A PHILOSOPHICAL CLARIFICATION OF THE AXIOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND THE CONCEPT OF GOODNESS IN GENESIS 1

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a philosophical clarification of the sense and logic behind the concept of goodness as it occurs in Genesis 1. Many readings of the chapter either bracket these issues or assign it what is thought to be an obvious utilitarian, moral, legal, aesthetic, or theological connotation. The contention of this article is that these views fail to take seriously the metaphysical riddles inherent in the narrative's ontology and beg the question as to the sensibility and folk-philosophical context of the concept of goodness in Genesis 1. Following an initial overview of the relevant data and an outline of the problematic, G.E. Moore's open question argument suggesting the indefinable nature of goodness as a non-natural property is brought to bear on the discussion. The presentation concludes with a philosophical clarification of the axiological assumptions in the text via categories in value theory.

INTRODUCTION

In Genesis 1 "God"[1] (henceforth אֱלֹהִים [Genesis 1])[2] sees that the (acts of) creation "is (are) (very) good!" The divine assessment is noted seven times in the chapter:

וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאוֹר כִּי-טוֹב	And God saw the light, that it was good (1:4)
וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לַיַּבָּשָׁה אֶרֶץ וּלְמִקְוֵה הַמַּיִם קָרָא יַמִּים וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב	And God called the land Earth, and the gathering of the waters he called Seas; and God saw that it was good (1:10)

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[1] By "God" I am not referring here to what people understand to an extra-textual divinity but to the character in the creation narrative of Genesis 1.

[2] I specify the context here because I wish to read Genesis 1 on its own terms and not an attempted harmonization with the larger contexts of Genesis 1-11 or 1-3.

וַתּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ דֶּשֶׁא עֵשֶׂב מַזְרִיעַ זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה-פְּרִי אֲשֶׁר זַרְעוֹ-בוֹ לְמִינֵהוּ וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב

And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after its kind; <u>and God saw that it was good</u> (1:12)

וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמָיִם לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ לִמְשֹׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וּלְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב

And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; <u>and God saw that it was good</u> (1:17-18)

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַתַּנִּינִם הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֵת כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׂת אֲשֶׁר שָׁרְצוּ הַמַּיִם לְמִינֵהֶם וְאֵת כָּל-עוֹף כָּנָף לְמִינֵהוּ וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב

And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that creeps, wherewith the waters swarmed, after its kind, and every winged fowl after its kind; <u>and God saw that it was good</u> (1:21)

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת-הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ וְאֵת כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינֵהוּ וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב

And God made the beast of the earth after its kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground after its kind; <u>and God saw that it was good</u> (1:25)

וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה-טוֹב מְאֹד

<u>And God saw</u> everything that He had made, and, behold, <u>it was very good</u> (1:31)

From these passages we can see that several aspects of creation are called "good":

1. Light (Day 1)
2. Dry land and seas (Day 3)
3. Vegetation (Day 3)
4. Lights (Day 4)
5. Sea creatures (Day 5)
6. Earth creatures (Day 6)
7. Everything (Day 6)

What is meant by "good" is never made explicit.[3] Typically, commentators on the

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[3] I do not expect the author to have done so. My concern here is not with some absolute

chapter simply note that things are judged to be good, that this is done seven times, that the valuation is omitted in some places and that it must have some theological significance (Alter 1997:15; Brueggemann 1982:89; Gunkel 1997:32; Hamilton 1990:43; Sarna 1989:91; Skinner 2010:81; von Rad 1972:36; Wenham 1987:72; Westermann 1984:59). Few go further and seek to state in what sense things are thought to be "good" and what "good" meant with reference to creation (Albright 1957:22-26; Stachoviak 1970:321-328, Stoebe 1978:652-654; Yamauchi 1980:343). Most lay and scholarly readers, however, appear to take the meaning of goodness in this context for granted, as though what it was assumed to mean is clear, if not univocal common-sense. Perhaps it is thought that since we ourselves constantly use the word "good" correctly in various language games (in the Wittgensteinian sense) there probably is no readily apparent mystery involved.

Be that as it may, from a philosophical[4] perspective the divine valuation presents us with a conceptual riddle (cf. Cupitt 2001:72). For "to see" something as "good" to be meaningful in any sense presupposes some standard of valuation with reference to which the judgment is made. It also presupposes that the concept of goodness and its binary terms are already in place in some sort of "language-of-thought". So how, from the text's own perspective, could אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) see that something was "good"? "Good" in what sense of the word? "Good" according to what evaluative criteria? Good for whom? Good compared or as opposed to what alternative state of affairs?[5]

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notion of goodness, or with goodness as it might be understood theologically and normatively, but with what the text itself presupposes as regards its meaning. We have no access to divine or human thoughts behind the text.

