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mysterious_joy ([Q](#) [mysterious_joy](#)) wrote in [philosophy](#),
[2012-10-16](#) 16:59:00



asking for a philosophical input to a theological question

Hello, this is really a more theological than philosophical question but it can also be thought through in atheistic terms and I am interested in everything you might have to say.

I wanted to ask how much weight does the "good and evil dualism" has in your thought life, and in the thought life of mankind at large? I was thinking of the story of Paradise that is in the bible and in this story it appears man encounters the concepts of good and evil. I believe this story has to be read as metaphorically, symbolically and also, to some extent, a literal depiction of human life in the middle east. Historically, it describes how men went from being hunters/gatherers to living from agriculture and stock farming.

But the most interesting thing here is how the story in the bible describes this knowledge of good and evil as the fruit of a tree that God didn't want people to eat. If I interpret that metaphorically, what exactly do we find written about here? I mean, did mankind, before the events described in this story, already use the terms good and evil? Had they another idea of this kind of knowledge? I must add that I believe the Paradise account does not, for me, describe the actual creation of man but instead the time when man rose from the animal kingdom.

My first thought is, Adam and Eve being created from dust means that they were taken from the Earth, ie they (or the group of people they stand for) were people of special humility, very earthy people. God could use them for a special story that was to unfold. The story describes how Eve was taken from Adam's life, she was perhaps someone who really lived in the shadow of Adam but at some point Adam fell in love with her and then she was suddenly wife material and Adam had to treat her better. Eve, being surprised with the new attention that she received, got into pride and opened herself up to the devil who subsequently fooled her, and both Adam and Eve fooled themselves and didn't turn to God with the whole thing and ate from the tree and then the mess was there and in some mystical way we got the good and evil knowledge and thinking which since that time defines human inward and outward life in so many ways.

Is there a way to get rid of this good and evil thinking? Nietzsche tried to assert that we needed to go beyond good and evil, but I really think that's not the way to go ... I believe in a moral and ethical God and we need to go in his direction, and basically going beyond good and evil would be making things worse actually, it's the wrong direction. So what I thought was I needed not to seek the good, or the evil, but God Himself. The purpose that we give to what we call good is often different, and often marred by our selfishness, and it invites judgmentalism, so the good alone is not enough. The evil, on the other hand, is often uncanny, freaky, mean, nasty, vicious, etc, it's not a way either. So what can I do to escape the good and evil dualism? I think the bible shows an alternative in the history of the jews that has God exercising the good and evil thing over them while they just had to be mindful of the right and the wrong, ie the law. But ultimately Jesus comes and says to the jews you messed up too, I will end this law and erect my own, the law of Christ - love one another like Christ has loved us, bear with each other lest you consume each other, honor each other above yourselves, bless and do not curse, do not resist evil, the rest of the Beatitudes and so on.

But it's not always easy to escape the good and evil dualism anyway. For one, there are instances in life where we encounter evil outside of mere knowledge, for example when we read about child rape or other crimes. Some would say that disaster are also evils. Or diseases, or plain old death. What I'd like to escape was the constant inward guiding myself along the good and evil dualism, that I can love the evil without their evil meaning my doom, and that I can go beyond looking for the "good", that I can be free, that I can embrace love in a deeper way, that I find better wisdoms than those brought by the good and evil thinking. Basically, my thinking should be able to give me a better life and yet it should be as ethical as certain good and evil thinkers accomplish. How would you create a system of ethics that works without good and evil?

With Christ this should be a mission of mine, and the bible records Christ saying to the messed up thief on the cross next to him, "you shall be with me in Paradise!" So somehow I need Christ to return to fabled Paradise, but how exactly do I get there without the good and evil knowledge that's standing guard at Eden's entrance like a dancing sword... and the Cherubim, these ideal visions of God's servants which cannot allow me into Paradise because I'm not pure enough for them..

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October 16 2012, 17:24:19 UTC



Historically, it describes how men went from being hunters/gatherers to living from agriculture and stock farming.

Oh that isn't the Bible, that's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond. Hunter gatherers would remember which areas produced food during which seasons, and this formalized people's movements. Due to food being consumed by animals, weeds, and weather, some people were left behind for the purposes of chasing away animals, removing weeds, and building dams, thus formalizing plant life into proto-agricultural settlements. This is not in the Bible.

For one, there are instances in life where we encounter evil outside of mere knowledge, for example when we read about child rape or other crimes.

Interesting choice of example. Is child rape more evil than other kinds of rape?

