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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EVIL: OR THE PERVERSION OF HUMAN
POTENTIAL

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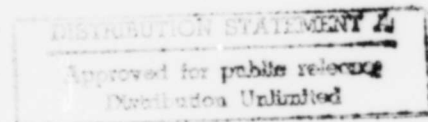
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"The Psychology of Evil": Or The Perversion of Human Potential²

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- ¹ The author has been engaged for a decade in conducting empirical studies on anti-social behavior (violence, vandalism, dehumanization), much of it under ONR contract: Grant N00014-67-A-0112-0041 funded to him as principal investigator.
- ² An invited address delivered to the Commonwealth Club of California, March 7, 1975, Sheraton-Palace Hotel, San Francisco, California

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AGGRESSION ANONYMITY ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR DISPOSITIONAL ATTRIBUTION EVIL EVIL OF INACTION FINAL SOLUTION JUSTIFICATION OF EVIL OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY PRISON RULES AND ROLES SITUATIONAL ATTRIBUTION SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY VANDALISM WHITE COLLAR CRIME						

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Abstract

This paper presents a social psychological perspective on existential evil. The author has been engaged for a decade in conducting empirical studies on anti-social behavior (violence, vandalism, dehumanization), much of it under ONR contract. It is concluded that evil deeds are better understood--and controlled--by analysis and manipulation of situational and transpersonal variables than by dispositional aspects of individuals or groups. Studies by Milgram and by Zimbardo and his colleagues reveal how readily good people may be made to act in evil ways, and further, how facile people are in creating justifications for any act of evil.

.1.

It is the human capacity for justice that makes the rule of law possible.

But it is the human capacity for evil that makes law necessary.

A basic theme in Western thought is that man--once great, once the most noble paragon of all creatures--has suffered a great fall from his state of perfection.

You will remember the total condemnation of the human race that the king of the Brobdingnags levels against Gulliver during his travels:

"[The historical account of humans is a] heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments, the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, and ambition could produce.

... I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth."

[Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels, 1726, Pt. 2, Ch. 6]

Accepting this human propensity for evil, it has remained for theologians, philosophers, social scientists and legislators to debate the origins of that evil. Are we, as Rousseau envisioned, noble, primitive savages born in God-like innocence only to be corrupted by contact with society? Standing in stark opposition to this general view of human beings as the innocent victims of an all-powerful, malignant society is the view that people are basically evil. According to this view, people are driven by desires, appetites, and impulses unless they

are transformed into rational, reasonable, compassionate human beings by education, or controlled by the firm authority of the home, church or state institutions.

Where do you stand in this argument? Are we born good and corrupted by an evil society, or born evil and redeemed by a good society? And do you believe that evil deeds flow from the evil motives of people who are basically "evil" (like them), while goodness is a quality that inheres in certain other people (perhaps like you)? Before casting your ballot, consider an alternative perspective. Maybe each of us has the capacity to be a saint or a sinner, altruistic or selfish, gentle or cruel, dominant or submissive, sane or mad, prisoner or guard. Maybe it is the social circumstances we experience and how we learn to cope with them that determine which potential we develop. In fact, maybe the potential for perversion is inherent in the very processes that make us able to do all the superbly wonderful things we can do.

From untold millions of years of evolution and adaptation, we have become the rulers of this planet, controlling the other animals and the physical matter of the earth for our survival, comfort, and happiness. This reign is currently being extended to life beneath the oceans as well as to outer space. We have reached this position because of our capacity for learning new relationships, for remembering old ones, for reasoning, inventing, and planning action strategies. We have developed language to manipulate symbols and transmit our thoughts and information to others.

But each of these unique attributes can also become cancerous. The seeds of our perversion are nourished in the soil of the human potential for perfectibility.

For example, our remarkable memory enables us to profit from mistakes, establish continuities within our lives, and master complex feats of learning. But this same gift of memory can convert our minds into storehouses filled with traumatic events, fears, anxieties, unresolved conflicts, and petty grudges.

