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Hyde within the Boundaries of Mere Jekyll: Strange Cases of Evil in Kant & Stevenson

Abstract

This essay experiments with Kant’s writings on rational religion distilled through the *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* as canonical confrontations with primal problems of evil. It suggests boundaries between Stevenson’s characters and their occupations comparable to the those conflicted in the Kantian university, namely, law, medicine, theology, and philosophy (which makes a short anticipatory appearance in his earlier text on rational religion). With various faculties it investigates diffuse comprehensions—respectively, legal crime, biogenetic transmission, and original sin—of key ethical modes: will, inheritance, incorporation, freedom, duty, obligation, love, living, and killing to conclude on the possible logic of evil (or evils of logic) collateral and possibly innate to Kant’s comprehension of radical evil.

Keywords

Reason, Religion, Morality, Freedom, Hermeneutics

Mixed Reasonings

The *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) might be read alongside Kant as a critical engagement with evil and religion within the limits of reason. The *Case* supplements Kant. It is a complex *Streit* to comprehend the “enigma” of “original evil” (Stevenson 2015, 117, 128). On his way to developing “a radical innate evil in human nature” in *Die Religion innerhalb der*

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Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft (1793), Kant suggests other radical originals (natural/physical and comparative self-love) (1995, 80). All “are original, for they belong to the possibility of human nature,” but only humanity’s propensity to respect the moral law is rooted in practical reason (75-76). This discloses a fundamental flaw in non-rational religious constructions and conceptions of original sin. This gives religion a bad name, “for religion is a purely rational affair” or ought to be, upon reasonable correction (287).

Many of Stevenson’s characters find themselves in positions that Kant finds conditioned and debilitated by mistaken theological hermeneutics which rational readers of scripture *ought* to correct:

Scriptures express this incomprehensibility in a historical narrative [...] by projecting evil at the beginning of the world [...] The absolutely *first* beginning of all evil is thereby *represented as incomprehensible* to us [...] the human being [...] is represented as having lapsed into it only *through temptation*, hence not as corrupt *fundamentally* (89).

The incomprehensibility of original evil is expressed by Jekyll to his lawyer: “You do not understand my position,” which is delivered with “incoherency” (Stevenson 2015, 35). The “lawyer’s mind [struggles to comprehend] *a reason* for his friend’s strange preference or *bondage*” (21-22; italics added). It all turns on Jekyll’s “temptation” to ill propensities (126).

Boundaries abound¹ in the *Strange Case*. It breaches several. “Hyde broke out of all bounds” (41). Four boundaries evince the separation of the Kantian higher university faculties. These are first outlined in a footnote to Kant’s discussion of rational religion and radical evil which he more fully develops five years later in *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798). In its preface, Kant emphasizes the categorial importance of disciplinary boundaries and the dangerous mistake of mixing them. He confesses:

As a *teacher of youth* [...] in my academic lectures—I never have and never could have *mixed* any evaluation of the Holy Scriptures and of Christianity into my lectures [...] I have always censured and warned against the *mistake of straying beyond the boundaries* of the science at hand or *mixing* one science with another [...] (Kant 1995, 240-241; Kant’s italics of “teacher of youth,” other italics added).

These Kantian ambitions and prohibitions are applicable to the *Strange Case* on at least four counts.

¹ “A close observer might have gathered” (Stevenson 2015, 34) that *binding* is at the heart of the enigmas of evil and Hyde as it is in Freud’s development of the death drive (1961, 41-42, 75-77).

(1) Much of Stevenson's works can edify as YA lit accessible to youth. He writes poetry for children urging kindness, moderation, and non-cruelty.² There is a school boyish deontology in "The Whole Duty of Children" inculcating a Kantian obligation to truth against the immorality of lying (Stevenson 1914, 9). But his fiction exceeds the bounds of any target audience of ages,³ as if "appointed to teach the people" whom Professor Kant claims, "cannot think out their own religious belief *by themselves*, but can only have it handed down to them" (1995, 241). Read as mystery, horror, thriller, science-fiction (or mixtures of all), Stevenson endeavors to teach young readers while addressing a broader public.

(2) The problem of evil radically belongs to the literary arts and obliquely invites consideration within strange tales of fiction. Kant cannot begin his treatise on rational religion and evil without engaging literature.⁴ Immediately invoking the gospel of John, he begins: "That 'the world lieth in evil' is a complaint [...] as old as the older art of poetic fiction [*Dichtkunst*]; indeed, just as old as that oldest of all fictions [*Dichtungen*] [...]" (Kant 1995, 69; 1974, 20). Such fictions are indissociable from "the religion of the priests" (1995, 69). Readers might tremble at a hybrid even more radical than Jekyll's demon skulking about the novel: a *homiletic horror* (or *sci-fi sermon*).⁵ This make of monster might be more horrific than Hyde and eerier than imps in bottles. Kant claims from the lectern that his core university textbook (by Baumgarten)⁶ is "not suitable for the public" (240-241). But

² "Happy hearts and happy faces, / Happy play in grassy places / That was how, in ancient ages, / Children grew to kings and sages. / But the unkind and the unruly, / And the sort who eat unduly, / They must never hope for glory / Theirs is quite a different story!" (Stevenson 1914, 49; "Good and Bad Children"). Even as addressing children the poet laments a goodness to be lost as they age to adulthood: "if I were not so tall ['grown-up'], I should live for good and all" (111; "The Flower"). These verse's insensitivity to geographical and racial difference (tinged with just enough white supremacy still suitable to its assumed Anglican readership) also smacks of Kantian anthropology. Cf. the former's "Foreign Children" (51-52) with the latter's "National Characters" (Kant 2007, 52, 58-62). Stevenson writes of a "monstrous hybrid—whether good or evil," not when describing Jekyll and Hyde, but when pondering the "hotch-potch of races" in the American south (which he predicts will "turn out English, or thereabout") (Stevenson 2009, 97).

³ "What age is a book? ...Books happen off age's shore" (Cixous and Jeannet 2013, 40).

⁴ See also Derrida 2002, 23, 32-33.

