

Having so long thought of Whitehead's thinking of the good, or the beautiful, as the mean of harmony between the extremes of intolerable conflict, on the one hand, and intolerable monotony, on the other, I was struck by his saying, "Evil is the half-way house between perfection and triviality. It is the violence of strength against strength." This he says in a context in which he explains: The good of the soul, to which the indwelling Eros urges it, "resides in the realization of a strength of many feelings fortifying each other as they meet in the novel unity. Its evil lies in the clash of vivid feelings, denying to each other their proper expansion. Its triviality lies in the anæsthesia by which evil is avoided. In this way through sheer omission, fewer, fainter feelings constitute the final Appearance" (*AI*: 355).

Whether, or how, what is said here can be reconciled with how I'm accustomed to interpreting Whitehead's view remains to be thought about. I incline to think that what he actually says about the good of the soul, its evil, and its triviality can be fairly interpreted as respectively the mean between the two extremes, notwithstanding his use of "evil" to refer solely to clashing, or conflict, of strength against strength, and not also to triviality. There seems little reason to suppose, however, that he ever uses "anæsthesia" to indicate anything positive (cf., e.g., "The Peace that is here meant is not the negative conception of anæsthesia. It is a positive feeling which crowns the 'life and motion' of the soul" [367]).

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