

Supporting the Lesser Evil and Avoiding the Greater One are not the Same Thing

There is a great moral difference between supporting the lesser evil and avoiding the greater evil. To support the lesser evil is to condone evil, which is a morally reprehensible act. On the other hand, to avoid the greater evil is a legitimate act of self-defence. To flee a totalitarian state and relocate to a merely interventionist one is an instance of avoiding the greater evil. To start feeling a “patriotic duty” towards such an “adoptive homeland” is an instance of supporting the lesser evil. The difference is quite clear.

Of course, it is a common practice to try to paint one’s support for the lesser evil as one’s avoidance of the greater evil, and only keen moral intuition is a reliable tool for distinguishing between the two in borderline cases. Still, it is crucial to acknowledge and understand the distinction in question, since without it people of conscience are bound to end up in a state of moral paralysis, while people with no conscience are likely to get away with everything.