Nietzsche tried to assert that we needed to go beyond good and evil, but I really think that's not the way to go ... I believe in a moral and ethical God and we need to go in his direction

First, you may not argue like that. It is not acceptable. Second, why are you even reading Nietzsche? He isn't your style. The smartest Christians were German idealists like Kant, to whom Nietzsche was responding. Read that stuff (after you've read Descartes' Meditations and Hume's Dialogues on Religion). Wake me when you get to Hegel, I wouldn't mind arguing with someone about whether or not Christianity is the consummate religion.

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[david deacon](#)

October 16 2012, 17:55:21 UTC

This is not in the Bible.

"And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."

That *is* in the Bible (Genesis 4:2-5). If anything, it represents a condemnation of agriculture *in favor* of hunter-gatherers. Apparently Jehovah preferred mankind to hunt rather than settle down in one area, at least back then.

Is child rape more evil than other kinds of rape?

Is taking a dollar from a blind beggar more evil than stealing it from Donald Trump? Okay, then how about Mitt Romney? Is it less reprehensible to steal \$40 than \$400? The law certainly thinks so: certain crimes are misdemeanors, third-degree felonies, second-degree felonies, and first-degree felonies. The law *certainly does* consider "sexual assault of a child" more serious than rape.

First, you may not argue like that. It is not acceptable.

He may argue as he pleases, Numb-nuts--it is not your comm.

I wasn't going to reply to this post until I had something constructive to say (and I don't respond to your posts regardless), but I thought you needed a fucking chiding.

[Reply](#)



[zentiger](#)

October 16 2012, 18:45:53 UTC

It seems to me (and, if I am incorrect, [4inquiries](#) may correct me) that the point he was trying to raise about child rape was more "And what makes it worse than the rape of an adult?"

[Reply](#)



[4inquiries](#)

October 16 2012, 19:14:31 UTC

Of course! The literacy on this site can be astounding.

[Reply](#)



[zentiger](#)
October 16 2012, 19:24:46 UTC

Literacy is a hobby of mine.

[Reply](#)



[david_deacon](#)
October 17 2012, 20:36:32 UTC

Not simply the law, but the fact that the victim is more vulnerable and helpless than "the average person."

[Reply](#)



[zentiger](#)
October 17 2012, 20:50:58 UTC

Well, yes, obviously.

[Error: Irreparable invalid markup ('<lj-user="4inquiries">') in entry. Owner must fix manually. Raw contents below.]

Well, yes, obviously. <lj-user="4inquiries"> is trying to run an <i>elenchus</i> here.

[Reply](#)



[4inquiries](#)
October 16 2012, 19:21:06 UTC

You take the Bible quote here as a *description of the move from hunting/gathering to agriculture* as stated by the OP? Really? So the appropriate response to Diamond would be, "the Bible already did this"?

Not that you understood what I was asking, but I'm prepared to claim property is primarily theft. Are you prepared to claim that sex is primarily non-consensual?

He may argue as he pleases, Numb-nuts--it is not your comm.

If you say that 2+2=5 and I tell you that you may not do math like that, it is unacceptable, do you respond that I am not the ruler of teh maths community, and so cannot tell anyone how they may do math?

Come on deacon, you are missing forests for trees. You need to bring your game up.

[Reply](#)



[mysterious_joy](#)
October 16 2012, 18:09:28 UTC

Maybe I didn't express myself very well, the idea is that the Eden narrative describes a middle eastern tribe of people who had a special experience during a time when most men were transitioning from hunting and gathering to agriculture and stock farming. It's not that their experience was shared by all men at the same time, they just, in some way, had a prominent role in this because they knew God's side of the story. The narrative itself has Adam, Eve and their kinspeople (that's how I read the second "creation" story), eat from trees and plants and that really sounds like hunting and gathering for me and the narrative concludes with God telling these people that from now on they would live from farming.

Interesting choice of example. Is child rape more evil than other kinds of rape?

Ha, that is a case where the good and evil knowledge played its tricks on me. Of course every kind of rape is "evil", but the thing with "evil" is that

we usually use it to describe the worst things that could happen. And child rape is something that really evokes a sense of dread and disgust in me, going by my emotions it's really one of the worst things that could happen, so it is evil. I know that when an old man in a city is murdered coldly for his wallet it's just the same kind of evil that's happening, but it doesn't strike me as evenly dreadful. There is, I think, something at play here that I would call perversion. But I know terms like "perversion" had been used for normal and harmless things like homosexuality too, so I am chalking this up to the problems of our mode of dualistically thinking good and evil. I think how we relate to children is a fundamental touchstone of our lives and that's why rape or other kinds of child abuse strike me as especially terrible because I have the impression that by doing such things we rob children of the joy of life, maybe entirely, and ourselves of one of the major solaces against having to get old and having to leave this life eventually.

