

DIVERSE READINGS OF EVIL: PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

I. A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

When someone makes an assertion about something, it is always legitimate to respond with the following question: "Why do you say that? What is the ground of your assertion? What is the cause, the motive, the reason that underlies your act of claiming what you are presently claiming?"

To say that such a response is always legitimate is not to say it is always appropriate. Quite rightly, it would strike most of us as dullwitted, pedantic, or at least a bit odd for someone habitually to ask "Why do you say that?" in response to such assertions as "Dinner is ready," "Fire," and "I love you." It is always legitimate to pursue the value of truth; but since truth is neither the only value and nor invariably the dominant value, it is not always appropriate to do so.

Nonetheless, there are contexts in which untrammelled and single-minded pursuit of the truth is not just legitimate but also appropriate, and a convention of Christian theologians surely is one of them. Moreover, one useful tactic in an overall strategy of truth-seeking is for us as Christian theologians energetically to press the "why" question in response to our own assertions. And, drawing closer to our central topic, I suggest that it can be quite helpful for us to press that question regarding our own pronouncements about good and evil. Clarifying the grounds of our assertions about such basic matters can be illuminating in itself, and it can provide important clues about the grounds of our other claims as well.

Now, in most of our discourse as Christians and much of our discourse even as theologians, we attribute goodness and evil without making explicit the grounds on which those attributions rest. We often say such things as "God is good"; less often, such things as "By virtue of the cosmic evidence I declare that God is good." "Creation essentially is in no way evil" is a more routine affirmation than "The biblical witness moves me to profess that creation essentially is in no way evil." "Jesus is the good shepherd" is a commonplace; less common, "Because I am a believing Christian, I acclaim Jesus as the good shepherd." Similarly, in some of our most traditional and familiar direct characterizations of good and evil we do not spell out the bases of those characterizations: "Good is what is to be sought, and evil is what is to be avoided"; "Evil is the absence of good"; "Evil is the rejection of God." The present point is not that sometimes we cannot articulate the grounds of our assertions about good and evil; rather, it is simply that most of the time we do not.

There is, however, a deeper level to the matter. For sometimes, moved by the need to justify or defend our assertions, whether about good and evil or about anything else, we do indeed articulate something of their grounds. We make explicit such factors as cosmic evidence, the biblical witness, and the constant tradition of Christian belief. But only infrequently does this effort take us to the point of expressing the most basic foundational features of those grounds, the most fundamental properties they possess precisely as grounds.¹ Ordinarily we address our explanatory or apologetic tasks by spelling out only those features of our assertions' grounds which seem necessary to meet a present need, rather than going further and attempting to situate those grounds clearly within the explicit framework of some exhaustive set of basic foundational alternatives. As earlier, the present point is not that we cannot take the further step; it is just that normally we do not.

So what? Why is it significant that frequently we make assertions about good and evil without articulating the grounds of those assertions? What difference does it make that even when we do express certain features of those grounds, our effort seldom extends to the most basic foundational features? My response has four main steps.

First of all, I would argue that the concrete meaning of any assertion a person makes is inevitably constituted in part by the underpinning on which the assertion depends.² Concretely, what I mean includes not just what I say but also why I say it; and the same is true for you. Not as a mere hypothetical proposition but as an actual claim, any assertion one makes has a meaning that always embraces not just an explicit content but also an initially implicit ground. Further, the assertion's concrete meaning embodies the ground in its totality as ground. It incorporates the ground not only in the latter's most obvious foundational aspects but also in its most basic ones. Still further, the concrete meaning incorporates the ground whether the latter eventually is made wholly explicit, or only partly explicit, or left entirely implicit. Why one asserts something is unavoidably part of the full meaning of one's asserting it, regardless of whether or how fully one spells out that *why* for anyone else or, indeed, even for oneself.

Secondly, I suggest that whenever we hear another person say something about a familiar topic, we are prone to assume that we adequately grasp the concrete meaning of her statement. Even when the other person does not spell

¹I hasten to point out that my terminology here and throughout this essay should not be taken as indicating my adoption of the "foundationalist" (as distinct from "antifoundationalist") stance, currently discussed (and often pejoratively characterized) in the journals, that there is some basic principle or truth upon which all (other) truths ultimately rest. The question I am raising here is a broader and more basic one, namely, why we make the assertions we make. The "foundationalist" and "antifoundationalist" stances both are answers, albeit diverse ones, to that question.

