

‘EVIL’ IN *THE SLEEP OF REASON*

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze English physical chemist and novelist C. P. Snow’s novel entitled *The Sleep of Reason* (1968) according to Terry Eagleton’s perspective of evil with reference to his book entitled *On Evil* (2010), and also aims to discuss to what extent his views on evil shed light upon the novel. Eagleton’s unconventional attitude towards evil can be easily recognized when he focuses on a rare category of evil, that is, ‘without an apparent’ reason, in his mentioned book. This type of evil is observed with the murder of an eight year-old boy after being tortured by two women named Cora and Kitty during a weekend, which happens without an apparent reason. In order to explain this type of evil, Eagleton relates the concept of motiveless evil with the death drive, freedom, free will, responsibility, destructiveness, and the influence of external factors on human beings, which are of great importance in the sense that the two women are sane and have free will; thereupon, they should assume the responsibility for what they have done. In short, Eagleton’s views on evil will be used as the critical tools in the analysis of *The Sleep of Reason* in this paper.

Key Words: Evil, the death drive, freedom, free will, motiveslessness and the murder.

AN EAGLETONIAN ANALYSIS OF ‘EVIL’ IN *THE SLEEP OF REASON*

Observing the etymology of the concept of evil, the *Online Advanced Oxford English Dictionary* states that *evil* originates from “Old English *yfel*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *evvel* and German *übel*”(Online Oxford Dictionary). Neil Forsyth gives another account for its etymology relating it to pride:

The English word evil is of Teutonic origin, cognate with *übel* and Dutch *evvel*. It is thought to derive from a theoretical word *ubiloz*, cognate with *up* or *over*, and thus the etymology of evil connects it with the concepts of too much, exceeding due measure, over limits, what used to be thought of as hubris. (Forsyth, 2000: 521)

Besides, every occurrence that makes people unhappy or angry is not necessarily evil. Every one of those people who attempt to define evil has emphasized one or two features of evil. From the attempted definitions, the distinctive features of evil can be expressed by six aspects: intolerable harm, intentionality, senseless destruction, unintelligibility, aimlessness, personally satisfying and the banality of evil. For instance, Angelo Corlett evaluates evil actions as

“extremely harmful wrongs, whether or not they puzzle the minds and hearts of people” (Corlett, 2004: 83). It is the same for Ervin Staub’s concept of evil in that actions are considered ‘intensely harmful’ (Staub, 1999: 181). Claudia Card also highlights the severity of the harm while explaining evil, declaring that “evils are foreseeable intolerable harms produced by culpable wrongdoing. The nature and severity of the harm, rather than the perpetrators’ psychological states, distinguish evils from ordinary wrongs” (Card, 2002: 3). In contrast to Corlett and Staub, even though Card implies the intentionality in evil by saying ‘foreseeable’ harms she focuses on the intolerable harm.

Marcus G. Singer lays emphasis on ‘intentionality’ in evil actions by expressing that “one cannot do something evil by accident or through thoughtlessness. Through accident or misadventure one can do something wrong or bad, even terrible, but not something evil” (Singer, 2004: 190). Similarly, Robert B. Loudon claims that “...whenever people commit evil, they have intentionally violated fundamental moral norms- they are ‘conscious of the moral law’ but have willfully deviated from it” (Louden, 2010: 99). In contrast to Corlett, Staub and Card who emphasize the severity of harm, Singer and Loudon emphasize intentionality in this harm. By implication, no matter how great the harm, it cannot be labelled as evil if it is not done ‘intentionally’. Jeffrey Burton Russell, who wrote a history of evil in four books, concurs with the lack of purpose of evil in the same fashion. He explains evil as senseless, causeless destruction that does not build but destroys, it does not repair but breaks, and it does not tie but unties (Russell, 1999: 18). It is interesting to mention the unintelligibility of evil after mentioning the ‘intentionality’ in evil actions. One wonders, then, how an incomprehensible action can be done intentionally, which also makes it incomprehensible.

While Adam Morton talks about evil he states that “the point of view of the victims of evil is usually that of incomprehension. How could anyone do this to me?” (Morton, 2004: 13-14). When there is intentional, intolerable harm or senseless destruction the victim cannot understand it. However, human beings want to understand evil because, as Allen Wood says, “there are moral reasons (for me) not to do it, and these reasons are decisive. In principle, therefore, there could never be a fully satisfactory explanation of an evil action as an action for reasons” (Wood, 2010: 148). In a similar vein to Wood, Colin McGinn also says that “an act that has good effects can explain why an agent performed it, but the bad effects of an act cannot explain why it was performed- though there exist both types of act” (McGinn, 1997: 72). In contrast to evil, goodness can be explained in many ways. For example, one can perform a good action to be appreciated by other people. Joel Feinberg also emphasizes the unintelligible nature of evil but he includes the harm evil causes as well by defining it as follows: “considerable harm to a victim, and the unintelligibility of the actor's reasons or motives for her wrongdoing and for the elements that ground her moral blameworthiness”(Corlett, 2004: 82).

