Moral Tegrity

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Abstract

In his essay "Moral integrity", Peter Winch criticises the conception of morality as a guide to action. What such a conception overlooks is the understanding of something as a moral problem, what it is that calls one to do something in the first place. In this paper, I discuss these issues in dialogue with Winch's essay, as I believe there are fruitful aspects of this essay that have not yet been sufficiently explored. These aspects concern how the above-mentioned understanding is to be described, above all that the substance and point of moral understanding must be searched for in the context of my relations to others. By a discussion of what this means, it is also possible to answer some of the problems Winch runs into during the course of his discussion.

Papers in moral philosophy often start with describing a moral problem.[1] This can be done in a more abstract way or by means of an example. The problem will then be discussed in the paper, and the task set is to find a solution to it, to criticise previously proposed solutions, to show that there are no solutions, or in some other way draw theoretical conclusions with the problem as a starting point. Whatever the exact approach of the paper, there is (at least) two presuppositions they have in common: that what they are starting with is a problem, and that it is a moral problem. This shows that there is a kind of moral understanding that such approaches presuppose without making explicit: of something as (or as not) a problem, of something as (or as not) a specifically moral problem.

[1] Of Lars Hertzberg's many papers, the one I think I have returned to and recommended to others the most is "Moral Escapism and Applied Ethics" (2022b: ch. 9). My present paper is part of my ongoing reflections on some of the themes of Hertzberg's paper, on the (problematic) nature of moral philosophy in general and of applied ethics in particular.

If this is so, a moral philosophy that concerns itself with moral understanding rather than with moral problems is not only possible but necessary.

Not seeing the need for such a moral philosophy is largely the result of seeing "action" as the central moral phenomenon.[2] Moral problems simply exist, and morality consists in solving them in one way or another.[3] Such solutions, or criticisms of previously proposed solutions, are what philosophy is supposed to provide. And since the solution, if there is one, is to do something, morality is simply a matter of action. What one here overlooks, however, is what calls one to do something in the first place.

In this paper, I will discuss the above issues in dialogue with Peter Winch's essay "Moral integrity" (1972: 171–192), as I believe there are fruitful aspects of this essay that have not yet been sufficiently explored. Winch formulates a forceful criticism of the above conception of morality and moral philosophy, and by further reflection on some of his examples, it will be possible to come to a deeper understanding of what I just said such a conception overlooks – what calls one to do something in the first place. This exploration of the implications of Winch's important points will sometimes be in tension with other things he says in the essay. The critical side of my discussion should however not be overemphasised, firstly since the criticism is inspired by Winch himself, secondly since I do not discuss other essays by Winch, which would be necessary if my focus was criticism and not what a discussion of this specific essay by Winch can help us see. It should also be noted that the problems I point to are most often the result of Winch staying close to those he criticises, which could be understood as a conscious, argumentative decision on his part.

1. Winch and action

Not seeing the need for a moral philosophy that concerns itself with moral understanding rather than with moral problems is largely the result of seeing "action" as the central moral phenomenon, I said. This focus on action has

[2] For examples of this, take a look at how the subject is described in textbooks, e.g.: "Morality is, at the very least, the effort to guide one's conduct by reason – that is, to do what there are the best reasons for doing" (Rachels and Rachels 2015: 3).

[3] Doing ideology critique, one would describe this as an example of instrumental, technological reason (cf. Horkheimer 1947; Habermas 1968).

been criticised by some moral philosophers. For example, in his essay "Moral integrity", Peter Winch critically discusses "a certain way of looking […] which I suspect is secretly at work in the writings of many philosophers" (1972: 171), a way of looking that he sums up in this way:

> he [the spectator and agent] needs to be presented with considerations which will show him why he should initiate one set of physical changes rather than another, or rather than none at all; he needs guidance, that is, in the exercise of his will. Morality is thought of by many philosophers as one such guide. (1972: 172)

In criticism of this "way of looking", Winch writes:

> our understanding of this term [moral guidance] presupposes our understanding of the nature of the difficulties which occasion the need for guidance. Now these difficulties would naturally be conceived as obstacles between a man and some goal he is trying to attain. […] But morality has nothing much to do with helping people to overcome any of these. On the contrary, were it not for morality, they would often be a great deal easier to overcome. What are the difficulties, then, which morality can show us the way round? I do not know what answer can be given except to say that they are moral difficulties. (1972: 172)

Winch expands on this by pointing out that morality does not only come to expression in what course of action one decides to perform but in what one "considers the alternatives to be", what reasons one "considers it relevant to deploy", how one describes the situation and what kind of "issues [one thinks are] raised by it" (1972: 178).

