

The Roots of Radicalism and the Structure of Evil. “The Israeli Slaughter of Palestinians is Evident for all to See”. Edward Curtin

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My title is redundant for a reason, since the root of the word radical is the Latin word, radix, meaning root. For I mean to show how the use and misuse of language, its history or etymology, and ours as etymological animals as the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset called us, is crucial for understanding our world, a world once again teetering on the edge of a world war that will almost inexorably turn nuclear as events are proceeding. If our language is corrupted, as it surely is, and political propaganda flourishes as a result, the correct use of our language and the meaning of words becomes an obligation of anyone who uses them – that is, everyone, especially writers.

The United States government exists to wage war. In its present form, it would crumble without it; and in its present form, it will crumble with it. Only a radical structural change will prevent this. For war-making is at the core of its budget, its raison d'être – 816.7 billion for the Fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act alone – a deficit-financed sum that tells only part of the story. This amount that finances the military-industrial complex and its blood money is for a country that has never been invaded, is bordered by friendly neighbors, and is oceans away from the multitude of countries its leaders attack and call our enemies. The U.S. wages wars around the world because killing is its lifeblood, its structural essence.

In writing of the misuse of language, George Orwell wrote,

“It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.”

So with these words Orwell slyly places us within the enigma of the chicken and the egg, a conundrum or paradox that relates to my theme in a weird way, but which I will directly

ignore.

By radical I do not mean the widespread political usage as in radical-right or radical-left or radical meaning one who plays the role through dress or demeanor.

I am using the word in its primary meaning – a radical is one who is rooted in the earth, which means everyone. Everyone therefore is mortal, human not a god, and comes from the earth and returns to it. Everyone is radical in this sense, although they may try to deny it. And the more one feels alive the more one senses one will die and doesn't like the thought, therefore many tamp down their aliveness in order to reduce their fear of death. The best way to do this is to disappear into the crowd, to become a conventional person. To act as if one didn't know that one's political leaders were in love with death and killing and were not obedient cogs in a vast systemic killing machine. Maybe the unconscious assumption is that these "leaders" can kill death for you by killing vast numbers of people and make you feel someone has control of this thing called death.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who stood strongly against the Vietnam War and marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., put the basic sense of radical well when he said:

Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement. . . . get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed.

To be radically amazed that we exist is to be equally amazed that we will die. And there's the rub.

Yesterday I got in our car and drove away to meet a journalist friend. It was evening and my wife had previously used the car. I had just spent time following all the dreadful news about the massive slaughter by Israel of Palestinians in Gaza, including the death of more than 3,000 children whose numbers are climbing fast. Visions of those children and babies played havoc with my spirits, and I kept thinking of my own children and the love and tenderness that comes with being a parent. A musical cd that my wife had been listening to started playing. The case was on the console. It was *Sacred Arias* by Andrea Bocelli. He of the majestic voice was singing *Silent Night*. I was overwhelmed with tears by his passionate words:

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
round yon Virgin Mother and Child,
Holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in Heavenly peace!
sleep in Heavenly peace!

I saw nights in Gaza as Israeli bombs burst and shattered everyone and everything to bits, all the holy infants, the children and adults.

I felt beside myself with grief, a U.S. citizen driving down a safe country road contemplating the savagery of my nation and its support for the Israeli government's brutality and mass killings of Palestinians for all the world to see on screens everywhere.

I felt ashamed to live in a land where justice is a game reserved for rhetoric alone as it joins

in the massacre of the innocent, as it always has, now together with the apartheid Israeli regime.

I thought of all the compromised politicians who pledge their allegiance to the killers, Biden and all his presidential predecessors, now including the aspirant Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., a man with a conscience on many important issues whom I have supported in his quest for the presidency, but a man whose conscience has abandoned him when it comes to the Palestinians, as Scott Ritter has recently [documented](#). I have privately urged Kennedy to reconsider his “unwavering, resolute, and practical” support for the Israeli government following the Gaza breakout of October 7, but to no avail. In fact, I have been trying to get him to withdraw his unconditional support for Israel since the summer when he withdrew his support for Roger Waters, marched with Rabbi Shmuley Boteach in the Israel parade in NYC, and allowed Boteach to say that Sirhan Sirah had killed his father without correcting him since he knew it was an egregious lie. My failure in this regard deeply saddens me.

Image is from [Silent Crow News](#)



I felt betrayed again – perhaps you will call me naïve – as when I was young and last put my trust in voting for a US presidential candidate in 1972. I thought I had learned to radically grasp the systematically corrupt nature of the U.S. warfare state. Now more than three weeks have passed and Bobby Kennedy has remained silent, only to ask for our prayers for the victims of the mass shooting in Maine. For the Palestinians, not a word. Although he considers the Israeli-Palestinian situation complicated, there is nothing complicated about genocide; it doesn’t necessitate long analyses and discussions with advisers. The facts of the Israeli slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza are evident for all to see, if they wish. Bobby Kennedy has turned away. And I have now sadly turned away from him.

I remembered the Gospel words I heard long ago about the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Jeremiah: “A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loudly lamenting: it was Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they were no more.” But this time it is not the Jewish Rachel, for Herod has assumed the name Netanyahu and his U.S. allies, and the weeping ones are Palestinian mothers and fathers.

Nothing can justify such slaughter, not the terrible killings of innocent Israelis on October 7 that I denounce; not the fear that the birth of messengers of peace might strike into

Herod/Netanyahu's heart – nothing! Seventy-five years of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians continues apace. The Jewish child Jesus, the radical preacher of love and peace for all people, didn't die on a private cross, nor do the Palestinians. So it goes.

I thought of the indescribable sweet wonder of holding your baby in your arms while realizing how many Palestinian parents have been holding their dead children in theirs. Rage welled up in me at the obscenity of those who support this and those who shut their eyes to it and those who remain silent.

I realized that as a Christian I am baptized into the human family, not some special in-group, which is the opposite of Jesus's message. Every child is holy and innocent and to massacre them is evil. And to remain silent as it happens is to be complicit in evil.

I remembered how these many ongoing weeks of terror started and thought of a poem that is succinctly apposite: *Harlem* by Langston Hughes:

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore-
and then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over-
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

And I thought that he could have omitted that final question mark because we have our answer, then and now.

Then the music stopped and I arrived at my destination to meet my friend.

Yes, to be radical is to be rooted in the earth and to realize all people are part of the human family, each of us made of flesh and blood and therefore sisters and brothers deserving of justice, peace, and dignity. But this is just a first step in the grasping of the full dimension of the radical vision. It can end in fluff if a second step is not taken: to use our freedom to uproot ourselves from the conventional government and mass media propaganda and mind control that clouds our understanding of how the world works. This takes study and work and an understanding of the historical and systemic roots of all the alleged "unprovoked" violence that ravages our world.

Thus the existential and socio-historical merge in the radical vision that allows us to grasp the structures of evil and our personal responsibility.

Today that obligation is clear: To oppose the Israeli genocide of the Palestinians.

Otherwise we are guilty bystanders.

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