²I adjudge this the most basic claim in the present essay, and perhaps the most controversial one as well.

out her statement's ground, we are spontaneously inclined to think we know just what she has in mind—not only what she intends but also why she intends it, not just her statement's explicit content but its implicit ground as well. In particular, we are apt to suppose that whenever another person makes a statement that strikes us as correct (for example, "Michael Vertin is a wonderful person"), the concrete meaning of her statement is virtually identical with the concrete meaning it would have if we ourselves made it. And we are apt to suppose that whenever another person makes a statement that strikes us as mistaken (for example, "Michael Vertin is a scoundrel"), the concrete meaning of her statement is wholly opposed to the concrete meaning of the statement we ourselves would make on the same topic.

Thirdly, whenever we think that we adequately understand what another person concretely means, but the ground of the other person's statement remains implicit, in fact our understanding is liable to be defective in either of at least two ways. At a minimum, even if our understanding happens to be correct, that correctness is difficult to confirm. For we cannot be certain we grasp the concrete meaning of what another person says unless we are certain why she says it; and we can't be certain why she says it if the ground of her statement is not made explicit. More seriously, however, our understanding is susceptible to being incorrect. For it is hazardous to suppose that similar statements indicate virtually identical concrete meanings. Similar statements can have grounds that are quite opposed, at least in their most basic foundational aspects. (For example, two people might have diametrically different grounds for asserting that Michael Vertin is a wonderful person). Conversely, it is hazardous to suppose that opposed statements indicate wholly opposed concrete meanings. Opposed statements can have grounds that are quite similar, at least in their most basic foundational aspects. (For example, two people might disagree over whether Michael Vertin is a scoundrel but nonetheless appeal to the same basic type of ground.) What makes both these forms of defective understanding particularly insidious is our propensity to presume their nonexistence. Our antecedent conviction that we are thoroughly familiar with certain types of topics can make us complacent, disposing us to overlook or reject the possibility that our understanding of another person's statement about one of those familiar topics is inadequately confirmed or even incorrect.

Fourthly, I propose that the preceding account applies to many of our claims about good and evil, many of our affirmations of value or disvalue.³ Like all other assertions, every value assertion has a concrete meaning that includes both an explicit content and an initially implicit ground. And as with other common assertions, whenever we hear someone make a familiar value assertion we have

³Though I recognize that the words "value" and "disvalue" sometimes have nuances that would make such a practice inadvisable, in the present essay I am using them as (at least rough) synonyms of "good" and "evil" respectively.

a tendency to suppose that we adequately grasp the concrete meaning even when the ground is not made explicit. In such circumstances, even if our understanding of the assertion's concrete meaning is correct, confirmation of that correctness is liable to be difficult. But more importantly, our understanding might be incorrect. For we are prone to jump to the conclusion that similar statements of value or disvalue have virtually identical concrete meanings, and that opposed statements have wholly opposed concrete meanings, even though such is not always the case. (For example, you and I might both say "God is good"; and I might well go on to conclude that concretely we mean just the same thing, ignorant of the fact that you base your statement on your reading of world history and I base mine on my own personal experience. Or you might say "Creation essentially is in no way evil" and I might deny it; and I might well go on to conclude that concretely we are in total disagreement on this issue, ignorant of the fact that both of us base our statements solely on the Bible as we read it.) Finally, the very familiarity of common value assertions can generate overconfidence about our understanding of what another person concretely means when she makes one. Such overconfidence suppresses the suspicion that our understanding might be defective, and thus it impedes us from recognizing and attempting to rectify whatever defects there actually are.

To be fair, we theologians are perhaps less likely than ordinary believers to conclude too quickly that we adequately understand the concrete meaning of someone else's value assertion when the ground of that assertion remains wholly implicit. We are more likely to recognize the importance of explicating that ground: after all, studying grounds is part of our job! There is, however, a more rarified mistake to which I suggest we are prone. Precisely because assertions about good and evil are so familiar to us, we can be lured into overconfidence about our understanding of the assertion's concrete meaning once we have made its immediate foundational features explicit, overlooking the importance of making explicit its most basic foundational features as well. We can accede to the temptation of concluding that we sufficiently grasp the ground of the other person's assertion once we know it to be world history as she reads it, her personal experience as she interprets it, the biblical or dogmatic tradition as she construes it, or something similar. The very familiarity of common value assertions can make us intellectually complacent, insensitive to the importance of a further task, namely, that of attempting to situate the ground's immediate foundational features within the explicit pattern of a complete set of basic foundational options, a task historically often labelled "philosophical." And insofar as we neither address that further task nor even notice its importance, we are apt to think we adequately understand the concrete meaning of the other person's assertion when in fact our understanding is insufficiently radical.