Our capacity for love allows us to experience the most tender and subtle of emotions, to feel special and needed, to nurture the growth of your beloved and to sacrifice for his or her well-being. But love can also lead to jealousy, possessiveness, domination, obsession, and its loss to depression, revenge, and suicide.

Because we have developed a unique temporal perspective, we can plan for our future, "save for a rainy day," delay gratification, and profit from history. But because of this very sense of time, our present behavior often loses its spontaneity. We fail to take full measure of the love others offer or the joys of nature as we plod through each day's obligations, promises, and commitments (our past contracts), while fulfilling responsibilities, avoiding liabilities, and anticipating the worst (our future concerns).

Without the human conception of an expanded time sense there could be no hope--but there would also be no guilt.

A fuller catalogue of human attributes which share this duality, the potential for both good or evil is included in the appendix.

Empirical Research on Evil

For the past ten years I have been engaged in research at New York

University and now at Stanford University (funded by the Office of Naval Research) studying violence, vandalism and other forms of anti-social behavior. My colleagues and I have not only tried to systematically observe these forms of evil as they exist in everyday life, but in addition, we have attempted to manipulate evil--creating it as well as preventing it under carefully controlled laboratory conditions.

The general conclusion which emerges from this body of research runs contrary to prevailing stereotypes which locate the source of evil in people. Rather, these investigations have led me to accept the wisdom of Nathaniel Hawthorne's assertion that, "There is no such thing in man's nature as a settled and free resolve either for good or evil, except at the very moment of execution." (Twice Told Tales, 1837)

In addition, I will argue in favor of a conception of evil as a behavioral act that is best understood in terms of the prevailing social conditions that elicit it and the situational forces that instigate and encourage it.

Before I describe some of the evidence which supports this view--and in the process, describe how easy it is to make good people engage in evil acts--it is necessary first to consider why we all prefer to find people who are personally responsible for the evil we see all around us rather than situations that are causally responsible for it.

We have been programmed by our socialization process and basic institutions to accept doctrines of individual guilt, sin, culpability, and failure, as well as to accept the cult of the ego, the strength of character and the stability of personality.

This egocentric orientation assumes that there is in each of us a stable core of values, beliefs, attitudes and a constellation of personality

traits which guide and rationally direct our behavior. Defects in behavior are therefore traceable to defects within the person. Defects within the person who breaks laws, or violates the rules are then evidence of a psychopathic or sociopathic personality, deviance or character disorder. Or at a simpler level, such people are the sinners, the criminals, the bad guys.

Dispositional versus Situational Attribution

Who is to blame? Who is responsible? Who must pay for the damages? Who must be punished?

Phrasing the question in this way as who?, and not as what is to blame? What is responsible? How can we change the undesirable behavior knowing what are its causes? is very comforting to many people.

The two approaches I am contrasting are the dispositional and the situational. The analysis of social problems--crime, violence, riots, rebellion, wars, vandalism, poverty, sexual abandon--according to those who espouse a dispositional orientation always locates "the problem" inside the person. Evil is in the soul, spirit, heart, head, guts of the evil doer.

I think there are three primary reasons why such a view is so readily accepted and so resistant to challenge:

First: It assumes that the evil doer is different from the rest of us in fundamental ways, since he or she did the evil deed and we have not. Therefore, we need not identify with him or her, feel empathy towards, nor share the guilt of such a person. It also allows us to feel superior by virtue of this difference between "us" (as the good) and "them" (as the bad). We thus

distance ourselves and make the evil act and its perpetrator alien to us.

Second: We need not feel responsible for having created or perpetuated social, economic, political or psychological conditions which may have caused the evil behavior, since by assuming an internal origin of the act, external causation is irrelevant or merely an extenuating circumstance. Our analysis is thus simplified as well as our guilt assuaged.

Third: By holding this "evil seed" theory of behavior, or by believing that some people who commit deeds we label as "evil" are "incorrigible," then it follows that their behavior cannot be modified, and so we don't have to really try to save them, or change them or change the conditions surrounding the evil act. The solution is again simple, instead of recognizing the particular, complex circumstances associated with the act and then determining an individualized treatment, or the need to make basic changes in the quality of life, we take note of the evil in the evildoer and prescribe institutional ISOLATION, SEGREGATION, PUNISHMENT, OR EXTERMINATION for him or her or them.

