The Positive Function of Evil?
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Critical Notice: *The Positive Function of Evil*, edited by Pedro Alexis Tabensky, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 185+ xix.

I. Introduction

According to Pedro Tabensky (xv), the rationale for this collection (and its interest) is that it examines, from a secular point of view, the previously unexamined positive role that evil plays in our lives.[1] The claim is problematic on at least two counts. First, a central contention in most theodicies, including for example Leibniz (1710) in his 'best of all possible worlds' theodicy, is that evil does play an important, even necessary role in advancing greater good. Although occurring in the context of theodicy, the arguments are generally independent of theological assumptions. They are, therefore, equally and immediately applicable, more or less as they occur in theodicy, to secular contexts. For example, we are told that apart from facing first order evils—like situations that generate fear or despair; there could

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1 Ninian Smart (1961) argues that the world would have to be virtually incomprehensibly different if it contained no evils, or rather no evils of a particular kind. Smart's essay is the earliest modern precursor I know of to Tabensky's concern with the positive function of evil.

Several contributors to the volume raise questions about using the term 'evil.' Tabensky finds nothing particularly problematic in talking about 'evil' and makes short shrift of a number of objections. Stronger cases, however, can be made for eliminating the notion of evil in favour of talk about the 'bad' or immoral in secular contexts. 'Evil,' it has been argued, has irreducible theological underpinnings, which in turn have significant implications (Levine 2006).

be no second order goods such as courage, nor could we understand what 'courage' is.[2]

Secondly, but just as much to the point, if by 'examining the positive role that evil may play in our lives' one means not just philosophical examination narrowly construed, but that of literature, drama, art, poetry, etc.; then, far from being a neglected topic, it would have to be one of the central concerns of the arts—narrative art to be sure, but also much visual art.

This second point has something like a corollary attached—one that is significant for Tabensky's project. No one seriously doubts that evil may at times play a positive role in our lives. From a religious perspective—that of theodicy—the question is (i) whether there could not be even greater good(s) apart from the evils apparently necessary for certain goods; or (ii) whether all such evil was really necessary for greater good(s) since so much evil appears to be gratuitous. Why could a theistic God not have creatively achieved a world containing at least as much, if not more, goodness than this world of ours has, apart from (without) the amount and types of evil present in the world? Tabenky's project of investigating the positive function of evil appears to rest on the assumption that there is some kind of secular counterpart to the theistic problem of evil. Given that there is no such counterpart, the project's rationale seems problematic. From a secular point of view what can be said about evil? Despite the fact that evil frequently has positive effects or may function positively, we still have ample reason to try to reduce the amount and kinds of evil that exist. Knowing that we will only ever be partially successful, all we can do is to look for its underlying causes and seek explanations for it, in an attempt to lessen it. Betrayal, cruelty, mental illness and the like are here to stay given the kinds of creatures we are.

From the theistic point of view, there is plenty reason to concern ourselves with the fact that evil may (does at times) result in good. But, from a naturalistic or non-theistic point of view, what is one to say about

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2 See, for example, McCloskey 1974:180; Mackie 1974.

the fact that World War I (an evil) resulted in many goods (and evils) some of which would most certainly not have otherwise occurred? Life is full of contingencies. Such 'luck of the draw' facts are important ethically and have been discussed, but in a wholly different context—that of the problem of moral luck, of which there are several types.[3] It is also significant in the context of existentialist considerations (e.g., with the alleged 'absurdity' or problem of meaning in life).

There is a great deal of truth in the claim that 'we can only properly understand how it is that we ought to live our lives if we properly understand the allegedly complex relationship between goodness and evil'—which accounts for the focus of the arts on evil's various functions. However, such understanding hardly rests on examining the uncontroversial claim 'that some evils may play a key positive role in our lives' (Tabensky, xv). The fact that there is no secular equivalent to the theological problem of evil (i.e., no secular problem of evil), does not mean that there are no secular questions to be asked about evil. Let us then leave these issues aside and discuss a few of the volume's eleven essays.