In the remainder of this paper my goal is to begin addressing the question that I have been arguing we ought not neglect.⁴ When we as Christian theologians make the assertions we make about good and evil, why in general do we say what we say? What in general are the grounds—the causes, motives, reasons—of our assertions of value and disvalue? What are the most basic foundational features of the grounds on which those assertions depend, their most fundamental properties precisely as grounds?⁵

II. EIGHT DIVERSE ANSWERS

Both what an investigator envisages as the complete group of basic foundational options and how she envisages those options as related to one another reflect the investigator's own stance on which of the options is correct.⁶ Such is the case in what follows. I briefly sketch what I maintain to be an exhaustive set of alternative families of answers to the question about the most basic foundational features of the grounds of our concrete value assertions. That set of alternatives expresses what I contend is an eight-part progressive clarification and correction of my grasp of certain structural elements of my own concrete subjectivity at its best, plus what those elements imply. To speak of alternative families of answers is to say that although the total number of possible answers may well be quite large, I think they can be grouped according to shared properties in a fashion that serves both accuracy and manageability. To call the eight-part sequence progressive is to say that I judge the final alternative to be the most complete and correct, concretely the most developed and least controvertible. To specify the successive steps as advances in my self-knowledge is to say that basic foundational inquiry as I conceive it is radically autobiographical. To speak of structural elements and their implications is to indicate my view that basic foundational features are essentially heuristic, anticipatory, a priori. They are what one brings to any inquiry, not what one discovers in it. As such, they are manifested by society and history but not constituted or intrinsically conditioned by them.⁷ To present the eight alternative families as reflecting what I have just said about basic foundational inquiry is to characterize those

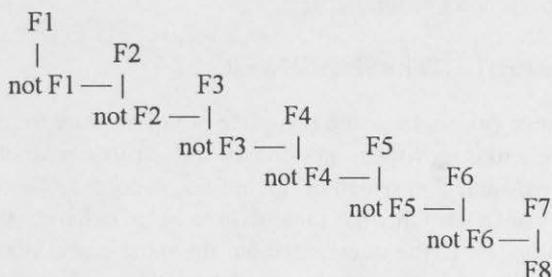
⁴I say only "begin," for I cannot hope to address that task amply within the confines of a brief paper.

⁵See n. 1, above.

⁶One's conclusions regarding (a) the complete set of basic foundational options and (b) the correct option correspond respectively to the "functional specialties" that Bernard Lonergan names "Dialectic" and "Foundations." See his *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) 125-45, 235-93.

⁷The basic foundational features include elements that, when made explicit, constitute the fundamental principles of mathematics and logic. For example, the validity of the principle of noncontradiction is manifested by society and history but not constituted or intrinsically conditioned by society or history.

alternatives themselves as essentially heuristic, anticipatory, a priori, manifested by society and history but not constituted or intrinsically conditioned by them.⁸ Finally, I should make clear my suspicion that others whose self-knowledge is highly developed will not disagree with what I am proposing here, but ultimately that is for them to say. (In the following chart, families one through eight are represented by "F1" through "F8.")



To my knowledge, Christian theologians do not commonly offer answers in the first family, but nonetheless I begin with it for the sake of completeness. Some of its clearest illustrations come from the history of explicit philosophy. For example, determinists such as Democritus of Abdera, Thomas Hobbes, and B.F. Skinner contend that all our assertions, like all other events in the universe, follow totally and necessarily from causes.⁹ (Where it arises, the theological version of determinism is usually presented as implied by a certain notion of divine omnipotence.) By contrast, indeterminists such as Epicurus of Athens and William James argue that at least some of our value assertions belong instead to a class of events that are matters of sheer chance, without any causes, quite simply ungrounded.¹⁰ But however much the various answers in this family may differ in other respects, they all agree that our value assertions are *never grounded even partly by our free choices* (where "free" means "creatively self-determining"). Why we make value assertions is never at all because we freely choose to do so. To make a value assertion is in no way a human deed, only a human event. It is never done by me; rather, it merely occurs through me.

⁸In what follows, I shall be identifying certain thinkers' views with the first family of basic foundational options, others' with the second family, and so forth. I am prepared to argue for the correctness of my interpretations of these thinkers, but it is important to recognize that I present them to illustrate my scheme, not to demonstrate its validity. The eight-family sequence is a dialectical typology, not an historical summary; and even if my historical interpretations were to be proved deficient, this would not necessarily invalidate the typology itself.

