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Towards a transpersonal psychology of evil

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Abstract

I examine the philosophical and psychological roots of moral evil, which I see as a potential that emerges alongside the development of ego consciousness and personality. In this way, ego development gives rise to the possibilities of both chosen (deliberate) and unchosen (characterological and projective) evil. I then examine the ways in which characterological and projective evil may be consequences of damaging socialisation experiences in which there is a failure of empathic concern for the developing child. On this basis, I propose a model in which the various forms of human good and evil can be understood in terms of the two dimensions of (1) empathy vs. egocentrism and (2) benevolence vs. malevolence. The solution to human evil is the encouragement of both empathy (head) and benevolence (heart), together with the capacity for moral effectance (hands). Such development may largely depend upon the role that significant others can play in acting as empathic, benevolent and morally effective "self-centres". Finally I discuss the implications of Ken Wilber's Quadrant Model for our understanding of human evil before proposing a general transpersonal perspective in which moral good is seen in terms of an increasing expansion of empathy and moral concern. From this perspective, moral expansion is a critical feature in the process of self-realisation, which may be viewed simultaneously as the realisation of spirit.

"Evil" is a difficult word. A major problem is that the concept of evil has become unfashionable in intellectual circles, including transpersonal psychology (cf. Daniels, 2000). This is partly because the word has been increasingly commandeered by the horror buffs, the tabloid press and by bishops, religious fundamentalists and ideological fanatics. These people all tend to use the word "evil" in a populist, often careless and sometimes hysterical way that sees evil as an absolute, substantial, perhaps demonic "other" reality that can "possess" certain people and make them absolutely wicked. As a result, these evil persons are perhaps beyond human

understanding and compassion. They are also beyond redemption other than through divine or supernatural intervention, aided perhaps by rites of exorcism, or by conversion to a new set of religious values and beliefs.

In contrast, post-modern thought suggests that moral evaluations are relative and culture-specific. Our judgements of good and evil are made simply on the basis of personal or social values that are, in the final analysis, arbitrary and parochial. The implication is that neither good nor evil exist in any absolute sense - that what is good for one person or one society may be considered evil by another. Although we can morally evaluate actions within the confines of a particular ideological or social system, we cannot justifiably extrapolate our views and opinions to other societies and cultures.

The fundamentalist position is that evil is an absolute and substantial reality. For the relativist, evil is simply a point of view. But do we have to choose between these two polarised positions? Is there a way of accepting the absolute reality of evil, without simply asserting a set of cultural values, or invoking questionable religious or ideological premises, or falling into the common trap of romanticising evil? In other words, can we come to a rational and scientific understanding of evil that does not radically deny its existence? In my view, the answer is "yes". Furthermore, this understanding may also point the way towards some possible solutions to the problem of evil.

I shall begin by explaining that I use the word "evil" principally in its descriptive or adjectival sense. Importantly, this contrasts with the use of "evil" as a noun that refers to some kind of hypothetical reality such as a force, substance, intelligence or supernatural entity. In my view, there is no physical or metaphysical *substance* in evil. "Evil" simply *describes* certain things, whether these are actions, events, persons, values, beliefs, processes or other phenomena. This use of "evil" as a descriptor implies, of course, that a moral judgement is being made. Indeed the word "evil" is reserved as the most extreme term of moral condemnation. "Good" and "evil" therefore only exist as a result of humankind's moral consciousness and our resulting ability to make moral evaluations. We have tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and there is no turning back or away from our moral awareness. Indeed to do so would be to renounce our spiritual heritage.

Despite what the postmodernists may argue, moral evaluations are not simply relative. On the contrary, our moral consciousness makes universal judgements of goodness and evil. In this, I very much follow the American moral philosopher John Kekes in his important book *Facing Evil* (1990). For Kekes, moral judgements are based firstly on the rational assessment of the human value of certain "goods" and "harms". There are certain things that are intrinsically and universally good - the things that all rational persons agree will facilitate a good life. These include life itself, food and shelter, financial security, living in a stable and just society, being loved and respected, and being able to exercise one's talents and capacities. In contrast, "harms" refer to those things that prevent a good life. These include prolonged pain, disease, untimely or unwelcome death, fear, depression, extreme poverty, rape, brutalisation, captivity, contempt and social ostracism.

It is important here to distinguish these simple universal or intrinsic goods from those more complex relative goods that are merely defined or asserted as such by a particular individual, group or ideology. These *relative* goods may include material wealth, fame, racial purity, control of feelings, conformity, or religious devotion. In practice, as I will explain in more detail later, many of the manifest evils in this world are the direct result of promoting and imposing these relative and ideological goods in favour of (and usually at the expense of) simple, universal goods.