II. Adams's 'Love'

Adams's thesis can be approached in terms of his consideration of the following two principles (8; 11).

(R) If a state of affairs q is a necessary condition for a state of affairs p, then if one does not (or ought not rationally to) regret that p, one ought not rationally to regret that q.

(R*) If a state of affairs q is a necessary condition for a state of affairs p, then if one does not (or ought not rationally to) wish, all things considered, that not-p, one ought not rationally to wish, all things considered, that not-q.

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3 The problem of moral luck and its significance to ethics and our lives has been widely discussed—most notably by Bernard Williams and Thomas Nagel. For an illustration and discussion of various types of moral luck see Cox and Levine (2011), Chapter 12, 'The Lives of Others: Moral Luck and Regret.'

Adams rightfully rejects R. If killing is necessary for my existence and I do not regret my existence, this does not mean that I ought not or do not regret the killing. Adams is glad he exists while properly (rationally) regretting World War I which was, let us assume, a causally necessary condition for his existence. We can rationally regret evils that were causally necessary to bring about p without regretting p.

Adams contrasts cases of conditionally favourable attitudes with those where we have an 'unconditionally' favourable attitude towards some state of affairs, such as one's existence, and where that state of affairs is causally necessarily connected to some prior evil. In these cases, can one regret, or is it rational to regret, the bad states of affairs that we suppose are necessarily connected to the state of affairs towards which we have the unconditionally favourable attitude? Even supposing it is rational to regret the bad in such cases, is it also rational to *wish* that the bad never happened? (See R*)

Adams does not distinguish between casual or nomic (law-like) necessity and logical necessity, even though were the two kinds of necessity to be distinguished different responses to the questions posed may be in order. It might make sense to wish for x where x is nomically impossible but logically possible. What one might be wishing for in such a case is that the casual link be severed: that the laws of nature did not operate as they ordinarily do in such a case.

Here, then, is an essential part of Adams's theodicy. We should have an unconditionally favourable attitude towards the existence of those we love, even towards those whose existence is necessarily (causally) connected to prior bad events. Contrary to R, we should have an attitude of regret towards the bad things necessary for our own or a loved one's existence. However, on the basis of R*, which Adams accepts, 'one ought not rationally to wish, *all things considered* [my emphasis], that not-q' (that World War I did not happen), but instead assume an attitude of 'ambivalence' towards it.

The significant question in such a case is, *supposing* such necessary causal connections, should one ever adopt such 'unconditional'

attitudes? Does love really demand it? I love Y very much—but not so much (I hope) that I would be willing to say that Y should exist if the cost is untold misery. No love should be 'unconditional' in these ways. Adams misunderstands the nature of unconditional love. The argument from evil, claims that it is highly improbable or impossible to suppose such connections between good and evil are logically necessary—that things *could not* be different, even if they are causally necessary in the circumstances. A theistic God could and would have seen to it, could see to it, that casual conditions were other than they in fact were.

Adams implicitly endorses modal scepticism. '[W]e have no sort of capacity that would enable us to know whether … it is necessary that the laws of physics have the same structure as the actual laws' (van Inwagen 1995, 12-13).[4] In other words, we do not know what is and is not causally possible—and perhaps not even logically possible if we do not distinguish between casual and logical necessity. He then assumes that, for all we know, separating the evil (World War I) from the good (his beloved's existence) is not possible. We are then told that, given an 'all things considered' perspective towards a good state of affairs that is necessarily connected to bad states of affairs, our attitude towards them (considered together) is properly one of ambivalence. He does not question whether we should (morally) have such unconditional attitudes. Nor does he question whether God could have achieved the good without the bad since he has assumed, like Leibniz and van Inwagen, that it is impossible (causally and/or logically). The connection between the good and bad is necessary. This theodicy is therefore question-begging (God cannot have made things differently). More importantly, it is perverse.[5]

Adams (11) says that principle R* (above) is 'much more plausible than R.' As I understand R*, indeed, it seems to be a condition of

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4 Van Inwagen (1995: 12-13) says 'It hardly follows that, because a certain thing cannot be proved to be impossible by a certain method, it is therefore possible in any sense of "possible" whatever.'