Furthermore, Robert Fisher remarks on another feature of evil. He argues that it is performed by human beings and composed of four basic tenets. To him, evil is “peculiar to us as a species, intelligently artistic, intensely creative, and, personally satisfying” (Fisher, 2003: 34). For the first, that evil is performed only by human beings can be deduced from other definitions mentioned before Fisher’s. If there is an intention while performing something, there must be consciousness, as well. As a consequence of this, there must be a human actor in the action. For the second and third basics (being intelligently artistic and intensively creative), Iago’s actions in Shakespeare’s play called *Othello* can be given as good examples. That Iago plots against Othello creating a net to ensnare him can be taken as intensively creative and intelligently artistic. That is, one can admire how Iago carefully and elaborately plots against Othello as none of the characters manages to recognize his evil plans beforehand. As a natural consequence of the second and third basic tenets, the perpetrators of evil can feel satisfied. Related to ‘personally satisfying’ some explain evil as “taking pleasure”. For instance, Roy F. Baumeister suggests a ‘myth of pure evil’ which claims that “evil individuals are sadistic: they intentionally perpetrate harm, destruction, and chaos on innocent victims merely for the pleasure of doing so” (Burriss and Rempel, 2011: 70). Similarly, Kevin Bales mentions that “the evil person intentionally inflicts harm on people. It is driven by the wish to inflict harm merely for the pleasure of doing so” (Bales, 2004: 56). Bales also mentions intentionality in evil actions but, in contrast to others who emphasize the intentionality in evil, he explains the reason why they intentionally give harm as ‘for pleasure’.

A different aspect of evil, that is, ‘banality of evil’ is explained by Hannah Arendt. She mentions that “I do not think that evil is radical or it has neither deepness nor any satanic dimension. It spreads like a fungus on the surface of human existence. It challenges thinking because thinking tries to reach deepness or find the roots” (qtd. in Bersntein, 2010: 271). Examining the case of Adolf Eichmann who played an active role in the ‘Final Solution’ which was a project designed to kill Jews and caused six million people to die, Arendt educes this ‘banal’ nature of evil in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. During the trial, Eichmann did not accept the moral responsibility for his acts. Instead, he claimed that he did whatever he was told to do. Arendt concluded that “Eichmann was not an extraordinary man. His capacity to understand what he had done lacked the clarity of what is at stake when we deal with moral judgments. He was only capable of conflating the Führer’s orders with his moral duty” (Lara, 2007: 36). For he saw himself as an innocent person or even a good worker who obeyed the orders of his employer. As Ruth Stein asserts, “there is a wide-ranging consensus among thinkers on the psychology of evil, that for the most part, evildoers do not themselves consider their acts to be evil” (Stein, 2002: 395). Instead of acknowledging themselves or their behaviours to be good or evil, they regard it as a duty they have to fulfill. In this context, Lizelle Franken states that:

Moral standards are irrelevant for the technical success of bureaucratic operations- within a bureaucratic organization, morality is instead measured in terms of how well you perform to your tasks. A moral person is a good, diligent and efficient worker. In the bureaucratic system, the language of morality takes on a new vocabulary-loyalty, duty, discipline- and as Milgra points out, the subordinate person feels shame or pride depending on how well he has performed his tasks. (Franken, 2012: 28)

For individuals there is only duty. Thus, in duty ethics, the person “appears as a potential offender, whereas rights ethics views the self primarily as a potential victim and in terms of duty ethics an individual is a potential criminal, especially when he does not fulfill his duty” (Flynn, 2009: 187).

While there is no agreed definition of evil there is a consensus on the types of it. There are two basic types of evil: moral evil caused by human will, and natural evil caused by nature without human will. What critics do while determining the boundaries of the types is to take ‘will’ as the key criterion. For instance, Immanuel Kant defines moral evil “as resulting from unavoidable limitations in human beings. God could not create finite beings without such limitations and so could not have created humans that were not prone to committing immoral acts” (Duncan, 2012: 981). Seeing that freedom, will and choice are human values; human beings are observed as the only actors of moral evil. In other words, “moral evil presupposes that there is a person, or victim, who is the object of the evil and a person, or perpetrator, who is responsible for those acts toward the victim” (Coyle, 2011: 3). Alfred J. Eppens writes, “The capacity for evil is a price we pay for having free will, and the human will is the accidental cause of moral evil” (Eppens, 2011: 35).

