing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006);

[17] For utilitarians and Kantians, sound deliberation that takes a first moral principle as a starting point cannot produce conflicting moral judgments. If one reasons correctly, and then acts based upon the derived moral conclusions, then one has done what one ought to do. It would be incoherent to argue that there are situations where a correct conclusion, all things considered, of an agent's moral deliberation about what to do would conflict with itself such that the agent ought and ought not perform a specific action.

[18] Specific responsibilities or virtuous characteristics may be shared by multiple roles and relationships.

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[19] In this regard we might consider Confucius, a near contemporary of Socrates, who spoke of moral behaviour in exactly these terms of obligations such as filial piety—insisting that while a son owed his father loyalty and respect, the father was similarly obligated to treat his son with benevolence and fairness.

[20] Gowans, *Innocence Lost*, 123.

[21] For Kant only the noumenal person can be regarded as an end in itself. The moral imperative to respect the dignity of others is dictated by pure practical reason.

[22] For an overview and discussion of theories of moral standing, see: James Rachels, 'Drawing Lines,' *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*, eds. Cass R. Sunstein and Martha C. Nussbaum (New York: Oxford University Press. 1994), 162-174.

[23] Impartiality is a standard moral principle and appears in all of the prominent Anglo-American moral theories. For example, Bentham notably asserts that everyone is to count for one and no more than one.

[24] Kekes disagrees that all individuals have equal value. For Kekes, human worth depends on moral merit. Moral merit varies, so human worth is unequal. Evil people do not deserve the same reaction as good ones, because they have less worth. See Kekes, *Facing Evil*, 106-123. This disagreement between Gowans and Kekes does not create a problem for my account. If Kekes is correct that some individuals have more merit than others, then it follows that the principle of equality is invalid but not the responsibility to persons account. If Gowans is correct that individuals have different but incommensurable value, then it follows that we might not judge characters as harshly as Kekes does, but not that unchosen evil is nonexistent.

[25] Gowans, *Innocence Lost,* 226-227.

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Evil as All-Powerful, Evil as Immortal: The Public Relations of Evil in the Media

Sophia Kanaouti

Abstract
Using the political philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis's categorisation regarding the structure of the symbolic in society, i.e. the functions of what he calls 'social imaginary significations,' this paper addresses the representations, aims and feelings in our Western societies as they are promoted in the mass media. It argues that these three functions are tainted by the promoted successful self who is also demonstrably and acceptingly evil. In this self evil is 'natural,' 'authentic,' 'strong' and 'interesting' and the evil self 'immortal' – juxtaposed to a virtuous self which is 'weak' and 'boring' and 'a lie,' and much more in danger of a dismal future. If Castoriadis is right and the task of psychoanalysis is political, in that it tries to reconcile the person with his own mortality, then once we accept our mortality we can start to live, taking on responsibilities without the constant fear of death. This paper examines the ways in which the mass media insist on a self that is positioned as far as possible from mortality. Addressing news items that show the self as a neo-liberal 'hero,' a risk taker, and others that demonstrate death and loss being 'annulled' for successful business leaders (Berlusconi remaining 'young,' or, 'Wolf of Wall Street' Jordan Belfort remaining successful in spite of crimes) the paper tackles narratives of the 'successful' self that resonate as narcissistic and evil, and tests the distinct possibility that the formation of the self as an active citizen in the audience is undermined by them. It also examines how the insistence that our society creates leaders, or harbours 'leaders,' puts forth 'personas' as masks that replace identity – as the self does not identify with roles in social institutions, but instead exists as evil does: without an identity, only through its effects, echoing the deified corporate 'results.'

Key Words: Castoriadis, Arendt, leadership, mortality, self, social imaginary significations, representations, aims, feelings, identity.

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1. Introduction

As usual, art seems to have already gone where I want to go. The lyrics of the Alanis Morissette song 'I see right through you' evoke a description of evil as non-constituted. They read 'I know right through you,' 'I walk right through you.'

In *The Rise of Insignificancy*¸ the political philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis examines the ways in which an unconstituted self can come about. Talking about postmodernism and its freedoms, he states the ridiculous condition that people are now free, in the sense that they don't have to be themselves any more…[1] In the

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same book and elsewhere he suggests that evil is an attack on meaning. Arendt agrees with him in her essay 'Thinking and Moral Considerations.' But meaning, the demand, the need for meaning, is at the heart of the human psyche.[2]

This paper will examine the ways in which certain media tactics attack meaning defending evil, and what they put in its place. Significant meaning apparatuses available to the human being are what Castoriadis calls the 'social imaginary significations,' described by other thinkers as 'society's symbolic systems.' They are the way the social community corresponds to the needs of human beings, its members: they provide meaning for the people belonging to that society. Their function is threefold: they create *representations*, i.e., the way the person sees the world around him – Castoriadis's example is that today we may see trees as a total of chemical connections, whereas in ancient Greece people saw trees as homes for nymphs. Secondly, they instruct people about *aims*,[3] what is good to do or not to do. Societies encourage people to act a certain way and discourage other actions by looking down on them or by sanctioning them. Thus for instance, one of the encouraged aims of today is getting rich. Thirdly, these significations function in determining the affects, the *feelings* that are considered befitting the society in question – as for example faith was the feeling befitting a traditional society.

I would like to examine the media practices of undermining meaning in terms of the functions of the social imaginary significations. I would like to do that bearing in mind the media tactics in relation to three questions: first, what kind of *world* do they promote, thus what are the *representations* of the social imaginary significations currently at work? Secondly, which is the view of the *self* that they harbour, related to the *feelings* they expect and flatter in the audience? And thirdly, what are the aims of the self they encourage and present as optimal – hence linking the self and the world. Loss and death will be examined in relation to these three questions.

2. The First Function: Representations – a. A Hierarchy between Those in the Media and Those out of That Public Sphere

The world that the media create is related to a general worldview. Simply by occupying public space, they disseminate intense proposals of representations, of how people are supposed to see the world.

Hence, when the leader of a newly formed Greek political party, Stavros Theodorakis, was recently quoted saying 'I can go down to the people, can the other party leaders do that?' a representation was created, which is attuned to many more before it: a segregated society that is hierarchical and divided between those above, those who are in the public eye, and those to whom they have to descent, should they want to mix with them.[4] Not a single protest about this phrase was made public. For a former TV journalist this might be taken for granted, but not long ago a right-wing minister on Greek television used the same words, as he too

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claimed he was telling his 'leader,' the leader of his party, that they need to descend to the people, the voters.

2.b. Privatisation of Public Life

Yet the privatisation of public life, i.e., the practice of viewing celebrities and public figures in terms of their private life in the media makes audiences think that they know the people that they see in them. After all, audiences are usually invited, via the camera or Instagram, to celebrities' homes: we have seen their Christmas trees and their children, for instance. It is not uncommon for Greek TV personalities to get really upset when their work is judged, whereas they have no problem when their private life is judged – that brings them close to the public. An obsession takes hold of female fans when a female TV presenter gets pregnant, for example. This is an experience that equalizes the audience 'lay women' with the 'star,' but it doesn't explain why it renders former G-string models Madonnas…

Berlusconi is a master of this tactic of privatisation. He can twist any public crime he may have committed into a private affair, one that his voters are invited to think that they would share. Playing with the Christian notion that only God can judge us, he says, for example, 'I didn't commit tax fraud. Wouldn't you avoid unjust taxes if you could?' or 'I haven't slept with so many women – I am a rascal, but that is too many…' At the same time, he can be caught on camera leaving the Presidential Palace in Rome, and emulate sex when he sees a female traffic warden bent over a car leaving a ticket on the windshield.[5] When he did that, he almost waved to the camera of the passer-by. He did not commit any of his public affairs, certainly not the ones involving any crimes, on camera – but if he was to get caught, he would wave.

Berlusconi is not the only case in which the media pontificate about how corrupt politicians are the same as us, as evil as we would want to be. Viki Stamati, the wife of Akis Tsochatzopoulos, a corrupt Greek politician who is in jail right now and almost made it to the premiership, constantly has her lawyers 'leak' documents to the press pleading her case as a mother, claiming that she behaved as any other wife would – in spending millions, in following her husband in crime. The media often publish those without any criticism, as the lawyers provide them. Recently she appeared under the heading 'she wears only the prison uniform,' with one picture at least negating the professed title, showing her with a low-cut pink T-shirt…[6]

Yet it seems that this insistence in privatisation hides more than public acts, in the sense that these acts affect the whole community – it also hides private life. The case of Bill Cosby is telling, as more than fifteen women have by now come forth accusing him of sexual crimes. Whatever the truth of it, and the number of accusers is disturbing, it certainly seems we don't really know his private life, even though his private life itself had been in the spotlight for decades to 'inspire' us...

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2.c. An Obsession with Appearances

In this case, as Lance Armstrong's, what is more disturbing is the response of some regarding revelations of grave misconduct. Phylicia Rashad, the actress who played Cosby's wife in the famous show, recently urged us to 'Forget these women,' because 'what you're seeing is the destruction of a legacy.'[7] Lance Armstrong too, the athlete that inspired many with his wins in the Tour de France in spite of being a cancer survivor, is now back working with Livestrong, the organisation that had hired him because he was inspiring… before we knew he regularly used performance enhancement drugs to do it. Is it possible that his terrible misconduct even after his practice was revealed, claims that 'everybody did it' or 'everybody would do it,' instead of making people indignant, made them feel as guilty, even if just once, in passing, they felt the wish to cheat? 'We are all guilty,' is easily translated into 'no one is guilty.'[8] Armstrong's survival of cancer was a private affair, but his taking drugs to win was a public one. Does private life leave a legacy, but public life doesn't? Or, more to the point, do we have a problem giving up the illusion – both the illusion that we would be in his place, and the illusion that there is a legacy there, as constructed by the media?

2.d. The Reification of the World, the Reification of the Human Being and the Deification of Things

These examples seem to indicate we have come to a point where it is important for us to believe our own lies so that we are immune to reality, even to our own experience. Courtesy of science, we human beings are now a total of chemicals and tissue anyway – a news item from The Guardian *explains to us* why kissing is so much fun. The answer, because of neurotransmitters, is reminiscent of another news item with the title: 'What's in his kiss? 80 billion bacteria.'[9] As humans become things, things are elevated to the status of gods. Seeing money as sacrosanct was already in place in the imperialistic nineteenth century.[10]

2.e. Loss and Death and the Self

What can the character of loss be in this environment? For one thing, if appearances only matter, there can be no accountability, no loss. If life can be reproduced in a petri dish, loss can't be not too significant... News items promise eternal life and freedom from death, either as a prediction of physicist Stephen Hawking,[11] quoted as saying 'technology will give us eternal life,' which he really didn't say in the interview, or when journalists wonder 'Is this the end of death as we know it,'[12] or, 'Will eternal life become a reality?'[13] If man gets to be a thing, a robot, can he really die? But, more to the point, does he live? As the last article suggests, this is the time when the danger of humans becoming obsolete comes closer, as this is going to be a world, at best 'without jobs.' From *homo faber* to no homo at all. This entails not fear of death, not the fear of a single individual dying, but the extinction of the whole species.

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Technology is in the same entertainment game that the media are: trying to make us forget death, while at the same time having it hang over our heads, inducing incommensurate fear.[14]

3. The Media and the Self: The Second Function of Feelings – a.   Distancing

From feeling fear to being in awe and feeling pride, science and technology command respect. Technology, via the media, is an empowering concept. Thus, when we admire the feats of technology, we are invited to admire the feats of man in general, thus, 'our own.' A mastery over nature, and even over our own nature, disembodies the human being from the rest of the world. Feelings of admiration are alternating with superiority syndromes, as we are taught, by school and by media, that we are the Alpha dog in this planet.

An interesting effect of this is that when we speak about environmental problems, we speak about saving the planet, not saving ourselves. Comedian George Carlin's rant about how the planet will just spit us out and life will continue in it is a rarity. Our fear is not directed at technology, at least not yet, even though artists have shown us dystopic visions of robots taking over our lives. That is probably because we perceive technology as an ally tackling our real and paralyzing fear, that of death. As it fails in supporting us, comes depression.

Depression and numbness also befall us when news presenters jump from a humanitarian crisis to the price of gin or Hollywood news in the blink of an eye, and often with the same smile in their faces. When the disaster is too big they sometimes apologise, otherwise the insult is left in the air teaching the art of freezing one's feelings.

3.b. Exaggeration

Yet feelings in the media are also expressed through shameless exaggeration, as though we're dealing with a car salesman from the eighties. Indeed, this may apply to presenting consumer goods, or shows that deal with trivialities, as well as with interesting products of popular culture. Yet in the realm of the media, nothing is more important than anything else,[15] and even this exaggeration of sentiment ends up leaving audiences numb. Exaggeration is also present in a media hatred for the beautiful and the artistic, a totalitarianism practice,[16] here claiming it is boring because it is not thrilling enough. As cheap thrills are revered, art is hated unless appropriated and swallowed by entertainment, rendered something to consume – and defecate.[17]

4. Media, The Self and The World: The Third Function of Aims – a.   Loss Baptised Risk, where Risk is an Aim

Entrepreneurship has also helped in this issue, and now loss is called 'risk.' But this is a gambling risk, corresponding to the current character of the market.[18] (Pretend) risk is deified (claims that rich people risk their capital to create jobs,

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even when these are 'jobs' only in name, and they are in China – or, more to the point, they make millions without effort, in the currency market, buying and selling money.). Real risk is diminished (see George Osborne's attacks on welfare and on charities in Britain, claiming they are too leftist and are against the free market, simply giving stuff away). A third currency of risk rises: the manufactured risk of being called a skiver in Britain, lazy and incompetent instead of jobless. Social insecurity is praised by a narrative of greed, and now what is risky is… not risking. Meaning that people become jobless because they did not risk – they did not gamble.

4.b. 'The Leader Principle'

Brand phrases that include the world 'leadership' in them seem to have branched out to education from business. Are such practices adhering to a conception of a University as the training place for business people? Or is it that the idea of 'future leaders,' ingrained in a media representation of the media entrepreneur, nowadays claims the University as a brand name?

A private school in Greece called Byron College created a TV commercial that reads 'we don't encourage our pupils to learn history – we inspire them to write their own!'[19] I was in the beginning amazed that they would say something like that, but perhaps the amazing thing is that such things actually sell. One has to surmise that these pupils' parents are looking forward to their children becoming Napoleons – but never historians, and never followers, never peers, only leaders. These are the outlines of the new self, one who doesn't need to learn anything, but is sufficient in his own 'history.'