[4]   In opting for a philosophical perspective I do not mean to either imply that the text is or should have been philosophy or to impose alien philosophical categories and expectations on the biblical text. I only seek to identify and clarify the folk-philosophical assumptions implicit in the worldview that is itself part of the religious language used in Genesis 1. Claiming that we need a philosophical clarification (not speculation!) also does not seek to insinuate that other perspectives such as those adopted in, say, literary-historical approaches to the text are invalid. The present research merely supplements alternative points of view and does not seek to replace them or criticize their legitimacy. Last but not least it should be noted that my philosophical concern is not, as is popular, related to hermeneutics (Gadamer, Ricoeur, etc.) or ethics (good and evil) but to axiology or, more specifically, value theory. There is nothing anachronistic or esoteric about such an approach for it merely seeks to describe what is nascent in the text itself, albeit as in all our readings with the aid of post-biblical vocabularies.

[5]   In attempting to ascertain the meaning of goodness in this context it is not necessary or intended to relate it to its opposite, the concept of evil in other contexts (Genesis 2-3).

The reason for puzzlement is the fact that technically, from the narrator's point of view, there was as yet no axiological matrix relative to which what אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) sees and judges amounts to a valuation. Given the absence of the apocryphal supernatural audience we are confronted with what the philosopher Thomas Nagel called a "view from nowhere". So, tempting (and anachronistic) as it may be, one cannot even say that אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) or his purpose/will was itself assumed to be the standard relative to which things were judged to be good. Doing so simply defers the question-begging (on which, see G.E. Moore's "open-question argument" below). And insisting that the divine nature was assumed to be good which in turn causes whatever is created to be good by definition actually makes the divine judgment itself redundant (if divine acts are good by definition or in the analytic sense then describing them as good seems superfluous).

To sum up the conceptual conundrum: the idea of a pre-cosmic judge all by himself creating things for the first time and calling them good without an axiological frame of reference makes no conceptual sense at all (cf. Cupitt 2001:32). Of course, it does not have to. The author of Genesis 1 is not obliged to have considered all the problems generated by the axiological background of the world in the text he was working with. Yet it cannot be denied that of necessity the text will contain folk-axiological assumptions that are nascent and a folk-theory of value which remains unstated. Thus despite the pre-philosophical genre of Genesis 1, it is still valid to ask what was presupposed regarding the meaning of the concept of goodness in this context. In order to answer this question, the remainder of this article offers a philosophical reconstruction and clarification of the relevant presuppositions in Genesis 1 concerning the nature of goodness.

THE CONCEPT OF GOODNESS IN THE RELEVANT CONTEXTS

Much has already been written on the concept of goodness in the Hebrew Bible as a whole (Beyreuther 1986:98-107). Most Biblical Hebrew dictionaries and lexicons have something to say about it (see the entries in Clines 1993-; Koehler & Baumgartner 2002). From the perspective of comparative Semitics it is already established that the generic term probably derives from a proto-Semitic root *ṭb* which might have originated from bilateral substantives (see Johag 1986:297). In North-West Semitic the perfect form later became supplemented by the imperfect trilateral root

yṭb. In Ugaritic an etymologically related noun (but no verb) is attested and connotes "harmony". The adjective in the latter language has the sense of what is "pleasant" or "sweet". In North-East Semitic (Akkadian specifically) the parallel root signifies "favour" and "(good) deed" alongside "friendship, (good) will". In Egyptian it translates as "beautiful" or "to become good" (see Johag 1986:297). According to Johag (1986:298), with regard to usage *outside* the Bible:

> Examination of the root *ṭb* at its very earliest stage of usage reveals a variety of applications that did not develop out of a single conceptual meaning to which they can be traced etymologically. The meanings exist synchronically (polysemy) and must be classified according to the particular application at hand. No real semantic innovation for *ṭb* appears at any time. We are always dealing with semantic extensions and specializations of the term in specific areas.

Johag (1986:298) goes on to say that:

> The basic meaning of *ṭb* and all its derivatives refers in general to the qualities that make an object desirable. Here the emphasis is an originally pure utilitarianism, both qualitative and quantitative. When used in this way, *ṭb* can become a fixed element in the definition of an object.

