

Good Guys Bad Guys

Consider me a bit soft in the head if you wish, but whenever I read or watch a science fiction story I feel a kind of sympathy for the bad guys. For years the poor bad guys do most advanced scientific research, creating gadgetry the good guy scientists cannot even dream of, to commit a perfect crime or to start a fool proof racket. Things barely start looking good when the good guys start feeling uncomfortable (or jealous!). An agent for the good guys comes snooping around. This agent of the good guys is at least half bad himself. The author of the story knows that to sell the story he or she must make the character of the good-guy agent colorful, as the standard good guys are often nicely behaved, very chaste and hence completely lackluster. Anyway this somewhat loose character dashing good guy agent is brought in, often against good judgment, mainly because the standard good guys have failed to deliver the goods. On the scene, he does a little bit of womanizing and does a bit of fighting. His partners often are the enemy agents who are brought into the story to perhaps make sure that the readers/ viewers get their money's worth. Because, perhaps, the bad guys sense that this good guy agent is essentially one of them they often make futile attempts to kill him, however fearsome those attempts may appear.

The "good guy bad guy" fights are a sight worth seeing. In the beginning the bad guys seem to have a plot that is fearsome and foolproof. Then it turns out that the good guy agent is not made of mud. If the fighting means a shooting match then very often the bad guy runs out of bullets. And if the good guy agent has used up six bullets there is always a possibility that there is a seventh bullet in his revolver, or a good-looking female shows up with a gun. The most interesting fights are the ones that involve punch-ups. In the beginning it seems that the poor good guy agent has no chance whatsoever. The bad guy beats him in size, beats him in looks (looks more fearsome) and what is more important he beats him in skill and strength. So a somewhat sad demise of our hero seems imminent. But luckily all these fights are completely free-style. So, when our hero appears to be really down on his luck he spots a gadget that was brought on the scene with the express intent that when the good guy agent was subdued he would meet a more humiliating end in that gadget. Well, with failing sight and limb the good guy agent maneuvers, purely by plot, gets a hold of it and bam... the whole situation is changed. Depending on the sadistic bent of the author the bad guy dies silently or crying hideously. What annoys me is that no one, and I repeat, no one feels sorry for the poor bad guy. If you say that it is only a story and that the bad guy dies only on paper (or on screen). But then why were you all tensed up when the good guy agent seemed to be down on his luck? This totally one-sided attitude is deplorable!

The fights do not always end in victory for the good guy agent. Some plots make it necessary that the hero should be caught alive and well, because of course the bad guy boss has a lot of faith in his persuasive powers. The hero is caught in one piece and taken to the bad guy boss. The boss tries to convince the good guy agent that the best thing would be to join his organization. He shows him what his organization could do... giving him a complete run-down on the scientific goodies the bad guy scientists have come up with, offers him a comfy position in the organization indicating in no obscure terms that ultimately the bad guy organization would rule the globe. Of course the good guy agent is bent upon mischief and destruction. He behaves in a completely obnoxious manner. As soon as he sees the first opportunity he seizes it and runs ... very often only to be caught again. And again, look at the patience of the bad guys. With the pretense of keeping him for a more spectacular execution they keep him alive. Finally when the good guy agent has done something that would prove to be the last nail in the bad guy coffin they half-heartedly try to execute him but then, alas, it is too late.

So, looking at it from my angle, at least in science fiction, the bad guys are the builders and the good guy agent is the destroyer with bad habits and a very good conscience, whatever that means. I personally have a more pathetic picture in mind. The poor bad guys keep working like a bunch of honeybees and when the honeycomb is more or less complete there comes, the bear, the good guy agent to destroy all their work. (This picture is also pathetic in that it is a bad analogy ... the bear at least gets something out of destroying the honeycomb!). Well, look at it this way, if all those science fiction stories were true and if a single bad guy operation escaped the good guy agent how technologically advanced would we be! But then this wishful thinking pretty much predetermines the end of all science fiction crime and punishment stories. Well, all that a science fiction writer produces comes with the understanding that it happened or at least it is probable that it happened. If at least one bad guy operation is claimed to have survived the good guy intrigue, then people would want to see some of the gadgetry in the market, and believe me toys would not satisfy them. If you are not sure that this is the reason for the grisly end the bad guy operations meet, then look up some futuristic science fiction like Star Trek the Next Generation. Captain Jean Luc Picard of the Starship Enterprise would be terribly sorry if a life form would be destroyed ... even if it were a murderously bad entity!

