

# Evil Is Childish (With Apologies to Children)

When is the last time you knowingly did something wrong?

If you're being honest, it was probably in the last 24 hours. But there were probably some other things going on at the same time.

You were probably tired. You were probably frustrated. You probably needed a Snickers (i.e. something to eat). And maybe you were just finishing up a long day at work where you'd been slighted and brushed off and yelled at. In other words, you were ripe for making a bad decision. So you made one, and you knew at the time that you were making it.

In the end, you probably felt worse. The world was worse off. But while you were doing it, the evil gave you a smug sense of satisfaction and even triumph.

How do we explain this? And how do we explain why people would choose this fleeting satisfaction over actually feeling good and becoming better-suited to life?

I have a theory.

**Willfully doing something evil is a sort of petulant temper tantrum at the world for being the way it is.**

Have to become a better, more loving person to gain love and affection from others? If you're at the end of your rope, you won't respond well to that message. You'll go objectify and manipulate the opposite sex into giving love and affection to you.

Have to work hard to gain and keep wealth? You would be outraged if someone told you that. Instead, you'll go and defraud people, rob them, leech them through taxes and regulations and fees, or waste their time. You'll destroy their good fortune or their own ability to enjoy it.

In any kind of decision like these, it's because you are unwilling to acknowledge the world as it is and work within it that you will knowingly harm yourself and others. It's a pure, childish (with apologies to most children, who really aren't that bad) reaction of petty resentment.

You felt triumph because you resented the world and, in your moment of willful evil, you felt to yourself that you had succeeded in screwing over the world and its rules.

Of course, you didn't. You've only screwed yourself. But it's so very easy in the moment to bury that truth.

How can you avoid going to this place of evil? That's for another time and place, and there have been plenty of words typed on that subject. The first thing you can do is avoid getting to a state where you might be tempted to think and act with the patience of a sleep-deprived, hungry child. You might stop viewing the world as your angry, authoritarian father who's NOT THE BOSS OF YOU. Cut the antagonistic relationship with reality.

But the main value I wanted to get across with this observation? Evil is a smaller, meaner, more pitiable thing than we often make it out to be. In its angry refusal to handle the world, it's a confession of powerlessness, not a power of its own.

*"Evil as resentment/envy" is an idea which Jungian psychologist/comparative mythologist Jordan Peterson has developed more in series like Maps of Meaning. It's also been developed at length by authors like C.S. Lewis and Ayn Rand. This resonated with my own observations, but they put it far better than me.*