Paradoxically it is by personalizing evil that we are able to deal with it in an impersonal manner.

If there is one message of contemporary social psychology that I wish to share with you, it is that we all overestimate the extent to which behavior--be it evil, good or neuter--is dispositionally controlled, while at the same time we systematically underestimate the degree to which it is situationally controlled. We walk around with the soothing

illusion of personal invulnerability, of our inner strength to resist temptation and evil, fortified by our strong moral fiber. We are convinced that good people triumph in evil situations, thus evil must not be in the power of certain situations to corrupt and pervert any of us, but in evil people. It is precisely this attributional error which makes us most vulnerable to evil influences.

Seven Unpleasant Thoughts

And now for seven selected discomfoting thoughts.

1. It is not possible to predict with any certainty how a given person will behave in a particular situation solely from knowledge of his/her personality, however it is assessed.
2. No one can reliably predict violence from so-called measures of violence-proneness in individual cases.
3. Because you may not yet have committed an evil deed, you can't be sure you will not do so in the future if you are put into particular kinds of situations.
4. It is likely that you have committed evil in the past and that you are currently doing so, although you do not define the acts in question as evil.
5. Evil is typically in the eye of the observer, it is never in the mind of the doer.
6. Under the appropriate circumstances, any one of you could be my potential assassin, or in turn, my victim.
7. The setting for evil is rarely dramatic, evil operates most often when it is trivial and banal, routinized and sanforized.

Let us now examine the basis for such apparently cynical views.

The Banality of Evil

Last year more San Franciscans killed each other than ever before. Troubled by this record-breaking evil, the San Francisco Police Department set about to analyze the motives for these 131 homicides. The principal motive was--"a trivial argument" (the 2nd most frequent motive being sex). Representative of these trivial triggering incidents were: stepping on a man's foot at a party, missing a billiard shot, taking someone's seat and having mustard instead of the requested catsup put on a steak! But someone died because of such "evil" motivations--that someone was usually a white male shot to death by a friend or relative.

In a quite different context, Hannah Arendt concluded from her observations of the war crimes' trial of Adolph Eichmann that despite the enormity of the holocaust in the Nazi concentration camps, the operation of evil itself was in its day-to-day manifestation rather banal. Petty bureaucrats following orders, signing death certificates, meeting quotas, trying to please superiors, not wanting to offend, and above all, concerned about doing their duty and being obedient.

Could you send a Jew to a gas chamber? Could you electrocute a perfect stranger because someone asked you to? Is it not comforting to think of the horrors of Nazi Germany as the evil of another time, a different place, and a peculiar Germanic character that thrives on authoritarian obedience? It could never happen here, not now, by Americans, and certainly not by you! Sad to say there is compelling evidence that it could--and that you would.

Blind Obedience to Authority

A colleague of mine, Stanley Milgram, contrived a situation in which subjects believed they were shocking a stranger as part of a study of the

effects of punishment on learning. Whenever the learner made an error, the teacher-subject was instructed to press a lever that would deliver an electric shock to the middle aged learner. The subjects were Yale students as well as businessmen and ordinary citizens from Bridgeport, Connecticut. The special feature of this study was that the level of punishment escalated by 15 volts for each successive error. The shock generator had 30 levers from 15 volts all the way up to 450 volts where it was marked "Danger. Severe shock." The protests of the victim, heard over an intercom, rose with the shock level being administered. At 75 volts he began to moan and grunt; at 150 volts he demanded to be released from the experiment; at 180 volts he cried out that he could not stand the pain any longer. At 300 volts he insisted that he would no longer take part in the experiment and must be freed. He yelled out about his heart condition, screamed, and then failed to respond at all over the last series of trials.

If the subject hesitated or protested against delivering the next shock, the experimenter told him, "Teacher, you have no other choice; you must go on!" "Your job is to punish the learner's mistakes." The experimenter insisted that absence of a response must also be punished, because the rule stated that this was to be considered an error.