In other words, Winch points to one of the things I mentioned above, that the understanding that there is a moral problem logically precedes the question about solutions, and the rest of my paper will be an attempt at saying more about the nature of this understanding. However, some of the things Winch says in the essay seems to point in a slightly different direction than the direction of understanding. Compare its notorious ending:

> Philosophy may indeed try to remove intellectual obstacles in the way of recognizing certain possibilities (though there is always the danger that it will throw up new obstacles). But what a man makes of the possibilities he can comprehend is a matter of what man he is. This is revealed in the way he lives; it is revealed *to him* in his understanding of what he can and what he cannot attach importance to. But philosophy can no more show a man what he should attach importance to than geometry can show a man where he should stand. (1972: 191)

I say "notorious", among other things because of the many differing attempts at explaining what Winch says here, which makes it safe to say that the passage is very unclear.[4] Anyhow, in the light of the above quotations from Winch, one can understand the ending as pointing out – rightly – that when the question about what one should attach importance to is asked (that is, the question relating to philosophy as the question where to stand relates to geometry), the decisive part of the answering of such a question is already settled: the terms in which it is expressed, the possible alternatives one sees, and the very fact that the question is asked in this situation. From here, however, different paths go. One possibility – the one I will try to explicate in what follows – is to leave the question about action guidance behind (the one Winch could be said to be alluding to when he refers to the question about where to stand), and instead see the central – philosophical as well as moral – issue as one of understanding. In his essay, Winch often points in this direction, and my discussion will mostly be in dialogue with his examples. But here at the end of his essay, Winch follows another path. Since philosophy cannot answer the question about where one should stand, its task, as Winch here sees it, is to map the different possibilities and their interrelations, similarly to the way geometry relates to points in space. At the end of the day, Winch thus still sees the question about what to attach importance to as central, he only conceives of it and the relation of moral philosophy to it in a different way than the traditional one (the philosophy of action guidance, so to speak).[5]

2. Moral understanding

At this point, however, it is possible to use Winch's above important points to show things he does not state explicitly. What Winch is doing in his essay is certainly an expression of what *he* considers the alternatives to be, what reasons he considers it relevant to deploy, how he describes the (philosophical) situation and what kind of issues he thinks are raised by it. In other words, it is not possible to escape questions such as these four ones by moving the

[4] For one of the better ones, see Hertzberg 2022a: 111–112. Cockburn 2022: ch. 8 does not contain a discussion of this specific passage, though he mentions it, but even so, his chapter is very helpful in this context.

[5] As I pointed out above, Winch's approach might be strategic: since he is criticising the above "way of looking", he needs to remain quite close to it. This explains the choice of some of his examples (Violent Saturday, "Father Sergius").

discussion to another plane. For instance, if the problem one discusses would not matter, it would not matter whether one gets it right or wrong. In short, what one finds important will be a dimension of anything one does. (This certainly goes for geometry too, whether applied or theoretical.) Of course, one can take up a morally neutral position in order to be able to mediate between two fighting parties, but this neutrality is relative, not absolute, because what one is doing is an expression of, say, one's finding their conflict destructive.

One way of motivating the claim that the task of philosophy is to map the different possibilities and their interrelations, similarly to the way geometry relates to points in space, could be this one: it must always be possible to express a moral disagreement in a way that both disagreeing parties agree on, otherwise it would be unclear what they disagree about and whether they disagree at all. The task of mediation, mentioned in the previous paragraph, could then come to be seen as not only a possibility in particular cases but as something that by necessity is always possible, and therefore the business of the philosopher specifically. The task of moral philosophy would then be to arrive at and describe this underlying agreement. But this cannot be Winch's position. For even though he may be understood to make an implicit distinction between the intellectual and the moral in the beginning of the above quotation, a distinction that could be understood to underlie the idea of mediation I just gave voice to, it is obvious that such a description of the task of philosophy is in conflict with the central points I have already mentioned. For, as Winch rightly points out, the disagreement can concern what the issues are and how the situation is to be described, which means that there is no reason to believe that an underlying agreement must be there, even though it can of course sometimes be found. Additionally, the idea of a necessarily underlying agreement has a too undialectical understanding of moral development.[6] Speaking for myself, I cannot come up with a single example of a change of mind concerning a serious issue that did not also involve a change