⁵ For each Christmas murder in Stevenson's catalogue there is a supplemental Christmas sermon.

⁶ Although, even Kant's more generalized and accessible *Anthropology* remains determined and shaped by the fictitious fancy of Baumgarten's *Ästhetik*. See Mersch 2015, 78-81.

this would not be the case for Stevenson's fiction, which seems as palatable proclaimed from the pulpit (as cautionary tale) as heard around the campfire (as ghost story or murder mystery).

(3) Like Kant, Stevenson self-censures himself from developing overt theological or religious valuations. One might read both the *Case* (itself) and Jekyll's self-experimentation (narrated within it) as earnest endeavors to maintain dispassionate and rational integrity indicative of a de-theologized Kantian lecture.

(4) Lastly, *the mistake of mixing* is so crucial to *Jekyll and Hyde* that this Kantian syntagma—*The Mistake of Straying Beyond the Boundaries of Mixing One Science with Another*—could easily serve as suitable subtitle.

Kant University & The Stevenson School of Business

The Kantian university is divided into four core faculties. It is "not a bad idea" to think it "*like a factory* [apportioned] by a division of labor [...] *to create doctors*" (247). It perhaps manufactures *Dr. Jekylls* rather than *Mr. Hydes*. The order of the university follows the Kantian order of reason. The primary concern is "*eternal well-being*" followed by secondary "*civil*" and tertiary "*physical well-being*" (248). The ranks "assigned to the higher faculties [are] *theology*, first, *law*, second, and *medicine*, third [...] in accordance with reason" (250). There are "two ranks: *three higher* faculties and *one lower* faculty." A faculty is "considered higher only if its teachings [...] interest the government itself, while the faculty whose function is only to look after the interests of science is called lower [...]" which is philosophy (248).

As covert governmental agents, Kant calls the well-learned products of the higher faculties, "*businesspeople*" (248). Business is not restricted to economics or the law of the market. It also the driving force of medicine and theology. For Kant, a police force has less to do with law than with medicine. He likens the faculty of medicine and its practitioners to "a police force" serving the public's convenience and safety: "the medical police" (254-255). The three higher faculties are therefore instruments of command. "For the government does not teach, but it commands [...]" (248).

The business of governmental command at work in the higher faculties is not far removed from several of Stevenson's authorial employments of the term, "business," which often anticipates death or ending life. They are practiced both for the sake of higher duty respecting law as well as baser self-interests of murderers. There is the necessary evil of executing criminals by

due processes of jurisprudence in *Weir of Hermiston* (1994). The judge, “Hanging Hermiston,” jokes to his wife: “It seems a rather *sore kind of business* that I should be all day in Court hanging Raadicals” (Stevenson 2018, 146, 144; italics added). Under the pretense of last-minute Christmas shopping, the eponymous and strangely motivated murderer, *Markeim* (1885), says to his mark: “Enough fooling. *To business*. Show me something else.” The dealer stoops to procure another item as Markeim “*bounded* from behind upon his victim. The long, skewerlike dagger flashed and fell. The dealer struggled [...] and then tumbled on the floor in a heap” (Stevenson 2018, 125; italics added).

The lucrative business of death-dealing is a primal scene for Stevenson and a persistent leitmotif. More troublesome to Kantian ethics (if there is such a thing) would be an alleged duty to kill and the tactical business of finding an optimal opportunity to do so in *Treasure Island* (1883):

‘But,’ asked Dick, ‘when do we lay ‘em athwart, what are we to do with ‘em anyhow?’
‘There’s the man for me!’ cried [Long John Silver], admiringly. ‘That’s what I call *business* [...] *Dooty is dooty*, mates. I give my vote—death [...] I don’t want any of these *sea-lawyers* in the cabin a-coming home’ [...] (Stevenson 2013, 71; italics added).

A perverse deontology is thought alongside a certain anomy or *ad hoc* maritime law.⁷ This maximizes a diabolical duty to kill troublesome “lawyers” or any non-selves⁸ inhibiting one’s self-interest whilst at sea. There’s “the *business* thus rendered *necessary*” of procuring corpses in *The Body Snatcher* (1884), conducted by “the policy [...] to ask no questions” and a threefold “*duty* [...] to take what[ever corpse] was brought, to pay the price, and to avert the eye from any evidence of crime” (Stevenson 2018, 78; italics added). The business of body snatchers and dooty of pirates, as such, would develop from a misbegotten incorporation of over-particularized self-love into maxims guiding their choices and actions, the very possibility of which Kant finds rooted in radical evil.

⁷ Compare Kant’s concern with *res nullius*—whatever is “*washed up on shore*, whether human beings or things”—and the danger any pirate’s law of the sea poses to freedom, possession, and right in the *Rechtslehre* (1996, 404-405, 417, 420-421). See also Foucault 2008, 56.

⁸ These are considered “honest” and “faithful” from the perspectives of those marked for murder (Stevenson 2013, 91, 77).

Kant's lower faculty⁹ is thereby "free to evaluate everything" especially the three higher faculties and, by consequence, the governmental power for which they stand and serve (Kant 1995, 249). This exceptional freedom of the philosophy faculty already invites scrutiny of evil in which it would seem to be entangled by way of its very freedom. Radical evil is enrooted in the (supposed) freedom Kant presumes at the core of any rational decision: one's "free power of choice [*freien Willkür*]" (1995, 89; 1974, 55). It is as if philosophy's signature duty to conceive and critique evil (or anything) is itself conditional on its own inextirpable complicity in a kind of rational evil beyond the scope of Kant's architectonic yet would also seem congenital to any scholastic freedom.

The present study follows Kant's implied division of scientific labor and compares the respective objects of study (or specialized case studies) of each faculty with Stevenson's characters. These are usually some articulation of the Hyde phenomenon to which they would be disciplinarily attuned. Each Kantian science is followed by its object then posited as it might correlate to the *Case*. But the philosopher and the writer are their own idiomatic animals. Any one-to-one correlation would be contrived and doomed to reductivism and failure. Yet it imagines an intertextual juxtaposition, read and thought together.