5 Contemporary analytic philosophy of religion's treatment of the problem of evil is rife with perverse views. See Levine 2000.

coherence in wishing. For I take it that *wishing, all things considered,* that not-*q* is wishing away *q* and everything of which *q* is a necessary condition, and not wishing, all things considered, that not-*p* is not wishing away either *p* or any of its necessary conditions. In these terms we can frame our main issue: is it important, for the fullness of love, *not* to wish, all things considered, that the beloved not have existed?

Adams asks, 'Is it not monstrous to regard our individual existences as more important than the horrors of that conflict [World War I]?'[6] If by 'unconditional' or 'all things considered' one is saying that our individual existences are worth a world war, then the answer is 'yes'. The fullness of love, as Adams describes it, is a horrifically selfish love—and something all too often acted upon.[7]

If *q* (the murder of millions) is a necessary condition of *p* (my existence), then 'all things considered' I likely would, and in any case certainly should, rationally wish that not-*p*. This is because *p* would entail the prior occurrence of *q* which is the event I really wish not to have happened. This does not entail that I could not or should not therefore regret the state of affairs of my not-existing, nor does it entail my wishing or 'having to wish' to not-exist, along with my regretting the fact that the *q* and *p* are necessarily linked *and* wishing they were not.

R* is not a condition of coherence in wishing. Wishing, *all things considered,* that not-*q* (that WWI did not occur) is not the same as wishing away *q and* everything of which *q* is a necessary condition. Wishing is not constrained by causal (nomic) necessity. I can imagine Adams absent World War I and I can imagine Helen Keller—as Adams claims not to be

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6 It seems unlikely that WWI is necessary casually or otherwise for Adams existence. Adams's ancestor might have moved to Philadelphia on some other grounds—a way that did not involve either WWI or the mustard gas that affected him? Adams's great grandfather may have come across a lovely print by Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) of early morning rowers on the Schuylkill River—a print that moved him in such a way that he felt he had to live on its banks? Why didn't God see to it that his ancestor came across such a print?

7 See Parfit's (1984) answers to the questions and kinds of cases Adams is here concerned with.

able to—with 20/20 vision and superb hearing. Imagination, rather than causal possibility, is a necessary condition of wishing. (Imagination is not even governed by logical let alone causal necessity.) Wishing can ignore any such alleged causally necessary connections between bad and good.

What exactly is it that Adams is pondering with regard to the fact that good comes from evil? For Adams, it illustrates how God works in mysterious ways. Great goods result from evils (even horrendous evils) in ways we do not always know of and perhaps cannot conceive. This is a default ('for all we know') theodicy; one that resolves any alleged problem of evil by writing a blank cheque. It does not address the empirical argument from evil, but ignores it.

Adams's claim (12) is that in wishing away World War I we are also wishing away the existence of those who perished in World War I because in wishing away some state of affairs we are thereby also wishing away any events casually (necessarily) connected to it. Adams has a horse-and-carriage theodicy; evil and good go together like 'a horse and carriage'. You cannot have one without the other. But that things could have been different, that the casual connections Adams sees as inviolable are not so, is what believers and non-believers alike have, for the most part, believed.

