

ETERNITY EXPLAINED

Book 1



ZERO TO INFINITY

*we are in the solution
to the problem of evil*

Ed Lyons

The Eternity Explained Series, volume 1

Zero to Infinity

Universal patterns of evidence
point to our only hope

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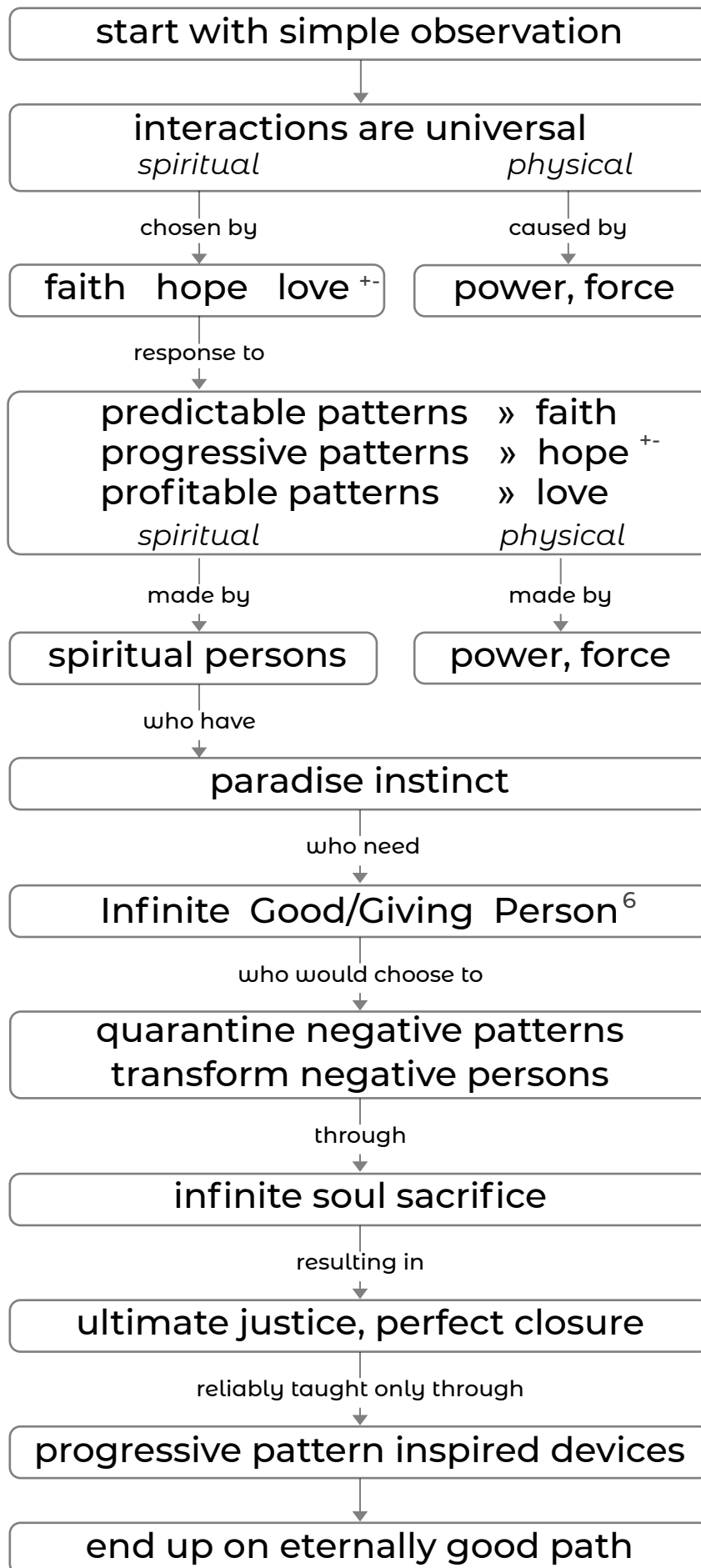
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*I was just a kid
raised in a religious home
trying to make sense out of life.
The God of my dad's religion didn't fit.
Contradiction, inconsistency, disconnection.
The only way I could resolve the problem
was to conclude that God had died.
Peace came to my puzzled mind.
Then restlessness came to my empty soul.
Years later I solved the problem another way.
I resolved the contradictions
and understood the inconsistencies.
I found connection,
not with the God of common religion,
but with One who is always true and good—
an Infinite Good Person.
He is the Man behind the curtain of life,
the Mother caring for us day and night.
This Being often seems impossible,
yet this Good beyond the evil is our only hope.
I write this book,
not to tell you to believe,
but to show you what we have already seen
and help you put your puzzle pieces together.
There are patterns in the universe
larger than all authorities
and need no interpretation by experts.
These patterns will show you.
They will tell you of truth
deep within your soul.
They will explain eternity
and give you life,
(abundant life!)
forever more.
So fear not
to wrestle with questions deep,
or to tackle issues hard,
for here we argue not with philosophers,
but stay close to the heart.
We will start at zero
then go step by step
until we gaze eye to eye
and take the hand
of Infinity.*

—the author





Walking Home

Like many other hikers in the summer of 2013, Geraldine Largay walked north on the Appalachian Trail. Her goal was the finish line on Mount Katahdin, Maine, then husband and home. More than 200 miles from the end, Geraldine stepped off the trail to relieve herself. She never found her way back. She never returned home.

Two years later, a crew filming nature scenes in the wilderness stumbled upon an old tent with something inside. A warden soon arrived and uncovered the skeletal remains of Geraldine, along with her cell phone and notebook.

The story had been written and typed. For 26 days the hiker had tried to find the trail or a high spot to get a cell signal. Having given up hope of freeing herself, she had settled down to await rescue. Meanwhile, her food ran out. Geraldine passed away in her sleeping bag in her tent.

This poor woman's experience is real and instructive, because in a way we are all Geraldine.

We all want and look for love, family, and home. Our lives are a continual pursuit after these goals and a perpetual protection of what we may already have.

To reach our goal we follow trails. We follow patterns of behaviors and rules that we believe will best help us make the most progress. Even on our death beds we do not stop wanting these valuable things.

Along the way we need to take care of our needs, or we just need a break, or we get distracted. We step off the trail and then many of us wander in the random trees and leaves and bushes unable to return to our exit point.

That's all right, some think, because there are many others out here wandering in the dense forest of life. So they party, work, marry and raise families in the towns they build in the woods. Generations grow up thinking it is normal to live in the

directionless, random expanse. Meanwhile, true happiness is never experienced because the true goal is unrealized, forgotten, even scorned as a fairy tale.

Returning to Geraldine's experience, we discover that she started out with a friend who had a much better sense of direction than she had. However, the friend left due to a family emergency and Geraldine decided to continue alone.

Now the question is raised, Could the friend have saved Geraldine? Maybe, maybe not. Just like in life, we not only need the ability to follow a trail, but we also need to know which is the right trail.

In the towns the wanderers built in the forest, religions and philosophies sprang up to make new trails or to keep the memories of the old ones. Scientists of various disciplines became expert at making trails that successfully moved people from town to town. However, no one ever stood on the mountain at the end then returned to tell the people which trail took them to the top. The wandering and the debating never ended.

Geraldine tried a very good thing when she climbed hills to get cell signal. We also need to climb as high as possible to communicate with the One who lives in the home on the mountain of mountains. We need to climb our mountains to get a view of the network of trails. We need the big picture so we can figure out the correct trail.

Science and religion offer us patterns of knowledge that work in limited situations, but we need to see the pattern of patterns—how they link, where they go, what is needed to travel on them. There are many "friends" who willingly offer us advice (sometimes for a fee\$\$), but who has been to the mountain home and back? Who can we trust to tell us the right way? We need to be experts at sorting out the experts from the well-intentioned from the deceivers.

So how do you know if I am an expert and this book is true? You don't, but neither am I asking you to believe or trust me. I merely want to show you a map as big as the universe itself and milestones as sure as history. You do not need to buy any special tools from me or anyone else to read this map. Spend a few hours considering and discussing the ideas in this book and you will see for yourself.

That is my goal in this book, that you see for yourself.

Ponder the questions sprinkled throughout

these pages, then discuss, experiment, decide. After all, it's your life to live, your trail to hike, your love and family and home to find, or not.

This book is deep because it is based on choice. It is written for thinkers, not for those who react to hype. I do not write for those who seek approval from those who pose as thinkers, but who are really just conformers themselves.

No, I write this for those who are willing to view and weigh evidence on its own merits. I write for those who are willing to step back all the way to zero and look at everything afresh.

To build your own foundation as broad as the universe and as deep as the soul is a wonderful, empowering process that involves growth, mistakes, and humility along the way, but delivers immortal confidence and success in the end.

May you be richly challenged and rewarded, burdened and blessed as you seek, find, and walk the trail of life to our ultimate home on Mount Infinity.