This much about the science fiction, but I am afraid the good deeds of the bad guys do not end in the science fiction. It is no accident that the bad guys show up as builders and innovators in science fiction; reality has an odd way of finding its way into fiction. Now, the subject of good deeds of bad guys in real life is vast. Someone with a limited knowledge, like me, cannot do justice to it. But someone must make the first move and I am never the one to shrink from making the first move (if you know me that is). Of course the main problem is where to begin. Do I begin with Adam and Eve or do I begin with an ape-like short lady who was named Lucy, hundreds of thousands of years after her death. I seriously think the Darwinians (the scientifically oriented people) and the Yahwehians (the religious minded people) should get together and workout a compromise explanation of the creation of Man. (How about assuming that homosapiens were singled out to be given the gift of the first step in reasoning... naming or defining, as the logicians would call it, and the first homosapien that was given this gift called himself Adam and called his female companion Eve.)

I would like to start with the story of Adam and Eve partly because of its romance ... two sentient beings being created to live together to give names to whatever they see or feel and where on earth? The Garden of Eden! I would not be surprised if Adam and Eve are reported to have sung duets, but I am sure they did not sing duets. They had all the pleasing goodies about them but they had no appreciation of these gifts of God. Who came to their rescue? The ultimate bad guy, the devil, Satan himself! Eve listened to Satan and Adam listened to Eve and lo, there was realization! Satisfied with the successful completion of the first act, God Almighty cast them out... whatever that means. Now the pair of them knew what pain was and what pleasure meant, and of course they knew what sorrow was, and what the meaning of being happy and carefree was. After that, I am sure that they sang duets when they had time and I am sure that they sang praises of the Lord after their 'descent'. How else on earth, would they know what heavenly bliss was bestowed upon them as the Garden of Eden?

So the story of humanity starts with the good deed of a bad guy. It appears that God Almighty was so pleased with Satan's performance that on his request he granted him license to carry out his work until the end of this world. (I am twisting the story a bit here, but I am sure the author of the Adam-Eve story will forgive me.)

Since then Satan has been busy at work. He has not forgotten that he had to disguise himself as a snake to get the Adams to listen to him. Of course his snake cover was blown, because the Almighty knew everything. Yet, if you are in a habit of listening to religious people, you know that Satan is extremely powerful and resourceful. If you do not know that, then you must be one of those hypocrites who would sit in a pew with bowed head, during the sermon, thinking, "Dear

God could I have a date with the girl/ man in the third row!”). In short, irrespective of your knowledge of the fact (or myth whichever suits you best) that Satan is very powerful and resourceful, he appears to be so. So, there is no end to his guises and disguises. But as the children of Adam grew in number Satan’s work increased. In the beginning all Satan did was to convince them that such and such right would be more right if they did it in such and such way. They would follow his advice, get hurt, realize their mistakes, repent and grow in wisdom. Although Satan was quite pleased with his work, he was doing the job assigned to him and the inferior humans were paying for their being exalted over all creatures and getting wiser and wiser every day. But there was this nagging feeling that their progress was somewhat slow.

Then Cain showed the way! Satan had been working on Cain for some time about that girl. All Satan wanted was to make the humans realize that sex was only for procreation, for transient pleasure, and it really did not matter if your life partner was very pretty or not very pretty. A less pretty woman may have other qualities that a pretty face may never have. The idea was to get the young idiot hopelessly worked up about a girl he was not supposed to have for a life partner. This would invariably cause some hassle and obviously in the end he would find out that it was not really worth it. But this fellow Cain fell so much in love with this woman that he killed Abel for her. (Some religious people have made interesting stories about Cain’s burnt sacrifice not being accepted while Abel’s was. But let us think realistically, if an idiot throws away good juicy meat and it gets burnt, somehow, and if I make the offering of something that I had no use for and it is not accepted or burnt or whatever, would I worry about it? Nah! I mean why should I? For this very reason I believe that Cain killed Abel for a girl.)

It must have come as a blow to Satan, or at least a shock as it was probably the first violent death. Or may be because he had some interesting plans for Abel. Another reason why he was so upset was that Abel died without his share of wisdom i.e. the notion that man was a worthless helpless little creature. He was sitting with his head lowered when he heard the grief stricken shrieks coming from Cain. Obviously Cain had realized what mistake he had made and now he was repenting! Satan had seen Adam and most of his children grieve and repent but never like this! Their grief was mostly over mistakes that could be easily repaired but this one could never be repaired! Satan danced with joy for days and did not really care to see what Cain did with his brother’s body and how Adam and other children of Adam reacted to this event.

