10

Is God evil?

*Mark Hobart**

Enquiring into the nature of evil is a little like the Hunting of the Snark. It
calls for great ingenuity and exertion, only for the object to vanish or become
something else altogether. Commentators, seizing upon different aspects,
often land up at cross-purposes, and all but the most skilled are prone to find
that 'the bowsprit got mixed with the rudder sometime.'

A discussion of evil would be dull were someone not to question what we
are doing. So, for the sake of argument, I shall play Devil's Advocate and ask
if evil is something — be it a state, property or predicate — that can
coherently be defined for any culture, let alone be compared between them.
To put it bluntly, I suspect that those who start out searching for what evil
really is anywhere will have looked in vain, no matter whether

> They sought it with thimbles. they sought it with care;
> They pursued it with forks and with hope;
> They threatened its life with a railway-share;
> They charmed it with smiles and soap.
> The Hunting of the Snark, Fit 5, The Beaver's Lesson

The grounds for my scepticism are briefly as follows. To ask what is the
essence of evil in any culture may well be to beg the question of its having
one. It is also to take the ways in which words like 'evil' are used out of their
settings, which may be social, moral, cosmological or epistemological, among
others. Cultures differ anyway in the importance that their members attach to
ideas of evil, or the degree to which they agree as to its interpretation. Nor
can evil be equated with what is confused or inexplicable in the human

condition. To do so is to run the risk of ignoring the point that order and explanation are themselves cultural — and possibly disputed — constructs. Instead of searching for objective standards by which to tell real 'evil' from ordinary 'badness', an exercise in correlating evil with the limits of taxonomies, perhaps we should consider how classifications are actually used. After all, neither culture nor classification is a thing, nor do people necessarily agree on how they should be interpreted. Ideas and explanations of behaviour are asserted, questioned and denied. So we need to look at how and when different views are put forward. Evil as assertion or explanation itself has to be explained.

The point will be made by looking at Bali, a society often cited as a dramatic case of ideas of evil run rampant. If one does not skim lightly over the ethnography, however, it emerges that, not only may different interest groups proffer different interpretations, but also different styles of judging thought and action are found in the cultural repertoire. Evil cannot be dismissed so easily, though. After all, in some societies some people swear by, or indeed at, its existence. I shall suggest that the existence of good and evil is a claim with important social and political implications. Such claims are often linked to an 'essentialist' style of argument which is powerful but, as a look at Western theories of morality shows, may dangerously distort our representations of what people do.

Our lines of debate about evil seem to have been laid down long ago. Before Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, the impact of eastern ideas such as Zoroastrian dualism on early Greek thinkers spawned a host of arguments. Often we do not know exactly what the origins were, or what the authors said, so much as how they were interpreted, but the arguments in different guises have bedevilled discussion since.

So it is worthwhile for a moment to look reflectively at our own intellectual tradition to see how far it may influence us in the ways we look at other cultures. Socrates, for instance, seems to have held the intellectualist stance that no one would willingly stray from *agathón*, the good, except out of ignorance. His disciple Plato, by contrast, shifted his ideas to see good and evil, *kakón*, not as value judgements so much as hypostatized realities (or forms, *eide*), objects potentially willed by the soul (*Laws* 896d, Plato 1961: 1452), identified at times as World Souls (*Laws* 896e). In a few strokes good and evil became real, dual and either moral or cosmic. Evil was thought to be removable from the soul by purgation, *kathársis*, by analogy to bodily disease (*Sophist* 227–8, Plato 1961: 970) — a theme destined for many variations. The notion of imbalance from the Pythagoreans comes to the fore in Aristotle's treatment of evil as excess (*Nichomachean Ethics* 1106a, Aristotle 1941: 958) and also as *ápeiron*, as indeterminate. inexplicable, 'Other' (*Ethics*

1106b). The potential link of matter, *hüle*, and evil in his writings was developed by Numenius, leaving the Epicureans to equate evil with pain and the Stoics with the puzzle in theodicy of how evil could exist in a world ruled by a good God. The stage — strewn with dichotomies and ambiguities — seems substantially set for later heroes and clowns.

It is a moot point whether the seeming convergences between our own and other cultures' ideas of evil are not a fancy born of unthinking translation and the export of our cultural presuppositions. Pocock. in chapter 3 above, shows neatly how much we rely on dichotomies when we try to explain forms of mystical maleficence like 'witchcraft'. For instance, evil intent is split according to whether it is conscious or unconscious, from internal or external agents, and is held to spring either from explicable or inexplicable malice (p. 44 above). The problem is that such ideas are hard enough to pin down among ourselves before we can start finding out if other peoples have the same at all.

So how do we view evil? Pocock suggests the English have two contemporary folk attitudes. The minority view regards the attribution of evil to deeds or people as due to lack of knowledge of the context. The majority are more Aristotelian — although it might surprise them! — in seeing evil as inexplicable excess, to the point that it is no more a moral judgement but an ontological assertion: there are truly evil acts which show the perpetrators to be inhuman (pp. 50–3 above). If evil is so extreme, then the dubious doings of ordinary people pale by comparison with such monsters. Most English then stand Terence on his head:

Homo sum, alieni nil a me humanum puto!

Talk of evil is marked by peripeteia, a feature used to effect by La Rochefoucauld on the theme that our virtues are usually vices in disguise. Mystical evil-doing is not always so remote, but may be recognized as springing from all-too-human motives like greed, envy or love of power. And, far from conveniently inhuman outsiders being responsible, the source of trouble is often uncomfortably close to home. The real threat, to reverse de Béranger's famous remark, is likely to be *les ennemis, nos amis*. The kaleidoscopic nature of representations of evil suggests we reconsider whether the inverted behaviour associated with 'witches' and other inhumans are symbols of their essential 'otherness'. Perhaps evil, for all sorts of reasons, is paradoxical. Signs, after all, do not just refer to the world; they may be reflexive, or poetic, and refer to the discourse of which they part. Might it not be that the perversions and inversions claimed of evil-doers are ways of saying something about the nature of judgements about evil itself?

It is tempting to treat the topsy-turvy forms that evil takes as ways of trying to cope with its sheer inexplicability. Whether or not the reasons or motives (see Skinner 1972: 142ff., on the difference) for actions are explicable (and so understandable?) may depend on how a culture casts its ideas about the world and human nature. Evil may have many kinds of explanation, such as among South American Indian groups (see chapter 14 below) or in Buddhism (chapter 8), where it is seen as stemming from ignorance. In such worlds, in Wilde's words, 'There is no sin except stupidity.'

As Parkin notes in chapter 13, human frailties are more tolerated in societies with inchoate ideas of evil and are set apart in those with clear-cut classifications. This raises an intriguing possibility. Some societies, as Pocock points out (pp. 44ff.), may have more than one set of ideas about evil. When and why one scheme is used rather than another will be a major theme of this chapter. But it cannot then be that evil is necessarily inexplicable universally or even in a single culture. So, where evil is held to be beyond explanation, is this because it is too awful to be allowed in, or because the styles and scope of classifications vary?

Might there not be reasons — as much political as philosophical — for using taxonomies to leave some kinds of act out? An intellectualism is much in the air, exemplified by structuralism, in which it is axiomatic, if counter-factual, that disorder is anathema to the human mind. Now, disorder is not the strict antithesis of order (even if the Greeks postulated a dichotomy of *chaos* and *cosmos*); nor need it be equated with the inexplicable. Some cultures, as some people (usually academics, one suspects!), express more concern over order, or explanation, than others. So perhaps we should start to ask why some taxonomies leave evil as inexplicable and others not? Also, are the reasons people do good any less in need of explanation than the reasons they do bad?