♪ Quotes and Questions

"The trick to forgetting the big picture is to look at everything close up." — Chuck Palahniuk

"Learn to see the big picture. Often times we get tunnel vision and lose sight of the big picture and what we're really trying to accomplish." — Robert Cheeke

"If we climb high enough, we will reach a height from which tragedy ceases to look tragic." — Irvin Yalom

"Child, you have to learn to see things in the right proportions. Learn to see great things great and small things small." — Corrie Ten Boom

"However tight things are, you still need to have the big picture at the forefront of your mind." — Richard Branson

"You're going to make mistakes. The key is to learn from them as fast as possible and make changes as soon as you can. That's not always easy to do because ego and pride get in the way, but you have to put all that aside and look at the big picture." — Tiger Woods

The big picture and the details that make it often have tension between them. How do they relate? How do you keep them in balance in daily life?



Power of Patterns

As I said, we will start at zero, with the very basics and go step by step from there. The entire thinking of this whole series is based on patterns.

What is a pattern NOT?

The opposite of a pattern is total randomness. An example of randomness is flipping a coin. Flip it 100 or even 1,000 times and you cannot predict the next flip or find a repeating pattern that would explain the previous flips. The opposite of context, purpose, and truth is randomness, which hides information. Patterns unlock it.

Randomness is the foundation of encryption, which is what we use to hide context, purpose, and truth. We disguise messages in the noise of letters and numbers that appear randomly put together. When we talk in random gibberish our words make no sense nor meaning, because they do not fit into any context, communicate any purpose, or tell any truth. They are patternless.

What is a pattern?

A pattern can be simple repetition, like the tiles on a floor or the dashes on the highway or the seasons every year or the habit of eating three meals per day. A pattern is a relatively simple description that connects a collection of items. Instead of listing all the stuff in the attic, you might summarize it with, "It's all junk." Now I know to take it to the dump, not to your new home.

When I say, "Alphabet," all the 26 letters come to your mind. I don't need to list them. Patterns can name, summarize, and simplify so that we focus on an essential similarity.

Now let's look at progressive patterns, which are complete, ordered, and inspiring patterns.

Completeness takes us from beginning to end, and the end might be infinity. Order is the opposite of random. It is organized, clear to follow, and grows. Inspiration shows beauty, intelligence, power, simplicity. These are the ingredients of progressive patterns.

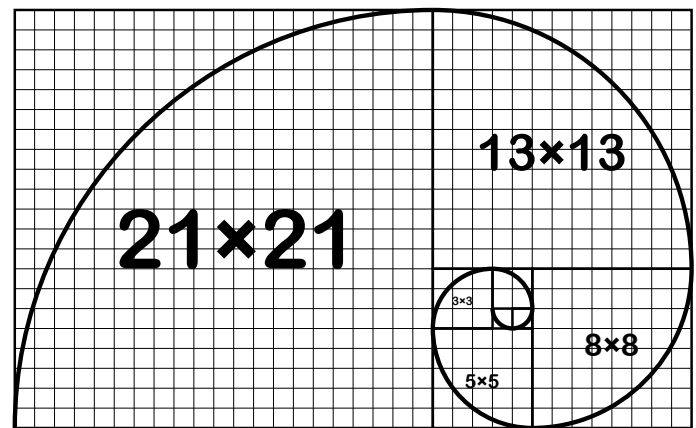
Let's look at an example: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, ...

You might say the pattern of regular counting numbers is so simple that it is not inspiring, but it is complete to infinity, very orderly, and has inspired algebra and calculus which have given us millions of inventions.

Another example: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8,

13, 21, 34, ...

At first glance, this appears to be a list of random numbers, but look closer at any two consecutive numbers and see how they add up to the next number. This is known as the Fibonacci Sequence. This special progressive pattern of numbers reveals itself in many interesting and inspiring ways. When you count opposite swirls in sunflowers or pine cones or pineapples, you get Fibonacci numbers. You get a similar curve in snail shells.



One could say that science is the discovery and application of patterns in nature. What appears random and confusing to the layperson makes perfect sense to the experienced scientist, engineer, mechanic, doctor.

Now look at the following table. Try to find a simple pattern hidden in the different numbers written with different sizes and shadings.

2	5	4	<u>13</u>	6
7	8	10	<u>10</u>	24
12	15	14	<u>15</u>	16

If you did not find the pattern in the above table, this hint in the gray cells should help you:

2	5	4	<u>13</u>	6
7	8	10	<u>10</u>	21
12	15	14	<u>15</u>	16

There are all sorts of distractions and disorderliness, but there is a pattern of even numbers as you read left to right and top to bottom. In spite of “errors” in communicating and translating, which show up in different sizes and shadings and formats, the message is still clear when you look at every other cell.

How do patterns help us?

Patterns make sense of the data. Patterns organize, connect, and summarize the ideas, events, and things we are considering. When something appears without a pattern, then we say it is random, chaotic, unpredictable, and confusing. In other words, it appears encrypted. When we wonder what is the meaning of life, we are saying life appears random and encrypted. We can’t detect patterns that lead us to hope.

When you speak to someone with a language foreign from yours, their speech is random nonsense. However, if you take time to learn their patterns of grammar and pronunciation, then it all begins to make sense. Even when

you don’t understand every little nuance of the stranger’s background that imposes slightly different meanings on their words, you can still communicate effectively for all practical purposes. As you become even more familiar with the language you can handle people who talk with lisps, or garble a few words, or speak to them on a bad phone connection. Patterns help us cut through the confusion of static and distractions.

Patterns set us free from experts and mind controllers. It might take an expert teacher to show us the pattern the first time, but ever after we can see the pattern for ourselves. Our source of truth becomes the pattern in the information rather than the reputation of the expert.

Once you see a pattern you can’t unsee it. Your foundation is now truth itself. You are an expert at seeing that pattern.

That does not mean we will now have a million experts saying a million different things. Everyone who sees the pattern will say the same thing, but in slightly different ways according to their personality. The truth of the pattern, once perceived, will cause greater, deeper unity than experts trying to make a population conform. Blind faith in experts cannot compare to seeing the truth and purpose of a pattern. Unity based on agreement is much more powerful

than conformity based on experts.

Hopefully I am beginning to make clear my approach and the reasons for my method. I simply want to show you patterns. The truth of the patterns will point you in the right direction. I don't need to tell you, "Follow me," or "Do what I tell you."

In this age of fake news, political power plays, mass hysteria, and conformity based education we need patterns as reliable as the universe itself.



Interactions

Journey through the universe

Let's take a journey in a science fiction star ship. Let's go above the atmosphere, out of the solar system, and above all the galaxies. Now look out on the vast universe and watch suns and stars and systems circling each other in harmonious interaction.

Now dive with me down to the microscopic realm of molecules, atoms, and quantum particles. Again we see swirling interactions without ceasing.

As we return to normal, we see that everything in between these two levels also interact. People talk to each other. Birds fly in the air. Fish swim in the water. Rain falls to the ground. The whole universe can be explained and understood in one word: interaction.

What is interaction?

Inter– between, among, reciprocal, together

Action– do, perform, move

Interaction is movement and/or influence between and among things that then reciprocates back and forth. A affects B and B affects A. Interaction requires at least two items and some kind of force or influence between them.

Interact is act and react. It is things bumping into things. It is objects pushing and pulling other objects. Interaction is people shaking hands and talking to each other, or fighting or competing. It is ideas connecting and relating to each other. From the microscopic to the galactic, in the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual realms, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that does not influence, or get influenced by, other things. Everything interacts.

From this simple observation we will unpack how the universe works, and then why sometimes it doesn't work. We will find a framework to understand eternity past, present, and future. Like a rainbow exploded from a raindrop, interactions will unfurl themselves into a fractal-like pattern that repeats at all sizes from the microscopic to the galactic, from the personal to the global, from the natural to the supernatural.

The basic concept of interactions will lead us to the motivations of the human heart and the personal patterns upon which they are built. That will then lead us to the really big issues of the universe, but first let's make sure we understand what physical interactions are and how they work.

Physical interactions

In kindergarten terms, a rock appears not to interact, but two colliding rocks are interacting.

Let's look at an example that strips everything down to the bare essentials. Pretend that the universe is empty—completely and absolutely empty. There are no galaxies, stars, planets, dust, atoms, subatomic particles or energy of any kind. There is absolutely nothing in the darkness except two small rocks which are placed at opposite corners billions of light years apart. Now sit, wait, and watch. It will take a long time, but slowly, almost imperceptibly, the rocks will start moving toward each other. Micrometers per year at first, but the acceleration is real. Velocities of miles per hour are reached after many millennia. Speed continues to

accumulate as the rocks fall toward each other. After millions of years of interacting at a distance, the mini asteroids crash into each other with velocities of thousands of miles per second.