[6] An example of this problem:

> I think the situation is something like this. If one looks at a certain style of life and asks what there is in it which makes it worth while, one will find nothing there. One may indeed describe it in terms which bring out 'what one sees in it', but the use of these terms already presupposes that one does see it from a perspective from which it matters. The words will fall flat on the ears of someone who does not occupy such a perspective even though he is struggling to attain it. (Winch 1972: 190)

Of course, the words *may* fall flat, but I see no reason to claim that they always *will*. Winch does not pay any attention here to the dialectics of different "styles of life" or "perspectives".

of mind concerning the issue itself and its meaning. In that sense, deeper moral understanding will be a deeper understanding also of the shallow.

One way of getting a better grasp of the problem here is by attending to the elusive location of understanding. Winch seems here to see it as a foundation, in the above quotation but also when he writes, using an in this context nearly related word: "the agent *is* this perspective" (1972: 178). In a sense, Winch is right, and understanding is indeed a foundation: the way someone reflects on an issue could be said to be an expression of her understanding of it. At the same time, however, one can come to realise that one's understanding is bad (as opposed to good), shallow (as opposed to deep), etc. As a result of such critical insights – and also of, say, experiences – one's understanding changes; in other words, one's understanding is not given. Leaving the question about action guidance behind and instead seeing the central issue in morality as one of understanding means asking questions directed at one's understanding, about, say, how a specific situation is to be understood or the best terms of describing it. Doing so will in most cases not be a way of trying to show others or oneself what one should attach importance to, but it will definitely influence one's understanding of such issues as well. (In other words, crucial insights are often arrived at indirectly.) Just because it is not possible to choose where to stand, it is not impossible to reflect on questions of fundamental importance and thereby come to occupy another place than before, or to find out that where one previously thought one stood was not a place at all.

What does this mean? That since one's understanding is not a foundation on which everything else is based, what one should aim for is rather some kind of coherence? That this is not the point could be seen in two ways. One is closely connected to what I have already said, the second will, through a discussion of one of Winch's examples, take us to central topics in this context. So, first, what one overlooks if one takes coherence to be what to aim for is that although it is possible to ask critical questions as concerns one's understanding of a particular issue, one's understanding as a, possibly coherent, whole is not a possible object of examination. For the way in which any examination is carried out – its specific "how" – is an expression of one's understanding. In other words, it is not possible to capture oneself in self-

reflection; as living, spirit is not an object of determination.[7] One's moral understanding cannot ever be made fully explicit, because in making something explicit, there is a moral understanding at work, in, say, how you do it and that you find doing it worthwhile. Morality is not an object of inquiry but one's very being (and this is one reason for not seeing the solutions to moral problems as central to moral philosophy). The formation of moral understanding is therefore not something one can be done with, so as to thereafter set to work at what appears in its light. The idea that coherence is the thing to aim for is the idea that it is possible to place one's total moral understanding before oneself, that is, that its realm is limited. At best, what the one who calls for coherence is referring to is the absence of self-deception, or whole-heartedness (see Strandberg 2015b: esp. ch. 2). Rather than to a set of surveyable propositions, these terms point to moral life, which whole-heartedness is the fullness of. Even so, absence of self-deception does not constitute a general aim possible to achieve by planning and exertion, because the way in which one is fighting one form of self-deception could very well make up another one. In any case, the reference to the absence of self-deception or whole-heartedness is not a coincidence here, for such objects point in a very different direction than the merely inward-looking process of attaining coherence. They point to my relations to others, the context in which the substance and point of moral understanding must be searched for. This will be the theme of the rest of this paper.

