

The 17 Stages of Evil

Evil and revolution go together and evil is always an attempt at a revolution - maybe a mini-one but yes a revolution. Ideology is the most common and perhaps deadly form of revolution. There is no such thing as a rapid revolution. It's a process that takes time. The goal is for it to be unstoppable before anyone realises what is and has been happening. Violence has to come for ideology works to smooth the way for it.

Suffering in empathy with your people can cause you to try to harm and kill those who you perceive as persecuting them. If you can try to put yourself in the victim – be the victims mind - it is hard to be cruel to them. But because you cannot do this with everybody you will not do it with those perceived as enemies or oppressors. Religion is us and not them in some form or another so it is intrinsically inconsistent with treating all people the same.

Religion needs to be humane and intelligent. Superstitious religion leads inevitably to cognitive dissonance. We all have that problem but religion compounds it and becomes another reason for it.

Elliott Aronson says that cognitive dissonance is the strongest when you feel your concept of yourself as a good person is being challenged. So if you believe you are a good productive person and you hurt somebody else you will try to dehumanise them in some way. They don't deserve good treatment so you are still a good fair person if you hurt them. This is a dangerous thing for you are using the idea of deserving which goes with the idea of being a person to make them not much better than rodents. You are well aware that you cannot really guarantee getting the consequences you want. Outside factors let that happen which means God cooperates with you. So your revenge when it works is not all down to you. Believers in God are saying, perhaps without realising it, that what they do is more God's responsibility than theirs. It sanctifies evil. Also, if God is important to you that will trigger dissonance when you do something to offend him.

Christians are clear that you are to see your neighbour as another you. If you see others as another self then you will abuse them like you do yourself. We all are our own worst enemy. Seeing a person as yourself at the mirror is a way of objectifying them. You see you not them. You insult them for you want it to be about you. You hurt them when you see they are not you.

Born to Believe, Andrew Newberg MD and Mark Robert Waldman, Free Press, New York, 2006 page 151 and 152 gives the seventeen steps needed to make a good person do grave evil.

1 Make a set of ideals and beliefs that indicate your superiority and the inferiority of others. My observation is that this set need not and should not make it too obvious.

2 Apply enough logic to make the set look reasonably acceptable. It must ring true even if it is not true.

3 Make it clear what your followers have to do in terms of behaviour. They at least need to be a group.

4 Reinforce the previous steps with literature and the internet and so on to make the beliefs ingrained.

5 Make members contract and commit themselves to the previous steps. They will develop a sense of obligation.

6 Select somebody with charisma to advertise and strengthen the beliefs. Charisma makes people want to adore you and the values you represent.

7 Lay out punishment for those who do not conform. It need not be about punishment in this world - the threat of it in the afterlife will do.

8 Stress how important agreement with the beliefs and principles is and lay out the bad results of disbelief or disobedience.

9 Urge each member to find converts. When people think others are starting to agree with them, it validates their own errors. They become too confident. They become blind to the errors.

10 Demand hate and punishment or stern disapproval of those who leave the group. You can make this one more subtle by saying, Love them and do not see them as sinners. Direct the hatred at their sins. If you hate the evil side of a person and don't allow you to see that person as evil to any degree you are in denial about your hatred for them. You are also letting yourself be subjected to a sneaky form of brainwashing. That makes you more dangerous to them than if you see them as evil and are honest about it. And if you say "You and I are sinners", you will use that as an excuse for calling say gays

sinner. You will say, "They are sinners but so am I." It is a way of abusing while avoiding the consequences for yourself. If it is not abuse, then what is wrong with falsely calling somebody a paedophile if you say you are no better though your sins are just different?

11 Limit the chances for your group to discuss what is going on critically.

12 Forbid or limit and regulate contact between the group and the outside world and censor or explain away material coming from critics.