As for natural evil, Susan Neiman contends

Natural evils are neither just punishment for something despicable nor unjust punishment for something heroic, but framework of the human condition. That condition is structured by mortality and, even more generally, by finitude. Being limited is being who we are. If finitude isn’t punishment, it is no evidence of sin. (Neiman, 2002: 60)

She regards natural evils as built into the human condition instead of a punishment for a sin or unfair treatment by God. Because human beings are limited they cannot affect natural evils. Susan Robbins concurs with Neiman by referring to the Gospels that “when asked ‘who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered ‘neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him’” (Robbins, 2004: 138). St. Augustine puts forth the proposition that “in fact, natural evil (except for what can be attributed to God’s punishment) is to be ascribed to the activity of beings that are free and rational but nonhuman” (qtd. in Plantinga, 1974: 58).

Like the definitions, there are different suggestions for the origin of 'evil'. For instance, there are human centered ones. As freedom is defined as the possibility of good and evil (qtd. in Heidegger, 1985: 97) by Schelling, 'freedom' and accordingly 'will' are suggested as causes for the origin of evil. In Western Christian tradition, the origin of evil is related to Adam and Eve by many philosophers, writers and critics. There are some people like John Milton who relate it only to Eve by claiming that she tempts Adam to eat the fruit. Nonetheless, there are others who believe that Adam and Eve are only dismissed from Eden after Adam eats the fruit. Paul Ricoeur concurs with this view and states that "ethically, the whole Fall may be 'summed up in one act: he took the fruit and ate of it'" (Tanner, 1988: 50). Pandora's Box is accounted as a second suggestion about the origin of evil. The theme in the story of Adam and Eve is narrated in a similar way to the story of the first created woman named Pandora in Greek mythology which claims that all evil existing in the world originated from her box.

For Friedrich Nietzsche, evil occurred with the revolt of the Jewish slaves against their masters. He writes in *on the Genealogy of Morality* as follows;

Masters use the term 'good' to refer in an approving way to this life and to themselves as people who are capable of leading it. As an afterthought, they also sometimes employ the term 'bad' to refer to those people – most notably, the 'slaves' – who by virtue of their weakness are not capable of living the life of self-affirming physical exuberance... Slaves develop a reactive and negative sentiment against the oppressive masters which Nietzsche calls 'ressentiment', and this resentment eventually turns creative, allowing the slaves to take revenge in their imagination on the masters whom they are too weak to harm physically. The form this revenge takes is the invention of a new concept and an associated new form of valuation: 'evil'. 'Evil' is used to refer to the life the masters lead (which they call 'good') but it is used to refer to it in a disapproving way. (Nietzsche, 2006: xxi)

A different suggestion about the origin of evil is put forward by Gottfried W. Leibniz who asserts that "the origin of evil must be sought in 'the ideal nature of the creature,' insofar as this ideal nature exists in divine understanding, since there is 'an original imperfection in the creature before sin, because the creature is essentially limited'" (qtd. in Latzer, 1994: 1). Being a theist, he associates perfection with God and, hence, believes that He represents absolute goodness. Thence, there is a relationship between perfection and goodness. Since human beings are limited, in other words imperfect, they do not have absolute goodness like God. Again, because of this imperfect nature, they cannot foresee the consequences of their actions and that is why, they inevitably tend to do evil. On the other hand, for the very same reason it seems an advantageous idea because it frees people from responsibility seeing that evil is due to human beings' imperfect nature and people cannot help themselves. However, it brings many disadvantages with itself. For instance, if human beings were perfect and could foresee

everything beforehand, evil (at least in moral terms) would not exist. As a natural consequence of this, there would not be freedom and free will.

Another suggestion about the origin of evil is heredity, within the instinctual nature of human beings. Russell explains unconscious, 'genotyping' aggression as universal and strong enough to destroy all human beings when combined with technology; that is why, in recent years, much research has tended to focus on genetics rather than on social influences (Russell, 1999: 23). Seeing that there have always been atrocities caused by human beings' heredity, in other words, people's inclination towards evil, heredity seems a reasonable explanation for the origin of evil.

In short, it is interesting to see that although 'evil' is used by everybody in daily life to label more or less the same actions; there has not been a clear definition of it. Neither is there an adequate explanation about its origin. While these definitions about evil are valid at explaining some actions they may be inadequate at explaining others like the main action taking place in *The Sleep of Reason*. At this point, Eagleton's views on evil will be helpful in understanding and interpreting the main action in the novel.

Terry Eagleton is one of the most prolific literary critics of today. His ideas on evil are important in the sense that he discusses the concept from religious, literary, philosophical and psychoanalytical aspects. Another point that makes Eagleton's views on evil important is his discussion about the 'rare category of evil' done for its own sake. He defines it as "evil has, or appears to have, no practical purpose. Evil is supremely pointless. Anything as humdrum as a purpose would tarnish its lethal purity" (Eagleton, 2010: 84). Generally, human beings look for a reason for the things happening around them and when a rare category of evil occurs people become perplexed and fearful. Eagleton's description of this kind of evil becomes important in understanding the perplexing events like the murder case in *The Sleep of Reason* which is beyond comprehension in many ways.