According to one classical anthropological view, evil is inexplicable in philosophical terms because its real referent is, in some sense, society. The argument is as follows:

If indeed we can relate philosophical dualism (the doctrine of two kinds of humanity, good and bad, found in small bounded communities) to certain kinds of social structures, then some re-examination of the history of ideas is called for. No longer should it be permitted for historians to write as if philosophies move automatically in a social vacuum, one idea hitting another, splitting it, growing, decaying and being taken over.

Douglas 1970: 119

Evil is to be understood either as symbolizing the problems of social structure

or as a means of evaluating social roles. Both suffer shortcomings.

The first version treats the pattern of beliefs about mystical malefactors as a projection on to a cosmic or theological plane of the structural features, and weaknesses, in society. So 'witchcraft beliefs are likely to flourish in small enclosed groups, where movement in and out is restricted, where interaction is unavoidably close, and where roles are undefined or so defined that they are impossible to perform' (Douglas 1970: 108). Even were the mass of social causes unentangled and each made precise, the problems it raises are by now familiar. Raw correlation says little about the analytical categories or their relation (Needham 1963: xi—xxix). Social structure is represented as reified and mechanical with no reference to the situations in which beliefs are invoked (Turner 1964) or to the participants' problems in interpreting alternative possibilities.

Another version has recently been resurrected by a philosopher, Alistair MacIntyre, to try to keep theories of ethics from falling into relativity. The confusion in moral philosophy, he suggests, comes from failing to locate morality in its social context, as the simple fulfilment of roles. In heroic Greece, for instance, according to the Homeric epics, *agathós*, good, denoted the qualities of being kingly, courageous and clever (MacIntyre 1967: 6). Either a man had those attributes, or he hadn't. The nasty gulf between performance and judgement, or fact and value, had not yet opened (MacIntyre 1981: 54—7, 114—22). The fuss over senses of 'good' or 'evil' comes about simply because we have lost sight of the kind of society in which the terms originally applied. Ancient Greek society is conveniently not documented in enough detail; but there seem to be few cultures so closed or simple as to rule out more than one interpretation of an act or event. Appeal to context does not help, as deciding what is relevant in any instance is open to different ideas and claims (Hobart forthcoming; cf. Sperber and Wilson 1982). For the social moralist context is the devil in disguise.

Finally, should 'good' and 'evil' properly be linked to what is socially approved? In Bali, I shall suggest, this is a delicate question. In general it is empirically unsubstantiated and rests on a naive view of language. Ethnographically, societies differ over whether such terms apply only to social roles. For the Japanese, as portrayed by Moeran in chapter 6 above, use of the terms is a simple function of social models (Buddhist or Shinto, p. 92; and 'group' against 'social exchange' conscious models, p. 107). As Overing makes clear, though, in chapter 14, it is hard to apply such Durkheimian criteria to the Piaroa, where culture is poisonous and may cause madness: for the intricacy of shamanistic speculation has little to do with social roles. The drawback of identifying the socially approved with the moral is that it becomes impossible to question social ideals, except clumsily in terms of other

social ideals, which still leaves the ideals themselves largely unexplained.

Perhaps we need to distinguish between uses of 'good', 'bad' and 'evil'. Some may evaluate social roles, others may allow a degree of reflexivity. Where it is recognized that acts may be accounted for by different reasons and motives,[1] more than one criterion is needed. Further, what kind of adjectives are we talking about? Geach's distinction between predicative and attributive adjectives is important here. To say 'x is a red book' implies that x is red and x is a book; but to say 'x is a big flea' implies that x is a flea, but *not* that x is big (Geach 1956: 33). Here 'red' is predicative, 'big' attributive. Geach suggests that 'good' and 'bad' are always attributive ('x is a good cricketer' does not mean that x is good and a cricketer). 'Evil', however, may arguably be predicative ('x is an evil leader' may imply that x is a leader and evil to boot), which raises interesting questions of possible differences even within the class of moral adjectives in English. The point is neatly put by G. K. Chesterton:

The word 'good' has many meanings. For example, if a man were to shoot his grandmother at a range of five hundred yards. I should call him a good shot. but not *necessarily* a good man.

Only fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

Let us turn then with due caution to the subject of good and evil in Bali. On few matters is a simple summary so impossible. For the Balinese have absorbed Hindu, Buddhist, Tantric, Old Javanese and other, including apparently indigenous, religious ideas and have mixed them into a textual and practical tradition which has so far baffled description. Any account of evil alone would take many monographs (see for a start Hooykaas 1963, 1973, 1977, 1978). My treatment of cosmological and moral doctrines must needs be cavalier, and I shall look mostly at ideas in daily use rather than at priestly knowledge.

In Bali many forms of evil are held to stem from (the Hindu–Balinese deity) Siwa in his destructive aspect: as Kala (Sanskrit Bhaṭṭāra Kāla, the noble Lord Kāla),[2] who is allowed by mythical charter to eat humans (Hooykaas 1973: 170–87; cf. O'Flaherty 1973), or Durga, who in Bali is invested with many attributes of another of Siwa's consorts, or *sakti*, Kali (Kālī the Black One). Among other forms, evil may spring from Buddha as Siwa Maha-Barawa (Śiva Mahā-Bherava) and the Buddhist goddess Vairocana as Yama-Raja. In village representations such aspects of divinity are often spoken of as

[1] For example. 'Sin grows with doing good' (Eliot 1935: 33)
[2] Wherever possible. I use Balinese spelling in the text and keep the Sanskrit spelling for parentheses.

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buta (*bhūta*) and *kala*. These may be lumped together as *buta-kala*, a distinctly unpleasant class of greedy, destructive spirits who must be propitiated to leave humans in peace. They may also be seen as different kinds of invisible agent or principle.[3] In the ritual invocations during temple ceremonies in Bali, *buta-kala* may be bought off collectively or be subject to quite different identification (Hooykaas 1977: 83–4, 90–2). In purificatory rites, known as *caru*, Durga may also be linked separately with *buta* and *kala* (pp. 76–8). The subject is complicated: there are probably hundreds of different sets of invocations for temple ceremonies in the island, and there are thousands of different rituals.[4]

Other ideas bear more immediately however on human evil. Sets of texts deal with how humans may obtain power, (*ke*)*saktian*).[5] Such texts are many and varied but are mostly secret and often esoteric (Hooykaas 1978; Pigeaud 1967: 198–201, 265–73; Weck 1937). Knowing too much, or learning too fast, leads easily to madness, as my informants who had tried such ('Tantric') paths were willing to testify. The agency behind this in village thought is usually the goddess Durga (the Inaccessible, the Unattainable), often known simply as Batara Dalem ('Insider', an epithet given because she is too dangerous to name casually). It is she who tangles with the human world, for it is from her one obtains power to assume different forms or learn techniques to help or attack others. It would be convenient to split people according to whether they know 'black magic', *pengiwa*, and are *lèyak*, *dèsti*, or *manusa sakti* — terms that may very loosely be rendered as 'witches' — or 'white magic', *penengen*, and are *balian*, 'doctors'. (Translation is fraught with misleading connotations here, and the English words are used merely to avoid too many Balinese words.) Unfortunately, mystical expertise is not so easily controlled and the labels fail to account for the practitioners' inclinations on different occasions. Also, what is harmful to one person may be good from another's point of view!