3. Beyond terms

The above, first way of explaining why coherence is not the thing to aim for as regards moral understanding might seem to be a merely formal point. At the end, however, I pointed in another, non-formal direction, so let us therefore move on to the second way of explaining this. Here one of Winch's examples is important. In a discussion of the Kantian locution "acting for the sake of duty", Winch writes:

> Mrs Solness, in Ibsen's *The Master Builder,* is someone who is obsessed with the Kantian idea of 'acting for the sake of duty'. She does not appear, though, as a

[7] This is why Hegel writes (1986: § 378 Z): "Spirit is not a resting one, but rather absolute restlessness, pure activity." In other words, the systematic position is not a position, but movement (see Hegel 1980: 34–35, 410, 416–417, 429). See also Strandberg 2015a: sec. 4.

> paragon of moral purity but rather as a paradigm of a certain sort of moral corruption. […] When Hilda Wangel arrives at the Solnesses' house as a guest, Mrs Solness, in splendid Kantian tones, says: 'I'll do my best for you. That's no more than my duty.' How very differently we should have regarded her if she had said: 'Do come and see your room. I hope you will be comfortable there and enjoy your stay.' (1972: 180, 183)[8]

Of course, not much would change if we substitute "what coherence requires" for "my duty." (Or rather, it would turn Mrs Solness absurd.)

What is the contrast to terms such as duty and coherence? Well, one could say "hospitality" or "friendliness". Such answers are not false, on the contrary, but they can give rise to the same problem as the one Winch is pointing to, if someone takes hospitality and friendliness as referring to "sakes" for which one is acting, that is, if Mrs Solness would say: "I'll do my best for you. That's no more than what hospitality (or friendliness) requires."[9] This problem arises, in other words, if one sees them as terms the conceptual requirements of which one must act so as to fulfil. In seeing "hospitality" and "friendliness" in this way, these terms would thus lose their point. When not lost, where is that point to be found? Not in the concepts themselves, as we have seen; their point is to be found in the one they are directed to, the guest or friend, in this case Hilda.

However, this way of putting it might give rise to a misunderstanding, as if Hilda should be the object of Mrs Solness's action. On the contrary, such a description would capture the mindset of the original Mrs Solness, who thinks of herself as someone who is there to fulfil certain duties, duties of doing things for Hilda: making her bed, doing her washing, serving her food, and what not. By contrast, the imagined utterance Winch is using as a non-corrupt alternative could very well continue in this way: "Is there anything you would like to do?"[10] Asking questions like this one, Mrs Solness would welcome Hilda by not seeing her as a passive recipient, a setting in which Mrs Solness too would certainly do things, but then not as the outcome of her determining what her duty is or

[8] It should be noted that "for the sake of duty" is not the best way of capturing Kant's expression "aus Pflicht" (Kant 1968: 23 (Ak. 4: 397) and *passim*), but I do not think this matters in this context, especially since my aim here is not to criticise Kant, and I will sometimes use Winch's phrase. A minor translation issue is that in Ibsen's *Bygmester Solness* (2005: 383–423), Hilda Wangel's name is Hilde Wangel, but I will go for Winch's spelling in this paper.

[9] In other words, Winch's criticism, although he only mentions Kant, could just as well be seen as a criticism of virtue ethics.

[10] Of course, nothing really hangs on any specific words. However good something looks on paper, one can imagine it said in a nasty tone of voice, and stiff phrases can be used for comic effect.

with Hilda as the object of her actions. In other words, the nature of the category of action, if this is still the right word, greatly changes when placed in the context Winch suggests. All in all, an important difference between Mrs Solness's actual words and Winch's alternative is the difference between the distance that comes to expression in the former and the friendliness in the latter, a difference that moves us away from individual action to the being of togetherness. By contrast, seeing oneself as the object of someone's attempt at making one feel comfortable means that an atmosphere of togetherness is not fully there.

Winch's alternative could hence be misunderstood, if one would take him to suggest that Mrs Solness is mistaken about what her duty is, that her real duty is to say things like: "Do come and see your room. I hope you will be comfortable there and enjoy your stay." Such a rendering of his alternative would not be a solution to the problem he points to, only another version of it, as I have tried to show in this section. In other words, that Winch is using the word "corruption" should be understood as part of his description of the moral nature of the situation, not as blaming Mrs Solness for, say, not fulfilling her real duties. The same corruption would arise if she would think that acting non-corruptly is the thing to aim at.

