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## evil, *adj.* and *n.*<sup>1</sup>

**Pronunciation:** /'i:v(ə)l/

**Forms:** OE–ME **yfel** (in inflexions **yf(e)l**-), (ME **ifel**, ME **efel**, **yfell**, ME **ywel(l)**, ME **ufel**, ME **uvel(e)**, ME **ivel**, (ME **ʒevel**, ME **ivil**), ME–15 **evel(l)e**, (ME **ewelle**, **hevelle**, 15 **ewil**, **yell**), ME–15 **evill(e)**, **-yl(l)e**, **yvel(l)e**, (15 **yevill**), ME– **evil**.

**Frequency (in current use):**

**Etymology:** Middle English *uvel* (*ü*), Old English *yfel* = Old Saxon *ubil*, Old Frisian, Middle Dutch *evel* (Dutch *euvel*), Old High German *ubil*, *upil* (German *übel*), Gothic *ubils* < Old Germanic \**ubilo*-z; usually referred to the root of *up*, *over*; on this view the primary sense would be either 'exceeding due measure' or 'overstepping proper limits'.

The form *evel*, whence the modern form descends, appears in Middle English first as west midland and Kentish, but in 15th cent. had become general. The conditions under which early Middle English /i/ or /y/ became /e:/, the antecedent of modern English /i:/, are not clearly determined; the present word and *weevil* seem to be the only examples in which this change was other than local; obsolete and dialect instances are *yewe* = 'give', *leve* = 'live', *EASLE n.* (Other apparent examples are due to Old English forms with *eo*, resulting < *u*- or *o*-umlaut.)

**A. *adj.*** The antithesis of **GOOD *adj.*, *n.*, *adv.*, and *int.*** in all its principal senses.

In Old English, as in all the other early Germanic langs. exc. Scandinavian, this word is the most comprehensive adjectival expression of disapproval, dislike, or disparagement. In mod. colloquial English it is little used, such currency as it has being due to literary influence. In quite familiar speech the *adj.* is commonly superseded by *bad*; the *n.* is somewhat more frequent, but chiefly in the widest senses, the more specific senses being expressed by other words, as *harm*, *injury*, *misfortune*, *disease*, etc.

**I. Bad in a positive sense.**

**1. Morally depraved, bad, wicked, vicious. Also *absol. Obs.* as applied to persons.**

971 *Blickl. Hom.* 37 We sceolan..ure heortan clænsian from yflum gebohtum.

971 *Blickl. Hom.* 161 Hi cyningum & yfelum ricum ealdormannum wipstandan mihtan.

?c1200 *Ormulum* (Burchfield transcript) l. 1742 To bærnenn all þatt ifell iss. Aweʒ3 inn hise þeowwess.

1398 J. TREVISA tr. Bartholomew de Glanville *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (1495) xv. cxvii. 532 Pentapol..hathe that name of 5 cytees of euel men that were dystroyed wyth fyre of heuen.

c1440 *Gesta Romanorum* (Harl.) x. 31 Ivel men, þe which neyþer lovith god, neyþer hire neghebowre.

c1460 (†a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Laud) l. 8106 Lothe is Eville mannys soule & body boþe.

1526 *Bible* (Tyndale) Matt. xxi. f. xxx<sup>v</sup> He will evyll destroye those evyll persons.

1584 H. LLWYD & D. POWEL *Hist. Cambria* 16 Sigebert..for his Euill behaviour was expelled.

1611 *Bible* (King James) Gen. viii. 21 The imagination of mans heart is euil from his youth.

1796 S. T. COLERIDGE *Relig. Musings in Poems Var. Subj.* 162 She..from the dark embrace all evil things Brought forth and nurtur'd: mitred Atheism!

1817 W. SELWYN *Abridgem. Law Nisi Prius* (ed. 4) II. 1156 Imputing to a person an evil inclination.

1871 S. SMILES *Character* i. 10 Good deeds act and react on the doers of them; and so do evil.

*absol.*

c1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 23 Alle men shullen cume to libben echeliche..þe gode on eche blisse..þe e  
uuele on eche wowe.

a1425 (þa1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Galba) l. 25249 On domesday..þe euill sall fra þe gude be drawn.

1827 R. POLLOCK *Course of Time* II. x. 235 To the evil..Eternal recompence of shame and wo.

## 2. Doing or tending to do harm; hurtful, mischievous, prejudicial. Of advice, etc.: Misleading. Of an omen, etc.: Boding ill.

c1175 *Lamb. Hom.* 3 Heo urnen on-3ein him al þa hebreisce men mid godere and summe mid ufe  
þeonke.

?c1225 (þ?a1200) *Ancrene Riwe* (Cleo. C.vi) (1972) 42 Is hit nu swa ouer uuel for tototin vtward.

c1275 (þ?a1200) LA3AMON *Brut* (Calig.) (1963) l. 1271 Ah þa heora fader wes dæd þe sunen duden  
vuelne [c1300 *Otho* vuele] ræd.

1297 *R. Gloucester's Chron.* (1724) 593 Thurghe euelle conceille was slayne..the Erle of Arundelle.

c1380 WYCLIF *Sel. Wks.* III. 330 Evyll ensaumple of opyn synne.

a1400 (þa1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Fairf. 14) l. 4635 He prisoned was wiþ euel rede.

a1400–50 *Alexander* 703 Þe euyll sterne of Ercules how egirly it sorozes.

c1400 *Lanfranc's Cirurg.* (MS. A.) 41 It is not yuel to putte a litil opium to þe oile of þe rosis.

c1420 *Chron. Vilod.* 808 Hym shulnot harme non hevelle thyng.