The focus in the novel is on the two women, their motives for this particular murder and the evaluation of this case by society. The story of *The Sleep of Reason* is narrated by Lewis who is a lawyer. Nobody knows what happened during the weekend when the two women kidnapped a boy of eight-year old. We are informed with the evidence given during the trial mostly by Bosanquet and other lawyers, and psychiatrists. A lot of time is given to assessing the two women's mental condition because, in order to judge them as responsible agents for the murder at the trial, they should be proven that they are sane and they acted with their own free will.

When the nature of evil is discussed throughout the novel, some characters link it to instinct while others link it to reason, that is, to freedom of choice. For instance, the police officer, Maxwell, demonizes the two women as in the Middle Ages. The reason why he demonizes

the two women is that he cannot understand the motive behind the murder. As a rational man he wants to see a cause and effect relationship in the actions. Because this murder lacks it he cannot comprehend the murder case and demonizes them. Eagleton explains that “evil rejects the logic of causality. If it were to have an end in view, it would be self-divided, non-self-identical, out ahead of itself” (Eagleton, 2010: 84).

When Lewis arranges a meeting with Maxwell, he tells Lewis: “Those two women are as bad as anything I’ve seen...I’ve seen plenty, but I’ve never seen anything worse” (Snow, 1968: 235). Lewis considers Maxwell’s reaction exaggerated, but, once he has seen the two women Maxwell insists: “I’m going to tell you something. I mean every word of it. Those two are as sane as you or me. When we had them in here and found out what they’d done, if I could have got away with it, I’d have put a bullet in the back of both their necks. It would have been the best way out” (Snow, 1968: 236). He has not learned anything about them except they committed a murder for no apparent reason. He emphasizes that they are not mad and asserts that “those two are as sane as you and me... I’ve seen them” (Snow, 1968: 237). Maxwell’s emphasis on their being sane is because he wants to make them pay for what they have done. If they are found to be mad or if there is something that made them act without free will, they can be forgiven for their action. He may also fear that if there is an understanding of the perpetrators, there will also be compassion for them. However, as Eagleton says, reason and evil are closely related. That is, to explain why someone tortures somebody else does not exonerate them from responsibility. Eagleton accepts the influences of external factors on people, though, as he believes that ignoring external influences reduces people to zombies (Eagleton, 2010: 11). People are social creatures and they have to live in cooperation with other people, which makes influences unavoidable in human beings’ lives. That is what makes the notions of free will and freedom important.

It is hard to say for certain whether one is acting under the influence of something or with free will, as one cannot know anybody else’s mind. Besides, the story is told from Lewis’s viewpoint, which is first person narration and thus limited, sometimes sounding subjective except for the evidence, and because of this reason, one cannot know everything in the story. If it was narrated through an omniscient point of view one would know who was telling the truth. For example, when Martin asks which of those two was the prime mover, Bosanquet replies that “we don’t know. There are plenty of things about this case we don’t know...But we do know two things. They had planned this, or something like this, literally for months beforehand. And they were going to kill, right from the beginning. That was the real point all along” (Snow, 1968: 317).

Furthermore, Eagleton also suggests that while one is doing something of one’s free will it is hard to decide definitively whether one is actually free or under the influence of something. It

is problematic because one decides to do something according to one's character, and character is shaped by social factors or past decisions (Kane, 2000: 317). For example, Martin wonders: "if it hadn't been for all hothouse air we used to know about- those two mightn't have done it?" (Snow, 1968: 368). Lewis answers that

It was impossible to prove. Was there ever any single cause of any action, particularly of actions such as this? Yes, they must have been affected by the atmosphere round them, yes, they were more likely to go to the extreme in their sexual tastes. Perhaps it made it easier for them to share their fantasies. But between those fantasies, and what they had done, there was still the unimaginable gap. Of course there were influences in the air. But only people like them, predisposed to commit sadistic horrors anyway, would have played on to the lethal end. If they had not had these influences, there would have been others. (Snow, 1968: 369)

Anybody can have extreme fantasies but not everyone makes them a reality. This is what Mary Midgley says about evil. She states that no matter how great the influence of external factors, it is important to comprehend how people react to influences, and maintains that infection causes fever but only in those who have the appropriate circulatory systems (Midgley, 1984: 131). Lewis believes that the two women would have done it anyway, by claiming that if there had not been the present influences there would be others. At this point, Eagleton is right to state that "evil is a timeless condition rather than a matter of social circumstance" (Eagleton, 2010: 135). He precludes influence as the ultimate coercive factor in order not to evade freedom and, accordingly, free will. Lewis believes this is not because of chance, or social class. For instance, when he first met Cora he felt nothing strange or fearful and did not have any negative feeling towards her. But he confesses in the prison that "I had to submerge or discipline what I felt. Going into the jail, preparing for this visit, I had been nervous. In her presence, I still was. It might have been anxiety. It might have been distaste, or hatred. But it was none of those things. It was something more like fear" (Snow 256: 1968). Besides causing shame and lack of understanding, the unintelligibility of evil stimulates fear as well. For example, when the police officers bring the women into the courtroom it becomes very silent as all attention focuses on them. Lewis notes: "it wasn't a natural silence. Something- not dread, more like hypnosis- was keeping us all still" (Snow 281: 1968).