However, the story does not end there. The exploding particles interact with each other. They bounce off each other and dance with each other through gravity. After millions of more years, the particles will in all likelihood clump together. The bouncing has stopped, but the interacting has not. The pieces are still attracting each other. Their movement happens to be static.

This means that our kindergarten explanation of the single rock not interacting needs to be expanded. Yes, it is not interacting with another rock, but all the molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles within the rock are interacting. You could say that the rock is an interaction, or a collection of interactions.

All matter is just congealed energy according to the equation $E=mc^2$. Packets of energy vibrate and wiggle and interact with themselves and each other to provide us with the sensation of "things" and "objects" and "real stuff." It is all just interactions interacting with our senses on a molecular level.

Look! Listen!

Where?

Here. There. Anywhere. Everywhere.

Interactions. See them?

Rain falls to the earth.

People shake hands.

Trees take in carbon dioxide.

Their cells transform it to oxygen.

The quarterback throws the ball.

The receiver catches it.

The electron orbits the nucleus.

The planets circle the sun.

Teachers teach. Students learn.

Stuff is sold. Stuff is bought.

Ideas are connected.

Inventions are created.

Lovers kiss.

Children play.

Galaxies spin.

The universe is an interacting system!

The magic of the universe is interaction. Science turns this magic into formulas for us so that

we can make better predictions and plans. There is no escaping physical interactions. It is not incorrect to view the whole universe as one giant, complex interaction.

If you still are not convinced, then try to find one thing, living or dead, animate or inanimate, that exists without being affected by something else. Nuclear and quantum forces hold things together at the smallest levels. Electromagnetic waves and cosmic radiation broadcast from one end of the universe to the other. Gravity emanates to and from all particles. Try to find something that exists without affecting or being affected, but you will discover that all things push and pull, ebb and flow, and dance together.

What causes physical interactions?

As you might have already guessed, force and power cause interaction. To grasp a penny, electromagnetic forces between my skin and the copper molecules enable me to feel. Chemical reactions empower my muscles to lift it. When I release it, the penny is attracted to the earth by gravity. When the coin hits the ground, kinetic energy is transformed into acoustical and thermal energy. Forces are like the springs connecting all objects and power is the energy that stretches those springs to start chain reactions of energy transformation.

Like an enormous game of pinball, energy is transmitted and transformed from object to object from one side of the universe to the other. The game never stops. Sometimes a person's choice starts a series of unexpected interactions, but after that the laws of physics take over and transformation after transformation cascade outward to the farthest reaches of the universe. Even after the tossed stone has sunk to the bottom and its ripples are no longer visible, the original energy is still spreading through water, air, and rock.

Physical interactions and their causes have their counterparts in the spiritual realm. We will look at those next.

In your words:

What is interaction? What are some interactions in the water cycle? What are some interactions in the digestive process, circulatory system, and other body systems? What people/tools/objects do you interact with on a regular basis?



Spiritual interactions

What are spiritual interactions?

Just as physical interactions are universal, so spiritual interactions are also universal. Similar to the physical being driven by force and power, spiritual interactions are expressions of choice.

They are not be confused with religious choices. Spiritual interactions reveal the heart and happen at the personal level. People love to interact with people, with the inner nature of people, with the origin and potential of people. We are by nature spiritual beings born to contemplate and connect with ourselves, others, life, and deity.

I use "spiritual" in a broad, inclusive sense. Not only does it contain the supernatural and metaphysical, but also includes those distinctly human aspects of emotion, social bonds, and connected thought. It is this higher, inner dimension of personhood that separates us from animals and gives us a sense of self-worth, deeper meaning, and noble aspirations. When these qualities work as they should, we feel good and purposeful. When they fail for too long, we descend to the level of addicted animals.

We can endure almost anything with friends and supporters, but can tolerate almost nothing when abandoned to ourselves. Our interactions with others give us courage, place, stability, meaning, and happiness. One on one or in groups we like to play games, talk, eat, work, party, rest, and just be.

Imagine yourself alone in a universe of rocks and plants, but no people. You would soon have a deep and unexplainable loneliness and depression. Without anyone telling you or teaching you, you would wonder what was the point of living. You would search for someone like yourself. You would start a spiritual quest for meaning and relationship simply because you are a person with a nature that

seeks and thrives on interaction with others.

I am an interactive being. Unending life without interaction, physical or spiritual, is not a happy life for me. An eternity with physical interactions, but no personal interactions, is nice for a rock, but not for me. I can kiss a rock, but it cannot bond with me on personal levels. I can talk to a rock, but it cannot listen to me and communicate shared experiences. I can physically interact with the rock — like throwing it far away — but I cannot spiritually interact with it.

What motivates spiritual interactions?

In the physical world, fuel powers cars and trucks, food energizes the body, the basic forces operate the universe. What drives a decision? What energizes a soul? From my research, faith, hope, and love motivate a person's choices.

Every act from conversing to hugging to yelling to working has a motive. Our actions come from thoughts and feelings which spring from our beliefs, desires, and values — faith, hope, and love.

Let's start with an obvious example. Two people get married because they trust and love each other and hope to spend a long, happy life together.

A mundane example would be brushing one's teeth. I value (love) my teeth and do not want to lose them to cavities. Because of what I have been taught, I believe brushing helps me toward that goal, and I obviously hope to achieve it.

We take vacations because we believe we need a break. We hope to gain rest and energy. We love feeling good and strong.

We go to work because we believe we will get paid and we trust our employers to pay us. We hope this will give us a better life and provide for us and others because we love them. Some love their work.

We trust and love our friends and hope to maintain close relationships with them.

Faith, hope, and love work on the negative side also. A mother does not love changing diapers, in fact, she detests it. However, she hopes and believes in the cleanliness and health of her baby. Therefore, she changes the diapers because she loves her baby.

A dark example would be the serial killer so in love with himself and the feeling of power that he believes, and hopes, he can get away with killing. Also, the cheater believes true love is found behind

the back of the faithful lover and hopes to live the double life without consequence. In the case of the mother, the negative is in the external environmental conditions. Her motives toward her child are pure and unselfish. However, the killer and the adulterer are harming other people by their selfish choices.

Examine the decisions you make today. What beliefs, what hopes (profound or mundane) prompted the choices? What do you value, treasure, and love and how does that move you to make the decisions you make? On the flip side, try to find a decision, situation, or issue that does not involve any of these motivations.

In our search for life's answers we are already able to draw one conclusion. Solution will be found in the midst of interaction, not in emptiness. There are some religions/philosophies that teach the student to empty one's mind of all thought, and that when complete emptiness is achieved then ultimate insight is reached. That is just the opposite of the truth. A universe based entirely on interaction can only be understood by gathering and connecting knowledge, wisdom, and love.

Synonyms

I use the words "faith" and "hope" and "love" in a categorical sense, not in a precise we-always-experience-it-exactly-like-this sort of way. For example, faith has a clear dual meaning. It can be used in the sense of an intellectual belief or conviction. It can also be used in the sense of personal trust, which begins to overlap with love. So, like most words in most languages, they each have meaning but are fuzzy around the edges. Therefore, we need to comprehend the underlying concept and not rely on a surface literalness.

Faith

trust; believe; conviction;
hold to principles; religious belief;
scientific belief; cultural mindset
trust in someone or something
freedom from doubt; to "really know"
belief that something is true
chosen perspective on information
loyalty or allegiance to a cause or person;
confidence that some event will happen;
assurance in your position in a relationship;
conviction in the rightness of a principle

Hope

expectation; optimism; desire; wish
anticipation; holding to a promise
favorable prospects
possibility of future success
feeling that some desire will be fulfilled;
the object on which expectations are centered;
belief/feeling/intuition that future will get
better; outlook that things will become more favorable

Love

give unselfishly
respect; reverence; adore
cherish; desire; affection; appreciate
enamored with; get pleasure from
to bestow grace (undeserved benefits)
to value someone or something
to hold dear; to greatly enjoy
to treasure; to appreciate
do what is eternally good for others

Antonyms

Faith, hope, and love come in negative flavors, also. Distrust is the opposite of trust, for example. And the negatives are not necessarily bad. It is good to distrust an untrustworthy person. It is good to hate bad things. Notice the double negatives. The key is the context or the object. It is good to hope that a criminal fails. It is bad when we give up all hope and suffer depression or even commit suicide.

Some of the antonyms below might not be complete opposites. They might be twisted or have partial meanings. For example, gullible is faith based on poor, missing, or fake evidence. Some will categorize it as opposite, others as partial, but such precision does not matter. We only need the basic concepts for practical purposes.