'All-things-considered' evaluations, involve taking an attitude towards, or setting a value on, complexes that include both goods and evils.' This is the kind of evaluation Adams thinks we should take to evils generally or at least to those from which a good, like one's own existence, comes. He claims that the result of such evaluations should be 'ambivalence'. Why is it not proper to 'evaluate each event in itself, rejoicing and regretting without regard to the causal connections'—which is in fact what we generally do? There is no ambivalence nested in this response unless one presupposes some kind of 'all things considered' event ontology (and corresponding view about attitude ascription) that bundles conceptually distinct events on the basis of causal—often quite remote—connectedness, and insists that only a single attitude is appropriate to such an event. Adams appears to have an event

ontology that claims casually linked events should not be properly regarded as disparate. The view is reminiscent to Jonathan Edwards' (1703-1758) claim that punishing Adam's progeny for Adam's transgressions is not immoral because God views Adam and his particular descendants as a single person. God's view of personal identity is different than our own.

Thaddeus Metz refutes R.M. Adams by pointing out (40) that 'wishes' do not 'track relations of possibility and necessity.' He is right, but Metz's critique, as well as that of Samantha Vice, does not touch the moral objection to Adams's argument; an argument that astonishingly claims 'love' would prevent us from rationally wishing horrors like World War I never happened. There is such a thing as 'sick love', and the kind of love Adams describes is an instance of it.

III. Scarre

Scarre, like Adams, examines connections between the theological version of the problem of evil and a secular counterpart. He discusses the theological problem that arises from the assumption that the fall of Adam allegedly gives rise to a very great good—the redemption of humanity. If Adam's fall gave rise to such a good perhaps Adam has as much reason to rejoice as to regret the fact of his fall? Scarre quotes *Romans* 6:1: 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?'—to which Paul replies (*Romans* 6:2, 18) 'God forbid!' Similarly, Scarre discusses the case of Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean. Drawing on these cases and others, Scarre argues that even though it is clear that good often comes from evil, it is not the case that we should attempt to increase the amount of evil so that further good may come from it. He shows why further good, at least in the cases he discusses, will not or cannot be the result. The example he gives is the repeated neglect of one's spouse, where neglect in the first instance brought about a greater good through greater understanding and the like.

This argument appears to have important implications for the theological argument from evil since if successful it would refute the

objection that because evil gives rise to good, God should see to it that more occurs. The problem, however, is that Scarre's argument does not appear to work for all (most) cases of moral evil. It works in those cases where an individual seeks to undertake the same kind of bad thing done previously—for example, the serious neglect of a spouse. But Scarre's argument leaves out cases in which the same or another individual pursues evils not in the interest of promoting a greater good, which Scarre points out generally will not work, but which nevertheless result in a greater good. It would seem that God (and the rest of us) should commit evil so that a greater good can come about. It also leaves the problem of natural evil unaccounted for. Given that natural evil may at times result in much good (as well as evil), would not a God interested in and capable of producing the greatest good increase natural evil so that a greater good may result?

Thus, while Scarre's argument seems promising and does successfully refute the *felix culpa* (i.e., 'happy fault') objection applicable to Adam on one significant front, it is another dead end. The well-worn objection to a version of the theodicy that claims evil is necessary for greater goods is sustained. Scarre succeeds in showing why efforts to do evil in order to promote good *must*, in some cases go awry. He also shows why such efforts often do go awry, and why we should not attempt to do evil that good may come of it—that is, to produce a *felix culpa* even where it may be possible to do so. Scarre reminds us of what we already know. 'Happy faults more often reveal themselves in retrospect, when their beneficial results have become apparent, than in prospect, as practicable options for action' (26). But how this addresses the objection, which states that since good comes from evil we should do more evil, is unclear. We can at least try to bring about further good by doing further greater evils even if things do often go awry. God ought to be able to forestall at least some of the kinds of problems that Burns' mouse ran into.[8]

8'The best-laid schemes o' mice an'men / Gangaft agley, / An'lea'e us nought but grief an' pain, / For promis'd joy!' Burns (1785), 'To a Mouse, On Turning Her Up In Her Nest With The Plough'

IV. Galgut and Lacewing

Galgut and Lacewing argue for the necessity of evil in terms of artistic creativity and psychoanalysis respectively. More than that, if right, they show that a psychoanalytic approach to understanding evil, including its positive functions and connection to the good, also rests on a psychoanalytic understanding of the intrinsic nature of human beings. As Lacewing (126) says:

If the psychoanalytically informed reading of the psychology of evil is correct, we can conclude that evil is inevitably a permanent possibility for human beings. Our psychological structure is such that we could not live or function, nor experience one of our most important sources of joy, our loving relationships with others, without mental operations that equally ground our capacity for evil.

