

Social Justice: When good becomes evil?

Traditionally in the West, Justice was defined as, "To give to each his due." Western men were expected to judge the individual and his actions against what were then considered objective truths. For anyone watching the culture these days, especially on college campuses, it should be clear that that's no longer the accepted understanding of Justice.

Informed by the simplistic belief of [Cultural Marxism](#) that history and life is nothing more than a nearly perpetual battle between the oppressed and the oppressors, our cultural leaders have replaced Justice with Social Justice.

What's the difference?

Well, if one distills the main thrust of Social Justice, one comes to understand that it is the belief that a just society cannot exist until all identity groups have parity with the others. In such a system, we do not judge the individual based upon his actions, but rather we judge him based upon the identity group with which he is most associated. Social Justice Warriors then work to determine which identity groups are oppressors and which ones are oppressed. Upon doing so, they use collective action to lift up the oppressed and bring low the oppressors.

In a way, Social Justice has a rather romantic feel to it, one in which you feel good using any means necessary to lift up the oppressed. You are helping the underdog while humbling the mighty. You are fighting racism, bigotry, ageism, homophobia, and so much more; you are the good guy. Hence, a lot of young Americans are being drawn to the effort.

With its current popularity, though, it's worth considering the movement's cloaked demand for Equality and the grave

dangers inherent in the application of Social Justice as presented so far.

Again, the traditional view of Justice asks of us to judge a man based on his actions. For instance, how do we determine if a man is a racist? We examine his actions towards individuals of a different race.

Is the man acting justly to those of a different race by measuring the sum of each individual? Or does he simply judge the others and act in a certain way based on assumptions about the identity group to which they belong? If the latter, then the man is being a racist. But if it is the former, then he is traditionally not guilty of racism.

It should be noted, too, that racism and bigotry are unjust in the traditional sense of Justice because they judge the individual by association rather than by the individual's actions. Pushing back against racism or bigotry, therefore, is often a good thing.

But in the effort to right these wrongs, the Social Justice warriors often commit the very evil they are attempting to erase. Indeed, they have even gone so far as to change the definition of racism from something an individual commits, to something that identity groups establish, seemingly in an effort to mask the hypocrisy.

For instance, Social Justice Warriors might determine that one identity group created a government and that it is therefore guilty of establishing a system that gives the group power over other identity groups. Thus, the identity group that created the system is guilty of instituting racist, bigoted, homophobic, or ageist policies through the power structure of the system. The powerful identity group is therefore evil because Social Justice Warriors believe it can and likely does oppress other identity groups. Put simply, an identity group is evil if it has created inequality that benefits itself.

As a result, what we see happening with colleges, government bureaucracies, and even human resources departments is that individuals are treated either well or poorly depending upon the identity group with which the individual is most associated.

For instance, the White, heterosexual male is no longer judged based on his individual actions, but rather by what is assumed to be his identity group's institution of systemic racism and homophobia when White, heterosexual males established both the federal and local governments in America several centuries ago. Because the individual is a white male, it is assumed that he is still benefiting from privilege created by his identity group many centuries ago, whether he realizes it or not. Therefore, because his identity group is racist, he is racist.

In doing so, the Social Justice Warriors who are seeking a good, such as ending racism, lost their way and actually commit evil themselves. Virtue often becomes vice, good often becomes evil.

G.K. Chesterton, the early-20th century author, was concerned by such developments. In *Orthodoxy*, he argued that once virtues become unmoored from the holistic metaphysics that originally developed them, individuals and groups often run wild with them, so focused on one virtue that they actually spread vice.

The modern world is not evil; in some ways the modern world is far too good. It is full of wild and wasted virtues. When a religious scheme is shattered (as Christianity was shattered at the Reformation), it is not merely the vices that are let loose. The vices are, indeed, let loose, and they wander and do damage. But the virtues are let loose also; and the virtues wander more wildly, and the virtues do more terrible damage. The modern world is full of the old Christian virtues gone mad. The virtues have gone mad because

they have been isolated from each other and are wandering alone. Thus some scientists care for truth; and their truth is pitiless. Thus some humanitarians only care for pity; and their pity (I am sorry to say) is often untruthful.

Does it not seem like our modern world is full of the old Christian virtues gone mad? If so, the only cure is for our society to dig deep into both its past and traditions to better understand *how* we came to understand the traditional virtues and vices. We must ask ourselves, too, how we can live and promote the good without causing even greater damage. Perhaps it's time for us to get our mooring back, to anchor ourselves to the timeless truths of our civilizational heritage.