þc1449 R. PECOCK *Repressor* (1860) 4 Gouvernauncis of the clergie whiche summe of the comoun  
peple..iugen..to be yuele.

1530 J. PALSGRAVE *Lesclarcissement* 217/2 Evyll tourne, *maluais tour*.

1584 H. LLWYD & D. POWEL *Hist. Cambria* 99 King Edward by euill counsell..banished Algar.

1587 L. MASCALL *Bk. Cattell: Oxen* (1627) 36 Yeugh is euill for cattell to eate.

1595 SHAKESPEARE *Henry VI, Pt. 3* v. vi. 44 The owle shrikt at thy birth, an euill signe.

1611 *Bible* (King James) Gen. xxxvii. 20 Some euill beast hath deuoured him.

1623 W. DRUMMOND *Flowres of Sion* 40 Weigh not how wee..(Euill to our selues) against thy Lawes  
rebell.

1655 N. CULPEPER et al. tr. L. Rivière *Pract. Physick* I. xvi. 57 In a great Headach it is evil to have the  
outward parts cold.

1846 J. RUSKIN *Mod. Painters* II. 129 The neglect of art..has been of evil consequence to the Christian  
world.

1868 J. H. BLUNT *Reformation Church of Eng.* I. 403 The evil system of pluralities.

## 3. Uses partaking of senses A. 1, A. 2:

**a. evil will** *n.* depraved intention or purpose; also, desire for another's harm; = ILL WILL *n.* *rare* in mod. use.

c897 K. ÆLFRED tr. Gregory *Pastoral Care* xxi. 157 He of yfelum willan ne gesyngað.

1340 *Ayenbite* (1866) 66 Þe dyeuel beginþ þet uer of tyene and euel wyl uor to becleppe.

1377 LANGLAND *Piers Plowman* B. v. 121 For enuye and yuel wille is yuel to defye.

- a1400 (†a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) l. 1065 For caym gaf him wit iuel will.
- 1523 LD. BERNERS tr. J. Froissart *Cronycles* I. cxix. 142 The duke..pardoned them all his yuell wyll.
- 1563 *2nd Tome Homelyes* Rogat. Week III, in J. Griffiths *Two Bks. Homilies* (1859) II. 492 Cast we off all malice & all evil will.
- a1569 COVERDALE *Fruitful Lessons* (1593) sig. Gg Many afflictions, much euill will..shal happen vnto you.
- 1598 R. GRENEWAY tr. Tacitus *Annales* III. ii. 65 He [Piso] increased the euill will of the people towards him.

**b. evil angel, spirit, etc. Also, the evil one (†Sc. the evil man):**  
the Devil.

- c950 *Lindisf. Gosp.* Matt. xiv. 26 Forðon yfel wiht is.
- 1553 R. EDEN tr. S. Münster *Treat. Newe India* sig. Gj<sup>v</sup> Sundrie illusions of euyl spirites.
- 1611 *Bible* (King James) Luke vii. 21 Hee cured many..of euill spirits.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Julius Caesar* (1623) IV. ii. 333 *Bru.* Speake to me, what thou art. *Ghost.* Thy euill Spirit Brutus?
- 1648 *Acts Gen. Assemb.* 463 (Jam.) Whilest some fell asleep, and were carelesse..the evil man brought in prelacy.
- 1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* IX. 463 That space the Evil one abstracted stood From his own evil.
- 1686 J. SCOTT *Christian Life: Pt. II* II. vii. 977 The Ministry of the evil Angels to him.
- 1727 D. DEFOE *Syst. Magick* I. i. 24 They did not suppose those wise Men..had an evil Spirit.
- 1825 E. BULWER-LYTON *Zicci* 2 The Evil Spirit is pulling you towards him.
- 1841 E. W. LANE tr. *Thousand & One Nights* I. 117 Sakhr was an evil Jinnee.
- 1881 *Bible* (R.V.) Matt. vi. 13 Deliver us from the evil one.

**c. Of repute or estimation: Unfavourable. evil tongue n. a malicious or slanderous speaker. arch.**

- c1330 R. MANNYNG *Chron.* (1810) 20 Of him in holy kirke men said euelle sawe.
- †c1384 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) (Douce 369(2)) (1850) 2 Cor. vi. 8 By yuel fame and good fame.
- c1450 MYRE 58 Wymmones serues thow moste forsake, Of euele fame leste they the make.
- 1535 *Bible* (Coverdale) Ecclus. xxviii. 19 Wel is him that is kepte from an euell tonge.
- 1611 *Bible* (King James) Deut. xxii. 19 He hath brought vp an euill name vpon a virgine of Israel.
- a1891 *Mod. Newspaper* The defendant was arrested in a house of evil repute.

**4.**

**a. Causing discomfort, pain, or trouble; unpleasant, offensive, disagreeable; troublesome, painful.**

- a1131 *Anglo-Saxon Chron.* anno 1124 Se king let hine don on ifele bendas.
- 1577 B. GOOGE tr. C. Heresbach *Foure Bks. Husbandry* iv. f. 161 The berry of..the wyld Uine., the euill tast wherof wyll cause them to lothe Grapes.
- 1578 H. LYTE tr. R. Dodoens *Niewe Herball* I. lxxxviii. 130 The herbe..is of a very evill and strong stincking savour.
- 1690 J. LOCKE *Ess. Humane Understanding* II. xx. 113 We name that Evil, which is apt to produce or increase any Pain, or diminish any Pleasure in us.
- 1850 TENNYSON *In Memoriam* liv. 78 Are God and Nature then at strife, That Nature lends such evil dreams?