There is a direct relevance of the views Galgut and Lacewing exposit towards the question of the positive value of evil. It is worth considering these essays in light of many, if not most, of the others in the volume. To what extent are the psychoanalytic account(s) compatible or otherwise congruous with the very different kinds of views the volume elsewhere presents?

V. Adam Morton

Morton argues that 'evil does have a positive function in low-stake situations but none in high-stake situations,' (2009: xviii). He appears to draw the wrong conclusion from empirical data. He says (128):

There are people who tend to do the right thing under ordinary circumstances … There are also people who do the right thing—or what can be seen retrospectively to have been the right thing—in extreme conditions … These tend to be different people. The good citizens are rarely the moral heroes, and vice versa. So the traditional image of the simply good person is a myth.

While it is true enough that 'the good citizens are rarely the moral heroes', understood to mean that not many good citizens will be moral heroes, it does not seem to be the case that moral heroes are rarely good

citizens—depending of course on what is meant by a good citizen. If so, then Morton's claim that 'these tend to be different people' is correct only when understood as referring to good citizens under a particular interpretation of 'good citizen'. Under a more plausible interpretation, moral heroes will, contrary to Morton's claim, generally be drawn from among those who are good citizens.

There will be the occasional bad ('not-good') person who will rise to the occasion when faced with a moral quandary in extreme circumstances. But what reason is there for thinking that though not many ordinary citizens will act morally in extreme circumstances (a true claim), those that will, will not generally be found among the ordinary good (a false claim)? Morton refers to 'facts' of social psychology—citing (134) Gilbert Harman in support of his view. Neither Morton's skewed notion of the 'good' neighbour, nor Harman's attack on virtue theory can plausibly be sustained by empirical data. If empirical facts do not support Morton's contention, then those who would trust Morton's 'good citizen' as opposed to Morton's unneighbourly renegade in extreme circumstances, would not be so much illogical as simply bad judges of character. The fact that 'some of the possible causes of cooperative behaviour in low-stakes situations are possible barriers to moral insight and moral courage in high-stakes situations' (Morton 134), while certainly true, is no reason to think otherwise.

The gist of Morton's argument rests on his unorthodox notion of the good citizen (or normally good person) as a wimpy and rather unprincipled follower, who obeys rules. The 'bad' citizen is the one who is rebellious, thinks for himself, pays little attention to the small stuff (e.g., is late taking out his trash), but is able to stand up to atrocity. Here is his argument (Morton 134):

My neighbour on the left [bad citizen] is nonconformist and independent-minded. He makes up his own ideas about what to do … So if either of the two neighbours is able to see through the dominant public mood, it is more likely to be him. Small-scale bad behaviour is certainly no guarantee that someone will do the right thing in a crisis,

but some forms of bad behaviour—rebelliousness, lack of deference, inappropriate reflectiveness, insubordination, cantankerousness, a self-willed mentality—are correlated, roughly and weakly, with resistance to large-scale atrocity. And since some of the characteristics that foster small-scale good behaviour also foster spinelessness in the face of atrocity, we have reasons at least to consider the bad neighbour as a possible good resource in a crisis.

Morton's claim here is considerably weaker than above. All he says here is that 'we have reasons at least to consider the bad neighbour as a possible good resource in a crisis.' This is not the same as saying that 'people who do the right thing—or what can be seen retrospectively to have been the right thing—in extreme conditions' are not generally going to be the ordinary 'good citizens.'

