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Evil, wrongdoing, and concept distinctness

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Abstract Philosophers theorizing about 'evil' usually distinguish evil actions from acts of ordinary wrongdoing. They either attempt to isolate some quality or set of qualities shared by all evil actions that is not found in other wrongful actions, or they concede that their account of evil is only distinguished by capturing the very worst acts on the scale of moral wrongness. The idea that evil is qualitatively distinct from wrongdoing has recently been under contention. We explore the grounds for this contention, and argue that there is a third option that might be useful for a variety of philosophical accounts of evil. The alternate form of distinctness we propose is called quality of emphasis distinctness (QE distinctness). We illustrate this form of concept distinctness with a modified version of Hillel Steiner's account of evil. We then explain how QE distinctness could also be applied to more complex theories of evil, such as the theories proposed by Claudia Card, John Kekes, and Todd Calder.

Keywords Evil · Concept-distinctness · Moral red zone

Philosophers theorizing about 'evil' usually distinguish evil actions from acts of ordinary wrongdoing. They either attempt to isolate some quality or set of qualities shared by all evil actions that is not found in other wrongful actions (see, e.g.

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Garrard 2002; Haybron 2002; De Wijze 2002), or they concede that their account of evil is only distinguished by capturing the very worst acts on the scale of moral wrongness (for instance, Russell 2007 attributes this position to Claudia Card). The idea that evil is qualitatively distinct from wrongdoing has recently been under contention. We explore the grounds for this contention, and argue that there is a third option that might be useful for a variety of philosophical accounts of evil.[1] Our broader philosophical point, that conceptual distinctions need not be limited to either purely quantitative or purely qualitative distinctions, is embedded and illustrated throughout the paper.

In Sect. 1 we first present Luke Russell's argument that no plausible theory can hold that evil is qualitatively distinct from ordinary wrongdoing. We then explain why Todd Calder takes his own theory of evil to be a counterexample to Russell's conclusion. In Sect. 2 we suggest that both Russell and Calder present a false dilemma when they suggest that plausible accounts of evil, when applied to action, must view evil as either qualitatively distinct from all merely wrongful acts or else a mere "moral red zone" on the scale of some subset of moral wrongs. The alternate form of distinctness we propose is called quality of emphasis distinctness (QE distinctness). We illustrate this form of concept distinctness with a modified version of Hillel Steiner's account of evil. In Sects. 3 and 4, we explain how QE distinctness could also be applied to more complex theories of evil, such as the theories proposed by Claudia Card, John Kekes, and Todd Calder.

1 The plausibility of evil as qualitatively distinct from ordinary wrongdoing[2]

In his 2007 piece, "Is Evil Action Qualitatively Distinct from Ordinary Wrongdoing?" Luke Russell argues that no philosopher has been successful at characterizing evil actions in a way that is both plausible and is also qualitatively distinct from ordinary wrongs. He argues that the most plausible accounts that he considers all fail to produce a qualitatively distinct conception of evil, because in each account the only property that distinguishes evil actions from some ordinary wrongdoing is a property that is simply a more extreme version of some property instantiated by those ordinary wrongs (2007, pp. 659–677).

For example, Russell critiques Hillel Steiner's account of evil, under which Steiner argues that evil is qualitatively distinct from ordinary wrongdoing. Steiner

[1] Following much of the recent philosophical work on evil, our focus in this paper is evil actions rather than evil persons, although being an evil person may have to do with a predilection for evil actions.

[2] We will generally use the term 'ordinary wrongs' to refer to the concept against which we contrast 'evils,' following the literature to which we are responding (see especially Russell 2007 and Calder 2013). By contrasting 'evils' with 'ordinary wrongs,' we do not mean to imply that evils are necessarily uncommon. Claudia Card argues that evils sometimes occur all too frequently, such as "the low-profile terrorism and torture that are routine under oppressive regimes, in racist environments, and in families devastated by domestic violence" (2010, p. 17). It is important to realize that evils can sometimes be common, since this can make them harder to recognize as evils. And, of course, some types of non-evil wrongs are quite uncommon.

says that evil acts are wrong acts that are pleasurable for their doers (Steiner 2002, pp. 183–93). Russell points out that this account, as it is stipulated, cannot be correct, since it would render certain trivial wrongs, like pleasurable shoplifting, evil. However, if Steiner were to modify his account of evil to include only extremely harmful acts that are pleasurable for their doers, then trivial pleasurable wrongs would not be considered evil, but the account would no longer establish a qualitative distinction between evil and ordinary wrongdoing (Russell 2007, p. 670). After all, the difference between evil acts and ordinary wrongs in which the agent takes pleasure would consist merely in the quantity of harm involved in the act.