⁹See, e.g., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards et al. (New York: Macmillan, 1967) 2:359-71; B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (New York: Macmillan, 1948).

¹⁰See, e.g., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2:359-71.

The basic difficulty with the foregoing view is akin to the basic difficulties with each of the next six views as well: I cannot assert it without concretely contradicting myself. For whenever (as often happens) I make any assertion, invariably I experience the act of making it as my deed, an act for which I am responsible. That is to say, invariably I experience the act neither as utterly ungrounded, nor as an act that I am unable not to make, but rather as an act that occurs at least partly because I freely choose to produce it. Hence, if I were to assert that value assertions are never grounded even partly by free choices, the verbal content of that assertion would be confuted by an invariable feature of my concrete act of asserting that content. Even modest reflection is able to bring this prospective concrete inconsistency to light; and, once it does, I recognize I must reject the first family.

Negatively, answers in all the remaining families concur in rejecting those in the first, maintaining instead that our value assertions are *always grounded at least partly by our free choices*. Positively, answers in the second family all affirm, in one way or another, that our value assertions are *grounded at best by our free choices alone*. For example, voluntarist self-determinists such as Jean-Paul Sartre believe that although one may indeed allow one's choices to be influenced by what one knows, such allowances are fundamentally immoral. The mark of a truly moral choice is that it is determined by nothing save itself, thus embodying the pure freedom that is the human person's most noble feature. A choice determined in part by one's knowledge is an abnegation of one's pure freedom, a flight from self, bad faith.¹¹ Consequently, our morally superior assertions are the ones grounded solely by our morally superior choices, namely, purely self-determining ones.

As with the first view, however, so also with the second: I cannot maintain it without concrete inconsistency. For whenever (as often happens) I make any cognitional assertion, whether of fact or of value, inescapably I experience myself as justified in making it only insofar as I have some basis for thinking it to be true.¹² That is to say, inescapably I experience my knowledge of the determinate fact or value I am asserting as a moral precondition of my asserting it.¹³ Consequently, if I were cognitively to assert that our value assertions are grounded at best by our free choices alone, what I assert would be contradicted by an inescapable feature of my concrete act of asserting it. When reflection on

¹¹See, e.g., Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953) 89-268.

¹²In making an assertion, one might have in mind goals other than expressing what one knows. Hence, not all assertions are cognitional. For a detailed discussion of some noncognitional assertions, see Donald Evans, *The Logic of Self-Involvement* (London: SCM, 1963).

¹³The word "moral" is used here in the broader sense already introduced in our discussion of Sartre, above, namely, "faithful to the most noble features of oneself." This includes but is not limited to "moral" in its usual narrower sense.

this experience brings that imminent concrete contradiction to light, I recognize I must disavow the second family.

Like answers in all the remaining families, those in the third family agree that our value assertions are grounded at least partly by our free choices, and *at best also by our knowledge of the determinate values we assert*. The unique trait of answers in this family is their conviction that our knowledge of determinate values epistemically is *never more than just pragmatically objective*. The most prominent illustrations here are answers influenced centrally by the Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Paul Ricoeur, for example, contends that we cannot deny our concrete orientation toward living morally; and since a precondition of living morally is that we treat our knowledge as though it expresses noumenal reality, concretely we cannot avoid treating it in just that way. The moral dimensions of this practical warrant may be augmented by religious experience, but even as thus augmented the warrant remains practical at best, never strict.¹⁴

It remains that I find that any effort to profess the third view is concretely self-defeating. For whenever (as often happens) I make what I take to be a morally justified cognitional assertion, I always experience myself as possessing strictly objective (not just pragmatically objective) knowledge of the determinate fact or value I am asserting; and, moreover, I always experience the strict objectivity of that knowledge as a necessary element of the justification. In other words, to experience myself as making a morally justified cognitional assertion is to experience myself as bound by a moral condition that in fact is fulfilled, namely, that I possess a strict warrant, not just a practical one, for thinking that my knowledge of what I am asserting is epistemically objective. It follows that if I were cognitively to assert that our value assertions are grounded at best in part by knowledge of values that epistemically is never more than just pragmatically objective, the content of that assertion would be undercut by a necessary feature of my concrete act of asserting that content. When reflection on my experience makes this prospective contradiction clear to me, I find myself constrained to renounce the third family.

