{phocagallery view=category|categoryid=58|imageid=439|displayname=0|float=left}By PATRICK HALL
The Wilson Post

Friday marks the completion of director **Christopher Nolan’s** trilogy of Batman films with “The Dark Knight Rises” and his first two installments look at real world terrorism, the pursuit of bringing them to justice, and whether sacrificing an ethical code in the process is justifiable.

Since the start in 2005, with “Batman Begins,” Nolan has set Bruce Wayne/Batman (**Christian Bale**
) against villains and their schemes that are reminiscent of real world terrorism.

Plots by villains in the films include bioterrorism in “Begins” to blowing up buildings, using suicide bombers and holding large passenger ferries hostage with bombs, in “The Dark Knight.”

Following 9/11, anthrax attacks killed five people and infected 22, terror suspects were arrested in Denver for attempting to poison water supplies and terrorists have been using suicide bombers and blowing up buildings for decades. Nolan's films ask the tough question of whether unethical means are allowable when hunting down such evil individuals.

In upcoming “The Dark Knight Rises,” the villain Bane (**Tom Hardy**) exploits a more recent fear, economic ruin by attacking a stock exchange. He’s also seen blowing up a football stadium and assuredly creates even more death and destruction.

The terrorist villains possess goals ranging from lofty ideologies to the simple desire for wanton destruction and societal decay. “Begins” villain Ra’s Al Ghul (**Liam Neeson**) wanted to destroy Gotham City using a massive biological attack, while “Dark Knight” villain the Joker (
Heath
Ledger
) was out to show how inadequate authorities are in dealing with terrorism given the lawful and ethical boundaries they must operate within.

Enter the Batman, whose drive is morally right in wanting to rid his city of crime and stop these terrorist villains. But he often works outside the confines of the law, opening up countless moral and ethical conundrums. His famous statement in "Begins", "It's not who I am underneath, but what I do, that defines me," is strangely familiar to "the road to hell is paved with good intentions."

While Batman's intentions are pure, his methods are outside the law, and his persona arguably invited terrorists such as The Joker and Bane to emerge and unleash hell on Gotham City.

The police in Gotham City, including Commissioner Jim Gordon (**Gary Oldman**), exhibit actions that would be considered unethical in the real world, and arguably the most ethical and morally righteous hero in “Dark Knight”, District Attorney Harvey Dent (
Aaron
Eckhart
) is corrupted by his pursuit of justice constantly running into a wall of legality.

In that pursuit, Nolan is asking legitimate questions of whether the end justifies the means, especially when those means include scenes reminiscent of torture, violating national sovereignty and spying on millions.

No villain exposes the Gotham City Police Department’s limited power in a world full of terror more than Ledger’s Joker.

When arrested and threatened with violence, he literally laughs in the face of Batman and points out the hero and the police have rules they will not and cannot break, thus rendering their physical threats useless.

The heroes are constantly faced with the problems of jurisdiction and skirting or stepping outside the law to bring criminals to justice. Their dilemma highlights the difficulty the federal government has in trying to eradicate terrorism worldwide and with all law enforcement agencies in dealing with local crime.

Gordon allies with Batman, despite the vigilante having no legal right to investigate crime scenes or snatch a Chinese citizen from Hong Kong. He organizes operations centered on Batman’s aid.

The incorruptible Dent also eventually seeks Batman’s help, but eventually falls from his moral perch into a madness that is consumed by the fact the world’s criminals don’t play by society’s rules, and enacts justice in his own brutal way. He takes the road that Batman travels on, but Batman does not kill, where Dent's "Two Face" does just that.

While the police made little headway against organized crime without Batman, due to citywide corruption, the presence of Batman appears to invite corruption of a different kind into the hearts of the city’s best stewards of justice.

Gordon’s actions in working with Batman are obviously questionable and Dent begins to take justice into his own hands as well after allying with Batman. It seems Batman’s presence not only influenced the escalation of the city’s crime but also planted seeds of vigilantism within the police force and district attorney.

Batman is able to achieve justice in ways the police cannot, but his presence also potentially creates an atmosphere of moral ambiguity and escalated terrorism.

The heroes’ alliance with Batman is also often met with bad results, as Bruce Wayne’s butler and moral compass, Alfred (Sir Michael Caine) tells him, “Things were always going to get worse before they got better.”

Batman’s unethical means to stop the Joker in “Dark Knight” are best depicted by his use of an extensive surveillance device that is capable of monitoring all of Gotham City by tapping into cell phone signals.

The device is akin to the 2001 Patriot Act, signed into law by President **George W. Bush** that

reduced regulation on law enforcement's ability to gather intelligence within the United States, including using wiretaps on citizens.

The machine does its job and Batman finds the Joker and saves the day, eventually destroying the machine. In the film, it appears such measures are acceptable, as long as the sought-after goals are achieved and the measures are then scrapped for proper ethical reasons.

The at-times unethical actions of Nolan's heroes mirrors the same questions the American public has raised about the federal government's actions in hunting terror suspects worldwide since 9/11.

His films are not only three great Batman films but also three outstanding films that are entertaining and present numerous questions about the pursuit of justice and the ethical codes we are expected to follow.

The Joker said the code "was a bad joke, dropped at the first sign of trouble." It definitely seems he was right in talking of Batman and the Gotham Police, who sacrificed their ethics to stop the terrors they face.

But is justice worth the price of losing or dropping our code of ethics?

Regardless of the answer, "The Dark Knight Rises" will definitely be worth the price of admission.

Before you head to the movies this weekend, check back Friday afternoon for my review of "The Dark Knight Rises." The movie is rated PG-13 with a runtime of 2 hours, 44 minutes. You can find showtimes at www.roxy10.com.

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