

Profiling EVIL: Sadists, Psychopaths, Pedophiles, Habitual Felons, and Political Evil

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Profiling Evil (part 1)

Other than primary reflexes, most human behavior and related matters of life and living are learned. No one is born a serial killer, a pedophile, or an habitual felon. Similarly, other than primary stimulus events, values and value judgments are learned, and must be taught and reinforced accordingly. For both behavior and values, there are two interactive learning environments: the external, overt domain of the body and the internal, covert domain of the mind – i.e., the imagination. The learning process (classical and operant conditioning) are the same in both domains – real physiologically based learning occurs related to behavior and thoughts; however, there are no time/space limitations in the domain of the imagination, but there are limitations related to cognitive complexity, abstract capacities, critical thinking skills, etc.

Each individual necessarily plays an active role in their learning experiences in both learning environments. For example overt behavior puts one in situations in which certain opportunities develop and others do not, and covert behavior conditions one to be predisposed to perceive and act in particular ways and not in others. People play an active role in all aspects of their learning – i.e., beliefs, values, motivation, expectation, behavior and consequences. Emotions are learned according to the same learning principles as behavior, including fear, anger, and desire – what one fears and does not fear, what makes one angry and what does not, and what one desires and what one does not desire. Thoughts and behavior consistent with a fear, anger, or desire will strengthen the fear, anger, or desire. Thoughts and behavior inconsistent with a fear, anger, or desire will weaken it. Also, it is the individual that decides how to react and how to “frame” or understand their life experiences. Even in most cases of structural trauma or process abnormality (e.g., brain damage or chemical deficits or excesses), humans are still pretty much SELF-made creatures, and their creation of self is ongoing throughout their lives. They are constantly becoming more or less sensitized and desensitized to matters of life and living, depending on their thoughts and behavior, values and value judgments, and related desires.

The fact that some individuals actively cultivate undue SELF esteem, are willing to use various deceptions and/or violence to get what they want and to avoid what they do not want, and are motivated by SELF-serving pleasures, taking the easiest route to immediate gratification, all at the expense of others, does not require an independent concept of Evil. Humans have an innate capacity for good or evil (the pathways to both are summative choices and cumulative consequences); however, there is very little agreement about what is Good and what is Evil, much less the appropriate methods for accomplishing or avoiding either. In any case, most individuals who think, want, and do Evil are SELF-made, not born that way. Conditions of birth, as well as time and circumstance, certainly play a role in an individual’s learning history, but one’s lot in life is not one’s soul, and one’s talents are not one’s soul. One’s soul is how one deals with one’s lot and talents. It is one’s soul that is SELF-made, consistent with the natural laws of the universe. Ultimately, it is one’s soul that is Good or Evil.

Regardless of definitions, the word “*evil*” seems to be gaining in popular use, being applied to individuals and nations, particular behaviors or motives, even to social trends and world-wide religions, but the definition of Evil is elusive, often boiling down to whatever one is strongly opposed to or threatened by or intensely dislikes ... whatever engenders intense anger, fear, or revulsion. But the road to great Evil is paved with many subtle thoughts and incremental behaviors. Since Evil has religious or supernatural connotations for many, including Muslims, Christians, and Jews, perhaps a few related biblical references will lend to its operational definition:

Psalms 34:14 *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

Proverbs 8:13 *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.*

Isaiah 5:20 *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

Amos 5:15 *Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate*

Romans 7:19 *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

Romans 12:9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

The following is a bit dry and inadequate, but it provides some functional basis for discussing the nature of Evil and evil acts. If one is to hate and abhor Evil, one must understand what it is in order to avoid it, condemn it, and otherwise diminish it --- i.e., to make judgments (cognitive) and do justice (behavior) with accuracy and equity. Consequently, one must be able to conceptualize Evil motives and to describe evil acts in observable, measurable terms.

People who habitually and knowingly commit evil acts because of their evil motives are evil people. There may be evil acts that are not based on evil motives, and there may be evil motives that do not result in evil acts or evil outcomes. However, for current purposes, an evil act is defined as: **unnecessarily and intentionally inflicting pain/discomfort on others or unnecessarily and intentionally depriving others of pleasure/comfort --- or, encouraging others to do so, or not actively discouraging or preventing others from doing so, when it is in one’s power to do so.**

This definition of Evil includes unnecessarily and intentionally preventing or withholding DUE pain/discomfort (e.g., corrective discipline, warning), and unnecessarily and intentionally providing or allowing UNDUE pleasure/comfort (i.e., rewarding evil). Evil acts of commission (something one does) or omission (something one does not do) generally involve the use of force and violence (e.g., murder, assault, robbery) and/or lies and deception (e.g., false flattery, forgery, identity theft) in order to affect, control, or motivate others, either directly or indirectly, for one’s own satisfaction or gain.