The kinds of mystical power are classified in different ways. Commonly there are eight (known as the *aṣṭa-sakti*, *aṣṭa-guna* or *aṣṭa-siddhi*, eight powers, qualities or abilities). Two versions are given in table 1 (from

[3] In Sanskrit *bhuta* is 'that which exists'. '(material) element', and in Old Javanese a 'class of demons. demon (in general)' (Zoetmulder 1982: 278). *Kala* has many senses: 'wicked. evil. base. false', possibly from Sanskrit *khala*. a mischievous man (Zoetmulder 1982: 767).
[4] There is no space to give examples here. A comparison of the Darma Pawayangan and the Kala-Purana (Hooykaas 1973) with the invocations, *mantra*, in an ordinary temple ceremony, *piodalan* (see also Hooykaas 1977) will show how different usage and reference may be in just two texts in common use.
[5] The senses of the term are close to the Sanskrit: 'power, ability. strength. might: regal power, energy or active power of a deity personified as his wife' (Zoetmulder 1982: 1607). It may also connote mystical as opposed to political power. *kekuasaan*

TABLE 1   Two versions of the eight supernatural powers known in Bali
(The Asta-śakti, Asta-guṇa, Asta-siddhi, Astaiśwarya)
Version (a): the Wrhaspatitattwa

		Wrhaspatitattwa (14: 66)	Balinese popular knowledge
1	aṇiman	The power of becoming as small as an atom	The ability to become small at will
2	laghiman	The faculty of assuming lightness at will	To be able to levitate (25–50 cm is the hallmark of léyak, 'witches')
3	mahiman	The power to increase size (the power to change form)	The former is unknown; changing form, ngelekas. masiluman, is the most basic ability of all
4	prápti	The power of obtaining everything	Often treated as the goal of the other powers
5	prakāmya	Freedom of will, irresistible will	Thought to be possible only for very advanced specialists
6	waśitwa	Power to subdue to one's own will	Why people cannot run away on meeting a 'witch'; they lose the ability to will their bodies
7	iśitwa	Superiority; supremacy	What specialists fight about; if one wins the other is found dead in bed the next day
8	(yatrakāmā) wasāyitwa	Power of transporting things (Z); ability to suppress passions (H)	Both are known but villagers are rather vague about them

TABLE 1 (contd)
Version (b): the Kalima Usada

		Kalima Usada	Balinese popular knowledge
1	dūra-darśana	Power of seeing what is distant or hidden	Ability of specialists with a fairly high degree of knowledge
2	dūra-śravaṇa	Power of hearing at a distance	A common ability which makes it very unsafe to talk anywhere about such specialists
3	(dūra)sarwajña	Power of knowing at a distance (Z), omniscience (H)	Subsumed by villagers under the first two entries above
4	asasañcara	Faculty of not needing sleep	A necessary attribute if one is to spend the night abroad and work normally the next day
5	ambaramarga	Ability to move through the air; ability to fly	Proper flying requires greater expertise than levitation
6	adrśya	Power of being invisible; power to make invisible	A fairly common ability, and much easier than making other things or people invisible
7	awakaromaya	Faculty of spatial extension (?)	Usually identified with changing shape, but also being in bed and abroad at the same time
8	dūra-grahaṇa (dūra-wedha)	Ability to seize objects (or attack) from a distance	Long-distance theft is rarer than ability to attack enemies from afar, which is common

Sources: Hooykaas (1963) (H); Punyatmaja (1970); van der Tuuk (1897); Zoetmulder (1982) (Z).

Balinese editions of the *Wrhaspatitattwa* and *Kalima Usada*; see Weck 1937; also Hooykaas 1963: 86–8; and van der Tuuk 1897: 221). Interestingly, the words are Sanskrit and carry something close to their classical senses with one or two exceptions. (These are *mahiman*, which in Old Javanese denotes the ability to change shape (Zoetmulder 1982: 1090). In Balinese the term is *ngelekas* or *masiluman*, the most common proof of spiritual powers. *Yatrakāmā-wasāyitwa* has two senses, which are given in table 1.) How full the knowledge of most adult villagers is, as against that of experts, turns out to be rather striking (an outline is given in the right-hand column of the table). Such powers are attributes of divinity in the form of Siwa (Punyatmaja 1970: 32–6), obtainable by humans through supplicating, *nunas ica*, his active aspect, Durga. The importance of these potentialities may perhaps be gauged by my having had to take my informants to Java before they felt safe to talk without the fear of being overheard by those with *dura-srawana*, the ability to hear at a distance. People with such powers are thought rather dangerous, if for no other reason than that it is hard to tell what they are up to!

What are the popular representations of these mystical practices? Balinese make widespread use of various kinds of doctor or spiritual specialist when ill, for protection against suspected attack, or in the hope of attaining dubious ends: potions to kill others, become rich, make people fall hopelessly in love and many others (see Weck 1937). Villagers quite often report meeting frightening manifestations at night in the roads or speak of battles where rival camps turn into (*ngelekas*) detached limbs, giant snakes, burning trees or, in one instance of one-upmanship, a helicopter. Mystical activities, usually at night, are a theme on which Balinese imaginations run gently riot.

The most famous form evil takes, however, is in the figure of Rangda. She is often identified as the historic widow, Queen Mahendradatta, mother of the Balinese prince, Erlangga, who became king of Java in AD1019 (being herself Javanese may not have helped her reputation). More questionably, she is identified as Durga, in her form of Mahisasuramardini, in the temple, Pura Meduwé Karang, in north Bali (Grader 1940: 16). In paintings, statues and as a mask and dress worn by an actor she is bulbous-eyed, canine-toothed, dangling-breasted. In popular accounts of Bali, Rangda is best known from 'trance dances' in several villages on the tourist track near the capital, Denpasar. There she confronts another giant puppet, Barong Kèkèt (sometimes, and rather doubtfully, identified as Banaspati Raja, the Lord of the Forest), in what tourist guides describe as 'the eternal fight of good and evil'. In the village of Tengahpadang,[6] where I worked, the mask is used by

itself in a dance drama, Calon Arang (de Zoete and Spies 1938; Poerbatjaraka 1926), to protect the welfare of the community. The mask is also used, as are those of various kinds of Barong, to cure illness.

A little more prosaically, but more usually, Rangda is thought to act as the leader, or source of power, for persons wishing to learn various unpleasant arts. Something like one in ten villagers, mostly women, are thought to have inherited or learned the ability of becoming witches. At night these adepts are held to leave their bodies behind in bed, to congregate in the graveyard, where they transform into hideous old hags or men, under the aegis of Rangda. There they dig up the newly dead and, after a hearty supper on rotting flesh, titivate themselves using intestines as necklaces, lungs as earrings and so on, before setting off to harass or kill the living. Geertz sums up the popular image as follows:

In Rangda, monstrous queen of the witches, ancient widow, used-up prostitute, child-murdering incarnation of the goddess of death, and, if Margaret Mead is correct, symbolic projection of the rejecting mother, the Balinese have fashioned a powerful image of unqualified evil.

