

Good in Conflict

First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Delaware, by Rev. Michelle Collins, 2013

Chalice Lighting, by David A. Johnson

When evil darkens our world give us light;
When despair numbs our souls give us hope;
When we falter and fear, surround us with beauty;
When nothing seems sure give us trust;
When we lose our way may we find a light and a guide.



Check In

Reading: from “Confronting Evil,” by Warren R. Ross

From Gordon McKeeman – evil comes into the world when our “good” comes into conflict with another’s “good”

From William R. Jones – “Evil is a label”; a term for someone else’s interests that conflict with one’s own. “There is no intrinsic good or intrinsic evil. There is always some perspective from which you can demonstrate the good of what we label ‘evil.’”

Reading: from “Good Versus Good,” an article on pop culture

“There are few wars between good and evil; most are between one good and another good.”

—Yang Wen-li, *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*

It's hard to create a story where both sides are fully sympathetic and yet in a real conflict with each other. But sometimes the authors manage to pull it off. This is not when the characters on both sides are somewhat sympathetic, merely believe in their own actions without being fully sympathetic, or are in a temporary conflict by mistake. No, this is when both sides are unambiguously Good AND locked in a real conflict with each other. This can be a philosophical struggle where Lawful Good and For Great Justice stand against the forces of Chaotic Good and For Happiness. In this case, the conflict is between a Hero Protagonist and a Hero Antagonist. It can also be when unambiguously good characters find themselves on different sides of a Grey and Grey Morality conflict. In either case, they are often reluctant to fight each other but can have a hard time understanding each other's point. This trope is closely related to White and Grey Morality, but when that trope is played completely straight there can be no conflict beyond mere misunderstandings. Compare with Both Sides Have a Point, Your Terrorists Are Our Freedom Fighters and Utopia Justifies the Means. Contrast to Black and White Morality and Evil Versus Evil. (source, with links: <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/GoodVersusGood>)

Discussion & Sharing Questions:

- How do you go about determining whether something is “good”? Which of your own values impacts your conscious or unconscious reasoning process?
- When has something that was “good” to you been in tension with another’s “good”? What was going on for you then? Are there any truly universal good’s?
- What is usually your reaction when something is in conflict with what you have determined is good and of value? Are you involved in any advocacy efforts where this applies?
- What do you think of McKeeman’s and Jones’s definitions of evil? Do they work for you?

Closing Thoughts & Extinguishing the Chalice