Russell uses this approach to critique a variety of accounts of evil that each claim to establish a qualitative distinction between evil and wrongdoing. For each, he suggests that the only quality that distinguishes evil actions from some set of mere wrongs is a quality that is simply a 'more extreme version' of a quality shared by that set of mere wrongs. For this reason, these accounts all render evil the "moral red zone" on the scale of some category of wrongdoing.[3] For instance, there is some set of wrongs that are unified in that they all involve an element of sadism. This set of pleasurable wrongs ranges from barely harmful to extremely harmful. On the modified version of Steiner's view, evil acts amount to those on one end of this spectrum (i.e. the "moral red zone"). This end of the spectrum might include actions that are both harmful and wrongful to different degrees; that is, the zone of evil actions does not refer only to maximally harmful or maximally wrongful actions (Russell 2014, pp. 64–65). Instead, the zone extends from the threshold between evil and ordinary wrongs of the type represented on the spectrum all the way to the end of the spectrum.

On Steiner's modified account, since the feature that is merely an extreme version of a feature shared by ordinary pleasurable wrongs is extreme harmfulness, the threshold between evil actions and ordinary wrongs will be a degree of harmfulness. The moral red zone on a spectrum such as this one might be quite expansive. For instance, it might range from the sadistic, unrelenting bullying of a schoolboy that leaves him with subtle but lifelong emotional scars, to the sadistic torture and subsequent massacre of an entire ethnic group. Russell thinks that all plausible theories of evil that try to establish a qualitative difference between evil and ordinary wrongdoing attempt to do so by isolating a feature of evil that is merely a more extreme version of another feature held by some set of ordinary wrongs. Thus, he says that any such theory cannot truly offer a qualitative differentiation, since evil acts will inhabit a zone on a spectrum like the one just described—a zone with a threshold that is determined by the degree to which some moral feature (e.g. harmfulness) is instantiated.

At the beginning of his recent article in which he introduces a new theory of evil, Todd Calder responds to Russell's 2007 paper. Calder's concern is: "If evil is just very wrong we can do without the term 'evil'" (2013, pp. 163, 179). Calder characterizes Russell's account of qualitative distinctness between concepts as one

[3] This is a description of the merely quantitatively distinct account of evil that Russell uses in his 2006 work.

that can exist only if one concept possesses some particular property or properties not possessed to any degree by the other concept (Calder 2013, p. 179). Calder goes on to argue that this account of qualitative distinctness is too strict. He uses the examples of tables and chairs to illustrate the way in which two concepts can be qualitatively distinct even if all of the defining qualities of one concept are shared by some members of the other. For instance, a table might be defined as an object with a flat surface, some number of legs, and on which, primarily, non-human objects are placed. Just because non-human objects, like dinner items, are *sometimes* placed upon chairs does not meant that there is no qualitatively distinct difference between the concept of table and concept of chair. A difference can be qualitative, suggests Calder, so long as the two concepts share no essential properties. Being used to set non-human objects on is an essential property of being a table, but not of being a chair.

Does Russell *really* contend that one concept must have some particular property or properties not possessed to any degree by another concept in order for those two concepts to be qualitatively distinct? It is not clear that he does. What Calder is quoting when he describes Russell's view is from the following passage,

> Since de Wijze, Steiner, and Garrard wish to contrast qualitative difference with quantitative difference, we ought to read them as claiming that evil action is non-quantitatively distinct from ordinary wrongdoing. They believe that evil actions differ from ordinary wrongs in virtue of possessing some particular property or properties not possessed to any degree by ordinary wrongs (Russell 2007, p. 661).

Russell might just be indicating that the *particular way* that these authors are trying to establish qualitative distinctness is by pointing to a quality not held to any degree by ordinary wrongdoings (which, if they were successful, *would* be one way of establishing qualitative distinctness).[4] Russell does not say that this is the only way that concepts can be qualitatively distinct; he just shows that this is the strategy used by these theorists on evil.