The tragedy of human life is that we sometimes suffer harm when we do not deserve it. In many cases, harm is due to contingency, in other words to natural causes such as epidemics, earthquakes, hurricanes, pestilence, or attacks by predators. Although we may refer to these as "natural evils," the occurrence of such natural harmful events has no moral implications. I say this despite the tendency in many societies and in various philosophies, both traditional and new age, to interpret these events as *deserved* - in other words as punishments for moral or religious transgressions, meted out by some supernatural intelligence, or as the inevitable reaping of karmic seeds. This is not to say that human beings do not have the moral capacity and duty to *respond* to such natural events, simply that the events themselves are amoral.

There is also, however, another fundamental type of undeserved harm - that which is inflicted by human beings. This is the essential domain of *moral evil*. Indeed, according to Kekes, moral evil may be *defined* as undeserved harm caused by human beings. At this point it might be objected that the harming of a person is never

deserved or justifiable, and therefore that moral evil occurs whenever people cause harm. However if we have a serial killer in our midst, then it is not only morally justifiable, but also imperative, that we seek to apprehend this individual and to restrict his or her freedom to roam the streets and to exercise this particular talent. But in saying that the serial killer deserves to be harmed by imprisonment we must be clear about the principles by which we morally justify this action. If we are not very careful then the idea of deserved harm can easily become a platform for justifying revenge and for all manner of disproportionate, undeserved harm - in other words, it can become a platform for evil.

Kekes is clear that the only possible moral justification for inflicting harm is that it serves the interests of morality, defined as a commitment to human welfare¹. However, Kekes is rather broad in his understanding of deserved harm, seeming, for example, to justify the punishment of offenders for punishment's sake. I offer a more specific and perhaps less controversial formulation that is, I believe, generally consistent with Kekes' main agenda. In my view deserved or justifiable harm may be defined as *the minimum harm that prevents a greater undeserved harm*. According to this definition it is morally justifiable to imprison offenders if their presence in the community would constitute a greater threat of undeserved harm to themselves or others. In contrast, it is not morally justifiable to execute a petty thief. All punishment must be reasonable and proportionate.

One important consequence of distinguishing between the concepts of deserved and undeserved harm is that it reveals that there are certain actions for which there can *never* be any valid moral justification. This is because they cannot possibly prevent a greater undeserved harm. These actions are, in other words, absolutely and undeniably evil. They include rape, the physical and sexual abuse of children, mutilation and torture. In contrast, certain forms of theft and killing are, in my opinion, sometimes morally justifiable (for example the theft of food for the starving, or of killing in defence of self or others).

It will be noted that in the definition of moral evil as "undeserved harm caused by people," there is no reference to the *conscious intention, choice or decision* to cause harm. This is, in fact, a most important and deliberate omission. It is commonly assumed that an action is morally good or evil only if the person has chosen to

¹ Many people would wish to include animal welfare in this definition, and I shall briefly return to this issue later.

perform it. However, as Kekes effectively demonstrates, much moral evil is, in fact, *unchosen*. Kekes is referring here not so much to accidental harm, such as the unintentional shooting of someone while cleaning a firearm, but rather to evil that results from harmful personal characteristics or *vices* such as selfishness, jealousy, cowardice, cruelty, or avarice. People with these vices do not necessarily *choose* consciously to enact evil, rather their behaviour follows inevitably from their flawed character structure.

At this point, we have begun to step beyond a purely philosophical analysis to a consideration of the psychological causes of evil. What motivates people to commit evil? How is character formed? Are some people fundamentally evil? If so, are they born evil, or do they become evil? Can we prevent evil, or rehabilitate its perpetrators?

I shall begin with the question: "When do human beings become capable of evil?" The answer, which follows from our definition of moral evil, is as soon as the individual is capable of causing undeserved harm. Babies are, in my experience, harmless and totally vulnerable beings. I have never seen an evil baby, except in the distorted imaginations of Hollywood filmmakers. On the other hand, as many of us can attest, quite young children are capable of violent destructive tantrums and of inflicting undeserved pain and suffering on animals and siblings. At this point, it becomes meaningful to understand their actions as morally wrong ("evil" is too extreme in most cases). In fact it is vital that we see their actions in this way. Only by so doing will we seek to stop the present harm, prevent its reoccurrence, and take the necessary steps to begin to inculcate moral consciousness in the child.

The reality seems to be that children become capable of moral evil (and good) at precisely the time when ego consciousness and the sense of self are starting to emerge. This enables moral good and evil to be considered primarily as ego functions and as character traits (or, virtues and vices) that may be encouraged or discouraged in the child's developing personality. Although good and evil exist as potentialities within every infant, these potentialities become actualities only with the emergence of ego consciousness and the development of character traits. To the extent that neither animals nor babies possess a sense of self, they are amoral beings. They have a nature but no character. They experience unconscious urgings but have no capacity for conscious understanding or reflection. They are therefore capable of neither unchosen (characterological) nor chosen (deliberate) moral evil.

