Editorial: Sin and Vice

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Albeit often overlapping, sin and vice are two related yet clearly distinguished concepts. It would require an extremely long detour to sketch the history of such thick, central notions in Western culture, as well as their similarities, differences, and overlappings. Sin is a polysemic notion. The word refers, primarily, to an *action* whereby an agent intentionally fails to live up to the will or commands of God (see Stump, 2018). However, sin can be also considered as a *disposition* of the will, i.e., an inclination to engage in sinful actions (Plantinga 2000). Finally, according to parts of the Christian tradition, sin is a metaphysical state, i.e., a condition of "uncleanness" which marks a fundamental ontological difference between human beings and God (M. Adams 1991, 20f). While according to the Christian thought vice can be a cause of sin, and a sinful disposition may closely resemble a vice, the two concepts shouldn't be confused. First, while sin pertains to a theological vocabulary, talking of vices is perfectly compatible with a secular philosophical discourse, as the recent success of virtue ethics and virtue-vice epistemology testifies. This comes as no surprise, if one thinks that the very origin of the concept is rooted in the secular philosophical tradition tracing back to Plato and Aristotle. Secondly, within character-based moral and epistemic theories, a vice is, unequivocally, a trait of character. As such, it is part of an agent's psychological makeup, which means that it is a stable feature of their moral psychology, independently of its specific behavioral manifestations. And while an action may well be vicious, it can be so only insofar as it springs from a vicious trait, which has—so to speak—ontogenetic, conceptual, and even normative priority over the actions it elicits.

In this special issue, we aim to further clarify the nature of sin and vice and the connection between sin and vice. The issue includes seven contributions. Three contributions concern topics in philosophy of religion, two further contributions deal with metaphysical issues and the last two contributions mostly focus on ethical problems.

Kevin Timpe, in his "The Inevitability of Sin", explores the idea that all humans (except Christ and maybe Mary) cannot freely avoid sinning, at least

following the Christian doctrine of original sin. Timpe models this idea using Lewis' theory of counterfactuals. Indeed, the inevitability of sin is a modal notion: roughly, if a human were in specific conditions, s/he could not avoid sinning. However, to understand this notion and evaluate the relevant counterfactuals connected with it, it is necessary to restrict the set of accessible worlds (from the actual world in which humans cannot avoid sinning) by introducing specific restriction condition(s). The author then shows how such restriction conditions should be singled out from the standpoint of two theological doctrines, i.e., theological determinism and Molinism. On theological determinism, the restriction condition is a certain volition of God, i.e., that each human in the relevant world commits at least one sin. On Molinism, the restriction condition is Plantinga's transworld depravity thesis. Finally, Timpe faces libertarianism. Libertarianism seems to be at odds with the inevitability of sin. However, the author suggests two options. The first option consists in accepting two theses: that someone may freely and responsibly do something even without having alternative possibilities and that all humans are (partly) identical with the first sinner by virtue of some volition of God. The second option amounts to operating on the restriction conditions for the accessibility relation connected with the relevant counterfactuals.

In "On the Privation Theory of Evil: A Reflection on Pain and the Goodness of God's Creation", Parker Haratine reconsiders the privation theory of evil in connection with two theological theses, i.e., that God is the creator of everything and that being and goodness are interconvertible. The privation theory of evil seems to follow from the conjunction of these theses. According to it, evil cannot have a positive existence or, better, it is entirely ontologically dependent for its existence on something else, which is good. Thus, evil is the privation of the latter. Otherwise, *qua* existent, evil would turn out to be good. However, Haratine examines pain as a classical counterexample that stands in the way of the privation theory of evil. Pain is evil, but it is not necessarily a privation. Pain has a positive reality. The author defends this thesis against three main responses on behalf of privation theorists: that pain is not real, since it is an evaluative mental state; that pain is not evil, since it has some function or utility; that pain actually is the lack of something, so that it squares well with the privation theory. Haratine's conclusion is twofold. First, even if pain is a positive evil and the privation theory of evil is false, the privation theory does not actually follow from the theological theses mentioned above. For those theses are actually compatible with the non-existence of evil, which is incompatible with the privation theory. Secondly, one may accept an alternative view of evil: the opposition view. According to the latter, evil is good insofar as it enjoys absolute existence — which is good by itself. However, evil is bad insofar as it does not have kind-existence,

i.e., it does not have any proper nature or end. In this respect, evil is nothing but the opposite of something which enjoys kind-existence.

Helen De Cruz and Johan De Smedt, in their "Schleiermacher and the Transmission of Sin: A Biocultural Evolutionary Model", explore Schleiermacher's account of the transmission of sin. They first point out that the traditional Augustinian account of original sin—which includes one specific 'primal sin' episode and some biological mechanism of transmission of sin—is affected by at least two drawbacks: it is not supported by current biological evidence as concerns the existence of a single ancestral pair and it does not explain why transmission mechanisms were implemented by God in the first place. Schleiermacher's account is based upon God-consciousness, i.e., self-consciousness and species-consciousness coupled with a feeling of absolute dependence upon God. God-consciousness emerges in humans from biological mechanisms, when humans start to perceive their relative dependence upon natural resources and then recognize that God is the source of nature itself. Sin enters the stage when there is a mismatch between one's own God-consciousness and one's own social and bodily self-consciousness. This mismatch is due, on the one hand, to our 'seeds of sin', i.e., our biological tendencies to commit evil acts, and, on the other hand, to the negative impact upon ourselves of the cultural communities where we live, that contribute to transmitting sinful tendencies. Therefore, Schleimermacher's model is a 'biocultural' model of the transmission of sin. The authors then present empirical evidence for the existence of God-consciousness and for the social transmission of sin, through the influence of peers, parents and social models. Finally, they adapt the cultural Price equation in order to show how changes in adhering to social norms from one generation to another turn out to depend upon the number of cultural descendants of an individual (divided by the population mean number of cultural descendants), the perceived cultural prevalence of that trait (i.e., adhering to social norms) and some cognitive attractors that work as distorting biases.

