

If the Road to Hell Is Paved With Good Intentions, With What Do We Pave the Road to Heaven?

There is a reason nearly everyone is familiar with the saying, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

The reason is, of course, that it is true and therefore it helps explain why there is so much evil.

Take the 20th century, the bloodiest century on record, in which about 100 million people – all noncombatants – were murdered by despotic regimes, nearly all of them communist. Many of the people who supported communism – both outside and inside communist countries – thought they were doing good.

The Soviet Communist Party's Gulag Archipelago; the Holodomor (the communists' deliberate starvation of 5 million-plus Ukrainians); the Cambodian killing fields (the communist massacre of about a quarter of the Cambodian people); the Chinese communist government's mass starvation and other forms of killing of more than 60 million of its own people; and the creation of the world's largest prison camp, communist North Korea – the roads to all these communist hells were paved by many people who had (or believed themselves to have had) good intentions.

Were it not for many well-intentioned people who believed in communism, the truly evil people who implemented these genocides might not have come to power. To cite but one example, it was Western men and women (primarily Americans and Brits), presumably with good intentions, who delivered to Stalin the secrets to making an atom bomb.

But what about the Nazis' rise to power in Germany?

Not every German who voted for the Nazis in 1932, in Germany's last free elections until after World War II, had evil intentions, let alone the aim of murdering all Jews. In fact, in campaigning that year, Hitler toned down his antisemitism in order to appeal to a broader base of German voters. The Nazis won only a third of German voters in that election, and the primary reason they voted for that party was not antisemitism. The primary reasons were the Great Depression and Germany's hyperinflation, fear of communism, widespread political violence and resentment of the Versailles Treaty. In other words, even many of the minority of Germans who voted for Hitler did so with the good intention of solving Germany's economic and political crises.

I use the Nazi example only to show that even those Germans who voted for the man and party that unleashed the greatest documented evil in history were not all motivated by bad intentions.

Thank God there is no mainstream movement in America with genocidal aims. But the road to lesser hells in this country is almost always motivated by people with good intentions.

I am sure that most of the many teachers who are robbing young children of their sexual innocence are motivated, certainly on a conscious level, by good intentions. Most of the Americans who vote for politicians who seek to defund the police – a true recipe for increased evil – do so with good intentions. The great majority of those who stormed (not to mention those who merely saw open doors and strolled into) the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, had good intentions. Most of the vast number of Americans who believe that free speech does not apply to anything they deem "hate speech" have good intentions – the elimination of hate speech; yet they comprise the first mass movement against free speech in American history. They pose a mortal threat to liberty in this country. But they believe

they mean well.

The truth is that, on a conscious level, only a small minority of people wake up on any given day with an intent to do bad. The 51 heads of intelligence agencies who signed a statement a month before the 2020 presidential election declaring the Hunter Biden laptop story “Russian disinformation” lied. Yet, they probably believed that their mendacious assertion was morally justified because, in their view, the larger good was to ensure that then-President Donald Trump not be reelected.

The road to hell is paved by good intentions because most people who do harm, even many who do evil, are motivated by good intentions.

So, then, given that good intentions are almost always morally worthless, what are we to do if we wish to see good triumph over evil? Or, to pose the question another way, if good intentions are morally useless or, worse, actually pave the road to hell on Earth, with what should we pave the road to heaven on Earth?

The answer is wisdom. Good intentions without wisdom leads to evil.

The reason to worry about the future of America and Western civilization is not that its elites are composed of people with bad intentions; it is that the elites are composed of people devoid of wisdom.

The word for those who lack wisdom is “fool.” Most college professors, deans and presidents and, increasingly, most teachers in high schools and elementary schools; most editors and other journalists; most of the businesspeople who run big companies; most “experts”; and most of the rest of the elite (including, frighteningly, in the medical profession) are fools.

Why are they fools? Why are these men and women devoid of

wisdom?

Because they were never taught wisdom. One must study wisdom to know how to do good, just as much as one must study physics to know how to do physics. If you are taught wisdom, there's a good chance you will become wise. If not, there's a good chance you will be a fool. And fools do a great deal of harm.

But wisdom is no longer taught by most parents and nearly all schools.

Until the early decades of the 20th century, American students were expected to know the greatest sources of wisdom – the ancient Greek and Roman writers, Shakespeare and, most important of all, the Bible.

But about 100 years ago, America embarked on the road to hell when it stopped teaching wisdom – and what wisdom is all about, moral virtue – when it secularized all education. First the universities and then the lower grades decided that knowledge could substitute for wisdom. Now American young people get no wisdom and, for that matter, little knowledge.

It is not a coincidence that the most foolish institutions in America and the rest of the West are the universities. They are the most radically secular.

You don't have to be religious to realize that the most secular institutions are also the most foolish institutions. You just need not to be a fool.

The road to a good world is paved with wisdom.

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