For the same reason, human nature and the human unconscious must be considered to be fundamentally amoral - in themselves neither good nor evil. The capacity for human aggression is undoubtedly innate, as it is in many animals. In animals, for the reasons outlined, aggression has no moral status whereas, in humans, it may be used for either good or evil. Aggression becomes morally evil when it is either a conscious choice, or a character trait that produces undeserved harm - either chosen or unchosen evil. Freud was partly right when he postulated the *Thanatos* instinct (1920) - human beings do have an innate capacity for evil and destructiveness. But he was wrong to argue that *Thanatos* is an evil and destructive drive within the unconscious. On the contrary, our innate capacity for evil, and also for good, is a consequence of the human species' programming to develop ego consciousness and character.

In contrast to Freud's view of the unconscious, I find Jung's formulations (e.g., 1966) to be much more valuable and instructive. For Jung, the unconscious can be dangerous, but it is not basically evil or destructive. However, there is one important functional component of the unconscious that, in certain circumstances, can become a source for much of the evil that human beings create in the world. This component is the *shadow*. According to Jung, the shadow is the dark complement of the consciously expressed personality, or *persona*. The shadow represents those personal qualities and characteristics that are unacceptable to the ego, which consequently defends against them. The most important of these ego defences are repression and projection. When we repress, the ego pushes the unacceptable tendencies down into the unconscious, where they remain as shameful personal secrets. Such repression requires psychic energy and may therefore cause us harm as a consequence of the general depletion in our psychological reserves. Repression can also harm us because the shadow may contain unacknowledged and unexpressed positive and beneficial qualities such as the capacity for joy, love and creativity.

Much more dangerous and potentially evil, however, is the defence mechanism of *projection*. With projection, the unacceptable shadow characteristics are cast out from the self and are perceived as being located in something external - usually in other people. Thus, for example, our own unacknowledged anger, hatred, jealousy, selfishness or lust are falsely experienced as qualities possessed by another person or group. This unconscious phantasized projection will generally cause a

corresponding conscious moral devaluation of its object, which in turn leads us to behave towards the innocent person or group in harmful ways. In practice this may range from the comparatively minor damage caused by a snub or hurtful comment to the major evils of rape, torture, murder and ethnic cleansing.

According to Jung, this results from the fact that the shadow both complements and compensates for the conscious persona. Therefore to the extent that our persona is evaluated as "good," the shadow will be apprehended as evil. If this "evil" shadow is then projected onto others, these people will be defined and experienced as our moral enemy and we will thereby feel consciously justified in the harm that we might cause them, which is cleverly interpreted by the ego as *deserved harm*. In this way evil (undeserved harm) is seen as good (deserved harm). Such is the moral double-talk that projection can produce.

In identifying an important source of human evil with the unconscious shadow, this does not contradict the view expressed earlier that the capacity for evil develops alongside the emergence of ego consciousness. This is because the shadow is itself a by-product of conscious personality development. The shadow is thus formed from those characteristics of the whole self that cannot be accepted into the conscious persona. Because these characteristics are unacceptable to consciousness, they become defended against and submerged into the unconscious, where they constellate together as the shadow system.

However, in addition to the evil that may be caused by unconscious shadow projections we also need, as Kekes (1990), M. Scott Peck (1997) and Erich Fromm (e.g., 1947, 1964, 1973) have all importantly recognised, to acknowledge the reality of *character evil*. In this, it is the *ego-persona* system that is the principal, direct cause of evil, not the shadow. In other words, the individual develops a sense of self and a conscious personality structure that is itself evil, in the sense that it becomes the source of undeserved harm to self or others. In this way we develop character traits that are vicious, in the literal sense that they are full of vice.

How is such a vicious development of the self possible? The simple answer, of course, is that personality development is the result of socialisation and enculturation. By introjecting the behaviours, views, values, expectations and opinions of others, communicated via rewards and punishment, behavioural example, language, ideology and cultural mores, the child acquires a socialised self-

system, persona, and self-concept. If these introjects are themselves vicious, then the child will inevitably develop a potentially evil-producing character structure. If brought up in a damaging, dysfunctional family or society where violence, spite, greed and selfishness are both modelled and encouraged, or in which it is considered normal and acceptable to exhibit sexist and racist attitudes, children will develop a self-system that incorporates and expresses these harmful characteristics. The resulting selves will cause evil for the same reason that dogs bark - it is simply what they do. Moreover when such people themselves come into a position where they may influence the next generation, whether as parents, teachers or role models, then the whole vicious, damaging circle is repeated.

According to Firman & Gila (1997), in their excellent book *The Primal Wound*, although this damaging process of socialisation may be typical, it is not inevitable or natural, but represents a basic failure of empathic concern for the developing child that often results in neglect and abuse. They argue that children are traumatised into developing a *false self*, or *survival personality*, because of the failure of adult caretakers to empathise with and mirror accurately the child's own experience. In this way, the child is unable to acquire an authentic self-system, based on reflected knowledge and acceptance of its own total Being. In its place, the child develops a false-self system, based upon adapting to the non-empathic behaviours, values and opinions of the caretakers.