Faith

Doubt; skepticism; distrust; dubious
Gullible; naive; credulous
Suspicious; judgmental; wary

Hope

Despair; pessimistic; despondent
Disheartened; resigned; discouraged
Disappointed; dismayed

Love

Hate; fear; prejudice; bigotry
 Intense dislike; antipathy; aversion
 Abhor; condemn; hostile; enmity
 Scorn; detest; despise; loathe

While we can talk about faith, hope, and love as things, they are really methods of connecting, and interactions are connections in motion. However, since faith, hope, and love also have a negative side, the three basic motivations are also ways of disconnecting. It would be helpful to examine them individually.

***In your words:***

Expand the synonyms/antonyms lists. Find positive and negative examples. What is a person? Are the non-religious spiritual? What if you were sentenced to solitary confinement forever?



Faith

The boy became a believer as he watched the man take a wheelbarrow back and forth across the high wire. The boy then got in the wheelbarrow and trusted himself to the man.

Are there different kinds of faith?

Faith is a religious sounding word, but all disciplines from science to philosophy to politics to sports use it and its synonyms. I can trust God and I can trust my atheist soldier buddy to rescue me. I can believe that black cats crossing my path doom me or I can have faith that science and statistics can provide a more accurate explanation. The basic concept of faith is universal.

My faith can be rational or irrational. In other words, I can have faith based on reason and evidence, or not. For example, I can get in an airplane and chase the sun around a round world, or I can

believe in a flat earth simply because a charismatic teacher told me there is a conspiracy. My faith can be dogmatic and based on authority because my church tells me what to believe. My beliefs can be limited to the mechanistic physical laws and properties discoverable by scientific research or I can trust whatever my drug-induced mind can imagine. I can believe whatever I want to believe simply because I choose to believe it for no reason at all. Faith can be totally blind and gullible, or it can inductively trust in tomorrow's sun because of all the sunny yesterdays.

Who do you trust? How much?**Why?**

Imagine a guy with no trust at all. He would have no friends because he is completely paranoid. His family is long abandoned because he is convinced they do not care for him. All of his movements and decisions are slow because he is so ridden with anxiety that he thinks his bed will break at any moment, the chair will fall apart, and his clothes are unable to stay together. He delicately tests the ground before he makes his next step. He cannot use technology because he is unable to test everything thoroughly before buying it. He simply cannot trust. He simply cannot look back at all that he has done before and trust that some, most, or all of it will be repeated. He is always afraid that today is his last because he has no assurance the sun will rise tomorrow.

Faith is a good thing. It lets us see into the cloudy future with reasonable expectations and it helps us relax in the present. Sure, there are let-downs that shake our faith, but so much of our lives are now routine because long ago we decided to trust others, to trust the laws and rhythms of nature, to trust the technology we use and the makers of that technology. Faith, trust, confidence, and assuming the repeatable will repeat is an old foundation upon which we build new experiences. We are not constantly reinventing the wheel. We now use it to make new things and go to new places. Faith becomes the foundation for hope.

Faith can also be a bad thing when it is directed towards selfish goals. Adolf Hitler believed in the dominance of the blue-eyed, blond-haired German and plunged the world into the nightmare of World War II with its concentration camps and atom bombs. 9/11 happened because bombers be-

lieved their cause justified the killing of innocent people. Theft occurs because someone believes your stuff is their stuff.

Negative faith is selfish, egotistical, I-don't-need-anyone belief. It disconnects people from each other. Negative faith ("only my beliefs count") can be harmful when it attacks others for their beliefs. Positive faith can be naive because it is early in the learning curve, but it will never be so arrogant as to deny someone else the right to believe.

Faith also turns negative when it turns inward because a person has been hurt and betrayed. In this case, however weak self may be, self is the only one to be trusted because it is believed self is the only one who will not hurt self.

All these examples, and the many more brought to mind, cause us to believe that all of us always believe something. We always trust someone, something, or ourselves. Positive or negative, scientific or religious, rational or irrational, we always have faith and make choices based on that faith. The same applies to hope and love.

🎵 Quotes and Questions

"To have faith is to trust yourself to the water. When you swim you don't grab hold of the water, because if you do you will sink and drown. Instead you relax, and float." (Alan Watts)

"I believe in everything until it's disproved. So I believe in fairies, the myths, dragons. It all exists, even if it's in your mind." (John Lennon) Is he talking about gullible, imaginary faith?

"A casual stroll through the lunatic asylum shows that faith does not prove anything." (F. Nietzsche) Did this statement prove anything? How does faith relate to proof relate to reasoned judgment?

"None of us knows what might happen even the next minute, yet still we go forward. Because we trust. Because we have Faith." (Paulo Coelho)

"Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." (Carl Sagan) If extraordinary evidence exists, is the way opened for extraordinary faith?

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." (Martin Luther King, Jr.) Faith, by definition, has an element of blindness to it. But should it be so blind that it randomly picks which staircase to climb without evidence that it is the correct one?



Hope

High hopes compelled the kids to run to the Christmas tree piled high with presents. The sad wife hoped her dead soldier-husband would revive. Everyone in the crowd hoped they had the winning lottery ticket.

Are there different kinds or levels of hope?

Hope, like faith, can be rational or irrational. I hope to buy a nice car after working all year versus hoping to turn into an eagle because I leave a written prayer under the church door for nine days in a row. (Yes, I admit, I fell for that when I was a kid.)

Like the crisp, gentle dawn after a stormy night, hope can rise gradually or it can be dumped on us all at once after winning the lottery. Either way, hope gives us a future focus, an anticipation that today will be better than yesterday, and tomorrow will be better than today. Hope is belief wrapped in the emotion of anticipation. Hope is faith wrapped in desire, even if we're tired.

Why do you get out of bed in the morning? "Because I have to." Why do you have to? "Because I need to work and earn money." Why? "So I can spend it." Granted, your work may be boring, even painful, but you work each day to earn money to provide for you (and possibly others) the things that hopefully will sustain, protect, entertain, and give you joy and comfort. Hope, however dim, however vague and ill-defined, drives us to survive and to wait for something better. At a minimum, hope keeps us alive.

Can we survive without hope?

But what happens when tomorrow turns out worse than today? We tend to sink into despair and refuse to hope. With Alexander Pope we say, "Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed." This attitude hardens our hearts and darkens our days and darkens the lives of those around us. We run the risk of being caught in the vortex of negative self-fulfilling prophecies.

When all hope is gone we just roll over and wait for death, or hastily commit suicide. (This is why we must really listen when we ask, How are you? Also, if you or someone you know is suicidal, seek help.) Why continue into the future when we perceive nothing better in the future? As we see the physical, political, and psychological world breaking down around us, it is important that we find a light in the dark tunnel that will lead us to the opening.

Hope's strong emotional component makes it difficult to precisely define, but the difference between feelings of hope versus hopelessness are easy to tell. Dictionaries list "despair" as an antonym of "hope." Is despair the negative opposite of hope or the draining of hope to the zero level? Or is it the shifting of hope from something to nothing because nothing is better than something worse?

What about selfish hope at the expense of others' hope?

In other words, if I step on you to make my way up the ladder is that positive or negative? I think we would all agree it is negative. The most positive hope is universal where I hope the best for everyone. However, if my survival negates your survival, then my hope negates your hope. In these situations it is hard to even call it hope. Sometimes the will to survive is mere selfishness when the living crawl callously over the dying. Yet, it is a sort of hope—for the survivor.

We all seem to have this gut-level, rock-bottom survival instinct, which is hope at its minimum, but it often gets us through. We have no idea why we continue through the suffering, abuse, and terrible odds, but there seems to be this dim foggy light in the heart of each of us that points the way forward and urges us onward. Why? We often don't know. We just go... hoping, always hoping.

Eternal, infinite hope

The fundamental premise of this book is that we want eternity. The human condition is a quest for a way up, a way out, and a way forward — without end. No one wants to die, not even depressed people. We all want to live and grow and share happiness together. Therefore, our goal in this book is to find a way above and beyond death to truly live.

*Eternity! Infinite time. Endless ages.
A sun always on the rise, never falling into dark.
Fountain of youth. Tree of life. Immortality.
Ever feeling fresh in the glory of unending
morning.
Heaven. Nirvana. Paradise. Valhalla. Promised
land.
Swords into plowshares. Lions lay down with
lambs.
Peace. Contentment. Safety.
We want it. We yearn for it.
More than mere gazing at the stars,
we want to live among the galaxies
and pick flowers on other worlds.
We want to be one with the universe
and the universe to be one, forever.*

Quotes and Questions

"The capacity for hope is the most significant fact of life. It provides human beings with a sense of destination and the energy to get started." (Norman Cousins)

"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence." (Helen Keller)

Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison for his fight against apartheid in South Africa. Four years after his release, apartheid was dismantled and he was elected president. He said, "I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death."

"A leader is a dealer in hope." (Napoleon)

"You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us. And the

world will live as one.” (John Lennon) How does hope give birth to dreams? How do dreams relate to goals?

“Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.” (Alexander Pope) Can there be hope without risk of disappointment?