Geertz 1973a: 180

If we hack through the textual thickets, do we not have here a coherent vision of the cosmic and moral forces that give meaning to suffering and misfortune — 'the Symbolism of Evil', in Ricoeur's (1967) terms? The argument has indeed been advanced, using Balinese and Javanese ethnography, by one of Ricoeur's main disciples as follows:

The so-called problem of evil is a matter of formulating in world-view terms the actual nature of the destructive forces within the self and outside of it, of interpreting murder, crop failure, sickness, earthquakes, poverty, and oppression in such a way that it is possible to come to some sort of terms with them.

Geertz 1973b: 130

For it is

in essence the same sort of problem of or about bafflement and the problem of or about suffering. The strange opacity of certain empirical events, the dumb senselessness of intense or inexorable pain, and the enigmatic unaccountability of gross iniquity all raise the uncomfortable suspicion that perhaps the world, and hence man's life in the world, has no genuine order at all. . . . And the religious response to this suspicion is in each case the same: the formulation, by means of symbols, of an image of such a genuine order of the world which will account for, and even celebrate, the perceived ambiguities, puzzles and paradoxes in human experience.

Geertz 1973c: 107–8

The problem of evil, once again. is the problem of the inexplicable and of disorder.

It would make our problems much easier if we could encapsulate, and so study, evil in terms of a set of symbols that would help to make sense of the human predicament. How adequate, though, is the approach? There are both theoretical and ethnographic grounds for questioning its usefulness.

At first sight the argument has a self-evident ring of truth to it. May this not come. however. from begging the question? The suspicion in any culture that the world is unordered and inexplicable gives rise to symbols. Where, though. did the suspicion come from in the first place? It was made possible by the symbols themselves! The elaboration of ideas of evil is not a function of the highly variable 'objective' incidence of misfortune (see Turner 1964 on this point). but is at least as much a question of what kind of classification a culture has. Much suffering in Bali is brought about by other people pursuing goals by means defined by such 'symbols'. Anyway, suffering — unlike pain, perhaps? — is culturally defined.

There is a way out of the circularity, but its implications are unpalatable. Suppose we postulate a basic human need to understand, of which anxiety over disorder is a manifestation. If this be so. as Geertz is clear, it must hold for all humans. If not, we require an explanation of its variability. Apart from being open to empirical disproof, we are committed to a universal theory of human nature which does little to explain why symbolism should vary across cultures. There are also good arguments against such a universal view (Collingwood 1946: 81—5). The implicit psychological hypothesis is also causal. A need to explain produces symbols. Also. we still need an account of how symbols successfully resolve human anxiety. There is an implicit assumption that the human mind is a *tabula rasa*, such that the existence of an explanatory symbol in a culture *ipso facto* is a sufficient condition to satisfy the anxiety or need. It is unclear how a symbolic assertion of how the world ought to be solves the problem of people in the world as it is. (The dichotomy of symbol and reality here is not of my making, or to my liking: it is an assumption of the approach.) A properly cultural analysis would. by contrast, have to start with a study of indigenous ideas of order, human nature and different classifications of the world for the society in question in order to find out what kinds of disorder were feared or treated as inexplicable. It could not start from dubious general assumptions about the human condition.

Let us consider with a little more care, then, Balinese representations of order, good and evil. In Indonesia widely. order is glossed as (h)*adat* (an Arabic word). The *locus classicus* is Shärer, for whom *adat* is more than usage: it is, firstly,

divine cosmic order and harmony, and secondly . . . life and actions in agreement with this order. It is not only humanity that possesses *hadat*. but also every other creature or thing (animal, plant. river. etc.), every phenomenon (e.g. celestial phenomena). every period and every action. . . .

<div align="right">Shärer 1963: 75</div>

Adat is at once descriptive and prescriptive. In Bali, order (usually *tata*) depends upon *désa, kala, patra* (place, occasion and situation). So it varies between villages and kingdoms, by historical periods (sometimes identified with the Hindu cycle of *yuga*) and according to particular circumstance. Each kind of being has its own code. It is the task of tigers to eat people, the task of crows to warn of impending death, and the task of witches to attack others. To the Balinese, it is conflict that is to the fore, and how conflicting codes achieve harmony God only knows. What is appropriate, *patut*, for humans is triply contingent, and, on a common reading, order is the *de facto* recognition of how things are here and now. As a solution to the problem of suffering, I wonder how much it helps to know that it is just someone else's way of doing things.

There is a further twist. There are at least nine well-known causes of personal misfortune. Gods may directly afflict the living for all sorts of reasons. most often for forgetting to carry out rites, sometimes very unusual ones. Ancestors are prone to interfere in their descendants' lives for good or bad. The souls of those who have died bad deaths, *tonyo,* are likely to attack people trespassing (to get water, plants and so on) in ravines where they have their villages. *Léyak,* 'witches', may cause trouble, as in a rather unspecified way may *buta* and *kala*. Specialists may be hired by relatives or enemies to make one ill by spell or medicine (*pekakas*). The living may curse a family member, or someone may swear a false oath, and it may last or take generations to fulfil itself. The Hindu doctrine of *karma pala,* the effects of (previous) actions, may affect one in a later incarnation or may strike immediately within a lifetime. If the deed was bad enough, the whole family may suffer the effects. Another common explanation is fate. *ganti,* which it is doubtful even the gods can control. Where a victim may attribute suffering to one of these. others may see it as plain stupidity or culpability. Privately, one may suffer from bad thoughts, *manah jelé,* for which one may hold oneself or other agencies responsible. One adolescent I know developed a desire to flash his genitals and went, very ashamed, to pray and purify himself at a temple. Everyone else treated it as just the pains of sexual maturing. So culture may turn what some regard as normal into a heinous offence: it may create evil. The main point, however, is that Balinese culture, with so many possibilities to choose from, does not eliminate bafflement. It may encourage confusion,

or at least convert it into the delicate difficulty of choice and interpretation.

Sadly, space prevents me from looking at the subtleties of Balinese eschatology, as more needs to be said about the *dramatis personae* already introduced. The primary sense of *buta* in Bali is 'blind' (metaphorically, used of someone blinded by pride). It is also said of a shrine where offerings have not been made for a long time. Significantly, it refers as well to 'elements', as in *pañcamahabhuta*, earth, water, fire, air, ether.

Kala is more complex. Among its homonyms — I avoid speculating about etymology — are 'wicked', 'scorpion', 'snare', 'noose', 'time as inescapable fate' and the name of the god of death and annihilation, besides the attribute. or class term, for the Hindu spirits known as *rākṣasa* (cf. *rakṣaka*, guardian). In compound words like *niskala* and *sekala*, *kala* denotes invisibility and visibility, respectively. It may also mean 'raw energy'. In high Balinese 'bad' is *kaon*, which also means 'to be defeated'; in low Balinese the term is *kalah*. The room for play is immense. *Buta* may be 'demon', but also human blindness and so ignorance. In ritual it is often spoken of as returning complex entities to their constituents. *Kala* are often treated as the negative aspects of high deities, or the inevitable entropy of all visible forms; while the pun on *kalah* allows all manner of interpretation. Even as demons, the most striking attribute of *buta* and *kala* is not that they are destructive, but they are polluting. They may be vile, but are they evil?