What Russell does say is that no two actions or concepts can achieve such distinctness in the following way: by having all of the same qualities save one, and have that one differing quality be simply a greater or lesser degree of some quality held by the other (2007, pp. 661–662). For instance, let us look at Russell's revised version of Steiner's account of evil, described above. On this revised account, an evil action must: (1) be extremely harmful, and (2) afford the agent some pleasure as a result of a wrong-making component of the action. Russell says that this concept is not qualitatively distinct from those acts of wrongdoing from which an agent takes pleasure but that are only a little harmful. That is, there is a single spectrum of actions that are harmful from which agents take pleasure, and the modified Steiner view places "evil" actions on one end of that spectrum where the extremely harmful actions lie.

[4] In his recent book, Russell refers to this as "the strong version of the qualitative difference thesis" (2014, p. 118).

2 Quality of emphasis distinctness

Todd Calder argues that a concept must have one essential property not shared by the other in order for the two concepts to be qualitatively distinct (2013, p. 181). As we have just discussed, Luke Russell believes that if there is only one property held by a first concept and not by a second concept, and that property is only different in degree from a property held by the second concept, then the two concepts are merely quantitatively distinct. We will argue that there is a third type of distinctness between concepts. We call this distinctness: QE distinctness.

Two concepts might share all of the same qualities, but the qualities that are most important for determining the degree to which an action instantiates either concept could be determined by an emphasis placed on one particular characteristic. If the 'quality of emphasis' for each concept is different, then the scales of measurement for each are different. For instance, let us stipulate, for the sake of illustrating our point, that for an action to be "Altruistic," it must be:

(a) performed for the sake of others
(b) performed at some cost or risk to the agent

Let us similarly stipulate that for an action to be Heroic, it also has to be both and only (a) and (b). The traditional result of these two concepts sharing the same necessary and sufficient qualities is that altruism and heroism are qualitatively the same. They might be quantitatively different if (b) simply must be more extreme in heroic cases. That is, maybe the difference between the two action types is that extremely altruistic actions are heroic.

However, imagine that it is the case that an action becomes *more* altruistic whenever the degree to which the action instantiates (a) increases. Also imagine that it is the case that an action becomes *more* heroic whenever the degree to which the action instantiates (b) increases. So, altruistic actions and heroic actions each must be done for the sake of others and at some cost or risk to the agent. But the more the action is done for the sake of others, the more altruistic the action; the more the action is performed at some cost or risk to the agent, the more heroic the action. The result is that some actions might be more heroic but less altruistic than others, even though the two action types share the same qualities. For example, take the following two cases:

> I. At great risk to her future career prospects, and at the likely cost of her colleagues' esteem, a victim of continued sexual harassment sues her otherwise popular boss as well as the company for allowing his harassment of her to persist unchecked. She sues primarily because she wants to stop getting harassed herself, although she also knows and is somewhat motivated by the fact that her lawsuit will make it far less likely that future female employees at her workplace will be sexually harassed.
>
> II. A man who has a moderate aversion to needles gives blood once a month for his entire adult life.

I and II are each altruistic and also heroic, based on the stipulated definitions of these words. However, I is more heroic and less altruistic. II is more altruistic and

less heroic. Both the woman in I and the man in II exhibit behavior that is (at least partially) done for the sake of others. Both incur some risk or cost. However, the woman in I incurs significant risks and costs, and is only somewhat motivated by the interests of others. The man in II does not incur a high level of risk or cost, but is acting almost entirely for the sake of others.

These qualities cannot be measured on the same scale; so the difference cannot be merely quantitative. That is, one cannot say that heroic actions are extreme versions of altruistic actions and one cannot say that altruistic actions are extreme versions of heroic actions. Instead, though they share the same necessary and sufficient qualities, they are not merely quantitatively distinct, because each concept requires its own scale, or axis of emphasis, for measuring actions.[5]

Now, consider again Steiner's account of evil, but revised in the way that Russell suggests [which seems advantageous given Russell's point that, on Steiner's unmodified account, pleasurable shop-lifting would count as evil (2007, pp. 670–671)]. On the modified account an action is evil if it is *very* harmful and also performed by someone who takes pleasure from action. The result is that evil is quantitatively distinct from some acts of wrongdoing. The lesser *degree* to which pleasurable shop-lifting is wrong and the greater *degree* to which rape, for the sake of pleasure, is wrong is what makes the former non-evil and the latter evil.

