

Synopsis of the Evil Person

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My dissertation is on the question of what it means for a person to be evil. This is primarily evil as an adjective describing a person. It is not about natural evil, such as the evil of earthquakes or famines, nor is it about the theological problem of how God could allow evil to exist. In reaching my final conclusions on the nature of evil, I reviewed and compared several theories. But in the short space I have here, I cannot do justice to each theory. So instead of trying to present each theory covered in my dissertation, I will highlight the most important conclusions that came up from considering various theories, and then I will turn to the leading theories that made it to the final chapter. I will end with a synopsis of my comparisons of these theories and my final conclusions on the nature of evil.

My dissertation began with the examination of some very simplistic theories, mainly for the purpose of establishing guidelines for choosing and evaluating other theories of evil. The first main guideline I established is that an evil person is someone with an evil character. After reviewing several theories of character, I concluded that it is made up of the habits, moral beliefs, psychological capacities, intentions, and motivations that shape one's dispositions in matters of morality or happiness. More generally, character is made up of any enduring psychological attributes that affect one's moral

predispositions. My main conclusions about character were that is psychological, it has various components, and it is dispositional in nature. Thus, an evil person would be distinguished by psychological qualities that predispose him toward some kind of bad, immoral, or evil behavior.

Another important and related guideline I reached was that evil is some kind of privation or perversion of goodness. One of the simple theories I considered was that evil is a force with its own reality, as in Manicheanism for example. I brought up Augustine's criticisms of Manicheanism and generally agreed with them. Although some people may understand Augustine to be merely saying that evil is the absence of goodness, that is not exactly what he says. He is mainly saying that evil is a quality, as distinguished from a substance. He understands evil to be like disease or injury, which is an impairment of what is good, not something with its own separate existence.

Although I disagree with Augustine's notion that goodness is a substance, I do believe that being a person is a good thing. An evil person is not some special kind of person that happens to be a bad thing rather than a good thing. Rather, an evil person is someone in whom the goodness of being a person has become impaired in some way. An evil person is a corrupt or defective person, not someone imbued with the force of evilness. This emphasizes my original understanding of evil as a quality of a person, and it corroborates my conclusion that an evil person is someone with an evil character.

My next three guidelines concern what an evil character is, and all three are interrelated. The first is that an evil character is a bad character. A bad character is one which normally predisposes a person toward doing what is wrong or away from doing what is right. The notion of a bad character is a very broad one, and the first guideline merely means that all evil characters are bad characters. It does not imply any synonymy between an evil character and a bad character. The next guideline is that an evil character is a kind of bad character. Adding the notion of a kind precludes any theory which says that an evil character is nothing but an especially bad character. Evil does not mean very bad or especially bad or anything like that. Whether or not someone is evil is not a mere matter of how bad his character is. Instead, evil should be understood as some particular kind of bad character. The third guideline is that an evil character is the morally worst kind of bad character. It is not individual characters that are being compared here. It is kinds of characters. Some kinds of bad characters are morally worse than others, and an evil one is the worst kind. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that calling someone evil is the morally worst thing you can say about him. It would be morally worse to call someone very evil or to add other forms of moral condemnation on top of calling someone evil. For example, depending on what evil means, it may be worse to call someone evil and morally bankrupt or evil and very cruel. The thing about evil is that among the kinds of bad character it is the morally worst kind. There may still be differences of degree among evil characters, and these distinctions may be reflected in calling

someone very evil or evil and cruel. Instead of counting as separate kinds of character, they count as evil characters that are distinguished by degree or by additional characteristics.

There are two main approaches to take in arriving at what an evil character is. One is to define a set of parameters. Any character that falls within a certain set of parameters would count as evil. Another way is to identify a particular characteristic that distinguishes an evil character from other kinds of bad character. There is also the possibility of combining these approaches. Some of the first theories I considered identified an evil character with a set of parameters. John Kekes put forth the theory that an evil character is one dominated by vices. He also distinguished between three main kinds of vices, which were insufficiency, expediency, and malevolence. His approach to evil was a parameter approach, because two people could be dominated by vices without being dominated by the same vices. For example, one person might be extremely expedient, and another might be extremely malevolent. One of the main problems with this theory was that it seemed too broad. It seemed likely that it would include as evil some people who should not be included as evil.