Speculating about spirits is difficult for the Balinese because, being invisible, any evidence is indirect. The doings of 'witches' at least deals with human motives and actions; but ideas about them show an odd paradox. Speaking generally, most Balinese assert that they bring illness and death. When such misfortunes occur, however, the same people often are quite firm that the most witches can do is hang around in the vague hope that people will die, perhaps egging them on by making nasty faces or frightening them. Causing fear and showing off are the stock in trade of 'witches', but they are hardly alone in this. Further, they are only a nuisance if they live in the same compound (i.e. are immediate family). Most accusations are made by the victim or close kin and are often dismissed by other villagers as excuses for their own ineptitudes. As it turns out, most Balinese are 'hot', *panes*, and temperamentally unable to see, or feel, the presence of witches, and some are downright sceptical of their existence. Stated belief in doctors' powers is, quite reasonably, prevalent. Almost everyone I spoke to admitted to using them for sundry nefarious purposes. And one day, sitting in a coffee-stall, the most feared specialist in the area asked me, as one scholar to another, quite publicly, if I would like to learn the techniques and offered to take me to Geriya Delod Peken, the accepted centre of such expertise (in the heart of the main tourist village on the coast)!

The theological status of Durga is also extremely complex, as suggested above. The gift of unusual powers is not hers alone: it may come from almost any deity, as may assistance in all malfeasance. Thieves, for instance, pray to, and may be made invisible by, Batara Désa (sometimes identified with Brahma). Durga further protects people in time of pestilence, especially cholera; but it is far from clear that this is because she is the original cause. In my village her temple, the Pura Dalem, is known for bringing peace of mind, and, if one sleeps there, it is extraordinarily refreshing. It is also said that holy water and prayer at her shrine induces an unparalleled tranquility — an assertion I can confirm from experience, for what it is worth. The title 'Dalem' is used of royal princes, and in many ways Durga resembles them. She is a dangerous enemy but a caring patron of those who seek her help. She is, after all, an active aspect of Siwa himself.

Impersonations of powerful figures also occur in dance and drama. Masks of Rangda and the various kinds of Barong appear in gentle comedy and burlesque but rarely in knock-about farce. Both are given their power, *sakti*, by invocation at night on the cremation mound, *pemuun*, in the graveyard, and must be treated afterwards with care. The character for real slapstick is the *celuluk*, similar to Rangda but with a squarer head and slightly less extreme features. In popular theatre (*derama*), she or he plays a buffoon, part frightening, part touching, and pops out of the wings to howls of anticipatory laughter. *Celuluk* come up behind the low-caste servants unexpectedly, or when they are asleep, and stroke them fondly, nurse them or make coy amorous overtures. After a double-take the servants leap up, into one another's arms, rush off or look generally panicked, while the *celuluk* sets off in a pursuit halfway between anger and disappointment, although sometimes the scene is reversed and the *celuluk* flees from the clownish servants. As Rangda's main adjutant, whatever it be, the *celuluk* is hardly an 'image of unqualified evil'.

Can the *celuluk's* antics be dismissed as simple catharsis, or making the world safe from demogorgons? I think not. Over 40 years ago, Bateson and Mead remarked that Rangda 'is not only a fear-inspiring figure, but she is Fear' (1942: 35). In the figure of the *celuluk*, who may be as much sinned against as sinning, I suggest the Balinese are as much as anything laughing at themselves — at their fear, at the impossibility of a creature so different wanting to cherish or to be lovable to human beings. The notion of catharsis makes little sense of much of the *celuluk's* cavortings and caresses (the actors certainly did not see it as merely inspiring horror). I suspect too that catharsis is a term from a particular theory of mind, whether Greek or Freudian, which is at odds with Balinese ideas. Prima facie, to apply it to Bali would be a category mistake. Could it not be that such ambiguous figures, rather than

depicting evil beings, are poetic reflections on the ambiguities of fear, danger and difference?

In what does the difference lie? We are, I think, back to the problem of order. For neighbouring Java, Becker has argued that the worlds of the gods, heroes, clowns and demons in the shadow play illustrate the coincidence of different epistemologies, by which he seems to mean 'world views' (Becker 1979: 219ff.; cf. Hobart 1982: 10—13). Taken literally, however, it is as good a reading as any. The meeting of different kinds of being, with different metaphysical presuppositions, ideas of knowledge, reason and aims in life, is an important theme in Bali. The incommensurability of different forms of life, expressed in theatre and supernatural beings — in the terrifying but sad figure of the *celuluk*, for instance — makes more sense of the ethnography than reducing it to mere symbols of evil. If we are content to trundle out dog-eared stereotypes, like the French all eating garlic and snails and the English struggling endlessly through peasoup fog in bowler hats, then there is evil in Bali a-plenty. If we are not, then is it not perhaps time we delved a little more deeply?

Apart from cosmological, or theological, representations of good and evil, there are also moral standards for judging behaviour. In order to understand these, it is helpful to sketch in the outlines of Balinese society. The vast majority of Balinese are, or were, peasant rice farmers who supported an elite of princes and priests that made up less than 10 per cent of the population. The idiom of relationships was caste, and this was justified by Hindu dogma. Political authority over villagers, mostly *sudra*, lay in the hands of local — often, indeed, village — aristocrats who styled themselves *satriya*. Religious, textual and juridical matters were the preserve of brahmanical priests, who also sat as judges in royal courts, the most famous being the *Kertagosa* in Klungkung, the notionally most senior of the island's eight kingdoms. The legal and moral basis of the caste system was laid down in Hindu and Old Javanese texts in which the idea of *d(h)arma* was critical. In Balinese, *darma* stands for 'true', 'calm' and 'patient', as well as 'morality' and 'duty'. The Brahmans gave it a more classical gloss as divinely ordained rules of conduct, but also virtue itself, as well as one's nature (see Zoetmulder 1982: 367—9). A perennial problem therefore arose as to whether moral codes could be defined exclusively by caste or whether they held good for all Balinese, or all humanity.

Some of the differences in moral codes are adumbrated in the first two examples below. Space does not allow a fuller consideration. So, if the reader feels dissatisfied, it makes my point that one needs to know a great deal about a culture before one can start to assess moral issues (the background to the first two cases can be found in Hobart 1979: 35—47 and 522—72).

Case 1   The royal suicides in front of the Dutch army

The Dutch finally conquered South Bali between 1906 and 1908 after meeting heavy resistance. When the main armies in several kingdoms had conceded defeat, the royal families with their entourages marched out, dressed in full regalia, and men, women and children committed suicide (the children were often stabbed by their parents) to the reported astonishment of the Dutch soldiers. Several royal dynasties were drastically reduced in numbers as a result.

Among the best-known caste duties of *satriya* is to be courageous in face of death. Running away in battle is not to live to fight another day but to besmirch one's reputation, the memory of which clings to the fugitives' descendants for generations. One of the purposes of dynastic chronicles, *babad*, is to record which families in history have lost legitimacy this way. Now there are two senses of *satriya*. Besides evaluating observed characteristics, like bravery, the term is used ascriptively of an entire caste group, many of whom may well prove notorious cowards. In order to remain *satriya* in the strong, achieved, sense and to preserve the integrity of the descent line, the royal families chose to adhere to the strict moral code that held for their caste.

The conflict of moral codes comes out in the next case.

Case 2   The problem of the orator's underpants

The Balinese aristocracy kept some of their power after colonization both through their large land-holdings and by becoming administrators under successive regimes. During the Second World War the island was invaded by the Japanese, with whom the courts cooperated in varying degrees as at least liberators from the Dutch.

What the Japanese termed 'the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere' entailed the removal of surplus produce, so the Balinese had little to eat and still less access to consumer goods. Cloth, for example, was tightly rationed. In my village the allocation was funnelled through the local princely family who served as the Japanese amanuensis. Almost all cloth found its way into the hands of the prince and his close clients.

