



The Argument Against “the Lesser of Two Evils” Debunked

Election Day is upon us and there is no short supply of self-avowed liberty lovers who have decided to either sit this election out or vote for a third party candidate (like Gary Johnson). Practically speaking, these alternatives are indistinguishable from one another, for a vote for a third party candidate is essentially a non-vote. In any event, for the lover of liberty to make either choice is for him to betray his vocation to promote liberty.

Liberty demands the defeat of President Obama. But the only way — the only way — for this to occur is for the champion of liberty to vote for the president’s rival, Governor Mitt Romney.

Ultimately, there is but one objection to this verdict. It can be seen and has been heard from miles away. Objectors reason as follows: There isn’t a dime’s worth of difference between Obama and Romney. A choice for either presidential candidate is a choice for evil. And even if one isn’t as evil as the other, they continue, the vote for the lesser of two evils is still an evil.

That liberty lovers should be disillusioned with our two national political parties is both understandable and justifiable. But their position on this score, reflecting as it does both their despair as well as their complacency, casts doubt upon their professions of love for liberty.

In throwing up his vote by refusing to vote for either Democrat or Republican — the only two realistic options on the ballot — the lover of liberty throws up his hands in despair. He essentially says that he will turn the fate of his country — the inheritance that his ancestors sacrificed immeasurably to bequeath to their posterity — over to those whom he regards as evil.

As a result, he is complicit in their wickedness.

To be clear, it isn’t the refusal to vote in itself that calls into question the sincerity of the self-avowed friend of liberty. If his call to abstain from voting was coupled with calls for secession, say, or even a coup of the government, then while we may or may not agree with his methods, we could no longer in good faith suspect his integrity. But, to my knowledge, the self-proclaimed lovers of liberty who never tire of shouting from the rooftops the bumper sticker slogan that “the lesser of two evils is still an evil” while accusing the rest of us of “compromising” principle have never argued on behalf of either secession or an overthrow of the government.





Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on November 5, 2012

No, they just urge us to vote for Gary Johnson. Or they assure us that they will be writing in Ron Paul. Neither gesture will forward the cause of liberty by one iota. The self-avowed champion of liberty refuses to vote for Obama or Romney, Democrat or Republican, for even if one is not as evil as the other, the lesser of two evils is still an evil and it is always wrong to choose evil. Thus, in refraining to vote for politicians from either national party, the liberty lover refuses to “compromise” his principles. This is what he tells us.

On its face, this argument seems sensible enough. But once we look beyond its face, it can be seen for the house of straw that it is. Think about it: If both ruling parties are agents of evil, then the legal arrangements over which these forces of evil exercise control are also evil. Yet inasmuch as he observes the laws of the land, the lover of liberty, then, complies with evil. That is, each time he acts lawfully, he chooses evil.

It will do no good for the liberty lover to reply that he has no real choice in this matter. He does indeed have a choice: He could choose to violate the law.

We need to be clear as to what this means, though. Truly principled opposition to unjust laws must shine light on itself. That is, the lover of liberty has no option but to engage in what we call “civil disobedience”: He must make his displeasure with the law(s) public knowledge — and show his willingness to accept the penalties for his disobedience.

Of course, since it is the entire system of laws to which he objects — how can matters be otherwise when it is two indistinguishable forces of evil that have been busy at work constructing this system for years and years? — the lover of liberty will be consumed in perpetuity with the enterprise of disobeying one law after the other.

Until then, however, the lover of liberty is guilty of — you guessed it! — compromising his principles.

The lover of liberty could reply to this charge by denying, quite plausibly, the claim that the entire system under which we live is evil. However, if so, he must explain how a system that has been the monopoly of two evil parties for most of the country’s history can be anything other than evil itself. This he will not be able to do.

There is another problem with his reply. If it is inaccurate to say that the entire system is corrupt, that law abidingness amounts to an abandonment of principle, then it is just as inaccurate to say that the entirety of Romney’s agenda (or even that of Obama, for that matter) is corrupt.

Romney, along with his fellow partisans, has pledged to repeal ObamaCare. Would that be evil? He also wants to make America more energy independent. Would this be evil? A Romney administration would engender an environment dramatically more business-friendly than any that we could ever expect from an Obama administration. Would this be evil?

In the real world, the choices with which we are confronted never so much as remotely approximate anything like ideal. This is a painful lesson that growing up teaches us. The lover of liberty knows — or should know — this better than anyone. And he does indeed reveal his knowledge of this each and every time he obeys the laws of his city, state, and country (which is virtually always) — however “evil” he must find these Democrat and Republican authored and enforced laws to be.

But if the liberty lover isn’t guilty of compromising his principles in this case, then neither can he credibly be said to be guilty of compromising his principles when he votes to stop the most dangerous threat to his liberty by voting for the only thing that realistically can stop it.



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And on this Election Day, the only thing that can stop a second Obama term and all that this entails is Mitt Romney. This is no more a vote for “the lesser of two evils” than is the decision to abide by a flawed system of law (a system, again, that the self-sworn lover of liberty must deem evil).

Nor, as I have shown, does it make any sense to describe such a choice in terms of a compromise of principle.



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