Yet Arendt suggests, and in that she is in agreement with today's psychologists regarding narcissism and its victims of abuse, that both the tendency to want to dominate and the tendency to want to be dominated is present in the same individuals.[20] It is one of psychoanalysis' aims to deliver the individual who is not a victim and is not a victimizer. Stemming from bad experiences, depending on the choice of the psyche, a person can become a victim or an abuser himself. What a political sphere that is democratic needs instead, is neither a leader nor a follower, but peers who discuss, negotiate and take decisions that benefit the whole community, not because they adhere to a totem leader, but because they are convinced and give their consent.[21]

4.c. Imitation Instead of Identification: Fragmented Bodies

As in the media world 'all real events are exceptional and happen only to strangers,'[22] media audiences are convinced, or rather mesmerized with what they see. Yet media personalities cannot really be models for identification. Identification is mimicry with psychic investment, with love.[23] Humans of the media world are simply models of success. When Berlusconi brags that he is

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already rich and didn't need to get into politics, he implies that politics is simply a means of getting rich.

So such models 'work only externally, but they cannot be internalized really, they cannot be charged with a value content, they can't answer the question 'What do I have to do?'[24] They are fragmented bodies – evident particularly in the case of women presenters/celebrities, only portions of bodies, portions of breasts or thighs, emulating portions of chicken in a restaurant.

Such conditions bring forth only imitation that is a mockery of identification, because it lacks psychic investment and it lacks passion. Living in a de-invested world, as disengaged human beings, 'we visit the Acropolis as we go to the Baleares.'[25]

This disinvestment is apparent in our societies as it was in the nineteenth-century ones. Proust talks about the members of high society and explains that he prefers the pariahs because at least they still have passion.[26] Ubiquitous bullying in today's celebrated corporate CEOs, far from the behaviour of a pariah, is a response, a negative response to this emptiness that endangers further.[27]

The political insights that psychoanalysis affords suggest that the desires to do evil exist, and that one should not feel guilty for desiring. But that is not to say that we are a world of evil people, far from it. Instead, it recognizes the unconscious as a force, which also, in neuroses, tries to hold us back. It is not the desire that ought to lead to guilt – psychoanalysis urges people not to feel guilt for evil they have *not done* – and take responsibility for evil they have done. Democracy is not a freedom for all game, but a reality in which autonomous individuals put limits to themselves – but they do it themselves, by virtue of being the lawmakers of the state themselves.[28] In the end, we must remember that

> Each good action, even for 'a bad cause,' adds some real goodness to the world'. Each bad action, even for the most beautiful of all ideals, makes our common world a little worse.[29]

Notes

[1] Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Rise of Insignificancy* (in Greek), trans. Kostas Kouremenos (Ypsilon Books: Athens, 2000), 181-182. (Not to be confused with *The Rising Tide of Insignificancy*, which is another volume, which can be found translated online and includes a different selection of essays – although some of the essays are the same in the two books).

[2] Castoriadis, 'Psychoanalysis and Philosophy,' *The Castoriadis Reader*, trans. and ed. James Ames Curtis (Blackwell: Oxford 1997), 358.

[3] In the essay 'The Construction of the World in Psychosis,' the same triptych appears, but aims appear as 'desire' instead – but this is a description of human psychical activity and the spaces where it is defined and exists: Cornelius

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Castoriadis, 'The Construction of the World in Psychosis,' *World in Fragments*, ed. and trans. David Ames Curtis (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1997), 206.

[4] 'Theodorakis Throws Down the Glove: I Can Go Down To the People, Can the Other Party Leaders Do That?' *Star TV Online*, March 9, 2014, viewed on 16 March 2015, http://www.star.com/Pages/Parapolitika.aspx?art=218416&artTitle=petaei_to_ganti_o_st_theodorakis_ego_mporo_na_katevo_ston_kosmo_aftoi_mporoun__.

[5] 'The Best of Silvio Berlusconi,' *youtube.com*, Channel 'Nznhqh,' May 14, 2009, viewed on 15 March 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81vQje8bWmo.

[6] 'New Shocking Pictures of Viki Stamati in Dromokaitio Mental Hospital,' *IEfimerida.gr*, March 17, 2015, viewed on 17 March 2015, http://www.iefimerida.gr/news/196481/nees-sokaristikes-eikones-me-ti-viky-stamati-sto-dromokaiteio-eikones.

[7] Sarah Parvini, 'Phylicia Rashad Defends Bill Cosby, Says Media Treating Him Unfairly,' *LA Times*, January 7, 2015, viewed on 15 March 2015, http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-three-women-say-bill-cosby-attacked-them-20150107-story.html.

[8] Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch: New York, 1972), 162.

[9] Rob Stein, 'What's In His Kiss? 80 Million Bacteria,' *npr.org*, November 17, 2014, viewed on 15 March 2015, http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2014/11/17/364054843/whats-in-his-kiss-80-million-bacteria.

[10] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt: New York, 1976), 145.

[11] 'Steven Hawking: "Technology will Give Us Eternal Life,"' *TO VIMA*, September 23, 2013, viewed on 15 March 2015, http://www.tovima.gr/world/article/?aid=531478.

[12] Naomi Alderman, 'Death to Death,' *The Guardian*, Technology Section, October 28, 2008, viewed on 15 March 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2008/oct/28/naomi-alderman-living-forever.

[13] 'Will Eternal Life Become a Reality?' *The Guardian*, February 6, 2015, viewed on 15 March 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/game-changers/2014/dec/11/will-eternal-life-become-a-reality. This was apparently (although not evidently) paid content, and it has since been removed; there is still a cache version of it online though, because if one googles 'Will Eternal Life Become a Reality – Guardian,' one is still presented with the page in the list produced by Google.

[14] Castoriadis, *The Rise of Insignificancy*, 181.

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[15] Cornelius Castoriadis, *A Society Adrift: Interviews and Debates, 1974-1997*, eds. Enrique Escobar, Myrto Gondicas, and Pascal Vernay, trans. Helen Arnold (Fordham University Press: New York, 2010), 215.

[16] Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Ugliness and the Affirmative Hatred of the Beautiful,' *In Front of War*(in Greek), trans. Zoe Christofidou-Castoriadis (Ypsilon Books: Athens, 1986), 280-286.

[17] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (Penguin Books: London, 2006), 202-203.

[18] Castoriadis, *The Rise of Insignificancy*, 124; see alsoMichael J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*, (Allen Lane: London, 2012), 143.

[19]'2013 – TV Commercial No 3,' *Byron College Website*, viewed on 16 March 2015,
http://byroncollege.gr/news-events/video-gallery/video/latest/2013-tv-commercial-no3?start=32.

[20] Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, 138-139.

[21] Cornelius Castoriadis, *Kairos* (in Greek), trans. Kostas Kouremenos (Ypsilon Books: Athens, 2000), 39.

[22]John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (BBC and Penguin Books: London, 1972), 153.

[23] Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (Martino Publishing: Mansfield Centre, USA, 2010), for example 60, 65; Thomas Mann, *Essays*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (Vintage Books: New York, 1959), 319.

[24] Castoriadis, *Kairos*, 94.

[25] Castoriadis, *Kairos*, 99.

[26] Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, 81-82.

[27] Bruce Kasanoff, 'If your CEO talks like this – Quit,' *LinkedIn*, September 30, 2014, viewed on 15 March 2015,
https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140930184113-36792-quit-if-your-ceo-talks-like-this.

[28] Cornelius Castoriadis, *That Which is Greece, Volume II: The Polis and the Laws, Seminars 1983-1984* (in Greek), eds. Enrique Escobar, Myrto Gondicas and Pascal Vernay, trans. Zoe Castoriadis (Kritiki Publications: Athens, 2008), 114.

[29] Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding: 1930-1954* (Schocken Books: New York 1994), 281.

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Exploring the Banality of Bureaucracy in Carceral States

Rallie Murray

Abstract
Bureaucracy, the governing legacy of the expanse of European colonialism, has come to be the dominating means by which states relate to their citizens, but also through which they relate to other states. Analysing geographies of evil from within a post-colonial world system perspective, it becomes possible to see the creation of carceral geographies – literal prison states – created to control and manage populations inconvenient to or unwanted by the state. Deemed always already criminal, the unwanted are submitted to the technologies of control that have come to be associated most closely with the prison - with checkpoints, with constant suspicion that they are planning some malevolent behaviour, forbidden from entering certain areas of the state, forced to prove their own innocence in the face of presumed guilt, and often literally caged in by geographies designed to recreate the architecture of the prison. I contend that such systems are capable of being upheld through the banality of bureaucracy. The purpose of this piece is to first attempt a deconstruction of the notion of a banal bureaucracy and its role in the creation and maintenance of carceral geographies, and second to add to the growing literature on anthropology of the state through incorporated comparisons between individual carceral circumstances and a wider capitalist pattern of power.

Key Words: Banality, bureaucracy, prison state, criminality, everyday violence, carceral geography, evil, the state, Palestine.

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Banality is a word too easily tossed around in discussions of state structures and 'evil' without thorough deconstruction of its implications and deeper meaning(s). In particular, an appeal to Hannah Arendt's phrase 'the banality of evil' appears frequently in the literature - for Arendt, the 'banality of evil' marked a revision of her previous construct of 'radical evil', the wilful belief that humans are superfluous and expendable (thanatopolitics). Banality, on the other hand, Arendt saw as emergent from within totalitarian regimes which produced individuals:

> unable to think for themselves and unable to understand the wrongness of their actions, given that everything they did was sanctioned by law and supported by the regime of power.[1]

The banal evil that Arendt observed expressly in the person of Eichmann is the willingness to commit acts that would ordinarily be considered 'radically' evil, but because they occur thoughtlessly they become simply unexceptional in context - in

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other words, they are no longer extraordinarily evil because alternative actions are just as ordinary. Evil does not require diabolism; it merely requires a silencing of thought.

This is the starting point from which I wish to proceed in my discussion of the banality of bureaucracy and carceral geographies. The nature of bureaucracy lends itself to this kind of trivial evil, for it is banality itself; it is incapable of governing situational specificity, prescribing operational mechanisms and relationships through which populations can be managed within the interlocking systems of the state structure – each 'thing' must be reimagined in an 'ordinary' or 'typical' form in order for bureaucracy to comprehend it.[2] As Foucault reminds us, a state which relies upon bureaucratic management techniques to control its population is not disinterested in their individual lives and bodies; rather, it is intensely interested in them as a matter of securing its own legitimacy.[3] In other words, it is not that individuals (and their bodies, and their vulnerability, and their reproductive capacities, etc.) are *unimportant* to bureaucracy. Instead, it is the unthinking, uncritical nature of the bureaucratic management of 'things' that renders it capable of banal evil – its acts cannot be considered diabolical because they are carried out with precise measure rather than individualized intent.[4]

Carceral geographies are my mobilizing interest in terms of understanding the banality of bureaucracy. My research has, in the past, largely reflected an interest in microgeographies of incarceration - prisons and similar state institutions - where concepts reflecting the banality of bureaucracy are highly applicable. The 'Lucifer Effect' is perhaps the best known theory of bureaucratic evil in prisons; put forward by Philip Zimbardo as a result of his infamous Stanford Prison Experiment, it posits that ordinary people become capable of extraordinarily cruel or evil acts when placed in situations where such behaviour is normalized.[5] I believe it is possible to expand the scope of prison geography in order to encompass larger spatial manifestations of incarceration – for example, one might explore this concept through the geopolitical and economic structures that keep poor populations incarcerated in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations while their labour and natural resources are extracted for the benefit of those at the core of the world system.[6] What I am interested in here are the incarcerated towns, neighbourhoods, villages, and cities that make up networks of occupation and oppression that mirrors the space of the prison. Urban neighbourhoods in the United States represent such a site of oppressive abandonment, and the uprisings of this past year in Ferguson, MO have succeeded in drawing attention to this form of carceral geography in recent months. South Africa under apartheid was structured via the same logic of incarceration and occupation. Palestine, or what remains of it in a geopolitical sense - the West Bank and Gaza - bears striking similarities to both South Africa under apartheid and the urban ghettos of the United States, and is my primary interest in this paper. These carceral geographies are part of banal bureaucratic systems of control and surveillance that, I argue, enable the

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perpetuation of unthinking yet intensely interested violence at the behest of the state against individual and collective bodies designated not-quite or no-longer human via silences in official discourse.

It would be disingenuous to attempt to describe the realities of the carceral state from a purely nomothetic perspective. Indeed, recent ethnographic literature on the state suggests that it is not possible to understand bureaucracy and state structures without attention to the plurilocal, multiplanar nature of bureaucracy, as well as to the process by which the 'imagined' state becomes realized in the experiences of individuals.[7] Therefore, some dialectical weaving together of concepts and observations must take place in order for a more realistic understanding of the banality of bureaucracy and evil to come to the fore. By varying the focus of our lens, different relationships and emergent properties come into view.[8] Arguably, in the discussion of the banality of bureaucracy and banal acts there are three relevant 'scales' (which contain further specificities therein that I am avoiding for the sake of brevity): the state, the masses, and the individual. In what follows, I will attempt to weave together an analysis of the banality of evil in bureaucratic states deployed through carceral geographies as manifested in the situation of Palestine, between these three scales of focus.

In the beginnings of the State of Israel, Zionists put forth the claim that Israel/Palestine was 'a land without people for a people without a land.' This was the first erasure, the first step that the state took to obliviate individuals for its own interests. From that point, the unfolding creation of an Israeli state followed a prefigured plan, the implementation of which was by necessity bureaucratic. Efrat writes that it was unique among modern states, a 'system worked out in advance,' preconfigured and then put into practice as quickly as possible to secure the foundations of the newborn state.[9] This system had no space built into it for the people it did not recognize existing in the first place, thus rendering Palestinians from the first moment of encounter already superfluous. As superfluous beings, they were inconvenient – a political and economic relationship that has effectively negated the humanity of peoples across the world in different scenarios (Black women in post WWII America, Indigenous Peoples in the Americas, Jews and Romani in the Third Reich) - not 'counted' yet part of 'the count'; always a stark reminder of the violence inherent in the encounter.[10] The bureaucracy put in place to orchestrate the genesis of an Israeli state had no means with which to account for the Palestinian people; to conjure Agamben: they were abandoned by the state as the state itself was beginning.[11] And as subsequent events have shown, this *really was only* the beginning.[12]

The relationship of abandonment and occupation between the (Zionist) Israeli state and Palestinians has continued as the operating logic of its bureaucracy. It is banal in its utter inability to think Palestinians as 'real' beings and its intense interest in keeping their bodies separate and exposed. What has emerged in the decades since the official creation of Israel, as Israel has extended its political

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control over the geographic region, is a situation in which bureaucracy provides for roughly two different categories of being: Israeli citizens, who are governed by the rule of law; and non-citizens, typically Palestinians (both Muslim and Christian) but also other immigrants, who are governed by policy in an 'unexceptional' state of exception.[13] It is 'unexceptional' in that it has been normalized;[14] the relationship of power between the individual and the state is one in which the evils of oppression, of constant surveillance, of mortification and expropriation, are no longer recognized as being either 'radical' or even 'evil' in the official discourse of the state.[15] It is only through banality that they can function, because to acknowledge the state of exception with conscious or critical thought would bifurcate the discursive cognitive dissonance underpinning the logic of the exception. Arendt writes:

> Without the elite and its artificially induced inability to understand facts as facts, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, the movement could never move in the direction of realizing its fiction.[16]

Thus it is the will to unthinking by individuals ensconced within its structure that produces the banality of a bureaucracy, that necessitates the stories told in the dominant script to reauthorize its banality by reconfiguring what can be seen and what can be thought by 'the masses'.