One young villager, a man of great oratorical skills but from a poor family, found wearing the substitute of barkcloth as underpants rather chafing. So finally he decided to persuade a friend of his, the rations clerk in another village, to write him an extra allowance. Later that day the villagers swarmed out to watch an extraordinary sight. The orator was strolling up the main road swathed in five metres each of red, white and blue cloth, which he allowed to trail behind him in the dust, as he sauntered in front of the local court.

This extraordinary episode, which 40 years later still brought amusement to many and chagrin to some, has meanings I cannot deal with here, such as the

colours of the cloth. First, the orator was drawing attention publicly to the court's failure to fulfil its social obligations to redistribute resources, however scarce, to its subjects. That this is the *darma* of a successful king is reiterated for the populace in shadow theatre and other media. As Worsley put it, 'the realm exists not only for the good of the monarch but also for the sustenance of its population. The king was required to furnish the needs of his people and was dutybound to listen to their grievances' (1972: 45). The orator was making public their deviance from caste *darma*, by caricaturing their greed (and, by letting the cloth trail, ensuring it was unfit for high-caste use). Was this all? Implicitly, the orator was touching on a second issue, that of a universal morality. Another sense of *darma* deals with the moral obligations incumbent on all human beings in dealings with others, which among other things condemns selfishness and greed. The court was painted as falling short both in caste and universal *darma*.

How universal is 'universal' here? The villagers, if not the priests, recognize five exemptions. One is not sanctioned should one lie to, or cheat, enemies, traders, lunatics, sexual partners and children. The first of these colours attitudes to strangers in an island that has known centuries of internecine warfare: but the Balinese rarely go as far as many people seem to in treating outsiders as barely human and fair game for duping. The moral code indeed may stretch beyond humans (something that appears to have escaped Kant), for many people are reluctant to take animal life, preferring to leave that for butchers who suffer for this breach in hell. So, already we have at least three senses of good and bad. A person may be a bad *satriya* in the weak sense by being of dubious birth, by contracting a mis-caste marriage and so on; or in the strong sense by falling short of caste morality; or in terms of more general codes. The exceptions embody a further twist in recognizing that there are many contexts where what is good for you is likely to be bad for someone else.

If it be indeed that 'there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so' (*Hamlet* II, ii), then Balinese imagination has still more to exercise it, as the next two cases suggest.

Case 3   *The punishments of Hell*

In the Kertagosa, the supreme criminal court in Klungkung, presided over by high priests, the ceiling is decorated with vivid paintings of the punishments in Hell for wrongdoing in life. Apart from the more obvious crimes, the scenes depict aborted foetuses pushing their mothers off wobbly bridges into well-stoked fires; butchers' heads being sawn open by the animals they killed; the indolent inverted in mortars to have the behinds, on which they sat while others worked, pummelled by giant pestles; and fornicators having their genitals scorched by flaming brands.

Case 4 *Possession by* kala

If a Balinese engages in behaviour that is abnormal or inexplicable by their usual standards — if someone runs amok, or if a normally calm man comes home and starts hitting his wife — he is said to be *kerangsukang kala*. If one enquires of a priest what this phrase means, one is likely to be told that the person has been entered by a *kala*, some kind of demonic influence or being. One sense of *rangsuk* is indeed 'to enter'; another is 'to manifest'. In a survey of my village most adult villagers, however, interpreted the expression as '*kala* manifesting itself'. When asked what *kala* denoted here, the answers ranged from 'badness' to 'uncontrolled emotion', from 'impulsiveness' to 'uncontrolled energy'. It was rare for a villager, on being asked what *kala* was, to speak of an external agency. The Balinese agree on the diagnostic label; they disagree over what it implies.

At the risk of pushing the distinction too far, there are interesting differences between the styles of interpretation of villagers and the elite. The punishments in Hell suggest that wrongdoing results in clear, unambiguous consequences. Likewise, priests tend to support the view that there are real, and essentially destructive, forces at work called *kala*. Put simply, there are kinds of agency and act that may be judged to be bad. For villagers the clarity of the classification is sometimes puzzling. Some acts, like murder, are agreed to be bad, if understandable; others, like sexual intercourse outside marriage, are commonplace and hardly deserve to be put in the same class as serious offences. Rather than *kala* being something nasty in the woodwork of life, they are ways of talking about how people may behave on occasions, to be explained in terms of control and balance. The two views are not exclusive: priests and princes often use explanations similar to villagers in everyday life. None the less, it is curious to find the elite endorsing rather literal interpretations as against the peasants' proclivity for abstraction.

A similar disjuncture of interpretive styles occurs over the link of ritual purity and moral judgement. Differences in caste duties are justified by the view that birth confers innate differences in purity and so determines one's appropriate role in the social order. Together with this is a stress on actions as purifying or polluting, and the handling of adventitious dangers, in the form of *buta* or *kala*, in terms of ritual responses such as purificatory offerings. According to the ascriptive code, high-caste persons, barring certain permanently polluting acts, are always purer than low-caste ones. By contrast, according to the universal code, moral judgements depend on the act, not upon the actor's status. In caste dogma, goodness is implicitly linked to ritual purity and birth, a connection that the other code questions.

How far can the differences in interpretations of such codes be linked to

social structure? The idea that 'evil' or 'pollution' denote essential qualities, real things in the world, which one social group understands and can control, lends itself to political use. Essentialism is a trusty standby for all sorts of elites, from academic to political. The advantages of claiming that one knows what the world is truly like are pretty obvious. In contemporary terminology, this is described as 'false consciousness', which mystifies people as to the actual state of affairs. If pushed, one might then argue that essentialism is essential (sic) to an elite to avoid 'true consciousness' of the situation — in other words, that 'evil', 'pollution' and so forth were merely names. Nominalism would then be the style of revolutionaries and essentialism the style of those in power.

It would be comfortable to be able to stop at this point, having linked ideas of good and evil to the conditions of social differentiation and political stability. Good and evil, to the elite, would be stated as really existing, as solid a set of predicates as any, and used to judge fulfilment of given social roles. There is some evidence to support this view, and it can easily be adapted to take in different contexts of use of evaluative terms. How such a scheme might work is laid out in table 2, in the left-hand column.

The argument is weak, however, on several scores. Ethnographically, it leaves much out. Most speculation about evil comes from high priests and other literati who, as Bali is a village society, share many village values. Social explanations of evil tend, further, to be functional. At best, they account for how ideas about evil may be used to one kind of end, but little more. When people take decisions, they must choose between possibilities: so definiteness may have more to do with the particular circumstances of action than with social structure *per se*. Opponents of a regime may be just as dogmatic as its proponents, each backing a different essential definition. And arguments about 'true' or 'false' consciousness merely move essentialism from something to be explained to the false status of an explanation itself. Social life is about rival claims, questions and uses, where to speak of 'objective' yardsticks, let alone about as tricky a term as 'consciousness', is not just misleading but begs the interesting questions.