“My life is a perfect graveyard of buried hopes.” (Anne of Green Gables) Who could have phrased this better than the queen of drama herself?! What level of hope was she feeling?

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.” (Desmond Tutu)

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” (Martin Luther King, Jr.)



Love

“I love you,” said the mother to the child, and the pretty young woman to the old billionaire, and the addict to his needle, and the kids to their ice cream.

Why is love so important? Are there different kinds of love?

“Love is an irresistible desire to be irresistibly desired.” (Robert Frost)

To love and be loved, this is the goal, this is the ultimate, for romantic and hardhearted alike. In fact, we become hardhearted because of a past failure of love. It is not that we don't want to love. We are afraid to love or ask for love, then be rejected.

We are humans. We are hard wired to connect to each other in confidence, respect, and mutual admiration. When we fall into prejudice, it is not that we do not want to love. No, we want to love, but we are afraid of the unknown, afraid to love the unknown.

We often think of hate as an opposite of love, which it is, but fear is also an opposite. Fear and love both have the element of respect, even rever-

ence. Hate, like love, has the elements of attention and attachment. When I let go of fear, I let go of the inflated value I placed on a person. When I let go of hate, I let go of resentment and revenge. In both cases, I become free.

Freedom is at the core of love, because true, sincere love is not forced. I did not marry my wife because her dad held a shotgun to my head. I married her because she freely chose to place value on me above all others, and I upon her. Sure, we also have similar beliefs and hopes, and we love to do similar things, but if that was it, then we are just one among many good friends. To be elevated to the position of one-and-only by another is true love.

Of course, love is not limited to marriage. Family, friends, co-workers, and society are larger circles of connection. Our relationships with individuals in each of those rings are different degrees of attachment, mutual respect, and shared experiences. What makes each of them rewarding is when they are freely chosen, motivated by the heart and not forced by circumstances.

There is also mundane love, which comes in the form of tastes and preferences. “I love pizza. I want to marry it, but it would just be to eat her family at the wedding.” (Mike Birbiglia)

Even this type of love retains freedom at its core. I can be forced to eat pizza, but I cannot be forced to love it. You can be forced to exercise good behavior towards me, but you cannot be forced to love me.

What is the highest form of love?

Imagine a world where unselfish love prompted every action of every relationship. The love we give would be the love we would receive. At home, at work, at the store, at the traffic light, wherever, we would put each other first with courtesy. We would always feel well thought of, taken care of, and provided for. We could always give because we know we would always receive. We would never worry about having too little. We would never worry about ourselves, because others would do that for us.

When everyone is unselfish, there is no need for selfishness. Fear, hate, and prejudice melt away in the growing experience of loving concern and compassion. Our vision, individually and collectively, would expand beyond instant gratification and the need of the moment. Those moments

would link together to launch us to bigger unity and deeper communication.

Which leads us to my favorite definition of love: Doing what is eternally best for everyone. At that level, love becomes a principled mixture of wisdom and compassion. We often give in to short term indulgence (of ourselves and others) that leads to long term suffering or failure. When we really care for each other (when we are not just reacting because we don't want to be bothered) true love takes the time to listen, learn, plan, and help towards goals that permanently benefit someone else. Love takes the time to find the solution that might require temporary pain and sacrifice, but results in long term growth for everyone at no one's lasting expense.

It may seem impossible that everyone could win in a world of limited resources, but this is only because we limit our thinking and feeling. True love expands "me" to "my group" to "everyone." Wise love expands "right now" to "long term" to "forever." This is all possible when we choose to replace selfish love with unselfish love. When I invest in others' growth, and they invest in mine, then we all get the growth we need and want without the damaging side effects of ego, stinginess, discontent, hypocrisy, self serving, and evil desire.

What is the opposite of love?

"Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment." (Mahatma Gandhi)

"I have decided to stick to love...Hate is too great a burden to bear." (Martin Luther King Jr)

"The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference." (Elie Wiesel)

"At first I assumed hate was the opposite of love. But it isn't. The opposite of love is indifference." (Helen Fisher)

Love is so multi-faceted, that all three opposites in the quotes above are correct: fear, hate, indifference. However, there seems to be a different point of view with indifference. Hate and fear are viewed from the victim's or recipient's view point, while indifference is viewed from the giver's perspective. How do these positives and negatives fit together?

Quotes and Questions

"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage." (Lao Tzu)

"Love has reasons which reason cannot understand." (Blaise Pascal)

"One is loved because one is loved. No reason is needed for loving." (Paulo Coelho)

Here is a key distinction between love versus faith or hope. Both faith and hope need good, real reasons to exist in a healthy way. Love needs no reason at all or can even overlook negative reasons. Love can give even in the face of hatred and indifference. Love can bestow value on the worthless. Love can change a negative pattern to a positive.

"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive." (Dalai Lama)

"Where there is love there is life." (M. Gandhi)

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable." (C.S. Lewis)

"Some women choose to follow men, and some women choose to follow their dreams. If you're wondering which way to go, remember that your career will never wake up and tell you that it doesn't love you anymore." (Lady Gaga) Perhaps she was betrayed by the vulnerability that C.S. Lewis wrote about?

"A flower cannot blossom without sunshine, and man cannot live without love." (Max Muller)

"Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone — we find it with another." (Thomas Merton)

Can anyone be a full hermit all their life? Is it true that no one is an island without bridges, that no one is a self-contained unit of all talents and resources? Is life and love positive personal interaction?



Checkpoint

Physical and spiritual interactions are universal. Force and energy drive physical interactions, while choice based on faith, hope, and love motivates spiritual interactions. This is an inescapable, universal pattern. However, faith, hope, and love themselves arise out of patterns.



Predictable patterns

You know the story of the boy who cried, "Wolf!" while watching the villagers' sheep. He decided to have some fun and yelled out the warning when there was no wolf to get them all running out to the field. Of course, they were upset with him when they discovered it was a false alarm. We do not know how many times it took until the villagers stopped responding. Some might have stopped after the third time, others after the fourth, and maybe some lasted until the ninth. Whatever the case may be, when a wolf really came, the boy realized to his dismay that he had established a pattern and caused the villagers to believe all his yells were false alarms. The villagers had not predetermined to believe. They did not beg the shepherd, "Increase our faith." They just believed, because that is the natural, reasonable response to a predictable pattern, especially when very predictable.

How do patterns and exceptions affect our beliefs?

The soil of predictability (positive or negative) naturally gives rise to trust (positive or negative). We go to bed every night so firmly believing that the morning will come that we don't even think about. We don't just believe—we know. We know it so deep down, so ingrained, that we don't even consider ourselves believers. We take the morning sunrise for granted. We don't preach it. We don't make dogmas about it. It is so predictable that we shape our lives around it—past, present, and future—naturally, without argumentation, doubt, or hesitation. The evidence is so consistent and overwhelming that only a fool would disbelieve.

But not all patterns are so invariable. Take the weather, for instance. When we think of Florida we think of warm sunshine and some afternoon rains. Once in a while it gets hurricanes in late summer. The state has a weather pattern within a range. The price of boarding up the house every ten years is worth the pleasant weather the rest of the time. However, if Florida sometimes froze 3 months in a year and got buried under five feet of snow, faith would be shaken and many residents would move away. Predictability builds faith, while major or persistent exceptions destroy faith.

This same principle holds with people. We don't expect perfection from others, but neither do we expect major exceptions. My wife might accidentally drop a dish on the floor once in a great while, but if the police knocked on my door charging that my wife went on a rampage with an ax in the neighbor's house, I would say they have the wrong door. It would be out of character for my wife. It would be far outside the predictable range of her known behavior for me to readily accept.

Why do we trust patterns?

Predictability naturally leads to belief. It is almost unavoidable. Our brains seem hard-wired to trust. This takes place on both a conscious and unconscious level. We can always choose to believe or disbelieve, but always the mind is building a framework, a belief system, into which we incorporate our conclusions. This is how we make sense of our world.

Even a disbelief and skepticism is a belief. For example, after so many times of being lied to by a friend, I gradually disbelieve in our friendship. That

is because I gradually come to believe that the person is a liar out to take advantage of me. I always disbelieve something because I think I have a bigger, more predictable pattern to substantiate a different belief.

Our beliefs change because our perception of patterns in reality change, and information is what changes our perceptions. If we are at all reflective, we are constantly evaluating the predictability of the patterns that give rise to our beliefs. As we see the reliability factor change we change our beliefs accordingly. When we think we have seen enough to conclude a range of expectations than we form a belief. Until that time we hold it in abeyance. Which, of course, is also a belief based on our belief that we lack deciding information.

This brings us full circle to the fact that predictability gives rise to faith, and even unpredictability gives rise to faith, but in a negative sense. When I have too many conflicting observations to trust that you are a trustworthy person, I therefore believe that you are potentially untrustworthy and therefore keep my distance. Furthermore, because I have encountered so many untrustworthy people in my life, I begin assuming every stranger I meet is untrustworthy.

