

## Abstract

The aim of this study is to cast new light on the conceptualization of evil. When brutal crimes like murders or robberies are visualized, they are commonly viewed as evil deeds. There thus appears to be a clear relationship between our ideas of *criminal* behavior and *evil* behavior. By regarding unethical or dangerous behavior as evil, we have maintained social order. The question we must ask, however, focuses on whether all crimes are always absolutely evil. What follows is a discussion of the extent to which evil could possibly be seen as a relative idea.

In chapter 1, I first analyze a diabolical character named Joker in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*, and examine the hidden purpose for his crimes, and how evil resides in various characters in the film. It has been recognized by critics that the movie carries subtext concerning the "September 11 attacks" and that Joker acts as a terrorist against America. I further insist that Joker tempts good people to commit crimes as if he were the sly serpent which tempted Adam and Eve to sin in the Book of Genesis. The purpose of the Joker is to expose the egoism of citizens who seem to be good.

Next, I turn to a hero from British literature, Alex in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, and consider the issue of whether Alex's feelings about violence are deleted due to technology made possible by 20th-century science. Alex is depicted as always having a thirst for violence because government officials who use the technology are extremely selfish and only worry about decreasing the number of crimes without concerning themselves with moral issues. Burgess warns that extreme suppression through technology leads to dehumanization. As a result, as discussed in this chapter, we can see that everybody keeps a "devil" within them and it is hard for people to eradicate it completely. Thus, we can see there is a possibility that we coexist with the challenge presented by evil.

Chapter 2 is comprised of two sections. In section 1, I reconsider the two heinous characters, Joker and Alex, to discover positive aspects of evil. In the beginning, through investigating the targets of Joker's madness, I show that he attacks important elements of American society like money, authority, media, morals, and legal codes. His insanity reflects urgent social problems in modern America, and its presentation can become an opportunity to think about our social system. In turn, I consider and interpret the ending of *A Clockwork Orange*. Contrary to the stereotypical images of Alex as going on to live a happy married life in the final chapter, my observations suggest that Alex curses the selfish society in which he lives and is going to choose self-destruction. At the same time, the novel offers severe criticism of society and a lesson about human relationships. As a result, it becomes apparent that sometimes evil gives us valuable messages.

In section 2, I focus on an American dark hero, Batman, in Nolan's "The Dark Knight Trilogy," especially *The Dark Knight*. He punishes criminals through excessive amounts of violence and engages in illegal activities for justice. I associate his violence with vigilantism, which is a notable part of American history, and consider whether his violence will be viewed as arbitrary brutality, or excessive beating. Critics tend not to focus on the risk of Batman's vigilantism, that is, the possibility that his violence leads to lynching, recalling dark moments in American history. However, Batman is not merely symbolic of vigilantism, since he has an unwavering conviction not to kill anybody. Next, I study the legality of his activities. Although Kristine Kathryn Rusch (2008) insists that Batman represents George W. Bush, who prioritized only American national interest during the "September 11 attacks," Batman's actions and Nolan's intentions do not reflect Bush's military sanctions. Throughout this process, I clarify that Batman corrects law and order when law fails to serve justice. On top of that, Batman protects public order with violence and illegal activities that fall outside the realm of social acceptance. In other words, he goes back and forth between good and evil. The duality of Batman's character is reflected by his symbol, the bat, which has two identities; it can be seen as bird-like and, simultaneously, rat-like. Relatedly, the Christian conceptualization of the devil involves the idea of a fallen angel. To put it another way, there is some possibility that what seems to be evil will bring about a moral result.

Finally, I look at the closing scene from *The Dark Knight*, in which Batman happens to kill public prosecutor, Harvey Dent, in order to save an innocent boy. He never forgives himself for the murder, despite the fact that it was brought about by unavoidable circumstances. This kind of empty humility could be described as a beneficial model or source of hope for the viewers. In this paper, I consider all of these issues as I investigate a recalibration of the concepts of good and evil. This is not to say that I promote evil crimes, of course. I conclude that *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Dark Knight* suggest that the hidden truth of evil can be seen in diabolical behavior and the recognized psychological backgrounds, or the stereotypical understanding of good and evil should be rethought.