

PEOPLE OF THE LIE, IS EVIL A KIND OF PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESS?

Dr M Scott Peck a psychiatrist who is in the self-help genre wrote the famous book People of the Lie. It is about evil people and what he learned from his patients regarding what evil is and what it does.

Peck notes that "one of the characteristics of evil is its desire to confuse." He argues that if you are evil you will avoid psychotherapy like the plague. Evil people don't want help for they think they are great the way they are. He softens that a bit by saying a person can be ambivalently evil so that some part of them will allow a therapist to help.

[I would suggest that maybe the person is using a therapist who she or he senses will not be able to change things. The person then goes to therapy like it was scratching an itch that is prolonged by the scratching.]

Naturally then Peck asks if evil is a psychiatric illness. He quotes Martin Buber as pointing out that evil people demand, "affirmation independent of all findings." They expect then you to say nothing about their sin and to condone it and even reward it. Sin then is not just the sinner's business - it reflects on how the sinner thinks of you and society. Thought leads to action so the sinner is not an island.

So is evil a psychiatric illness?

One objection to that he says is how evil people have no overt suffering just from being evil. But he says you could see them as diseased but asymptomatic. You don't have to be in pain to be ill. He says the evil hide their pain for evil causes fear. "The evil live their lives in fear." And he goes, "The evil are to be pitied - not hated - because they live their lives in sheer terror."

My response to that is if their fear is that bad and they don't see it, imagine what they would be capable of thinking they are defending themselves.

Christianity teaches that sin does harm the sinner though the sinner may be blind to that and everybody else thinks the sinner is happy and grounded. Such a doctrine virtually tells sinners to do harm in self-defence. Fear is the root of all violence. It warns that an asymptomatic fear in a sinner will explode. The symptom has to come.

A sensible person would say that so-called sinners not suffering is proof that there is no God or no God who cares about sin. Peck is engaging in vindictive wishful thinking that makes him look for ways to imagine sinners are suffering!

If sin did come with fear it would not prove that sin is an illness. Falling in love brings fear but we do not consider love an illness for the fear is separate from the love.

Another objection is that to be ill or sick is to be a victim and evil is based on choice so you are not a victim. Peck says you can put yourself in a bad situation by choice and still be a victim. A child is hit by a car is a victim despite being told not to go out on the road.

He claims that the sinner is both actor and victim. If you say you must hate the malevolent actor side of the person and love and pity the victim side of the person.

I see that he wants you to love the sinner and patronise him as a victim! This patronising love will only fuel sinners. They will sense how superior and fake and condescending you are.

He says that if evil is untreatable that does not prove it is not a disease. He says that our failure to know how to treat evil is the best reason of all for seeing it as a disease. He quotes a priest with approval who said evil was the ultimate disease.

Peck reasons from that that "despite their pretence of sanity, the evil are the most insane of all."

The interesting thing about that is the person needs to be very sane and clever indeed in order to fake sanity! How can we trust anybody? How can we trust those who tell us about the paranormal and the supernatural for it is easier to lie about them than anything else? The best way to fake sanity is to get people to think the supernatural or paranormal are real and yet elusive and you can tell people about them for you have special access to information. Perhaps you are a prophet or Messiah or just divinely inspired.

I wish to note that one advantage of this approach is that it urges us to meet the evil with compassion for that alone allows

the solution to come. But compassion based on the assumption that you are insane when you are a very functional person and good in society will not be compassion to you. It will be patronising.

It is very judgemental to say that sinners are lying to us and taking us for fools by pretending to be sane. If the pretending is evil or a sin then if it is a symptom of insanity that is not pretending. Only a sane person can pretend.

Peck thinks science is not about the problem of evil or the nature of evil at all while religion is. Science does not test moral values. It is about the physical.

My response that science can test the part of moral values that is about avoiding harm. The harm part is the important bit. The rule part is less important. Any decent person will worry more about a baby's pain when he is attacked than about what any God has to say about it. History is not about morality but its method is to discern truth as far as possible so though science does not equate to morality that does not mean there is no connection. In fact there has to be.

Peck says that it is only because there is good in the world that we even consider the problem of evil. That makes good and bad two sides of the one coin and you are stuck with both forever. One needs the other, one goes with the other.

My response is that if that is true then God has to be a coin with a good side and an evil side. We have to accept that we will be good or evil and keep changing forever. Many of us feel that this is so and that is why they do evil when they get the chance. They think there is no point in trying to avoid being evil forever.

Peck says you can do evil things and not be evil. He says sin and evil are not exactly the same. He suggests that being evil is not easy which does not fit the coin image.

If evil is a power and good is a power then God made the coin - that is he made good and evil and made one need the other.

If evil is a loss of good or an absence of good then there is no coin. If pink is one side of the coin and the absence of pink is the other that gives you a non-coin for it has only one side. Good in Christianity is not made but is just a default.

Believers probably all, deep down in some way at least, use the coin methodology and approach. The danger of holy people being secretly happy that people are suffering and dying so that they can help them must be astronomical.

MENTAL HEALTH DEFINED AND AUTISM

The line "mental health requires that the human will submit itself to something higher than itself." He goes to say this something for religious people is God. He says those without religion or who are not interested in religion have truth or love or the need of others instead. He defines mental health as "an ongoing process of dedication to reality at all costs. The utter failure to submit oneself to reality is called autism." He sees autism as living inside your own head and being in a world of your own. It's a world where "the self reigns supreme." Later he writes, "autism is narcissism in its ultimate form." For the complete narcissist, others have no psychological reality than a piece of furniture."

This controversial material shows no knowledge of what autism really is and insults autistic people. Autistic people can be narcissists but autism and narcissism are not the same thing. Peck is inconsistent for he sees evil as narcissism so why is he not saying that evil and autism are just two different words for the same thing?

KILLING - IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT MENTAL ILLNESS IS USUALLY BLAMED FOR IT

Peck says unlike animal killing "human killing is not instinctual." He is referring to how animals hunt and kill or they do not while we can do either.

He says that some feel that war is neither side's fault and comments on how that turns it into virtually spontaneous combustion. I see that it turns war into something that is to be just accepted and that trying to work for peace is a waste of time!

Peck says that evil is antilife but is a form of life itself which is why if you try to destroy evil by killing evil people you become evil yourself. He says that trying to destroy it in yourself will not kill you but will kill you spiritually.

We must all be evil realistically we only care about not killing people and do not see killing them spiritually as as bad or even worse. The doctrine is rubbish and is passive aggressive. It amounts to making murder no big deal. If you say it is for if you kill you kill your own soul then how narcissistic are you?