Although these two women seem to be like everyone else in society they have fantasies about ultimate freedom. Dr. Adam Cornford who is called to give evidence about the mental condition of the women notes that

They had made fantasies about ultimate freedom. They had heard of people who talked about being free from all conventions; they had met people who prided themselves on not obeying any rules. They felt superior because they were breaking the rules themselves; that was not

inconsistent with unconscious guilt, in fact it often went hand-in-hand with it. But they excited each other into being freer than anyone round them. They made fantasies about being lords of life and death. They thought of having lives at their mercy. (Snow, 1968: 353)

He depicts the two women as anarchists in the sense that they refuse any rules and want to have power over life and death. They feel superior because they feel freer than anybody else to do anything they want. One wonders, then, why the two women want to be freer than anyone else and to decide whether a child picked out at random should live or die without expecting any practical gain from it. Eagleton explains it by stating that “unlike chartered accountants and real estate agents, evil does not believe that practical results are all that count” (Eagleton, 2010: 120). Thus, he evaluates this action as a pure act of evil.

Eagleton says that a pure act will have to be acted out just for the sake of it, thus, there is no more reason to do it than not to do it (Eagleton, 2010: 84). This can be observed in many aspects of the two women’s actions. The first information about the event is given by Maxwell. He explains: “They played cat-and-mouse with him. He wasn’t a very bright lad. They picked him up ‘at random’, they don’t seem to have had a word with him before. They’ve got a hideout in the country, they took him there. They played cat-and-mouse with him for a weekend. Then they beat him to death” (Snow, 1968: 236). The key word here is that they picked him ‘at random’, which emphasizes what Eagleton means by evil’s being autotelic, unintelligible and disinterested. Lewis then asks: “why did they do it? Have you any idea why they did it?” (Snow, 1968: 238). In one sense, this attitude is a humane one. He wants to understand rather than demonize. Maxwell answers: “I think it was a sort of experiment. They wanted to see what it felt like” (Snow, 1968: 238). However, if Maxwell is right, if it was a kind of experiment, what did they expect to find out? What were their expectations? Facing such a situation one becomes perplexed with the unintelligibility and autotelic nature of it, and wants to understand it. For example, while Lewis and Cora are sitting face to face in the prison, Lewis asks prosaic questions. Yet, in contrast to these questions about which he does not care, he actually wants to ask questions such as “what have you done? What did you say to each other? When did that child know?...Who suggested it? Didn’t you ever want to stop? Are you thinking of it now?” (Snow, 1968: 256). Lewis wants to learn how it happened because the killing does not make sense. On the one hand there are two grown-up women and on the other hand there is a child of eight whom they did not know before, and they killed him after having tortured. Evil, it would seem, is an example of pure disinterestedness” (Eagleton, 2010: 93).

This incident demonstrates the meaningless violence and it seems that there is no actual point in it. That is to say, the two women buy some instruments to torture the boy and change the car while abducting and burying him carefully. When these actions are considered

individually it makes sense but the overall action does not make sense. Eagleton declares that “it is not quite true to say that evil is done for its own sake. Rather, it is purposeful action taken in the name of a condition which is not itself purposeful” (Eagleton, 2010: 104). At the beginning of the trial, the two women deny the accusation as they do not think that they are guilty despite the evidence is accounted against them. However, Bosanquet informs the jury that

You will hear medical evidence that the child had been dead since approximately the time that he disappeared. You will also hear, however, that he didn't die on that first night and probably not for forty-eight hours afterwards. The pathological experts will tell you that he had received several mortal injuries, through his skull having been battered in, though with what precise implement or implements it is impossible to say. The pathological experts will also tell you that there were signs of lacerations and other wounds on his body, not connected with the mortal blows, which may have been inflicted many hours before death. (Snow, 1968: 287)

The striking thing in Bosanquet's summary of the incident is that there are signs of lacerations and other wounds which are not 'the mortal blows.' This takes the trial beyond just a murder case, to something rather more. The women did not want to kill the child in the first place, they wanted to torture him. What Bosanquet claims about the wounds are confirmed by the Home Office pathologist, Laurance McQuillin who gives his conclusions after examining the child:

One definite conclusion was that the boy's body showed two types of injury. The first type was wounds which could not have caused death and which had, with reasonable certainty, been inflicted some considerable time before the death. These wounds included lacerations on the back, buttocks and thighs. The exact number could not be decided. Well over twenty. There were also cuts on the breast and groin. A number of burns on the upper arms and shoulders. Not less than ten. Marks on the ankles and wrists...None of these injuries had any connection with the victim's death. (Snow, 1968: 319)