In this failure to empathise with the child's experience, the adult treats the child as an object or thing rather than as a subject or person. In Martin Buber's terms (1970) the child becomes an *It* rather than a *Thou* and therefore is seen as something to be moulded according to the wishes and views of the adult. Of course parents and teachers must set limits on children's behaviour, and provide examples of good and effective behaviour. But these adult interventions must always be led by a deep understanding of the child's true needs and experience; in other words on deep empathy with the child. This kind of "good-enough" parenting, which leads to the development of authentic selfhood, is very different from the damaging, wounding manipulation caused by the failure to empathise with the child's experience.

According to Carl Rogers (e.g., 1959), adults achieve this manipulative moulding through their conditional love and conditional approval of the child. In this way the child gradually learns how it must think, feel and behave in order to receive the love and approval of its parents and other significant figures. These imposed "conditions

of worth" are eventually incorporated into the child's self-concept and thereby become characteristic features of its *persona*, or *survival personality*. The remedy for this damaging process, according to Rogers is for the adult's attitude to the child to be based on unconditional love or unconditional approval, which Rogers calls "unconditional positive regard". Only if love and respect are unconditional will the child experience a psychological and social atmosphere in which it is possible and safe to become what he or she truly is.

In my view, the failures of empathy and unconditional love are not simply features of the primal wounding of the child, but are general characteristics of the psychology of evil. Thus moral evil results when people treat others (or themselves) as things or objects, or when there is a failure of concern for their welfare. If we truly empathise with people, treating each person as a *Thou*, rather than an *It*, and if we simultaneously show them moral regard and concern, then personal moral evil (or, *character evil*) is simply not possible. If either of these conditions is not met, then various kinds of moral evil can occur.

This argument is illustrated in Figure 1. Here I distinguish firstly between empathy and egocentrism. In empathy, there is understanding of the experience and needs of another (or of the larger reality of the whole Self), whereas from an egocentric or *narcissistic* position, there is awareness only of one's own limited egoic experience and needs. Secondly, I distinguish between benevolence and malevolence. Benevolence is essentially having good will towards oneself or others, wishing them well, and showing concern for their welfare. Malevolence is ill will, or wishing someone harm. The diagram recognises that egocentrism and empathy, and benevolence and malevolence, can exist in varying degrees. Also, importantly, that these two dimensions seem to be more or less independent. In other words, a high degree of empathy can coexist with either benevolence or malevolence. The various combinations and degrees of egocentrism-empathy and benevolence-malevolence give rise to different potentials for good and evil. If there is both empathy and benevolence, then moral good is the likely outcome, whether expressed as compassionate action, care, sympathy, or interest in others. If both egocentrism and malevolence predominate, then we have the potential for the evils of neglect, antipathy, abuse and enmity.