Several lessons were to be learned from the Abel- Cain episode. Obviously this inferior looking creature had a flare for accomplishing things beyond Satan’s expectations. So, given proper training the children of Adam and Eve could do deeds that would make their kind pay... for being the exalted ones! Of course with each such event the realization of right and wrong would get stronger and stronger, the main purpose of the Adam-Eve- Satan story. Best of all, if some humans were converted to Satan’s way of thinking they could leave Satan far behind. It took several centuries to convert people to what Satan regarded was his way of thinking. Yet the results were beyond Satan’s wildest dreams. Adam’s children had ceased to be Adam’s children. They talked in terms of good guys and bad guys. Conceptually, a *good guy* was one who followed the commands of God and a *bad guy* was one who did not. Satan used the bad publicity he had earned to his advantage and introduced the notion of bad guys being the followers of Satan. Of course then it became all right to kill a bad guy. If anyone killed a bad guy and his children and kept his wife to appease his appetites and to keep reminding him of his success no one would object.

The world had become a mad house, but Satan’s work had just begun. He taught some of his followers to disguise themselves as good guys and the game started. *Good guy* soon became synonymous with *one of us*, and *bad guy* stood for *one of them*. Armies of *good guys* would invade a sleeping village of *bad guys* and the next morning the routed village would mourn its dead good guys and would curse the bad guys who came at night, like thieves. The invaders would celebrate their victory as the victory of truth over falsehood. There would of course be a counter attack at a later date and the *good guys* of the other side would win or lose depending upon their number and

strategy. Satan's agents on both sides would keep both sides busy hating the other side and preparing for the battle. On the other hand those who still followed Adam's tradition of living and letting others live would grieve at what was happening to their brethren. But they were getting fewer and fewer in numbers, for some would be labeled as bad guys and slaughtered and some would fall into the hands of Satan.

The whole humanity however was still not fighting with itself and hence was not suffering sufficiently and Satan felt rather ill at ease with it. After pondering over the situation for a few more centuries Satan found out the mistake he was making. The mistake, indeed, was that in the distinction of good guys from bad guys there still was the word good involved and good had old style definitions which were kind of ingrained in human minds as if God had printed them on their DNA's. God only knows what He actually had done but that was a good point. Satan patted himself on the back and introduced the notion of "Enemy". Of course he introduced a whole new philosophy to go with it.

According to this new philosophy the enemy, good or bad, was the focus of all the hate you could muster. It became an un-sworn duty of every human under Satan's influence to seek ways of causing pain and/or harm to the enemy. An enemy never did a good deed and if he did something that looked good there must be some ulterior motive behind it. The best place for an enemy was either under the ground or in the fire, or if you had means, a jail where you could inflict all kinds of pain and humiliation on the hapless fool who was not smart enough. The enemy's belongings must not remain his. They should be rendered useless ... at least for the enemy, which really meant destroyed if it was not worth much or could not be carted home or looted if it was too precious to destroy and light enough to carry. This gave rise to a new round of killings and it seems repenting was left to the future generations. While all this was going on, it seems, God Almighty was busy creating subtle hints for a thinking man, which in Divine Wishful Thinking, would lead the man to his Creator. These subtle hints it seems were basically some easy successes in making life easy this way or that way or some directly observable phenomena that led to indirectly observable phenomena. A thinking man would look at them, ponder upon them, and make conjectures perform experiments, draw conclusions and say, "Dear God nothing you made that was useless". What Satan had done to the children of Adam did not please God at all. It had set the children of Adam way behind on their schedule to reach God through the maze of hints He had created. The kind of conclusion God wanted man to draw needed pure thought and pure thought does not enter the mind that hates. It seems that what Satan had started with a will to help, had developed into this monstrosity because Satan had given in to the feelings of envy over man's exalted status. But of course God had Himself given the license for what turned out to be Satan's dirty work.

I would not be surprised to hear that in a moment of fury God almighty thought of doing away with Satan. Who could have stopped Him and who in God's universe would dare point a finger at Him? (Though, of course, this would not be a plausible statement as being beside Himself in rage is not an attribute of God.) However, even if he did think so, he did not do away with Satan. Obviously, humans exalted or not, were not worth going back on His word. Besides, whether Satan intended it or not, humans were benefiting from their experiences and if reminded of what was right and what was wrong would be ready to modify their ways. What happened next became the best example of bad guys causing a good thing for humanity. God Almighty devised a strategy that would bring people back to the way of life that would please Him. He decided to send his messengers who would teach them how to be good and how to shun evil in the face of persuasion and persecution. These messengers, or prophets, were to be ordinary folks from among the society and so their spans of life were limited too. For this, God Almighty used written commandments to serve as a source of guidance even after the messenger is no longer there to guide.

