

WHAT IS EVIL?

By Gail G. Jolley

In response to certain traumatic events in our lives – whether they occur on a global, national or personal level – we are led to wonder about evil. These events can range from the mass murder of innocent individuals to psychopathic murderers to corporate or governmental deception to personal betrayal, etc. As we contemplate each of these degrees of behavior and analyze them in their respective circumstances, we may ask ourselves what makes an act evil versus merely morally reprehensible. Is there such a thing as true evil or is it mainly a question of demonizing others based on our cultural biases and inability to understand the causes of such behavior? Or do we perhaps dispose of such philosophical inquiries by classifying certain people and their acts as evil, no matter what, and therefore not worthy of further consideration?

As we study the Ageless Wisdom teachings, we get the impression that much of what we might categorize as evil is basically a question of people or entities behaving badly due to materialistic, separative and retrogressive attitudes based on fear, selfishness and ignorance – which is certainly bad enough, but is it evil?

Base motives produce bad behavior. No doubt we can all think of moments when we acted dishonestly or immorally, and we find ways to justify our acts, gloss over them, forgive ourselves, or suppress our guilt over them. Most thinking people know on some level of their being when they are behaving badly, and perhaps they suffer some degree of conscience. This is not true evil, but is more likely the normal ongoing struggle between our divine nature, the Soul, and our lower personality desires. (There are also those cases of mental and emotional deformation, people who are not motivated by evil per se, but who essentially have been twisted by life circumstances into stunted personality manifestations.)

As human animals we have an innate tendency to selfishness and separateness that we inherit from our material nature, but we also have an innate divinity and a sacred purpose on Earth, and we are guaranteed that good will eventually prevail. As evolving units of consciousness we must inevitably pass through the various developmental stages of imperfection and limitation. But as we experience life in form, we gradually mature, and we learn to overcome the fear, selfishness and ignorance of our material nature. We redeem ourselves through increased spiritual living and by becoming more group consciousness. Most importantly, we begin to take an active part in the redemption of all humanity through service of some type.

However, all this is not to say that true evil doesn't exist; somehow we still get the sense that certain acts go beyond the realm of essentially good people acting badly and that certain acts are indeed manifestations of evil.

The information passed on to us by Alice Bailey corroborates that true evil does exist; it is said to originate from cosmic levels and it is always looking for ways to manifest on Earth. Since evil could be characterized by the dominance of the material plane over spiritual values, it is logical that the material plane would be the path of least resistance for it. The aspects of materialism used for evil include physical desires, emotional fears and cravings, and mental subjugation.

Nevertheless, we are not completely at the mercy of these so-called Forces of Darkness; they are only able to perpetrate evil in our world due to the easy foothold they find here through humanity's material inertia and the prostitution of our hearts and minds to selfish, materialistic ends. We actually hold the door open for these forces to enter our world by giving in to the temptation that certain aspects of evil hold out to us.

There have been many so-called "evil" people throughout the course of history, and Hitler is an example that comes readily to mind. Evil begets even greater evil when it works through those personalities who are most susceptible to it and who allow themselves to be overtaken by evil forces in the form of personality enslavement, or possession. The possession of a personality vehicle by an evil force seems to give the resulting evil acts more power, albeit temporarily, on the physical and astral plane, but the manifestation can only be of short duration. It seems as if the shock of seeing such evil worked out in the world on such a scale is sufficient to knock some sense into a critical mass of humanity, causing us to unite against it and defeat it. If only we could maintain this sense of "fighting goodwill" for longer periods of time in order to work against evil forces on a more consistent and thorough basis.

Once we accept the fact that evil does indeed exist, the next question that might occur to us is: what do the evil forces want from humanity? The enemy of the Forces of Darkness can be found in the Forces of Light and Love. The Forces of Darkness try to keep the Forces of Light from entering our world because they "feed" on our material natures, thus they need to keep humanity trapped in its material world by appealing to our baser instincts, and they seek to keep humanity's spirit from rising free by keeping our minds and hearts focused on the "attractions" of the material world.

Therefore, our only salvation from evil lies in the spiritual growth of humanity, in our redemption of humanity and the establishment of right human relations. This kind of spiritual work will strengthen the ability of the Forces of Light to fight the Forces of Darkness on equal footing on this plane.

Besides taking up the necessary spiritual work, is there something else we can do to fight evil more directly? Can evil somehow be transformed into good and thus be redeemed? It seems hard to believe that good could ever come from evil, but how else can we rise above it and not be infected by it and have everything brought down to its level?

Forms may be destroyed by evil, but a beneficial spirit can be liberated from this destruction, just as the mythical phoenix rises from its ashes. We can actually use this release of positive energy to transform our lives and all life on Earth. This transforming, healing, redeeming action can only come from a higher, spiritual focus, a higher will, so that we can see the situation whole and not focus on duality and conflict.

Evil exists, but we are not powerless against it. The work of transformation and redemption is part of our task in the New Age to come.