~ *Dramatis Impersonae* ~

Kantian Faculties

Law (inheritance)

Crime

Medicine (physical evil)

Disease (tapeworm)

Transmission (poison)

Unease (civic unrest)

Theology (original sin)

Eden (Cain)

Stevenson Characters

Utterson, the lawyer (contract law)

Hyde (forgery, fraud, theft)¹⁰

1. Dr. Lanyon, the anatomist

Hyde (parasite, addiction)

2. Maw, the chemist

Hyde (drug, salt, powder)

3. Police

Hyde (nuisance, murder or manslaughter)

"Silent symbols" of the *Strange Case*¹¹

Hyde (cane, death-dealer)

⁹ Without a lower faculty "of this kind, the truth would not come to light" (Kant 1995, 249).

¹⁰ The characters of Hyde and Jekyll draw inspiration from the double life of William Brodie, respectable deacon, civic official, cabinetmaker, and (by consequence) accomplished locksmith by day, gambler and (by consequence) cat burglar or housebreaker by night. He was convicted for thievery and publicly hanged on 1 October 1778.

¹¹ Considering "The Book as One of Its Own Characters" in Cixous 2011, 125-159.

Philosophy	Jekyll, the transcendental (freedom, reason)
Moral Evil ₁ (frailty)	Jekyll (regret, repentance, resistance)
Moral Evil ₂ (impurity)	Hyde (mixture)
Moral Evil ₃ (depravity)	Hyde (possibility of the diabolical)
Radical Evil (incomprehensible)	[J/H-hybrid] (enigma)

This last J/H hybrid is speculative and perhaps only discernable indirectly (if it is discernible at all). It is arguably as incomprehensible as it is unthinkable, as enigmatic as it is unwritable and remains unwritten by Stevenson as such. But only the unwritable is worth writing.

Faculty of Law

At the beginning of the *Case* is a lawyer concerned with a last will in testament.¹² The novel immediately lawyers-up as if guilty from the start. *Inheritance* is the singular springboard of the story. This is also the case for young David Balfour in Stevenson's novel, *Kidnapped* (1886) published the same year as *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Already one detects a Stevensonian *Streit* between law, medicine, and theology. This lawyer, Utterson, is "a man of no scientific passions" compared to his friend, the medical Dr. Lanyon (Stevenson 2015, 19). Instead of studying theology, "a volume of some dry divinity" which was "his custom" on Sunday, Utterson instead studies "Jekyll's Will," bequeathing Jekyll's estate to Hyde (15-16). Theology is displaced from the start by contract law in the very character of Utterson, Esq. The legal document "offended" him. The will "swelled his indignation" (17). It seems a transgression of obligation, responsibility, and freedom in the eyes of the law. "This document had long been the lawyer's eyesore" (16). Upon inheritance, Hyde would be "free from any burthen or obligation beyond the payment of a few small sums" to Jekyll's staff (16).

Utterson's indignation arises perhaps from an unfair imbalance between this obliged small payment and the vast atonement presumed by Kant's legal theology. For Kant's rational boundaries demand critique of colloquial accounts of evil as fundamentally flawed (especially in the quest to attribute an *origin* to it). "Whatever the nature [...] of the origin of moral evil in the

¹² Kant performs as Utterson when suggesting that Jesus or the "teacher of the Gospel [...] left his last will behind him by word of mouth (as in a testament)" (1995, 156-157).

human being, of all the ways of representing its [...] propagation [...] the most inappropriate is surely to imagine it as having come to us by way of *inheritance* from our first parents” (Kant 1995, 86).

This lends too much credit to evil and diverts attention away from the moral and rational agency of freedom. Enframed by religious limits, theology as such becomes anything but moral. Instead, it strands itself in amoral ways of thinking (perhaps even immoral). Seduced away from confronting the more troublesome human propensity to perform evil acts, its gaze instead becomes fixed and “only consider[s] the actual evil of given actions according to evil’s inner possibility” (86).

The law’s fixation on crime is but a juridical reiteration of this theological diversion. The fixation on Edenic transgression simply becomes legalized: “the legal consequence of our accession to an *inheritance* bequeathed to us by these first parents but weighted down by a serious crime [...] We must therefore make payment (atone) and, at the end, shall still be evicted (by death) from this possession” (86). This Kantian move from inherited crime [debt/guilt, *Schuld*] to due recompense [atonement] as mortal eviction [death and suffering as punishments] maps out the sequential structure of the *Case’s* overall narrative and the downfall of Jekyll.

Kant’s suspicions of a tacit flawed theological diversion burrowed within a collaterally contaminated understanding of law (with regards to evil) are confirmed in Utterson’s rationalization of Jekyll’s plight through a vast theodicy of divine judgment:

Poor Harry Jekyll [...] He was wild when he was young; a long while ago [...] but *in the law of God, there is no statute of limitations [...] the ghost of some old sin [...] punishment coming, pede claudo, years after memory has forgotten and self-love condoned the fault* (Stevenson 2015, 30-31).¹³

The law’s preoccupation only begins with inheritance and obligation. Inheritance grows into crime and crime culminates in murder: “The Carew Murder Case,” perhaps Hyde’s only legitimate crime in the eyes of the law (evidentiary support for which remains somewhat speculative, hearsay, or circumstantial).

But well before the murder, Utterson already associates inheritance with the propensity to murder benefactors. The “danger” is “if this Hyde suspects the existence of the will, he may grow impatient to inherit” (31-32). Already

¹³ The reduction of old sin to a “subjective principle of self-love” and “the law of self-love” aligns with Kant’s critique, though differentiated between “*mechanical*” and “*physical* which involves comparison” with others (1995, 83, 75).

there seems a congenital defect in the law itself, as if one does not know or consider crime (even murder) until or before the law (of inheritance) functions as its prior condition of possibility. Like the apostle,¹⁴ the lawyer is “conscious of some touch of that terror of the law” (45). The possibility of the law’s ethical complicity in its own transgression terrorizes the estate lawyer of Sunday testaments.