The masses, it is critical to note, refers to the particular social relationship born from participation in the 'dominant' script - in other words, to the conglomeration of individuals bound in relationship to the state, but not strictly applicable to each and every individual as an individual.[17] Acknowledging this leaves our sliding scale of focus free to move between the ideographic and nomothetic with 'the masses' as a nexus point between the two, where agency and structure collide in movement and countermovement. Bilsky's discussion of the Kufr Qassem trial in 1957 provides an excellent example of movement between individual and state through the locus of the masses.[18] She claims that this trial, in which a battalion of Israeli Border Police were charged with murder for the massacre of Palestinians in the town of Kufr Qassem (for breaking an imposed curfew of which none of them had been informed) represents one of the 'junctures in which the imaginary boundaries of the collective identity are exposed through a confrontation with an Other, who is effectively excluded from the society's dominant narrative of membership.'[19] The masses remember the Kufr Qassem trial as one in which the limits of military obedience were firmly set, yet Bilsky argues that there is still a collective historical amnesia at work in that the masses recall that the members of the battalion were punished for murder, but not the details of the events which made the unexceptional exceptional in the eyes of the justices. Only part of the

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story can be spoken in the language of the masses. It is, as Oppenheimer writes of a very different massacre, as though:

> The official history (and this is no surprise) refuses to recollect the systematic nature of the terror within a judicial, ethical, or forensic frame. The deliberate nature of the massacres is *obscene* to an official history.[20]

Although the Kufr Qassem trial marked a juridical pronouncement that Palestinian lives were just as valuable as Israeli ones, Bilsky notes:

> This recognition was only de jure and not de facto...it did not prevent [the Palestinians'] exclusion and de facto separation created by the military rule, and it did not change the Jewish public's suspicious attitude toward them.[21]

The mass consciousness that recognizes Kufr Qassem as a political victory proclaiming the democratic equality of Israel is just one of the stories whose repeated performance obfuscates deliberate evil; the masses draw that evil into themselves through the banality of its repetition. And, too, it is a repeatedly imagined site of encounter, in which the role of the state as protector of justice and equality on the one hand or as casual oppressor on the other is naturalized for those participating in its performance according to their relative positions.

The interplay between the state and the masses exemplified in the Kufr Qassem case and the amnesia surrounding it has had lingering effects on Palestinian and Israeli geographies.[22] The violence of the occupier – to impose curfews and to punish those who break it, to set up check-points between Palestinian towns to ensure that 'suspicious' figures (typically but not limited to young men) are unable to move freely within Palestinian territory, to demolish Palestinian houses to make room for Israeli settlers – is given shape by the interactions between the state, the masses, and the individual. As Oppenheimer states, 'we voluntarily place ourselves under the spell of the terrifying effects of stories';[23] stories that enable individuals to carry out acts of banal evil on the level of everyday life and on the level of directing state policies. And as all facets of life are interpellated within the banality of the state, so too is the spatial network deployed as a technology of control.

From the point of view of Palestinian critics and their international allies, perhaps the starkest physical reminder of the bureaucracy that has declared them non-persons is the Wall. Filmmaker Simone Bitton's interview with General Amos Yaron in her film *Mur (Wall)* is telling; the former Defense Forces Major General of Israel stated:

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> The reason [for the Wall] is clear. It is an effective way to
> significantly reduce the penetrative capabilities of Palestinians
> who come to commit terrorist acts inside the State of Israel...this
> is the primary reason behind this investment. The secondary
> reason is that for many years the Palestinians considered Israel to
> be an unlimited resource for stolen goods...this made Israelis
> living on the seam-line feel insecure. It made all Israeli citizens
> feel insecure.[24]

However, even General Yaron's 'story' obfuscates the evil of this carceral landmark – his words imply that the Wall is a boundary strictly between Israeli and Palestinian spaces, leaving unspoken the reality that the Wall in many places passes over official boundaries to secure (often illegal) settlements which also means entirely encircling Palestinian towns and villages, effectively imprisoning them and cutting them off from their families, their jobs, and their land.[25]

Roadblocks and checkpoints are also deployed as geographical techniques of control. Again, the official story is that these roadblocks and checkpoints are for the safety of Israelis, yet only thirty-six of the over 600 checkpoints separate Israel from Palestine; the vast majority separate Palestinian towns from other Palestinian towns.[26] Controlled by the Israeli Border Police, these checkpoints, in the eyes of journalist Ali Abunimah, are effectively 'placing an entire population under the jurisdiction of 18, 19 year old soldiers who have absolute power over the lives of Palestinians.'[27] Under the spell of the stories of the dangerous Palestinian, soldiers willingly participate in the mortification and dehumanization of Palestinian men, women, and children at military checkpoints. These barricades have become the site of childbirths, of the death of the old or infirm, simply because soldiers following orders will not allow a car through before the end of curfew or an ambulance to cross a checkpoint unmolested.[28] Again, in Oppenheimer's words, 'this is a terrifying and terrible actuality: that one could commit genocide under the spell of stories - stories of heroism, horrors, ghosts.'[29] This is not to say that individuals in themselves are evil, or that it is only the actions of each individual themselves that creates evil in the world. To come to grips with the banality of bureaucracy and the kinds of evil it empowers, we must be prepared to look deeper. In his exegesis on Arendt's work, Bernstein states:

> To speak about good and evil in this simplistic manner is not
> only inadequate for understanding evil in our contemporary
> world, but also it is dangerous. It is cynically used as a political
> weapon to obscure complex issues. This is no longer a
> satisfactory way to come to grips with the prevalence of *new*
> forms of evil that became manifest in the twentieth century and
> are still very much with us. We need to understand how ordinary

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people can be complicit with evil deeds, including genocide. And we also need to understand how political leaders and bureaucrats (who are not vicious monsters) can, by their actions, create an environment where it is all too easy to foster torture and humiliation.[30]

In their performance, stories become easier to think than reality, and so the unthinking individual, within the like-minded masses, is drawn into the circuit of ordinary evil in a carceral landscape. It is the landscape itself, the 'set' that is the constant reminder of the theme of the play, that makes the story all the more real. In some sense, the carceral landscape serves as a fetish of state power – a landscape whose symbolic construction goes beyond symbolism and, in the words of Achille Mbembe:

> Takes on itself an autonomous existence. It becomes unaccountable... capriciousness that has reached the contemplation of itself...we should not underestimate the violence that can be set in motion...to safeguard the official fictions that underwrite the apparatus of domination.[31]

Without the dialectical interplay between the state and its geography, there would be no 'site of encounter' to reinforce the power dynamics of the occupation. And, too, there is a necessary relationship between the banal historical amnesia that enables everyday Israelis to forget the terrible violence of the state, and the banal evil committed at the site of encounter. When the encounter becomes 'real', that is, when there is an explicit 'site of encounter' (at a checkpoint, at a political protest, in a prison), the evil contained within the banality of bureaucracy may be deployed by the individual. It is the choice to act *without* deeper thinking, to toe the line drawn by bureaucratic decisions that makes such evil acts ordinary, even trivial. The banality of bureaucracy in a carceral geography cannot help but be violent – it must continue to contain, to discipline and punish, to erase the inconvenient and unwanted carceral subjects from free spaces to preserve the logic of its justice. And it must do so through stories that coerce the citizens of those free spaces into consenting to participate, whether by unthinking blindness or unthinking violence. It is this distinction that I think is of the utmost importance in terms of building webs of understanding between the Palestines, Algerias, South Africas and Fergusons of the world – the distinction between complicity and guilt, and the distinction between banality of the masses and the banal evil of the individual.

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Notes

[1] Karin A. Fry, *Arendt: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009), 28.

[2] Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation,' *The Anthropology of the State*, ed. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 86-111; Max Weber, 'Bureaucracy,' *The Anthropology of the State*, ed. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 49-70; Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality,' *The Anthropology of the State*, ed. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 131-143.

[3] Foucault, 'Governmentality'; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I, an Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

[4] Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses'; Foucault, 'Governmentality'; Weber, 'Bureaucracy'.

[5] Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House, 2008).

[6] Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2008).

[7] Achille Mbembe, 'The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarity in the Postcolony,' *The Anthropology of the State*, eds. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) 381-400; Akhil Gupta, 'Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State,' *The Anthropology of the State*, eds. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 211-242.

[8] Andrew Sayer, *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Bertell Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

[9] Zvi Efrat, 'The Plan: Drafting the Israeli National Space,' *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture*, eds. Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman (New York: Verso, 2003), 59-69, 60.

[10] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2005); Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004); Neferti X. M. Tadiar, 'Life Times of Becoming Human,' *Occasion: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities* 3 (2012): 1-17.

[11] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

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[12] Efrat, 'The Plan'; Rashid Khalidi, *Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007); Riccardo Bocco, 'UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees: A History within History,' *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28.2-3 (2010): 229-252.

[13] *Occupation 101: Voice of the Silenced Majority*, dir. Sufyan Omeish and Abdallah Omeish. Los Angeles: Trip'ol'i Productions, 2006, Digital Edition; *Roadmap to Apartheid*, dir. Ana Noguiera and Eron Davidson. New York: Journeyman Pictures, 2012, Digital Edition; Sarah S. Willen, 'Do "Illegal" Im/migrants Have a Right to Health?,' *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 25.3 (2011): 303-330.

[14] Agamben, 'State of Exception'; Steven Colatrella, 'Nothing Exceptional: Against Agamben,' *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 9.1 (2011): 97-125.

[15] Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses'; Foucault, 'Governmentality'; Weber, 'Bureaucracy'.

[16] Hanna Arendt, *Totalitarianism: Part Three of the Origins of Totalitarianism* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 2005), 83.

[17] Badiou, *Being and Event*; Fry, *Arendt*.

[18] Leora Y Bilsky, *Law, Meaning and Violence: Transformative Justice: Israeli Identity on Trial* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

[19] Ibid., 172

[20] Joshua Oppenheimer and Michael Uwemedimo, 'Show of Force: A Cinema-Séance of the Power and Violence in Sumatra's Plantation Belt,' *Critical Quarterly* 51.1 (2009): 84-110, 85.

[21] Bilksy, *Law, Meaning and Violence*, 194

[22] Efrat, 'The Plan'; Sharon Rotabard, 'Wall and Tower (Homa Umigdal): The Mold of Israeli Architecture,' *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture*, eds. Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman (New York: Verso, 2003), 39-56.

[23] Oppenheimer and Uwemedimo, 'Show of Force,' 98

[24] *Mur (Wall)*, dir. Simone Bitton. Las Vegas: Syndicado Films, 2005, Digital Edition.

[25] *5 Broken Cameras*, dirs. Guy Davidi and Emad Burnat. New York: Kino Lorber Films, 2012, Digital Edition; *Bil'in Habibti*, dir. Shai Carmeli Pollack. Zurich: First Hand Films, 2006, Digital Edition; *Mur (Wall)*.

[26] *Roadmap to Apartheid*.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.; *Life in Occupied Palestine: Eyewitness Stories and Photographs*, dir. Anna Baltzer. Denver: Pan Productions, Digital Edition; *Occupation 101*.

[29] Oppenheimer and Uwemedimo, 99.

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[30] Richard J Bernstein, 'Is Evil Banal? A Misleading Question,' *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics*, eds. Roger Berkowitz, Jeffrey Katz, and Thomas Keenan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 131-136, 136.
[31] Mbembe, 'The Banality of Power,' 388

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Against Humility as Informed Contempt

Regan Lance Reitsma

Abstract
The French moral philosopher Andre Comte-Sponville regards the moral virtue of humility as including, at its very core, both a lucid recognition of, and a profound moral dissatisfaction with, the low quality of one's own moral character. In this brief chapter, I argue against Sponville's particular vertical conception of humility as a 'truthful sadness' or even an 'informed contempt for self', a conception which leads to unnecessary paradoxes within his broader moral outlook. I gesture at an account that better coheres not only with several seemingly sensible insights, but also with Sponville'shighly idealistic agapic morality.

Key Words: Comte-Sponville, moral virtue, agape, humility, sadness, self-contempt, moral equality, spiritual cannibalism, St. Paul, Pascal, Spinoza, Kant, submission to valid intellectual and moral standards.

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> 'What is man? A nothing before the infinite, a colossus before the nothing.'[1]

1. Humility as Informed Contempt

According to the French moral philosopher Andre Comte-Sponville, the moral virtue of humility is, at its very core, a disposition to lucidly 'acknowledge all that we are not',[2] namely, that we are, especially in terms of moral character, 'not God'.[3] This definition leads Sponville to describe humility as 'a humble virtue, so much so that it even doubts its own virtuousness'.[4] Even more, in its 'extreme awareness of the limits of all virtue',[5] humility is not only a self-deprecating character trait;[6] it verges on, for its bearers, an attitude of humiliation, a species of 'informed contempt for self',[7] a 'truthful sadness',[8] prompted by the thought that ourmoral characters are 'nothing to be proud of'.[9]

Are these claims, several of them conspicuously censorious, true? In particular, is a (strongly) negative appraisal of one's own moral character the principal characteristic of being truly humble?

2. The Central Dispute

I will argue no. To be fair, Sponville isn't, as the above remarks suggest, unswervingly reproachful. He does advise us to 'temper' our morosely self-contemptuous stance with mercy, 'a bit of gentleness', towards ourselves.[10] Even so, taken as a claim about the definition of humility, Sponville's proposition that

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being humble is a 'truthful sadness', or even a tempered 'contempt for self', is mistaken, and it leads him into unnecessary moral 'paradoxes'.[11]

3. My Argumentative Strategy

Sponville's account of humility goes awry for at least two reasons. First, his discussion overemphasizes the vertical, theological dimensions of humility and correspondingly neglects its horizontal, social dimensions. In my view, a humble person's moral attention is often not on her own moral faults, but on such things as the needs, rights, and legitimate expectations of other people. Second, Sponville's discussion fails to distinguish between different moral registers, distinct standpoints from which we should appraise character. To make progress in the moral life, it's useful to judge ourselves both from more and less idealistic standards. A properly humble person, utilizing this range of standards, will think no more, and no better, of herself than is warranted; but also no less, and no worse. In this brief chapter, I'll operate from several assumptions, each of which Sponville claims to share: (i) humility is a moral virtue,[12] and so both(ii) a morally praiseworthy character trait and (iii) a personal strength[13]; it is a character trait (iv) generally consistent with other important moral virtues such as being just, generous, patient, and tolerant, traits which Sponville himself tends to conceive as (unified under the gloss) 'feeble approximations of love'[14]; and (v) people are generally capable of some measure of moral improvement, however modest.[15] Sponville's particular conception of humility doesn't, I think, cohere with (i)-(v).