4. Gaita on parodies of remorse

That the point of moral concepts is to be found in the one they are directed to (as in the discussion above, concerning friendliness and hospitality) is often stressed by Raimond Gaita.[11] He writes:[12]

[11] I will not discuss the ways in which Gaita sometimes falls behind his own insight. For a critical discussion of Gaita in this regard, see Joel Backström's contribution to this special issue.

[12] Gaita's example is this one:

> Imagine someone – call him N – whose route home from work takes him past destitute homeless people sleeping in the doorways of shops. They are not young homeless, but old, ruined by drink, unable ever to get a job, without family and friends. If any one of them were to die, no one would care. If N were to hear that one to whom he occasionally gave money had died that evening, he might think on it for a few minutes and then his mind would pass to other, perhaps quite trivial, things. No one would do more. Now imagine that one of the homeless people asks N for money, abuses him when he refuses to give it, and stands aggressively in his path. In a fit of temper N pushes him aside, off the kerb and, unintentionally, into the path of an oncoming car. The beggar is killed. […] We know that N's remorse might haunt him all his life, blighting it. At times – especially early on – he might even say that he cannot live with himself, and although he would be unlikely to kill himself in his grief, the thought might come to him. (2000: 30–31)

> N's grief and his suicidal thoughts make sense only if we see them as responses to the moral dimensions of what he has done. Those dimensions are often characterized by terms like 'rules', 'taboos', 'transgressions' and so on. If such terms are the main ones informing our sense of the nature of morality, then we are likely to diminish the significance of the fact that our wrongdoings have victims. N's sense of the terribleness of what he did depends on the way his remorse focuses on his victim in all his individuality. He is not haunted by the principles he betrayed or by the Moral Law he transgressed; he is haunted by the particular beggar he killed. 'My God, what have I done? I have transgressed most terribly! I have violated my principles! I have shattered the ancient taboo against killing! I have transgressed the Moral Law! I have done what would reduce social life to tatters if too many people did it! I have broken the Social Covenant!' These are parodies of his remorse because they are insufficiently attentive to the particularity of his victim […] Reflection on remorse takes us closer, I believe, to the nature of morality and of good and evil, than reflection on rules, principles, taboos and transgressions can. (2000: 32; see also 2004: ch. 4)

Moral understanding is not the understanding of some distinct moral objects, such as values or rules; moral understanding, one could say, is not the understanding of "morality". In this case, moral understanding is one's attention to the victim; in Mrs Solness's case, it is her attention to Hilda Wangel. Principles can at best guide one's attention in this direction but must then not attract attention themselves. If they do, the kind of corruption Winch mentioned above results.

For this reason, it would be a misunderstanding of what Gaita is after to read the above quote as an analysis of the concept of remorse. For example, if someone would object by claiming that this concept is not always used in the way he is using it, and, furthermore, that the use Gaita is putting it to is historically conditioned and so not available to everyone, such a claim would be interpreting Gaita's point as just another expression of precisely what it criticises. "My God, what have I done? I have acted in a way I feel remorse for!" – this would also be a parody of N's remorse. The terribleness of what N has done lies in what he has done to the beggar – him is what N's remorse is the attention to – not in what he has done to himself or to the supposed principle that one should never act in a way that gives rise to remorse. (Or in

One could of course have objections to this example or to Gaita's rendering of it, but however that may be, Gaita does not think that the points I quote him making above are tied to this example specifically. The points concern our understanding of our moral relations to each other, no matter whether the context is one of homelessness or not.

other words, what N has done to himself can only be understood in the light of what he has done to the beggar, not vice versa.) Gaita is not trying to replace one principle with another one, one set of concepts with an alternative set of concepts. Gaita's point does not concern the classification of an emotion but is an attempt at awakening the reader to what N sees. What remorse is the attention to is not remorse itself; any supposed understanding of remorse that sees nothing but remorse will be a misunderstanding of it.