By now the reader will have grasped the pattern that recurs at each step of our eight-part progressive sequence of alternative answers to the question about the basic foundational features of our assertions of value and disvalue. Through reflection on one's own concrete performance as an assertor, an answer that initially seems plausible is manifested as concretely untenable; and recognition of that untenability impels one toward an answer that does better justice to one's concrete performance. In order to minimize the tedium that is inevitable when presenting any systematic scheme, I will elaborate the remaining steps of our sequence in more concise fashion.

¹⁴See, e.g., Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) 347-57.

The answers in families four through eight all agree that our value assertions are always grounded at least partly by our free choices, and at best also by our knowledge of the determinate values we assert, which knowledge epistemically is *strictly objective at best*. The hallmark of answers in family four is the contention that our epistemically objective knowledge of determinate values is *just intuitive*, a matter of direct and unmediated awareness of valuable contents as given or constituted or both, whether those contents are experiential or supraexperiential or both, and whether they are distinct from one's cognitional acts or identical with them or both. Charles Hartshorne, for example, maintains that to know a determinate value is fundamentally to be immediately aware of some given or constituted concrete spatiotemporal content as contributing to cosmic intensity and harmony.¹⁵ All such views, however, run counter to my concrete experience of basing every cognitional assertion on knowledge that arises not instantaneously but rather through a process, knowledge that results from assessing particular contents in light of a general standard or criterion that is both distinct from them and prior to them, knowledge that is not just intuitive but instead is inferential.

On all the answers in families five through eight, our value assertions at best are always grounded partly by knowledge of determinate values that is *inferential*. What distinguishes answers in family five is their concurrence that the general criterion within this inferential knowledge is some ultimate value that one has immediate intellectual or moral or religious awareness of, that is supraexperientially self-evident, that one *supraexperientially intuits*. For example, Germain Grisez presents self-integration, authenticity, justice and friendship, holiness, life, knowledge, and playful activities and skillful work as seven broad contents that function as criteria in our practical reasoning precisely because they are basic aspects of the ultimate and allegedly self-evident value of human flourishing.¹⁶ But this type of account is at variance with my concrete experience of basing every cognitional assertion on inferential knowledge whose general criterion is an ultimate value that I do not actually grasp but merely anticipate, a value whose features are manifest not immediately but only via the mediation of my questioning, a value that supraexperientially I do not intuit but instead just intend.

The answers in families six through eight hold in common that our value assertions at best are always grounded partly by inferential knowledge of determinate values, inferential knowledge whose general criterion is an ultimate value that supraexperientially we do not intuit but *merely intend*. The characteristic feature of answers in family six is their view that our intending of that ultimate value is initially opaque, originally lacking in self-presence, *radically noncon-*

¹⁵See, e.g., Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (La Salle: Open Court, 1962) 191-233.

¹⁶See, e.g., Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus* 1 (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1983) 115-40.

scious, and only subsequently self-transparent to some degree, self-present, conscious. For example, Joseph Maréchal envisions all human self-presence as the result of activity that is reflexive, returning upon itself, objectifying itself. For Maréchal, primitive or "implicit" self-presence and advanced or "explicit" self-presence differ not in kind but only in the degree of their reflexivity. But the originating moments of all our activities are nonreflexive, anteceding the return—if any—of those activities upon themselves. Consequently, the originating moments of all our activities—including our intending of the ultimate value—involve no consciousness but instead proceed "sourdement et nécessairement."¹⁷ It remains that such a portrayal conflicts with my experience of basing every cognitional assertion on inferential knowledge whose general criterion is the ultimate goal of my supraexperiential intending, where even initially and radically that intending is intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, and thus a fortiori at least minimally self-present, primitively self-possessing, conscious.

The answers in families seven and eight all affirm that our value assertions at best are always grounded partly by inferential knowledge of determinate values, where the general criterion of that inferential knowledge is an ultimate value manifest to us through the mediation of supraexperiential intending that is *conscious even at root*. What distinguishes answers in family seven is their affirmation that not only have we no unmediated supraexperiential grasp of the ultimate value: we have no unmediated grasp of it at all. We intuit it neither supraexperientially nor experientially. We *do not experience* it in any way. This view is implicit, for example, in the earlier work of Bernard Lonergan, where the final objective norm of all one's knowing and choosing is characterized as a reality that "is at once unrestricted understanding and the primary intelligible, reflective understanding and the unconditioned, perfect affirming and the primary truth, perfect loving and the primary good."¹⁸ This unique and unitary reality is present to us heuristically, as the ultimate goal of all our intelligent and reasonable intending, but (in this world) we have no unmediated grasp of it.¹⁹ All such claims, however, overlook a further crucial cognitive factor, the one commonly labelled "religious awareness." For careful reflection makes explicit that I base my every cognitional assertion on inferential knowledge whose final objective criterion is an ultimate content manifest to me not just mediately, as the *anticipated* total fulfillment of my supraexperiential intending, but also immediately,

¹⁷Joseph Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique* (Paris: Desclée, 1949) 5:404; cf. 5:114-26, 396-405.