To give a preliminary example of an unnecessary paradox prompted by Sponville's definition, consider the idea, seemingly very plausible, that an increasingly patient person is able to be both humble and honest with herself. Oddly, this level-headed idea – an instance of the more general assumption (iv) – isn't available to Sponville. If, as Sponville supposes, humility includes a 'lucid' and 'extreme' awareness of your own lack of virtue, the birth and subsequent growth of any authentic moral virtue in you would call for the corresponding death of humility. Otherwise put, any progressively patient person would either need to eschew her morose feelings about herself or be dishonest – even and especially with herself – about the better parts of her character. Moral virtues are not, I submit, generally moribund in this way.[16]

To simplify my discussion, at times I'll critique Sponville's vertical account of humility as self-contemptuous sadness from the perspective ofRobert C. Roberts' horizontal account.[17]According to Roberts, humility is ultimately grounded in a belief in the 'basic moral equality' of each person and manifests as a corresponding disposition not to feel certain negative, competitive emotions – such as envy, resentment, and Schadenfreude[18] – 'associated with caring a lot about one's [social] status'[19] and tend, in their rivalrousness, to harm relationships. Roberts' focus on the social dimensions of humility is a useful corrective to Sponville's

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unhelpful fixation on our status as egregious, creaturely violators of the highest moral law.[20]

My own view of humility does include, at its very core, a vertical element. As I see it, humility includes a disposition to submit willingly, sometimes at some cost to self-interest, to valid norms. The central characteristic of a properly humble person is her lucid recognition that she isn't above the legitimate expectations – among them, moral expectations – all of us are under.[21] More on this point later.

4. Spinoza and the Pauline Tradition

Sponville's conception of humility as self-contemptuous sadness isn't thoroughly idiosyncratic. Several estimable philosophers seem to concur.[22] Sponville quotes Kant, for instance, who describes '*humilitas moralis*' – 'beautifully', Sponville supposes – as 'the consciousness and feeling of the insignificance of one's moral worth in comparison with the [Moral] Law'.[23]

Sponville and Kant, note, treat humility as a second-order attitude: to be humble is to take a certain (negative) stance towards your own moral character, or the quality of your own will. Their accounts also implicitly posit a valid moral standard from which the relevant negative judgment about our moral characters is made. Kant would have us judge ourselves according to the 'matter' of the Categorical Imperative and its demand that we invariably behave, intentionally, in ways creative of the Kingdom of Ends. Sponville's ultimate standard is the biblical principle 'love your neighbor as yourself'.

An atheist in terms of his metaphysics, Sponville, in ways similar to Kant,[24] is a Pauline Christian in terms of his broad moral outlook.[25] According to Sponville's conception of the moral life, becoming a better person is tantamount to becoming more and more neighbor-loving, with a special emphasis on striving to become unwaveringly just and pervasively charitable. The prophet Micah, perhaps summarizing the fundamental maxims of the ancient Hebrew law, calls us 'to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God'.[26] Elide 'with God' from the third maxim, and Sponville fundamentally agrees. Sponville employs the concept of God, this implies, as a heuristic, very useful idea which serves to clarify our best moral thinking about, among other moral virtues, humility.

The moral rigor within Sponville's and Kant's philosophizing is obvious. Taking his cue (again, as Kant does) from St. Paul, Sponville speaks of the importance of combining 'perfect lucidity and unwavering standards'.[27] If we compare ourselves to a Being we imagine to be profoundly just but even more loving and merciful, we must admit, Sponville tells us,'All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God'.[28] Sponville subsequently chooses to make this insight the centerpiece of his definition of the moral virtue of humility.

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5. The First Objection: The Propriety of Sponville's Negative Judgments

Sponville's Pauline posture naturally leads to a certain type of objection. Some readers, certainly those who think of moral education mostly in terms of positive reinforcement and building self-esteem, will immediately disagree – perhaps viscerally – with Sponville's account of humility as a lucid and self-contemptuous sadness on the grounds it's dour and condemning.

This isn't how I will put the objection, at least not precisely. I think Kant and Sponville have a point. If we ascend to a sufficiently idealistic perspective – whether Kant's Moral Law or Sponville's agapic principle – the judgment we aren't 'perfect as [our] Father in Heaven is perfect' will be obvious.[29] And I suspect any introspective person devoted to living a moral life will be disappointed, in some cases profoundly, with some aspects of her own moral character, and so will sometimes experience, to one degree or another, a corresponding 'sadness'. More, I find considerable value in Sponville's agapic moral outlook: there are times when thinking in terms of 'unwavering standards' of justice, generosity, and patience is an excellent idea, even though doing so can lead to moments of deep-running moral dissatisfaction with one's own character.[30] How, for instance, do we begin to significantly improve our characters if we don't have an adequately clear – if highly idealistic – target to shoot for and an honest and focused sense of how we come up short?[31] Self-criticism, even strong self-criticism, has a place in the moral life.

But why think the proper attitude that arises from such reflection is contempt for self? Here are three reasons to think it isn't.

First, Sponville's account of humility directs our attention at the wrong object. Let's imagine you've been stuffed chock full of conceit for many years, having attributed to yourself a generous spirit you've never had. When the scales fall from your eyes, you should, it's clear, pour contempt on all your pride. But why, we should ask, should this lead to a seemingly generic contempt for 'self'? Presumably there's more to you and your character than this particular weakness. You've lacked generosity for the people you encounter, but perhaps you haven't lacked, say, respect for their moral rights. A person's character is often a hard-to-untangle jumble of strengths, weaknesses, and indifferents. Accordingly, a generic contempt for self, tempered only by a 'bit' of mercy, would seem to reflect a false picture of a highly unified self. Even befuddled, frustrated pathos seems more apt than contempt for self – for moral frustration with self already signals the presence of, in the very least, a modicum of moral goodness.

Second, set aside questions of the quality of your character, Sponville, as an advocate of biblical agape, is presumably also an advocate of a proper love of self. But is feeling contempt for your 'self' consistent with having a significant regard for your own inalienable moral significance? It would seem – to pick up on an element of Roberts' view and St. Paul's, that lucidly recognizing your own moral worth is also a profoundly important attitude towards your 'self', one which

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doesn't vary as your character strengthens and weakens. Shouldn't this attitude, and not merely a 'bit of gentleness', temper one's stance towards self?

Third, it's worth asking why, facing up to our moral faults, contempt is the proper attitude, instead of, say, contrition or remorse, attitudes more apt to lead the agent to attempts at recompense and moral improvement? As the theologian Jennifer Herdt remarks, in response to 'hyper-Augustinian' attitudes that sometimes crop up in Christian moralizing, 'Confessing at every instant how our characters fall short of the [seemingly virtuous] actions we are performing, insisting on the deceptiveness of our activity, obsessing over our lack of purity of intention would short-circuit our movement toward perfection'.[32] Accordingly, contrary to the thrust of Sponville's account, it's sometimes appropriate to appraise ourselves in terms of less idealistic moral standards than the standards of perfect justice and pervasive charity. For instance, our human inability to be assiduously truthful, with self and with others, shouldn't stop us from seeking to make incremental improvements in our dispositions to promulgate truth. And in many social situations, it's absolutely crucial to make distinctions between those among us who do and don't display significant, if not perfect, resolve to tell the truth. If a witness has scrupulously eschewed perjuring himself within his testimony in a court of law, it's not particularly relevant to say, 'Oh, but he's a liar, even so. He's been guilty of fibbing to his buddies about his athletic accomplishments on the basketball court'. In other words, we often have good grounds for prying our best attempts at evaluating ourselves from Sponville's 'hyper-Augustinian' concerns.

6. The Second Objection: Humility and Basic Moral Equality

My primary objection to Sponville's account is not to its dour, censorious spirit, but to the idea that humility includes, at its very core, a negative appraisal of self. He might be correct that moral faults are endemic to our earthly lives, but a recognition of such faults isn't, in my view, a part of the concept of being humble.

First, there's my appeal to the intuitive idea that a person who is unswervingly just and pervasively charitable can also conceivably be humble, and without having to lie to herself about her own character. Roberts, who is a Christian – both in terms of his metaphysics and his morality – puts the point this way: 'Humility has nothing essentially to do with being sinful. Jesus Christ is the most perfect exemplar of humility (Philippians 2), but he could not exhibit contrition, which involves sorrowing over one's sin'.[33]

Second, we can construct an account of humility that neither suffers from Sponville's unnecessary paradoxes nor conflicts with assumptions (i)-(v). Reflection on Robert's account is sufficient to make this point.

Here's Roberts' basic idea. People, more or less persistently and inevitably, compare themselves with others – whether in terms of relative intelligence, wit, physical appearance, career success, or other similar measures. There's nothing essentially pernicious about such comparisons. But it often does, as a matter of

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practice, go badly. If clear-headed and honest, most of us notice we do better by some of these (as Roberts puts it) 'worldly measures', worse by others. You might score relatively high in terms of athletic skill, but have to admit you're an abject failure musically. How, we might wonder, should such judgments, whether positive or negative, lead you to think about yourself? Roberts' view is you should make a stark distinction between your relative success by worldly measures and your basic, profound, and equal moral worth. Often, in Roberts' estimation, we don't: we tie our self-worth, for better or worse, to how smart, hip, or financially secure we take ourselves to be. This choice to link self-worth to relative success makes your self-regard, if it is presently high, tenuously so. The athlete whose self-worth is significantly grounded in his currently ascendant play on the court is only a creaky knee from a personal crisis. Our sense of self-worth threatened, we often succumb to unduly rivalrous, negative emotions and – heaven forbid – the morally troublesome behaviors they encourage.

Better, for self and for others, if we can properly ground our sense of self-worth in something that 'transcends' our relative (in)ability to succeed in terms of intelligence, wit, or athleticism. As Roberts has it, we can. Each person's moral worth is basic, profound, and equal. Accordingly, Roberts describes humility as a personal strength, a 'transcendent self-confidence' and 'a psychological principle of independence from others' that permits you to compete for job promotions and athletic titles, all while feeling secure in your inalienable standing within the moral community. Roberts emphasizes a world-class musician needn't, to count as humble, deny she has earned her well-deserved accolades. What humility, properly conceived, requires is that she eschews forms of invidious pride that manifest as, say, haughtiness. In this vein, Roberts calls humility the 'absence of spiritual cannibalism'. Too often we nourish our ego, our own personal sense of self-worth, by 'feeding on' the (perceived) failures or weaknesses of others, whom we are, in these moments, treating as our rivals. But if a belief in the moral equality is 'integrated into a person's emotional life',[34] it manifests itself positively within social relations. For instance, if I regard my opponents properly, I'll be less likely to suffer, at least without intense internal combat from the perspective of my belief in moral equality, from envy, superciliousness, and Schadenfreude.

Here is the salient implication for my critique of Sponville. If a belief in the basic, profound, and equal moral worth of each person liberates a person to make truthful judgments, positive or negative, about her relative intelligence, wit, or physical strength, why wouldn't it liberate her, also, to make honest judgments, positive or negative, about her moral character? Recognizing a personal moral weakness should not lead her to 'contempt for self', but to a warranted level of, say, contrition for that particular fault and a corresponding resolve to improve. And if and when she does improve, however modestly, Roberts' account permits the person to feel a corresponding level of pride.

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7. A Response

A reader well-versed in philosophy's history might respond that Kant can assimilate Roberts' point. Kant believes – rather famously, of course – in the absolute, intrinsic worth of each person. And so, presumably Kant is able to mix a degree of moral self-dissatisfaction with a profound belief in his own moral worth. This astute reader might suspect Sponville can do the same. As a matter of fact, at times Sponville does advert to a belief in individual moral dignity,[35] though he's dicey on the subject.[36] My basic question is why Sponville's discussion – which I find replete with tensions and difficult to render fully consistent – doesn't incorporate this moral insight into his definition of humility.

8. Conclusion

To summarize, Sponville's account of humility, which posits a (strikingly) negative self-appraisal as a constitutive element of being humble, is difficult to square with several intuitive ideas: namely, that such self-contempt is inconsistent with a person's proper sense of his own moral worth, with a sensible belief in the possibility of (modest) moral improvement, and with the idea that a morally praiseworthy person can also be simultaneously humble and honest about himself.

More constructively, Sponville's discussion strikes a truer note – at least to my ear – when he says humility is 'knowing . . . there exists something greater than' yourself.[37] In my view, a central feature of a humble person is her willingness to submit, sometimes at some personal cost, to (what she takes to be) valid norms. This idea can be put into theological terms. God is sometimes (controversially) conceived as an absolutely sovereign lawmaker. He doesn't submit to laws. He creates the laws the rest of us are to submit to. In my view, to be humble requires you to lucidly recognize you are not, in this sense, God. You and I don't personally construct all of the valid norms we ought to live up to. Accordingly, an intellectually humble person discovers and subsequently holds himself to the same valid standards of logical reasoning, evidence-gathering, and fair-minded argumentation he legitimately expects others, including his intellectual opponents, to follow. Analogously, a person with moral humility does not behave as though valid moral norms do not apply to her. Once she recognizes their validity, she gives them their proper due.

Notes

[1] Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, 1660, trans. W.F. Trotter (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1958): Idea 72.
[2] Andre Comte-Sponville, 'Humility,' *A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues*, trans. Catherine Temerson (Oxford: Metropolitan, 1996): 140-148, 140.
[3]Ibid., 147.

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[4] Ibid., 140, 141.

[5] Ibid., 140.

[6] Ibid., 143.

[7] Ibid., 140.

[8] Ibid., 143. The inspiration for the idea that humility is a 'truthful sadness' comes from Spinoza, though Spinoza is talking about a more general 'impotence' we suffer from.

[9] Ibid., 140.

[10] Ibid., 143.

[11] Ibid., 143.

[12] In a fully-fledged account of humility, these assumptions would require justification. For instance, it's certainly conceivable – contrary to (i) – that there are distinct character traits, each properly called 'humility'. Many theorists already distinguish between intellectual humility and moral humility. Perhaps there are also different conceptions of moral humility that are both valid and conceptually useful. In every day contexts, for example, we often describe a person as humble just in case he combines significant, say, career success with a persistent aversion to boasting. We might call this the 'mere behaviourist' account of humility, as it doesn't advert to an assessment of this humble man's motives or reasoning. And there might be additional valid and useful conceptions of humility.

[13] Sponville, *A Small Treatise*, 1-6.

[14] Ibid., 97-98, 266-267.

[15] Ibid., 4. This assumption is pervasive. For example, it's implicit in Sponville's act of writing an entire book on 'practical morals' (4).