Citadel of Medicine

Before the beginning of the *Case* readers receive bad news, a solemn medical prognosis delivered in a poetic dedication: “It’s ill...”¹⁵ It immediately exposes readers to infirmity—immunity compromised—as if the first word on evil could only be uttered from a contagion site or fever den and rushed to the clinic for diagnosis. Outside the work, proper, epigraph plays *exergue* (perhaps a prayer). If these are Stevenson’s words (which does not go without saying), then they come from the pen of one who suffered a lifelong battle with tuberculosis. This ill-fed false start, “*It’s ill...*,” already infects the encasement from which it remains external.

For better or worse, *it* becomes evil. The word, “ill,” is moralized and incorporated—as is often the case in common idiom—within the story as a metonym (or stand-in) for *evil*, itself evoking *bad* or *wrong* deeds by connotation. Jekyll “was humbled to the dust by the many *ill* things he had done” (Stevenson 2015, 31). Like Kant, he traces this immorality back to religion with his own articulation of a radical *evill*. His experiment “severed in [him] those provinces of *good and ill* which divide and compound man’s dual nature [...] that hard law of life, which *lies at the root of religion*” (122; italics added). Whatever it is, ill evinces some valence falling short of goodness.

¹⁴ This is a Pauline paradox from the epistle to the Romans. “I did not know sin before the law.” Paul is evoked by both Kant and Stevenson on this point. Kant cites Paul directly as precedent to radical evil innate to humanity. “What I would, that I do not do!” (1995, 77). Jekyll cryptically paraphrases Paul, testifying to “the perennial war among my members” (Stevenson 2015, 123). Cf. Rom. 7:23.

¹⁵ “*It’s ill to loose the bands that God decreed / to bind; / Still will we be the children of the heather and the wind; / Far away from home, O it’s still for you and me / That broom is blowing bonnie in the north countrie*” (Stevenson 2015, unenumerated cover page). It’s anticipating a binding discomfort of those of *us* (“we”) who *will* (when *still*) someday discover ourselves the descendants of *heather* and *wind* (plants and weather, botany and physics) upon a revelation decreed by some deity. Whatever *it* is, it’s estranged and unhomely—*far from home—unheimlich*. “*Still*” outside the *Case* “*we*” seem already infected by its grave condition.

Still only on the eve of evil—before beginning—these opening words from the *Case's* exergue, "*It's ill...*" invoke an enthymematic disjunction that is so often presumed in agential moralities positing evil only in opposition to an exclusive or exclusionary good (healthier, firmer, or cured of its ills).

Similarly, Kant's lectures on the philosophy of religion (1783-1786) posit "the *ill* of the world" (1995, 412). He explains "universal physicotheology" from the perspective of a "sick person" infected by teleology eventually attaining "health" (404). In trying "to justify the supremely perfect God against all the *ill and evil* found in the world," Kant suggests a makeshift theodicy: "*Ill* is only a special arrangement *for leading the human being toward happiness*" (451, 413; italics added).

Utterson tables "Jekyll's Will" and rushes to consult Dr. Lanyon¹⁶ at "the citadel of medicine" (Stevenson 2015, 17). The medical anatomy of Lanyon "differed by some point of science" with Jekyll's philosophy whose "own tastes¹⁷ [are] rather chemical than anatomical" (19, 51). A transcendental physiology becomes the pathway through which Jekyll unwittingly confronts radical evil via mistaken mixture, impurity, and self-modification.

Medicine, for Kant, is prone to its own religiofied misdiagnosis of the genetic transmission of an evil ill by way of parasitic defect.

The Faculty of Medicine would represent the inherited evil somewhat as it represents the tapeworm, concerning which *certain natural scientists* are actually of the opinion that, since it is not otherwise found either in an *element outside us* nor (of this same kind) in any other animal, it must already have been present in our first parents (Kant 1995, 86, fn.).

The problem is a stubborn refusal to consider the complex incorporation of an external element. Kant would perhaps critically allege Jekyll (as a doctor of natural science) to be complicit in perpetuating this medical mistake in the latter's belief to have discovered an "extraneous evil" (Stevenson 2015, 124). Despite the misdiagnosis of a tapeworm as inborn parasite, the possibility of a congenital necessity inborn to any living organism is yet worth considering with regard to the condition of Hyde and the enigma of evil

¹⁶ Lanyon's character revives Dr. Livesey from *Treasure Island* and anticipates K, the "extramural teacher of anatomy," Dr. Macfarlane, and "the Doctor" Fettes who "studied medicine in the schools of Edinburgh" in *The Body Snatcher* (Stevenson 2018, 73, 77). The "point of science" distilling Jekyll from Lanyon might represent the threshold between physiology and anatomy, suggested in Agamben (1998, 186-188).

¹⁷ Jekyll's taste for the chemical ought to be noted as a key motif in the story (which would endow a distinguished Maw Faculty of Chemistry).

inasmuch as it seems an innate ill of any maw—even prior to proper buccality¹⁸ by unicellular pseudopods¹⁹—to ever engulf an external element (such as Jekyll’s miraculous salt). This mistaken medical microbiology anticipates the sinful Edenic eating of forbidden macrobiotics.

Stevenson is a great chemist of mixtures. Gradually the *Case* confronts the moral evils which Kant finds comprehensible only through practical reason. Jekyll’s ordeal with evil is called a “murderous mixture” (27). Kant indicts the flawed religious conception of original sin as presumptive of a purity beyond mixture: “a corruption that lies in all human beings and cannot be overcome except through the idea of a moral good in its *absolute purity* [...] and we only need to be assiduous in keeping it free from *impure mixture* [...]” (1995, 122). Kant all but diagnoses Jekyll’s condition as an impure moral mixture. Jekyll cannot replicate the proportions of his secret salts and powders as Hyde becomes uncontrollable, unpredictable, and beyond expectations. “But in connection with the *mixture of good and evil* in [humanity’s] predisposition, with the proportion of which he [is] not acquainted, he himself does not know what effect he might expect from it.” (301; italics added). The grand reveal of the *Case* is an involuntary and deadly acquiescence to impurity by an inexplicable efficacy of an impure chemical concoction. “I am now persuaded that my first supply was impure [...] it was that unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught [potion]” (Stevenson 2015, 157).