If use of evaluative terms cannot entirely be reduced to social structure, is it perhaps part of an 'internal cultural debate' (see Parkin 1978: 286—336)? After all, the Balinese do talk about good and bad; and the theme crops up perenially in theatre and ritual. The trouble is that some people use such terms more than others for some purposes, and ignore them on other occasions. There are as many metaphors for the nature of society as one has ingenuity and time to dream them up. Some are more illuminating for some problems than others, but they are perspectives, not keys to society's essential nature. 'Internal cultural debate' implies a bounded entity, with a shared

TABLE 2 *Descriptive summary of some Balinese uses of 'good' and 'bad'*

Context	Essential attributes	Nominalist problems	Overlap of use
1 Cosmic forces	*batara · kala* (god) :: creative : destructive / :: benign : malevolent; *batara : buta* :: abstinence : greed / complex : elemental	Problem of ontological status of gods / Avoidance of personifying/ hypostatizing ideas	Subject to 3 in sense of *darma* I / Evaluated by 4(a) *darma* II or 4(b)
2 Limits of normality	witch : human :: extraordinary : ordinary (faculties and appetites)	Many sources of power, not just witches have *sakti* / Question whether witches act intentionally / Question whether witches exist	Ability comes from 1 / May be judged by 4(a/b)
3 Social roles (*darma* I)	*darma : adarma* :: good : bad (role fulfilment)	Conflicting texts over what is proper role-set / Different ontological bases of purity / Different epistemological interpretations of purity	Established by 1 / Liable to conflict with 4(a)
4 Universal roles (*darma* II)	(a) *Deontic* good — bad / intentions reasons ; (b) *Utilitarian* good — bad / acts consequences	Problematic status of *karma*: does it apply to 3 or 4? / No necessary link of intention/ act or reason/effect	4(a) and 4(b) may take account of 3

*Digital** truth functional / textual / signification / referential

*Analog** no truth functions / contextual / meaning / connotative

* Adapted from Wilden (1972: 191—5).

'language' and agreement over assumptions, means and ends. It may well be useful to designate a political response (as Parkin intended), but it is misleading applied to Bali, where villages differ so much and confusion and conflict may prevail as often as debate. Society may be treated *as if* it were a language, a code, a debate, a dance or a fight; but it *is* none of these.

Again, might it be that ideas of good and evil only look many and jumbled, but are in fact ordered by some underlying keys or 'paradigms'? This is merely to jump out of the Durkheimian frying-pan into the Platonist fire. One essentialism replaces another. In describing some of the most often stated difficulties in defining good and evil as 'nominalist' in table 2, I do not suggest there has to be some alternative, articulated framework. Rather, ostensibly unambiguous definitions ('digital' ones in Wilden's terms, 1972: 155–201) obscure all sorts of puzzle implicit in the classifications themselves, and any switch (to 'analog' perspectives) threatens to tear away the mask of order.

It would be slightly surprising to find ideas of good and evil neatly ordered anywhere, least of all in Bali, granted the various historical influences it has absorbed and the formula for diversity built into the notion of custom. So where do the regularities, if any, lie? There are preferred styles of argument which the Balinese recognize as appropriate. The label 'playful pragmatism' catches some of these, but it is perhaps best brought out by examples. So I shall finish by tidying up some left-over ethnographic points and contrast Balinese styles with recent Western philosophic approaches to morality.

Earlier I suggested that some senses of good and bad might be more reflexive than others. For all but die-hard substantivists, to use the term 'good' is to invite questions like: 'for whom?', and 'by what criteria?' To the extent that attributive adjectives may raise more questions than predicative ones, they encourage not just reflection but an open field. The Kantian solution, for instance, may be seen as two ways of closing down the possibilities. In hypothetical imperatives, the injunction implicit in 'good' is directed to a particular person for the criteria of fulfilling particular ends (if x wishes to achieve y, doing z is good). The categorical imperative holds for all persons, and good becomes an end in itself, by way of the criterion that 'good' for one person shall not be 'bad' for another (z is good in itself for all xs). The former implies a certain utilitarianism; the latter is deontic. Arguably, such implications are inevitably faced when one uses words like 'good' or 'bad'.

What implications does the term '*darma*' have for the Balinese? As it lays down duty regardless of ends, prima facie it is categorical and deontic (about binding obligations): for whom differs between the caste and universal senses. Following or ignoring *darma* has, however, consequences in bringing happiness or pleasure (*suka*, from Sanskrit *sukha*) as against misery and pain (*duka*, from Sanskrit *duhkha*). The recognition of consequences invites

consideration of the distinction between intended and unintended effects of action; and for whom. Thomas à Becket observed that 'The last temptation is the greatest treason: to do the right deed for the wrong reason' (Eliot 1935: 32).

Balinese pragmatism gives this a curious twist. While they are quite clear that there are different intentions for action, it is often impossible to know what these are without looking at the consequences. A hard-nosed empiricism requires that intentions may have to be ignored for many purposes. (It is the stress on sense-data which I suspect accounts for much of priests' preference for speaking of abstractions as potentially perceptible.) The drift of Balinese attitudes to intention comes out clearly in the term they use, *tetujon*, which has in its primary use a sense of 'direction' or 'goal'. So they might endorse Balzac's remark that 'Evil, no doubt, is a form of good of which the results are not immediately manifest.'

The range of interpretation of evaluative terms is curtailed by the need to achieve a degree of coherence with other sets of terms. The Balinese use the word *becik* (*luwung* in low Balinese) in most contexts where we would say 'good'. There are many words used predicatively to talk of things they dislike: rotten, coarse, ugly and so forth. The term used attributively is *kaon* (or *jelé* in low Balinese). One word, *corah*, looks promising, as dictionaries usually render it as 'wicked', 'evil'. It connotes, however, wanting something belonging to someone else, being greedy. So, if we are to ask for whom something is good or bad, we must look at what is presupposed by the terms the Balinese use.

As the link of 'evil' and 'greedy' suggests, judgements commonly refer back to a theory of human nature, which the Balinese have borrowed and adapted from Indian philosophy. Both aristocracy and villagers agree that humans have divergent goals. (This view is used to explain why one person's prayer may not be answered: divinity cannot satisfy everyone!) They are known as the *triwarga: darma*, a disposition to do one's duty; *arta*, the pursuit of wealth; and *kama*, the search for sensual pleasure. Whereas *darma* brings good to others as well as satisfying oneself, in pursuing *arta* and *kama*, the good or pleasure one obtains may well be only for oneself and is likely to be at the expense of others. The diverse forms of good are justified by a theory of human nature that recognizes conflicting aspects, the *triguna: sattwa*, the disposition towards purity or knowledge; *raja*, towards passion; and *tamas*, towards desire or ignorance. Where the Balinese give this Indian model an interestingly pragmatic turn is in questioning that good lies in the ideals of duty and knowledge (cf. chapter 9 above). As human nature has several aspects, they are all of value, and excess in any direction is bad, and endangers not only happiness but sanity. It is the pure man who is liable suddenly to

lapse, and, as villagers would often remark, the local thief (a one-time murderer) could be generous and kind. They tend to be suspicious of views, like Augustine's. that 'To many, total abstinence is easier than perfect moderation' (*On the good of marriage*. xxi).

Finally, how do the Balinese link the stress on balance and the pragmatic nature of good with the nature of God? The following story from my fieldwork may help.

Case 5   Is God evil?

Late one evening after a long discussion with a group of villagers, in which they commented on how many contradictions and inconsistencies their beliefs seemed to contain, I remarked that we too had our puzzles. In Christianity there was a paradox that, if God were good, omnipotent and omniscient, how could evil exist? To my surprise I was met with hoots of laughter. White people seemed so clever. How could they find difficult what was so obvious, even to simple villagers who could not read or write? One of them explained the matter to me, to mutters of agreement from the others. Of course God — in Bali Sang Hyang Widi, the highest, all-embracing Divinity — was bad (*kaon*). How else could there be bad in the world? Were he not bad as well as good, we could never know if an action, or thought, were good as we would have nothing to compare it to. It is only because God is both that humans are able to say that something is good or bad at all.