What patterns does eternity need?

In its raw, generic form, predictability breeds faith, but taken a step further, predictable goodness grows trust in its warmest, most confiding, most connecting form. We do not want merely an eternity of various beliefs collected about various things. We want an eternity where human relationships are open and intimate and reliable. We want an eternity where physical interactions are safe and invigorating. Therefore, we need an eternity of unexceptionally good predictable patterns.

One contrary exception will cause us to form a contrary belief. "Eternity is great, but..." That one single contradictory belief, based on one single exception to the pattern, gives rise to doubt and automatically excludes perfect trust. There is always a reservation, a question, a nagging doubt. That belief becomes part of our framework which in turn interprets new information and sooner or later, we will interpret something negatively. That negative belief, like all beliefs, will express itself in action. One negative action will influence others to believe and act negatively, then perfect good collapses into

a sinkhole of evil.

We are so accustomed to contrary patterns, and adapting to survive in the face of contrary patterns, that we cannot wrap our minds around a perfectly good set of patterns. That just seems so impossible. Yet, impossible or not, perfectly good predictable patterns are absolutely essential if eternity is to avoid distrust, separation, suffering, and ultimately, death.

Can we have faith without a pattern?

There is such a thing as blind faith or dogmatic faith. We do this when we throw caution to the wind and get into a stranger's car in spite of signs telling us we shouldn't. We exercise dogmatic faith when we do something just because this is the way it has always been done, or "this is what the expert told me to do." There is always an authority ready to tell us what to believe, but how do we know if the so-called expert is really trustworthy? We often blindly assume that what our church or culture or leadership is telling us is what we should do, but how do we know that our they are correct in the greater scheme of things?

At some point a pattern is so large that it seems unreasonable not to believe, but at the other end of the spectrum, a pattern can be so small or contradictory that it is unreasonable to trust. At what point is there too little evidence to make the leap of faith? The answer will vary case by case, but when there is too little evidence we begin experiencing the pains and consequences of gullibility.



In your words:

When you were a child, how much of your faith was based authority vs patterns? What is the ratio now? Give an example of a pattern building your trust and of an exception breaking your trust. Why is faith often thought to be in opposition to science?



Progressive patterns

As the children climbed the stairs they kept finding more candy on each floor. Their hopes grew brighter each time. Then they reached the top floor.

The newlyweds set off on their honeymoon with great anticipation of the weeks and years to come. They discovered new things about each other and enjoyed new activities together. Then there was too much work, too many bills, too many affairs. Divorce papers were written and signed.

The explorers uncovered the mysteries of the jungles, mountains, oceans, and skies. Then they discovered that there was nothing left to discover.

Did you feel that all of these examples built you up only to drop you with a thud?

What happens to hope when a pattern ends?

As we consider eternity, we must consider its patterns. They must progress to infinity or we will be stuck under a ceiling blocking our achievement. It really doesn't matter how low or high is the ceiling. When the possibility of something better ends, hope evaporates and boredom begins. What does a mountain climber do when he climbs the last mountain? What does anyone do when the yellow brick road leads to a yellow brick wall?

Why does hope need eternity? Why does hope need progressive, not static, patterns?

Hope is future oriented. When a better future disappears, hope must also disappear. Either the future stops or it goes on endlessly.

When athletes plateau, they try something else. When people face mid-life crises, they look elsewhere. When we are stuck in a rut, others try to encourage us with new possibilities. After ex-

plorers map a territory, they move on to new mysteries.

But what do we do with eternity in a limited universe with limited progressive patterns? What do we do when progress hits the ceiling and there is no way to break through? Such a situation is hard to imagine from here, but a trillion years from now when we hit that ceiling, then eternity is going to look very boring, very bleak. The apparently endless day that started with an inspiring sunrise now retires into a dim, unending twilight.

When progress ends, hope ends. When growth and improvement in one area are exhausted, then we need a gateway to new areas with new potential. That is the way hope works. That is the only way hope works. Hope is not static. It is not a dull routine. It is not even a dull good routine. Hope reaches out and up and forward. It grasps the dreams and possibilities of the infinite future and climbs the heights of wonderful.

Hope is not mere variety. It is not being stuck in a good relationship with good people doing the same collection of good things over and over again. No matter how large the set of activities, eternity is a long time and will exhaust all bucket lists. No matter how large the palette of paint, infinite time will drain all colors of vibrancy. Even with a million things to do, eternity guarantees that we will inevitably say about all of them, "Been there. Done that."

We need predictability for faith, but we also need the wonder, mystery, and newness of progressive patterns so our hope can continually burn brighter.

Can hope survive without something new?

Hope is not based on just a varied pattern. It springs from a progressive pattern. It is based on variety with the element of new growth, and that growth must be meaningful to the human heart.

For example, we teach our children to make their breakfast by pouring milk on cereal. When they become more capable, we teach them how to make sandwiches, then entire meals. Our hope burns bright as we watch their talents grow. Finally, at some point, we expect them to be creative without us, to be more than robotic chefs following our recipes.

Life and eternity is not just about making big-

ger meals. It is also about learning how to serve and share meals with others to help make and grow friendships — personal interactions. Our talents lack meaning when focused on our own selfish pleasure, but meaning and pleasure blossom as we contribute to the growth of others who then contribute back to us. Meaningful growth is the basis of eternal hope.

Without meaningful growth, our stories become stale and repetitive. They lose significance when they lose progressiveness. It is like being in the same coffee shop telling the same jokes year after year because we have run out of purpose. And, sooner or later, this must happen whenever we are dealing with something less than infinity.

Why is “really big” not enough for hope?

Real hope sees no walls, only the dreams beyond the horizon. Finiteness is the killer of hope because it puts boundaries on possibilities and potentials. Even if the prison fence is a light year away, the fact of the fence puts an end to hope. Prisoners are hopeful only when they have prospect of release. Endless hope feels no limits, because there are no limits.

Patterns need to be not only predictable, like a wide straight road with no potholes, but they also need to be progressive, like a road climbing a mountain. Patterns need to be full of the growth that is the sign of life and vitality. The road is not only to be a good, safe road, but it is to lead through and to places that become more wonderful through the years. Hope travels towards an infinite destination and revels in the upward journey. Anything less, anything limited, anything that ends, destroys hope, sooner or later.

🧠 In your words:

What gives you hope for tomorrow, next week, next year, next life? Is it better to tell someone to have hope or to show them a progressive pattern?



Profitable patterns

What makes you love someone?

He asked her out. She thought, I'll try anything once. He brought her flowers. She was delighted. He listened to her and treated her like a lady. She decided she liked him. They discovered they had common interests and goals and enjoyed each others company, and he was really good with kids. After a long time of consistently good experiences, she gave him her heart and said, I do.

The owner demanded top notch work from each of his employees, but treated them fairly and paid them well. He trained them in all the aspects of the job and promoted them as openings became available. Almost like sons and daughters in a family, the employees grew in skill and loyalty which made the company hum along and produce high quality results.

What makes you realize that you like, love, or respect someone?

They happened to sit down at separate tables, but faced one another with no one in between. Their eyes met. It was love at first sight. Sixty years later they were still happily married. True story.

How does love (or our perception of it) change over time?

Flowers, fancy restaurants, expensive gifts, then a trip to Las Vegas. The girl was sure the man loved her, but she never returned. She was sold as a sex slave and hated the man for the rest of her life. True story.

The selfish boy was vaguely appreciative of the food, clothing, and house dad provided. Years later, the young man found out that his father had worked two back breaking jobs to provide for the family while fighting cancer. He now loved his dad like never before.

What do contradictions do to patterns? What does selfishness do to love?

We can be addicted and deceived by things and people that are bad for us, but we never truly like or love them. If we don't feel that we have profited, then we don't love. I use "profit" as a memory device (predictable, progressive, profitable) signifying a lot more than just financial gain. Everything physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual is included. A baby profits from the care of his mother. A wife profits from the affection of her husband who in turn profits from her affection. A country profits from the sacrifice of its soldiers. Love grows in the heart of the receiver every time someone gives out of kindness.

On the other hand, hatred or fear grow in response to an unprofitable pattern. Just ask the child who was raised in an abusive home or ask the battered wife or survey the population under a tyrant.

This idea that love grows in response to the pattern feeding it seems quite normal and rational, but popular media with its penchant to offer us instant gratification would have us believe that love ramps rapidly, almost instantaneously. The script and camera angles pretend that deep love has been achieved on the basis of superficial acquaintance. Of course, if the movie were extended from two hours to two years, then most of them would end very differently. Real love is rarely seen on the silver screen.

Can we love someone who gives us negative patterns?

In other words, can we love our enemies? Can we profit them even though they do not profit us? Are there wise and foolish ways of loving our enemies?