And:

> In all the Semitic Languages, *ṭb* is used in the context of everyday life to designate the practical utility of an object, an object or a situation, with reference to its being useful, advantageous. The particular purpose in each case lends the word its specific meaning (Johag 1986:299).

In the Hebrew Bible,[6] there are 738 occurrences of the root in Hebrew, 3 in Aramaic. It also occurs 13 times in names. Besides the perfect root *ṭwb* there are 123 occurrences in the imperfect *yṭb* (44 in the *qal*, 73 in the *hiphʿil*). There are also 6 in the form of the superlative substantive. It is found in all the books except Obadiah,

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[6] Given that this has been done many times before and by capable Hebrew linguists and scholars of the history of Israelite religion, the aim of this paper is not to relate the data to the use of related axiological concepts in comparative Semitic semantics or to identify links with ancient Near Eastern creation myths. The findings of such research are presupposed and available elsewhere for those interested in what is beyond the scope of this article to discuss.

Habbakuk and Haggai. In many passages it is difficult to determine whether the word represents the adjective (masculine singular) or the verb (*qal*, stative, participle or infinitive). The abstract noun form is also attested (32 times). Diachronically the term is attested during the entire historical period, albeit in the context of different life settings and applications (see Johag 1986:303).

In most versions of the LXX the Hebrew טוב of Genesis 1 is translated as καλόν (see Grundman 1964:1-18) This Greek word is typically used in contexts with aesthetic sense. In this it is different from ἀγαθός which is more frequent elsewhere in the biblical corpus and refers to what is "good" in the practical sense (see Grundman 1966:536-550). The polysemy is reflected in the fact that while we are dealing with only one Hebrew word, with regard to the overall use of טוב in the Hebrew Bible, one can detect the existence of at least five senses: practical, abstract, quality, moral, and technical (Yamauchi 1980:211). All of these have been ascribed to the use of the root in Genesis 1 by various commentators through the ages and there is no clear-cut consensus. As for the semantic scope, according to Brown, Driver & Briggs (1979:131), טוב has the following possible meanings:

1. good, pleasant, agreeable
   a. pleasant, agreeable (to the senses)
   b. pleasant (to the higher nature)
   c. good, excellent (of its kind)
   d. good, rich, valuable in estimation
   e. good, appropriate, becoming
   f. better (comparative)
   g. glad, happy, prosperous (of man's sensuous nature)
   h. good understanding (of man's intellectual nature)
   i. good, kind, benign
   j. good, right (ethical)

2. a good thing, benefit, welfare

In this regard, many theological dictionaries would suggest that the use of טוב in the context of Genesis 1 is utilitarian in the secular sense:

> From the perspective of the suitability of the object or person, 'the focus
> is on the functional aspect, as being in proper order or suitable for the job.

> We are thus dealing with "goodness for something,' with a very concrete
> and tangible meaning in the background (Johag 1986:304).

The phrase וַיַּרְא אֱלֹים כִּי-טוֹב as used in Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31 is therefore about the functionality of the creative work. Essential for the interpretation of טוֹב is its use with the verb ראה which is considered to mean "see" in the sense of "regard", "examine" or "think proper" (Johag 1986:304). In other words, creation was seen as good in the sense of being useful, i.e., everything achieves its intended purpose (thus providing a fitting setting for life). This idea is nothing new (see Schmidt 1973:62; Westermann 1974:61; Zenger 1983:177, Rogerson 2004:103). One problem with it concerns the fact that the establishment of meaning seems to be circular, as W.V.O. Quine's indeterminacy-of-translation hypothesis predicts. Moreover, the idea seems probably indebted to neo-Aristotelian philosophy rather than to the text itself. The reading alludes to the concept of final cause in Aristotelian metaphysics whereas Genesis 1 has nothing explicit about teleology other than that related to procreation.

A second view prevalent among interpreters is that creation was assumed to be good in the moral and/or aesthetic sense (see Rotzoll 1993). This view seems to think of the deity as praising himself for the skill or virtues he happened to have (see Fox 1973:41-49; Johag 1977:3-23). Philosophically speaking it bears resemblance to Platonism. It is doubtful, however, that the author of Genesis 1 had this conceptual background in mind. The text does not assume a "best of all possible worlds" metaphysics and does not see the good in abstract terms. Even if this view was accepted for the sake of the argument it leaves us with the question of what possible frame of reference for moral/aesthetic judgment there could be.