†b. Hard, difficult. Const. *to* with *inf.* *Obs.*

- c1175 *Lamb. Hom.* 147 Hit is uuel to understonden on hwulche wise Mon mei him solf forsake.
- 1377 LANGLAND *Piers Plowman* B. xv. 63 Hony is yuel to defye and englymeth þe mawe.
- 1523 LD. BERNERS tr. J. Froissart *Cronycles* I. ccxxi. 286 It was yuell mountyng of y<sup>t</sup> hyll.
- 1551 W. TURNER *New Herball* sig. A iv<sup>v</sup> Astriction..is ether very euyll to be founde, or els there is none to be founde at all.

†5.

a. Of conditions, fortune, etc., also (rarely) of persons: Unfortunate, miserable, wretched. **evil health** *n.* misfortune (see HEALTH *n.*). *Obs.*

- c1175 *Lamb. Hom.* 33 Hwi beo we uule on þisse wrecche world.
- a1300 *Floriz & Bl.* 441 Hi beden God ʒiue him uuel fin.
- a1400 (†a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Trin. Cambr.) l. 7320 Þei aske anoþer kyng þen me Euelhele þe tyme shul þei se.
- 1477 CAXTON tr. R. Le Fèvre *Hist. Jason* (1913) 39 Thenne cam agaynst him the king of Poulane, but that was to his euyll helthe.
- a1500 (†?c1450) *Merlin* (1899) i. 20 Thow toldest the person that thow were euel ther-on.
- c1500 *Melusine* (1895) 78 He..after the dede & euylhap..fledd with all from þis land.
- 1530 J. PALSGRAVE *Lesclarcissement* 217/2 Euyll lucke, *malevr.*
- 1611 *Bible* (King James) Exod. v. 19 The officers..did see that they were in euill case.
- 1614 W. RALEIGH *Hist. World* I. v. iii. §15. 509 So beaten, and in such euill plight.

b. Of periods of time: Characterized by misfortune or suffering, unlucky, disastrous. *evil May-day*: see MAY DAY *n.*<sup>1</sup> 2.

- 1377 LANGLAND *Piers Plowman* B. IX. 120 Wastoures and wrecches out of wedloke..Conceyued ben in yuel tyme.
- 1490 CAXTON tr. *Foure Sonnes of Aymon* (1885) iii. 107 Euyll daye gyve you, god.
- 1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* IX. 780 Her rash hand in evil hour Forth reaching to the Fruit.

- 1738 J. WESLEY *Coll. Psalms & Hymns* (new ed.) iv Help me in my Evil Day.  
 1806 J. BERESFORD *Miseries Human Life* I. iv. 67 In an evil hour, I..changed my lodgings.  
 1849 MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* I. 280 In times which might by Englishmen be justly called evil times.  
 1878 R. B. SMITH *Carthage* 186 The Boii..determined to anticipate the evil day.

## 6. evil eye *n.* (Phrases, **to bear, cast, look with, an evil eye.**)

### a. A look of ill-will.

- c1000 *Liber Scintillarum* xxvii. (1889) 102 Unclænnys eage yfel [oculus malus] withersacung..gemænsumiaþ man.  
 1382 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) Mark vii. 22 Fro withynne, of the herte of men comen..vnchastite, yuel yʒe, blasphemyes.  
 1526 *Bible* (Tyndale) Matt. xx. f. xxvij Ys thyne eye evyll because I am good?  
 1611 *Bible* (King James) Mark vii. 22 Lasciuiousnesse, an euill eye [*Rev. V.* an evil eye], blasphemie.  
 a1639 W. WHATELY *Prototypes* (1640) I. xx. 202 Why should wee..beare an evill eye towards them?  
 a1644 F. QUARLES *Solomons Recantation* (1645) x. 79 Let not thine eyes be evill.  
 1705 J. ADDISON *Remarks Italy* 84 They look with an Evil Eye upon Leghorne.  
 1875 B. JOWETT tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) I. 394 Patriotic citizens will cast an evil eye upon you as a subverter of the laws.

**b.** A malicious or envious look which, in popular belief, had the power of doing material harm; also, the faculty, superstitiously ascribed to certain individuals, of inflicting injury by a look. Cf. French *mauvais œil*, Italian *malocchio*.

- 1796 J. SINCLAIR *Statist. Acct. Scotl.* XVIII. 123 The less informed..are afraid of their [old Women's] evil Eye among the cattle.  
 1797 J. DALLAWAY *Constantinople* 391 Nothing can exceed the superstition of the Turks respecting the Evil Eye of an enemy or infidel.  
 1834 E. BULWER-LYTTON *Last Days of Pompeii* I. I. iii. 52 He certainly possesses the gift of the evil eye.  
 1871 C. READE *Terrible Tempt.* xxxiii Or if you didn't kill him, you'd cast the evil eye on him.  
 1879 G. F. JACKSON *Shropshire Word-bk.* at *Evil* 'E's a nasty downlookin' fellow—looks as if 'e could cast a nev'l-eye upon yo'.

## II. Bad in a privative sense: not good.

†7.

**a.** Of an animal or vegetable growth or product, as a tree, fruit, the body, 'humours': unsound, corrupt. Of a member or organ: diseased. **to have an evil head:** to be insane. *Obs.*

- c1000 *West Saxon Gospels: Matt.* (Corpus Cambr.) vii. 17 Ælc yfel treow byrþ yfele wæstmas.
- c1000 *Sax. Leechd.* II. 178 Gif of þære wambe anre þa yfelan wætan cumen.
- c1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 183 Gief þe licame beð euel, loð is heo þe sowle.
- c1320 *Seuyn Sag.* (W.) 1878 Iuel blod was hire withinne.
- 1382 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) *Matt.* vii. 18 A good tree may nat make yuel fruytis, nether an yuel tree make good fruytis.
- c1400 *Lanfranc's Cirurg.* (MS. A.) 38 Yvel fleisch growiþ in a wounde.
- a1450 *Knt. de la Tour* (1868) 20 A gentille man..was riotous..and hadd an evelle hede [Fr. *male teste*].
- 1563 J. FOXE *Actes & Monuments* 1372/2 I am an olde man and haue a verye euill backe.
- 1591 F. SPARRY tr. C. de Cattan *Geomancie* 199 I iudged that the horse had an euill foote and was worth nothing.
- 1611 *Bible* (King James) *Jer.* xxiv. 3 Very euill [figs] that cannot be eaten, they are so euill.