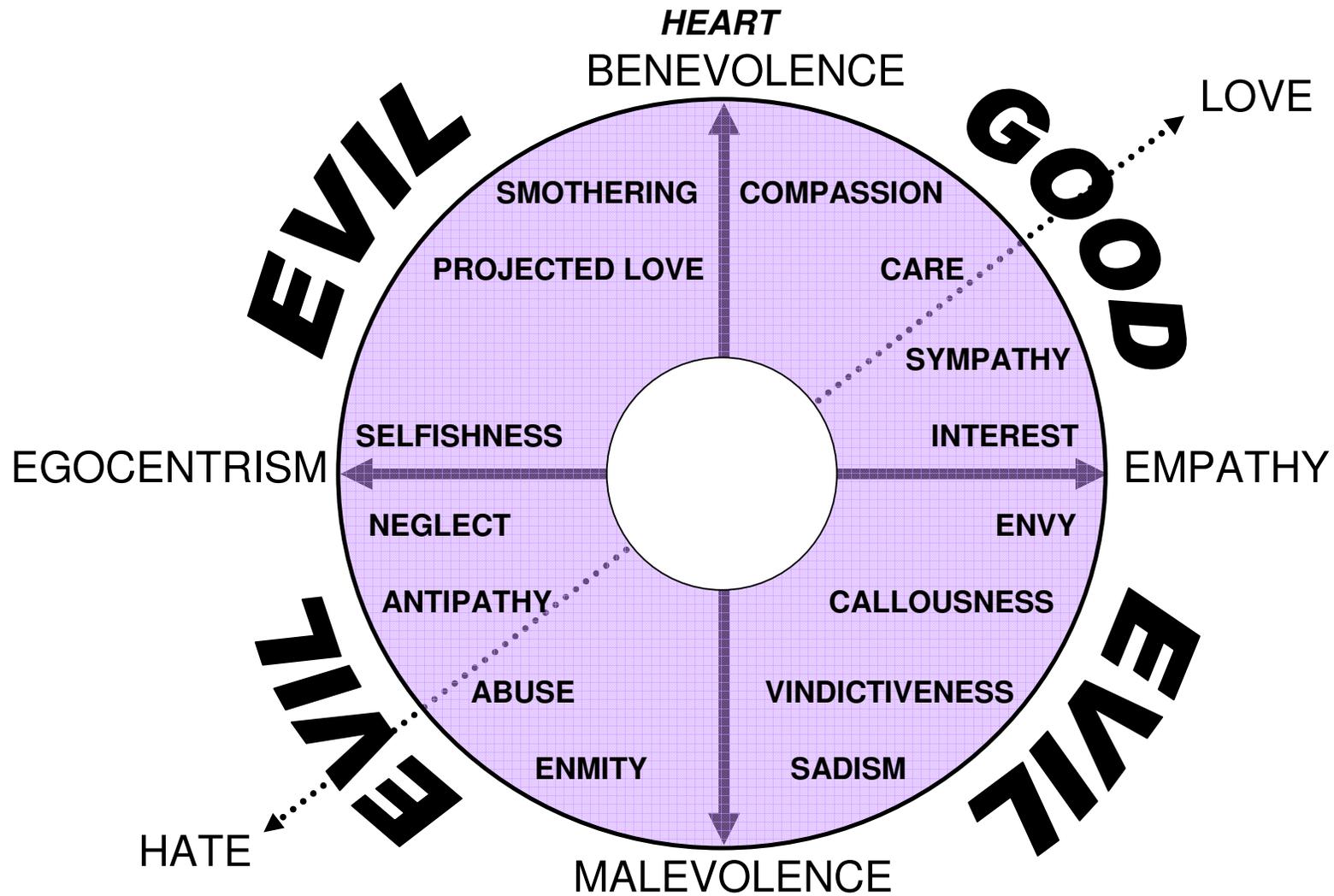


Figure 1: The Wheel of Virtue and Vice

Other kinds of evil are possible, however, when egocentrism is combined with benevolence, or empathy with malevolence. Consider, for example, the infatuated lover or smothering parent who, despite what may be intense feelings of good will and concern for the other, is unaware of the actual experience of their partner or child and instead projects their own needs onto the relationship. Such narcissistic projection is inherently damaging to the other person because it is non-empathic and distorting. Then there are those forms of evil in which the person seems to understand certain aspects of another's experience, but who is malevolently envious, or who seems to delight in the other's suffering. In sadism, for example, the enjoyment would appear to be all the more delicious precisely because the sadist is able to empathise with the pain of the victim. There would be no point to sadism if the victim were an *actual* object that could not experience the terror and suffering - for example if she or he became unconscious. Although it is true that the sadist is almost certainly unaware of the larger reality of the victim's experience (in other words, the sadist empathises only with the immediate pain), sadism is perhaps not so much a failure of empathy as of compassion. Thus in the sadistic trance there is no moral concern whatsoever for the victim, who becomes simply the subject-object of the perpetrator's desires.

Although I have emphasised the dimensions of empathy-egocentrism and benevolence-malevolence in determining the potentialities for good and evil, an additional factor in the *manifestation* of these potentials is personal effectance, or the power to act. In practice a person may be both empathic and benevolent, but may lack the power, capacity or skill to effect beneficial action. Similarly, a person may be non-empathic and malevolent, but is fortunately prevented from engaging in evil action through personal weakness or by strong social controls.

According to this model, the basic solution to character evil lies in the development of empathy and benevolence, or the *head* and the *heart*. In order to promote moral good, we also need to encourage personal effectiveness and a *hands-on* approach in our moral dealings with other people. To do these things, we need to replace the vicious circle of non-empathic primal wounding and malevolent socialisation with a virtuous circle of empathic responding, benevolence and moral

effectance. To see how this may be done, we need to understand more clearly the function of *significant others* in creating and defining the self. Heinz Kohut (1977) calls these significant others "selfobjects" and psychosynthesis refers to them as "unifying centres". In objects relations theory they are known simply as "objects". In this discussion I shall use the term "self-centre" to refer to these defining and unifying selfobjects.

Self-centres are often individual people, but they also include groups, norms, customs, values, roles, beliefs, ideologies and worldviews. Since the self exists, and can exist, only in relationship, these self-centres reflect and re-present the individual's experience, and in this way serve to define and maintain the self-system. Because they are fundamental to the self's very existence, representational images of external self-centres are incorporated psychologically and thereby come to function as *internal centres* with which the subjective self maintains an interior relationship. Thus, for example, we may form internal images of the loving carer or strict headteacher that become abiding reassuring or fearful presences, and with whom we maintain an inner, often unspoken dialogue. Then there are also the relationships we have with other internalised self-centres, such as our inner representations of the values, roles, beliefs and ideologies that have influenced us throughout our lives. In this way, we may, for example, engage in inner debates with our conscience, or experience conflict with our internalised sexual or ethnic identities.