As you might imagine, the situation was not an enjoyable one for the subjects. In fact, it produced considerable anguish in many. To shock an innocent stranger at such high voltage levels obviously was an act of extreme violence against another human being. Most subjects complained and protested. As they became alarmed that they might even kill the learner if one of their shocks caused him to have a heart attack, they insisted they could not go on with their job. That the experimental situation produced considerable conflict is readily apparent from a sample of the transcript given here:

"180 volts delivered: 'He can't stand it! I'm not going to kill that man in there! You hear him hollering? He's hollering. He can't stand it. What if something happens to him? . . . I mean who is going to take the responsibility if anything happens to that gentleman?' (The experimenter accepts responsibility.) 'All right.'

"195 volts delivered: 'You see he's hollering. Hear that. Gee, I don't know.' (The experimenter says: 'The experiment requires that you go on.')

—'I know it does, sir, but I mean--huh--he don't know what he's in for. He's up to 195 volts.' . . .

"240 volts delivered: 'Aw, no. You mean I've got to keep going up with that scale? No sir, I'm not going to kill that man! I'm not going to give him 450 volts!'" (1965, p. 67).

The majority of the subjects, like this one, dissented but they did not disobey. Nearly two thirds of the subjects (62 percent) kept pressing the levers all the way to the very last switch that delivered 450 volts, the maximum punishment possible! When the study was repeated using high school students tested with an authority figure who had considerable prestige telling them they must continue--a remarkable 85% went all the way.

Personality tests did not reveal any differences between those people who refused to comply and the majority who showed total, blind obedience to authority. You will recall that there was a similar failure to find any individual differences between American POWs in the Korean War who collaborated with their Chinese captors and those who resisted.

In these studies those situational forces are identified as: the presence of a "legitimate" authority who assumes responsibility for the consequences

of one's actions; a victim who is physically remote; acceptance of a subordinate role with functions governed by rules; and finally allowing oneself to become part of a social system where public etiquette and protocol are more important to maintain than one's personal values and private beliefs.

An experiment such as this one is valuable not only because it provides answers, but also because it raises new questions and compels us to rethink some of our assumptions about human nature. It shatters the myth that evil is alien to Everyman and Everywoman and lurks only in particular other people who are different from us. It is a convincing demonstration that the "Eichmann phenomenon" could be reproduced in the majority of ordinary American citizens under specifiable social conditions.

We don't like to believe such truths; we defend against them by saying it was "just an experiment," it's not "real life." But C. P. Snow reminds us:

"When you think of the long and gloomy history of man, you will find more hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have been committed in the name of rebellion."

Obedience in Real World Settings

No one was really hurt in Milgram's experiment because the victim was actually a confederate, but consider the following real life analogue in an interview I had with a veteran from Viet Nam, who was a medical corpsman:

Veteran: My last two weeks there in the jungle we're on a routine patrol and this little girl about three years old starts running toward us. She was about forty or sixty feet away from us at the time, we noticed something bouncing on her back as she ran, and our officer said "shoot." We shot her

down. At the same time we shot her down she exploded. She blew into small bits. The V.C. attached a savoy mine to her back and it was wired to explode by the time she reached us. It was either her or us. We didn't know for sure the mine was there but we couldn't take the chance.

Zimbardo: When the officer said "shoot," how many people shot?

Veteran: We all shot at her. There was about thirty of us in this particular platoon.

Zimbardo: But did you have to do it?

Veteran: Right. You have to do it, you are ordered to do it. You either shoot them, or if you don't shoot them, your officer shoots you. You don't have any choice. No choice about it, you don't have time to think about it, you do it.

Obedience is a virtue we instill in our children, but when it becomes perverted into blind, unquestioning obedience to authority, then it may give rise to the evil deeds of an Eichmann, or of President Nixon's inner circle who preferred to call it "loyalty to the Chief" rather than Eichman's obedience to his dictator.