**b.** Of air, diet, water: wanting in the essentials of healthy nutrition; unwholesome. *Obs.*

- c1400 *Lanfranc's Cirurg.* (MS. A.) 80 If..þe eir be yvel, þe sike man schal be chaungid into good eyr.
- 1523 LD. BERNERS tr. J. Froissart *Cronycles* I. xviii. 24 Beastis they..myght eate at their pleasure without bredde, whiche was an euill dyette.
- 1587 J. WHITE in R. Hakluyt *Princ. Navigations* (1589) III. 764 The water whereof was so euill.
- 1597 SHAKESPEARE *Richard III* I. i. 140 Oh he hath kept an euill diet long.

†**8.**

**a.** Inferior in quality, constitution, condition or appearance; poor, unsatisfactory, defective. *Obs.*

- 971 *Blickl. Hom.* 197 Heo [seo cirice] is eac on onsyne utan yfeles heowes.
- 13.. tr. *Leges Burgorum* c. 63 in *Sc. Stat.* I. 345 And gif scho makis iuil ale and dois agane þe custume of þe toune..scho sall gif til hir mercyment viii s or..be put on þe kukstule.
- a1400 (►a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Coll. Phys.) l. 21805 Þis tale queþir it be iuil or gode I fand it writin.
- c1400 *Rom. Rose* 4459 Whanne she wole make A fulle good silogisme..aftirward ther shal in deede Folwe an evelle conclusioun.
- c1400 *Lanfranc's Cirurg.* (MS. B.) 8 Euyle maners beþ folwyng þe lyknesse of an yvele complexioun.
- ?c1450 in *Vicary's Anat. Bodie of Man* (1888) App. ix. 229 Vayns..gude to be opynd for..euill sight.
- 1561 in T. Thomson *Inventories* 141 Item, ane euill litle burdclaith of grene.
- 1576 E. GRINDAL *Remains* (1843) (modernized text) 392 I pray your lordship, appoint when you come to take an evil dinner with me.
- 1583 G. BABINGTON *Very Fruitfull Expos. Commaundem.* i. 38 If a man cut with an euill knife, hee is the cause of cutting, but not of euill cutting.
- 1609 J. SKENE tr. *Regiam Majestatem* 142.

†**b.** Of a workman, work, etc.: unskilful. *Obs.*

- 1530 J. PALSGRAVE *Lesclarcissement* 416/1 I acloye with a nayle, as an yu<sup>ell</sup> smythe dothe an horse foote.
- a1535 T. MORE *Hist. Richard III* in *Wks.* (1557) 37/1 None eu<sup>ill</sup> captaine was hee in the warre.
- 1561 T. NORTON tr. J. Calvin *Inst. Christian Relig.* IV. f. 85 He is an eu<sup>ell</sup> pyper but a good fiddler.
- 1577 B. GOOGE tr. C. Heresbach *Foure Bks. Husbandry* I. f. 36 An excellent good seede for an eu<sup>ill</sup> husbande.
- 1799 S. FREEMAN *Town Officer* (ed. 4) 146 Forfeit every hide marred or hurt by his eu<sup>il</sup> workmanship.

**B. n.**<sup>1</sup>**I.** The adj. used *absol.* That which is evil.**1.**

**a.** In the widest sense: that which is the reverse of good; whatever is censurable, mischievous, or undesirable. Also with adj.: **moral evil**, **physical evil**.

- c1340 *Cursor M.* (Fairf.) 939 Y made eu<sup>ille</sup> & good to you knowen.
- 1382 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) Gen. iii. 5 3e shul ben as Goddis, knowynge good and yu<sup>el</sup>.
- 1559 in S. Tymms *Wills & Inventories Bury St. Edmunds* (1850) 153 I, Sir Willm Paynter..w<sup>t</sup> all vnderstanding of good and eu<sup>ell</sup>, make this my last will.
- 1611 *Bible* (King James) Gen. iii. 5.
- 1733 POPE *Ess. Man* I. 284 All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee..All partial Eu<sup>il</sup>, universal Good.
- 1759 JOHNSON *Idler* 29 Dec. 409 Almost all the moral Good which is left among us, is the apparent Effect of physical Evil.
- 1813 J. M. GOOD et al. *Pantologia* (at cited word) The most serious difficulty lies in accounting for the permission of moral evil or guilt.
- 1846 R. C. TRENCH *Notes Miracles* xviii. 290 The Christian, which ever recognizes the reality of eu<sup>il</sup>.
- 1860 E. B. PUSEY *Minor Prophets* 180 Evil is of two sorts, eu<sup>il</sup> of sin, and eu<sup>il</sup> of punishment.
- 1869 J. MARTINEAU *Ess. Philos. & Theol.* 2nd Ser. 42 Moral evil is a broad black fact.
- 1878 B. STEWART & P. G. TAIT *Unseen Universe* vii. 269 The greatest of all mysteries—the origin of eu<sup>il</sup>.