One of Stevenson’s many lessons is that any separable moral disjunction would be a mistaken miracle. If Hyde is “wholly evil,” it cannot be part of a composite whole composed of an evil part purified from good any more than a good part purified from evil (131). Jekyll’s great moral discovery is necessary contamination. The evils of indemnification by separation render purification morally impossible. As chemist, Jekyll belongs amongst the 19th century critics of disjunctive valuation and religiosity (e.g., Hegel 1985, 102-106; Kierkegaard 1987, 166-169) and even more recent pharmacologists (Derrida 1981, 63-171; Stiegler 2013) that further the Kantian critiques.

¹⁸ A genealogy of orality discovers: “*La buccalité est plus primitive que oralité*” (Nancy 1979, 162).

¹⁹ As “the capacities for feeding and for digesting are prior to the organs in each case” (Heidegger 1995, 224).

Faculty of Dry Divinity

In the beginning Stevenson creates a *Case* for theological concerns written through “silent symbols” (Stevenson 2015, 1). He clues readers’ attention to this possibility in the first paragraph of the story. Kant and Stevenson both resist overt theologizing. But it persists at play in its very absence (verging on indirect communication the likes of Kierkegaard). Readers of Stevenson’s works are often blessed with lawyers, judges, physicians, surgeons, anatomists, dissectors, and med students, which easily outnumber the small circle of elected or confessed godfolk (as Kantian clerical businesspeople). Any theoretical theologian—properly ordained—remains absent as an unwritten character in the *Case*. Yet some unholy ghost hovers throughout and haunts²⁰ all its others (which Kant’s critique of theology’s two subordinate higher faculties arguably forewrote and overtly forewarned). Jekyll believes his experimentation has a “spiritual side” (148). This is no less espoused by the spirit-seeking philosopher of reason, more respectful of the “*spirit* [Geiste]” of the moral law than its mere “*letter* [Buchstaben]” (Kant 1995, 78; 1974, 36).

A mere mistake²¹ made by “Maw,” the “chemist,” is further mistaken by Jekyll as a scientific or thermodynamic miracle (Stevenson 2015, 84-85). His “scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle” (124). It’s as if the possibility of mistaking a mistake for a miracle is, itself, the miracle. The unknown chemical impurity is merely epiphenomenal. The real miracle is the that Jekyll believes the miracle (cf. Deleuze 1991, 76). If there is a miracle to be found in the *Case*, it is—or would be—nothing less than a possibilization of the impossible separation of the human propensity to goodness from radical evil (Jekyll purified from Hyde, though not necessarily vice versa), purely believed possible because of the potion of unknown impurity.

Jekyll and Hyde is a tale of “original evil,” “the first breath,” “the first creature,” and “temptation” (Stevenson 2015, 128, 126). It bears all the signature marks of a creation story, as much as one might “read Satan’s signature upon a face” which Utterson fantasizes on the yet unseen face of Hyde prior to catching a glimpse (28). This mark is but one of several gestures to Cain

²⁰ The lawyer is “haunted” by the “figure” of Hyde, that “figure to whom power was given,” by inheritance upon Jekyll’s demise at “the dead hour.” The lawyer “must rise and do *its* bidding” (Stevenson 2015, 21; italics added). Once again, the referent of ‘it’ is ambiguous. Hyde, it, and death are all intertwined as they haunt.

²¹ Such a “mistake once made may vitiate the entire work” that follows (Lukàcs 1980, 33).

(Qayin). The first chapter of the *Case* strangely coagulates with the opening ‘chapter’ of the Hebrew Bible, invoking both Cain and Satan²² by name.²³ Utterson confesses a heretical identification with fallen fraternity in his personal propensity for social tolerance (fragrant of laissez-faire political liberalism). “I incline to Cain’s heresy [...] I let my brother go to the devil in his own way” (2). It is as if no “lawyer” worthy of the name could be ever truly disinclined from Cain. Here, the lawyer’s own secret alter-Hyde is conjured in the name of the proto-murderer, betraying the law’s own innate exceptional state of uncanny Cainhood.

An unwritten confessor emerges beyond the text. The writer all but divinizes the reader. Astute readers might hear, here, the author’s own secret confession. In “A Christmas Sermon” (1888), Stephenson reveals his only begotten Uttersonship as he reutters the lawyer’s heresy. This sermon is an ethical exercise pondering the limits of eudaimonism, conflicting duties (rivaling that of Kant’s faculties), and the possibility of unavoidable (perhaps radical) “evil” beyond extirpation:

In his own life, then, a man is not to expect happiness, only to profit by it gladly when it shall arise; he is *on duty* here; he *knows not how or why, and does not need to know* [...] and must not ask. Somehow or other, though he does not know what goodness is, he must try to be good; somehow or other, though he cannot tell what will do it, he must try to give happiness to others. And no doubt there comes in here a *frequent clash of duties*. How far is he to make his neighbor happy? *How far must he respect* that smiling face, so easy to cloud, so hard to brighten again? And how far, on the other side, is he *bound to be his brother’s keeper* and the prophet of *his own morality*? *How far must he resent evil*? (Stevenson 2009, 312; italics added)

True to his namesake this preacher performs great marvels by silent *semeia*.²⁴ It’s no wonder this discourse is delivered at Christmastime. It becomes difficult to distinguish creator from creation, Stephenson from Utterson, as if performing a silent incarnation—slouching toward Bethle-

²² Though generic devilry runs throughout the *Case*, it thrice invokes Satan: while describing Hyde, in the first chapter, “with [...] sneering coolness—frightened too [...] but carrying it off [...] really like Satan” and again in the second as signature (Stevenson 2015, 8, 28). Later, Lanyon reports Jekyll describing Hyde as “a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of Satan” (117). It seems that Jekyll believes Satan would have more trouble disbelieving in Hyde than disbelieving in god (which is itself unbelievable).