[16] Actually, I must admit that certain 'virtues of will power' do have this trait of being moribund within moral progress. To give one example, temperance, taken as an ability to overcome inordinate passions, is necessary only when a person has inordinate desires. As an intemperate person's motivational dispositions improve morally, her need for the will power to overcome such desires increasingly, as it were, "dies." That said, I don't find humility to be a virtue of will power. For a discussion of the distinction between different types of moral virtue, namely, 'virtues of will power' and 'substantive-motivational virtues,' see Robert C. Roberts, 'Will Power and the Virtues,' *Philosophical Review* 93.2 (1984): 227-247.

[17] Robert C. Roberts, 'Humility as a Moral Project', *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007):78-93.

[18] Ibid., 83.

[19] Ibid., 88.

[20] This fixation leads to another unnecessary paradox when Sponville describes humility as a 'humble virtue' that 'even doubts its own virtuousness' (140). Since Sponville defines humility as a profoundly negative attitude towards one's self, he

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is forced to say that a truly humble person won't feel pride in any aspects of her character. Then − in a peculiarly infelicitous move − he personifies humility and projects this combination of negative attitudes onto 'humility itself' as he imagines this personified 'virtue' observing 'itself.' When an account claims that a moral virtue, when it gazes at itself, must judge itself not to be what it is, a moral virtue, something is going wrong.

[21] My account treats intellectual and moral humility as of a piece: intellectually humble people willingly submit to legitimate norms of logical reasoning, evidence-gathering, belief-formation, and fairness in argumentation, whereas moral humility's focus is on a willing submission to the dictates of valid moral norms. My account has a theoretical advantage over Sponville's. In my view, the humble person isn't particularly focused on himself, say, on the (low) quality of his own character. Quite the opposite, his attention is on giving legitmate moral considerations their proper due. In this way, his humility manifests as a disposition not to give his ego, for instance, undue weight in his practical deliberation. In this way of thinking, invidious pride is a form of prejudice, especially within practical deliberation, for self.

[22] Sponville is also inspired by Spinoza, who, speaking of a person's proper attitude toward not only his own moral character but toward all of his human capacities, says, 'Humility is a sadness born of the fact that a man considers his own lack of power'. Compared to the self-sufficiency and power of 'God (or Nature)', our limitations are exposed, and we are duly humbled. Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics*, 1667, in *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton University Press: 1994): 192.

[23] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, 1797, trans. James W. Ellington (Library of Liberal Arts, Bobbs-Merrill: 1964): 81. Kant, though, does not treat humility, on my reading, as a self-standing moral virtue. Instead, it's an attitude that plays an important preliminary role in leading an agent to recognize the proper grounds of self-respect, her capacity to legislate (proper) laws for herself.

[24] Both Kant's and Sponville's conceptions of the moral life have their moorings in biblical visions of the Kingdom of God, though Kant's emphasis is on the dignity-respecting justice at the heart of this vision, whereas Sponville emphasizes the importance of both this type of justice and a type of charity that goes beyond it.

[25] Andre Comte-Sponville, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, trans. Nancy Huston (New York: Penguin, 2008).

[26] Micah, 6:8.

[27] Sponville, *A Small Treatise*, 140.

[28] Romans 3:23.

[29] Matthew 5:48.

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[30] I think we're at the threshold of a deep concern about the coherence of Sponville's own broad moral outlook. Christian thinkers such as St. Paul and St. Augustine regard the experience of a deep-running moral dissatisfaction with our own character, a profound moral-existential crisis, as a propaedeutic to the soul's search for God's grace. Sponville follows St. Paul and Augustine in terms of their moral rigor and its consequent yearning for profound moral redemption. But Sponville, as an atheist, doesn't think such grace is in the offing. Accordingly, he suggests we temper our feelings of 'informed contempt for self' with 'mercy', a 'bit of gentleness' towards ourselves. Resources such as this seem a rather meager instrument for such a profound moral-existential crisis.

[31] Sponville, *A Small Treatise*, 5. Elsewhere, I have defended the usefulness of highly idealistic moral standards: Regan Lance Reitsma, 'Freud Against Neighbor Love,'*I Want To Do Bad Things: Modern Interpretations of Evil*, eds. Kristin L. Bone and Rivkah Greig (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, forthcoming).

[32] For this use of 'hyper-Augustian', a form of 'Augustinianism' that Herdt does not attribute to Augustine himself, see Jennifer Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: the Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012): 82.

[33] Roberts,'Humility as a Moral Project,' 82.

[34] Ibid., 83.

[35] Sponville, *A Small Treatise*, 146-147.

[36] Ibid., 145.

[37] Ibid., 142.

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The Belief in Evil and Its Redefinition during the Salem Witch Trials

Stefanie Schnitzer Mills

Abstract

The essence of witchcraft in the American Colonies in the 17th century – the pact with the Devil and the rejection of God's grace – was seen as the most wicked of crimes. By joining Satan's quest to build a kingdom of Evil on earth, a witch had forfeited her soul and had nothing human left in her. There was no way of redemption, no extenuating circumstance – or was there? If we look carefully at the Salem trials, a change seems to have occurred that redefined the perception of evil as abruptly and as clearly as in no other case to my knowledge. The trials started out of social tensions and the idea of the inherent sinfulness of women brought them into the spotlight as potential witches. Fear and the belief that Evil was amongst the Saints of Massachusetts was the fuel that drove the trials onward. Yet, at the height of the trials, the colonial government put a halt to the trials, pardoning remaining suspects and dismissing any further accusations. And even more surprisingly, the accused went back to their lives, perceivably without any repercussions, and were reintegrated into the community without any apparent animosity. What had been considered the essence of evil had changed – almost overnight. It is this redefinition that will be looked at more closely in this chapter. This approach may help to understand the perception of Evil as a cultural concept, and the dynamics behind its definition and redefinition. In an age where evil becomes a label for political agendas, I find it paramount to understand how our concept of evil has and can change, not just gradually, but within one particular situation.

Key Words: Witchcraft, Colonial New England, perception of evil.

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Introduction

To most people, the Salem witch trials are somewhat familiar, as they still feature strongly in popular culture. And while we can understand in the historical context, to a degree, the notion that witchcraft was truly evil, it appears that the concept of evil changed very shortly after the Salem trials ended in 1693.

The Salem trials started innocently enough in the early months of 1692. The impulse that started the trials was given when the Parris family noticed the strange behaviour of two young girls in the household, Elizabeth (Betty) Parris and Abigail Williams, sometime between 16 and 19 January in 1692. The girls would crouch under furniture, mutter unintelligibly, twist in seizures and complain of pains like pinning and pinching.[1]

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Weeks of prayer and care for the children brought no end to the symptoms, leading a local doctor to diagnose witchcraft as the source of the illness. What followed were a good nine months of what can only be described as hysteria. Accusations ran wild, accused confessed and men, women and children alike were arrested and jailed on suspicion of witchcraft. A special court was established and within three sessions, 19 persons were sentenced to death. At the height of the trials, some 150 people were accused of witchcraft and awaited trials.[2] It is important to keep in mind that, while the trials at Salem reached unparalleled proportions, witchcraft accusations and trials were not at all unusual for New England at this time.

Before the Salem trials, there were at least 140 other incidences of witchcraft in the colonies[3] and many had similarities with Salem. In Hartford, Connecticut, in 1662, a young woman named Ann Cole experienced 'extremely violent bodily motions… even to the hazard of her life in the apprehensions of those that saw them'.[4] The Goodwin children of Boston experienced fits in 1688 and accused a local washerwoman of witchcraft.[5]

None of these led to any hysteria even slightly comparable to Salem. But it is important to keep in mind that the idea of witchcraft was very prominent in the New England Colonies both as a folkloristic element or magic and as a legal crime actually called witchcraft.[6]

The major distinction between the two was the notion of a crime against God. The elements of maleficium, the wrongdoing against someone, the causing mischief through the medium of witchcraft[7] – may have been what the common people had been afraid of, but the actual legal crime of witchcraft lay in the covenant with the Devil.

There is a clear religious component to this crime – not so much the results of the maleficium but the act of signing one's soul to the Devil was the crime punishable by death.[8] We know of at least 147 cases of involving witchcraft before Salem and in at least 25 of them, the accused were executed for Witchcraft.[9]

At least 45 people confessed to heinous crimes committed with the help of witchcraft, being murder, infanticide and the torture of children just some of them. While legally, the covenant with the Devil was in the foreground and necessary for conviction, those attending the hearings would often hear gruesome stories of witches Sabbaths, of how the accused had tortured the attending children by sticking needles into poppets, how they had killed infants with their mere thought, and how they communicated with the Devil as though he was their personal friend.[10] It is not surprising that in the communications for the time, in court documents as well as in private correspondence, the overriding reaction to these women (and men) were synonymous: evil and wicked.[11]

The phrase dominated witchcraft trials in New England, and the idea of the witch was closely connected with the loss of her soul; an irreversible turning away from God and their community into the dark realms of the Devil.

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    This idea prevailed in other trials as well, and we often see that if legal evidence lacked and the accused was set away free, they would later be accused of the same crime again – so ingrained was it in the minds of the New England Puritans that becoming a witch was a permanent thing, much like a christening will make the proselyte a Christian forever more.[12]

    Countless books and articles have been written on the Salem trials and a multitude of theories have been proposed as to why they escalated so beyond any previous incident. The frame of this chapter is far too restricted to go into detail here.[13] However, some of these theories rest on the cultural and religious upheaval of the time. The Puritans had come to America to build a *City Upon a Hill*, a social experiment to prove that a society could be governed by the word of God alone, without the need for secular laws.[14] This was only possible because the Puritans were an overwhelmingly homogeneous group who were granted Charter that gave them a uniquely generous independence for its time. By the time of the Salem trials, this Charter had been revoked and by 1692, the English Crown had granted freedom of worship to all dissenters from Congregationalism. This meant the Puritans no longer held the legal monopoly on religious matters. As a result, the very reason the colony had been established was threatened. Many[15] see this loss of control as one foundation of the Salem Trials, as a way to 'clear house,' re-establishing standards in a last attempt to save the City upon a Hill.

    There are many more very interesting facets to the Salem trials. One that is also interesting in our context is the particularity regarding the end of the trials. Rather than 'burning' out, as so many other trials have, the Salem trials were ended rather abruptly by government decree.

    Again, it would go into too much detail to explore the possible causes of this, but it meant that all those who had confessed to witchcraft, in addition to those awaiting trial, were set free and had to be reintegrated into society. In the immediate aftermath, the colonial Government, under Phips, had tried to contain any animosity by declaring that: 'no sheriffe, constable, gaoler or other official shall be liable to any prosecution in the law for anything they legally did in the execution of their respective offices'.[16]

    No such legal protection was granted to the accusers or to those who accused and confessed. Historically, one would assume that either more accusations of witchcraft would have surfaced soon after the trials, or that the accused would have been involved in other trials, as accused of a different crime to satisfy the people's need to closure and revenge.

    However, none of this happened. In fact, we do not know of a single Salem accused who went on to be accused of another crime, nor are there any reports (surviving) of retaliation against those who had confessed.

    What is even more puzzling is that immediately after the Salem trials, the tone over witchcraft persecutions changed. There were a few sporadic incidences of

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accusations, but they drew very different reactions, both from the judicial system and the people.

As an example, I would like to present three cases which have survived of the period just after the Salem witch trials that show just how quickly and thoroughly the attitude of witchcraft as evil and threatening changed: about Hugh Croasia (or Croatia in some sources), it was said: '… through the Instigation of the Devil thou hast foresaken God … in a preternaturall way…'[17] He was accused because he had boasted of his connection to the Devil and now before the court, claimed he had lied. The Court acquitted him but ordered him to pay his court fees.[18]

Grace Sherwood of Norfolk, Virginia, was accused of witchcraft in 1697, tried and put to the water test. Although her peers found her guilty the justices ordered a retrial. The result is not documented, but she was released and lived on until 1740.[19]

Another very telling case was recorded in Littleton, Massachusetts, in 1720. Three daughters of Joseph Blanchard displayed fits very similar to the ones perceived in Salem and cried out against a woman in the town, who supposedly caused their afflictions. Although their ordeals went on for a good eight months, no trial was held and they were basically ignored until the symptoms subsided. In 1728, the oldest sister made a full public recantation, apologizing and admitting that they acted out their afflictions to attract pity and attention.[20]

These cases suggest that a redefinition of witchcraft took place.[21] That somehow the Evil that was attached to witchcraft became less of a threat, and within months – certainly a few years, lost most of its hold on New England. I would like to emphasize here that this is mostly concerning the ruling elite. We can only see how accusations were dealt with on a legal level. I am not arguing that all people in New England immediately lost interest in witchcraft, but that legally and officially, the accusations were handled differently and seemed to have appeared much less of a threat than before. What had been the most evil of actions, all of a sudden became almost negligible.

So, what happened? Did the Puritans lose the belief in Evil? Had enlightenment reached New England somewhat belatedly and relieved the New Englanders of their darkest fears?   This seems very unlikely.

But what did happen was that the form of Evil had shifted. If we look through documents moving from 1700 forward, it seems surprising how the notion of Wickedness and Evil attached itself to a whole other group of people – Pirates.[22]

From Witches to Pirates?

From 1700 onward, piracy increased in the American colonies, partially due to the conditions aboard trading ships[23] and partially due to changing legality of privateering.[24]

Especially during the period from 1716 to 1726, piracy around the American Colonies rose steadily and with it, the 'fear of their depredations.' Their alleged

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ferocity towards the ships they attacked caused terror amongst sailors and their families alike.

But they also threatened the economy of New England in an increasingly deeper way. New England's wealth was closely linked to naval trading, and the increasing threats of piracy put a lot of pressure on merchants and politicians alike.[25]

This fear of pirates became more evident and vocalized over time, often carrying the same connotations and adjectives as have become familiar during the witch trials.

As early as 1697, Cotton Mather – who had been hugely influential in the Salem witch trials – remarked upon the increase of piracy in his personal diary.[26] He uses a similar vocabulary for the pirates, as he had previously used against those accused of witchcraft in Salem.

In 1726, for example, he wrote a sermon entitled: Useful remarks, an essay upon remarkables in the way of *wicked men…*[27] and he was not the only one to use these words against pirates.

The governor of Virginia already warned against pirates in 1716 and argued that ' the whole trade of the continent may be endangered if timely measures be not taken to suppress *this growing evil.*' [28] The Pirate, according to Rediker,[29] soon became '*Hostes Humani generis* – the common enemy of mankind', the new incarnation of all things evil.

Accounts of their deeds only deepened the terror they spread and emphasized their wickedness. Captain Dirk Chivers, for example, is known to have sown the lips of a conquered ship's master together because he was tired of listening to his complaints.[30] Purvis describes the time after 1713 (when the wars between England, France and Spain were resolved and privateering was no longer an acceptable way of living) when the violence and wickedness associated to Pirates increased dramatically and accounts of brutal killings reached the people on shore regularly.[31] Pirates themselves often embraced this image.