Love grows in profitable patterns

There once was a horse that walked along everyday following the carrot dangled in front of its face. It was a very predictable pattern that the horse could count on. It was also a progressive pattern because everyday a slightly larger carrot was dangled. However, the horse never got to eat the prize. It got thinner and weaker all the while believing in, and hoping for, the carrot. The pattern

lacked profitability.

Sometimes our lives are no different from the poor horse's. We work every day. We play on the weekends. Yet, nothing satisfies. More precisely, no one satisfies. We seek, but never find, the experience of truly loving and being loved. Whether we own a little or a lot, we feel our lives are unprofitable.

If there were only one person on the planet, it would be possible for her to have full faith and hope. Predictability and progressiveness can be solo experiences. However, if love is to be experienced to its fullest (beyond, "I love strawberries, swimming, and the color green") then at least one other person is required. Love is the giving and the sharing of one's time, attention, energy, affection, thought, loyalty, and resources. Love does not exist as an abstract concept. It lives in the giving and receiving of self with another person.

Let's say two kids each have a quarter. They agree to trade their quarters to each other. Obviously, neither of them profits financially, but each of them profits emotionally and spiritually. They interacted with each other in a spirit of fair trade and, probably, play. They both profited from each other by spending time with each other and doing something together. Both kids are happy and fulfilled.

That was a little illustration, but it is not much different on the adult level (at least it does not need to be). Two people get together and agree to trade one set of resources for another. This can be done in a spirit of competition (negative love) or in a spirit of mutual respect and care. Whether the deal is money for goods, time for resources, or any other combination, the deal is profitable for both when both think they have received fair value. Also, though trading equal values, each gains personally from the other.

Eternity cannot survive with winners and losers. Everyone must give. Everyone must receive. Everyone must experience an unending pattern of profitability, of value, of fulfillment and reward. This experience must pervade all dimensions of human existence. The universe must be an entirely friendly, safe, and fun place.

And the fun cannot have any adverse side effects. No hangovers allowed. No instant gratification followed by illness or injury is permitted. The universe and its inhabitants progress from good to

greater good, happiness to greater happiness, predictably and without exception.

Why? One negative begets another negative. One evil spawns another evil. Either the universe is perfectly good with perfect patterns or it isn't. If it isn't, then why isn't it perfect and how much imperfection will be allowed and who will suffer and who won't suffer, and on and on and on. It would not be long until we find ourselves back in this meaningless mess we face today.

Love thrives on profitable patterns. Hate, fear, jealousy, prejudice, greed, immorality, violence, cruelty, and every other form of selfishness springs from patterns that are less than profitable for everybody.

By beholding we become changed. If I see cheating, I am moved to cheat. If I see stealing, I am influenced to steal. If I see any vice that matches any disposition within me, then I tend to take up that vice. However, if I receive love, then I am inspired to give love. By being on the receiving end of a profitable pattern, I tend to contribute back to that pattern and reinforce it and expand it. A perfect profitable pattern is not merely a circle of sharing. It is a spiral growing ever upward and outward in an endless virtuous cycle of growing, deepening love.

In your words:

Can true love be turned on and off for reward and punishment? If I gain from someone's love, isn't that selfish?



Source of patterns

With notable exceptions, such as disasters and droughts, nature is quite predictable. Science exists because of this predictability. We build air conditioned homes in Florida and igloos in Alaska because of this predictability. As familiar as its seasons, we are pretty comfortable living in nature's

ebb and flow of energy and resources.

Technology then comes along to give us progress. Over the last few centuries, we have produced more, created more, discovered more, traveled more, and lived longer than our ancestors. We have cured some diseases and put men on the moon. The mental prowess of humanity harnessing nature's power has made many wonderful accomplishments and points us toward a future of astronomical achievement.

On a material level we have profited from the universe's resources. Our civilization far surpasses anything that has come before us. Our standard of living is a thousandfold greater than the generations that scratched in the dirt with crude implements.

Generally, physical power gives us physical predictability, technological progress, and materialistic profitability. What about the spiritual level? How are we doing individually and globally?

We all know that money cannot buy us happiness or love. That is because personal patterns can only be made by people. Only a person can believe in me, see my potential, and love me for all I am worth, and choose it day after day, year after year. Only a person can give me a role model I can look up to. Only a person can be my friend, guide, hero, or lover. And they earn that right by becoming a long term demonstration of predictable, progressive, profitable patterns.

I love my dad, not only because he provides me food at every meal, but because he encourages and guides me. I love my mom, not only because she washes my clothes, but because she nurtures me and teaches me compassion. I love my friends, not just because they give me gifts, but they also give me belonging. Without the physical I would die. Without the spiritual I would be an animal. But positive spiritual patterns on top of positive physical patterns is a life I can live because it is full of people I can love and be loved by.

We are all spiritual people, spiritually positive or spiritually negative, but spiritual nonetheless. We are souls filled with faith, hope, and love. No machine, robot, artificial intelligence, or Mind-In-The-Sky can understand or communicate with us on a personal level. No impersonal essence or set of scientific laws can satisfy our needs or fill the longings of our heart. We need a mother's lap in which we can curl up in comfort and a father's shoulders

upon which we can sit in safety from harm.

Only a heart feels another heart. Only a living hand shares the warmth of love and life. Only spiritual people make and consume spiritual patterns.

If there is such a thing as an eternal machine or an endless mind then it can keep operating the universal mechanisms, but it will remain cold as ice for people who need the warmth of personhood.

In your words:

In movies and books who is almost always made more relatable: the hero or villain? Is there a correlation between criminal behavior and the ability to view people as people instead of objects? In other words, is it easier to commit a crime against someone we put in a box with a label rather than seeing them as a fully faceted person? What if you discovered that your parents were robots and you were hatched in a laboratory?



Paradise instinct

The paradise instinct is the survival instinct applied to the spiritual level. The survival instinct keeps us going through the burning deserts of life. It alerts us when the house is burning in the middle of the night, rushes us to wake the kids, and throws the valuables on the front lawn. The survival instinct wants to keep our bodies alive. The paradise instinct wants to keep our souls alive.

The paradise instinct is placed in us at birth. It enables us to view life as endless and good.

One big difference between children and adults is that children do not think about death. They are too busy enjoying life! They are learning and growing and loving and being loved. They are too in the moment to be bothered with thoughts of death. It is almost incomprehensible to them.

This unending outlook on life mostly carries on into youth. They are indestructible. They look before they leap because life will never end. They

not only want to live, they assume they will live.

It is the accumulation of years with its accidents and passing of loved ones that gets us focused on our own mortality. It takes dark times to cause us to really see the wall at the end of our life's journey.

Before evil touches us in a significant way, we naturally think in terms of eternity. We may not consciously use that word, but that is how we visualize life. It is like a day without sunset, a road without end, a climb without limit. We are accustomed to births and beginnings, but no one plans their life around a scheduled death — "I plan on living until 48, then I'm out of here."

In fact, when faced with death, our survival instinct kicks in. We fight the rabid dog. We call for help if in a car accident. We don't walk too close to the edge. When life appears at its end, then it appears most valuable. Even if that life has many sorrows and heartaches, we cling to life because somehow, someday tomorrow might be better. We live because we believe our lives are worth living and we hope for a better life.

Putting the immortality of youth together with our survival instinct leads me to conclude that in the heart of every human is a paradise instinct. Whether or not we believe such a Never Never Land exists does not matter. We all want something like it.

We all want an endless vacation in a place that is completely safe and fun and restful and healthy and comfortable. We see no good reason why our lives should arbitrarily end, so we are naturally inclined to view ourselves as rightful residents in paradise, heaven, or that big nameless place in the sky where everyone lives happy ever after.

Almost every culture and religion has legends and versions of heaven. It has mainly been the cynicism of science and/or atheism that has made belief in an afterlife seem irrational. Science has arbitrarily determined that anything that cannot be measured, poked, prodded, or otherwise be detected with instruments to be non-existent and therefore unworthy of time and attention.

Yet, there it is. In the heart of every human burns a flame that does not want to die. An individuality glows with life and there is no good reason to bring that uniqueness to an end. Just as there is no desire to see the flower fade, there is no rational reason to end the contribution of one person to the

greater good of humanity. Individually and collectively, we are paradise people. Our limitless potential cannot be realized when our lives are capped with tombstones.

Eternity, infinity, forever, unending life, immortality — all of these are beyond our comprehension and beyond our powers to describe precisely. Yet, it lives and burns within our souls. Even if we have no words to express the essence of the concept, we choose life over death, light over darkness every time. We sense it. We feel it. The paradise instinct drives us forward, keeps us seeking, and lights our minds with hope.

In your words:

Do you want to die? Do you want heaven? Do you like stories with sad, hopeless endings? Can you think of a popular movie or book without a good ending, even though the ending may be sad?



