



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on April 11, 2023

When Liberals Admit They Don't Know What Good Is (Even Though They'll Still Enforce It)

“Liberals claim to want to do good while also claiming to not know what the good is.” This was said, I believe, by late journalist Joseph Sobran. Whatever the authorship, however, it addresses a real phenomenon — one whose existence was just acknowledged, in so many words, by a liberal.

At issue is a very interesting opening paragraph to [a Monday book review](#) in the left-wing *Atlantic*, penned by one Lily Meyer.

To wit:



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Ask me how much time and money I have devoted, in my adult life, to conscious efforts to be a good person, and I would struggle to quantify it. Of course, I would also struggle to tell you what “being good” means. My ideas seem to change constantly, which means the target shifts. Besides, the world I inhabit does not make goodness easy, for me or anyone else. I put clothes I no longer wear in giveaway bins run by a profoundly inefficient nonprofit; I assiduously recycle despite reports that my plastic is likely “headed to landfills, or worse”; I sign up for shifts at a food bank, then cancel because I have to work. If I were giving away more money, or more of my time, my efforts would surely be wobblier or more questionable still.

The above introduction is apropos because Meyer reviews a book, *Birnam Wood*, she calls “a biting satire about the idealistic Left.” You can read the review [here](#) if interested; in accordance with the saying “Truth is stranger than fiction,” however, more fascinating than this confused woman’s analysis is her confession.

People so often do have a desire to confess their sins, too, and, just occasionally, leftist soul-baring makes it into print.

Another example is the liberal NYC parent who, opposing a diversity (i.e., integration) scheme targeting his kid(s)’ school, [stated in 2015](#), “It’s more complicated when it’s about your own children.” Yes, well, he obviously wasn’t ever so sure what “good” was, though it likely felt good prior to his object lesson in left-wing policies’ consequences to value-signal about “racist” conservatives opposing said policies. He didn’t, however, *feel* so good after being forced to live with his own ideals.

Then there was the climate-alarmist journalist — unfortunately, I can no longer find the link to his article — who confessed that he would leave lights on unnecessarily; have the TV blaring even though no one was watching it; and, most bizarrely, would have the shower running for 30-45 minutes before getting into it. (Explanation? It appears that certain maladjusted people derive pleasure — in particular, perhaps, a feeling of power and importance — by being “bad” and flouting “the rules.” This likely helps explain, by the way, why leaders such as California Governor Gavin Newsom readily and consistently violated their own Covid lockdown regulations.)



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Emerging here is a portrait of individuals who act as people unsure about what's "good" would. Evidencing why they perhaps are unsure about it (i.e., they don't love the good enough to sincerely seek it), they treat their conception of good as they would a spouse they don't truly love: They "cheat" on it with other values that seem momentarily more attractive — and they're willing to divorce it entirely once their lust for the next seductive pretender to "the good" becomes sufficiently intense. As Meyer put it, "My ideas seem to change constantly, which means the target shifts."

Of course, since leftists' conception of good *is* a pretender, a liar, it's also unworthy of fidelity. So these philanderers of values go from one liar's arms to another's. They thus are ever unfulfilled and unhappy — and, exhibiting a misery that loves company, shower the rest of the world with their unhappiness.

Yet this "good" confusion isn't just a problem of the Left. A Barna Group [study I often cite](#) found that in 2002 already, *64 percent* of Americans (and 83 percent of teens) embraced moral relativism, the notion that what's called "right and wrong" or "good and bad" is merely a function of man's collective preference. This figure would include a good number of "conservatives," and this reflects how at issue here is a problem of modernity.

Philosopher G.K. Chesterton addressed this in his 1905 book *Heretics*. After averring that our "popular modern phrases and ideals" — such as "liberty," "progress," and "education" — are dodges designed "to shirk the problem of what is good," he continued:

The modern man says, "Let us leave all these arbitrary standards and embrace liberty." This is, logically rendered, "Let us not decide what is good, but let it be considered good not to decide it." He says, "Away with your old moral formulae; I am for progress." This, logically stated, means, "Let us not settle what is good; but let us settle whether we are getting more of it." He says, "Neither in religion nor morality, my friend, lie the hopes of the race, but in education." This, clearly expressed, means, "We cannot decide what is good, but let us give it to our children."

To be clear, the real issue is that most Americans don't even believe there is "good" (Truth), properly defined as an *objective* behavior yardstick existing apart from man. This is actually the root cause of all our problems, too, though rarely recognized as such. For people detached from Truth become dangerous. Why? Well, without Truth to use to govern our decisions, we generally fall back on the most compelling yardstick remaining: emotion.

This is precisely what Barna found, too. "By far the most common basis for moral decision-making" among Americans, the site informs, is "doing whatever feels right or comfortable in a situation."

So while Benjamin Franklin sagely warned "Passion governs, and she never governs wisely," passion is now what most Americans are running on. Do you think this will end well?

Modern leftism is not an ideology, but a *passion-driven movement toward moral disorder*. And it cannot exist in a universe in which Truth is widely recognized and loved. In other words, the real solution to all our political and social problems is as simple as it is difficult to effect: discarding the desire for the eternal absolute that relativism's message there is no sin brings, and instead recognizing, seeking, and embracing Truth.

For among the things Truth will set you free from, is confusion about what is good.



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