¹⁸Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957) 659.

¹⁹I say the denial that we directly experience God is *implicit* in the early Lonergan, for he does not so much explicitly deny it as fail to consider the question. For his own subsequent remarks on this oversight, see Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophy of God and Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973) 11-13, 41-42.

as the inchoatively *experienced*—though not yet properly known—total fulfillment, the transcendent content of my religious awareness.

Answers in the eighth family, concretely the most developed and least controvertible in my view, take account of religious awareness as a palpable cognitive factor. They all claim that our value assertions at best are always based partly on inferential knowledge of determinate values, inferential knowledge whose final objective criterion is an ultimate value that we grasp mediately, as the anticipated exhaustive goal of our radically conscious supraexperiential intending, and also immediately, as the transcendent content of religious awareness, the *inchoatively experienced* (though not yet properly known) exhaustive goal of that supraexperiential intending. Thus for the later Lonergan, "the knowledge born of religious love" is "an apprehension of transcendent value. This apprehension consists in the experienced fulfillment of our unrestricted thrust to self-transcendence, in our actuated orientation towards the mystery of love and awe." It "places all other values in the light and the shadow of transcendent value." In light of it, our inferential knowledge of determinate valuable (and disvaluable) contents becomes knowledge of determinate holy (and unholy) contents, and in turn all our assertions of value (and disvalue) become assertions of holiness (and unholiness).²⁰

III. THE USEFULNESS OF THIS SCHEME: TWO BRIEF ILLUSTRATIONS

Let me conclude these remarks with two suggestions that I think, if developed in a way space does not allow me to do here, could illustrate convincingly the clarificational merit of my eight-family scheme of alternative answers to the question about the basic foundational features of the grounds of our value and disvalue assertions, our assertions of good and evil. First, in the continuing debate among moral theologians about the moral status of such activities as euthanasia, abortion, and homosexual behavior,²¹ I suggest that the so-called utilitarian, deontological, and proportionalist stances on the general criterion of specifically moral evil belong respectively to families four, five, and six or later. Second, in the continuing debate among systematic theologians about how to understand the relationship of God and evil,²² I suggest that the stances envisioning the general criterion of evil as such to be pain and suffering, the privation of abstract intelligibility, the privation of concrete intelligibility, the

²⁰Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 115-17. Cf. Michael Vertin, "Lonergan on Consciousness: Is there a Fifth Level?" *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994) 1-36, at 24-26.

²¹See, e.g., Susan Ross, "Evil and Hope: Foundational Moral Perspectives," *CTSA Proceedings* 50 (1995) 46-63.

²²See, e.g., David Tracy, "Evil and Hope: Foundational Systematic Perspectives," *CTSA Proceedings* 50 (1995) 15-36.

privation of concrete responsibility, and the privation of concrete holiness belong respectively to families four, five, six, seven, and eight.²³

Correctly situating the diverse stances on the general criterion of evil is not sufficient to resolve the debates, of course; but it is a necessary element of any satisfactory resolution. For it elucidates precisely both (a) how the basic foundational features vary from one stance to the next, and (b) how my justified personal preference of one stance over the others requires reflexive explicitation of the recurrent operational features of my own concrete self at my best. And such elucidation in turn, by highlighting the basic foundational stances inevitably though often just implicitly underlying our personal uses of the word "evil," helps us avoid the mistaken but not uncommon conclusion that whenever we verbally agree about whether X is evil, our concrete meanings are virtually identical, and whenever we verbally disagree about whether X is evil, our concrete meanings are wholly opposed. Or, positively and more simply, such elucidation fosters genuine communication—not a disadvantage for theologians or, indeed, anyone else.

MICHAEL VERTIN
St. Michael's College
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

²³See Michael Vertin, "Toward a Theology of Evil: Process and Transcendental Approaches in Dialogue," *CTSA Proceedings* 39 (1984) 166-69.