**b.** What is morally evil; sin, wickedness.

- c1040 *Rule St. Benet* (Logeman) 3 Gecyr from y<sup>efe</sup> & do god.
- a1175 *Cott. Hom.* 219 Pat teonðe werod abreað, and awende on y<sup>efe</sup>.
- c1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 11 An were3ed gost..him aure tacheð to u<sup>efe</sup>.
- 1413 LYDGATE *Pilgr. of Sowle* (1483) IV. xxv. 71 To..chesen the good fro eu<sup>ylle</sup>.
- 1596 W. RALEIGH in W. B. Scoones *Four Cent. Eng. Lett.* (1880) 37 Converting badd into yev<sup>ill</sup> and yev<sup>ill</sup> in worse.

1611 *Bible* (King James) Prov. iii. 7 Feare the Lord, and depart from euill .

### c. What is mischievous, painful, or disastrous.

c850 *Bede's Death-song* in *Sweet Old Eng. Texts* 149 To ymbhycgannaē..huaet his gastae, godaes aeththa yflaes aefter deothdaege doemid uueorthae.

971 *Blickl. Hom.* 115 Nu is æghwonon yfel and slege.

1154 *Anglo-Saxon Chron.* anno 1135 Al unfrið, & yfel, & ræflac.

a1325 (†c1250) *Gen. & Exod.* (1968) l. 788 Ðat ywel him sulde nummor deren.

c1380 *Eng. Wycliffite Serm.* in *Sel. Wks.* II. 249 3elde to noo man yvel for yvel.

a1400 (†a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) l. 7949 Iuel he sal apon þe rais.

a1400–50 *Alexander* 1699 Depely þam playnt, Quat erreure of þis Emperoure & euill þai suffird.

c1450 in T. Wright & R. P. Wülcker *Anglo-Saxon & Old Eng. Vocab.* (1884) I. 709 *Morbosus*, full of ewylle.

1611 *Bible* (King James) Job ii. 10 Shall wee receiue good at the hand of God, and shall wee not receiue euil?

1789 J. BENTHAM *Introd. Princ. Morals & Legisl.* xviii. §17 (*note*) It was the dread of evil, not the hope of good that first cemented societies together.

1850 TENNYSON *In Memoriam* xcvi. 146 Evil haunts The birth, the bridal.

**2. to do evil, †say evil.** (In post-inflectional English hardly distinguishable from use of *EVIL adv.*) †**with evil:** with evil intention.

†**to take in, or to, evil:** to take (a thing) ill; also, to be hurt by.

c825 *Vesp. Psalter* xiv. [xv.] 3 Ne he dyde ðæm nestan his yfel.

971 *Blickl. Hom.* 51 He us þonne forgyldē swa we nu her doþ, ge godes ge yfeles.

c1000 *West Saxon Gospels: Matt.* (Corpus Cambr.) v. 11 Eadige synt ge þonne hi wyriað eow and ehtað eow and secgeað ælc yfel [L. *omne malum*] ongen eow.

c1000 *West Saxon Gospels: John* (Corpus Cambr.) v. 29 Þa þe god worhton farað on lifes æreste, and þa þe yfel [L. *mala*] dydon on domes æreste.

c1340 *Cursor M.* (Trin.) 23183 For good & euele þat þei dud ere.

1377 LANGLAND *Piers Plowman* B. VIII. 23 ‘And whoso synneth’, I seyde ‘doth yuel, as me þinketh’.

c1430 *Syr Gener.* (Roxb.) 2494 Mi lordes..Take it not in euel that I say here.

c1430 *Syr Gener.* (Roxb.) 3972 That stroke Generides to yuel nam.

c1460 *Emare* 535 Another letter she made with evyll.

c1510 T. MORE tr. G. F. Pico della Mirandola *Lyfe J. Picus* in *Wks.* 15/2 If folk backbite us & saie euill of us: shal we so greuously take it, that lest they should begin to do yuel?

1570 P. LEVENS *Manipulus Vocabulorum* sig. Kiv<sup>v</sup>/2 To do Euil, *malefacere*.

1611 *Bible* (King James) *Ecclus.* v. 1 They consider not that they doe euill.

1842 E. BULWER-LYTTON *Zanoni* 29 He does no evil.

**3.** With defining word: that which is evil in some particular case or relation; the evil portion or element of anything. Also quasi-*abstr.* as in **to see the evil of** (a course of action).

- c897 K. ÆLFRED tr. Gregory *Pastoral Care* xxi. 157 Ðu meaht geseon eall ðæt yfel openlice ðæt ðærinne lutað.
- c1400 *Solomon's Bk. Wisd.* 70 3if he wot any yuel by þe.
- 1523 LD. BERNERS tr. J. Froissart *Cronycles* I. cv. 127 So that all thynges consydred, the good and yuell, they yelded them to therle of Derby.
- 1590 SPENSER *Faerie Queene* II. VIII. sig. T6<sup>v</sup> The euill donne Dyes not, when breath the body first doth leaue.
- 1611 *Bible* (King James) John xvii. 15 I pray..that thou shouldest keepe them from the euill .
- 1651 T. HOBBS *Leviathan* II. xxviii. 162 All evill..inflicted without intention..is not Punishment.
- 1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* I. 163 If then his Providence Out of our evil seek to bring forth good.
- 1759 JOHNSON *Prince of Abissinia* II. xxix. 35 To inquire what were the sources of..the evil that we suffer.
- 1877 J. B. MOZLEY *Univ. Sermon*. (ed. 3) ii. 34 The evil which is the excess of appetite and passion is not so bad as the evil which corrupts virtue.