²³ It does so as it struggles with something unnamable. Enfield, trying to describe Hyde, “really can name nothing” (13).

²⁴ Cf. Acts 6:8. The death deed is ever encased in any work signed by the son of Stephen, the gospel’s protomartyr (Acts 7:59).

hem—miraculized only through writing. Saint Stephenson, the homilist, cites Cain's question²⁵ at the colloquial commemoration of christology (thereby commencing that terrible trend toward the eventual execution of Stephen) so that he may further ask the reading congregation: How far must unknown and unknowable non-evil (if there is such a thing) respect others within the "bound[s]" of mere good or duties? How far must happiness, goodness, respect, duty, and morality (ever subjective, as one's "own") be from Cain and/or evil? How far is one's neighbor from becoming the next Abel? Oneself from becoming the next Cain? Or Hyde? How far can the creator of the *Case* really be from the struggler of *Der Streit*? Evil from the next religion? Or reason?

Beyond flawed religious hermeneutics of original sin by stereotypical interpretations of scripture, the core crime within Genesis would be "The Abel Murder Case," misinterpreted (by Kantian rational standards) as subsidiary to a presumed original sin.²⁶ But beyond murder (or any other deeds²⁷ of physical necessity, none of which should be simply reduced to synonymy or equivalency), Cain's question of keepership conjures the possibility of *the human invention of death*. One of Kant's key objectives for rational religion is to attribute the agential responsibility of evil at human feet rather than nature (*phusis*, *Ananke*, or necessity). "Nothing is...morally (i.e., imputably) evil but that which is our own deed" (Kant 1995, 78-79). "Hence the ground of evil cannot lie [...] in any natural impulses" (70). We should "always be satisfied that *nature is not to blame* for it (if the character is evil) [...]" (71; italics added). But literary hermeneutics could offer a compelling case that such groundwork is as applicable to human mortality as to Kantian evil. The Genesis narrative attributes the primal death of human being neither to god nor the serpent (nor Satan) but binds it to the deed dealt by mere Cain alone.

Near the beginning is the deed. To call it 'murder' almost names too little, nearly nothing or a mere trifle by comparison, inasmuch as even "human being is [...] but a trifle" for Kant "in the face of the omnipotence of nature" (305). Kant insinuates that theological misinterpretation over-fixates on the strange injunction against eating forbidden fruit; alimentation, phagation,

²⁵ Genesis 4:9.

²⁶ It requires no small amount of flawed theology and religious diversion for the murder of Abel to be weighed any less overt in the Biblical narrative than the primal deed is in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*. Hyde's alleged murder of Carew is referred to as "the deed" (Stevenson 2015, 42).

²⁷ Cf. Kant's criterial categorization of the "propensity of evil" to "a deed" (1995, 79).

incorporation, or introjection of some botanical which, as plucked, adopts a maxim by necessity to (a) *end vegetal life*. This is perhaps already an Edenic deed of (b) *killing* but still less than Cainitic (c) *murder*. Beyond any criterial boundaries set by reason between these three deeds (a-c), is it not through some participation in death that radical problems of evil begin revealing themselves? A malicious metonymy of *dead* and *deed* become indissociable by literary condensation as Stevenson twice tries to write the unwritable as “d-d” in *The Body Snatcher*. (2018, 86-87).

The cane is all that is the *Case*. Cane is the instrument of its murder (the conditions, provocation, or details of which readers learn nearly nothing). Hyde’s cane²⁸ performs an intertextual repetition of Long John Silver’s “crutch,” “that uncouth missile” of “stunning violence” which deals “The First Blow” toward murder on Skeleton Island (Stevenson 2013, 90). Half of Hyde’s heavy walking stick is introduced into evidence as murder weapon, *ad baculum*. Hyde “had in his hand a heavy cane” (Stevenson 2015, 41). Cain too murders by hand. Only in discovering his deed does the word, “hand,” appear in the Bible.²⁹ Remember the haunting name of the pirate, *Israel Hands*, to whom, after murdering O’Brien—as if by revelation—it “appears as if killing [...] were a waste of time” (Stevenson 2013, 162).

Hyde carries Cain’s propensity in his hands before his hand carries the cane. The *Case* condenses Cain and cane into a Hyde hybrid. Hyde barely tries to hide his cane after the deed, *post festum*. Utterson locates the cane hardly hiding in Hyde’s home as the reader discerns the Cain hardly Hyde-ing in the *Case*’s cane.

Transcendental Philosophy

The med-school dropout in *The Body Snatcher*, Fettes, confesses to his accomplice, “*I was an ass till I knew you.*” “*You are a philosopher [...]* you’ll *make a man out of me*” (Stevenson 2018, 87; italics added). Stevenson’s image of the philosopher seems capable of optimal humanity, reason, and morality (or the authentic existence of the rational animal as *Dasein* by ontological distinction from bestial asininity). Philosophy is not mentioned in the *Case*. But in true Kantian fashion, twice Jekyll distinguishes his worldview

²⁸ Cf. Macfarlane “tapping the [dead] body with his cane” in *The Body Snatcher* (Stevenson 2018, 81).

²⁹ Reading “כַּיָּדָךְ” in Genesis 4:11 akin to “from/by your hand” (but which likely exceeds the boundaries of mere anatomical description) as, e.g., in Oduyoye 1984, 17.

from law and medicine as *transcendental*.³⁰ The “direction of [his] scientific studies [...] led wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental” (123). He believes he discovers and practices “transcendental medicine” (117).

The “mysterious ‘It’ in our holy”³¹ “*It’s ill...*” wouldn’t properly exist to logic and is an ontological enigma.³² Syntax performs an ambiguous ontology of the logical principle of identity. “It’s” apostrophe dots an unstated *i*: first letter of an ‘is’ (that typographically is not). It’s beyond being and already performs the core ontological crisis of the *Case*. Jekyll demands readers to think of an ‘it’ before his impossible confession: “Think of it—I did not even exist.”³³ (133; italics added). This impossible statement comes from the mouth(s) of ‘one’ called “it” (and “that”) by his/its own butler: “*that thing was not my master [...] it was never Dr Jekyll*” (88).