Captain Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard, 'consciously cultivated an image of himself as Satan, tying up his long black hair and beard in pigtails'.[32] When asked about his origin, he famously answered: 'He came from hell and would carry him there presently'.[33]

Legally, the pirate attracted more attention as well: the same Charter that had granted religious freedom in New England also added piracy to the list of crimes punishable by death.[34] The number of Pirates of the American colonial coast was estimated at around 2400 men, and the navy undertook a huge campaign against them, increasing their 6240 sailors to over 16000 in a short time to combat piracy.[35] Mass executions took place on a scale not seen in the colonies before. In 1726, 26 pirates were hanged in one day in Newport, Rhode Island.[36] It seemed as though the Pirate replaced the witch as the embodiment of Evil.

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The Implications of This Shift

Julie Haines Mofford[37] argues for three great crime waves in colonial New England: crimes against religion, witch trials, and piracy. If we look at this argument, then we see a clear distinction between religious crimes – which clearly includes the witchcraft trials – and crimes against property, a threat to economic wealth. I believe this is one reason for the shift in the perception of Evil.

One could argue – and I do so only to suggest a direction for further research, not as a developed theory – that not just the threat had shifted, but also what was perceived as 'the threatened' changed.

Where witchcraft persecutions may have been born out of a threat to religious homogeneity of the City Upon a Hill, piracy threatened the economic prosperity of the colony.

Similar to the tightening of racial laws and the deterioration of slaves' conditions right before the abolition, the Salem trials, one could argue, were a last desperate show of strength, a last ditch attempt before the City Upon a Hill was given over to religious freedom.

Evil did not at all disappear – it merely changed focus.

The City Upon a Hill was no longer salvageable, Quakers, and other denominations had made a home in New England, and the Puritans had lost their legal monopoly.

With the new Charter, legal status was no longer linked to church membership. It was now rather linked to financial situation. In order to vote, a man previously had to be a full member of the Church, which meant only Puritans had any political weight. According to the new Charter, voting rights were now linked to economic prosperity and all men with assets worth 40 pounds or more were eligible to vote.[38] This made economic success not just desirable, but necessary in order to participate in the political sphere of the Colony.

In New England, one could argue, the need for economic prosperity increased in status over religious homogeneity. And with the new status came new threats. Different denominations were becoming the norm, no longer were those who interpreted the Bible differently the main threat. Rather, it was those who threatened this prosperity through piracy. Evil had shifted from a Devil seeking to destroy religious harmony to one raiding the coffers of the Colony.

Conclusion

I do not in any shape want to suggest that the inhabitants of New England had lost their religion over night. Surely and quite visibly, religion remained a very important part of colonial life. However, I would like to stress that what they did give up in a sense was the dominance of the relatively closely defined idea of Puritanism that the first New Englanders had brought with them and the notion of an exemplary society based on these values. New England was becoming a pluralistic society and Puritanism had lost its role as guideline.

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With the priorities changing, so did the image of the enemy – the embodiment of Evil. What this shift may emphasize is how the perception of Evil can change, both over time and also quite quickly.

We need Evil, its our Alter- ego and counterpart, but we don't need it to be in a certain shape. And that change in shape, by definition can be very fluid and proceed very quickly. The notion of Evil did not go away, but it attached itself to something else entirely. From a connection to religion and the Devil – the perception of Evil became more closely connected to crimes against property.

We perceive as Evil whatever threatens our core values at that point in time: be it religious superiority, economic prosperity, racial supremacy, or as today, our freedom to live as we please, with no religious or economic restrictions. Looking at what is perceived at one point in time in any given society or culture will enable us to pinpoint more closely what that particular society holds most dear, what it values most at that point in time, culture and space.

In an age where 'evil' becomes a label for political agendas, I find it paramount to understand how our concept of Evil can change and has done so, not just gradually, but within one particular situation. Understanding how and why these shifts in definition occur may help us deal with what we perceive as evil in a more productive way. It may help us face our fears and understand them, rather than scapegoating and labelling whole groups as ultimately evil and without redemption.

Notes

[1] For a detailed day-to-day account of the events leading up tothe trials and the months during the trials, see Marilynne Roach, *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-by-Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege* (Lanham, Md.: Taylor Trade Publishing 2002)

[2] The numbers vary slightly according to research for a listing of different numbers, see Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York 1993) 205

[3] Online appendix to Master Thesis by Stefanie Schnitzer:*Did Salem have to happen? A comparison of theoretical approached aiming to explain the events that led to the Salem witchcraft trials in 1692 in Salem Massachusetts*" FreieUniversität Berlin, May 2014, http://www.reference-a.co.uk/,last viewed on 16 July 2015

[4] David D. Hall, *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History 1638-1693* (Northeastern University Press, Boston 1991) 149

[5] George Lincoln Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases: 1648-1706* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), 99-103.

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[6] See Richard Weismann, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in 17th-Century Massachusetts* (University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst, MA 1984) for a more detailed discussion between the folkloric 'magic' and the legal 'witchcraft'.

[7] See Ann Kibbey, 'Mutations of the Supernatural: Witchcraft, Remarkable Providences and the Power of Puritan Men' *American Quarterly* 34, No.2 (1982):125-148 for a more thorough investigation of the concept and interpretation of maleficium.

[8] Although the colonial governments were guided by English law, which made witchcraft a capital crime, Connecticut, New Haven and Massachusetts had distinct laws of their own, demanding the death penalty for witchcraft. See John M Taylor, *The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut 1647-1697* (Stratford CT, Edmund Edwards 1969) 22

[9] See Schnitzer, *Did Salem have to happen*, http://www.reference-a.co.uk/

[10] See the accusations of Dorcas Hoar,Last viewed on 16 July 2015. http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/texts/tei/swp?term=child&div_id=n68.14&chapter_id=n68, or the confession of Sarah Churchill, Last viewed on 16 July 2015. http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/texts/tei/swp?div_id=n30.

[11] In fact the people were looking for Evil as becomes clear in the sermons by Parris, head of the household where the first afflictions occurred, where he continuously referenced the Evils to come.

[12] See as an example here the Winifred Benham of Hartford CT, who had been accused off witchcraft at least 2 times in 1692/93 and 1697 whose daughter had also been accused of witchcraft. See Schnitzer: *Did Salem have to happen,* last viewed 16 July 2015 http://www.reference-a.co.uk/.

[13] Without being too forward, I would invite anyone interested in the different theories in the Salem witchcraft to read my dissertation, which introduces and discusses all theories to this date in detail. Stefanie Schnitzer '*Did Salem Have to Happen? A Comparison of Theoretical Approached Aiming to Explain the Events that Led to the Salem Witchcraft Trials in 1692 in Salem Massachusetts*'(MA dissertation, FreieUniversität Berlin, 2014)currently not published, but I'd happily supply a copy to anyone interested.

[14] See Kai Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (Boston:Pearson /Allyn and Bacon, 2005) 22ff for a detailed discussion of these pressures on the Puritan society and their effect on the Salem witch trials.

[15] Such as for example Kai Erikson*Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*, Richard Latner, *The long and short of Salem witchcraft: chronology and collective violence in 1692*.' IN: Journal of Social History, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Fall, 2008), pp. 137-156and Franklin G. Mixon, *'Homo economicus" and the Salem witch trials'*The Journal of Economic Education, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Spring, 2000), pp. 179-184

[16] Roach*, The Salem Witch Trials*, 570.

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[17] Taylor*, The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut*, 17-21.

[18] See Schnitzer, *Did Salem have to happen*, http://www.reference-a.co.uk/.
Last viewed on 16 July 2015 and Taylor,*The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut*, 17-21.

[19]See Schnitzer, *Did Salem have to Happen.*

[20] See Sally Smith Booth, *The Witches of Early America* (New York: Hastings House, 1975) 127f for an account.

[21] I am not arguing that this redefinition happened over night, as there are cases of acquitted accused even before Salem. However, they were rare and it is documented there were no trials after Salem that led to a conviction and those cases that went to trial are few and seem to be motivated by other underlying causes, rather than genuine fear of witchcraft.

[22] Another group that continually carried that label were Native Americans. The relationship between settlers and Native Americans was a very complex one and for the purpose of this chapter, I will disregard them in the context of Evil. That means by no means that they are irrelevant to the discussion.

[23] See Marcus Rediker, *Villains of all Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*(Boston: Beacon Press, 2011) chapter 2 for a detailed account of what attracted seamen too become pirates.

[24] A legalized form of piracy, in which the English crown declared that attacking ships sailing under a Spanish flag, and capturing their cargo for the English crown was a legal thing to do.

[25] Daniel E. Williams, 'Puritans and Pirates: A Confrontation between Cotton Mather and William Fly in 1726,' *Early American Literature* 22 (1987): 235

[26] Williams, *Early American Literature,* 235.

[27] The title further continues: '... a sermon on the tragical end unto which the way of twenty-six pirates brought them at New Port on Rhode-Island, July 19, 1723, with an account of their speeches, letters & actions before their execution'.

[28] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations,* 32.

[29] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations* 129.

[30] Thomas L. Purvis, *Colonial America to 1763* (Facts on File Publishing, New York: 1999), 314.

[31] According to Purvis, this is also the time when the skull and crossbones appeared as a symbol for piracy, both used by the pirates themselves but also adopted and understood by the general public as a glorification of death and a very apt symbol of Evil itself. See Purvis, *Colonial America to 1763*, 314.

[32] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations,* 153.

[33] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations,* 153.

[34] Amongst other property crimes such as arson to be added to the list of crimes calling for the death penalty, see Juliet Haines Mofford, *The Devil Made Me Do*

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It!: Crime and Punishment in Early New England(Globe Pequot Press, Guilford CT,2011), 168.

[35] See Purvis, *Colonial America to 1763,* 314.

[36] See Purvis, *Colonial America to 1763*,314.

[37] Mofford, *The Devil Made Me Do It*

[38] John McWilliams, *New England's Crisis and Cultural Memory: Literature, Politics, History, Religion 1620 -1680*(Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148.

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Pinteresque Evil: A By-Product of Authority and Power Games

Asli Tekinay

Abstract
The 2005 Nobel Laureate, Harold Pinter has been one of the most influential dramatists since the late 1950s. His long dramatic career evolved over the course of five decades. However, what remained as a constant in his drama is his concern with the theme of authority as evil. From the perspective of a behaviourally focused definition of evil as intentionally behaving in ways that demean, dehumanize, harm, destroy or kill innocent people, it is possible to see much of Pinter's drama as delineation of the potential threat of evil that lies within power. The threat is threefold: firstly, the desire to possess power is so strong that once the possibility for possession emerges, it negates all sorts of human consideration. Secondly, once possessed, power degenerates or distorts the human psyche and negates human values, which may block or contradict its terms. Finally, power brings out the repressed sadistic tendencies within its holder. From Pinter's early plays, the so-called comedies of menace, to his later more overtly political plays, the preoccupation with evil is strongly visible. As a Jewish dramatist writing in the post-World War II era, Pinter is concerned with the open wound lying in the heart of humanity: a horror of violence, cruelty and alienation in a world governed by power games. The connection between power and evil is solidly established in his plays. This chapter focuses on two plays, one belonging to his early phase, 'The Hothouse', and one to his later phase, 'One for the Road'. What lies at the heart of both plays is the relationship between the power of authority and his subjects, the victimizer and the victim.

Key Words: Pinter, drama, authority, power, menace, evil, victim, violence, cruelty.

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Since World War II, British and American drama has been increasingly interested in the concepts of evil, violence and trauma. The atrocities and horrors witnessed all over the world since then have found voice in numerous dramatic works.

The 2005 Nobel Laureate, British playwright Harold Pinter has been one of the most influential dramatists since the late 1950s. His long dramatic career evolved over the course of five decades. However, what remained as a constant in his drama is his concern with the concept of evil. From Pinter's early plays, the so-called comedies of menace, to his later more overtly political plays, the preoccupation with evil is strongly visible. As a Jewish dramatist writing in the post-World War II era, Pinter is concerned with the open wound lying in the heart

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of humanity: a horror of violence, cruelty and alienation in a world governed by power games.

In his typically minimalist Pinteresque way, the dramatist portrays violent and cruel acts, which may be approached through the theoretical lenses of evil. Claudia Card's secular theory of evil foregrounds the presence of two components, one being foreseeable intolerable harm, the other being culpable wrongdoing. Such an act either causes the recipient's life to be indecent and impossible or deprives death of human integrity. Hence, atrocities like genocide, war rape, torture, and child abuse include both components that make such deeds evil. Card argues that evil is set apart from ordinary wrongs in terms of the 'nature and severity of the harm'.[1] Thus, she highlights the significant difference in the extent of the harm that is done: 'Evils tend to ruin lives, or significant parts of lives. It is not surprising if victims never recover or are never quite able to move on…'.[2] At this point, the effect of evil on the victim brings us to the domain of trauma – an emotional shock that creates lasting damage to the psychology of a person, often leading to neurosis.

Much of Pinter's drama establishes a solid connection between power and evil. From the perspective of a behaviour focused definition of evil as intentionally behaving in ways that demean, dehumanize, harm, destroy or kill innocent people, it is possible to see how Pinter delineates the potential threat of evil that lies within power and authority. The threat is threefold: firstly, the desire to possess power is so strong that once the possibility for possession emerges, it negates all sorts of human consideration. Secondly, once possessed, power degenerates or distorts the human psyche and negates human values, which may block or contradict its terms. Finally, power brings out the repressed sadistic tendencies within its holder. Hence, evil is practiced upon the recipient(s).

This chapter focuses on two plays, one belonging to his early phase, 'The Hothouse', and one to his later phase, 'One for the Road'. What lies at the heart of both plays are evil acts by agents that hold power positions. According to Hillel Steiner, the extra quality shared by all evil actions and lacking from merely wrongful actions, is the perpetrator's pleasure; evil action consists in taking pleasure in doing wrong, no merely wrongful action is pleasurable for its doer.[3] Pinter's authority figures take pleasure in harming their victims, both physically and mentally, so much so that they are deprived of their human dignity and their lives are ruined. In addition to evil actions by perpetrators who hold power in their hands, Pinter insinuates the presence of inherent evil in certain institutions.

'The Hothouse' (1958) is a fusion of grim humor and horrifying power games. The comedy stems from Pinter's use of his typical linguistic devices like repetitions, tautologies, verbal absurdities, incoherent associations and illogical dialogues. The horror lies in the realization that authority so easily becomes a source of evil and deprives individuals of their essential humanity.