However, the two types of action might instead be QE distinct, if we interpret Steiner's theory to include an emphasis, as we have characterized the term, on pleasure, which seems reasonable given Steiner's view that pleasure is the distinguishing feature of evil. Ordinary wrongdoing takes into account all sorts of moral features, depending on the ethical theory. But Steiner's theory, thus interpreted, could stipulate that while both (1) pleasure to agent and (2) extreme harmfulness are necessary conditions for an action to be evil, the degree of evil could be determined by the degree of pleasure to agent.[6] Different axes are then needed to measure the degree to which any action is evil versus the degree to which it is wrong, even when both actions are harmful and cause pleasure to the agent. Consider the following two cases:

[5] Now, one might object that this conceptual analysis of heroism is off the mark. After all, it may seem plausible that a cancer patient can heroically confront his fears of death purely for himself or that someone can heroically stand up for her own rights without doing anything for the sake of others. We are worried that this objection may stem from a confusion between heroism and bravery. After all, bravery is often present in heroic actions, and vice versa. For the sake of stipulating straight-forward and easily applicable criteria, we will assume that bravery done merely for the sake of oneself is just that: bravery, not heroism. We find this perfectly plausible. Nonetheless, we are not attempting the defense of any particular conceptual analysis here. The goal of this paper is to demonstrate an alternate form of concept distinctness and show how it might be useful in a particular philosophical discussion. Further, we do not intend that this example serves as evidence for QE distinctness having real applications to the world. It is merely a mechanism for describing this possible type of distinctness. As should become clear, this paper is not committed to there being any actual instances of QE distinctness in the world.

[6] We should note that Steiner does state that the scale for measuring the degree of evilness is "a *compound* scale … combining the scale for wrongness with that for pleasure" (2002, p. 190). However, with Russell's plausible addition of extreme harm, it does not seem unreasonable to interpret Steiner's theory of evil as having an emphasis on pleasure, at least for the sake of illustrating the possibility of QE distinctness.

III. Tarquin rapes his girlfriend who refuses to have sex with him, finding immense pleasure in his sense of dominating her.

IV. John is told that he must shoot and kill one thousand people (who will otherwise be freed) or else have his leg chopped off. John is so selfish that he values his leg over the lives of the thousand people. He shoots and kills the thousand people, with great sadness at their deaths, but with some small pleasure in getting to handle an automatic weapon to kill.

On Steiner's modified account of evil, III and IV both count as evil, as both involve pleasure for the agent and both cause extreme harm. Given our suggested quality of emphasis, III is more evil than IV, since the pleasure is more extreme. However, most would agree that IV is morally worse than III (without discounting that III is still morally very wrong). This means that *even if*, on Steiner's modified account, with our suggested quality of emphasis, evil is not purely qualitatively distinct but is instead QE distinct from ordinary wrongs, one still cannot say that evil is merely an extreme version of ordinary wrongdoing.

In the application of QE distinctness to Steiner's modified account, as well as in our applications that follow, it is important that we distinguish our approach from one that will not resolve the problem identified by Russell. It is tempting, and easy, to come up with cases for any of these theories that show that some acts of evil are less wrongful than some acts of ordinary wrongdoing. Whenever an extremely wrongful action is failing to meet *some* necessary condition for being evil, according to the theory at hand, it is still bound to be worse than some evil actions. However, Russell is not stymied by such cases.[7] He can admit that those ordinary wrongs are qualitatively distinct from evil actions while persisting in saying that the set of ordinary wrongs that *do* share all of the same qualities with evil (but some to lesser degrees—like harm instead of extreme harm) is merely quantitative distinct from evil actions.

Our cases and arguments will demonstrate that Russell is wrong. Two actions can share all qualities that are necessary for an act to be evil, and, even still, one action can be more evil but less wrongful than the other.

3 Claudia Card's account of evil and QE distinctness

Claudia Card offers a theory of evil according to which "evils are reasonably foreseeable intolerable harms produced by inexcusable wrongs" (2010, p. 16, italics omitted).[8] Under this theory, evil has two main conceptual components: a harm

[7] Russell discusses and acknowledges the possibility that some ordinary wrongs may be morally worse than some evil actions, even under theories that he considers plausible (2014, pp. 121–128). He uses this possibility to argue for a conceptual pluralism regarding evil (pp. 128–130). According to Russell, there are several plausible accounts of evil, some of which simply view evil as extreme culpable wrongs, and some of which add a necessary psychological component such as malice, sadistic pleasure, or knowing defiance.

