

The Problem of Evil and the Nature of the Creator

Sanchayan Dutta

July 2023

Could a suspicion have grown up in God that man possesses an infinitely small yet more concentrated light than he, Yahweh, possesses? - Jung in "Answer to Job".

The Problem of Evil is an inevitable confrontation for any meaning-seeking being regardless of the existence of ultimate meaning.

This issue is nothing new to those familiar with Ivan's internal conflict in "The Brothers Karamazov". In the chapter "Rebellion", Ivan expresses his inability to accept the idea of a God that allows innocent suffering. On the other hand, there is the deistic viewpoint of Voltaire, who believed in a God that created the universe but remains apart from it to allow for creation to administer itself via natural laws (a stance possibly consistent with modern quantum physics).

My most profound insight on this matter came from Carl Jung's "Answer to Job", published in 1952. Towards the end of his life, Jung's personal conception of God was that of a *Complexio Oppositorum* — a conglomeration of antinomies — who is capable of both good and evil, perhaps in equal measures. This belief goes against almost all traditional notions of religion and theism, but it is the idea that resonates with me the most.

Indeed, this is partly a matter of definition: without evil, "good" loses meaning, and vice versa. But this doesn't equate the human experiences of "good" and "evil". A funny observation I once made is that if even the Devil must masquerade himself as an angel of light, it implies Lucifer's own recognition of light's superiority over darkness.

Even if we may not claim to understand a divine morality, I posit that due to the experiences of suffering, fragility, and limitations, man possesses a greater moral "luminosity" than the Creator himself — irrespective of the nature of the Creator, whether our universe is a mere four-dimensional simulation on an alien supercomputer or the product of a superintelligent Being. In light of an axiom of "fair play", it seems that the existential scales are tipped unfavorably against mankind.

One might argue that I'm presuming the Creator's lack of suffering, citing Christianity's narrative of Jesus's crucifixion as a counterpoint. However, even Christ, while enduring the cross, wrestled with feelings of divine abandonment. This implies that in the face of immense and unjust suffering, even God, manifested as a man, may be driven to atheism.

This is essentially not about whether a superintelligent Creator exists, or if spiritual experiences of the psyche can be put on equal footing with physical reality, or even if phenomena like synchronicity or other supernatural events are physically possible. It concerns coping with the ultimate human condition issues: loss, suffering, malevolence, fragility and death.

I conclude that a certain brand of humanistic agnosticism strikes me as the most rational viewpoint on this problem. This simultaneously harmonizes with empathy for the human condition and sidesteps the endless, often infantile, arguments about the physical existence of the Creator, as if physical validity were the only measure of truth. To a staunch atheist, I would propose: irrespective of our beliefs about a Creator, our subjective human experiences likely exist within the fabric of a metaphorical space, which we might term the "Book of Life". We can navigate our lives with a mindful consideration of how we desire our chapter to unfold. Surely, it is reasonable to assume the existence of free will in this scenario, as we at least behave as if our will is free.