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   'The Hothouse' takes place in a setting not clearly defined; it is sort of a rest home or convalescent home. The patients are 'governed' by military discipline under such enormous pressure that they lose all sense of individuality and identity. Called by numbers for the sake of order, they forget their real names. Roote, the head of this establishment, is an exhausted old man. He has all the power within the four walls of the rest home. Now and then he has lapses to common sense but he, being entrapped by the fixed rules and regulations of the establishment, has no initiative of his own:

> Roote - Still, I sometimes think I could have instituted a few more changes - if I'd had time. I'm not talking about many changes or drastic changes. That's not necessary. But on this number's business, for instance. It would make things so much easier if we called them by their names. Then we'd all know where we were. After all, they're not criminals. They're only people in need of help, which we try to give, in one way or another, to the best of our discretion, to the best of our judgment, to help them regain their confidence . . .

> Gibbs - Would you like me to place further consideration of this matter on the agenda, sir?

> Roote - Certainly not, we can't. You know damn well we can't. That was one of the rules of the procedure laid down in the original constitution. The patients are to be given numbers and called by those numbers. And that's how it's got to remain.[4]

   The figure of authority is imprisoned by the order of which he is a part. Engulfed within the order, the staff in the hothouse are made up of people who have become like robots; mechanical and bereft of human emotions. The order necessitates that the patients have no free will and no control over their bodies. Women are freely raped by the staff and even that is legitimized:

> Roote - . . . If a member of the staff decides that for the good of a female patient some degree of copulation is necessary then two birds are killed with one stone! It does no harm to either party. At least, that's how I've found it in my experience. But we all know the rule! Never ride barebacked. Always take precautions. Otherwise complications set in. Never ride barebacked and always send in a report. After all, the reactions of the patient have to be tabulated, compared with others, filed, stamped and if possible verified! It stands to reason. Well, I can tell you

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something, Gibbs, one thing is blatantly clear to me. Someone
hasn't been sending in his report.[5]

When a woman patient gives birth to a baby, Roote panics, for that may stain
the reputation of the institution. The measure to be taken is to find someone who
would assume the responsibility of the action, thus to clarify the records by naming
the guilty person, and to do something about the baby:

> Gibbs - What shall I do about the baby-sir?
> Roote - Get rid of it.
> Gibbs - The mother would have to go with it, sir.
> Roote - Why?
> Gibbs - Can't live without the mother.
> Roote - Why not?
> Gibbs - The mother feeds it.[6]

The clinical detachment and the emotional coldness with which such human
concerns are foregrounded are telling of how authority distorts the psychology of
its possessor. The patients become no different from animals to be tamed and kept
under control in order to preserve the order, which is the key principle. No
deviation is allowed; uniformity is the central idea. The implications of the
administrative system in the hothouse naturally lead the audience to make their
own associations to the political systems, which are hinted at in the play.

Gibbs is an efficient administrator; in his utter ruthlessness and total
inhumanity, he carries on and fulfills his duties as the system necessitates. He finds
a devoted servant of the establishment, a man called Lamb, responsible for keeping
the doors locked at all times. Expecting promotion in the power chain, Lamb is
willing to help in any way he can. Philip Zimbardo's Lucifer effect and the
banality of evil echo here: 'I must say I've always enjoyed my work here
tremendously . . . I mean, you really get the feeling here that something . . .
important is going on, something really valuable, and to be associated with it in
any way can't be seen in any other light, than as privilege'.[7] Taken into the sound-
proof experimentation room, Lamb is electrocuted and interrogated so as to find
out if he is the man who impregnated the patient who has just had a baby. Gibbs
knows that Lamb has nothing to do with the affair but someone has to take on the
guilt. The interrogation scene is typically Pinteresque. Reminiscent of the
interrogation scene in 'The Birthday Party' in which the authority figures Goldberg
and McCann bombard Stanley with questions that can have no sensible answers,
here Gibbs and Cutts engage in the same terrifying game:

> Cutts - Are you often puzzled by women?
> Lamb - Women?

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Gibbs - Men.
Lamb - Men? Well, I was just going to answer the question about
women -
Gibbs - Do you often feel puzzled?
Lamb - Puzzled?
Gibbs - By women.
Lamb - Women?
Cutts - Men.
Lamb - Uh - now just a minute, I . . . do you want separate
answers or a joint answer?
Cutts - After your day's work, do you ever feel tired, edgy?
Gibbs - Fretty?
Cutts - Irritable?
Gibbs - At a loose end?
Cutts -Morose?
Gibbs - Frustrated?
Cutts - Morbid?
Gibbs - Unable to concentrate?[8]

Gibbs plays with Lamb just like a cat playing with a mouse. Finally he brings
him to the point where he becomes totally submissive, yielding to whatever Gibbs
says. The power game necessitates ruthlessness at all costs. The ambitious Gibbs
manipulates everything to suit his own ends. The final scene takes place not in the
hothouse but in the ministry with which it is affiliated. The shocking news that
Gibbs gives to the ministry is that the whole staff except him has been slaughtered.
The implications to the audience are clear that he is the murderer. From the point
of view of the ministry, however, he is now the indispensable man to be rewarded
for having things under control in the establishment. Gibbs claims that the
massacre was done by the patients whose doors were unlocked by Lamb, the man
in charge of locks. The reason for the assumed rebellion was, according to Gibbs,
that Roote — the head of the establishment — was unpopular with the patients:
'Two things especially had made him rather unpopular. He had seduced patient
6459 and been the cause of her pregnancy, and he had murdered patient 6457. That
had not gone down too well with the rest of the patients'.[9]

'The Hothouse' dramatizes human relationships as a battle for dominance, with
the characters carefully calculating their opponents' strengths and weaknesses, as if
they were players in a hard-fought game. With his insatiable need to dominate, to
be the prime power in the establishment, Gibbs finally gets what he has long been
waiting for, at the expense of a horrifying slaughter. As for Lamb, now totally
destroyed, he is in the sound-proof room. The curtain falls on 'Lamb in chair. He
sits still, staring, as in a catatonic trance'.[10]

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'One for the Road' (1985) is Pinter's attempt at awakening social consciousness about torture, which he deems to be an accepted routine in prisons worldwide. The play is a slightly different, though much more condensed version of 'The Hothouse'. The basic difference is that 'The Hothouse' uses metaphor to great extent, whereas 'One for the Road' is much more specific and direct. What lies at the heart of both plays is the relationship between the power of authority and his subjects, the victimizer and the victim. In the postscript to the play, Pinter states that the play is an outcome of his experiences in Turkey: in 1985 Arthur Miller and Harold Pinter visited Turkey on behalf of International Pen. They were invited by the Turkish Peace Association in order to witness the situation in the prisons. In the interview he granted to Nicholas Hern, Pinter says the play is his response to official torture, subscribed to by many governments, but particularly by the Turkish government: '. . . Turkish prisons, in which there are thousands of political prisoners, really are among the worst in the world. After arrest, a political prisoner is held incommunicado for forty-five days, under martial law. Torture is systematic'.[11] 'One for the Road' refers to 'facts' that Pinter wishes his audience to know about. The grim humour that characterizes Pinter's drama is absent in this play; he is 'in deadly earnest; it is as though the clown has taken off his make-up'.[12] For Pinter the situation is so important that 'it's past a joke'.[13] The play concentrates on physical and psychological torture. The authority figure is Nicolas; the family under arrest has three members: Victor, the father, Gila, the mother, and Nicky, their seven-year-old son. The play opens with Nicolas at his desk in a setting not clearly specified but one that implies a police station. Nicolas has Victor brought in. Victor is a writer, an intellectual. With his clothes torn and his body bruised, Victor is allotted a few short lines in the play for he barely has the energy to talk and he knows that whatever he says is in vain.

Nicolas has all the power. Reminiscent of Orwell's 'Big Brother' in *1984*, Nicolas knows what is 'right' and to preserve the 'right' order he dedicates his life. He is the protector of political and religious order; his heart is in the right place:

> Nicolas - . . . if you don't respect me you're unique. Everyone
> else knows the voice of God speaks through me. You're not a
> religious man, I take it?
> [Pause]
> You don't believe in a guiding light?
> [Pause]
> What then?
> [Pause]
> So ... morally ... you flounder in wet shit. You know ... Like
> when you've eaten a rancid omelette.[14]

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Nicolas, possessing all the power within those walls, not only takes immense pride in that but also justifies that for he is a man who acts legitimately for his country. He's a 'patriot' and to defend his country's values, he can do anything: torture, rape, or murder. However, it is not only his blind devotion to the orders given to him but also his natural sadistic self which leads him into taking in human measures. He enjoys witnessing the fragility of his victim:

> Nicolas - . . .What do you think this is? It's my finger. And this is my little finger. I wave my big finger in front of your eyes. Like this. And now I do the same with my little finger. I can also use both . . . at the same time. Like this. I can do absolutely anything I like. Do you think I'm mad? Do you think waving fingers in front of people's eyes is silly? I can see your point. You're a man of the highest intelligence. But would you take the same view if it was my boot - or my penis? Not my eyes. Other people's eyes. The eyes of people who are brought to me here. They're so vulnerable. The soul shines through them.[15]

Authority is practiced by a man who openly says he loves the death of others: 'Death. Death. Death. As has been noted by the most respected authorities, it is beautiful. The purest, most harmonious thing there is. Sexual intercourse is nothing compared to it'.[16] Preaching honesty and patriotism and talking about his wife in the utmost degrading terms, Nicolas drives Victor to the verge of despair and he simply cries out 'Kill me'.[17]

Nicolas' encounter with the seven-year-old boy, Nicky, is ironic for the child comes forth as a more mature being than the narrow-minded Nicolas, who interrogates a child for kicking his men:

> Nicolas - You like soldiers. Good. But you spat at my soldiers
> and you kicked them. You attacked them.
> Nicky - Were they your soldiers?
> Nicolas - They are your country's soldiers.
> Nicky- I didn't like those soldiers.
> Nicolas - They don't like you either, my darling.[18]

Nicolas' third encounter is with Gila, who apparently has been raped by several soldiers. Gila's father was a patriot, one who fought for his country. According to Nicolas, Victor and Gila are debasing the memory of her father, who was revered by everyone: 'He didn't think like you shitbags. He lived. He lived. He was iron and gold. He would die, he would die, he would die, for his country, for his God'.[19] Nicolas' treatment of his victims shows how horrible it can be to lose the privacy and integrity of body and mind. Thoroughly debased and having lost their only

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son, the couple might have been better off if they were dead. The last line of the play underlines the ruthless, cold, and inhuman detachment of authority: 'Your son? Oh, don't worry about him. He was a little prick'.[20]

In 'The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil', Claudia Card states that

> applied to social practices or institutions… 'evil' is a totalizing judgment, in the following sense. Even if not absolutely everything about an evil institution is unacceptable, evil institutions are rotten at the core. Practices that are bad but not evil tend to be unjust in limited, fixable, respects. Evil practices need to be abolished. Bad ones need repair. Genocide, slavery, torture and rape are evil practices.[21]

In 'The Hothouse' and 'One for the Road', Harold Pinter portrays how evil practices are condoned, nurtured and institutionalized. The individual victim has no way out. Thoroughly traumatized, he enters a catatonic state.

Acknowledgement

Notes

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[2] Ibid., 3-4.

[3] Hillel Steiner, 'Calibrating Evil', *The Monist* 85.2 (2002): 184.

[4] Harold Pitner, 'The Hothouse', *Plays One* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 198.

[5] Ibid., 219.

[6] Ibid., 221.

[7] Ibid., 236.

[8] Ibid., 248.

[9] Ibid., 328.

[10] Ibid., 328.

[11] Nicholas Hern, ed. *One for the Road* (London: Grove Weidenfeld, 1986), 13.

[12] Ibid., 11.

[13] Ibid., 11.

[14] Ibid., 40.

[15] Ibid., 33.

[16] Ibid., 46.

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[17] Ibid., 51.
[18] Ibid., 59.
[19] Ibid., 66.
[20] Ibid., 79.
[21] Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*, 102.

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Representations of Evil in Found Footage Movies

Claudio Vescia Zanini

Abstract
The end of the 1990s marks the consolidation of a subgenre within horror cinema known as found footage. Representatives range from cult predecessors *Cannibal Holocaust* and *C'est arrivé près de chez vous,* to blockbusters such as *The Blair Witch Project* and *Paranormal Activity*. Some of the features in these movies include typical elements from the documentary format, such as the real-time unfolding of events, the filming character who works as a sort of first-person narrator, the 'claims to truthfulness'[1] and the presence of evil deeds, characters and entities. More often than not, found footage movies document acts which are too violent, vicious, wicked or supernatural to be believed. Thus, this proposal seeks to analyse representations of evil in found footage movies over the past three decades, given that evil is a core element in the narrative dynamic in these movies. The analysis proposed here is based on a threefold theoretical structure: studies on documentary and false documentary; concepts pertaining to the society of spectacle[2] and the convergence culture;[3] finally, pertinent views on evil such as the ones found in Jean Baudrillard's *The Transparency of Evil* and Terry Eagleton's *On Evil*. The conclusion points out that evil is multifaceted in found footage movies, ranging from acts of vandalism, destruction of communities, murder of all kinds, to supernatural events involving zombies, aliens, witches, spirits and demons, among others. It also highlights the blur between reality and fiction inherent to the genre, fostered by movie makers and studios, as an important factor so as to bring evil closer to the audience and strengthen its effects.

Key Words: Horror cinema, found footage, claims to truthfulness, evil, representations of evil.

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1. Introduction

In 1938, Orson Welles delivered a dramatic reading of *War of the Worlds*, with parts of the story presented in the form of news bulletins describing gas explosions on the surface of Mars and weird creatures on Earth. This led listeners to stock water and supplies, creating a rather large chaos. The episode is seen today as a milestone in the history of the false documentary.

Indeed, Welles knew like no other how to blur the boundaries between truth and rumour through the manipulation of journalistic facts – *Citizen Kane* (1941) has as its narrator a journalist, of all trades. These examples demonstrate the importance Welles attributed to what Patricia Aufdenheide calls the 'claims to

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truthfulness', one of the pillars on which both the documentary and the false documentary are based.

Remarkable examples of that are also found in classic horror literature. Both Shelley's *Frankenstein; or; The Modern Prometheus* (1816) and Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) are told through diary entries. However, it is Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) that displays the most peculiar example of all: multiple narrators use diaries, letters, telegrams, transcribed phonograph entries and newspaper clippings to bring evidence to the reader of the incredible facts presented. *Dracula's* concern with new technologies is echoed by horror storytellers nowadays, who do whatever they can to give readers/spectators plenty of evidence of the evil and wickedness their characters witness.

Thus, this work verifies how the delivery of evidence happens in found footage, a subgenre within contemporary horror. Such analysis shall happen through the presentation of its main structural features and a discussion on its connection to the documentary genre. Finally, four representatives of the genre are presented and analysed, namely: *Cannibal Holocaust* (Italy, 1980), *The Blair Witch Project* (USA, 1999), *Paranormal Activity* (USA, 2007), and *La Cueva* (Spain, 2014).