This problem was addressed by trying to narrow down the parameters with a second theory. This new theory identified an evil character with the combination of an immoral character and a wicked character. An immoral character was distinguished by lacking in the qualities that would predispose a person toward doing what is morally right. A wicked character was distinguished

by the qualities that would predispose a person toward doing what is morally wrong. More briefly, an immoral character lacks virtue, and a wicked character is distinguished by the presence of vice. The opposite of an immoral character would be a moral character, and the opposite of a wicked character would be an innocent character. So, a character could not be both immoral and moral or both wicked and innocent, but it could be innocent and moral, wicked and moral, innocent and immoral, or wicked and immoral. Of these four possible combinations, an immoral and wicked character is the morally worst, because in this sort of character, predispositions to do what is morally wrong would normally go unopposed by predispositions to do what is morally right. Thus, this sort of character would more commonly lead a person into wrongdoing.

The main problem with this theory was that it too was too broad. In examining several different ways in which a character could be immoral or wicked, it became clear that this theory would provide no distinguishing feature that evil people would share in common. One person might be evil for being an amoral sadist, and another person might be evil for being an overzealous idealist, such as a Communist revolutionary, who focuses only on selected moral concerns.

Despite this, it seemed that this theory was moving in the right direction. An immoral and wicked character was surely morally worse than the alternatives, and if an evil character wasn't the very same thing as an immoral and wicked character, it was probably some particular kind of immoral and wicked character.

Holding this thought in mind, I turned to theories which identify an evil character with particular qualities. The first of these focused on the idea that evil is some kind of pride, such that an evil character could be understood as a proud character.

This idea was drawn from Christian tradition, in which pride is regarded as “the greatest sin and the origin of all sin” (Williamson 98), not to mention the sin that led Lucifer to rebel against God and become Satan. The idea immediately met with the objection that pride is highly praised in many quarters, and that philosophers such as Aristotle and Richard Taylor have praised pride as an important virtue. But this first objection was resolved by pointing out that philosophers and theologians on both sides of the issue are in agreement that there is a legitimate distinction between vanity and self-esteem. Those who condemn pride also point out that it is not the same as legitimate self-esteem. Those who praise pride also point out that it is not the same as vanity, conceit, or egoism, which they regard as bad. The controversy over the value of pride focuses more on semantics than on substance. What the opponents of pride are condemning is not the same thing as what the proponents of pride are praising, and to some degree, they are even in agreement on which qualities are bad and which are good.

The common element behind what they all condemn is an inflated sense of oneself that is not grounded in reality. Those who praise pride value a high estimate of oneself that is based on reality. They value being the kind of people

they can legitimately be proud of being, not in falsely believing that they are better than they really are. Those who condemn pride focus on those who believe they are better than they really are, especially those who think they are better than God. The bare commonality between what they all condemn is false pride, which is merely believing that you are better than you really are. But this seems to be too broad a quality for identifying who is evil. It would identify as evil anyone who even slightly tends to overestimate his own good qualities.

Of course, those who condemn pride do not focus on something as slight as this. Instead, they focus on some kind of spiritual rebellion against God. I took from this a kind of pride I called *egotheism*, which I identified as “the exaltation of one’s ego to God-like status.” This understanding of egotheism does not imply the existence of God. Someone can exalt his ego to God-like status without there actually being a God, though if there is a God, this is the very sort of pride that would be the greatest spiritual rebellion. The important thing about egotheism is its moral flaw, which is that it corrupts a person’s sense of morality by leading one to underestimate the value of others and by leading one to not submit oneself to moral considerations.

But the notion of egotheism was only one notion of pride as evil. To better evaluate the notion of egotheism as evil, I compared it with another theory that also identifies evil with a kind of pride. This was the theory of M. Scott Peck, who identified pride with a refusal to acknowledge any sense of one’s own sinfulness. The strong point of this theory is that it revealed the potential for evil

in self-righteousness. Its weak point was that it failed to recognize as evil anyone who does believe that he is evil. This is paradoxical, because it means that anyone who recognizes that he is evil is not evil, whereas anyone who is evil fails to recognize that he is.

As it turns out, Peck's theory of evil is rooted in a dubious distinction between human evil and demonic evil. The refusal to recognize sinfulness is what he calls human evil, whereas demonic evil consists in being possessed by a demon. Thus, Peck is not completely ruling out the evil of someone who acknowledges his own evil. He just seems to think that this happens only during demonic possession. In support of his demon possession theory, he describes two exorcisms he witnessed. I was very skeptical of Peck's accounts, and I regularly brought up non-supernatural explanations for the events he reported. My own conclusion was that the so-called possessed people were mentally disturbed in some deep way, and the drama of the exorcism helped them get over some stumbling blocks that had been impeding their recovery.

