

Chapter 7

Goodness of man

Good or Bad

Philosophers have long pondered the nature of man. Is he good or bad? Fundamental to the goodwill revolution is the conviction that people are basically good. Why else do we care about things like fairness and justice. We do not want justice only for our relatives and friends, we want justice for all. We do not want to see people suffer, go hungry. The homeless beggar in the street with his sign "*Will work for food*" touches us deeply. We might not do anything about it , but we wish we could. Why? Because we are basically good and do care about others.

We care about people we don't know and people who don't even exist. We go to the movies and care for the plight of the make-believe hero. So, we love happy endings, because in happy endings good usually triumphs, or the homeless person gets fed, or the sick person is healed or justice prevails. We do not just want these good things in the movies, but we hunger for them in our lives. And very important, we are not selfish to want good things just for ourselves, but by our very nature, we want them for all.

Conversely, we despise and hate evil. Because we are basically good, evil goes against the grain. Even the robber probably does not want to rob. Even the 9-11 terrorists probably did not really want to murder those hundreds of innocent people in the World Trade Center. Even George Bush did not want to kill those thousands of innocent Iraqi men, women and children. Before or after these acts, the perpetrators are compelled to justify their horrible actions. In so doing, they are saying these horrible acts are really good because of this or that reason. Why do they have to? Because, they don't want good people to despise them. They don't want good people to consider them evil. It is a recognition that we are good and the primacy of this good nature which must be satisfied. The bottom line is not only do we not want to do bad things, but we also do not want to be perceived as doing bad

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things. So I believe that Israelis and Palestinians, Hindus and Muslims, Irish Catholics and Protestants, Tutsis and Hutus, and many other bitter antagonists that imperil our world today, do not really want to kill each other. It is unnatural.

Conscience

Doing an evil deed is not just clear sailing. Before we can do it, we must contend with our basic instinct which tells us not to do it, our conscience. Unfortunately, conscience does not have veto power, and so it can be overcome. And even after overcoming conscience and committing the dastardly deed, human nature runs into more opposition from remorse and guilt. But alas, these instincts for good are not indestructible and like the UN can be rendered completely irrelevant and killed. But their very existence is another bit of evidence that mankind is basically good.

If man is so good, why does evil prosper? Because we have lost our way. We have abandoned goodwill to follow money, materialism and power. This money, materialism and power has corrupted the goodness of man.

Tapping Goodwill

We still feel inside a sense of outrage when we see injustice, but we do nothing about it. We still feel a compassion for genuine poverty misery and misfortune in others, but we do nothing about it. So at a movie, we are moved by a touching and moving make-believe story. This fake story might even be better than reality because we do not have to do anything about it. And, that's the problem, which makes us want to even deny our feelings of goodwill, or to fight against them. We deny them and try to embrace apathy, insensitivity, because we feel helplessness to do anything about it. Why bother?

So this natural force to do good within us is suppressed. It is relatively dormant, but it is still there waiting to be released.

Goodness of Man

Don't fight that feeling of goodwill. Let's liberate it. The goodwill revolution taps into that goodness of man. It is a source of power. It is that source of power which waged the greatest revolution in American history and won against tremendous odds. And I do not mean the revolution against the British. No, it was a revolution that pitted ordinary people armed and united by goodwill against unjust laws, against police terror, violent mobs, even vicious dogs, a most formidable enemy indeed. It was the civil rights revolution of the sixties. Black and white people of goodwill fought together against segregation. Black and white people united by goodwill died together against segregation. Black and white people of goodwill fought against a system that denied black people basic civil rights. White people of goodwill fought against a system that bestowed upon them a wide assortment of special privileges. They endured violence and insults of others of their own privileged white kith and kin to join with blacks in the fight.

The good news is that in this new goodwill revolution, we will not have to face the perils that the battle of the sixties required. Different times require different methods. This new goodwill revolution is unstoppable. It will be a tough battle but it will place no one at risk of any physical harm or arrest.

In South Africa, Nelson Mandela was jailed for 26 years. He witnessed the brutality and oppression of his people for decades in which they were treated like dogs, herded in their own land like cattle, denied even the status of human beings because they were black and a slew of other vicious repressions. But they overcame it. The goodness of man was a source of power for this liberation and the peaceful transition of South Africa from these horrors of apartheid. In the words of Nelson Mandela, in his farewell speech from Parliament, "*Historical enemies succeeded in negotiating a peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy because we were prepared to accept the inherent goodness in the other*".