At one extreme, evil embodies a capacity to invert the presumed moral order of reason (as that which ordines Kant’s faculties). But there are several evils (or gradations of evil) to appreciate. There are at least three lesser evils at play in “a propensity to genuine evil, i.e., moral evil”: the “[a] general weakness [...] or *frailty* of human nature; [b] *second* the propensity to adulterate moral incentives with immoral ones [...] i.e., *impurity*, [c] *third* the propensity to adopt evil maxims, i.e., *depravity* of human nature” (Kant 1995, 77). Within the latter festers the possibility of the “*diabolical*” or “*perversity*”: the “disposition [...] to incorporate evil *qua evil* for incentive into one’s maxim” (84). One might recognize similar gradations in the *Case* as [a] Jekyll’s mere human frailty, [b] the impure salt the makes the Hyde

³⁰ “Kant defines ‘transcendental philosophy’ as a philosophy that does *not* go beyond the sphere of the finite in its use of categories but that exhibits the source of what can perhaps become transcendent” (Hegel 1990, 221). Jekyll’s mention of mysticism perhaps renders his philosophy more transcendentalist than transcendental. On this point and in response to an anonymous peer reviewer’s concern with my preoccupation “on how Stevenson’s text might be read through Kant, rather than proving, or successfully suggesting, that Stevenson had Kant in mind,” I ought to clarify that I do not assume nor wish to imply that Stevenson has Kant in mind. My reading attempts indifference to such autobiographical facticity (if such a thing is possible) and would follow a kind of Barthesian imperative that allies itself with Kant’s own biblical hermeneutics: a rational or philosophical reader “must treat the text *only* [...] without venturing to search for what the sacred authors themselves might have meant by it” (1995, 288).

³¹ Cf. the critique of Saint Stirner in Marx and Engels (1998, 134).

³² Readers can no more identify the referent of “it” while suffering “*It’s ill...*” than while weathering “it’s raining” (Heidegger 1984, 23).

³³ Cf. Poe’s *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*: “*I say to you that I am dead*” (2017, 384).

metamorphosis possible still “somehow entwined with humanity itself” (80) and [c] the J/H hybrid that discovers diabolical possibility (though Jekyll insists that the drug itself is not “diabolical” (Stevenson 2015, 131).

Most importantly, radical evil discloses itself as a necessary subjective human condition. “[W]e may presuppose evil is subjectively necessary in every human being, even the best” (Kant 1995, 80). If a propensity to invert the moral law,

does lie in human nature, then there is in the human being a natural propensity to evil; and this propensity itself is morally evil, since it must ultimately be sought in the free power of choice, and hence imputable. This evil is *radical*, since it corrupts the ground of all maxims; as natural propensity, it is also not to be *extirpated* through human forces, for this cannot take place if the subjective supreme ground of all maxims is presupposed to be corrupted. Yet it must be possible to *overcome* this evil, for it is found in the human being acting freely (83).

To conceptualize radical evil Kant addresses the mistake of disjunctive moral logic (itself collateral damage of deeper flawed theology).

At the basis of the conflict [...] there lies a disjunctive proposition: *The human being is* (by nature) *either morally good or morally evil*. It will readily occur to anyone to ask, however, [...] whether some might not claim that [1] the human being is by nature neither of the two, others, that [humanity] is [2] both at once [...] good in some parts and evil in others (71).

Kant answers both objections in the negative. Neither is possible in the eyes of duty. To “indifferentists” who ask the former (or adopt its affirmation) [1]: within the reasonable boundaries, human disposition to the moral law is “never indifferent (neither good nor evil)” (73). To “syncretists” who pose the latter or affirm it [2]: “*Nor* can a human being be morally good in some parts, and at the same time evil in others” (73). A principle of universalizability demands that any duty to the moral law incorporated into one’s maxim, thereby, generalizes one’s duty from which it follows that any particular part disinclined toward the good would be (or becomes) “contradictory.” Jekyll draws close to a syncretic morality when he suggests, “all human beings [...] are commingled out of good *and* evil” (Stevenson 2015, 130).

Kant’s latter response to syncretism seems fragrant of the logical fallacy of composition or perhaps a moralized inversion of the fallacy of division. Inversion or ‘reversability’ are ever entangled in the problem of evil: the “reversal of incentives” (Kant 1995, 83). It relies on an unstated principle of identity to reduce a flawed proposition to contradiction, *reductio ad absurdum*. Reason finds itself engulfed in a dilemma of fuzzy logic not dissimilar to

Jekyll's inseparability from Hyde. Practical and moral reason seem strangely prone to incorporating a particularized (or hypothetical) duty into logical principles in order to universalize logical duty. From there, Kant logically syncretizes the two nonrational amoralities in question to become, himself, particularly indifferent to indifference (by which he then denies syncretism). This vertiginous exercise in moral logic might be a wicked performance of the innate contradictory logic of radical evil (or even the innate evil of any radical logic).

At the naïve or idealist stage during which disjunction still holds (i.e., when there seems separable J and H parts of the JH hybrid, by which J is a whole with a propensity toward good and H is "wholly evil"), Jekyll offers Lanyon a disjunctive choice to learn the secret of disjunctive separation. The decision is not forced upon Lanyon. It's up to Lanyon to decide if he wants to learn. Jekyll's deceptively simple disjunctive offer to Lanyon is: "*Either, you shall be left as you were before, and neither richer nor wiser [...] Or, if you shall so prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues of fame and power [...]*" (Stevenson 2015, 116; italics added). In this offer,³⁴ Jekyll perhaps performs a transcendental deduction of radical³⁵ evil to "the exercise of the power of choice" so crucial to Kant: "the first really good thing that a human being can do is to extricate himself from *an evil* which is to be sought not in his inclinations but in his perverted maxims and hence *in freedom itself*" (1995, 76, 102, fn.).

