

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*Fr. Schall gives a good analysis of evil acts which have no immediate punishment, and are then thought to be innocuous, yet still require justification of bad acts as good before the world. This is so obvious in our church regarding sexual sin and homosexuality in particular.*

*Pornography, prostitution, abortion and so forth are called victimless crimes, thus meriting no government interference. Only a fool will believe that.*

*People using positive law reject the natural law, claiming their right to redefine civil law in government, as well as hierarchs in the church demanding their right to redefine doctrine.*

*Our Catholic church has Jesus' power to forgive sins of those who are repentant. As part of the mercy, the mitigating the temporal punishment due to such sins, she has the power to offer remedies beyond penance in the form of indulgences, so that moral power and grace be fully restored to the person and to the natural order that was offended by the sins, even when they are known only to the sinner and to the confessor.*

*When I directed Courage in San Diego for 8 years, the members never deluded themselves that any sexual action outside of Holy Matrimony was all right for them because of their feelings. Neither did they try to redefine themselves as LGBTQXYZ in order to claim a right to sin. They wanted power and control over their memories, their thoughts, their actions, and they turned to Jesus Christ for this.*

*They confessed sins and made reparations for them, and were open about their struggle so that no one else would fall into it.*

*The women of Rachel's Hope post abortion healing are the same. They regret their actions, and make their mission about repairing their lives witnessing so that other women do not fall into the sin.*

*Mercy is not making evil good. Neither is mercy about mitigating all punishment. It is about loving and nurturing a soul back to God with punishments so that the pain of sin be a deterrent until a complete love of God should dominate the soul.*

# On Retribution

James V. Schall, S.J.

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The full understanding of our free choices includes the seeing of their consequences. Our self-initiated actions are not good or bad because of their consequences. But what we choose to do impinges on the world because of what we have made our choices to be.

They make, as Msgr. Robert Sokolowski wisely remarked in *Moral Action*, “a crease in being.” Once we see this full result of our action, spelled out from intention to consequences, we will understand why we deserve either punishment or reward according to the gravity and nature of the choice that we made.

We would like to think that our sinful choices have no dire effect on anyone, especially on ourselves. This is why we often insist on calling our evil acts “good.” We must “justify” ourselves to ourselves and before the world.

Indeed, everything we do is done under the supposition that it is good to do it. Even if we justify the horrors of abortion or denounce the deeds of a good man, we do so under the aegis of doing something “good.” We must intellectually argue ourselves into a mentality whereby we can call what is evil to be good.

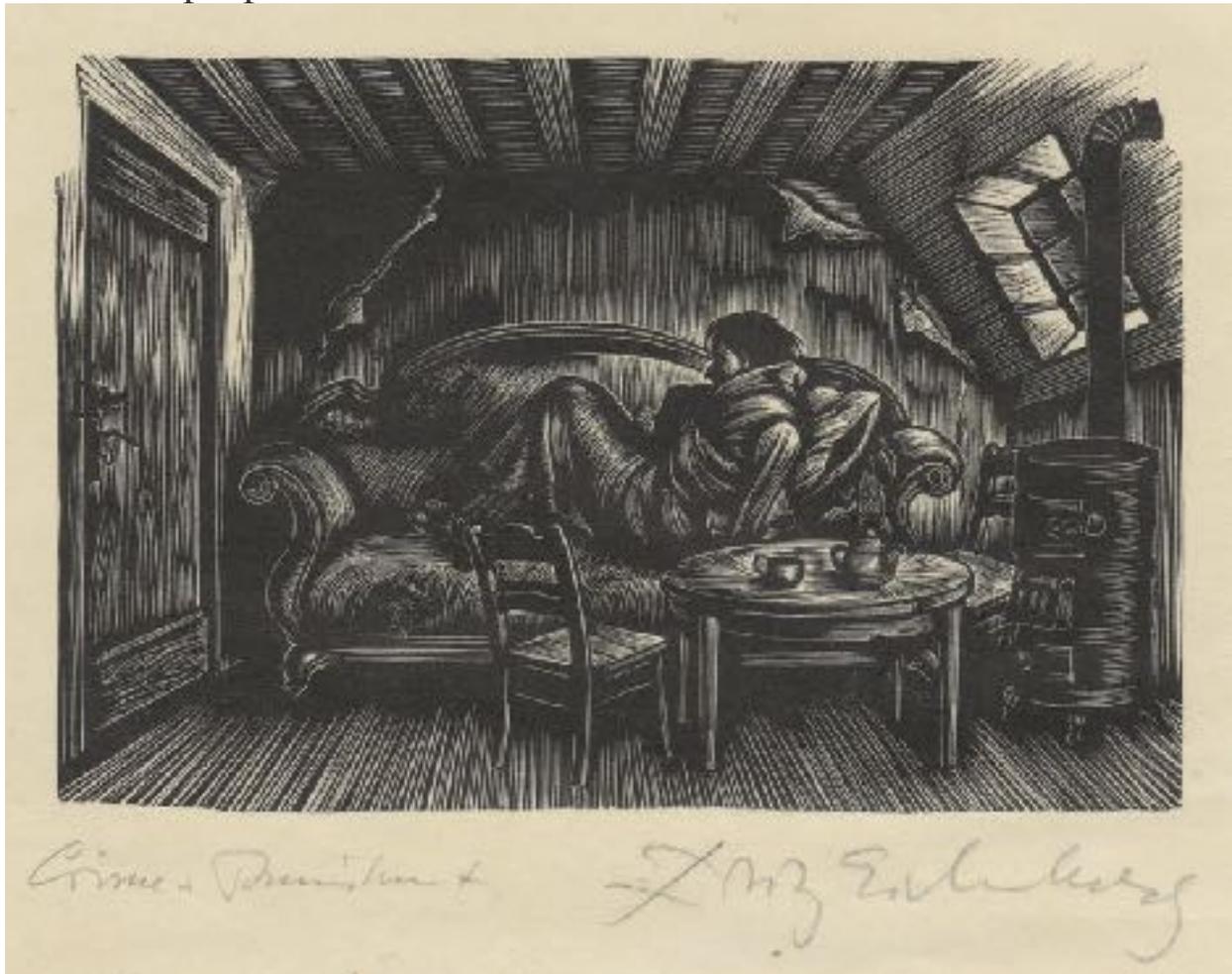
This is the point where evil comes into our souls. That is, we are aware that we are not acting in complete objectivity but we go ahead and act anyhow. Something that ought to be added is not there. Hence, evil is the lack of what should be there, namely right order put there by our willed judgments.