Considering that Satan had a license to continue misleading the humans and considering the size and population of Earth, there had to be many prophets. It would be impossible even to name all the prophets, so I have elected to describe the events that took place in the time of most

of the prophets. To their compatriots these prophets were strange beings. They had human mothers and hence they were human, but perhaps that was the only weakness they had. They lived, quite contrary to the norms of the society, lives of piety and decency and stood out as respectable, truthful, and trust-worthy people. Understandably they kept aloof and had the tendency to brood over the ways of the world. Then they would start making claims. The upshot of these claims being that God had told them that whatever was current in the society was evil, and the work of Satan, and hence must be abandoned or destroyed. The people were generally perplexed. This man, who they had grown to trust and respect, wanted them to abandon what their forefathers had established and destroy what they had built, and worst of all to give up the beliefs they held so dear. The worldly minded thought the man had gone crazy, the superstitious thought he was under the spell of some evil forces and the religious minded prayed that God, whatever they meant by that, may cure his affliction.

But relentlessly this fellow the prophet would keep on preaching his point of view. He would present his case so effectively that some people would agree to listen to what he called a message from God. Because of his effectiveness people would start feeling that he had some magic. He would also, to substantiate his claim that he was from God, cause some events that would look like magic tricks but he and his followers would call them miracles. This is more or less the point where Satan would jump in. Wizards and witches are feared more than they are hated. Even those people would cast a stone at a witch, given a safe chance, who would give anything to get hold of a magic wand. Satan would stir people up against the prophet saying, that this man was a sorcerer. For some reason it is understood that punishing him and his followers in different ways would dissuade them from following the new ways they had adopted. But the prophet and his followers would not give any ground whatsoever. Mere talking turns into tongue lashing and that into physical violence of increasing degrees but they not only grow in their steadfastness but also in their numbers and there comes a time when the prophet and/or his followers command armies against their persecutors.

After a few years of resistance Satan would finally retreat and apparently leave for the lands that were more suited to his taste. If we go by scriptures and by history this retreat often meant losing the whole army to the Wrath of the Almighty which often took the form of a natural disaster that, uncannily, struck when the prophet and his followers were being persecuted. Any way if it was not a natural calamity it would be the "The chosen people of God" who would go about destroying the collectors' pieces of sculpture that would, to sufficiently imaginative people represent some aspects of God.

The story of the victory of righteousness over the evil has been related in scriptures and folklore of all kinds. However ugly the story may be, it indicates beyond all doubt that first there is evil (or darkness if you please) it increases so much that someone (or SomeOne!) wants a bit of righteousness (or light) for a change. Now if righteousness or light are something's one should want then one must agree that there is no appreciation of righteousness if there is (a) no sense of fairness and (b) and there is no evil. Moreover, there is no appreciation for light if (a) there are no eyes and (b) there is no darkness. Let us thank God Almighty (or whoever we believe in) for the fact that we humans have always had the notion of what is fair, however distorted at times it may be, we have eyes that are capable of seeing in the presence of various shades of light and the intelligence that ultimately presents a solution to every chaos in life. But the question is, did the prophets stop Satan and his followers? Did Satan succeed in converting the whole world to what he wanted? No, in each case! Look up the scriptures. During the time of every prophet, except possibly for Noah, there were all kinds of infidels and disbelievers roaming the earth and there has not been a true prophet whose followers did not, after a while, succumb to suggestions from Satan. Only two thousand years ago a prophet of God was tortured for not making the claims his people were waiting for. He was tortured so much that people are still divided on what happened to him; did he die a cursed death or was he saved miraculously. Then a few hundred years after he disappeared from the scene his followers prevailed. The grandson of another prophet was butchered by the prophet's own followers, just because he could be a possible contender for power. Recently when

almost all the prophets had come, Hitler's SS made life a misery for the Jews. On the other hand whenever the evil became rampant there came prophets in the old days and there rise political reformers nowadays. So, are we in an all time great scam where everyone is a loser and everyone feels like being a winner?

Far be it from me to make a judgment. It is also not my position to produce a rationale with the claim that, this is it, and here's the reason! But as I started off this article let me finish it with what I think is the matter. I think that we might find some plausible answers if we, assuming that we are endowed with the sense of what is fair and with the concept of what is not, consider the natures of good and bad.