First, you may not argue like that. It is not acceptable. Second, why are you even reading Nietzsche? He isn't your style. The smartest Christians were German idealists like Kant, to whom Nietzsche was responding. Read that stuff (after you've read Descartes' Meditations and Hume's Dialogues on Religion). Wake me when you get to Hegel, I wouldn't mind arguing with someone about whether or not Christianity is the consummate religion.

LOL, are you trying to play tricks on me? I know that Kant and Hegel are absolutely tiresome to read and Nietzsche has many edges on other philosophers due to his great writing style. It's just that I actually like this God of christianity and receive lot's of comfort from him about my illness, life in general, the future and the fact that I have to die one day. I'm drawing strength from this and a positive outlook which is growing too because I'm not a fundie and believe in the salvation of all men.

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[david deacon](#)

October 16 2012, 18:26:34 UTC

Don't listen to [4inquiries](#), he does nothing but troll. I don't even read his posts. And he treats everyone and their ideas with total contempt.

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[zentiger](#)

October 16 2012, 18:37:51 UTC

You do know that the only reason I unbanned you is because I find *your* trolling amusing, right?

[Reply](#)



[mysterious_joy](#)

October 16 2012, 19:09:04 UTC

Oh well. I am a christian, and trolls don't like our meat after a while, ha.

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[4inquiries](#)

October 16 2012, 19:59:28 UTC

For the record I don't treat with contempt any Platonists, Aristotelians, Cartesians, Humeans, German idealists, feminists, historicists, or psychoanalysts so long as they know their subject well.

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[zentiger](#)

October 16 2012, 18:43:43 UTC

I know that Kant and Hegel are absolutely tiresome to read and Nietzsche has many edges on other philosophers

OK, stop right there.

Do you have a decent mastery of Plato? That is: are you able to explain the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Meno* to a person who has never heard of them? If not, you really shouldn't be reading Nietzsche. Hegel is, and I will agree with you here, more than tiresome to read, but Kant is absolutely essential if you want to understand what Nietzsche is up to, and Hume is essential to understand Kant, and Descartes is essential for Hume, and Plato for Descartes. Also you should think about some Aristotle, perhaps the *Organon* and his *Metaphysics Gamma*.

This is not to say that your concerns lack merit. I'm just suggesting ways by which you will hopefully expand your understanding of the issues involved.

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[mysterious_joy](#)

October 16 2012, 19:14:57 UTC

I'm sorry, I am not a master of philosophy by any means. I just read some Plato, some Descartes, and some introductions to philosophy. I'm interested in philosophy because I think it is a kind of dialogue about virtually everything, and it sees connections and insights that you don't usually get otherwise and so on. It's just a little love for wisdom, for me, and I find western philosophy that gets so much from the greeks very helpful in order to complement the jewish wisdom that I get from my faith. So I'm just collecting ideas and arguments and later on in bed or when going for a walk I think about them and find my own little insights. It's really just a kind of a more intelligent and educated discussion over a beer for me. I'm not really a philosopher, more of a small-time amateur theologian who branches out.

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October 16 2012, 19:50:27 UTC

I think how we relate to children is a fundamental touchstone of our lives

Why children rather than people in general?

I have the impression that by doing such things we rob children of the joy of life, maybe entirely, and ourselves of one of the major solaces against having to get old and having to leave this life eventually.

I'm not arguing against you, but why would non-children be less susceptible to being robbed of the joy of life by rape?

LOL, are you trying to play tricks on me?

You asked for a philosophical supplement to your Christian theology and I suggested that you read the smartest Christian philosophers to have ever lived. If I were playing tricks on you, I would have suggested that you read the stupidest Christian philosophers to have ever lived.

I know that Kant and Hegel are absolutely tiresome to read

Maybe someone else in this community can offer you an instant-gratification book of answers on the deepest issues humanity has ever considered. I'm sure there is a Jesus and Philosophy book out there that is short and makes you feel good, since that is what you seem to want. If you want knowledge rather than pleasure or a source of strength, you have to work for it by reading the history of the ideas you are concerned with, which in this case is German idealism like Kant and Hegel.

I'm not a fundie and believe in the salvation of all men.

You mean, you believe even people who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as their savior will still go to heaven? What is your principle of interpretation, or do you just interpret according to what you would like the Bible to mean?

