

# Benefiting from Evil

Something I think of, connected in part to my previous post “A Privileged View of History” is the idea that one man could ‘fix’ an issue in the world, create an obvious and undeniable benefit from their action, and be regarded as evil.

This man could kill every imprisoned violent criminal, no-doubt reducing crime year-over-year, and save many lives by extension. One could do the same but with a eugenic result, killing people with disabilities or low IQ's and watch as human beings are improved as a result.

This man would be a monster, and we would put him in prison or kill him. But yet we would forever reap the rewards of his act.

We, as the ‘good,’ have the privilege of passively recognizing issues (crime, dysgenics, etc.) but have neither the moral courage nor will to enact a fix. The ‘evil’ man takes the burden of action from the uncertain group.

The ‘good’ way of dealing with criminality could be to simply better enforce laws, perhaps achieving a similar decrease in crime over time but without the brutal means.

The man of action could create a strong and lasting course correction that would also hugely decrease the risk to the ‘good,’ through law enforcement being less necessary, in this example.

## What exactly makes the man of action evil, when taking a long view of history?

In the short term, you could say that what the man did was wrong (killing people) because it’s brutal, but that feels like a very odd thing to say, given time. Say he killed perhaps 1000 people, but really probably saved 5000 as a result over the following years.

Let’s use another example. There’s a rival kingdom across a river from our kingdom. Our king invades (let’s ignore the morality of our soldiers carrying out his orders), and completely annihilates the rival kingdom, allowing us to absorb their land and resources. Exterminating a whole group most certainly required some level of true depravity (killing children at the very least).

The man of action has to possess both moral courage to see that his people are good, and the bravery to know that his memory will potentially be held in the lowest regard; for people fail to “weigh” the totality of his actions with the results in a real, physical sense.

I say “real, physical sense” because it’s perfectly possible that we could get into discussions about the permanent or semi-permanent spiritual damage of murder, but I feel that gets away from the more obvious “Did this save or improve lives?” point.

## Do the ends justify the means?

We could say for example that the American Indians might’ve went on to create a civilization far greater than that of the US had the US not largely destroyed them, but I think that’s obviously unlikely, and I would question whether the person posing that question has true faith in the US to start.

It's that "might makes right" isn't necessarily the ideal or the glamorous answer to the problem of morality, but it's the one which is made manifest.

I've heard it said that "morality is feelings," and what we do is dictated by evolved intuitions of disgust or decorum. The acts that we do are largely dictated by simply "what works."

Even if that's the case in reality, I do think it's interesting to consider our morality 'scale' even if we as people are operating under false, but perhaps necessary, impressions:

**That there is moral rhyme and reason to existence.**