Of course, the particular example Gaita uses to make this point concerns a specific kind of society – one in which there are homeless people sleeping in the doorways of shops – and someone from a very different cultural background may therefore only understand this part of his discussion with some difficulty; on the other hand, she might also be in a better position to understand it, since she is not affected by the obduracy that mars a society where homeless people are part of normality. There are hence no definite conclusions to be drawn from such cultural facts. At best, however, growing up in a society where there are homeless people sleeping in the doorways of shops means to grow to an understanding of their predicament. Even though Gaita gives an example of a homeless man precisely in order to show that remorse is not conditioned by any previous attachments or obligations, the fact that the homeless man is not attached to anyone also makes him especially vulnerable, and becoming aware of this dimension of the vulnerability of homeless people is part of the growth I just referred to. But all this does not mean that "the pained recognition […] of the reality of another" (Gaita 2004: 51–52) is not really of another but of what one has learned. In order for it to be possible for N to "focus[] on his victim in all his individuality" (Gaita 2000: 32), the beggar N has killed must once have been alive, of course, and in this trivial sense there are conditions for the possibility of his remorse. If what Gaita tried to draw the reader's attention to were not the "victim in all his individuality", however, but, say, a principle or value, one might ask questions about its possible historical conditions and so availability; regarding what Gaita is trying to draw the reader's attention to, on the other hand, such questions are not even irrelevant but inapplicable – hence parody.

This problem – that using the word "remorse" may call attention to the word instead of what remorse is the attention to – is not unique to "remorse". In fact, all the words I have used above, whether from Gaita or not, could give rise to similar kinds of misunderstanding, and similar misleading questions and

objections could be asked and raised also concerning them. Pointing to something may always draw people's attention to the hand instead of away from it, to what is pointed to. This then also goes for the positive counterpart to remorse, forgiveness. Gaita's point can here by made again: the one whose forgiveness you need – the one the togetherness with whom is that for the sake of which forgiveness is sought – is the one you have wronged, not the issuer or representative of any supposed principle you have violated. And forgiveness, already when asked but even more so when given, is a movement in the direction of togetherness, away from avoidance and management, shaping the relation in the absence of forgiveness (Strandberg 2021; Strandberg 2024). Other words in the neighbourhood of togetherness, irrespective of whether the context is one of forgiveness or not, are "friendship" and "love". That the point of using such words does not lie in any conceptual requirements these words are supposed to entail and which would give one guidelines for action should be even clearer than in the case of "remorse", for such an idea would distance the one who takes them in that way from the togetherness just referred to, as we have seen also Winch pointing out. The attention to the moral importance of togetherness is the very point of using words such as "friendship" or "love" in this context. In principle, however, any specific word can be used in a way which would be parodic, and no specific words can automatically do the trick, neither remorse, forgiveness, love, nor friendship.

5. Spontaneity?

Another example from Winch's essay is closely connected to these issues and can help us to a deeper understanding of them. Winch writes:

> Simone Weil offers as an example of an absolutely 'pure' action the case of a father playing with his child – not out of a sense of duty but out of pure joy and pleasure. Kant would have to classify this as a case of acting from 'inclination' rather than from 'practical reason' and hence as possessing no moral value […] But let us consider the case of a man who finds himself unable to enjoy himself spontaneously with his child; though he goes out of his way to entertain the child out of a sense of his duty as a father. May he not quite well regard his relative lack of spontaneity, *vis-a-vis* the father in Simone Weil's example, as a *moral* failing? (1972: 181)

The question at the end is obviously rhetorical and the "may" an understatement: the line of thought in Winch's essay is only continuous if

Winch and the readers answer it in the affirmative. (Of course, the father Winch pictures at the end may certainly regard his relative lack of spontaneity in countless different ways, but what the issue concerns is which way of regarding it that shows moral understanding.) Moreover, what Winch is doing here is a good example of what "moral philosophy without moral problems as its central concern" means: neither we, nor the father in Weil's example, nor the father Winch pictures at the end, are asking a question to which the answer would be a solution to a moral problem. Of course, the father Winch pictures could ask himself, say: "How could I come to find playing with my child more fun?" But this is not a moral problem but a problem about how to actualise what he realises is of moral importance. (When thinking about why he cannot find much joy in playing with his child, however, moral difficulties may very well become visible to him.) All this means that the reference to "moral failing" at the end of the quotation does not presuppose that one thinks it possible for him to act differently or to find joy where he does not see much. Winch's point concerns the clear-sighted realisation of the nature of a situation; also truthfully saying that it is not possible to change the situation requires such understanding.