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[zentiger](#)

October 16 2012, 20:50:17 UTC

Maybe someone else in this community can offer you an instant-gratification book of answers on the deepest issues humanity has ever considered.

It's not so much a book as a bottle. Of whiskey.

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[mysterious_joy](#)

October 16 2012, 21:05:24 UTC

I'm not arguing against you, but why would non-children be less susceptible to being robbed of the joy of life by rape?

Well what happens to you when you're young is really more important than what happens to you in later ages. In our youth we get to know

what the joy of life even is and psychologically we are being formed into who we will be for a lifetime. When in this time something like childrape happens the person in question, in this life here anyway, often can't be who he or she is meant to be.

I mean, strictly spoken we should be concerned with every evil, even when an old man dies of cancer, but still the analogy of a small and fragile flower and an old and wilted flower makes some sense to me. I mean, we old people eventually must make place for the young but God secures our eternity so it's alright. But the young often can't defend themselves and they depend on our kind and helping disposition towards them, and child rape is pretty much the opposite of that.

As for why children are so important, well we age and we die and so life really is a meeting place of those who will soon leave this planet and those who have just arrive. Human life as we know it seems to oscillate between birth and death and for that to remain being positive and stable the old and the young need to understand each other and live well with each other. The young are really our greatest treasure and much in us is actually biologically prepared to support the young, to teach them things, to love them and to nurture them and to help them survive in this world, and this is such an important part in life to which childrape is its perversion and opposite.

But still the evil that befalls other people than kids is just as tragical, it's just a little further down the list of priorities-in-urgency.

You mean, you believe even people who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as their savior will still go to heaven? What is your principle of interpretation, or do you just interpret according to what you would like the Bible to mean?

I'm not exactly sure about the details but basically I trust that Jesus' death on the cross was a sacrifice not just for the believers of now, but also for believers of later, and of before the time of Jesus' advent, it's for everyone really. This is really an accepted teaching of the churches, but they differ on whether it matters, legally speaking, that someone picked up the truth of Christ in faith and has in that way fulfilled a necessary legal condition for salvation. The variant of Universal Salvation that I belief in, however, centers on a God who is love in a mystical way, a love that is beyond us and which declares that He would have mercy on whom he would have mercy - we can't sue God about Him saving whomever He wants, even when that is a Hitler or a Pol Pot or you and me. The bible speaks about firstfruits of salvation and how God wants every knee to bow to Him and basically I don't think that sin overrides God's desire to have all men saved and God still has many cards up his sleeve, as many as God wants, actually, it's not a problem for him, only for us who are used to the way this world and this life works and rather thinks that all of this is foolishness - just like the Cross itself, as St. Paul writes.

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 [fRobert Hagedorn](#)
October 16 2012, 20:51:01 UTC

The Tree? Google First Scandal. When you get there, go to the top of the page and click on "Welcome University of Alabama Students."

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 [afreemind](#)
October 18 2012, 07:28:01 UTC

I thought this essay aptly title "Good vs Evil" may be of interest to you - <http://www.worldtransformation.com/good-vs-evil/>. I've only recently come across these scientific theories but I've found it to say the least - profound. I agree with you that the dichotomy between the two sides of our natures can drive you crazy - am I good or am I bad? The biologist that wrote the paper mentioned suggests that we are fundamentally 'good' however the emergence of consciousness created the 'human condition' because our new conscious mind wanted to think but it had to co-exist with our already established instinctive orientations - he likens the evolution of consciousness to Adam taking the fruit from the tree of knowledge and us being banished from the garden. Anyway see what you think, I'm learning more about it everyday.

[Reply](#)

 [mysterious_joy](#)



October 18 2012, 09:08:40 UTC [link](#) [Collapse](#)

Hey there,

thank you for the link, I read both articles and find them very insightful. However, I also see a mystical element that is connected to this, the idea of a higher being, of a God who has an interest in us and in our thinking. I think there are different ways of articulating conflicts, you can think along good and evil but you can also think along right and wrong, lovely and hateful, beautiful and ugly, and so on. Good and evil is so problematic because it basically makes us shift between the absolutely acceptable and the absolutely unbearable. The good, when it meets with our human condition, is that which must come now and which must stay forever, the evil, when it meets with our human condition, is what we must purge indefinitely lest we invariably will succumb to it and will die. So what I see in the Eden narrative is not the first way of humans finding and using knowledge. It is a particular knowledge, it is not a knowledge that we learned, it is a knowledge that we ATE. If I understand it right, a baby is really often in the ego-inflated strife that your article refers to, but it remains an innocent being while already being more than an animal. The good and evil knowledge, however, is something by which humans want to be more than they are - a multitude of judging and warring gods for whom everything is their oyster. Babies and little children may be greedy and demanding, cheeky and lawless, but their scope is limited and we couldn't find hubris in them. But at some point when they understand their moral conscience the true and strict understanding of good and evil is given to them ... once this fruit hung on a tree in a garden, now it's hanging everywhere really and we paint it and spice it, Apple Cultivation is our big hobby. The good and evil knowledge has to do with expelling people from us, with hating your enemies rather than trying to give in honorably or to reconcile him to you, with wrath instead of forgiveness, with exerting authority rather than reason and wisdom, and so on. The good and evil morality I am speaking of adds a law on top of our inward law-seeking. You must be good lest you are evil and have to die.