## II. A particular thing that is evil.

**4. gen.** Anything that causes harm or mischief, physical or moral. **the social evil**: prostitution.

- a1400 (▷a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) l. 8108 Þir wandes thre wit-in þe rote Gains iuels all þai bar al bote.
- c1400 (▷c1380) *Cleanness* l. 277 & þenne euelez on erþe earnestly grewen.
- c1450 *Life St. Cuthbert* (1891) 3696 Of twa euels gif 3e nede þe tane To chese.
- c1500 *Melusine* (1895) 237 Of two euylles men ought to choose the lasse.
- 1539 R. TAVERNER tr. Erasmus *Prouerbes* sig. E.vii<sup>v</sup> A lytle euyl, a great good.
- 1577 B. GOOGE tr. C. Heresbach *Four Bks. Husbandry* II. f. 76 Among other euils, they [sc. hop gardens] wyl be ful of wormes.
- 1611 *Bible* (King James) Prov. xxii. 3 A prudent man foreseeeth the euill, and hideth himselfe.
- 1674 R. GODFREY *Var. Injuries in Physick* 94 We being admonisht by the vulgar proverb, To choose the least of Evils.
- 1793 E. BURKE *Corr.* (1844) IV. 135 There are evils to which the calamities of war are blessings.
- 1835 C. THIRLWALL *Hist. Greece* I. 305 Correcting an evil which disturbed the internal tranquillity of Sparta.
- 1849 MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* II. 136 One of the chief evils which afflicted Ireland.
- 1872 J. MORLEY *Voltaire* i. 12 A real evil to be combated.
- 1875 B. JOWETT in tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) V. 75 We can afford to forgive as well as pity the evil which can be cured.

†5. A wrong-doing, sin, crime. Usually *pl. Obs.*

- OE *Beowulf* 2094 I(c ð)am leodsceaðan yfla gehwylces ondlean forgeald.
- c1000 *Ags. Ps.* cv. 25 [cvi. 32] Ðær Moyses wearð mægene gebysgad for heora yfelum.
- c1175 *Lamb. Hom.* 15 Þas þeues þet nulleð nu nefre swike heore ueeles.
- a1300 *E.E. Psalter* lxxiv. 5 [lxxv. 4] I said to wicke, Ivels wicli do þer forn.
- c1374 CHAUCER tr. Boethius *De Consol. Philos.* IV. i. 109 Yif þat yuelys passen wiþ outen punyssheinge.
- 1490 CAXTON tr. *Fourre Sonnes of Aymon* (1885) xxi. 465 I have don many grete evylles agenst my creatour.
- 1559 W. BALDWIN et al. *Myrroure for Magistrates* Worcester xvii King Edwardes evilles all wer counted mine.
- 1597 SHAKESPEARE *Richard III* I. ii. 76 Of these supposed euils..to acquite my selfe.
- 1614 BP. J. HALL *Contempl.* II. O.T. VI. 181 Men think either to patronize, or mitigate euils, by their fained reasons.

†6. A calamity, disaster, misfortune. *Obs.*

- a1300 *E.E. Psalter* lxxxix. [xc.] 15 Yheres in whilke we segh ivels þus.
- c1475 (†?c1400) *Apol. Lollard Doctr.* (1842) 41 He reprouid þe ryche, and seid many iuels to cum to hem.
- 1490 CAXTON tr. *Fourre Sonnes of Aymon* (1885) xix. 408 Grete evylles and harmes are happeth therby.
- 1535 *Bible* (Coverdale) Esther viii. B How can I se the euell that shal happen vnto my people?
- 1590 J. SMYTHE in H. Ellis *Orig. Lett. Eminent Literary Men* (1843) (Camden) 64 Ther may uppon dyvers accidents ensue such and so great evills unto your Majestie and Realme.
- 1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* II. 281 How in safety best we may Compose our present evils .
- 1791 A. RADCLIFFE *Romance of Forest* I. i. 14 With the additional evill of being separated from his family.

## 7.

†a. *gen.* A disease, malady. *Obs.*

- c1275 (†?a1200) LA3AMON *Brut* (Calig.) (1978) l. 8782 Aurilie wule beon dæd. þat ufel is under his ribben.
- †c1300 *Havelok* (Laud) (1868) 114 Than him tok an iuels strong.
- 1340 R. ROLLE *Pricke of Conscience* 3001 Som..Sal haf als þe yuel of meselry.
- c1400 *Mandeville's Trav.* (Roxb.) viii. 29 A medicinal thing it [aloes] es for many euils.
- 1480 CAXTON tr. Trevisa *Descr. Eng.* 25 The yelow euyll that is called the Jaundis.
- 1697 DRYDEN tr. Virgil *Georgics* III, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 121 The slow creeping Evil eats his way.
- 1725 N. ROBINSON *New Theory of Physick* 280 It cannot be expected that..the feeling his Pulse..will

remove the Evil he labours under.

*fig.*

c1400 *Rom. Rose* 3269 This is the yvelle that love they calle.

**b. the Aleppo evil:** ‘a disease, which first appears under the form of an eruption on the skin, and afterwards forms into a sort of boil’ (*Penny Cycl.* XII. 12/2). †**the foul evil:** the pox. †**the falling evil:** = ‘the falling sickness’, epilepsy.

a1400 (†a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Trin. Cambr.) l. 11831 Þe fallyng euell had he to melle.

c1400 *Mandeville's Trav.* (1839) vi. 69 It heleth him of the fallynge Euyll.

?a1500 *Nominale* (Yale Beinecke 594) in T. Wright & R. P. Wülcker *Anglo-Saxon & Old Eng. Vocab.* (1884) I. 791 *Hic morbus caducus*, the fallyn evylle.