2. Do Cameras Lie?

Aufdenheide points out that aspects such as objectivity and bias become hindrances towards a clear definition of the term 'documentary',[4] once they interfere with our perceptions and representations of reality. What could be said safely is that the documentary is a predominantly cinematographic genre about aspects of human life. Simultaneously, Andrejevic's statement that reality TV remains interesting to audiences due to its 'appeal of the real'[5] (the illusion viewers have that the images on screen are life as it is) is also valid for documentaries; thus, significant part of the genre's credibility comes from its 'claims to truthfulness',[6] its informative property (the word 'document' comes from Latin 'docere', 'to teach'[7]), and the serious character generally attributed to it, enhancing its aura of plausibility. Spectators often believe that a documentary tells the truth also because the footage itself tends to be irrefutable proof that something has happened:

> The claim that documentary can present a truthful and accurate portrayal of the social world is not only validated through the association of the camera with the instruments of science but also depends upon the cultural belief that the camera does not lie.[8]

The idea that the camera does not lie is fallacious, particularly when considering the innumerous doctoring resources available and the notion of 'eye of the camera',[9] that is, the perspective of those filming or sponsoring the documentary. The notion of reality, which is strongly associated to the camera,

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collapses as contemporary media spreads those distorted images quickly and massively:

> The camera is thus a machine that vitiates all will, erases all intentionality and leaves nothing but the pure reflex needed to take pictures. Looking itself disappears without a trace, replaced by a lens now in collusion with the object – and hence with an inversion of vision.[10]

Since the final years of the last millennium, the audience's relationship with the contents it is exposed to has been changing dramatically. For a long time, there was a clear separation between content producers and content receivers. Technological advancements, the social network culture and people's larger access to recording equipment have led to the current state of affairs: all sorts of materials can be socialized online, and discussions happen globally, increasing the audiences' involvement with the works produced in a way that

> Storytellers now think about storytelling in terms of creating openings for consumer participation. At the same time, consumers are using new media technology to engage with old media content, seeing the Internet as a vehicle for collective problem solving, public deliberation and grassroots creativity.[11]

Such fact evidences that today we are experiencing what Jenkins denominates the 'convergence culture', characterized by the overwhelming flow of contents in diverse media platforms and means of communication, with an increasingly participative audiences who moulds their entertainment experiences according to their convenience, blurring the boundaries between producers and receivers of content and characterizing what Jenkins calls the 'participatory culture'.[12]

3. Found Footage: Evil and Wickedness before Our Eyes

The three features highlighted in the previous section – the claims to truthfulness underneath the documentary genre, the eye of the camera, and participatory culture – help to explain why found footage has become such an important trend in contemporary filmmaking. Added to the surveillance culture (monitoring equals freedom) and our undying love for evil, they are the core reasons for the recent spread of this particular subgenre in horror cinema. Roscoe and Hight's words regarding the mockumentary[13] serve well to define found footage: it tells an invented story as if it had happened in reality. In that sense, (false) documentaries and found footage take advantage of the appeal of the real and the claims to truthfulness. In many cases, found footage is sold as 'real' events recorded, subverting the factual discourse in order to make a story scarier or more

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shocking. Despite the shootings on location or studios, special effects and make-up, there is the low-quality homemade footage, the filming character and the recording of too-hard-to-believe facts, be it because of their supernatural character or their wickedness.

Cannibal Holocaust was a pioneer in capitalizing on the found footage format, in 1980. It starts with an anthropology professor returning to New York after an attempt to find four students who had gone into the Amazon Forest to shoot a documentary about the life and traditions of a cannibal Indian tribe. Although he does not manage to find them, he comes into possession of the footage they made, which he and his colleagues watch during the movie.

Most of the narrative puts us in the same position as the professors: powerless spectators before footage that reveals the so-called civilized people disrespecting the local culture, killing animals, raping an Indian girl and setting the village on fire. The end of the film explains why the students are missing, as the camera shows them being captured and cannibalized by the numerous Indians. The last scene presents a typical New York landscape, while the professor asks himself who the real savages are.

The movie has many ingredients for a successful found footage movie: it tells an incredible story involving exotic places and people. The special effects and make-up were so effective that director Ruggero Deodato was even charged with murder; when things were clarified, the only charges that remained against him were those of crimes against nature, given that animals are actually killed before the camera. *Cannibal Holocaust*'s format is innovative and intricate due to the presence of the film within the film; in addition, it presents actual death before the camera, in a connection to snuff movies, another peculiar genre within horror.

In 1999, three other academic students end up tragically while trying to shoot a movie. This time, they go into the woods of Burkittsville, in countryside Maryland, USA, in order to make a documentary about the local legend of the Blair Witch. One year after their disappearance, their footage is discovered and becomes *The Blair Witch Project* – in fact, an independent movie with an estimated budget of $60,000 that established many parameters for the genre.

The making of this movie[14] is full of interesting details: the three actors, who used their real names, are completely unknown; most of the footage in the final cut was actually made by them; directors led them to believe that their fictional story was real; besides, the main actors interviewed people who claimed to be locals without knowing that the interviewees were also actors; after the movie release, the leading actors were asked to 'disappear' for a while, preventing any contact with the media; finally, the promo materials also toy with the boundaries between reality and fiction and the subversion of the factual discourse is taken to another level through the official trailer,[15] which also is in the form of a documentary.

If in *Cannibal Holocaust* the actors knew what they were doing because they had scripts, the actors on *The Blair Witch Project* did not. The audience is led to

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believe that what is happening on camera is real, and so are the actors. A great deal of the movie's notoriety originated in the publicity strategies mentioned before.

There can be no analysis of marketing strategies in found footage without a reference to *Paranormal Activity* (2007). It has become a franchise, and although the series is usually disregarded for its low-quality, repetitive plots, a lot of the consolidation of found footage as a contemporary trend comes from it. The plot in the movie revolves around young couple Katie and Micah, who decide to have surveillance cameras installed all over their house due to strange things that have been happening to her. Naturally, the camera captures shocking images, confirming that indeed there is a spirit haunting the house and Katie.

On the one hand, the influence of previous found footage movies is blatant in *Paranormal Activity*; just like in *Cannibal Holocaust*, the quality of special effects is crucial for the picture's success; concomitantly, strategies used in *The Blair Witch Project* appear once again, such as the use of the actors' real names and their seclusion during release time. On the other hand, the movie presents an innovation by presenting the story through surveillance cameras, which brings more stability and higher image and audio quality to the story without quitting the found footage feel.

A remarkable difference lies in the structure behind this movie in comparison to the previously mentioned ones: whereas *Cannibal Holocaust* and *The Blair Witch Project* are independent, low-budget movies that respectively inaugurate and re-inaugurate the genre, *Paranormal Activity* was distributed by Paramount Pictures. The movie starts with a message in plain white font on a black background: 'Paramount Pictures would like to thank the families of Micah Sloat and Katie Featherstone and the San Diego Police Department'. In doing so, Paramount implicitly leads to understand that the footage in the movie consisted of actual real-life situations. The involvement of the studio's credibility, added to efficient marketing strategies, was enough to feed innumerous online forums about the footage in the movie.[16]

Conversely, *La Cueva* presents a diverse scenario. Five friends (Jaco, Carlos, Ivan, Celia and Begoña) decide to spend a holiday camping by the beach. There, they discover the entrance to a cave, and while exploring it they get lost, leading them to a long, unwanted stay. The action is recorded for the sake of holiday mementos, and to feed Carlos' blog. After some days without any food and little to drink, Begoña feels really sick and Jaco proposes that one of the five should be sacrificed so that their flesh should serve as a source of nourishment for the others. After a raffle, Begoña loses, and while the two other men accede despite feeling uncomfortable, Celia adamantly disagrees. She is outvoted, Bego is killed and has her flesh eaten in front of Celia's camera. Whether it is because of his renewed energy, or because he is losing his mind after days confined, Jaco threatens Celia, saying she is the next to die. At the end, the three men chase her, who, being smaller, manages to pass through a hole and find the way out. Jaco gets stuck in the

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hole, and the movie ends with him asking her to come back and help him, to which she responds with an ironic and relieved look.

4. The Places of Evil

This analysis intends to debate the question 'where does evil come from?', questioning its apparent fixity in the selected movies; for that, more than one perspective of evil is presented, even if in some cases one is more obvious than the others. It is argued that each plot presents a story where a human side (Caucasian, urban, theoretically civilized, curious) eventually battles an inhuman side (exotic, weird, mysterious, powerful, more liable to be pinned evil). This catachretic choice of words is supposed to help organize the analysis, but above all, it is intended to serve as a teaser to question the commonsense that distances evil from humanity.

In *Cannibal Holocaust*, it could be argued that the Indians are perpetrators of evil, for they outnumber the documentarists and do something completely unorthodox from the perspective of the so-called victims (and most viewers): they eat human flesh, and seem to enjoy it. Nonetheless, the way the narrative is built allows us to conclude that the documentarists deserved what happened to them after their actions. The professor's question at the end echoes a questioning that might be taking place for the viewer as well. The choice the professors make of not revealing the footage to the world indicates they know too well where wickedness is in the story told in these rolls of film.

The Blair Witch Project presents a powerful supernatural force whose personification is never seen; assuming that this force is the Blair Witch, it is easy to label her evil: besides the terrible psychological torture the three students are submitted to, the witch does have a record of sacrificing people. However, another perspective allows us to pin Heather, Josh and Michael as the evil party: just like in *Cannibal Holocaust*, they are intruders looking to tell a story that they are not supposed to tell. This is similar to what we see in *Paranormal Activity*, whose easy take is that an evil spirit is haunting a house and two people, and must be eliminated somehow; nevertheless, sequels of the movie reveal that Katie and her sister evoked spirits as children – therefore, once again the narrative presents a great power being bothered.

Placing evil on the so-called human side of the story is based on the premise that what the Indian tribe, the Blair Witch and the spirit do is motivated by human actions that are ultimately disturbing; furthermore, these 'inhuman' forces perform actions that are in their nature, namely, eating human flesh or persecuting those who summon it, which, according to Terry Eagleton, is enough to question their evil character.[17]

The most interesting aspect of this discussion is noticed in *La Cueva*. There are no witches or innuendos of demonic possessions. However, murder, cannibalism and psychological torture take place in the cave. The two first elements can be more easily explained – they do need to eat something in order to survive, and

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although the voting is not unanimous, the majority – including Bego, the loser – agrees on the raffle; most members of the group feel uncomfortable about that, which might also be considered 'human'; Jaco is the exception: he is more energetic and vocal than the others; he seems to enjoy Bego's flesh, and his verbal abuse against Celia, followed by his leadership in the chase after her make him more easily labelled 'evil', especially in the absence of a supernatural entity. Unlike *Cannibal Holocaust*, where killing and eating the victim's flesh is grounds to be considered evil, in *La Cueva* potential evil resides in enjoying these acts. Though Jaco apparently enjoys them, his behavior could be explained by a temporary loss of sanity due to lack of food, drink, light and the intrinsic pressure in their situation – and once again, evil would not be where most people see it.

5. Final Remarks

The appeal found footage films have derives from what Roscoe and Hight call referentiality and evidentiality, that is, making a reference to a fact and proving it actually happened. Despite the fact that this is a very old way of telling a horror story – vide the Victorian examples suggested in the introduction – in postmodern times the cold hard evidence comes from the (moving) image. It makes full sense that of all kinds of horror story on screen, found footage has encountered fertile ground for its recent development; Baudrillard reminds us that 'the screen is merely virtual - and hence unbridgeable. This is why it partakes only of that abstract - definitively abstract - form known as communication'.[18] If the story in question involves the supernatural, monstrous or abject, it seems not to belong to our reality, to the concreteness of life. What found footage does is to bring those two instances closer, showing that the line separating 'us' from 'them' – whatever that means – is thinner than we wished.

The confusion found footage creates involving truth and make-believe is core in those movies' marketing strategy. People will watch the images, and speculate about them later on; after all, spectacle today is not an ensemble of images, but a social relation between people, mediated by images.[19] That relation depends on communication and debate, which leads us to the question proposed here: where is evil in those movies? It has been the intention of this analysis not to present a concrete answer to that question, but to highlight that wherever it is, evil is part of humanity.

By putting the camera on the hands of a character, found footage drags the spectator into the story. This close distance is possibly why evil is such a recurrent and fruitful theme in those movies, for we are reminded that evil is more human than we would like it to be, and no matter how wicked or bizarre the events are, the fact is that they happened – the camera filmed them, and, as we know, cameras do not lie.

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Notes

[1] Patricia Aufdenheide, *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.

[2] Guy Debord, *A Sociedade do Espetáculo: Comentários Sobre a Sociedade do Espetáculo*, trans. Estela dos Santos Abreu (Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 1997), 14.

[3] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 169.

[4] Aufdenheide, *Documentary Film*, ix.

[5] Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 7.

[6] Aufdenheide, *Documentary Film*, 23.

[7] Betsy McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film*, 2nd ed. (Bloomsbury: A&C Black, 2012), 5.

[8] Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight, *Faking It: Mock-Cocumentary and the Subversion of Factuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 11.

[9] Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn, *Understanding Reality Television* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 11.

[10] Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, trans. James Benedict (New York: Verso Books USA, 2002), 56.

[11] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 169.

[12] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 3.

[13] Roscoe and Hight, *Faking it*, 13.

[14] *The Blair Witch Project*, np, viewed 11 April 2015, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0185937/?ref_=nv_sr_3.

[15] *Discovery Channel – A Lenda da Bruxa de Blair,* np, viewed 7 July 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOpAlDB01ro.

[16] *Is Paranormal Activity Real or Fake*?, np, viewed 21 January 2015, https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20111023214425AAOijql.

[17] Terry Eagleton, *On Evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 5.

[18] Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil*, 55.

[19] Debord, *A Sociedade do Espetáculo*, 14.

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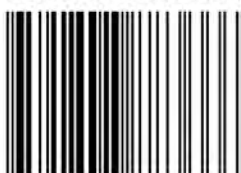
THIS THING OF DARKNESS: SHEDDING LIGHT ON EVIL

Evil has been historically associated to people, facts and situations labelled disturbing, weird, non-civilised, bizarre, or out of standards. Many artistic, fictional and media representations associate evil to darkness: because of its apparent ugliness, we tend to make all kinds of efforts so as to hide this 'thing of darkness', which is intrinsic to humanity and social relations. Through its chapters, this volume sheds light on evil, questioning its status quo, places, origins and pointing out its importance for social balance. The discussions and viewpoints rely on approaching evil, human wickedness and violence in real and imagined prisons, contemporary media, representations of the feminine, and witches from Salem and Blair alike. While movies, television series, works of literature, media coverage, public institutions and social relations are analysed, evil is approached from different philosophical perspectives, theories pertaining to mass media, documentary film, history, anthropology and psychoanalysis.
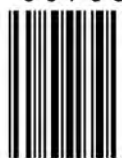
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