[8] In an earlier version of her theory, Card used "culpable wrongdoing" in place of "inexcusable wrongs." Thus, Card's previous definition of evil was "foreseeable intolerable harms produced by culpable wrongdoing" (2002, p. 3). However, nothing in this paper hinges on the difference between

component and an agency component involving inexcusability. Though Card lists "foreseeability" as a separate element, we are going to assume it is largely a component of inexcusability. That is, if a harm was largely unforeseeable, it was, at least to some degree, excusable.

First, evil actions, social practices, or institutions cause intolerable harm. Such harm "deprives victims of basics ordinarily needed to make a life (or a death) decent" (Card 2010, p. 8). To some extent, what is needed to make a life decent is partially determined by social, historical, and physical context. Nonetheless, intolerable harm is not entirely relative to what a particular individual can actually tolerate or learn to tolerate. Rather, it is about what a life must include and cannot include in order to go minimally well. Card gives the following examples of intolerable harm: "lack of access to non-toxic food, water, or air; lack of freedom from prolonged and severe pain, humiliation, or debilitating fear; prolonged inability to move one's limbs or to stand, sit or lie down; lack of affective bonds with others; and the inability to make choices and act on at least some of them effectively." To return to Russell's example, pleasurable shoplifting—even if inexcusably wrong—is not an evil since the harm caused is not intolerable.

Second, evils are produced by inexcusable wrongs. Genuine excuses include reduced culpability due to compulsion or ignorance as well as morally defensible reasons in support of a particular action, social policy, or institution (Card 2010, pp. 16–17). Intolerably harmful non-evil wrongs have moral reasons that count in their favor, but, since they are still wrongs, these reasons are overridden or outweighed overall. Of course, reasons are often given for evils. As Card astutely notes, evils are often perpetrated in response to other evils (2010, p. 3). Yet purported reasons for evils "do not count morally in favor of the deed. They carry no moral weight" (Card 2010, p. 13). A physician amputating a person's infected leg would not be an evil if done to save the person's life (a morally defensible reason), even if there is an effective medication for treating the infection but the physician has no feasible access to or no reasonable way of knowing about the medication (nullifying culpability). However, Nazi physician Sigmund Rascher amputating the healthy limbs of concentration camp prisoners to test the effectiveness of an experimental blood coagulant was an evil practice since this is not a morally defensible reason for such extreme harm.

One of Card's primary motivations for developing an account of evil is to distinguish evils from other wrongs in order to help prioritize resources for preventing and responding to wrongs as well as to "set limits to excusable forms of defense against or retaliation for atrocities perpetrated or threatened by others" (2010, p. 7). Moreover, Card's terminology now contrasts "evils" with "lesser wrongs." So, it could well be the case that Card would welcome Russell's notion of evil as a "moral red zone" of a particular type of wrongdoing as friendly to her

Footnote 8 continued
Card's previous and current definition. Card's current definition is broader, incorporating all actions falling under the previous definition of evil since culpability is one way of lacking an excuse, and "inexcusable wrongs" better captures institutional evils.

account. However, we believe that she has recourse to distinguish evil from ordinary wrongs in a way that is not merely quantitative.

Two qualities distinguish evils from other wrongs on Card's theory: intolerable harm and inexcusability. Both intolerable harm and inexcusability must be determined by examining a variety of moral factors. Within inexcusability, there are several possible dimensions of culpability, including various motives and degrees of voluntariness, ignorance, duress, recklessness, neglect, and carelessness (Card 2002, p. 14). Card's theory allows for: inexcusable wrongs that are not evil since the harms created are not intolerable; and intolerable harms that are not evil since they admit of some level of moral excuse. Both qualities are necessary conditions for an action to count as evil.

Card's earlier work emphasized intolerable harm as distinguishing evils from other wrongs, which suggests a possible quality of emphasis for determining the degree of evil (noted in Card 2010, pp. 5–11).[9] Let's add the following stipulation to the view: an evil action is one that meets some threshold of inexcusability and is more or less evil depending on the degree of intolerability associated with the caused harm. With this modification in hand, let us examine two more cases.

