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The Frivolity of Evil

The writer, terms himself one of the man crying out in the desert as he agonizes over the social and moral decadence in Britain in his article, 'The Frivolity of Evil'. In what he calls the 'elements of evil', he outlines how widespread 'evil' or the degeneration of value and the social structure is. The players in abetting evil are the state, the people themselves and even those who refuse to point out wrong and injustice in the society for their own sakes.

In the first instance, Theodore outlines the normal or common outlook of evil which usually takes the form of explanation of notorious tragedies such as the Nazi regime massacres and inhumane agenda which actually lead to Theodore's mother moving to Britain from her homeland. He urges that it is with these lenses that we usually view evil and wrongdoing so that when someone mentions the term evil then what comes to mind is the actions of dictators in some countries in Africa, the massacres propagated by rebel groups and the terror rained down on people by all-powerful leaders such as 'Great Leader' Kim Il Sung. He analyzes these evils and comes to the conclusion that thankfully his mother country, Britain, had escaped all of them and was victim to none.

The author points out that he works at a hospital ward dealing with mental health patients and at a prison, an occupation which his mother has opined that it might have made him bitter. Nevertheless, he says, he prefers to work with these wretched and poor people as his outlook of life is clearer with them than it would be with the rich whose problems are quite superficial and a bit removed from reality and human essence.

Theodore advances the argument that what is evil or otherwise should not be measured by its consequences. It is easy to call the actions of a husband who break his wife's limbs and beats her to a pulp as evil but what about the one who denies her sustenance after putting her in the family way? The argument is basically that what is evil should not be appreciated only for its magnitude and the multitudes which it affects negatively but rather by its action itself. By looking critically at specific action and balancing it on a scale of right and wrong then we are able to tell if it is evil even when its effects are not felt by such magnitude as a whole nation.

The author posits that crime is basic human nature and that the belief that human beings are inherently good is a mistaken belief, one which is unconscious to the fact that some of the most straightforward people are in reality people who just lack opportunity to fall into their full essence and granted such opportunity they will actually conduct evil.

To this extent, the writer argues, the state and society at large are abettors of evil. On one hand, the society aids evil and is complicit in evil acts when members fail to call out wrong acts for what they are and instead protect them in the idea of rights and freedoms of all human beings. The result of this, then, is people who have the belief that they have the right and freedom to

make the choices that best suit them without considering the corresponding responsibility to consider those for whom they are responsible and who are bound to be affected by these choices.

Appropriate examples of this are to be found in the analysis of the story of a single mother who the author attended to after she was hospitalized on overdosing on antidepressants. She had been raised by a single mother herself and abused by her mother's then boyfriend. She fled her home at the age of sixteen and got into her first relationship which produced a child. The husband, who was a violent drunk and with other children from different women, abused her and she left. Her next companion was a career criminal and drug addict who died under the influence and also left her with child. The third one was an older man who demanded, as a condition for their cohabitation, that she bears him and child. She had accepted the proposition despite the fact that she was very much aware that he had borne other children with other women who he did not care for in any way. The lady was aware of the character of every man he got involved with but went ahead to relate with them and even bring children into the picture, children who would probably go through the same miserable life that she had to the extent of willfully overdosing in order to be accommodated at the hospital and who would naturally perpetuate the same vices from the harsh environment in which they are raised.

The author faults the state too for abetting this kind of evil by providing subsidies and state relief where it is undeserved. He argues that the culture of advocating for people who have dug their own graves encourages other people to also dig the same graves which soon negatively affect the whole nation and lead to unnecessary loss of revenue which would have been better utilized elsewhere. For this point the author notes that government has become some of

secondary father to children born in unsustainable environments who it now maintains, it has become godfather to the million drug addicts who it takes up and rehabilitates despite having no part in their descent to substance abuse and even a secondary custodian of single mothers who are excused from paying utility fees. The result of this then, is that people find nothing wrong in having children for whom they have no clear vision, there is an increasing number of people living risky lifestyles and more and people are having children just for having them.

The evidence for these unfortunate circumstances is the rising rate of crime which was 1 in every 370 people 80 years ago but is now 1 in every 10 people and there is also an increase in violent crime. The author has personally been in contact with people who have had crime visited upon them or have themselves committed the crimes and there is also a general feeling and observation of growing insecurity.

I agree with the author in so far as he points out that liberties and government aid can actually cause people to lead a carefree kind of lifestyle since it is another entity who bears the responsibility for their actions. Even at the state level, there are countries which seek loans on terms which they cannot sustain with the assurance of the International Monetary Fund as a safety net. In the same way, people will tend to give less thought to having children out of wedlock when the possibility of the government's help exists. However, it is my position that in our day to day lives and choices, there are aspects and consequences that the government cannot see, let alone help us by cushioning the situation. In having an unplanned child, for example, there are factors such as the search for love and companionship and consequences go beyond monetary expenses to emotional distress and even physical exhaustion. It is wrong, therefore, to

make the assumption that people make what would be deemed unwise decisions for the simple and sole reason that the government has provide some form of cushioning. Social dynamics and decisions run beyond the allusion of that statement.

The theory of existentialism, as explained by the scholar Jean-Paul Sartre, propounds that man is a rule unto himself and that he is control of all that accosts him, his vision, his failures and choices. This then advances the argument by Theodore Dalrymple that what becomes of any man is a complex conglomeration of the results of his many choices, big and small, which led up to that particular moment. Theodore's position is therefore that of existentialist basis in so far as he pushes the agenda that we are all creatures with a reasoning capacity and when we end up in a bad situation it is because there was a particular time that it was required of us to weigh between the pleasure of instant gratification and the hardship of later consequences and we chose the former even with knowledge that it leads to our perish. Each should therefore be left to bear such consequences without the benefit of the state's help.

In Chapter VII of the book which presents an excerpt from 'The Republic' by Plato, the philosopher narrates of a hypothetical scene where there are humans who were born into captivity and throughout their lives live in such a way that light is projected to them from behind and they can only see shadows. He concludes that such people would accept the shadows as the only true objects having known only them throughout their lives and that until they see the light; they are limited to the fallacy they experience. This conclusion is similar to that described by Theodore in that people have been conditioned to believe that their freedom of choice overrides

all other considerations and in any case the government and its grants is present to aid as the last resort when things go badly.

Works Cited.

Theodore, Dalrymple. (2010). *The Frivolity of Evil: Our Culture, What's Left of It*. Monday Books. Retrieved from www.mondaybooks.com.