

The Nature of Good and Evil

In science, there is no such thing as measuring something's cold. Cold is what always exists, and Absolute Zero is the basis of any measurement and does not change. When we determine something's temperature, what we are measuring is the amount of heat or energy it possesses. It is the amount of energy or heat that changes, not the cold.

Is good and evil similar in nature? Is evil the basis for measurement? Are people born evil, and are we measuring the amount (or change) in goodness? Or is goodness the basis for measurement, and are we instead measuring the amount (or change) of evil?

There is no greater question facing humanity than the nature of good and evil. If we could ever fully understand their nature, it might be possible to conquer evil.

The concept of good and evil is only applicable to human beings, since we alone among the creatures of the Earth understand morality.

Science has already determined that many facets of personality and ability are innate in nature. Some people are born with a gift for music, athleticism, math or verbal skills, and seemingly need very little effort to perfect those skills. Others may lack these gifts, and need to work much harder to master them.

Likewise, is it possible that some people are born with a predilection for violence or other acts of evil? And is it much more difficult for such people to be good, considering their disposition to evil? Like the amateur writer who devotes his or her entire life to the written word, but never quite masters the art of writing, are bad people struggling to be good, simply because it goes against their nature?

We may discover one day that evil stems from a recessive gene. If so, would we require blood work on all newborns to determine if they carry that gene? What is our obligation to society when such a child is born? Do we allow the baby to mature to adulthood, where he or she may pose a threat to others? Should we remove them from society and place them in an institution? If discovered while still inside the womb, should the fetus be aborted?

Perhaps evil is a disease – an undiscovered virus that spreads throughout the population. This could explain Nazi Germany and the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Did a virus sweep through Germany at that time? And is that what also happened in Rwanda in the

1990s?

A Theologian might postulate that malevolent spirits are occasionally released into individuals or unleashed upon entire regions. If so, is there something that humanity is doing that encourages such malicious spirits?

Psychiatry confirms that neurological disorders can also bring about acts of evil. An imaginary voice compels some people to kidnap, kill, rape, or torture others.

Does culture play the primary role in producing evil people? If people are taught to hate from the time they are children, that hatred generally grows with age. We think of hate as being racial, ethnic, political, or religious oriented. However, teaching children that the greatest honor is to kill in the name of a leader, a movement, or any cause will incite malevolent actions. Convincing people that they are disrespected or treated unjustly in some way can also provoke evil acts.

Ironically, fighting evil is also a considerable source of evil, because good and evil sometimes differs between cultures. Americans view 9/11, and the British consider 7/7, as acts of terror. However, supporters of those actions consider the perpetrators to be heroes, who fought against evil powers. Thus the saying: "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter."

It is very difficult for humanity to wage war against evil, since it is sometimes difficult to agree who or what is good and evil. Consequently, the nature of good and evil might well remain just beyond our understanding. Tragically, this gives evil the upper hand.

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