> V. A military pilot carries out orders to drop a nuclear bomb. Along with destroying industrial military functions, the bomb kills hundreds of thousands of civilians and many more suffer horribly from nuclear fallout. Although the pilot had serious qualms about carrying out the bombing, she is following orders from the legitimate military hierarchy, with a good track record, whom she assumes has justification for the action. Trusting her superiors, she does no further investigation into this justification. It turns out that the bombing orders were unjustified.
>
> VI. Arriving back at her base after fulfilling the bombing mission, the pilot beats and leverages emotionally-damaging insults at her elderly father. The abuse is due to the pilot's frustration from her qualms about dropping the bomb and her resultant feeling of despair.

Though we do not commit to this position, it is certainly *plausible* that our agent's action in VI is morally worse—is a greater act of wrongdoing—than V. Elder abuse might well be worse than failing to fact check your superiors in war, even when the consequences are foreseeably grave. However, the elder abuse, assuming the beatings and insults are aberrations and not intolerable, is not evil. Assuming that there is surely *some* responsibility to refuse to cause such devastating harms without first receiving credible data ensuring its justifiability in war, it seems that the pilot in V clears the threshold for inexcusability. If this is the case, then, in light of our stipulated quality of emphasis, V is more evil than VI given the massive intolerability of the harms caused to so many.

[9] Card now places greater emphasis on agency and the lack of moral excuse in distinguishing evils from other wrongs (Card 2010, p. 13). Thus, our added stipulation to Card's theory does not fully capture the greater complexity of her current theory. Perhaps intolerable harm and inexcusability should both be considered qualities of emphasis in differentiating evils from ordinary wrongs under Card's theory.

This is enough to demonstrate that Card's account of evil, with a stipulated quality of emphasis, is QE distinct from ordinary wrongdoing. Sure, there will be *some* ordinary, inexcusable wrongs that would be made evil solely by ramping up the degree of intolerability associated with the harm. However, since it is possible for some non-evil wrongs to be morally worse than some evils, even when the two actions share the same moral qualities (harm and inexcusability in this case) evils are not merely extreme ordinary wrongs. The difference between evils and other wrongs cannot be purely quantitative.

4 Application to further theories of evil

QE distinctness also plausibly applies to other theories of evil, such as that of John Kekes and even Calder's own theory, which are structurally similar to Card's theory. Both Kekes's and Calder's theories of evil also have a harm component and an agency component. Each theory's requirement of "significant harm" is analogous, if not identical, to Card's "intolerable harm" requirement (Kekes 2005, p. 1; Calder 2013). And, like Card's theory, both Kekes's and Calder's theories include inexcusable wrongdoing. But what distinguishes these theories of evil from Card's is an intentionality requirement as part of the agency component. Under Kekes's theory, an evil action must also lack moral excuse and be motivated by malevolence (2005, p. 1–2). Calder refers to his intentionality requirement as an "e-motivation," which is "an inexcusable intention to bring about, allow, or witness [a significant harm] for an unworthy goal" (2013, p. 188).

By including intentionality, Calder further distinguishes his theory from Card's by allowing for a distinction between an evil perpetrated, which requires intention, versus an evil suffered, which merely requires a significant harm resulting from inexcusable wrongdoing. This distinction opens up the possibility of evils suffered that are not caused by evil actions. According to this theory, some actions may foreseeably produce evil suffering, thus are wrongful, but are not evil since the suffering was not intended either as a means or as part of the goal (Calder 2009, p. 31). An example of this sort of wrongdoing is purchasing cheap shoes knowing that such a purchase may likely help perpetuate sweatshops: wrong but not evil (Calder 2009, pp. 16–22).

The inclusion of an intentionality requirement may appear to make the distinction between evils and ordinary wrongdoing purely qualitative on Kekes's and Calder's theories. If a person, entity, or institution inexcusably intends a significant harm with malevolent motivation (for Kekes) or for an unworthy goal (for Calder), it is an evil action. Without such intention, the action is not evil. However, each of the essential components of these theories comes in degrees. We have already seen that both harm and inexcusability can vary in amplitude. Even intentionality allows for degrees, from accidental to passing blind rage to longstanding meticulously-calculated action (Kekes 2005, p. 2). Ordinary wrongs and evils may share all of the essential components of evils under Kekes's and Calder's theories, yet if an action fails to have a great enough degree of any of these essential components, it will be

an ordinary wrong, not an evil. The mere presence of intentionality cannot itself distinguish evils from ordinary wrongs.

