

Relazione di Luca Sbarbati e Francesca Petetta

Examined Life di Robert Nozick

Capitolo 18

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

Part 1

- Pag. 205: **REALITY** is not wholly rosy and it can be **increased along negative dimensions**, not only along positive ones, as the positive is just one dimension among others.

- Pp. 205-206-207: Nozick supposes that there could be a **row of darkness** (in addition to the row of light) into the **matrix of reality** he described in the 17th chapter. He also makes two examples of intellectuals who have given a great importance to the negative as well as the positive in life:
 - 1) Nietzsche “means not simply that the negative is a necessary instrumental means to the positive but that the two together form a dynamic whole in continuing tension; it is this whole and its tension that he prized, the obstacles as well as their overcoming”.
 - 2) Rilke talks about “the identity of dreadfulness and bliss, these two faces on the same divine head, indeed this one single face”.

- Pag. 207: But Nozick can't say that the negative is on par with the positive. There are two other routes to follow to contain the negative:
 - (1) Starting with reality in general and giving the negative its subordinate due within that.
 - (2) Building from the very beginning upon the positive.

- Pag. 207: (1) The negative is limited. Because: it tends to interfere greatly with other dimensions of reality AND the scores for the row of darkness would be less than for the row of light. Evil qua evil **does not** make something more real, value qua value does.

- Pag. 207: MOREOVER, some negative aspects do not merely differ from, but are the **opposite** of one of the positive dimensions. Hence, Nozick wants to exclude any such attempt to increase the degree of reality through a direct opposition to any of reality's dimensions, as the negative a) can increase something's reality only by also rising that thing's position along some positive dimension (indirect action) and b) operates itself to oppose and enfeeble still another positive dimension (direct action).
- Pag. 208: Nozick restates that the negative is subordinate to the positive. This theory is confirmed by the kind of connection to reality that we intend. Indeed, what we desire is a positive connection to reality and it would be more full and complete if reality was positive itself. Moreover the general combined stance does not point toward the negative. (compare to page 151 where the general combined stance is explained).

- Pp. 208-209: Nozick asks if small changes toward the negative might improve our connection to reality and he says that although dark steps might enable someone to reach greater reality than he currently has or knows, they do not bring him to the greatest reality he can reach through equally small steps that accord with the combined stance.
- Pag. 209: Nozick, then, asks what the basis of the categories of the positive and the negative themselves is and if that distinction exists at the most fundamental level or it arises later. He answers that it would be more satisfying theoretically to have it at the most fundamental level.
- Pag. 209: Movement toward greater reality need not follow dark paths, yet it can lead away from the **happiness** principle.

- Pag. 209: HAPPINESS makes us **feel** especially real and perhaps it is desired for this reason too. And when we find something that makes us feel more real than happy, it is not a great sacrifice to prefer that thing over another one that makes us feel happier but less real.
- Pag. 209: BUT **it is being real that is primary**, because the **feeling without the being** could be provided by the experience machine.
- Pag. 210: “Arraying the dimensions of reality in a matrix gives us an idea of their mutual structure and interrelations but does not give any ranking of these dimensions. There is no way specified to tell which of two things has greater reality, unless one of them ranks higher than the other along **all** the dimensions of reality”.
- Pag. 210: The matrix is just a model of reality and it's open to new ways to combine and integrate its dimensions.

Part 2

- Pag. 211: FREE WILL is **our giving weight to reasons**. Whether something is a reason for or against doing an action is not up to us, but giving weight to any particular one of those reasons is. For this reason we can say that an action is **CAUSED** but not causally determined.
- Pag. 211: Nozick says again that there is a non-fixed hierarchy that preorders the evaluative dimensions of reality. This fact is what allows and enable us to act in freedom.
- Pag. 212: Nozick starts to look at ETHICS in order to answer the worry that a concern for greater reality might lead someone in a negative or unethical direction.

- Pag. 212: ETHICS is built in **four layers**:
- 1) **Ethic of respect**: respecting another adult person's life and autonomy.
- 2) **Ethic of responsiveness**: acting in a way that is responsive to other people's reality and value, a way that takes account of their reality and is intricately contoured to it. **Precedence to respect or responsiveness?** Responsiveness is the higher layer, yet it rests upon the layer of respect. They are related by a **principle of minimum mutilation**.
- 3) **Ethic of caring**: caring and concerning, using tenderness, deeper compassion and love (ahimsa, nonharm to all people and love). It stands to the previous ones as responsiveness does to respect and it is related by the principle of minimum mutilation too.
- 4) **Ethic of Light**: does one have to enhance the light of those we are able to affect or to increase our own? Being of light: transmitter of light. The divergence between self and other is overcome. To be a vehicle of light is to be its impersonal vehicle.

- Pag. 215: Nozick formulates here a sixth principle of reality, “become a vessel of light”. **Being a vessel of light does integrate the stances** even as it further specifies them (the general combined stance combines them in an artificial and wrong way).
- Pag. 215: Thus far, Nozick has wanted to formulate a theory of reality that could have lead away from negative contents. (2) Now, instead, we can say that **the row of light is the content of reality**, while all the other dimensions of reality increase reality when (and only when) they enfold this content.
- Pag. 215-216: Nozick says that we don't have to justify the good with a neutral theory of reality, because it gets built upon truth, goodness, beauty and holiness from the beginning. We (instead) want to seek a basis for the good, a factual existence to undergird it, because the allure of goodness is presumed not to be strong enough without some additional authority.

CONCLUSIONS:

- 1) NEGATIVE —> row of darkness in addition to the row of light. The negative is not at the same level of the positive.
- 2) Two routes to follow in order to subordinate the negative to the positive.
- 3) Being real is primary. Feeling real is not.
- 4) Free will is our giving weight to reasons.
- 5) ETHICS —> four layers. The fourth layer is ethics of Light. (THIS is the way to build a theory upon the positive, we can't use a neutral theory. Nozick wants to give the right importance to goodness: it is more fundamental than evil and it doesn't need an authority to be built on).