Evil acts also include manipulative and exploitive uses of pleasure/comfort (providing or withholding) to motivate others (e.g., bribery, shunning, creating an addict using free samples), or the use of nonviolent means to intentionally inflict pain/discomfort (e.g., gossip, humiliation, sowing discord). Evil is a matter of both motive and method, involving both form and function. Using the above definition, most habitual criminals would meet the criteria of being evil people. However, people may also commit evil acts due to accident or ignorance, including misguided love. In any case, an operational definition of Evil requires a bit more specificity.

Profiling Evil (part 2)

Good, adaptive behavior (**B+**) is defined as exercising rights and meeting corresponding responsibilities. Evil, maladaptive behavior (**B-**) is defined as violating rights or not meeting responsibilities. All behavior, both “Good” adaptive behavior (**B+**) and “Evil” maladaptive behavior (**B-**), is motivated by some combination of Positive Reinforcement (**R+**) and/or Negative Reinforcement (**R-**).

R+ is an increase in pleasure/comfort (real or imagined, physical or psychological, “Good” or “Evil”). **R-** is a decrease in pain/discomfort (real or imagined, physical or psychological, “Good” or “Evil”).

Note that **R-** (Negative Reinforcement) is not Punishment ... it is Reinforcement. Punishment is an increase in pain/discomfort (**P+**) or a decrease in pleasure/comfort (**P-**). Reinforcement (**R+** and **R-**) strengthens; Punishment (**P+** and **P-**) weakens. Also note that it is punishing to lose something of value (**P-**) or to gain something aversive (**P+**), while it is reinforcing to gain something of value (**R+**) or to decrease or avoid something aversive (**R-**).

Also note that both **R+** and **R-** may be “good” or “bad” (legal, adaptive, moral, etc. or not). For example, **R-** might be a doctor relieving physical pain, which would generally be a “good” and kind thing to do. On the other hand, **R-** might be excusing a child from some necessary work (e.g., doing assigned homework), which would generally be a “bad” and harmful thing to do. An example of “good” **R+** would be to receive pay for a job well done. An example of “bad” **R+** would be for someone to successfully steal. An example of “good” **P+** might be surgery to remove a tumor or lifting weights to increase strength and muscle tone (no pain, no gain). An example of “bad” **P+** would be a sadist inflicting pain on an unwilling person. An example of “good” **P-** might be a parent putting the TV on mute until the children stopped arguing about the channel (i.e., time-out from positive reinforcement, which is in fact a punishment procedure); turning the volume back on when the children stopped arguing would be **R-** (i.e., the negative reinforcement of “not arguing” by ending the sound deprivation). An example of “bad” **P-** would be destroying a neighbor’s garden to “get even” for some perceived slight (i.e., intentionally and unnecessarily destroying something of value to another person).

Also note that what functions as **R+** and **R-** (and **P+** and **P-**) depends on current circumstances and the individual’s perceptions and knowledge (perceptual range and complexity as well as efficiency and accuracy), the individual’s learning history, the individual’s values, and the individual’s expectations. What functions as reinforcement (**R**) and punishment (**P**) is relative to the individual. And, the function and potency of positive reinforcers (rewards) and negative

reinforcers (punishers) changes across time and circumstances. For example, a favorite food is a positive reinforcer to a hungry person, but the same food is aversive if that person is seasick.

All else being equal, **R-** is a “good” thing to do (negative reinforcement is the relief of pain/discomfort), unless the pain/discomfort is necessary for some greater good (e.g., exercising for heart conditioning, working at an undesirable job in order to support a family). On the flip side, **P+** (increasing pain/discomfort, technically called positive punishment) is generally “bad” unless it is for some greater good (e.g., surgery to remove a tumor, feeling heat to avoid getting burned). Similarly, all else being equal, **R+** is a good thing to do (increasing pleasure/comfort, positive reinforcement) as long as the reinforcer used is “good” (i.e., legal, moral, ethical, adaptive, etc) and the behavior and motivation being reinforced is also “good” (i.e., legal, moral, ethical, adaptive, etc.).

Note that for **R-** to occur the pain/discomfort must already be present or expected in order to be removed, decreased, or withheld. Similarly, for **P-** to occur the pleasure/comfort must already be present or expected in order to be removed, decreased, or withheld.

