

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 has haunted me for a long time. I suspect this is something that anyone with a logical bent confronts as they progress through their life.

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

The greatest insight I received regarding this came from Carl Jung's "Answer to Job" which was 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 an idea that ultimately resonates with me the most.

To an extent, it's also a matter of definitions; the word "good" loses its meaning without the word "evil", and vice versa. However, this doesn't place the human experience and actions of "good" and "evil" on equal footing. Given that the human lens is the only perspective we have for viewing our subjective experiences, and that we cannot make objective claims about divine morality, I argue that suffering, fragility, and limitations place man in a position of possessing a greater moral "luminosity" than the Creator himself. Whatever the "Creator" might be - whether our universe is just a four-dimensional simulation on an alien supercomputer or the product of a superintelligent Being. Considering an axiom of "fair play", the game can be said to be rigged against man.

You might point out that I'm making assumptions about the Creator's experience, for instance, their lack of suffering compared to man. Christianity's concept of Jesus's crucifixion and God's suffering might be one example. My response is that even Christ cried out, wondering why God had forsaken him on the cross. The point is, the human lens is the only one we have. In the light of immense suffering and cruelty, even when God assumes the form of man, he becomes an atheist.

This is not essentially about whether a superintelligent Creator exists, or if spiritual experiences of the psyche can be put on equal footing as physical reality, or even if phenomena like synchronicity are physically possible. It's about how to cope with the ultimate problem of suffering, malevolence, fragility and death that arises in the human condition.

I conclude that a certain kind of humanistic agnosticism strikes me as the most rational viewpoint on this problem which is also consistent with empathy for the human condition. To a hardcore atheist, my answer is: regardless of our beliefs about a Creator, our subjective human experiences are likely embedded within the fabric of some space, which we can metaphorically call the book of life. We can then act, keeping in mind how we want our chapter of this book to be written. Surely it is reasonable to assume free will in this scenario because we at least act as if our will is free.