

Review of: "Geach's "Good" and "Bad", Attributive After All"

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I would like to thank the Author very much for sharing this paper. I learned a lot by reading it. Notwithstanding, there are some points that, I think, need addressing in order for the paper to be more generally accessible and comprehensible. Some of the points I will make in the following have already been raised by earlier reviewers, but I hope that by adding my own point of view I can make the need for some changes clearer.

As for the introduction, I had major issues in following the argumentation and the technical terms used. I had to re-read Geach's article (I have to admit, the first reading was for me almost 10 years ago) in order to understand the point. I would suggest that the Author take some time right at the beginning for explaining such concepts as "logically attributive" and "primarily descriptive".

I do think that some of the points raised are worth discussing; the Author embarks in a powerful defence of Geach's claim against critical attempts (as already pointed out, I would refrain from speaking of "commentators" for philosophers who attempt to criticize Geach's approach).

The Author writes: "Admittedly, Geach does not explain what his logical distinction between attributive and predicative adjectives is based on only how it is recognized and that it is the logical distinction which identifies "good" and "bad" as attributive." This is not clear to me. Geach is adamant with his examples concerning the distinction between attributive and predicatives; some of his examples are even mentioned in the paper. What exactly should Geach have explained more clearly? In general, the Author should make an attempt to formulate problems more clear. I really don't get the meaning of the sentence "I show that Geach's logical distinction between attributive and predicative adjectives is not based on the adjectives' inferential behavior but manifested by it for an adjective's inferential behavior itself is based on the logical distinction". This could be because I am not a native speaker of English of course, but I would suggest the Author to consider a different formulation.

The three main critiques to Geach spelled out are indeed helpful as a summary of debates on this topic, and the Author offers some helpful arguments on all of three. For the first point, I think - as already mentioned in another review - that Geach's logical distinction is very clear and that logical formalisation can help. The sentence "this frog is green" can be separated into "this is a frog" and "this is green", whereby both sentences are true. The sentence "this frog is big" cannot

be separated into “this is a frog” and “this is big”, since the second sentence (even if its truth-conditions were clear in everyday language) could be false. Therefore I do think that Geach's position on this first point is actually more clear than the Author's defence.

As for the second critique (on logical attributiveness), this is the best section of the paper in my view, and I have nothing to suggest. Indeed, the question raised by Boris Henning concerning land mines (besides the small misunderstanding between him and the Author) is important and is akin to the question about ICBMs: and I do think that Knowles has a point here. We could say that the sentence “landmines are bad” is actually an imprecise way of saying, in everyday language, that “landmines are evil”. In this case, we would need to analyze “evil” and its uses for philosophical ethics, which is obviously outside of the scope of the paper. As Knowles writes, in order to understand “bad” in this setting, we need context: we mean something like “bad for people”, “morally wicked (=evil)”, or “bad for peacekeeping”. I take this to be the bulk of Knowles' argument when stating that “Put otherwise, if ICBM is a weapon, this information must be supplied by context, or “bad” is used “illegitimately” as a predicate. The same applies if ICDM is a peacekeeper”.

As for the third critique, which is also convincing, I would suggest incorporating in some way at least some discussion of Philippa Foot's position, since she claims precisely that we should not fear the Naturalistic Fallacy (something crucial to Geach and that does not play any role in the paper), and that human beings, just as any other living being, have a “natural goodness” which is both descriptive and normative: There indeed is a “standard for man's goodness”.

The last comment I would like to raise concerns the very last sentences of the paper: “ More importantly, Geach's logical distinction allows for the possibility that the same man is sometimes good and sometimes bad, for being attributively good or bad means one is never good or bad by definition, or essentially. In turn, if one is predicatively good or bad, the possibility of redemption is precluded for us to a world where redemption is unavailable and likely impossible. For identifying the world as one in which, if one is described as essentially bad, there isn't anything one can do to improve one's lot. Moreover, would not we rather be called good for we are good, and not because we are commended? God knows, we often commend people and actions not because they are good, but because they serve a purpose. A purpose itself, not always commendable.” This is a series of worth-considering issues, but I have to admit that I don't see exactly how these considerations follow from what has been said in the paper. Maybe the Author should take some time to elaborate on those points or leave them for other works.

As a general hint, I would take a look at some grammatical issues, for example the use of scare quotes and the use of “alienans” (the plural should be “alienantes”), but also punctuation needs a closer look at points. But this is just a suggestion of a non-native speaker that could be completely wrong.