Anonymity and Aggression

But to make people act aggressively against one another it isn't necessary to have them knuckle under to an authority figure. In an experiment I conducted with mild mannered co-eds from New York University, simply putting them in a group and making them feel anonymous--no one knew who they were or cared--was sufficient to reduce their inhibitions against aggression. The anonymous girls who were hooded and in a darkened room delivered twice as much shock to other girl-victims as did the groups of girls who were made to feel identifiable.

In other studies in different parts of the country it has been shown that anonymity increases the likelihood of stealing and cheating as well as of aggression. Treating other people as if they were impersonal objects and making them feel anonymous sets the occasion for a wide range of anti-social behavior in normally law-abiding people.

Vandalism

But anonymity is not something psychologists invented, it has become a characteristic of life in our cities. It is so much a part of the everyday scene in a place like New York City that even without hoods over their heads, people realize they are anonymous strangers to virtually everyone else they pass on the streets. We wondered whether this pervasive anonymity would make it more likely for people to vandalize abandoned automobiles in New York City, than say in Palo Alto, where there is still a sense of community. We were also curious about who vandals were; we assumed they were irresponsible youngsters, probably from lower class, minority groups. To test our preconceptions, we (Scott Fraser and I), did a simple study; cars were abandoned near New York University and Stanford and hidden cameras recorded what happened to them.

The car in New York was subject to 23 separate attacks by vandals in three days and was finally reduced to a battered, useless pile of junk. The first attackers drove up in a new car and appeared to be a father, mother and small son. They removed the radiator, battery and contents of the glove compartment and trunk. All of the vandals were white, well-dressed adults, (except for a single group of young children) who under other circumstances would be identified as typical, middle-class advocates of greater law and order. In Palo Alto the abandoned car was not even touched in a week, although as many people passed it by.

The Evil of Inaction

There is more to this demonstration than that New York's greater anonymity allows for more vandalism than in California. During the act of vandalism against this valuable property not one passerby interceded in any way to complain or censure the vandals. Is this failure to act not itself a sanction of evil?

When a hundred thousand Japanese-Americans were rounded up in this state of California back in 1941 and herded into concentration camps in the southwestern deserts, how many of you condoned this action by your silence? And how many were convinced that the "Yellow Menace" was a real threat to national security? But no one herded German-or Italian-Americans into such camps on the east coast where the threat was at least as great; if not more so.

I recommend to you the eloquent works of Eli Wiesel whose childhood experiences at Auschwitz left him wondering not at the cruelty of his captors, but at the evil of all those neighbors who watched and saw and never intervened, and then psychologically denied the very existence of the concentration camps.

From a recent study at Princeton University we learn that one of the reasons we don't help a fellow in distress is not because we have grown callous, but simply because we don't have time, we're in too much of a hurry.

In this study by Darley and Batson, theology students were on their way to deliver a sermon on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Some of them had been told by the experimenters they were late, others that they had time. The situation was rigged so that each theology student came across a man who was lying in an alleyway moaning and covered with blood. Here was a chance to practice what they were about to preach. But did they? Only 10 percent of those in a hurry to give the Good Samaritan sermon stopped to aid a victim in distress! The more time they thought they had, the more likely they were to stop. However, when asked later why they did not stop, the theologians did come up with an interesting variety of justifications.

Justifying Evil Deeds

One of the greatest contributors to both the evil of action and the evil of inaction, is our limitless imagination which can generate justifications for virtually any action.

"Historically, collective violence has flowered regularly out of the central, political processes of Western countries. Men seeking to seize, hold, or realign the levers of power have continually engaged in collective violence as part of their struggles. The oppressed have struck in the name of justice, the privileged in the name of order, those in between in the name of fear."

(Tilly, 1969, pp.4-5)

People who violate basic laws of humanity often are convinced that evil is about to be wrought on them. Typically, they rationalize their behavior according to some principle acceptable to others in their society. In addition, they often have some degree of social or political support or institutionalized structure that helps make it possible to redefine the act in other than its human terms.

