

The Paradox of Existence

According to the oncologist under whose care I am, an atheist is an angry person, a person who blames his suffering on God and to punish God denies that He exists. My immediate reaction to this is that it is a simplistic understanding of atheism and in fact is not an understanding of atheism at all.

A person who is punishing God must have a God to punish.

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This of course is what the doctor, who believes in God, meant.

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For him the position of an atheist is a false position.

But atheism has little to do with an anthropomorphic father figure called God; it has everything to do with the recognition of our paradoxical existence in an infinite, expanding universe, one of many universes, with no beginning or end that we can conceive of. And we are inside infinity, a particle of dust or perhaps, considering our capacity for destruction, a virus inside something so vast that it is beyond our power to limit by definition.

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This is what makes our existence paradoxical. In an infinite context, we are finite beings existing for a speck of time in a timeless situation.

And because we have beginnings and ends, birthdays and deathdays, we are obsessed with the idea of finitude – beginnings and ends – and we project this fixation on our understanding of our context.

We define things; give them beginnings and ends, make them finite.

We limit everything by naming, classifying, and categorising, assigning specific characteristics to everything.

This is how we create meaning for the conduct of our lives. When we encounter things that do not fit into our categories, we create new categories for them.

We have named day and night and we have sunsets and sunrises, words that ignore the rotation of the earth, but have convenient meaning for us in our humanly created understanding of reality.

But that convenient understanding is not the truth. What scientists do is to dig underneath that convenient meaning to find the truth and even as they painstakingly uncover the reality that launches us into the universe, there are still those who believe in a flat earth.

Being finite in an infinite existence makes us long for infinity so we invented God in order to give us immortality. And with the concepts of God and immortality came division: duality of mind and body, instinct and reason, good and evil. And we kill each other in the name of a God and for an immortality that we posited in the first place.

In his book *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins refers to the God Hypothesis. By this he means that God is an idea in the mind, like any scientific theory, that needs empirical evidence, not faith, for proof of existence.

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But the concept of God depends on faith as it fulfils a psychological need for security.

So a God Hypothesis is a futile notion.

You either believe in God or god is irrelevant to your understanding of reality.

But faith can be disempowering. If you depend on a force whose existence is doubtful, you may prevent yourself from realising your potential.

Many people who have faith, do realise their potential and then attribute their achievements to God. That is a benign form of faith.

A malignant form of faith is when it is combined with power and human practitioners impose their will on other human beings in the name of God.