

To What Extent Do Thoughts Translate to Actions?

In his short story, “Radicalized”, Cory Doctorow delves into the idea that depraved actions and thoughts stem from an initial desire to do good. A prime example of this is the protagonist, Joe, who committed no atrocities, but had his entire worldview morphed over the course of the story. In the beginning, he had an average and normal life, but after his wife’s cancer diagnosis, his “anger consumed [him]” (Doctorow, 187). This anger directly corresponded to his insurance company, who denied his wife coverage for experimental treatment. Joe vented his anger, ironically, on a forum called “Fuck Cancer Right In Its Fucking Face” (Fuckriff) - which was a community for individuals whose anger dominated them. When Joe’s wife recovered from her cancer, Joe never stopped browsing Fuckriff because he felt he “had a duty to [them]” (Doctorow, 193). Because he kept browsing this forum, Joe saw firsthand the radicalization “ordinary looking” (Doctorow, 207) people underwent, from living a happy life, to openly discussing murder against those who wronged them. Naturally, Joe was horrified by this response, but after he was directly implicated in the bombings, his entire perspective changed. The entire campaign of barbarities committed by the Fuckriffers changed Joe in the sense that it accomplished passing a healthcare act. In Joe’s mind, the end justified the means, despite him initially against the concept. The entire ordeal Joe went through was so scarring and PTSD inducing that he truly believed that he had a duty to “kill a healthcare executive or two” (Doctorow, 236) which is opposite to his initial goal, of reconciling the others grieving on Fuckriff.