Regardless of whether these people were actually possessed, Peck recognized in them a person he identified as Satan, who was evil in a different way than other people he identified as evil. Indeed, Peck described Satan as having a personality. So he regarded Satan as a person, albeit not a human person. From the perspective of what makes a person evil, Peck's theory of human evil can be only part of the story. Given that he also believes in evil

persons of a supernatural variety, what makes them evil is also relevant to what makes a person evil.

Satan's evil, as Peck understands it, is rooted in extreme self-centeredness and hatred of reality. Through self-centeredness, Satan is completely cut off from any sense of love or connection with others. Unlike those who crave after the feeling of moral perfection, Satan cannot even comprehend the need for morality, for morality is a guide for relating with others and with the outside world. In craving after a feeling of moral perfection, those whom Peck calls evil pay some homage to morality, and in doing this they respect, to some degree, the importance of recognizing and dealing with a real world outside of themselves. Satan's evil does not even respect this much. It eschews any sense of reality, including any sense of reality that would have it pay any importance to morality.

This is an extreme form of narcissism, which Peck may not believe is possible for humans. Still, it illustrates how pride can make someone evil without basing itself on a belief in one's own moral superiority. While some narcissism roots itself in specific beliefs about one's own qualities, such as I am pretty, I am smart, etc., some narcissism is so extreme that it doesn't root itself in such beliefs at all. This is the kind of narcissism exhibited by the person Peck calls Satan. This is revealed in its hatred of reality. Extreme narcissism of this sort is threatened by reality, because it can sustain itself only by avoiding the light of truth. It is unrooted in reality precisely because reality does not support

it. To sustain the delusion of his own superiority, this extreme sort of narcissist has to avoid learning the truth of his own inadequacy at all costs.

In some respects, this is very much like what Peck has called human evil. It involves evasion of the truth and reliance on lies. The difference is that the so-called humanly evil person sustains his delusion with false beliefs about his own goodness, whereas the extremely narcissistic person doesn't even rely on this. His sense of superiority becomes something of a bare axiom, unsupported by reality and essentially meaningless in terms of specifics. The moral danger in such narcissism should be readily apparent. Hatred of reality undermines any respect for morality and any concern for others. Unbridled narcissism propels a person toward putting his own desires first at all costs. Thus, an extremely narcissistic person would have both an immoral and a wicked character.

In Peck's accounts of human evil and demonic evil, we can see two ways in which egotheism can lead a person into evil. One is through extreme self-righteousness, in which the axiom of one's own moral superiority becomes the standard by which a person deals with other people and with reality. This can lead to self-justification and scapegoating, which the theologian Ted Peters has identified with the fifth step to radical evil. It can also hide a person's evil qualities from the light of day, allowing them to grow and fester under the cover of darkness. The other way involves extreme rejection and hatred of reality, in which a person actively favors darkness over light, because reality can lend no support to his extreme narcissism.

Between the egotheism theory and Peck's theory, the egotheism theory seems more comprehensive. It focuses mainly on the extent, baselessness, and moral ramifications of a person's unjustified pride, whereas Peck has focused on specific reasons underlying a person's pride. Although the reasons Peck identifies with evil pride may play an important role in the evil of many, I believe that the egotheism theory better addresses the relevant evil-making characteristics of pride. So, I favor the egotheism theory over Peck's theory of evil.

The next theory also focuses on specific evil-making qualities. It's based on some of Michael Gelven's writing on evil. It begins with an article of his called "The Meanings of Evil," in which he gives ten examples of what we might call evil. Nine of these focus on actions, but the ninth says, "A man does nothing reprehensible: he just *is* evil" (202). In summing up his thoughts on these cases, Gelven says, "Case Nine is evil in the strictest sense" (220). Of the ten, he believes that only this one succeeds in distinguishing between bad and evil. He also says, "when I use the term 'evil', what I am suggesting is that the ground of the wrong is [. . .] simply the character of the perpetrator" (214-215). Although someone with an evil character will surely be more predisposed toward reprehensible actions, character is not the sum of a person's actions. Someone could have an evil character without doing anything reprehensible, and by focusing on just this possibility, Gelven turns the question of evil from what a person does to what kind of character he has.