Now in the biblical history, God crushed the good and evil morality by installing a law that nobody could follow and which consigned us ALL under sin (St. Paul). The transgressor of the law cannot be good, and the keeper of the law cannot be good either. So the rivalry ends because only one good person remains and that is God Himself, and God is someone who can reason better than us and who can use the good and evil knowledge in a fair way. This describes how God is able to rule everything if there is a need, God insists that He is the head of the house in order to save our and the universe's ontology.

And in Christ there is the big revolution wherein good and evil become thoroughly redefined. The little bird in the article from your site, for example, can now fly down to this island because God says he is free to do so and because Jesus Christ also flew down to our islands and didn't follow neither the base instincts when he had better things to do, nor the falsely named good and evil constructions that people follow.

The biblical Sermon of the Mount is often misunderstood. When Jesus tells us to give in to others He is not making us their slaves. He is showing us how He does things, He gave us a world and feeds us while we didn't know him or seek him, and from that God derives fun and pleasure, because He is proving that He is Lord and can do such things, it's the kind of stuff his angels find amusing. Likewise, when we serve an enemy rather than beating him, we are rising above him because we act like God acts. And in the end it's a way to secure happiness because we won't fall into states of mind where we have enemies and battles to fight. Every creature on this world has enemies, but the believer doesn't know enemies because he loves his enemies and doesn't have to fight them.

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[afreemind](#)

October 18 2012, 21:19:53 UTC

Thank you too for your considered reply. I'm new to this idea too but as I understand it it's not the good and evil that is problematic but our inability to explain ourselves and whether in fact we are good or evil - like you said an absolute. But if we can understand biologically how the human condition emerged with the emergence of consciousness then there is no guilt or evil it simply makes sense. The new nerve based learning system which emerged with consciousness (as opposed to the gene based/instinctive learning system we had (and all animals have now) previously existed exclusively - when this new 'thinking' brain evolved it wanted to wander and ponder and not just instinctively 'do' - like the bird story you refer - and this deviation from the instincts created conflict - enter the human condition. **Its really quite fascinating don't you think! Because if this is all correct, and science is just catching onto this - then it explains why we are all the 'evil' things we are - 'knowledge brings compassion' - and we can stop. The murdering, the pain all the suffering and rape and starvation can stop!** Can't it??? So I don't think we can 'fly down to the island' because God says - 'flying down to the island' is as a result of having a new brain which can think and reason events - its a conscious decision not a faith based decision. Jesus Christ did not 'fly down to the island' he was already conscious (we've been conscious for around 2 mill years) he was just sound enough to be able to speak the truth about the state of the world and because he was so pure in comparison to the rest of us corrupted humans he saw the need for us to live through him if we were to curb our corruption at all!

[Reply](#)



[lucidpsychogod](#)

October 29 2012, 22:42:49 UTC



whoops, adam was actually Phil and eve was Sophie -so fee- for the fee prostitutes charge, oh phil-o-sophy!
anyway, the serpent tempted sophie and she picked the fruit and offered it to Phil, then she tried to charge him a fee for sexual services, since the first profession was prostitution, that was the idea Sophie got, and god threw them out

phil had a job for god picking the other fruit and since he killed the last hooker -lilith- god didn't want to clean up another mess
basically, ever since people got minds of their own, women have been scandalous hookers

and nothing has changed, men work, and women connive, that is why god made hell, to make at least SOME women get jobs

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[promeny](#)

October 30 2012, 14:52:18 UTC

That is an interesting theory.

[Reply](#)



[lucidpsychogod](#)

October 30 2012, 20:20:04 UTC

politics are the before and after of god! donkey democrats
watch, donna -woman in spanish- aqui-here in spanish
woman here -donna aqui- donkey

now, after god, elephant,
elle, woman in french, phant, child in french

woman child elle phant

what about that?

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