Nor is the distinction between evils and ordinary wrongdoing purely quantitative on Kekes's and Calder's theories. Return to the pilot in cases V and VI. Add an inexcusable malevolent intention to case VI, involving the elder abuse (and assume that malevolent intentions typically qualify as one type of "e-motivation" under Calder's theory by being for an unworthy goal).[10] She malevolently intends to cause her elderly father *significant* harm in VI (even if we previously determined that the harm might not be *intolerable*). So, on these theories, the action in VI counts as an evil. For the revision to V, assume that the pilot still has serious qualms about killing so many civilians and *almost* no malevolent intention (though, being an American born and bred patriot/xenophobe, she has a bit). However, the pilot also has terrific evidence that her military superiors are non-reliable judges of justifiability in military action. She has seen them commit human rights violations before, and recklessly make orders that end in the unnecessary deaths of civilians. Despite this information, she decides to trust their discretion and perform the nuclear bombing.

Now, let us stipulate on behalf of Kekes's and Calder's theories, whether or not they would welcome such a stipulation, that malevolent intentions (or e-motivations more broadly for Calder) are the quality of emphasis for their accounts of evil. If we do so, then case V barely gets onto the chart as an evil action, given the very minimal degree of malevolent intent. On the other hand, case VI is plainly evil on these accounts, even and especially with the stipulated quality of emphasis. However, given the revisions to the cases, particularly to case V, it seems very plausible that the pilot's action in case V is much more wrongful than her action in case VI. She has no excuse for exterminating a large chunk of humankind with a nuclear weapon, given the information available to her. She has no excuse for hurting her father. But the former is more wrongful than the latter, even if less evil. Since both actions manifest all of the necessary conditions for an action to be evil, but one action is more evil and less wrongful than the other, the difference between evil and ordinary wrong is not merely quantitative.

5 Conclusion

We do not mean to champion any of these particular accounts of evil. It may well be that another theory of evil is the correct theory of evil. It may even be the case that the correct theory of evil simply *is* a red zone on the spectrum of wrongness. This

[10] Again, Calder defines an e-motivation as "an inexcusable intention to bring about, allow, or witness [a significant harm] for an unworthy goal" (2013, p. 188). We are not suggesting that Calder's required e-motivations are equivalent to malevolent intentions. There can be other types of unworthy goals that bring about significant harm but are not directly based on a desire to harm someone. For instance, a person may intentionally drive her car over a pedestrian, foreseeably killing the person, merely with the goal of getting to the grocery store for a doughnut as quickly as possible. The driver's motivation is dreadfully selfish, and inexcusably negligent, but not directly malevolent. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to view malevolent intentions as typically qualifying as one type of e-motivation.

essay simply has offered a critique of (a) Russell's view that the concept of evil *can only* be a red zone at the far end of moral wrongness and, (b) Calder's view that two concepts are merely quantitatively distinct if one does not have an essential property that is not an essential property of the second. We have argued that there are plausible accounts of evil (e.g. slightly modified versions of existing accounts) that must be measured on a disparate scale from that of moral wrongness *even if* all qualities of evil acts are shared with some acts of ordinary wrongdoing. Conceptual distinctions need not be limited to either purely quantitative or purely qualitative distinctions; concepts can be QE distinct. As such, philosophers who wrangle with the concept of evil are not confined to either isolating some essential quality shared only by evil actions or to viewing evil merely as extremely wrong actions.

In this paper, we have explained QE distinctness using only one quality of emphasis for each concept. This has been the case in the heroism versus altruism example (e.g. for altruism: done for the sake of others), as well as in the application of QE distinctness to the various accounts of evil. However, an account of evil could have more than one quality of emphasis. When this is the case, the degree to which an action is evil will depend on not just one, but multiple qualities. What is important for QE distinctness is only that, when dealing with an act of evil and an act of ordinary wrongdoing, even if these share all of the same moral qualities, some emphasis of a quality or balance of qualities different from that used to determine the degree of wrongdoing will play the role of determining the degree to which the action is evil.

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