

Evil Is Rising, but Despair Is Not an Option

To many people, the world seems to make less and less sense with each passing day. Values we once cherished and that bound civil society together face daily bombardment. Offensive things are routinely said and done today in ways intended to inflame and divide. Freedoms we took for granted—freedoms of thought, speech, press, religion—are under relentless assault as intrusive government and cancel culture gain ground.

“Orwellian” is no longer just an adjective derived from a work of fiction more than seven decades ago; it describes some new development in our lives every day. Words and thoughts, once neutral or perhaps disagreeable but not actionable, are treated now as if they are crimes. History itself is being rewritten to serve political agendas. Petty tyrannies are morphing into bigger tyrannies as governments play an ever more intrusive role in the lives of their citizens. There’s an awful lot of bad behavior going on—and perpetrators getting away with it, too. From lying to looting, it feels like an epidemic.

That’s not very scientific, I admit. Steven Pinker, in his 2011 book [*The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*](#) made a strong case that humanity is actually more humane today than ever. Statistics exist for murders and thefts, and Pinker provided bushels of them, but how does one measure bald-faced lies, silencing by intimidation, the “canceling” of dissenting opinions, and the like? Where are the data on hate, spitefulness, callousness, and discourtesy? I worry that amidst the good news Pinker revealed, something is amiss.

We are witnessing an alarming collapse of social cohesion that is propelled, as if it were consciously planned, by something

bigger and more menacing than simply falling standards of character. I call it “evil,” and I sense that it’s on the loose and on the rise. Rabbi Gershon Winkler of the Walking Stick Foundation in Colorado [writes](#),

Today, absolute evil flourishes in clever guises: for instance, distorted versions of social equality, or the officially sanctioned proliferation of outright lies and their costly consequences for the economic and physical well-being of entire communities. This form of evil is of the worst sort, since it is deceptively camouflaged by rhetoric disguised as humanitarian concern and compassion. Even the serpent in the Garden of Eden could not match the evil of draping the wool over the eyes of an entire population and allowing it to slip-slide into passive naiveté. Dishonesty and deception have time and again caused the fall of great civilizations.

“Evil” is a very muscular term. It is intensely pejorative. I wouldn’t know how to describe something that is worse than evil, so I use it as a synonym for “as bad as it gets.” Its gateway drug is disdain for the truth, the little white lies that lead to bigger ones, that then open the door to more heinous offenses.

Moreover, I do not deploy the term casually to represent actions or outcomes that result from inanimate forces—e.g., “The hurricane’s evil destruction laid waste to the town.”

Evil is inseparable from morality and moral agents. A hurricane is not a moral agent. Only individual human beings are, and therefore both their conscious choices and actions can be judged by a moral code or law.

The most logical next question is, “Where does a viable, defensible and universal moral code come from?” The Judeo-Christian perspective argues that its source is the Creator, and his moral rules are spelled out in the Ten Commandments. A

secular perspective claims that a moral code can be deduced from man's nature (particularly the unique and sovereign individuality of each person), apart from anything supernatural.

One can argue that there are other perspectives too, rooted in various philosophies and religions. In the interest of full disclosure, readers should know that I personally embrace *both* perspectives I reference above. For me, they are compatible, sufficient, and compelling.

In other words, I am comfortable maintaining that lying, stealing, injuring, enslaving, and murdering are moral wrongs because they violate at the same time both God's law and man's nature (his rights in particular). This premise is not the main point of this essay, but if interested readers wish to do so, they can explore my reasoning further in [Science is Affirming Creation, Not Accident](#).

Is there a bright line between "bad" and "evil"? Good question, but a good answer is beyond my expertise. I'll venture this much, however: *There is an inextricable connection between evil and power.*

Every manifestation of "evil" involves a desire to dominate and control, to compel another individual to bow to one's will. Evil often starts out small and draws its victims in one bite at a time. Deception about where it's really headed only magnifies the evilness. The longshoreman philosopher Eric Hoffer poignantly noted, "It is by its promise of a sense of power that evil often attracts the weak."

Sometimes evil is manifested in an act so horrible no one can excuse it, such as a school shooting. Then evil goes to work to get people to ignore real causes and support fake solutions, like disarming the innocent. Evil's allies include fear, corruption, chaos, intolerance, deception, and envy. What the *Wall Street Journal's* Vermont Royster once called

“the prevalence of evil” seems so palpable to me that I’m tempted to capitalize the word. That may offend some who don’t believe that either God or a Devil exist as real entities. You, the reader, can make that call.

In [a May 2023 article](#) at *HackSpirit.com*, Lachlan Brown identifies the traits of evil people. They revel in the misfortune of others. They bully and manipulate. They fabricate and dissemble, conceal their real selves, and “leave you with a weird feeling when you’re around them.” They’re mean to both animals and people. They show no remorse. They evade responsibility for their actions.

They also crave power and when they get it, it becomes their means for institutionalizing terrible things.

An evil person believes his ends justify any means. He divides the world between offenders and the offended and sells himself as a savior. He steals, injures, maligns, deceives, deconstructs, or even kills whatever stands in his way. He accuses the innocent of the very crimes he commits. He distorts language itself in order to confuse rather than enlighten.

The mortal enemy of evil is truth. Evil is profoundly reactionary and pessimistic. It is at war with human nature because it deals with people not as the unique and precious individuals they are (endowed with rights) but as pawns, dupes and tools. Evil is invariably a foe of individual freedom and an ally of collectivist socialism and its authoritarian impulses.

Evil is on the loose. The restraints with which civilized society shackled it seem to be dissolving. Do not be depressed by this fact, for a defeatist spirit will fatally disarm you, and that is precisely what evil wants. The last thing evil desires is an informed citizenry eager to resist. It is not inevitable that evil should win—unless good people give up.

Evil is not a fantasy. It is real. Wherever you believe it comes from, do not submit to it. We must confront it with, at the very least, an unwavering dedication to truth, solid personal character, and good ideas.

Remember the wisdom of Edmund Burke: “When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.”

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