

Re: Nature of Evil

Alex, very interesting article. In his conclusion, the author writes, "The longer we cling to strong beliefs about the existence of pure evil, the more aggressive and antisocial we become." I would say that that has very important implications for voluntaryism as it concerns parenting. I understand that spanking and other forms of involuntary discipline were rooted in the idea that people are born evil and broken and can only be fixed and trained up "by the rod," so to speak. I consider that superstition. In fact, I consider "being evil" or being pure evil to be superstition as well. On the contrary, while humans are capable of committing incredible acts of evil, their desire to do so stems from a lifetime of experiences, not their genetic programming. In "Being Evil vs. Doing Evil," I wrote,

Like I said, I don't consider the men above (Hitler, et al) to be evil. I do, however, consider their actions to be extremely evil; actions that were preceded by countless depths of unmet needs, experiences, and outside influence. None of those men were destined to do evil. Each of them as a rational human had the capacity to choose within the confines of their present knowledge and understanding, but just as they chose to do what many others consider evil, they were just as able to choose to do good.

It's unproductive in my estimation to believe that anyone is "pure evil." It's a way to ignore cause and effect, and to diminish accountability. If one is pure evil, then their evil actions are a part of their nature, and it would be silly to hold them any more accountable for their actions than a raging tiger or a tornado. I highly recommend this article by Alice Miller on Hitler and the seemingly eager-to-commit-violence Germans who did his bidding.

Back to the article, the author defined evil as, "taking pleasure in the intentional inflicting of harm on innocent others." We must ask, "Why would one take pleasure in that?" And the answer is most assuredly *not*, "Because they're evil!"

Skyler.