As indicated, they did not kill the boy immediately. One wonders, then, how the two women could, systematically and without anger, torture the boy. They tortured him systematically because they used different methods to cause lacerations, cuts and burns, which did not have any connection with his death. It appears that the two women were seeking annihilation for the sake of it under the influence of the death drive. Thus, the murder can also be explained:

As the philosopher John Rawls writes 'what moves the evil man is the love of injustice: he delights in the impotence and humiliation of those subject to him and relishes being recognized by them as the author of their degradation. Evil is pure perversity. (qtd. in Eagleton, 2010: 94)

McQuillen also notes in court that “there was no trace of this blood on the inside of his clothes. Thus he must have received the body wounds some time before: possibly, and in fact probably, over a period of hours: presumably while he was naked” (Snow, 1968: 319).

In McQuillen’s account of the murder, there had been at least seven blows and only one of them would have been necessary to kill the child. The reason for so many blows seems to be that the two women resign control of their bodies to their will, that is, to the death drive which is relentless. As Eagleton suggests, annihilation is a kind of purity. They do not expect any practical gain because evil has an autotelic nature as mentioned before. Eagleton explains that “even self-interest is set aside- for the damned are in their own twisted way entirely disinterested, eager as they are to bring themselves low along with the rest of creation. The death drive is a deliriously orgiastic revolt against interest, value, meaning, and rationality” (Eagleton, 115: 2010). Moreover, if they do have any kind of purpose to their action, their methods are excessive. Bosanquet comments that the boy “suffered wounds on his body, according to expert judgment, many hours before death. These body wounds were healing when he was finally beaten to death by at least seven blows on the head, probably with something like a poker or a metal bar and also with a wooden implement” (Snow 297: 1968).

Furthermore, it is told that the two women planned to borrow the car literally weeks before. Thus, Bosanquet concludes that “their domestic planning was far-sighted and full of common-sense. There were exchanges about insurance policies and savings. Altogether they had been more competent than most young married couples” (Snow, 1968: 413). The buying of objects to torture the boy and changing the car in order not to reveal themselves make sense when each is considered individually but they do not make sense in an overall picture, seeing that they do not have a purpose.

In terms of purpose, as discussed above, Eagleton considers evil as a purposeful action taken in the name of a condition which is not purposeful itself (Eagleton, 2010: 104). This can be clearly observed in this situation. For example, after all the evidence against them, they give up denying that they kidnapped the child, and give a reason for it. Bosanquet points out that “Miss Cora and Miss Ross had for some time past wanted to have a child alone, by themselves, to be in control of. She gave a reason for this desire. They wanted to teach it to behave” (Snow, 1968: 296). If they believed they had a convincing reason to kidnap him, then their action can be claimed to have a purpose, but there was no point teaching him how to behave. In this respect, Eagleton likens evil to a game in the sense that there are purposes/duties in a game one wants to fulfill but they are ultimately pointless. In this particular context, how could they know that he needed to learn how to behave since he was picked out at random, and from where did they assume the right to impose their will on someone else’s child? Their purpose is not in balance with their action. At this point, Eagleton

also posits that reason and freedom are closely related, in that one cannot save oneself from the crime one has committed by explaining it. Eagleton evaluates this kind of explanation as a 'grisly' rationality by explaining that

Evil is best seen as a kind of purposeless or nonpragmatic wickedness. In one sense, the answer is surely yes. Evil is not primarily concerned with practical consequences...Yet the evil do have purposes of a kind. They may seem to lay waste simply for the hell of it, but this is not the whole truth. We have seen already that they visit violence upon those who pose a threat to their own identity. But they also smash and sabotage to ease the hellish conflict in which they are caught. The evil are in pain, and like a lot of people in pain will go to extreme lengths to find relief. These, then, are reasons of a kind, even if they are not of the same order as butchering peasants for their counterrevolutionary views. In this sense, then, even evil has a grisly kind of rationality about it. (Eagleton, 2010: 103)

After his interview with the two women, Maxwell declares:

Miss Pateman told me, we wanted to teach him to behave. She told me again, we had to teach him to behave...She said we gave him three aspirins and a glass of milk before he went to bed...On the Sunday, she did tell him, they had been obliged to be strict. But they had let him look at television at Sunday tea-time. 'What sort of condition was he in then, I asked her, but she never replied. (Snow, 336: 1968).