The assumption in all this is that if external self-centres are distorting, damaging or evil, they will produce distorted self-systems and damaged or evil characters. We actually know quite a lot about the ways in which manifest evil results from people's relationships to significant others that are either non-empathic or malevolent, or both. There is extensive research, for example, on the traumatising and damaging effects of inadequate or abusive parenting, or of growing up in an emotionally disturbed and conflicted family environment. Social psychological studies have also shown that people are less likely to act to help a victim when they observe other people who fail to act, and will themselves inflict what they believe to be life-threatening pain when ordered to do so by someone in authority. Furthermore, members of groups will conform to harmful behaviours and, when occupying a social role that permits actions

that harm others, people will often act in ways that fulfil this malevolent role. Here the actions of others, or the authority of the leader, or group ties, or a social role, act as non-empathic or malevolent self-centres in relation to which the self becomes seemingly incapable of empathic and benevolent moral action.

Another important consideration in this is the learned and progressive nature of human evil. When people cause harm, their behaviour can become an acquired habit, learned simply by doing. In his book *The Roots of Evil*, Ervin Staub (1989) has shown that a pattern of harm-doing often starts out in relatively minor forms, such as name calling or ostracism. However, when perpetrators begin to harm people in these ways, then further harm becomes more likely and often more extreme. Sadistic killers, for example, often have a history of inflicting pain to animals when children, from which they gradually progress to the killing of animals and eventually to murder, often of an increasingly horrific nature. In the Nazi Holocaust there was a similarly evil progression from the boycotting of Jewish businesses to the eventual attempt at the Final Solution in the death camps of Auschwitz, Dachau and Treblinka. As Staub points out, one of the most effective ways in which we can, in practice, prevent great evil is by speaking or acting against the smaller evils that precede it. Evil, it seems, can be nipped in the bud. Social psychological studies have shown, for example, that bystanders - the witnesses of evil - can themselves have tremendous influence for good or ill, depending upon whether or not they are prepared to take appropriate action in times of crisis. These bystanders may be either individuals witnessing an attack in the street, or the international community that witnesses large-scale brutalisation or ethnic cleansing. All this confirms the point made earlier concerning the need for a hands-on approach to the problem of evil.

In the processes whereby human evil becomes possible, we should not underestimate the significance of social norms, customs, values, beliefs, myths, and religious or political ideologies. As we have seen, these provide important self-centres in relation to which personalities are created and maintained. If we understand evil as the causing of undeserved harm then it is undeniable that certain of these norms, customs and so on are themselves evil because they encourage, justify or condone undeserved harm. By way of example, we may note the following:

- *Social norms* such as ignoring the starving beggar in the street
- *Customs* such as female circumcision or murder of female offspring at birth
- *Values* of male sexual conquest or of personal success at any cost
- *Beliefs* such as the just world view that victims of circumstance have deserved their fate
- *Myths* of racial or ethnic superiority
- *Religious doctrines* such as that women or black people have no soul
- *Political ideologies* that are fascist, despotic or that permit slavery

A characteristic feature of many of these evil systems of valuation, belief or practice is their moral distinction between in-groups and out-groups, between "us" and "them". Moral concern, or benevolence, is restricted to our family, tribe, nation or race, whereas outsiders and strangers are seen as potential threats or enemies that deserve to be harmed, perhaps simply because they are different, or because of perceived harms they have caused us in the past.

Not only is the enemy the legitimate object of conscious malevolence, but he or she also becomes the appropriate target of unconscious shadow projections, both personal and collective. In this way undeserved harmful action towards our enemy is often due to a complex mix of both conscious and unconscious malevolent motives. As mentioned earlier, one of the most pernicious aspects of this process is the way in which these evil value systems are themselves used to justify morally the harm done to our enemies. Thus the enemy is defined as evil and therefore it is seen as not only justifiable but also our moral duty to inflict the harm we cause, even to the point of genocide. The tragic and devastating irony of this, as history clearly attests, is that moral and religious systems are themselves among the greatest causes of human evil.

Ervin Staub's (1989) analysis of human evil demonstrates that the scapegoating and harming of enemies is particularly likely to occur in conditions of hardship, threat, stress and frustration. These difficult conditions may be economic, personal or social.

A common feature, however, is that there is a perceived attack on the sense of self. This assault on the self and self-concept leads to a response that Heinz Kohut (1978) calls "narcissistic rage" and to a lust for revenge. At such times our fury may be so powerful and destructive that we become oblivious even to our own welfare. The threat to which we are responding in this narcissistic rage is that to our very existence. Something fundamental to whom we are has been violated and we respond with a primitive fury that according to Firman & Gila (1997) reveals the depths and damage of our own primal wounding and our fear of non-being.