Winch continues his discussion of Weil's example by writing:

> the force of the example does depend on what we understand of the relation between father and child, which does include, of course, the idea of certain duties and responsibilities; but equally the force of the example depends on the fact that the father is not behaving as he is for the sake of fulfilling his duties. (1972: 183)

Since Winch leaves unspecified what "duties and responsibilities" are included in "the relation between father and child", it is not clear to the reader what he is thinking of. One may think of the responsibility to provide food and shelter or of the general importance of close relationships that persist over time (and the relation of parent and child could be said to be quintessential in this regard) or of something else. Two things are not clear here, however. Firstly, whether the language of duty is really the best way of capturing the importance of the things I just mentioned. Secondly, what "include" means here, especially since Winch rightly points out that it cannot be translated into reasons for the sake of which the father acts. That it cannot be translated into such reasons suggests that what Winch is referring to is rather the fact that an "understand[ing] of the relation between father and child" includes, among other things, an understanding of the child's needs and of the fact that some of them in one

sense cannot possibly be, in another sense can only with difficulty be, met by anyone else than this father. What the child needs is the father himself; he is hence related to the child's needs not primarily as one who can satisfy them but as someone who is himself included in them. And this means that the noun "needs" might be misleading, if it suggests an instrumental relation, for the giver and the gift are not separable. Similarly, there are not two different roles here, giver and recipient. For what the child needs is the father to need their togetherness in playing – and vice versa and so on …

This is what Winch is referring to, I take it, when using the very ambiguous word "spontaneity", and as I have suggested, I think Winch's point is better captured in the terms I have used above: togetherness or love. The father takes pleasure in being together with his child, wants it and himself to be, and finds joy in seeing the child happy – or, rather, it is one and the same joy they are together in. What the father who is playing with his child while being unable to enjoy himself with it is doing, by contrast, can only be understood with reference to what is not there, the fullness of togetherness in playing, which means that there is a sense in which it is not altogether absent (a fact perhaps hinted at by Winch, when using the phrase "*relative* lack of spontaneity"), but present in the form of longing.

This way of expressing the point, avoiding the word "spontaneity", helps us to steer clear of the problems Winch runs into in this context. He writes:

> Now some people will have objections to my way of treating these examples. It may […] be thought that, in emphasizing the positive value of spontaneity I am offering an alternative to Kant's 'acting for the sake of duty' as that which is good without qualification. And to this it could rightly be objected that there are other cases where I should have to agree that acting as one spontaneously felt inclined to would be quite wrong and where it would be right to curb one's inclinations from considerations of what duty requires. With this I completely agree; but it is not an objection to anything that I want to say. For I am not trying to *replace* Kant's contention that acting for the sake of duty is the only kind of behaviour which is good without qualification with the counter-contention that acting spontaneously is the only kind of behaviour which is good without qualification. On the contrary, my contention is that there is *no* general kind of behaviour of which we have to say that it is good without qualification. […] All we can do, I am arguing, is to look at particular examples and see what *we do* want to say about them; there are no general rules which can determine in advance what we *must* say about them. (1972: 181–182)

If one has interpreted the point Winch makes via Weil in the way I have above, this objection would not even arise. Instead of challenging the translation of playing with one's child "out of pure joy and pleasure" into "acting as one spontaneously felt inclined to", Winch only restricts the generality of "the positive value of spontaneity". This is surprising, also because a positive value of spontaneity as such does not seem to make much sense: in order to understand the moral nature of something done spontaneously, one will certainly have to consider what is done, not only that it is done spontaneously. This is definitely the case as regards Winch's example, for the original contrast did not concern spontaneity, but "pure joy and pleasure", on the one hand, and "a sense of duty", on the other hand.[13] Spontaneously playing with one's child out of pure joy and pleasure is a good thing because playing with one's child out of pure joy and pleasure is a good thing (that is, no matter whether the father starts playing in the conviction that this joy will make itself felt later on, when they are caught up in their playing, or whether it is there from the outset). Does this mean that Winch, without noticing it himself, has indeed arrived at a "general kind of behaviour" which is "good without qualification"? The fact that Winch uses these phrases shows that he at this point has action as his main focus, in this case to be able to criticise Kant, the beginning of his essay notwithstanding. But more importantly, such phrases must be criticised in light of Gaita's point above. In order to turn the father's playing with his child out of pure joy and pleasure into a "general kind of behaviour", one would have to abstract from this very child, in that way seeing the child as an instance of the general. But just as it would be a parody of N's remorse to say that he is haunted by the principles he betrayed, it would be a parody of what the father who is playing with his child out of pure joy and pleasure is doing to say that he is applying a general principle to the specific case of his child, in that way executing a general kind of behaviour that is good without qualification. One way of arriving at this point would take its starting point in locutions such as "for her sake", for this "sake" is nothing but the child itself. This becomes evident if the father would explain why he, say, did not do what the child asked him to do by saying that