A third view, which is more theological if not pedantic, is that creation was assumed to be good in the sense of being a perfect expression of the divine will (cf. Westermann 1974:61). If this option is considered to be correct, the divine judgment amounts to a tautology. The deity called creation good because it seemed good to him. This in turn presupposes the relativist fork of the Euthyphro dilemma according to which the will of אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) determines the nature of what is good. Unfortunately for this view, in the Genesis 1 context it does seem to be the case that creation is called good relative to the divine only. It seemed good from the perspective of some unexplained standard. Whichever, if any, of these options we might concur with, is not presently important. The question commentators seem to bracket is whether goodness can be defined at all.

IS GOODNESS INDEFINABLE?

In this regard it is easy to complicate the concept of goodness in Genesis 1 philosophically. Perhaps the most interesting and directly relevant philosophical perspective comes from Moore's *Principia ethica* (see Moore 1993). In his approach to the question of what is "good", Moore argued that good is an indefinable property which can at best be partially understood in the framework of those statements which incorporate it. However, such propositions must always be synthetic ones and can never be analytic statements in any meaningful way. If this is true, Semitic scholars who claim that functionality, excellence or divine desire is what is meant by the concept of in the context of Genesis 1 are mistaken (see Moore 1993:285).

As an attempted proof, Moore offers what he calls the "open-question argument". On this view it becomes obvious that good is indefinable just as soon as we insert any "x" (where "x" is a potential definition of goodness) into the simple question, "Is 'x' good?" In other words, any answer to the question of what goodness is begs the question whether that is indeed itself good. This definability test is useful because, as long as any question arising from it remains meaningful, we can be assured that the proposed definition of good is an invalid one. The reason for this is that defining something against itself, or against an obviously synonymous term, will always yield an incoherent and completely empty question (Moore 1993:290).

How is this relevant to our clarification of goodness in Genesis 1? Suppose we define goodness as that which is functional, if we carry the investigation further and ask ourselves, "but is functionality good?" it is apparent that the standard itself now begs the question. Moore's argument therefore suggests that in the definitional sense the question of what goodness is will always be unanswerable. Fortunately for us, since we are not seeking to determine the meaning of goodness absolutely, there may be a way forward. It begins by asking what Genesis 1 might have presupposed concerning the judgment that creation is good, whether the textual assumptions are philosophically defensible or not. We may be unable to define goodness per se but we can reconstruct and clarify the value theory implicit in the folk-axiology of Genesis 1.

PERSPECTIVES FROM VALUE THEORY[7]

In philosophy, "value theory" encompasses a range of approaches to understanding how, why, and to what degree agents value things, whether the thing is a person, idea, object, or anything else. As Schroeder (2008:n.p.) notes, in its broadest sense "value theory"

> encompasses all branches of moral philosophy, social and political philosophy, aesthetics, and sometimes feminist philosophy and the philosophy of religion – any area of philosophy that is considered to encompass some 'evaluative' aspect.

This makes it possible for us to clarify goodness in Genesis 1 even if we are not exactly sure in which philosophical sense the term was used – value theory covers them all. To begin with we ask a historical question: What did the narrator assume אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) was doing when he ascribed value to some state of affairs? Answering this question involves explaining the meaning of evaluative judgments for the character of אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1). In other words, what did the word "good" signify within the world in the text (in the Ricoeurian sense)?

In this regard we may note that אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) assumed that seeing "x is good" involved attributing some property to an object. Yet אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1)'s seeing x is good was not assumed to be merely his own approval thereof as though goodness would not be recognized by other agents. Similarly, the valuations were not assumed to be merely emotive or prescriptive – they were assumed to be descriptive judgments. In short, from a historical perspective, אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) was a value realist in as much as he assumed that evaluative statements purport to represent facts about the world. But given the assumption that attributing value to an object or person involves ascribing a property – goodness – to that person or thing, what was the nature of the property attributed?

On this point philosophers divide into two camps: (1) non-naturalists, and (2) naturalists. Which was אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) assumed to be? On the one hand it is clear

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[7]   I would like to emphasize once more that the aim of this discussion is not to force the jargon of Genesis 1 into anachronistic and esoteric philosophical contexts via metaphysical speculation but merely to offer a historical and descriptive comparative philosophical clarification of the textual presuppositions in Genesis 1 when these are translated and explicated in axiological terms. In doing so I make no value judgment as to whether the textual folk-theory of value is itself true or not.

that אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) was not assumed to be a non-naturalist since he did not assume that any attempt to identify "good" with a natural property (such as producing pleasure, or being desired) commits a "naturalistic fallacy". "Goodness" was not for אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) a simple "non-natural" property (i.e., not discoverable or quantifiable by empirical investigation.) This reading rules out the possibility that אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) was an intuitionist in his axiological epistemology. On the other hand, the converse is readily apparent: אֱלֹהִים's folk-axiology was naturalistic in the sense that he held that goodness can be identified with some natural property or properties.

אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) was also assumed to be a subjectivist. אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) characterized value in terms of the states of individual sentient creatures and by implication affirmed to some extent that the kind of goodness he was concerned with depended on what is desired or valued by אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) and his creation. Like all subjectivists אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) did not think of states of affairs as good apart from any pleasure or satisfaction they bring. Good things were not assumed to make that life better independently of how much they are desired or enjoyed, and their absence diminished their value if this became a source of regret. So contra objectivist theories of value, אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) did not hold that certain things could be valuable independently of their impact on consciousness states.

Surely what is good was assumed to be such and so because it is experienced like that from אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1)'s perspective. A good thing is not objectively so. Surely אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1)'s foreignness to value objectivism is also already evident in the absence of a quest for perfection. In axiology perfectionism is an objectivist theory of value since it assumes that goodness depends on the actualization or perfection of nature. אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) did not believe such a thing to be possible, which explains the demiurge motif in 1:2 and appointing humans to run the world. Also, contra Aristotle's rationalist version of the theory of perfection, אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) did not assume that fulfilling the function of creative entities involved the exercise and perfection of their rational capacities. The "good" was not assumed to be identical to the attainment of virtue or excellence in reason.

In אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1)'s subjectivism, however, there was no simple *point of view* theory. In other words, what is good *simpliciter* did not differ from what is good from the perspective of the "I" in אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1). Being good *simpliciter* is not limited to a more general point of view – the point of view of the deity. אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) did not

complicate *good for* and good *simpliciter* by ascribing them to two sources. What was good was assumed to be such for everyone in such a situation (see Smith 2003:576-598). אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1)'s use of the concept of goodness makes no sense if one takes away the perspectives of the deity and his creatures. Goodness was assumed to be real, but it was always relative to agents. Clearly "good" here meant "good for x". Neither did אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) understand good *simpliciter* in terms of attributive good. The divine judgments always presupposed elliptical *good for* sentences with some agent for whom it is good in mind.

An important distinction in value theory related to the foregoing is between intrinsic and extrinsic value (see Zimmerman 2010:n.p.). An object, or state of affairs is "intrinsically" valuable if it is good simply because of its internal nature. It does not derive its value from anything else. We have already seen this was not assumed to be the case for אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) who knew nothing of such goods without anyone to enjoy them. Conversely, value was assumed to be extrinsic in nature since its worth is implied to be derivative from something else. Of course, *intrinsic* value can also be contrasted here with *instrumental* value. This important distinction in value theory is between things valued as means – instrumental goods – and things valued as ends, or final goods (see Zimmerman 2010:n.p.)

There is an important difference between saying that something was assumed to be a means to good, and saying that something is good in itself (see Zimmerman 2010:n.p.). This becomes more important when we say that something in itself has the property which we are asserting to belong to its effects. Often called the means/ends distinction, an object, experience or state of affairs is "instrumentally" valuable if it serves as a means to one's ends (see Zimmerman 2010:n.p.). For אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) most created things were not assumed to become ends in themselves, hence their value were assumed to be instrumental. As for linking goodness with creative action, on the one hand we can infer that אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) saw a creative action as good if he was assumed to know not only how far this action of creating is good in itself, but also how far it tended to produce a good effect. On the other hand, if a particular creative action was assumed to be *a means* to good, אֱלֹהִים can be said to be depicted as knowing not only that the action will produce a certain effect, but that the effect itself will be good.

In Genesis 1 with its minimalist psychological elaboration there is nothing explicit that seems to value psychological status in the deity such as happiness and pleasure as

apparently of intrinsic end-worth. However, it must be admitted that neither is there anything denying that these same goods have any ultimate value. This leads to the question of the relation between the instrumental/final values and extrinsic/intrinsic values for אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1). Instrumental goods for אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) would be those that were assumed to be extrinsically valuable, because their goodness derives from the good things that they promote. As we saw, however, this distinction does not always hold: אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) is not depicted as having assumed that happiness is an extrinsic good that sometimes could become the final end of human action.