1607 E. TOPSELL *Hist. Fovre-footed Beastes* 654 The bloode of a Lambe mingled with wine, doth heale..those which haue the fowle euill.

1869 E. A. PARKES *Man. Pract. Hygiene* (ed. 3) 79 The Aleppo evil, the Damascus ulcer, and some other diseases.

**c. Short for KING'S EVIL n.:** scrofula. Also *attrib.* in †**evil gold**, the gold coin (see ANGEL n. 7) given by the king to those touched by him for ‘the evil’.

[1530 J. PALSGRAVE *Lesclarcissement* 182 *Les escrouelles*, a disease called the quynnancy or the kynges yvell.]

a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Macbeth* (1623) IV. iii. 147 Macd. What's the Disease he meanes? Mal. Tis call'd the Euill.

1667 *London Gaz.* No. 154/4 There will be no farther Touching for the Evil till Michaelmas next.

1702 *London Gaz.* No. 3814/4 Stolen..two Pieces of Evil Gold.

1737 POPE *Epist. of Horace* II. ii. 14 When golden Angels cease to cure the Evil.

1751 FIELDING in *Lond. Daily Advertiser* 31 Aug. Two of the most miserable Diseases..the Asthma and the Evil.

1868 E. A. FREEMAN *Hist. Norman Conquest* (1876) II. App. 536 The first who undertook to cure the evil by the royal touch.

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## COMPOUNDS

*Comb.*

**C1.** Of the *adj.*, chiefly parasynthetic adjs.

**evil-affected adj.**

1611 *Bible* (King James) Acts xiv. 2 Stirred vp the Gentiles, and made their mindes euill affected against the brethren.

### evil-affectedness *n.*

1670 C. COTTON tr. G. Girard *Hist. Life Duke of Espernon* I. IV. 154 The evil-affectedness of the people.

### evil-complexioned *adj.*

1623 W. DRUMMOND *Cypresse Groue in Flowres of Sion* 57 If they were not distempered and euill complexioned, they would not be sicke.

### evil-eyed *adj.*

a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Cymbeline* (1623) I. i. 73 You shall not finde me (Daughter)..Euill-ey'd vnto you.

1661 T. PIERCE *Serm. 29 May* 35 Nor can you rationally hope to keep your Peace any longer, then whilst the evil-ey'd Factions want power to break it.

1872 J. RUSKIN *Eagle's Nest* §106 But to be evil-eyed, is that not worse than to have no eyes?

### evil-fortuned *adj.*

1490 CAXTON tr. *Eneydos* xxvi. 94 O fortune euill fortified why haste thou not permytted me, etc.

### evil-headed *adj.*

c1583 J. BALFOUR *Practicks* 490 (Jam.) Gif the awiner of the beist..knew that he was evil-heidit or cumbersom.

### evil-hearted *adj.*

1832 TENNYSON *Enone* in *Poems* (new ed.) 53 Evilhearted Paris,..Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

### evil-hued *adj.*

a1250 (†?a1200) *Ancrene Riwele* (Nero) (1952) 167 Me..tolde him. þet his deore spuse..were..lene & vuele i heowed.

**evil-mannered** *adj.*

1656 J. TRAPP *Comm. Coloss.* ii. 20 The most uncivil and evil-mannered..of all those who have borne the name of God upon earth.

**evil-minded** *adj.*

1531 in *Vicary's Anat. Bodie of Man* (1888) App. vii. 201 Opportunity was taken by the evil-minded to worry alien Surgeons.

1687 DRYDEN *Hind & Panther* II. 70 Some evil minded beasts might..wreak their hidden hate.

1817 *Cobbett's Weekly Polit. Reg.* 8 Feb. 164 The endeavours which have recently been exerted..by designing and evil-minded men.

**evil-mindedness** *n.*

1884 J. PARKER *Apostolic Life* III. 144 We ourselves are..infinite in the variety of our evil-mindedness.

**evil-officed** *adj.*

1607 T. MIDDLETON *Revenge's Trag.* II. sig. C4<sup>v</sup> What makes yon euill offic'd man.

**evil-qualified** *adj.*

1613 J. HAYWARD *Liues III. Normans* 59 His returne was on foote, by reason of the euill qualified wayes.

**evil-savoured** *adj.*

c1400 *Rom. Rose* 4733 [Love is] Right evelle savoured good savour.

**evil-starred** *adj.*

1842 TENNYSON *Locksley Hall* in *Poems* (new ed.) II. 107 In wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-starred.

**evil-thewed** *adj.* [see THEW *n.*<sup>1</sup>]

c1460 (†?c1400) *Tale of Beryn* (1887) l. 2177 Nevir þing so wild Ne so evill-thewid, as I was my selff.

**evil-thoughted** *adj.*

1824 J. SYMMONS tr. *Æschylus Agamemnon* 11 Cure me of evil-thoughted care.

**evil-tongued** *adj.*

1867 in *Deutsch's Rem.* 8 The evil-tongued messenger arrived in the camp.

**evil-weaponed** *adj.*

1590 J. SMYTHE *Certain Disc. Weapons* Sig. \*\*\* They have been contented to suffer their soldiers to goe evill weaponed.

**evil-willed** *adj.*

1393 LANGLAND *Piers Plowman* C. II. 189 Men of holy churche, Auerouse & euel~willed whanne thei ben auaunsed.

a1475 *Bk. Quinte Essence* 26 Saturn is a planete evel-willid and ful of sekenes.

c1475 (†?c1400) *Apol. Lollard Doctr.* (1842) 25 Who schal rise to gidre wiþ me azenis þe iuil willid.