It is important to realise that this kind of narcissistic rage can occur in response to a threat to *anything* that is central to the self, in other words to any of the self-centres that define and maintain the self-system. These may be our own body, our friends or family, our gender or ethnicity, our nation, our heartfelt values, our religious and political beliefs, or our ideals and heroes. In this rage our motivation is both to dissociate from the wounding pain to the self and to destroy the enemy who violates us in this way.

In the personal sphere we may note not only the recent phenomenon of "road rage," but also the profound rage often experienced by those whose bodies have been violated, whether by disfigurement, illness or rape. In the political arena, as Staub and others have shown, we may also see how ethnic cleansing, genocide and war are often the result of a profound wounding to the self-concept of a group or nation, whether current or historical. At these times, as for example in the Germany of the 1930s, people may look to a strong leader to provide a stable centre in relation to whom the violated sense of shared identity may be recovered. As is well understood by political analysts, a country will generally rally around its leaders when threatened with attack, no matter how unpopular these leaders may have previously been. Astute leaders will then commonly exploit this phenomenon by directing the people's desire for revenge towards an appropriate target, whether this is the actual aggressor or a convenient scapegoat.

What, then, is the solution to human evil? Because the issue is so complex there can be no simple or single response to this question. There is certainly no final

answer communicated to us from a transcendent source and we have no alternative but to struggle as human beings, as *whole* beings, with the reality of our own evil. However, the analysis I have outlined goes some way to providing at least partial answers. Perhaps the most important implication is the centrality of empathy and benevolence in the moral equation, and of the need for a relationship with external and internal self-centres that represent and express these qualities, thereby enabling the self to experience its connection to the total reality of its Being. In practice, such empathic and benevolent self-centres may include:

- Significant others such as empathic and benevolent parents, friends, mentors, therapists, or spiritual teachers
- Universal moral values and principles.
- Religious, social and political ideologies that express values of universal empathy and benevolence
- Internal archetypal images of empathy and benevolence, such as the Realised Self, Buddha, Christ, the Virgin Mary, Krishna, God or Goddess.
- For those who have been able to discover these within the self, perhaps as a result of spiritual practice, there are also the soul, which I understand as the benevolent spiritual *heart*, and the Transcendent Witness, or our empathic spiritual *head*.

Only in relation to these empathic and benevolent self-centres, can the self begin the process of healing the damage caused by the influence of non-empathic and malevolent centres. As is suggested above, such healing can be viewed as a process of self-knowledge and self-realisation, an important component of which is the acknowledgement and integration of the personal and collective shadow. This process may involve personal therapy, the further development of moral consciousness, fundamental changes in relationships or in religious or political affiliation, or spiritual practice of one kind or another.

It is also important, however, not to see the phenomenon of evil as a purely personal or psychological problem. This would open us up to the charge of psychologism. Ken Wilber's quadrant model (e.g., Wilber, 1995, 1999) provides one important way forward in this respect. According to Wilber it is important to recognise both the interior-exterior and the individual-collective aspects of any phenomenon. If we apply this to the phenomenon of evil, then we might come up with something like that illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. The Quadrants of Good & Evil

	INTERIOR	EXTERIOR
INDIVIDUAL	<hr/> Self & identity Moral development Psychotherapy Meditation & spirituality <hr/>	<hr/> Drug treatment Behaviour therapy Token economy Psychosurgery <hr/>
COLLECTIVE	<hr/> Myths Cultural values Ideology and religion World View <hr/>	<hr/> Laws and customs Institutions Language and propaganda Economic system <hr/>

Firstly, we have the individual-interior quadrant. This is the quadrant of inner psychological experience. In relation to morality and evil it is the quadrant of moral and spiritual consciousness, of empathic awareness, of the development of moral judgement, character and personality, and of psychotherapy and self-realisation. One of the ways in which we can seek to promote human goodness and tackle moral evil is by working directly on these aspects of our Being. For many people, especially psychologists and psychotherapists, this may seem the most important quadrant to address. However, the important implication of Wilber's quadrant model is the need to examine also the other three perspectives.

In the exterior-individual quadrant we look at individuals from the outside and respond to their external behaviours. In the moral sphere, this is the quadrant that addresses the question of how we should attempt to control the person who is behaving in an evil fashion, and how we might seek to replace antisocial with prosocial behaviour. This quadrant seeks external solutions to individual evil, such as restraint or imprisonment, the imposition of training programmes or regimes of reward and punishment, or the use of medication or psychosurgery to control aggressive behaviour.

Next we have the interior-collective quadrant. Here we look at groups, societies and cultures from the perspective of the insider who has a shared understanding. In terms of morality, this is the quadrant of cultural values, beliefs, myths, ideologies and worldviews. As we have seen, many of these aspects of collective experience are manifestly evil and the demands of morality require that they should change. However, because this is a quadrant of interior experience, it is not possible to alter this from the outside, or to impose alternative, morally better perspectives in any direct way. Instead, change must develop from the inside, perhaps as a result of the efforts of enlightened and brave members of the community who dare to challenge the dominant evil consensus.