On further enquiry with Balinese from different social strata similar views turned up, and they all seemed quite satisfied that the style of argument was 'good'. It is interesting to see how their answer to the problem of theodicy (from *theós*, god, and *dikē*, justice) works. Traditionally, the problem stems from three premises being mutually incompatible:

1 God is almightly and all-knowing;
2 God is perfectly good;
3 Evil exists.

The elegance of the Balinese solution to my mind, though probably to few Western theologians, is to elaborate the second premise such that, in allowing humans the capacity to discriminate, God allows the existence of badness. On one reading God becomes in fact the possibility of discrimination and choice.

Earlier I suggested there is a sense in which order, for the Balinese, is the way the world is. The point may be made by contrast to a problem in Christian theology. Once the existence of Satan, or evil, has been admitted, the tables have to be turned so that God must always win in the end (cf. chapter 2 above). The Balinese give a similar argument a flavour all of their own, by

arguing backwards. If the good always win, then who wins is good. For example, in the Balinese version of the Indian epic, the Mahabarata, upon which much theatre and cultural commentary draws, the five 'good' Pandawa brothers, who defeat the horde of 'evil' Korawa, are often no more honourable in the means they use than are their opponents: the difference is that they win. It is not that Brutus is an honourable man, in Balinese parlance, in overthrowing the tyrant Caesar, but rather that Brutus is alive and Caesar lies stabbed. The logic, whether one likes it or not, is impeccable.

Given the tenor of my argument, it would be contradictory to try to sum up the 'essence' of Balinese approaches to evil more than loosely to use a label such as 'pragmatic'. So perhaps I might be allowed to conclude by drawing a contrast between Balinese and Western styles of approaching morality.

To an outsider, Western philosophers have a striking tendency to try to pin down the 'essential nature' of the good or the moral. Unfortunately, different schools of thought seize upon different essential features. Is there method in their apparent muddle? It is possible that there is and that it is language — not as I tried to use it to look at culturally recognized implications, but in its different functions.

The point may be made by a quick inspection of Jakobson's model of the functions of language (1960). As I understand him, speech has many functions at the same time, but these may be distinguished analytically none the less. What is important is that speech does not just *refer* to things in the world. In differing degrees, depending upon speakers, listeners and context, different aspects of language come to the fore. The speaker's attitude to what is being said may be crucial. This is the *emotive* function ('How lovely to see you!'). Or the stress may be on the listener, as in vocatives and imperatives, which is the *conative* function (as in the command 'Drink!', cited by Jakobson himself, 1960: 355). The better-known *phatic* aspect may serve to check that the medium is working ('Good morning, how are you?'). Rather differently, the *meta-lingual* function is about confirming that the same code is being used by those concerned ('I don't follow you — what do you mean?'). Perhaps the hardest function to grasp immediately is the *poetic*. or *aesthetic*, which focuses 'on the message for its own sake' (Jakobson 1960: 356; Tennyson's 'And murmuring of innumerable bees', quoted by Lyons 1977: 54; or perhaps 'Frailty, thy name is woman!'). In describing the Balinese *celuluk* as reflecting the ambiguities of fear, danger and difference, I was hinting at something like the poetic function. The possible connection between these functions and theories of ethics is given in figure 1.

The parallel between Jakobson's functions of language and kinds of ethical theory is almost uncanny. Philosophers are described as 'naturalists' if they
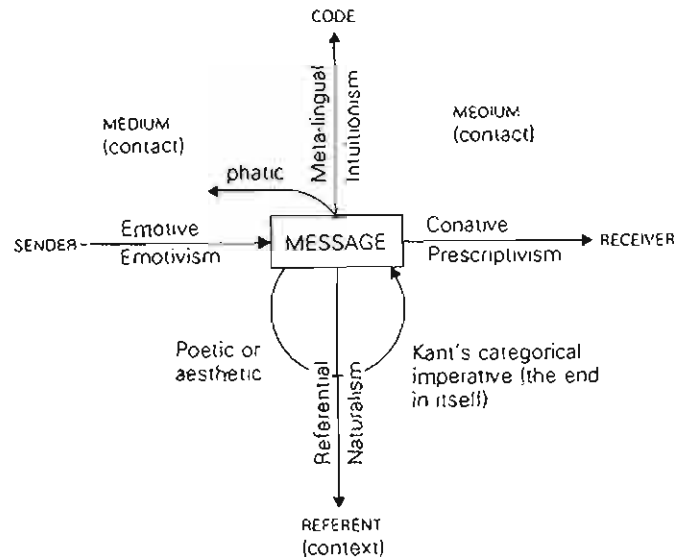
FIGURE 1   *The connection between Jakobson's functions of language
and theories of ethics*

try to describe 'good' by *reference* to supposedly objective, observable features of the world (e.g. Herbert Spencer or R. B. Perry). Naturalism implicitly assumes that reference is the key function in the language of moral statements.

'Non-naturalists' come, like Snark Hunters, in many shapes and sizes. 'Emotivists', such as Russell and A. J. Ayer, hold that moral statements do not so much assert truths about the world as express attitudes. By contrast, 'Prescriptivists', of whom R. M. Hare is perhaps the best known, regard such statements as a species of prescriptive discourse, of which the classic case is imperatives (cf. the *conative* function). 'Intuitionists', such as G. E. Moore, argue that moral terms like 'good' are like properties such as 'red' in being ultimately undefinable, but that they differ in being non-natural. Either one is simply aware that something is good or one is not: one cannot be shown it. I am tempted to paraphrase this as implying that either one understands the code or one does not (which would parallel the *meta-lingual* function). Somewhere between a stress on the code and the medium lies MacIntyre (there is a shared basis of some rather unspecified kind in social judgements). It is anthropologists who come near to elevating the *phatic* function of communication to the status of a theory of morality. For instance, F. G. Bailey's notion of 'moral community' is not so much a matter of understanding,

or agreeing to, the code (the double sense of code in 'moral code' should be obvious) as of recognizing that people share contact above all (Bailey 1971: 7–8). Finally, in Kant, or at least in the way Kant was interpreted by the Romantics, the connection between morality and aesthetics is pretty explicit. If the moral is what is an end in itself, the aesthetic was to become something very similar.

In trying to find out what morality really is, it looks as if philosophers searching for its 'essence' have unwittingly sounded out only the functions of language, and have confused words with their imagined objects. If the Balinese, as I suggest, stress the contextual and pragmatic use of evaluative words, then applying well-worn Western distinctions, designed to catch the essential nature of moral concepts, may be fruitless and ill-conceived. I suspect it makes a category mistake. The Balinese seem to work with quite different presuppositions and styles of argument. Any discussion of evil requires for a start so detailed and particular a knowledge of cosmology, theology, ideas of human nature and of social relations used by people in a culture that one wonders whether strict comparison would ever be possible. Worst of all, such an endeavour commits the essentialist fallacy of presupposing that there is something there to be compared. One recalls what happened to the hunters who thought that finally they had caught a Snark:

> He had softly and suddenly vanished away —
> For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.
> Fit 8, The Vanishing

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