Consider Hitler's justification in Mein Kampf:

"Thus, if we review all the causes of the German collapse, the final and decisive one is seen to be the failure to realize the racial problem and, more especially, the Jewish menace. . . . Thus do I now believe that I must act in the sense of the Almighty Creator: by fighting against the Jews I am doing the Lord's work." (1933, p. 25)

Or consider the reason mass killer Herbert Mullin gave for killing four teenage boys in Santa Cruz, California, in 1973. He "punished" the "hippies" because they influenced him to be a conscientious objector and not to be a

soldier "in the best country on earth." He also killed thirteen people in the belief that their human sacrifice would prevent a catastrophic earthquake (Associated Press, August 7, 1973). Here again is the paradox of human perfection--the same mind that can comprehend the most profound philosophical and metaphysical truths can distort reality so that "evil" becomes "good."

The Evil of Roles and Rules in a Prison

In a mock prison we (Craig Haney, Curt Banks and I) created at Stanford a few years ago, normal, average college students from throughout the country behaved in pathological ways within a few days after playing the roles of prisoners or guards in a realistic prison setting. The guards behaved brutally, often sadistically, and the prisoners, after an initial rebellion, were docile and compliant, but half of them became so psychologically disturbed they had to be released prematurely. The guards readily justified their aggression by pointing to the threats posed by the greater number of inmates than guards, their treachery, the need to show them who was boss and so on. When the planned two-week study had to be terminated after only five days, the guards were amazed to recall how alien their behavior was to their usual selves. "I couldn't tell where I ended and my role began" said one of our meanest guards. "I treated the prisoners like cattle and believed we had to watch them closely or they would not follow the rules or try to attack us," said another student who totally got into his new role as prison guard.

There is time for but two more examples that will be perhaps more disquieting to you than what I have described thus far.

The Final Solution Revisited

To study just how easy it is to get people to endorse the final solution of genocide for so-called unfit people, a former student of mine, Helge Maansson,

and his colleagues at the University of Hawaii tested over 1000 students in the following study. A brief speech was given about the impending danger of overpopulation by mentally and physically unfit peoples. The audience was flattered at being chosen to assist the government in determining how to deal with this "problem" because they were intelligent, educated and had high ethical values. After the speech opinions were solicited concerning the final solution. The results:

90% agreed that there will always be people who are more fit to survive than others.

91% agreed that "it is entirely just to eliminate those judged dangerous to the general welfare."

85% preferred to assist only with the decisions of who should be killed, while

8% preferred to assist directly with the killings.

Most surprisingly, nearly a third of the students even supported the final solution when applied to their own families--only if necessary, of course!

Business as Usual

But these are students of a different generation than yours, you might be thinking. Businessmen would not engage in that kind of evil. Before you disengage yourself from the rest of the human race, let me put you on the hot seat with the following perspective on legitimized evil.

Tax evasion, price-fixing, and misleading advertising are examples of more "legitimized" violence; they are usually tolerated by the general public, either through ignorance of what is going on or because such activities are less personally threatening than what people see as "real" crime, such as robbery, muggings, and rape. In a classic study (Sutherland, 1949), the seventy largest industrial and commercial corporations in the U.S. were all

found to have engaged in illegal activities. All of them had been prosecuted for various crimes, with the average company receiving fourteen convictions. Given this high rate of recidivism, 90 percent of these companies could be legally considered habitual criminals. The people who engage in this kind of crime, however, do not feel they are doing something really wrong:

"Businessmen differ from professional thieves principally in their greater interest in status and respectability. They think of themselves as honest men, not as criminals, whereas professional thieves, when they speak honestly, admit they are thieves. The businessman does regard himself as a lawbreaker, but he thinks the laws are wrong or at least that they should not restrict him, although they may well restrict others. He does not think of himself as a criminal, because he does not conform to the popular stereotype of the criminal. This popular stereotype is always taken from the lower socioeconomic class." (Sutherland, 1968).

This sort of attitude toward crime may be the reason why some people, such as our former Governor, felt the participants in the Watergate conspiracy should not be punished because "they weren't criminal types."

An Optimistic Conclusion After All That?