On its own, Gelven's ninth case might not lead to any detailed theory of evil, but his further comments help point the way toward one. In elaborating on this example, Gelven suggests that an evil person is someone whose "existence itself is somehow distorted, twisted, or characterized by unworthiness" (215). And that to be evil means to "thwart or distort the meaning of existence, properly understood" (215). The example gets more specific by suggesting that when we describe someone as not just bad but as evil, we mean that he has not only done immoral things but that his existence is nihilistic (216). This means that "the perpetrator does not affirm the worth or meaning of existence" (216).

Ideas such as nihilistic existence seem vague and paradoxical, but Gelven's other comments point the way to a more concrete and detailed theory. We begin with the idea that an evil person fails to affirm the worth and meaning of existence. Based on other writings, Gelven seems to understand the worth and meaning of existence to be what makes life worthwhile and meaningful. This can include things like fun, friends, and family, but there are even more fundamental issues involved. There is an important difference between what can make life more worthwhile and more meaningful and what makes it possible for a life to be worthwhile and meaningful at all. Fun, friends, and family may all contribute to making a life more worthwhile and meaningful, but for Gelven there are certain qualities without which life wouldn't be worthwhile and meaningful.

In an article called "Guilt and Human Meaning," Gelven describes how the interrelated qualities of guilt, freedom, and responsibility are all fundamental

to making life worthwhile and meaningful. Gelven uses 'guilt' in an uncommon sense. We commonly mean by guilt that someone has done something morally wrong or feels that he has. Although these are related to Gelven's notion of guilt, they are not what he means. But 'innocence' is commonly used as the antonym of guilt, and Gelven's use of the word 'guilt' is reflected in one common use of innocence. We sometimes speak of children losing their innocence, by which we mean that they are no longer as naive about evil, not that they have done anything wrong. Gelven's sense of guilt involves this greater awareness of evil that comes with the loss of innocence. More specifically, it involves a person's sense that he is capable of both good and evil, and that it is up to him to choose which direction he takes his life in. Guilt is the awareness of one's potential for good and evil and a sense of responsibility for choosing between them.

This leads right into responsibility, which refers to the fact that how your life turns out is up to you, i.e. it depends on your choices. Guilt includes the awareness that how your life turns out is your responsibility. Most basically, guilt is an awareness of responsibility. In the more usual sense, guilt is an awareness that you were morally responsible for something that went wrong. In Gelven's sense, it also includes awareness of the responsibility you presently bear to make the right choices.

By freedom, Gelven means the acceptance of responsibility. He distinguishes this from liberty, which is the absence of constraint. Freedom means to accept that the way your life turns out is up to you and to consciously

take charge of your life, making your own decisions, as distinguished from just letting others decide things for you. The acceptance of responsibility is the acceptance of your own power to determine your own course in life. Without the acceptance of this power, liberty is not enough to make anyone free.

Responsibility is at the core of both guilt and freedom. Guilt looks at responsibility from its frightening aspect, whereas freedom looks at responsibility from its empowering aspect. Yet the two are intimately linked, because you cannot take responsibility for your life without realizing that you bear responsibility for how your life turns out. This is why Gelven also understands freedom as the acceptance of guilt.

With respect to the connection between guilt, freedom, and responsibility, on the one hand, and what makes life worthwhile and meaningful, on the other, Gelven says, "To be responsible, i.e. free, is to be in such a way that it matters to be. Freedom (responsibility) is hence the ultimate presupposition for any worth or merit in existence whatsoever. Why then, would one want to be free? Because only as being free is meaning possible" (GHM 79). By taking responsibility for your life, you imbue it with purpose, making it meaningful, and you affirm that it matters, making it worthwhile.

Still, it seems problematic to place all the worth and value of a human life on a person's exercise of responsibility. This would imply that people who fail to exercise responsibility for their lives live worthless and meaningless lives. And this would include innocent children, not just irresponsible adults. Gelven

addresses this in a much more recent book, *This Side of Evil*, in which he distinguishes between moral and non-moral worth. Moral worth is directly tied to the exercise of responsibility, but non-moral worth is not. Since children possess non-moral worth, this theory on the relation of responsibility to worth and meaning does not imply that children live worthless lives.

