


Chapter 1

Sympathy for the Devil: Psychology of Evil From Milton's Satan to the Joker

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ABSTRACT

John Milton, in his epic poem Paradise Lost, describes the expulsion of Adam and Eve from heaven, leading to the beginning of the oldest struggle. However, the representation of the devil in Milton's work, which is considered responsible for all evil in the world, is striking. The fact that Milton's devil's temptation has taken precedence over the story of expulsion of Adam and Eve is similar to Batman being overshadowed by the evil character Joker. Batman, who has many virtues and positive qualities as a superhero, has not impressed the audience as much as wicked Joker. But what makes the bad characters attractive to the reader/audience in Milton's Satan and the Joker? Is the Joker mentally ill? Is there a rebellion like the Satan's behind the Joker's malicious actions or is it possible to talk about a different motivation? The aim of this chapter is to explore the answers to these and similar questions by taking a journey through the psychology of evil. Thus, it will be possible to understand whether our admiration of bad characters is a reflection of the darkness within us.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'evil', against 'good' that considered equal to beauty, happiness and desirable, is naturally linked together with ugly, unpleasant, harmful and undesirable things. It is seen that the discussions about the problem of evil throughout history are generally about the reason "why" it emerges, rather than "what" is it. Why do people do evil? Where is the source of evil? Is it in God or The Devil? Is it in a person's upbringing or social environment? Or is it inside of a human being?

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The oldest and classical views on this topic completely bill Devil for evil in the world. Lucifer, one of the angels of God, rebelled against his creator, for this reason, he was thrown out of heaven and for the revenge, he made the famous bluff that brought Adam and Eve to the world. After that day, The Devil considered responsible for all the sins committed by human beings. Because to the end of the world, the devil will whisper seductive words in the ear of humans to perform prohibited, sin and therefore ill-considered actions.

In addition to that, in this scenario, in an order dominated by good, the reason for the emergence of evil is uncertain. It is accepted that there was a certain bad thought behind Lucifer's rebellion, which turned him into a demon when he was the radiant angel of God. So evil must already be the part of that sacred order. In that case, wouldn't it be wrong to blame The Devil for being the root of all evil? So should we see evil as a part of God's great plan?

In Enlightenment, where rational thinking started to be accepted, thinkers like Jean Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant looked into human nature to find evil. Accordingly, the free will that God gave to man is seen as the most important factor that determines whether a person will choose good or bad actions or not.

This study does not have the intention to add a new discussion on the causes of evil that have been made for centuries that do not have any consensus. If it is placed aside what the evil is and where its source should be searched for, the thing that must be questioned is why evil is tempting. Because evil often scares everyone, but with its one side it is also attractive to most people. Of course, it is not sensible to love dictators, terrorists or serial killers whose actions are considered bad by the majority, but it is important to consider that many fan letters contain the proposal to marry Ted Bundy in prison.

It seems more innocent to have sympathy for the fictional bad characters in literature and cinema rather than a killer that killed more than thirty women. The world of movies and novels are full of popular evils: the villains we love more or at least as much as the hero we're supposed to identify with. They can do most of the things we want to do but we cannot do because of various reasons; they can build a Death Star and blow up galaxies, rob a bank, kill someone that annoys us, terrorize a big city or wage war against God. In this sense, do we love these bad characters for their acts without fear of blaming, committing sin, and most importantly having punishment, or do we love them because they can act freely despite these fears? After all, committing a robbery or waging a war in heaven is not everyone's cup of tea.

Waging war against God appears in the first 'evil' that is the Satan which is one of the heroes of the fall story told by John Milton in *Paradise Lost*. Milton wanted to tell a story about the expulsion of Adam and Eve from heaven, but while doing it he could not prevent Satan from taking the center stage rather than the real heroes of the work, Adam and Eve.

A situation similar to the popularity of Satan in *Paradise Lost* repeats itself in Joker, one of the notorious enemies of Batman, the protector of Gotham city. At the end of *The Dark Knight* (2008, Dir. Christopher Nolan) movie, we can be relieved with Batman defeating his enemies and ensuring everyone's safety, but it is still possible to enjoy the evil actions of the Joker that drifts the whole city into a state of chaos. The Joker character portrayed by Heath Ledger became so popular that the origin story was shot eleven years later, where we learned about the character's past and hence how he fell into the 'dark side'.

In this study, while discussing the psychological roots of the sympathy for the Devil and the Joker, it is necessary to understand their 'bad' nature by starting from the analogy between these two characters. Where did Devil found evil in a place where everything is good and perfect? What turns the agent of the morning light into the Prince of Darkness? What about the Joker? How did Arthur Fleck, whose only goal was being a comedian and make people laugh, became the leader of anarchy and destruction?

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