Morton's problem is in mistakenly seeing the 'nonconformist and independent-minded' neighbour who shows a 'lack of deference' and so forth as a bad citizen. She may be, but she may not be. Such people make good citizens and may well make fine neighbours—even if they do not often pick up after their dogs. There is no deep psychological schism between being a nonconformist and independent-minded on the one hand, and being a good citizen, neighbour, person on the other. One can be a nonconformist and independent-minded and still return the lawnmower one has borrowed from next door. If I am looking for someone to hide me from the Nazis I will first go to my good neighbour—the one who returned my lawnmower and showed me small kindnesses, and who I know to be independent minded. I will not go, nor should I, to the coarsely abusive racist, non-conforming (in some respects) loud-mouthed boozer; and I would not be making a mistake in reasoning in doing so—even though my choice may turn out to have been a mistake.

One of the implications Morton (134) sees for his argument is 'there may be no such thing as a good person, that is, a person who can be absolutely counted on to do the right thing in all circumstances.' Why would anyone adhere to such a strange account of a good person? Of course good people sometimes do the wrong thing.

VI. Vice

One stock-in-trade response to the argument from evil is the contention that evil is necessary for good; that if there were no evil there could be no good, and if there was no evil we would not be able to recognize or know the good. This response has both an epistemological and a conceptual component. In a novel attempt to refute this old war horse, Samantha Vice draws an analogy between beauty (and what she terms 'vicious aestheticism's' treatment of beauty) on the one hand, and goodness (and an attitude towards goodness that is analogous to vicious aestheticism) on the other. Vice (155-156) says,

My aim is not to draw a relation of necessity or identity between beauty and goodness; rather, it is to draw out certain conceptual and practical similarities … in order to argue for the autonomy of our notion of goodness … Evil … may have accidentally good consequences and it may even be the [necessary] condition for certain virtues, but it has no *intrinsically* positive aspect and it is not essentially connected to our notion of good or value *per se*.

The claim that (i) evil has no intrinsically positive (good?) aspect even though it may be necessary for some virtues, is distinct from both the claims that Vice wants to refute. These are, (ii) Evil is 'essentially connected to our notion of good or value *per se*', and (less explicitly); (iii) without evil we could not recognize or know the good. It is the two latter claims that are central to theodicies that claim that evil is necessary for good. Vice's strategy, by means of analogy, is to show that the Good is intrinsically valuable, and while undoubtedly useful, the Good (like beauty) has no purpose. The question then is how does Vice get from the claim that the Good is intrinsically valuable to claims (ii) and (iii)? On the surface, the claim that good is intrinsically valuable seems compatible with both (ii) and (iii). Here is Vice's (167) answer:

Conceptually and experientially, the notion of value contains that of attraction, of promise, of possibility. Granted this, we can finally see that goodness must be autonomous, independent of the notion of evil, which

conceptually—if not experientially … includes *repulsion,* the opposite of allure.

Vice (167) continues:

From the thought that evil often provides the occasion for good or the chance for it to be recognised, nothing further follows about the value of goodness or its conceptual or metaphysical relations to its opposite. In order for goodness to play its characteristic role in our lives (and this role is not its *purpose)*—of providing ideals, promises of progress, self-enlargement, meaning, imaginative play—it cannot be in any way dependent upon the existence or concept of evil. How can goodness offer these gifts if an element of evil is necessarily—in some way—'attached' to it?

Well, why not? Or rather, how could it 'offer these gifts' if evil was not so 'attached'? Even if 'Evil *in itself, as* evil, does none of these things', (167) it does seem, in this world at any rate, that our ideals, progress, self-enlargement etc., are intrinsically bound up with what is bad. The 'allure' of goodness gets its beckoning shine at least partly from that which we wish to avoid, including our own moral failings. What is an ideal if it cannot be destroyed or disappointed? What is progress if it cannot be set back, and what does it mean to expand the self if the self cannot also be reduced or rendered mean and narrow? It is not enough to say as Vice (168) does that 'Conceptually isolated, in themselves, value attracts, disvalue repulses.' What needs to be shown is that, given our experience, they can be conceptually isolated.