Finally, there is the exterior-collective quadrant. This refers to those social structures that are observable from the outside. These include laws and customs, institutions, the use of language to maintain shared perspectives or as a means of propaganda, and the economic system. In many cases, these social structures support a system that is itself evil or provide the social context in which evil is nurtured. Although it may be hard to break customs or change the way in which people use language, governments do have powers to propagandise, to pass laws, to reform institutions and to modify the economic system. In fact this is perhaps the most immediate and direct way in which evil can be tackled within society. Thus, for example, the establishment in Britain of the National Health Service and the introduction of laws against racial and sexual discrimination are undoubted victories for good. Equally, however, governments can, and often do, use their powers for evil, for example in the passing of the Nuremberg Laws defining the status of Jews in Nazi

Germany. Another important element in the exterior-collective approach to evil, as Ervin Staub's careful analysis has shown, is the importance of eliminating the social conditions that produce hardship, stress and frustration since these are the conditions in which evil can propagate. Although once again this may be in the hands of those with political power, it is not only governments who have the ability to instigate changes in social structures. In this respect we should not underestimate the power of pressure groups, the media and political commentators. Neither also, should we forget that we all also live in micro-societies such as family groups, clubs and organisations in which many of us have the power to bring about significant social change, either for good or ill.

My purpose in identifying and describing these quadrants is to emphasise that the solution to evil should ideally work on all four quadrants. It is not enough to enact laws if we do not also attend to people's values and beliefs. Nor can we expect evil to disappear in the world by devoting ourselves to a life of purely personal development, whether through psychotherapy or spiritual discipline, if in so doing we ignore urgent social and political realities such as suffering and injustice. And, of course, it will never be sufficient to rely solely on an approach that simply advocates locking up or punishing offenders or subjecting them to psychological or medical treatment.

The mistake entailed in each of these perspectives is that of ignoring the value and importance of the others. The significance of each is its own unique contribution to the total picture, which must be seen from an all-quadrant perspective. There is still much work to be done towards understanding the ways in which development occurs *within* each quadrant. However, according to Wilber, there are in fact very close parallels between the evolutionary patterns or waves of development that may be seen in each quadrant. At its simplest, there seems to be a general three-stage evolution from the prepersonal and presocial, to the personal and social, to the transpersonal and spiritual. Wilber (1999) provides more detailed and extensive analyses of these common evolutionary patterns.

I want to end by exploring briefly the implications of this evolutionary and transpersonal perspective for our understanding of moral development and of the

nature of good and evil. I have argued that moral action depends upon the development of empathy and benevolence, of *head* and *heart*.

In simple terms, empathy is present whenever a person moves beyond an egocentric perspective to an understanding of the experiences of others (or of the larger self). Yet empathy may have a lesser or a greater span. Thus some people may be able to empathise only with their immediate family or friends, others also with members of their own gender or peer group, or with those who share the same nationality or ethnicity. Perhaps a minority is capable of extending the capacity for empathy to all people. Here we see empathy as something that may *expand* during the course of development in a way that parallels the general evolutionary movement from individual-egocentric to personal-social to global-transpersonal. In a similar way we can perhaps also understand the development of benevolence as involving an increase in moral span, in other words an expansion in the number and range of people for whom we show moral concern and whom we consider as a *Thou* rather than an *It*. At the highest levels of transpersonal development, as Wilber (e.g., 1999, Chart 5c) argues, moral consideration may extend beyond the human realm to encompass all sentient beings or even the whole of reality.

From this transpersonal perspective, good is brought into the world and evil is countered through the development of our human capacity for moral consciousness, as expressed in all four of Wilber's quadrants. Yet consciousness is not enough, for we also need the ability and willingness to act directly and effectively in accordance with our moral consciousness. In other words, we also need skilful and willing *hands*. Good and evil arise in the human head and heart, and our moral destiny is literally in our own hands. There is no other solution. Evil is not a mysterious, unknowable, demonic reality that possesses or infects us. Evil is a part of the human equation. It is as familiar to us as our own face. Indeed it *is* the human face, as seen at our most non-empathic, malevolent or ineffectual moments. Moral evil arises as a result of our human capacity for ego-consciousness and personal being. *It* exists because *we* exist. The radical solution to evil can only be for human consciousness in all its manifestations to develop beyond egocentrism and the wounded self-system towards a truly transpersonal foundation based upon an ever-expanding empathy and

benevolence, and an increasing capacity to act according to our conscience. In this way we pave the way for the true realisation of the Self - in the sense of the *whole* person connected to the *whole* of reality. In my opinion such realisation of the Self is simultaneously the realisation of the human spirit. Indeed it is this spirit, I believe, that is the deep source of our moral consciousness and the true Ground of empathy and benevolence.

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