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## Heroes vs. Villains

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# Heroes vs. Villains

What exactly is a hero and what is a villain? I know most of you are already thinking this is simple; the hero is the good guy and the villain is the bad guy. My question is this: what is it that makes something good? Let's take a simple scenario; we have a monster who is killing people, and a knight saves the day by slaying it. Easy-peasy, we have a hero in the knight and a villain in the monster. But what really separates the two? They both kill for their own pleasure, the monster gets a thrill out of murder and the knight feels satisfaction after slaying the monster. Both struggled hard to achieve their goals. Both have legitimate, understandable reasons for doing what they do. So tell me, what is the difference? There is only this: one of them is victorious. So a better definition of what makes a hero and a villain is: a hero achieves their goals in the end at the expense of the villain, who does not.

So who's to say what is good and bad? The victor. He proved his might, so that must mean his way was the proper one, the 'good'. What it all comes down to is chance; the hero and villain are two sides of the same coin. Hypocrisy is the nature of humans: we root for the 'hero' to get his revenge, yet we then tell others an eye for an eye leaves us blind. We want the 'villain' dead, but we believe murder is wrong. The justifications for the hero's actions are just as valid as the villain's, so why do we treat the hero differently?

It all comes down to status quo. We will root for whoever fights for what we feel is normal. The villain usually breaks a vital societal rule to get what he wants, making the general populace who strive to follow those rules uncomfortable. They then get the hero, someone who wants that discomfort gone, and the populace instinctually wants them to succeed. No one takes an action they see no benefit in; any villain is the same. The villain is someone who takes the option that benefits him, in spite of the costs. What's actually wrong with that? The hero does the *exact same thing!* The hero almost always sacrifices something, puts everything on the line, goes all or nothing to defeat the villain. He weighed his options and chose what he felt was best no matter the costs. There's nothing wrong with that either.

You see, we humans are so quick to judge when we have no idea what justice is. How are we to pass judgement on another when we can't possibly judge our own self? We truly do not know ourselves. What would we do if we were in another's shoes? We have no idea. We can't say what is good or evil because such concepts are so abstract, they can only exist as Forms. It's not that good and evil don't exist, it is simply that they are so idealistically pure, that to even perceive them taints their existence beyond recognition. As the Devil told Eve: *Eritis sicut deus, scientes bonum et malum*: only God can truly know good and evil.

I'm not saying we should have pure good and evil in stories. If we were to push the pair as close as possible toward their respective 'good' and 'bad' roles, it wouldn't improve the story one bit. It would look something like the following:

If a villain were to be truly evil, he would often win. The callous, uncaring attitude he would have towards everything would grant him an advantage, as he has no reason to care what is destroyed. He has no selfishness or desires to be exploited. He won't give the hero any thought, he won't try to explain or justify himself. He will simply obliterate everything in his path without rest. In the face of such inhumanity, any would-be heroes are caught off guard or run in fear, which leads to their destruction. The only way this true villain might be defeated is through one who is as callous as he taking him on, but to motivate such a person to fight is impossible. By the time they realize for themselves that the villain is someone not to be ignored, they are already at a disadvantage.

The purest of heroes is not a welcome sight either. First of all, the burden of pure good would break the person. The good wants to justify every action, save everyone (including those who don't want salvation), and love everything and everyone. The mission to 'do good' will end up hurting those who have separate definitions of good. If helping one means forsaking another, the dissonance will destroy the hero. No matter what, he feels like he killed someone. No one wants such a person to help, and the hero doesn't want this responsibility. If he continues on his path, he becomes just as inhuman as the pure evil villain.

So making them good and evil is a bad idea, so what do we do? Do we continue to lie to ourselves and praise an unworthy hero? I believe the best course of action is simply to show that a hero means more than just 'good'. The comic book movies are gradually getting the right idea, albeit poorly executed, of showing that the heroes affect innocent lives, and how that's bad. More stories are surfacing about the anti-hero: flawed, natural people who don't delude themselves into grandiose heroism; they simply fight for a goal, right or wrong. These are steps in the right direction; we need to change our definition of a hero, we need to start giving people the right ideas of how the world works. We need children consuming these stories to get proper values out of them; stories where the hero follows these proper values and doesn't bend the rules around them. And if the hero does, he is shown to have done wrong, to feel guilt and shame.

Mostly, we need to stop the idea of the hero. There is no single 'good'. There isn't strength in solitude. There is no good in leaving everything in the hands of one person. It's the same with a villain: there is always more to the villain than just 'he is bad'. We need to retire these foolish, obsolete archetypes. If we do that, we can *all* have solidarity, courage, and understanding given to us through the stories we hold close to our hearts.