Furthermore, this is not an ad-hoc fix to his theory, as though it merely asserts that children have a different kind of worth. Although non-moral worth doesn't depend on the exercise of responsibility, it depends on the potential to exercise responsibility. For Gelven, innocence is the potential for guilt and freedom, not their mere absence. A rock cannot be innocent, because a rock can never know guilt or freedom. But a child can come to know these, and it is this potential that gives a child non-moral existential worth. So, guilt, freedom, and responsibility make worth and meaning possible in two very different ways. The exercise of them makes a life morally worthwhile and meaningful, whereas the potential to exercise them makes a life existentially worthwhile and meaningful.

In understanding an evil person as someone who fails to affirm the worth and meaning of existence, we can understand this to mean that he fails to affirm the qualities that are most fundamental to making life worthwhile and meaningful. Thus, an evil person would fail to affirm guilt, freedom, and responsibility. Yet that cannot be enough to distinguish an evil person from a non-evil person. An innocent child also fails to affirm these, yet the innocent

child is not evil. Thus, this much can only be a partial description of an evil person.

As it happens, this was not all that he was saying about an evil person. In discussing his ninth example, he also described an evil person as someone whose “existence itself is somehow distorted, twisted, or characterized by unworthiness,” and he added that to be evil means to “thwart or distort the meaning of existence, properly understood” (*ME* 215). So, an evil person is not only failing to affirm freedom, but is also thwarting or distorting it. There is some kind of active defiance of freedom, not just the failure to affirm it.

In *This Side of Evil*, Gelven adds more insight into this understanding of evil. In describing the evil of things which happen, as distinguished from the evil of persons, Gelven suggests “that evil may be defined as the betrayal of our expectation that there are purposive answers for what we suffer or endure” (44). When we attribute some kind of purpose to our suffering, it is easier to endure. But when something terrible happens without any sense of purpose to it, such as when a little child dies a horrible death, there is something especially wrong. This is the sort of event Gelven is describing as evil.

This also ties in with the failure to affirm freedom, because freedom implies purposefulness. When you take responsibility for your life, you imbue it with purpose. If events can be evil out of some betrayal of purposefulness, perhaps the same can be said of the evil of people. When a person acts in a way that betrays purposefulness, this is a failure to affirm freedom. Briefly put, evil

can be understood as the betrayal of freedom. More broadly put, it is the betrayal of those qualities which are fundamental to personhood, which are basic to the worth and meaning of human life. As Gelven puts it in *This Side of Evil*, “the essence of evil is the assault on the possibility of being a person; this anti-person force is recognized as inevitability, that of the pro-person force in all those attributes that transcend the inevitable: forgiveness, generosity, bestowal, grace, beauty, love, nobility, and laughter” (145-46).

With respect to understanding evil, one very important aspect of personhood is the struggle between good and evil. Gelven says in *This Side of Evil*, “The reality of persons themselves is understood in terms of good in conflict with the reality of evil. Evil thus serves as [. . .] a direct ground of persons, which is understandable fundamentally as the strife between the gracious (good in its fundamental, transmoral sense) and inevitability (evil)” (147). In betraying what is fundamental to personhood, a person gives up on this struggle. He surrenders to evil rather than continuing to resist it. Gelven clarifies the significance of this by emphasizing that “that evil as real must be thought both as internal and external” (*TSE* 64). Thus, an evil person can be more completely understood as a person who has betrayed his own personhood by succumbing to the power of internal or external evil.

In the end, the best two theories were the egotheism theory and the betrayal theory. In one respect, they seemed very different, for there would seem to be no pride in betraying the qualities that give personhood its worth and value.

But it must be remembered that egotheism is about false pride, not the legitimate self-esteem one can have for possessing these qualities. So they do not actually conflict on this point.

In fact, they are very similar. Consider, for example, that Peck regarded an evil person as someone who refuses to accept any sense of sinfulness. Another word for a sense of sinfulness is guilt. An evil person, for Peck, avoids feelings of guilt by making an axiom of his own guiltlessness. In terms of the betrayal theory, this is a betrayal of guilt, freedom, and responsibility. Instead of accepting freedom and taking responsibility for his life, this person is working hard to avoid the angst of guilt by refusing to accept any sense of guilt. Although guilt is painful, it is the key to freedom, making it fundamental to the worth and meaning of life. In refusing to accept it, Peck's evil person also forfeits the freedom that would give his life moral worth and meaning. And by resisting the potential that gives his life non-moral worth and meaning, he undermines even this.

Likewise, the extremely narcissistic person, as described by Peck in his accounts of Satanic possession, also betrays freedom. Accepting guilt, taking responsibility, and affirming freedom all require a commitment to truth and reality. Yet the extremely narcissistic person goes well beyond lacking this commitment. He actively hates and rejects reality, committing himself, if anything, to avoiding truth and reality.