1533 T. MORE *Answer Poysened Bk.* I. xii. f. xlv<sup>v</sup> His wysedome wyll not entre into an euyl willed heart.

**C2.** Also EVIL-FAVOURED *adj.*, etc.

† **evil-usage** *n.* *Obs.* = ILL USAGE *n.*

1645 MILTON *Tetrachordon* 93 Hemingius..writing of divorce..gives us sixe [causes thereof], adultery, desertion, inability, error, evill usage, and impiety.

**C3.** Of the *n.*

**a.**

**(a)** Objective with agent-noun.

**evil-sayer** *n.*

1530 J. PALSGRAVE *Lesclarcissement* 217/2 Evyll sayer, *maldisant*.

**evil-speaker** *n.*

a1200 *Moral Ode* 274 Þeor beð naddren..Þa tered and freteð þe uuele speken.

1413 LYDGATE *Pilgr. of Sowle* (1483) III. v. 53 Gladly heryng euery euel speker.

**evil-worker** *n.*

1552 ABP. J. HAMILTON *Catech.* Pref. Behald ye doggis, behald ewil workeris.

1611 *Bible* (King James) Phil. iii. 2 Beware of euill workers .

**(b)** With vbl. *n.* and pr. *ppl.* forming adjectives and substantives.

**evil-boding** *n.* and *adj.*

1833 H. MARTINEAU *Manch. Strike* (new ed.) xi. 125 The evil-bodings which a succession of Job's comforters had been pouring into her ears.

1855 R. C. SINGLETON tr. Virgil *Georgics* I, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* I. 101 And evil-boding bitches, and ill-omened birds.

**evil-saying** *n.*

1526 W. BONDE *Pylgrimage of Perfection* III. sig. aiiii<sup>v</sup> Detraction is a preuy and secrete yuell, sayeng of our neighbour.

**evil-speaking** *n.*

1611 *Bible* (King James) 1 Pet. ii. 1 Euill-speakings .

1705 G. STANHOPE *Paraphr.* III. 495 Many good Men..look upon these Evil-speakings as a sort of Martyrdom.

1847 G. GROTE *Hist. Greece* III. II. xi. 187 [Solon] forbade absolutely evil-speaking with respect to the dead.

**evil-wishing** *adj.*

1590 SIR P. SIDNEY *Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* II. x. f. 145<sup>v</sup> A country full of euil-wishing minds toward him.

**b.** Instrumental, with *ppl.*., forming adjs.

† **evil-bicaught** *adj.* *Obs.*

c1330 *Arth. & Merl.* 296 Thai weren sought and founde hem nought Tho he held hem iuell bicought.

**evil-impregnated** *adj.*

1855 J. C. STRETTON *Woman's Devotion* II. 25 Evil-impregnated air that seemed to surround Lady

Jane, wherever she went.

**C4.** See EVIL-DOER *n.*, EVIL-WILLER *n.*

**evil-proof** *adj.* proof against evil.

1864 W. W. SKEAT tr. J. L. Uhland *Songs & Ballads* 63 Now, builder, finish the walls and roof, God's blessing hath made it evil-proof.

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#### DRAFT ADDITIONS JUNE 2014

**evil genius** *n.* [compare earlier MALUS GENIUS *n.* and its Latin etymon] (*a*) a malevolent spirit imagined as accompanying a person and seeking to influence him or her to do evil, and often paired with an opposed benevolent spirit; (in extended use) a person who exerts an evil influence; cf. GENIUS *n.* 2, MALUS GENIUS *n.*; (*b*) a person with an exceptional capacity for wrongdoing or malevolence; (also) a highly intelligent criminal or villain.

[1613 S. PURCHAS *Pilgrimage* 365 A tradition of two Genii, which attend every man, one good, the other evil.]

1688 A. BEHN tr. B. Le B. de Fontenelle *Hist. Oracles* 1. 5 Evil Genii [Fr. *des Genies mal-faisans*], and Spirits condemn'd to eternal Punishment.

1702 N. ROWE *Tamerlane* IV. i. 1689 Thou..art an evil Genius to thyself.

1726 SWIFT *Gulliver* I. II. vii. 127 Some evil Genius, Enemy to Mankind, must have been the first Contriver.

1809 G. WATTERSTON *Child of Feeling* II. v. 39 He haunts me like my evil genius! I can go nowhere but I see him.

1924 *Rolfe (Iowa) Arrow* 10 July 1/1 He is an evil genius who will tear down American institutions and ideals, rather than build them up, as he makes it appear he will.

1992 *Vanity Fair* June 105 [Chuck] Colson..was known around the White House as the administration's 'evil genius'.

2002 M. WARNER *Fantastic Metamorph.* (2004) 246 Robert..goes there, at the urging of his evil genius, to kill his brother.

2007 *Independent* 22 Jan. 22/1 James Bond has beaten many a dastardly foe and evil genius in his long career, but the suave British secret agent has never successfully breached the Bamboo Curtain.

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#### DRAFT ADDITIONS FEBRUARY 2005

**Evil Empire** *n.* orig. *U.S.* (*depreciative*) the Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics (now *hist.*); (also) communist nations collectively; (in extended use) any very powerful nation or organization which is perceived as a competitor, enemy, or potential threat.

1983 R. REAGAN in *N.Y. Times* 9 Mar. A18/6 I urge you to beware the temptation..to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding.

1992 *Our Times* Sept. 53/3 Even today, with the Evil Empire in tatters and the Cold War frozen in time, we are only a historical blip away from the madness brought on by anti-communism.

2003 *Los Angeles Times* (Electronic ed.) 19 Jan. Red Sox President Larry Lucchino, reacting to the Yankees' signing of Contreras, Japanese outfielder Hideki Matsui and Roger Clemens for \$63.1 million, described the Yankees as the Evil Empire.

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