The questionable point is why they saw this 'teaching activity' as an obligatory task they had to fulfill. When they say they were 'obliged to be strict', it is as though they did not want to behave as they did. Later, the two women also explained their torture of the boy as a punishment. Eagleton notes that

If people who maim and exploit really do not know what they are doing, to borrow a celebrated line from the New Testament, then they are no doubt morally mediocre rather than utter scoundrels. Even if they only partly grasp the significance of what they are up to, or know exactly what they are doing but regard it as indispensable for some honourable end, they are perhaps not beyond the pale. I say 'perhaps' because Stalin and Mao murdered for what they saw as an honourable end, and if they are not beyond the moral pale then it is hard to know who is. (Eagleton, 2010: 145)

It has been proven with the evidence about the two women's mental condition that they know what they have done. The conditions in which they live may have influenced or caused some disturbances on them, but they cannot be beyond the pale.

Bosanquet argues: "All I need say is that this has been proven to be a deliberate, calculated, premeditated crime. That is enough" (Snow, 1968: 298). When Maxwell asks Kitty about the Sunday night he hears that "she didn't know, or seemed to have forgotten, what had happened

on the Sunday night” (Snow, 1968: 337). However, they do not say that they did not kill him, either. They are aware of the fact that the boy was killed and buried but they claim not to remember how it happened. Although they claim that they do not remember it has been proven that they are sane, which makes their action more appalling, more meaningless and more purposeless.

In terms of mental condition of the two women, Bosanquet gives detailed information:

These two young women share a room in the house of Miss Pateman’s parents. They have also, for two years past, rented a cottage in the country, where they have been accustomed to go at weekends...It may sound as though Miss Ross and Miss Pateman were living a luxurious life. It might remind you that they were each drawing good salaries, Miss Pateman as a secretary, Miss Ross as a trained clerical worker. They had left school with their O-levels, Miss Pateman with seven and Miss Ross with four, and in the normal run of things they were regarded as valuable employees whose security wasn’t in doubt. For two years past they had been able to run a car, a Morris saloon. As it happens, that car had its own part, a negative but finally a significant part, in the story of Eric’s disappearance. (Snow, 1968: 288)

From the outside, they look like very ordinary people and, even more, they lead a comfortable life compared to most people. They left school with good results and are good employees. Their performance in their working lives suggests a stable mental condition. Bosanquet gives information about the two women in a detailed way because he aims to show the women are of more than average intelligence (Snow, 289: 1968).

Despite of all these evidences, as Martin cannot understand this meaningless violence he wants to believe that the women are mad and asks for Lewis’s view about the mental condition of the two women. Lewis gives quite a long answer to this question:

I’m not certain what madness means. All I can tell you is, no one round them thinks they’re mad...I am certain of one thing. In most ways, they feel like everyone else. The girl Kitty is in pain. She can’t get comfortable, she’s just as harassed as any other woman with sciatica having to sit there under people’s eyes. I’m certain they wake up in the morning often feeling good. Then they remember what they’ve got to go through all day. It had been like that when I had the trouble with my eye. The moments of waking: all was fine: and I saw the black veil. I said that in the existential moments tonight, as they ate their supper and sat in their cells, they must be feeling like the rest of us. The horror is that they are human. (Snow, 1968: 330)

Neither Martin nor Lewis can grasp what has happened. While Lewis is undecided about the definition of madness he regards the two women like everybody else in many ways. The thing he cannot reconcile is how human beings can do such actions. If they were found to be mad, reconciliation would be easier. Martin asks about the women’s chance for a diminished

responsibility plea. Lewis comments: “It would be easier, of course, for their families. It would be easier for George, it would save some pain” (Snow, 331: 1968). Martin adds that “it would be easier for everyone” (Snow, 331: 1968). What Lewis implies is that it will be discomforting to see human beings in such an incomprehensible situation.

Dr. Adam Cornford is also called to give evidence about the mental condition of the women:

Miss Ross was in intelligence well above the average of the population. She was not in any recognized sense psychotic. She had some marked schizoid tendencies, but not to a psychotic extent. A great many people had schizoid tendencies, including a high proportion of the most able and dutiful citizens. Those tendencies were often correlated with obsessive cleanliness and hand-washing, as with Miss Ross...Schizophrenia was an extreme condition, which Miss Ross was nowhere near, and she was no more likely to be afflicted by it than many young women of her age. (Snow, 1968: 348)

Dr. Cornford explains that even the most able and dutiful citizens have schizoid tendencies but they do not commit such evil crimes, which suggests that Cora could have refrained from committing the crime. Benskin, one of the lawyers for the defendant, asks Dr. Cornford whether her personality is disturbed, and he replies “I should say that” (Snow, 1968: 348). Benskin asks whether the relationship between these two women is an abnormal one. Cornford does not consider ‘abnormal’ to be the right word and clarifies that “the two young women found each other; they responded to complementary needs, they were driven to escape from unsatisfactory environments. Very soon they began to live in a private world. A private world with their own games, rules, and fancies” (Snow, 1968: 351). Benskin is trying to show that the two women have some abnormalities.

