

Moral Evil

“Evil is whatever distracts. (...) What if the satanic hunting party drives me straight into the Good? (...) Evil knows of the Good, but Good does not know of Evil. (...) Sometimes, evil assumes the form of good, in fact, embodies it completely. If this fact remains hidden to me, no doubt I shall succumb, for such a good is more enticing than actual good.”

Franz Kafka (1883-1924).

In this quote, famous writer Kafka mentions moral evil, drawing attention to the principle of **“considering the consequences of every event and acting with restraint”**.

Though the concepts of ethics and morality are used interchangeably in daily conversation, according to sociologists, *ethics* is the theoretical aspect of right and wrong actions, whereas *morality* is its application, practice and performed behavior in life.

According to Syriac culture, a good person is someone who knows evil and does not do it even though he/she is capable of it. Whereas goodness is a pure idea that is organically linked to divine values. It is a spiritual energy that maintains the harmony between humans and their purpose of creation. It is crucial that this harmony is maintained and undisturbed. In this regard, we must remember that in addition to nice words and actions, we also owe one another better intentions and better thoughts. This is how famous sociologist/philosopher Eric Fromm (1900-1980) defines the good person: **“A good person is not someone who never thinks an evil thought. A good person is aware of all forms of evil, and still consciously prefers goodness.”**

In this context, the most straightforward way to create a life where people do unto others as they would have them do unto themselves and not do things that they would not want done to themselves, as well as the widespread acceptance of altruism to rival that of selfishness lies with being a morally good person.

The survival of goodness in social life is dependent on every single person being a **“part of morality”** and maintaining goodness. This requires virtue. Just as **“the principle of virtue”** guards people from excessiveness, it also constantly reorients them toward good, righteousness, justice, conscience, beauty, and moderation. As famous writer Goethe puts it, **“People can only recognize themselves in other people.”**

On the other hand, moral evil is an opposing state that bears no good intentions. The damage and suffering caused by voluntary choices, neglect, and deliberate actions done with ulterior motives are the essence of evil. All kinds of destructive words, behaviors, and activities which spawn injustice and victimhood, and disturb peace of mind and destabilize society are morally evil. The root cause of this is selfishness. And lack of virtue and consideration.

Attitudes maintained (or caused) deliberately, with awareness of the fact that they are evil, voluntary actions, neglectful attitudes, and their victims are morally evil. In other words, failing to act on something because of inattention or despite believing it to be good and necessary, or physically/emotionally harmful intentions/words/actions that one knows should not be done but does them anyway are morally evil. The suffering of humans and other living things, whether intentional or resulting from neglect, misfortunes caused by apathy are also held in this regard. Impatience, excessive anger, blinding passion, power seeking, lust for power, selfishness, jealousy, ostracism, spite, conceit, pride, depravement, instigation, slander, gossip, indignity, scorn, plagiarization and all forms of theft, deception, bribery, exploitation, abuse, overconfidence, vanity, greed, lust, rebelliousness, fraud, avarice, defamation, vengefulness, intolerance, talebearing, hate, ruthlessness, injustice, misconduct, infidelity, manipulation, cruelty, all attitudes offensive to human dignity, behavior that stems from malicious and perverted thought are the cardinal viruses of moral evil.

Moral evil may be a virus that harms spiritual and social health, but if approached with the sense of dealing with infectious diseases, the result will be more balance, peace, and stability in the cycle of life.

Yusuf Beğtaş