In their "Vices, Virtues, and Dispositions", Lorenzo Azzano and Andrea Raimondi draw some interesting connections between the metaethical inquiry into the nature of virtues and vices and the metaphysics of dispositions. They first point out that virtues are endowed with genuinely dispositional nature: one has a given virtue insofar as one is disposed (to a certain degree) to behave in given ways. Indeed, like dispositions, all virtues have typical manifestations and triggering circumstances. Like a disposition, each virtue may be possessed even if and when it gets unmanifested. And it may come in degrees and be interfered with. However, vices need not be thought of as dispositions. But the metaphysics of dispositions may be exploited in order to understand their nature. Indeed, the authors distinguish between three types of vicious persons: the incontinent, the malevolent and the indifferent. These types of persons may produce the same

behavior, e.g., failing to help someone in need. Yet, they may produce the same behavior in different ways. The incontinent possesses the virtuous disposition to help someone in need, but s/he does not exercise it because of systematic interferences due to negative character traits and/or negative external circumstances. In this respect, the incontinent only mimics the exercise of a vicious disposition, without possessing the latter. On the contrary, the malevolent actually possesses vicious dispositions and s/he regularly exercises them by deliberation. Finally, the indifferent lacks both virtuous and vicious dispositions. Thus, when s/he finds herself in the typical circumstances in which a given virtuous disposition should be exercised (e.g., meeting someone in need), those very circumstances cause the loss of the disposition. They act as 'finks'.

In "Presentism, Timelessness, and Evil", Ben Page reflects upon divine timelessness and evil from the standpoint of presentism. Divine timelessness seems to be incompatible with the defeat of evil at some time in the history of creation. Since the latter is part of Christian teaching, divine timelessness seems to be incompatible with Christian teaching as well. To account for the defeat of evil, one could resort to presentism. Yet, presentism needs to reject divine timelessness. Against this line of reasoning, Page argues for two theses. The first thesis is that it is possible to make sense of divine timelessness even from a presentist perspective. For one may figure out a possible world with two island universes that are temporally disconnected from each other. Both universes are presentist. In one of such universes, there is only one instant, that it is 'eternally present', so to say. It is the universe of God. In the other universe, there is only one present instant (at a time) but there is also flow of time. This is the universe of creation. Some complications are in order, since tenses and existence become relative to island universes. Moreover, one may introduce some tenseless notion of existence and argue that, even in the universe of God, the instants and the entities living in the universe of creation enjoy tenseless existence, so that evil enjoys tenseless existence as well. At any rate, evil may get defeated in the universe of creation as time passes by and it stops existing. But Page also argues for a second thesis. According to it, evil never gets completely defeated in the 'presentist' universe of creation. Indeed, consider a time at which evil does not exist anymore. Still, at that time, there are past truths about past evils, which are made true by presently existing truthmakers. Such truthmakers, even if they do not bring about pain or suffering and even if they may only consist of vivid memories in God's mind, still reintroduce evil in the universe of creation.

Ian James Kidd, in his "From Vices to Corruption to Misanthropy", explores the connection between failings/vices, corruption and misanthropy. "Failing" is a term broader than "vice", since it is not necessarily connected with the Aristotelian tradition. Kidd recognizes that failings are diverse, that some of them are temporary, whereas others are persistent and/or linked to specific

worldviews. Some failings only involve individuals, whereas others also or only involve collectives (e.g., institutions, companies, societies, and so on). Corruption results *from* failings and results *in* failings. More precisely, being exposed or subjected to corrupting conditions either results in the erosion of virtues or in the introduction or the strengthening of vices/failings. The author singles out different types of corrupting conditions and different ways in which such conditions work (e.g., through the acquisition of new failings, through the activation of latent failings, and so on). In turn, generalized corruption may lead to misanthropy. Kidd accepts one revisionary account of misanthropy—inspired by David Cooper's works—according to which misanthropy is a negative appraisal of the collective character and performance of humankind. Misanthropy may bring about different manifestations, stances and behaviors. It may come together with different affects. At any rate, it is typically produced by the experience of failings that are ubiquitous and entrenched in humankind. Kidd concludes that there is also room for Christian misanthropy, insofar as Christians recognize that humankind lives in a sinful condition, i.e., in a condition characterised by fundamentally disordered tendencies when they pursue goodness apart from God.

Charles Taliaferro and Emily Knuths, in their "How Sinful Is Sin? How Vicious Is Vice? A Modest Defense of the Guise of the Good", defend the guise of the good thesis, according to which everyone acts upon what s/he conceives of as good, or as least evil. They tackle three counterexamples against this thesis, i.e., that one may disapprove of one's own actions and still feel compelled to make them, that one may act upon conflicting and irrational urges and impulses and that one may even seek annihilation or self-annihilation. Interestingly enough, in the latter case, they argue that one still acts upon what counts as least evil (i.e., destroying something that is perceived as bad) or that one pursues the good by identifying it with punishment or revenge. Taliaferro and Knuths then claim that this thesis favors moral realism over moral subjectivism. Moral subjectivism is incapable of explaining our moral attitudes when we do something because we believe it is good. And it is incapable of providing reasons for abstaining from some profoundly evil actions when we feel compelling urges towards them. They also deal with two objections against moral realism, i.e., that it makes rightness and wrongness mysterious and that it is at odds with the higher number of existing moral disagreements. Finally, the authors examine the figure and the actions of Darth Vader in light of the guise of the good thesis.

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