During the interviews with the two women, Matthew Gough, a Home Office Consultant who has been working in these kinds of courts for several years learns that

They were prepared to describe in detail, almost hour by hour, how they planned to kidnap the boy. They told me about what happened at the cottage and how they brutalized him. But they wouldn’t go beyond the Sunday afternoon. Miss Pateman said they had finished punishing him by then. Neither of them at any time gave any account of how they killed him. (Snow, 1968: 377)

They accept that they brutalized the child, which was proven by the evidence at the trial, even though they claim that they do not remember how they killed him. They may be lying because they lied many times at the trial. For example, Lewis tells that “as Kitty lied and weaved her answers in and out, most of us were as undecided as when we heard her first word” (Snow, 1968: 415). However, even if they were lying again, their confession about kidnapping and torturing is compatible with the evidence.

When Kitty is in the witness box, Bosanquet asks when they first made plans to kidnap a child. She responds that “I was saying, we might have talked about catching hold of one for a little while, we talked about all sorts of things, anyone can make a suggestion” (Snow, 414: 1968). She acts very carefully and cautiously. Bosanquet asks her about books she has read as she claims that she reads a lot. For example, she says that she reads Albert Camus. Bosanquet asks what she gets out of Camus. She hesitates and states that “oh, they go to the limit, don’t they, I like them when they go to the limit” (Snow, 1968: 417). Lewis notes

I was now sure that she had been bluffing: somehow she had brought out a remark she had half-read. But it gave Bosanquet an opening. He didn’t know about Camus, but he did know that she wanted to show how clever she was. Hadn’t she enjoyed showing how clever she was- when they were planning to capture the child? Hadn’t she felt cleverer than anyone else, because she was sure that she could get away with it? She had said a good deal to her counsel about being ‘different’ and ‘special’- wasn’t that a way of proving it? (Snow, 1968: 417)

Since one evaluates whether something is evil or not according to the presence of free will then, as Eagleton believes, it can be claimed that there cannot be evil actions without evil people. The judge thinks more or less the same way by stating that “I don’t believe in evil. But I certainly believe in evil people” (Snow, 1968: 410). A person becomes evil when s/he chooses to do something evil. In short, if there is an evil action there should be an evil person. Similarly, an evil person necessitates free will which brings responsibility with itself. For example, about responsibility, the judge says to his friends during the lunch break that “we are responsible for our actions, aren’t we? I’m just deciding whether to have another gin or tonic. Eliot, if you give me five pounds on condition that I don’t have one, I’m perfectly capable of deciding against” (Snow, 1968: 407).

At the end of the trial the judge tells the jury

I want you to put the nature and details of this crime out of your consideration. You are concerned only with whether these women are, or are not, fully responsible. It would be the same question, and the same problem, if they had committed some quite minor offence, such as stealing half a dozen pairs of stockings or a suitcase. It would be the same problem. (Snow, 1968: 429)

The last phase is to decide whether they are responsible or not. The judge is objective in that he asks the jury to evaluate the case without including their feelings towards the child or his family and to ignore the gravity of the offence while judging the responsibility of the two women. The jury returns with their verdict which is ‘guilty’ for both of the women. The Judge asks the two women whether they object to the verdict of the jury and hears that they do not. He declares that “the sentence is a statutory one, and it is that you, and each of you, be sentenced to imprisonment for life” (Snow, 1968: 434).

After the trial, neither Martin nor Lewis can shake off the effect of what has happened. As Martin says “it was wrong to forget. We had forgotten too much. This was the beginning of illusions. Most of all of the liberal illusions. False hope was no good. False hope, that you hold onto by forgetting things” (Snow, 1968: 444). Martin considers forgetting as the beginning of liberal illusions, because they attribute evil to social factors and think that it can be removed by better conditions. However, as Eagleton says “evil is the dark shadow that the light of Reason cannot banish. It is the joker in the cosmic pack, the grit in the oyster, the out-of-place factor in a tidy world” (Eagleton, 2010: 132-33). If one considers evil in this sense one cannot forget this case.

In conclusion, it can be deduced that Eagleton’s views on evil shed light upon C. P. Snow’s *The Sleep of Reason*. Eagleton’s debate about freedom, will and responsibility is balanced in the novel with the emphasis on the two women’s mental condition. That is to say, Eagleton labels one evil on condition that one does it by one’s free will consciously. In the novel, before the judge decides whether the two women are responsible for their evil crime he insists on being sure that they are sane. Furthermore, while he mentions the rare category of evil, Eagleton’s emphasis on the aimlessness, the search for annihilation without an apparent cause, and the autotelic nature of evil prove to shed light upon Snow’s *The Sleep of Reason*. That is to say, there are two sane women who kidnap a child picking out ‘at random’. They allege that they kidnap him to teach to behave. They torture him about two days then kill him. They explain the torture as a punishment for the child. This murder can be explained by Eagleton’s perception of evil.

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