The two main types of egotheism described by Peck might not exhaust the ways in which a person can be an egotheist, but insofar as they are representative of egotheism, it would seem that egotheism always includes the betrayal of freedom. Thus, the egotheism theory could be subsumed under the betrayal theory. Everyone it identifies as evil will also be identified as evil by the betrayal theory.

If these two differ on who should be identified as evil, it will be that the betrayal theory identifies some evil people who are missed by the egotheism theory. In general, egotheism seems to be an extreme form of false pride that maintains itself with a hostile attitude toward the truth of one's own inadequacy (whether moral or otherwise), leading it into the betrayal of guilt, freedom, and responsibility. Thus, the egotheism theory identifies two main components to being evil. One is the betrayal of guilt, freedom, and responsibility, and the other is a specific cause for this betrayal, namely an extreme form of false pride that can be maintained only through this betrayal.

If the betrayal theory is more accurate, and the egotheism theory is incomplete, then there should be ways of betraying freedom that are unrelated to false pride. One way that suggests itself is nihilism. Gelven describes nihilism as "the metaphysical position [. . .] that there is no meaning to existence" (215). In discussing his ninth example, he specifically describes an evil person as nihilistic. He says, "I am free to reject the meaningfulness of human existence, or accept it. If I reject it, I am nihilistic, and if nihilistic, and on the basis of this carelessness

toward existence, I perpetrate wrong acts, I can be said to be evil” (216). In comparing the betrayal theory with the egotheism theory, I gave an example of a nihilist who, believing that nothing has any meaning or value, chooses to live a life of brutal violence, because this is what gives him pleasure. He regards all human life as worthless, and he eventually kills himself on a whim, because he doesn’t value his life anymore than he values anyone else’s. It seems to me that this person is evil. Because the betrayal theory recognizes this person as evil, whereas the egotheism theory does not, the betrayal theory has a degree of accuracy that is missing from the egotheism theory.

Although I favor the betrayal theory above the egotheism theory, it seemed to me that the betrayal theory might not fit squarely into the immoral/wicked model. Although I don’t believe that an evil character can simply be equated with an immoral and wicked character, I do believe that an evil character will turn out to be some particular kind of immoral and wicked character. An evil character, as described by the betrayal theory, is clearly immoral, but it isn’t so clear that it must also be wicked. Turning your back on responsibility goes a long way toward reducing moral resolve, but it doesn’t necessarily imply a positive inclination toward wrongdoing.

A positive inclination toward wrongdoing may be inferred from the surrender to evil that also characterizes someone who has betrayed freedom. But this surrender to evil has two forms. It can be to internal evil or to external evil. If to internal evil, then the positive inclination toward wrongdoing is definitely

there, and the character can be described as both wicked and immoral. The problem case is when the surrender is only to external evil. This might be the case for people who went along with Naziism only to avoid being killed. It is questionable whether this is possible. Some evidence pointed to the idea that surrender to external evil is facilitated by a surrender to internal evil. This would generally involve a surrender to some internal representation of an external evil, which might be found in what Carl Jung has called the shadow, the hidden dark side of human nature. Assuming that surrender to external evil is always made possible by a surrender to internal evil, then the betrayal theory fits squarely into the immoral/wicked model, and it seems to be the best theory of evil.

But there is some question as to whether all surrender to external evil is made possible by the surrender to internal evil. If someone can succumb to external evil without succumbing to internal evil, I think I would describe the person as weak-willed but not as evil. In succumbing to external evil, he may be perilously close to becoming evil, but I suspect that it takes some kind of internal evil for a person to truly have an evil character. So, I prefer to modify the betrayal theory by removing mention of external evil. Succumbing to internal evil guarantees a wicked character, whereas succumbing to external evil alone does not seem to. Also, I have recognized that there are at least two possible causal relations between betraying freedom and succumbing to internal evil, whereas the wording I used for the betrayal theory would suggest otherwise. One

possibility is for the betrayal of freedom to precipitate a surrender to internal evil. Another is for the temptation of internal evil to lead a person to a breaking point, that breaking point being the betrayal of freedom. So it is best to word the theory without implying one particular causal relation. With these considerations in mind, the best theory of evil seems to be this: An evil person is someone who has betrayed his own personhood (through the betrayal of guilt and freedom) and has succumbed to internal evil.