Instrumental value can also be contrasted with "constitutive" value. The idea behind this distinction is that instrumental values lead *causally* to intrinsic values, while constitutive values *amount* to intrinsic values. For example, for אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) the creation of the world at times seems to *constitute*, without causing, satisfaction. For the narrator's purposes this distinction is not very important, and constitutive values can be thought, along with instrumental values, as mistakenly trying to get something of intrinsic value. אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) did however assume a distinction between conditional values and unconditional values. A conditional value is something valuable in some circumstances whereas an unconditional value is valuable in all. Most values related to the good of creation were assumed to be conditional since אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) was assumed to be able to imagine circumstances in which it would be bad for himself or his creation to possess it.

In this regard, one of the oldest questions in the theory of value is that of whether there is more than one fundamental (intrinsic) value (see Mason 2011:n.p.). Value monists deny this while value pluralists affirm it. Since אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) appears to deny the existence of actual intrinsic value the question is whether his character is by implication denying the reality of one or of more than one fundamental intrinsic value (Schroeder 2008:n.p.). First is an ontological/explanatory issue. If anything is of (relative) value for אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1), there remains a further question to be asked: why? If this question has an answer, some have thought, it must be because there is a further, more basic, value under which the explanation subsumes it. For אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) the closest we come to this is in his use of the concept of "goodness". Since this seems lasting, אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1)'s positive theory is monistic and based on the assumption that there could be one intrinsic value, i.e., goodness.

Then there is the question of the relationship between the theory of right action and the theory of value for אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1). This is commonly part of scholars'

comments on the notion of goodness in the chapter. In some places, אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) seems to presuppose a form of classical utilitarianism that aims to account for goodness in terms of the promotion of universal good. In this respect, אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1)'s utilitarian view required an account of the good in order to specify just what sort of good consequences must be maximized. Such a classical type of utilitarianism in אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) held that goodness was simply that which produced the maximum balance of good over evil.

It should be clear from the aforesaid that for אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) what today goes under the name of "classical consequentialism" would have been out of the question. Like all non-consequentialists, אֱלֹהִים assumed actions were better for being more supported by some sort of reason for behaving in a certain way. For אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1), consequentialism would be too demanding and he would agree with those who with regard to the creation of the world opt for replacing "best" with "good enough" – substituting a "satisficing" conception for a "maximizing" one. This explains why things are not assumed to be perfect and why it might need to be destroyed later on (P's version of the flood).

Interestingly, a contrary perspective, i.e., universalizable egoism is not the teleological theory with which to classify axiological-moral trajectories in אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1)'s thought. The idea that אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) ought always to do whatever action has the feature that, of all available alternatives, it is the one such that, were he to do it, things would be best *for him* is not clearly or unequivocally visible in the chapter. Egoism does not feature when אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) commands agents to maximize what is good *for them* (procreation) Hence the absence of the modern teleological idea that the deontic is to be explained in terms of the evaluative (see also Portmore 2005:95-113).

In contrast to teleological theories, which seek to account for deontic categories in terms of evaluative ones, אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) appears to have assumed what is called a "fitting attitudes" account in that he took it for granted that what is "good" is closely linked to what is "desirable". According to Genesis 1's axiology what is good is also what is desired. However, this slogan is not by itself very helpful since we do not know which of our senses of "good" did Genesis 1 provide an account for. Was it an account of good *simpliciter*, saying that it would be good if *p* just in case אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1) ought to desire that *p*? Or was it an account of "value" claims, saying that pleasure is good just in case pleasure ought to be desired by אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1)? (See

Schroeder 2008:n.p.) The answers to these questions are elusive, as remains the concept of goodness itself.

CONCLUSION

The concept of goodness in Genesis 1 is too vague and ambiguous to define with any certainty. Scholars who take its meaning and sense for granted or who link it quickly with popular functional, moral, aesthetic and theological domains might be presumptuous. Taking seriously the open question argument by Moore it would be better to abandon the quest for definition in favour of attempts at conceptual clarification. The philosophical domain best able to encompass all the dimensions possibly present in the data is axiology. From this perspective, it is not possible to say with surety how the concept of goodness was understood by the narrator in Genesis 1 (or whether it makes metaphysical sense). Yet it is still possible to characterise elements and aspects of the folk theory of value presupposed by the character of אֱלֹהִים (Genesis 1). In other words, instead of only trying to say what was meant by the concept of goodness, it might in the future be more fruitful to supplement purely lexical approaches with philosophical perspectives aimed at reconstructing the axiological profile of the divine agent doing the valuations.

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