

destruction”) and gave a pretext for invading Iraq. *Axis*, because it included Japan, evoked the “sneak attack” on Pearl Harbor, and symbolically equated the September 11 attack with Pearl Harbor, again as a justification for going to war. On the assumption that America contains the essence of morality and democracy—the shining city on the hill—anyone attacking America was evil. And what happened on September 11 certainly felt evil.

The use of the word *evil* in the Bush administration’s discourse worked in the following way. In conservative, strict father morality (see *Moral Politics*, chapter 5), evil is a palpable thing, a force in the world. To stand up to evil you have to be morally strong. If you’re weak, you let evil triumph, so that weakness in itself is a form of evil, as is promoting weakness. Evil is inherent, an essential trait, that determines how you will act in the world. Evil people do evil things. No further explanation is necessary. There can be no social causes of evil, no religious rationale for evil, no reasons or arguments for evil. The enemy of evil is good. If our enemy is evil, we are inherently good. Good is our essential nature, and what we do in the battle against evil is good. Good and evil are locked in a battle, which is conceptualized metaphorically as a physical fight in which the stronger wins. Only superior strength can defeat evil, and only a show of strength can keep evil at bay. Not to show overwhelming strength is immoral, since it will induce evildoers to perform more evil deeds, because they’ll think they can get away with it. To oppose a show of superior strength is therefore immoral. Nothing is more important in the battle of good against evil, and if some innocent noncombatants get in the way and get hurt, it is a shame, but it is to be expected and nothing can be done about it. Indeed, performing lesser evils in the name of good is justified—“lesser evils” like curtailing individual liberties, sanctioning political assassinations, overthrowing governments, torturing, hiring criminals, and creating “collateral damage.”

Then there is the basic security metaphor, security as containment—keeping the evildoers out. Secure our borders, keep them and their weapons out of our airports, have marshals on the planes. Most security experts say that there is no sure way to keep terrorists out or to deny them the use of some weapon or other; a determined, well-financed terrorist organization can