There are eight basic functional types of *potential* evil acts and outcomes, which may be by intent (Evil) or based on ignorance, or even misguided love:

1. **R+** contingent on the presence of maladaptive behavior (**B-**) or the absence of adaptive behavior (**B+**) --- i.e., rewarding Evil, through positive reinforcement.
2. **R-** contingent on the presence of maladaptive behavior (**B-**) or the absence of adaptive behavior (**B+**) --- i.e., rewarding Evil, through negative reinforcement.
3. **P+** contingent on the presence adaptive behavior (**B+**) or the absence of maladaptive behavior (**B-**) --- i.e., punishing Good, through positive punishment.
4. **P-** contingent on the presence of adaptive behavior (**B+**) or the absence of maladaptive behavior (**B-**) --- i.e., punishing Good, through negative punishment.

There are also *potential* evil acts and outcomes based on the types of rewards and punishers used:

5. Using maladaptive rewards (the wrong kind; too much, too soon, too little, or too late; or illegal, immoral, unethical, etc.).
6. Using maladaptive punishers (the wrong kind; too much, too soon, too little, or too late; or illegal, immoral, unethical, etc.).

In the following functional categories, the purely SELF-serving motives and methods much more likely rise to the level of Evil.

- 7) **P+** or **P-** for no reason, without cause related to the person experiencing the punishment, all for the perpetrator’s own gain or satisfaction --- e.g., sadistic torture; random assaults; sabotage.

8) **R-** when the person relieving the pain/discomfort is the same person that inflicted the pain/discomfort in the first place (i.e., **P+** followed by **R-**), all for their own gain --- e.g., systematic domestic violence; strong-arm robbery; making someone sick in order to rescue them.

9) **R+** when the provider is the same person that withdrew or withheld the reinforcement in the first place (i.e., **P-** followed by **R+**), all for their own gain --- e.g., kidnapping then returning the victim for the money; killing someone's pet in order to console them; stealing property in order to "find" it.

Profiling Evil (part 3): Political Evil

In most cases of political Evil, the evils are multiplied because not only are there evil political motives and evil political acts which have evil political consequences, the cumulative evils are usually paid for with taxpayer dollars, often to the direct detriment of the tax payer, and the perpetrator's of political Evil are often cloaked in darkness or hiding behind false or deceptive social values. Now that's Evil. In any case, there are plenty of political evils to go around. Here is an example for each category of potential evil:

There are eight basic functional types of *potential* evil acts and outcomes, which may be by intent (Evil) or based on ignorance, or even misguided love:

1. **R+** contingent on the presence of maladaptive behavior (**B-**) or the absence of adaptive behavior (**B+**) --- i.e., rewarding Evil, through positive reinforcement.

A political example: Paying someone who is capable of work for not working.

2. **R-** contingent on the presence of maladaptive behavior (**B-**) or the absence of adaptive behavior (**B+**) --- i.e., rewarding Evil, through negative reinforcement.

A political example: Writing or using a doctor's excuse to skip work in order to participate in a work related protest.

3. **P+** contingent on the presence adaptive behavior (**B+**) or the absence of maladaptive behavior (**B-**) --- i.e., punishing Good, through positive punishment.

A political example: Shouting down a speaker in a public forum.

4. **P-** contingent on the presence of adaptive behavior (**B+**) or the absence of maladaptive behavior (**B-**) --- i.e., punishing Good, through negative punishment.

A political example: Taxing high effort and performance in order to reward low effort and performance.

There are also *potential* evil acts and outcomes based on the types of rewards and punishers used:

5. Using maladaptive rewards (the wrong kind; too much, too soon, too little, or too late; or illegal, immoral, unethical, etc.).

A political example: Tax loopholes.

6. Using maladaptive punishers (the wrong kind; too much, too soon, too little, or too late; or illegal, immoral, unethical, etc.).

A political example: Light punishments for pedophiles, heavy punishments for drug possession, delayed trials for both.

In the following functional categories, the purely SELF-serving motives and methods much more likely rise to the level of Evil.

7) **P+** or **P-** for no reason, without cause related to the person experiencing the punishment, all for the perpetrator's own gain or satisfaction --- e.g., sadistic torture; random assaults; sabotage.

A political example: Eminent domain used for private developments.

8) **R-** when the person relieving the pain/discomfort is the same person that inflicted the pain/discomfort in the first place (i.e., **P+** followed by **R-**), all for their own gain --- e.g., systematic domestic violence; strong-arm robbery; making someone sick in order to rescue them.

A political example: Encouraging violence and social unrest, then increasing government power and control to impose safety and security.

9) **R+** when the provider is the same person that withdrew or withheld the reinforcement in the first place (i.e., **P-** followed by **R+**), all for their own gain --- e.g., kidnapping then returning the victim for the money; killing someone's pet in order to console them; stealing property in order to "find" it.

A political example: Creating a shortage of some necessity (e.g., food), then supplying it contingent on political support.

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