Vice's strategy is to argue not merely for the Good being intrinsically valuable and purposeless (though it can serve purposes), but for the 'autonomy' of the Good. She says that (163) 'beauty—and, I hope to show, goodness—does not require these opposites either to exist as a value, or to be understood and appreciated. Goodness and beauty are, I will say, *autonomous*'. On Vice's account, it is the autonomy of the Good that entails claims (ii) and (iii), and the autonomy of the Good follows from it being intrinsically valuable. However, while the 'autonomy of the Good' may suffice to refute (ii) (on some understanding of what the

autonomy of the Good as well as 'intrinsic value' means), it remains unclear why, on Vice's account, such autonomy would refute (iii). Even if the Good were autonomous (for example, conceptually autonomous from evil), the epistemological claim in (iii) might still hold. That is, it might still be that without evil we could not recognize or know the good.

The most interesting, though for me not altogether persuasive, aspect of Vice's essay, has little to do with her discussion of how the autonomy of goodness is linked to her theses concerning evil. The argument for that link rests on her views about the nature of Good and it is here, I suspect, that most criticism and query will be directed. It has to do instead with how, drawing on Murdoch and Nozick, she connects the autonomy of the good to the grounds of morality: to the question of 'why be moral?' (Her discussion of the relation between goodness and beauty is another independently intriguing part of the essay.) She says (167),

At the end of our philosophical reflections and justifications, we find we cannot be good for any object or reason at all *except that part of what it is to be valuable is that we are attracted towards value*. It is just this attraction and the recognition it offers of the value of the object that are reasons.

The reasons she cites ('we are attracted towards value') seem insufficiently robust (indeed, ethereal and rarefied) to ground morality for the vast majority. They seem insufficient in practice to give people a reason to be moral. Many it seems are not sufficiently attracted towards value. There must be other reasons to be moral as well, including, as Aristotle claims, prudential ones.

Although Widdows' essay is the one most relevant to Vice's own in the volume, it goes unmentioned. This is regrettable because it seems that if Widdows is right then Vice cannot be—at least not completely. Widdows' purpose is to show that on Murdoch's account evil may perform a positive function. Taking into account Murdoch's view of moral failings, through self-deception, egoism etc., as well as of moral striving, a rather different picture of the moral agent and the relation between good and evil emerges. This would be something like the psychoanalytic position that sees the two as integrally related. It is a less lofty position than Vice's

but it is also psychologically and morally reassuring. It offers an explanatory scheme and coherence for certain lived experiences and difficult to explain facts. Furthermore, if Widdows, Galgut and Lacewing are right; that is, if the psychoanalytic view of human nature is substantially right, then it is also closer to the truth.

Though it plays no significant role in her essay, Vice does, I think, have a mistaken notion of 'ethics'. Citing Frankena (1963), and perhaps thinking of Elizabeth Anscombe, Vice (162) says 'it goes against the traditional categories of modern moral philosophy to speak of morality in axiological terms at all. Usually value and morality are taken to be distinct categories; values, it is thought, do not conceptually bring with them the language of "ought", "should", "right" and "wrong" that marks the moral realm.' Whether or not morality is used interchangeably with ethics, this characterization is not accurate. Ethics (or morality) has been conceived of as having two parts. One part is a theory of the 'right'. What is morally right and wrong and why? The other part is a theory of the 'Good'. What is valuable and what is not. The terms 'ought', 'should', 'right', and 'wrong' may belong primarily to theories about what is right and wrong, but that is only one half of the moral realm. In any case, they have their applications in theories of the Good as well. Morality is very much concerned with axiology, and axiological terms, even if particular ethicists have not been.[9]

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