The Faculty of Dry Divinity might claim this is but a logical re-articulation (both formally and informally fallacious by logical standards) of the Edenic choice, with Jekyll playing serpentine and Lanyon, protohuman. Jekyll momentarily flirts with indifferentist theology near the close of the story in holding firm in his belief that that "the drug" through which his entire self-experiment in moral separation is made possible "was neither diabolical nor divine" (Stevenson 2015, 131). Only after Kant might one appreciate that such alleged theological indifference is not equivalent to moral indifference, which is supposed to be a human impossibility. As a bad theologian or transcendental mystic, Jekyll falls short of Kant's rational standards and cannot yet comprehend his confrontation with radical evil of which he seems to remain incognizant to the end.

³⁴ But Jekyll is perhaps leading the witness to affirm Jekyll's own denial by loading terms to be decided, *ad misericordiam* (e.g., either quotidian ignorance of non-wisdom or powerful fame of wise knowledge).

³⁵ Lanyon's "life was *shaken to its roots*" after what Jekyll "told" him (Stevenson 2015, 118; italics added).

Lanyon somehow decides to learn the secret of Jekyll's provincial tree of new knowledge and witnesses a possibilization of the impossible separation of evil from good. This alleged choice is also worth considering as miraculous. Taken to ill-learning, this revelation to Jekyll ushers in his torment, despair, and hastened death. (The body count of the *Case* is not limited to mere Carew, alone.)

At this separable stage of Jekyll's "metamorphosis" (still processing), perhaps Lanyon more correctly witnesses the separation of a 'wholly evil' from Kantian radical evil—which, in turn, conditions the possibility of all subsequent human propensities to moral evils—within the limits of mere disjunctive reason, alone (116). Only at this point can Jekyll still believe "Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil" (130). Likewise, this is also the point at which Jekyll lastly maintains his identity, whereby he and Hyde might be considered "divided." But he also creeps closer to a point at which identity is soon lost. "This too was myself [...] the *divided* countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine [...] it yet remained to be seen if I had lost my identity" (130). In the end, the principle of identity falls and "suffer[s] the pangs of dissolution," through which principles such as 'Hyde is Hyde' and 'Jekyll is Jekyll' both no longer hold true: "the last calamity which has now befallen, and which has finally severed me from my own face and nature [...] This, then, is the last time [...] that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts" (157).

By the time of Jekyll's posthumous confession to Lanyon, the distinct sides of these two presumed purified identities become indistinguishable and beyond any agential control. Perhaps only then does some unnamable monstrous Jydell or Hylle hybrid write of an incomprehensible indifference.

Jekyll (who was *composite*) [...] [but] *now* with a greedy gusto, *projected and shared* in the pleasures and adventures of Hyde; but *Hyde was indifferent to Jekyll, or but remembered him* as [...] bandit remembers the cavern in which he conceals himself [...] *Jekyll had more than a father's interest; Hyde had more than a son's indifference* (140-141; italics added).

Oedipality aside, radical evil will have always been "more than [...] indifference," terrifying as the lifeless indifference of cold necessity would be. This discloses the kernel of self-love at the core of radical evil. For Kant, even the best human being "is evil only because he reverses the moral order [and] incorporates the moral law into [its] maxims together, with the law of self-love [and] makes the incentives of self-love and their inclinations the condition of compliance with the moral law" (1995, 83). Even in Hyde's alleged

indifference (which would no longer be humanly possible), Jekyll still admires Hyde's alleged "love" for him (which is merely for the sake of Hyde's own self-love and self-preservation). This mixture of self-love with an impure love for other non-selves emerges as a primal perversion of morality ever conditioned by fear. "But his love for me is wonderful [...] I know he fears my power to cut him off by suicide. I find it in my heart to pity him" (Stevenson 2015, 156).

Murderer maybe, but Hyde isn't the real monster of the story. It is worth considering that such alleged indifference could only come about (be thought or conceived) from a non-living—certainly nonhuman—impossible perspective of radical evil, itself. This is perhaps the secret god haunting the *Case*, imperceptible to law, medicine, theology, or even transcendental philosophy. Stevenson is at his best as he tries *to write the worst*,³⁶ in attempting to articulate an incomprehensible "something" exposed to thinking radical evil. Both radical evil and any possible comprehension of it are likely not thinkable or writable at all, beyond the limits of mere comprehensibility. Lanyon concedes, "*I cannot bring my mind to set on paper*" Jekyll's secret (118). Jekyll writes that it is "useless"³⁷ to continue trying to give "description" of it (156). The *Case* tries to think the unthinkable as it writes the unwritable: some "d-d"³⁸ thing that ever Hydies humanity. In style, Kant is not far behind. The very thought Jekyll thinks in identifying indifference in Hyde initiates the dissolution of his own identity (and Hyde's too) as metamorphosis culminates. Perhaps only an impossible hybrid comingling syncretism and indifference (that yet endeavors a moral propensity to good) makes possible the dissolution of all into something that somehow begins comprehending the incomprehensibility of radical evil [...] which, in doing so, instantly disappears.³⁹ Radical wills of such radical thinkers might only ever possibly be thought, read, or received "in case of [one's own] disappearance or unexplained absence" (16).

³⁶ "The movement [of Jekyll's ordeal] was thus *wholly toward the worse*" (Stevenson 2015, 132). Stevenson belongs among those writers who "dared to write the worst" (Cixous 1993, 63).

³⁷ Jekyll's confessed *uselessness* would also be indicative of the strange freedom of philosophy put to "some use" by its faculty. Cf. Ramsey 1990, 1, 94; Russell 2001, 89-91; Derrida 2002, 21.

³⁸ *The Body Snatcher*, Stevenson 2018, 86-87.

³⁹ Cf. how Mr. Arrow "disappeared entirely" from the *Hispaniola* (Stevenson 2013, 62) or the "sudden disappearance" of the Italian physicist, Ettore Majorana, for (or after) whom "disappearance is the only way in which the real can preemptorily be affirmed" (Agamben 2018, 2, 43).

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