After all these years of being surrounded by the ugliness of evil in my research and observations, I still remain an optimist precisely because I believe that collectively we can change the situations, environments and experiences that give rise to the perversion of human perfection. We must begin however, by not seeking the simplistic refuge of the dispositional analysis, the who question. Instead we should encourage understanding of the what and how of crime, violence and vandalism. Evil, however you define it,¹ is a complex process that requires complex solutions, but they can be

found in the type of situational variables I have tried to show elicit evil so readily. I urge you further to: Question illegitimate authority; if you dissent because of your moral principles be willing also to disobey; do not allow yourself to be forced into roles of power where that power can be abused; do not allow secrecy in the operation of government nor in our institutions especially our prisons; make other people feel wanted, recognized, worthwhile--your employees, your kids and even strangers; make the time to help someone in distress, look at your own possibly evil actions not from a self-justifying perspective, but from that of someone else, say Judge Sirica's perspective; don't reject people because they are different from you in appearance or ideas, instead try to appreciate the basis for that difference. Finally, and most important as we approach the bicentennial year of our nation, I encourage you to help prevent evil by promoting the old-fashioned virtues of neighborhood and community values. You alone can prevent or reduce crime by showing you care about others who might commit a crime against you. And as I have tried to show, we are all potential assassins, so I ask for your recognition and love, and in turn, am willing to give them to you--both from fear of the evil that can result from not doing so, and from anticipation of the joys that such shared trust can bring to each of us.

APPENDIX

■ WAYS WE CAN GO WRONG

Attribute	Enables Us to	But Can Also Lead Us to
Memory	Profit from past mistakes Develop and use complex concepts Relate present to past Distinguish novel events from previously experienced ones	Carry grudges, suffer from former conflicts and past traumatic events Lose spontaneity of behavior because of commitments and obligations Feel excessive remorse or sense of guilt
Time sense	Develop a history and sense of continuous self Relate present behavior to the future Distinguish between transience and permanence	Fear change, live in the past, feel nostalgic Dread an unknown future, become pessimistic Experience disappointments from unfulfilled expectations Concentrate on past or future, ignore the present
Ability to associate elements and infer unseen events	Create, imagine events not experienced Generalize from partial data Construct theories, hypotheses	Form negative, crippling associations Misperceive self or others, develop stereotypic and delusional thinking
Perception of choice	Not be stimulus bound, be independent See ourselves as responsible agents Hope, build for future	Experience conflicts, indecision Suffer from inability to act when action necessary
Responsibility, self-evaluation	Take pride in accomplishments Delay gratification, undertake difficult or unpopular tasks Be concerned about effects of our actions on others	Feel inadequate Feel guilt for not living up to standards or for letting someone down Feel constrained by obligations
Competence motivation	Do work well, set high standards Gain benefits of hard work Advance technologically, use resources to meet our needs	Fear failure, suffer feelings of inadequacy Be anxious about tests of our ability Work for self-aggrandizement, to be "number one," to beat others down
Concept of justice	Protect individual rights Set up fair rules binding on all Value equality of opportunity	Sacrifice individual needs to group principles or rules Torture, imprison, execute dissenters Impose our own solutions on others
Ability to use language and other symbols	Communicate with others, present and absent, for information, comfort, pleasure, planning, social control	Circulate and be prey to rumors and falsehoods, conceal true feelings Use "word magic" — curses, verbal derogation — to inflict harm Mistake the symbol for the reality
Susceptibility to social influence	Follow group standards Learn and transmit values Cooperate, establish community	Overconform, sacrifice integrity Reject innovation and stifle creativity in ourselves and others
Love	Experience tender emotions Nurture growth and independence of others Support, encourage, comfort others Feel wanted and special	Become jealous, vengeful Possessively limit another person's freedom Become depressed and suicidal from loss of love

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Footnote

Evil is a term applied to "situations when force, violence, and other forms of coercion exceed institutional or moral limits" (Smelser, 1971). The three classes of situations that qualify as "evil" by this definition are those in which individuals or groups: (1) exercise coercive power over others when they are not legitimately empowered to do so; (2) exceed the limits of their legitimate authority to exercise coercion; or (3) exercise coercive or destructive control over others that violates a higher standard of humanity or morality even though it may be within politically sanctioned authority.