[13] Another possible misunderstanding would be that Winch is supporting some kind of hedonism, as if acting for the sake of joy and pleasure would be that which is good without qualification. Discussing Winch's example in terms of love and togetherness helps us see the confusion of hedonism. By contrast to the hedonist's instrumental conception, playing with one's child out of pure joy and pleasure should be understood in the light of joy in, love of, one's child.

it was for the child's own sake that he denied it what the child said it wanted. (Of course, this explanation might be a lie and an expression of self-deception, but even so, or precisely for that reason, it takes the form of concern and care.) Someone of a Kantian bent might here continue reflecting on such examples, concluding that it is this "sake" that is good without qualification, the unconditional basis of the conditional, but what then must be noted is that this "sake" resists the general form, as any property the child shares with others is in the same way conditioned by this "sake".

6. Conclusion

The title of Winch's essay, "Moral integrity", is somewhat cryptic, and Winch himself admits as much. He begins his essay by saying:

> In view of the title of this lecture, and so that you do not find yourselves on the edge of your seats waiting for me to start talking about moral integrity, I must explain that I shall not be attempting an 'analysis' of this concept. In fact I shall not use the expression 'moral integrity' again in this lecture. What I have to say, though, does have a lot to do with this concept, as I hope will be clear. (1972: 171)

Now this is perhaps not as clear as Winch hoped it to be, but one can connect the title to his discussion of what it means to be "absorbed in" what one is doing and of what it means for an act to be unequivocally the act of the actor in question (1972: 184), a discussion which can be said to tie together many of the themes of his essay. More literally and according to its etymology, the word "integrity" can be said to characterise father Sergius at the point when he is untouched by the moral temptations he meets, in Winch's closing discussion of Tolstoy's story. Without questioning this importance of not being touched, my discussion has however been about the fundamental importance of being touched (which explains the title of my paper, a title which, in the spirit of Winch, is neither analysed nor mentioned in the essay itself). If moral philosophy only sees moral problems and the possible solutions to them, it does not see the understanding against the background of which moral problems arise: the understanding that consists in being touched by the reality of others (and therein of oneself). This being touched by the reality of others is at the same time, however, a call to be touched – distinctions such as the ones between facts and values, between the descriptive and the normative, do obviously not work here, because to be touched is to realise that one should

have been touched and vice versa – and in the context of a philosophical discussion, this call to be touched takes the form of a task of attending to the reality of others in one's discussion of the specific examples given.

This runs counter, however, to one central philosophical inclination. The philosopher often tends to believe that one's work can only fail in one way: rationally, when one's arguments do not hold. (To this could a second way be added: empirical failure, if one is mistaken about the facts.) Positively, this means that philosophy (perhaps, then, with the help of science) can determine moral reality: there is nothing in the context of morality that transcends or underlies the tools and methods of philosophy, so understood. For the same reason, a moral difficulty will simply be a rational-empirical difficulty, and it will thus be solved by means of such methods. The light of Gaita's point concerning remorse, however, makes visible what remains out of sight in this way of conceiving of things; evil is not a rational-empirical error, on a par with other such errors, and the horribleness of it therefore requires a different way of looking in order to be seen. Similarly, what I just have been trying to point to is the importance of attending to what makes something a moral issue in the first place: one's being touched by the reality of others. This, then, precedes logical deduction and empirical research.

In my discussion, I have specifically focused on Winch's essay "Moral integrity", trying to point to more or less hidden potentials in it, potentials which could also provide answers to problems Winch runs into during the course of his discussion. For example, his final claim, that philosophy cannot show a man where he should stand, is problematic, I have said, but here at the end, we have also come to see that it contains an important truth. For where should philosophy stand? And how is that shown?[14]

[14] Thanks to Salla Aldrin Salskov and Christopher Cordner for comments on a previous version of this paper. Thanks especially to Philip Strammer for discussions about these and similar issues.

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