I liken good or bad each with a typical population, of bacteria of a certain kind to simplify matters. Given ideal conditions, the population keeps growing continuously. But there comes a time when the toxins produced by the population become unbearable or competition for food forces a part of the population to take up the role of predators or in breeding weakens the population genetically and there starts a shift in the behavior of the population. In my opinion when a population (or a society if you like) becomes too uniform and starts feeling too secure it slackens or lets its safeguards down. This is where the deterioration starts. One anomaly occurs. Due to the slack there is no punishment and this encourages recurrence of the anomaly and after a while the anomaly remains anomaly no longer. Let us take an example from the religious books. There were once a very prosperous people. Their tilth would reward them amply for their toils and the soil would, in addition to the ordinary crops, support vast gardens with shady trees. Passers by from other lands would escape the relentless afternoon sun and rest under those shady trees and some, as they left, would pick some fruit. A place endowed with plenty does always attract people whose needs force them to use unconventional ways for acquiring what they need. So probably some of the foreigners were caught stealing other goods ... a calf or a lamb or whatever. This angered the people. But as they were not a violent people they could not bring themselves to kill these petty thieves. Instead they decided to inflict a memorable punishment on each miscreant. If they caught a foreigner stealing their fruit, or whatever, they would sexually abuse the guy. For a while it was a pastime for the farmers' helps, but then it spread all over; so much so that God Almighty had to wipe the whole people out. On the other hand in every thoroughly rotten society there spring people who would stand for goodness. Before the advent of Prophet Muhammad it is patent that the Arabs had no morals left, but it seems, too much lawlessness did not please some young men of Mecca and some of them got together and took an oath of helping out the needy and the oppressed. We Muslims mention this organization a lot, perhaps because Prophet Muhammad was also a member. In any case it is true that most of the prophets seem to have risen in reaction to the total deterioration of the society, if you look at their advent from a secular standpoint. Though of course it is hard to ignore that each prophet was known to be a truthful and trustworthy person and each said that 'God spake unto him'.

Now let us look at the animal world a bit before deciding that the presence of both aspects of life, good and bad, is necessary for the story to progress and for the life to go on. Pick any eco-system and ask, "Is it without a population control factor?" If the answer is no, rest assured that the system, whatever it maybe, is not an eco-system containing life forms. The population control factor may be the presence of predators and in the absence of predators it may be the harshness of the environment or it may be the span of life. The presence of predators or cannibalism is visible in our world. However, there are some eco-subsystems in this world where the only effective controlling factor is the harsh weather. For example, in deserts it seldom rains but some times when the clouds are loaded, they can, on a slight change of temperature and pressure, unload themselves over a desert. In a particular desert there is a depression where all the rainwater accumulates, whenever it rains. Within days signs of life start appearing. You see a shrimp-like creature taking shape and growing up fast as if hustling for life. The water dries within a few days but in that period at least one generation of those desert shrimps has grown and procreated. When the pond dries out they leave their eggs waiting for their chance of life and their bodies as the source of nutrients for

their future generation when it comes to be. Now let us ask God Almighty to be kind to the desert shrimp and suppose that God Almighty decides to let us see for our-selves and removes the only population control making sure that somehow the water does not dry out and no out-side predator can get in. Just imagine what would happen with their rate of growth. They would grow fast and procreate and before the first generation dies out there would be several other generations. Consequently there would be competition for space and the concentration of nutrients would go down. Obviously if the species decides to stay decent there would come a time when the whole population would grow weak resulting in its ultimate extinction. On the other hand, if a part of the population decides to increase the length of the food chain, the nutrients would start going back to the water in some form or the other and the population could survive until some alternatives show up. Now I suggest that we look at the predators in the latter situation as bad guys. It seems to me that to make sure that life continues on this globe without an observable interference from the Almighty, He organized the systems of procreation of most of the species so that fertilization is almost assured with each sexual activity. (If you do not believe me, refresh your memory about the number of sperms in the human semen, per ejaculation). With this kind of probability defying approach it is imperative that there should be some checks and balances and there are. Now taking the controlling factors i.e. predators etc. to be the bad guys of the eco-system we can understand that in natural steady state systems bad guys are an essential part of the scenario. So why should they not appear in societies which are natural steady state systems in their own right and of course why should they not appear in crime and punishment stories which depict a certain state of some imaginary society? Some people love to put every blame on Satan that he told Eve to taste that fruit or whatever! Who made Satan to act this way? Did Satan make himself the way we know him now or did the All Knowing God in His infinite Wisdom, seeing that the existence of a bad guy was a must for the Adam Eve story to go on, make him this way. I will let you choose your own poison with the comment that if you take up the former choice and assume that God had made Satan to be a Saint and Satan changed, then you cease to believe in an All Knowing All Powerful God while the other choice would let you keep your faith and would let you read a good crime and punishment story without raising your blood pressure. This kills my support for the bad guys too but what the heck!

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