13 Find a group that you encourage them to see as the opponents and the enemy.

14 Depersonalise the group perhaps by applying a label to them and condemn them and warn against them.

15 Do what you can to make the hostility worse.

16 When turning the group against the enemy, don't use the enemies' names, and honour your own members with titles or reminders of how important they are. Maybe your group can wear vestments or a uniform to make them different and feel superior.

17 The last step is kill the enemy.

It is easier for us to commit murder through somebody else than to do it ourselves. The person who cannot stab another could get a contract killer to do it for them. Direct contact with the victim as we hurt them makes us feel guilty and ashamed. Indirect contact may not. That is why we will not run out of a takeaway without paying. We have had a person to person encounter with the cook. But if the cook released her music CD we would feel okay about putting her out of business by illegally copying and downloading her music. The reality is we care more about people think of us than about what is really best for them. That is why we are able to revere and respect religion that claims God will punish sinners for all eternity. We are not directly torturing them and its fine with us as long as God does it. In fact, we are worse than God. The sinners might get more mercy if we were punishing them directly. Our attitude helps make us happier people but all the same we are badder people. A religion that is able to get us to turn off our empathy for others to that extent is dangerous. Challenge it and do not wait until it does something bad. The Church manipulates how people feel about hurting others in an out of sight way to get them to accept Hell. The doctrine is intolerable in itself and because of what it makes us.

People know that if they want to work on feeling horrendous about the tragedies they learn about that do not otherwise affect them, they will soon be consumed by grief and terror and anger. So they switch off. The down-side of that is that the more they anaesthetise their emotions the more they will see and think of the suffering people as unimportant or as objects. It is possible to see a person as 80% an object and 20% as a person. There is an empathy problem then in most people. That is bad but it is a fact of life. But to sanction it by telling that person that God accepts their lives and connects with them in spite of their attitude to suffering people is going too far. If you objectify the enemy that makes it easier to kill him so religion is to blame for it makes that easier still.

Religion tries to turn off our concern for others think in order to get us to love morality more. If nuns showed us kindness we would be horrified if we had reason to think that they did it to please God and not us. Though they tried to make us happy it was not about us at all. If you believe in God the nuns must be right. You have to assume innocent until proven guilty. So the nuns are not to be accused or suspected of the sin of being concerned for us regardless of what God wants. But the nuns are a good example of point 16. We become mere tools with which the nuns use to please God.

Some atheists say that life is meaningless and admit that despite that they fear and hate death. So it is the head then that says life is meaningless and the heart says different. The sense that life has meaning is a feeling. Religion uses that feeling to attract and manipulate our devotion. We are being taken advantage of. That manipulation is the sum of the 17 points. They are all manipulative.

The basic and fundamental religious doctrine seems to be love the sinner hate the sin. It is both a mask for hate that is in denial and an euphemism for "be passive aggressive." This comes out clearest when you are expected to hate sin because you love God which means you will hate sins that do not remotely concern you. Even if you hate what somebody did to you and its about God then it still something that does not concern you for you make it about God not you. The hypocrisy of pretending that the fact that sin has no existence except in the character of the sinner is untrue should be the first stage. So there are really eighteen stages. Stage 1 is the worst one and the sea in which the others swim.

Dehumanising a group - eg seeing them as some kind of inferior a little is all it takes - is the top way to sow hate and maintain it and worsen it. Dehumanising is the common thread whenever any group hates another. The path from othering" (thinking of a group as not being anything to you but other) to hating that group is a slippery slope. Othering is the oil that

makes sure you will slide down the slope.

Thus you don't need to objectify if you want to guarantee that the sea of blood will come about by itself without any further help from you.

To objectify a person is a summary of many objectifications. It means you are turning their happiness into a stone cold thing, and their sadness, and their sense of identity, and their abilities and qualities and finally their value is turned into nothing. The value may be turned into a word so that you say all the right things. You are never more objectified than when people don't value you but talk as if they do.

I would add that religion does nothing for suicide rates