Sidney Hook once remarked that there are certain things we do not want to know about a man, such as he betrayed his country or his friends. Though today they often insist on telling us, we really do not want to know someone’s deviant proclivities unless it’s necessary to protect others or ourselves.

But when we do know the consequences, we ask whether any response is properly due to them. Should we reward or punish them?

Plato, in the *Gorgias*, was aware that evil acts needed to be punished. Otherwise, the world will not know that we have acknowledged our part in bringing disorder into our souls and – through them – into the world.

In his *In Defence of War*, Nigel Biggar wrote: “As I believe in the gross and intractable wickedness, so I believe that punishment is necessary and that it has a basic, broadly retributive dimension. . . . I do not think of retribution as necessarily or properly vengeful. I think of it merely as a hostile response to wrongdoing, which might be and should be proportionate.”



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Callicles, in the *Gorgias*, was dumbfounded when he heard Socrates suggesting that the one who commits a crime or sin should not only repent, but he also should willingly suffer punishment. The man who puts evil things in the world can best let the world know that he has changed, that he accepts proper order, by himself undergoing a

suitable punishment. This penance is not just vengeance. It is what is due. It restores the order of things in the best way open to us.

We live in a world transfixed with a type of mercy/compassion that seeks to bypass justice. But the one who is treated mercifully, who is forgiven, does not escape the consequences of his disordered act. Forgiveness is something given by the one we have injured. Mercy cannot be seen as a step in mitigating the consequences of evil acts. The one who is shown mercy must restore what he caused to be disordered. This acknowledgment of one's sins is not yet punishment. Paying a fine, spending time in jail, being restricted in travel or work, these are punishments inflicted precisely as due retribution.

We could not know what mercy or repentance is if we lived in a world in which no evil could happen through human agency. Sorrow is what we undergo when we do see the consequences of what we have done. We should "forgive those who trespass against us." But if we ourselves are the trespassers, we have to restore order to our being.

We do this by acknowledging that we were wrong. The objective order was right. We also restore what is due; we accept the punishment our acts deserve.

Since we can repent and acknowledge our own disorders, we can live in a world of sinners. Our sins may cause much damage, especially to ourselves. Still, they need not defeat us ultimately.

Christ came to save sinners, not miraculously to prevent sin from ever happening. If we are saved from our sins, we want to restore the order that we violated. We do this by accepting due retribution.

The distance between sins committed, and sins repented, forgiven, punished is thus infinite. This is why there is a heaven and a hell, a City of God and a city of man.

**\*Image:** *Raskolnikov in the Attic (from Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment)* by Fritz Eichenberg [Heritage Club, New York, 1938: **The Annex Galleries**, Santa Rosa, CA]

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