

Making Excuses for Jihadis.
Posted On:December 31, 1969

With the decline of religious influence on our values, the word \342\200\234evil\342\200\235 has been largely dropped by the modern educated class. We look to the causes of bad behavior---such as the environment, abuse by parents, or bad wiring in the brain. Bleeding hearts like to think that the malefactor is not responsible, turning him into a \342\200\234victim\342\200\235 of other forces. One idiotic professor quoted in the recent issue of Rolling Stone, blamed the murderous rampage of the Tsarnaev brothers on \342\200\234American policies\342\200\235 (code words for support of Israel).

What nonsense! Nothing but evil can excuse two Chechen brothers who decided to massacre their fellow citizens, people who did nothing to them but give them refuge from their violent homeland. Refuge was US policy too.

This professor does not recognize any evil other than our government's policies. Terrorists who kill for political purposes, deliberately seeking out innocent civilians (more often than not women and children) to make the slaughter even more horrific, are \342\200\234victims of US policies?\342\200\235 Their mayhem requires mass maiming, whose victims will carry their wounds forever. Before our Boston horror, the Israelis suffered from this kind of attack for years. Even publishing X-ray pictures of bombing victims with bodies riddled with nails and ball bearings did not move the self-righteous supporters of the \342\200\234downtrodden Palestinians\342\200\235 to criticize such suicide bombers. No way would they call them evil.

The philosophy behind terrorizing the public began with 19th century anarchists, who believed that only by destroying all governments could a brave new world of equal freedom and goodness emerge. What emerged from their many assassinations and bombings was World War I, which indeed did destroy the old order of empires and monarchies, and replaced them in short order with Fascism, Communism, and Nazism.

Today, militant Islam has taken up the old anarchist banner. The latest were two Nigerian British jihadis who publicly decapitated a hapless British soldier while shouting \342\200\234God is Great,\342\200\235 demanding that the British \342\200\234drop their government.\342\200\235 Their fervent belief in reviving the Muslim Caliphate ignores the uncomfortable fact that not a single caliph died in bed of old age. They were all assassinated. Someone did not like them.

Human societies have always had difficulty trying to account for evil. Our primeval ancestors lived in fear: fear of more powerful wild beasts, insufficient rainfall, fire, famine, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and predatory neighboring clans. They resorted to prayer to the many powers they imagined out there and offered bribes (human sacrifices) to these deities to avert their evil.

Agricultural societies emerged with more sophisticated attempts to explain evil. Zoroaster, a prophet, emerged among the Iranian peoples living in what would be today's Afghanistan. Zoroaster preached that there was only one god, a god of light, who created man as a special species to whom he gave free will, something none of the other animals had. They could, as if they were gods, choose their actions.

However, there was a catch: they could choose to do bad things too. They had choice over good or evil. And Zoroaster warned that there was a price for this: reward or punishment after death. It was also the first religion to identify that the worst evils come from other humans. A lion is not evil; it just wants dinner. A human being who deliberately hurts others is evil.

Although all of the revealed religions (Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam) believe in one god of the universe, there is difficulty in explaining how a good god could inflict bad things on hapless people. The Book of Job explores this very issue, unsatisfactorily for me. All four of these religions have recognized an evil force, embodied in the fallen angel Satan, who is the tempter of weak souls to do bad things. Does this mean the God of Light casts a shadow in which evil lurks?

What we know today is that real evil is the fruit of human volition (except for the criminally insane). Evil requires volition, rationalization, and self-deluding belief systems. The Jihadis qualify on all counts.

675 words

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