Checkpoint

We are all spiritual people motivated by faith, hope, and love, which arise out of the patterns we experience in life. Our paradise instinct wants both the physical and spiritual patterns to continue forever. Because it takes a person to make personal patterns, we now need to focus on what kind of person we need for endless patterns. Therefore, the key question is not, “Does God exist?” Rather, we need to ask, “What kind of god or Gods exist? What kind of god or Gods do we need?” There is more than one answer, depending on your goals.



Six god options

Before dissecting the table of options on the next page let me clarify some points. When I am talking about God(s) or god(s), I am communicating generically. I am not referring to any particular religion’s deity, to number, or to gender. “God” is the being or beings who made, rule, plan, and maintain the universe. Be it far from me or any other limited human being to say that God must be or do what I say or think. Also, I am not trying to prove the existence of God. I am merely pointing out who we need based on what we have already learned about ourselves and our universe. Before we go searching for God it is helpful to narrow down the list of identifying traits.

We make a table of possibilities by combining the options of quantity and quality. God has either limited, finite power or he has unlimited, infinite power. God’s quality of character is all good, all evil, or some mixture in between. This gives us six options.

	<i>evil</i>	<i>mixed</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>finite</i>	hated	undependable	weak
<i>infinite</i>	feared	untrustworthy	hope!

Each of these options has an appeal to different audiences, as attested to by the variety we see in movies and literature. My goal is to determine which option can fulfill my paradise instinct.

Finite

Whether evil, mixed, or good this set of options has a human appeal because it is like us. We struggle against forces greater than ourselves in an attempt to conquer them and ourselves. We like stories where the common man or the ordinary woman overcomes great odds and grows in the process.

However, our concern at this point is not winning a battle or two. We want to win the whole war over death and suffering. This requires eternal paradise which requires infinity. So our three finite options immediately fall short, but let's briefly consider them to help us visualize and cement them in our minds so we are better able to discuss them with objectors.

Finite: Evil

Hitler. Nero. Stalin. The devil. Any number of despotic dictators. Demented arch-villains in the movies. All of these are examples of finite beings dedicated to evil. Nobody could endure an eternity under them, but of course, they are incapable of making eternity. They live in the universe as subjects to its laws, then they die. Obviously, this option is nowhere close to a desirable solution.

Finite: Mixed

We could put every human on the planet in this category. We can also put our fictional super heroes like Batman, Superman, and the Avengers in this category. But just because the American people defeated Hitler or the Avengers saved the planet from an invasion from outer space does not mean any or all of these people are anywhere close to providing us with an eternally good universe. In fiction, things are getting better (until the next movie!) but in reality things are getting worse. Putting all the finite beings in the world together will not give us infinity, and good intentions mixed with evil thoughts and actions does not bring perfection. Cross this option off the list.

Finite: Good

So where is this perfect person or persons? And how is this finite person so good when they have not lived for an eternity to find out what is really good? We cannot afford limited good. We need endless good. But in the end, it does not matter. Even if such a person(s) could be found, we still have the problem of finiteness when we really need infinity. Put all the gurus, philosophers, and holy men together (if it can be done consistently) and we still have only a tower of wisdom that fails to rise out of the atmosphere much less reach across the universe.

Infinite

It becomes clear that only an infinite being can give us eternity, so we need to consider the basic kinds of infinite beings. This is where religious

fight begin, but let's focus on just the basics.

Infinite: Evil

With this option, we are talking about some kind of dastardly deity, a divine devil of unimaginable proportions. Death and torture would be inescapable. Even resurrection would simply be a cruel way of getting us to live again so we could be tortured again. Thankfully, we can write off this option in short order. If an infinitely powerful and evil person existed, then we would all be dead and/or continually tortured by now. The fact that there is true, unselfish goodness left in this world proves that an infinitely evil person does not exist.

Infinite: Mixed

Next we come to an infinite, and part good part bad, being. Mostly, this is what the monotheistic half of the world believes in. Most Christians, Muslims, Jews, and even many secular people view God as an almighty, all loving, and all powerful person, but in some way selfish, egotistical, and contradictory. It was this confusing, contradictory view of God that drove me out of religion for years and led me to believe that God was dead. (I'll share some of that story shortly.) If God is infinite and selfish, then we are powerless pawns trapped in a miserable illusion of freedom. If we are to work, earn, beg, buy, or suicide bomb ourselves into the "good" side of the afterlife (if there is one), then the definitive textbook on that method I have yet to find.

And there still remains the problem of evil. In this view, deity is partly selfish, therefore partly evil, and therefore evil remains throughout eternity. The problem remains unsolvable because no one tells an infinite being what to do. So if God remains selfish, then we are stuck, permanently. We will survive forever bouncing off the highs and lows, and always living with the meaningless knowledge that we are pets for an infinite weird person. Because there is a lot of superficial evidence for this option, it is believed by a lot of people. Moving forward, we will often need to compare this option to the next one. Multitudes think this option gives us a perfectly good eternity, but it cannot. Good and evil cannot possibly give us perfectly consistent goodness. When the infinite being who sits on the top of the universe is internally conflicted then contradiction is enthroned, logic is overthrown, and truth becomes impossible.

Infinite: Good

Having surveyed all other options, we arrive at an infinite good person. A good person is able to generate positive patterns. An infinite good person can generate them forever. If that infinite good person will give us his/her predictability, progressiveness, and profitability then we can enjoy a wonderful eternity of faith, hope, and love. Giving us their goodness is key, so I use good and giving interchangeably.

Because this is the only option with eternal hope, let's explore it in more detail.

In your words:

Which of the six options do you prefer? Why?



Infinite Good Person

Eternal patterns need an infinite giving person

Eternity needs infinity. Personal patterns need personhood. Eternal personal patterns need an infinite good and giving person.

We want endlessly good patterns, but they must be sourced in something other than our limited resources and wisdom. Artificial intelligence cannot do it; it is artificial. Infinity can not be birthed in finiteness. We need something above and beyond and inherently limitless. Also, we humans, with our emotions and affinity for spiritual connection, need a person. Good personal patterns need a good person to generate them. Always predictable, eternally progressive, and sincerely profitable patterns need an infinite good and giving person (IGP).

Only a person can make personal patterns

A machine can make predictable patterns. That is why we make machines because we want their products to be predictable within a very tight

range. For example, homemade bread comes in all sorts of shapes and sizes with a variety of lumps and crusts, but not store bought bread. We expect, no we demand, that it conform to a predictable shape or we won't buy it.

But, can a machine—even an artificially intelligent machine—create a genuinely personal universe filled with personal patterns and interactions? Cuddling with a robot, now there is a heart-warming thought. (Just kidding!) Movies often make it look like artificially intelligent robots could fulfill our need for personal interaction, but we must not forget that those humanoid machines are played by human actors. There is a reason that “artificial” is the first word in “artificial intelligence.”

Which scenario is the more inspiring? A) A scientist builds and programs a life-like humanoid and they get married with a lovely wedding. B) A scientist meets a woman who, over time, gets to know his strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, background and ambitions. Out of choice based on admiration and honest evaluation, the woman marries the scientist in a lovely wedding.

Now extrapolate this to eternity. Which eternity is the warmer, more personal, more secure, more hopeful: an eternity managed by a machine or an eternity operated by someone we can look to as father, mother, and friend? At first glance some might think the machine is better because it might not have the whims and eccentricities to which we are so accustomed, but we are not talking about a regular person. We are talking about an infinite good person. For the first thousand, or maybe even million, years the robot might be good, but at some point we reach the limits of the machine. Then we become limited. Boredom and loneliness sets in. We then find ourselves in the monotonous, vicious circle we are in now.

The other problem with the machine is that someone must program and maintain it. Who will do that? What arguments and conflicts will that entail? Even if everyone agreed, how do we know what is eternally good? All we can do is program ourselves into the state we are now.

Foreseeing the limitations of high-tech, some religions have proposed a sort of “mind in the sky,” an essence, a consciousness, a being that is not a person but just a state of being. However, this runs into the same problem as a machine in the sky, just from the opposite end of the spectrum of existence.

It is only partially human, unfeeling, unchoosing, basically unconscious of the holistic package of physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual that we are as humans. We need personal patterns that are profitable for all parts of us. A partial being cannot make, maintain, and improve complete patterns.

I think it is safe to conclude that we need a person to make personal patterns, but this person also needs to be infinite, good, and giving.

Only a good, giving person can make profitable patterns

Good and profitable are relative to the time frame and circle of influence under consideration. For example, a mother figures out that feeding her baby a sugar filled drink makes the baby happy and quiet. However, later years show that the sweet tooth habit leads to all sorts of health problems. In a similar manner, a smoker calms down with a cigarette now but later gets cancer.

In the 1930's Neville Chamberlain of England appeased Adolf Hitler by not contesting Germany's takeover of Czechoslovakia. "Peace in our time," Chamberlain proclaimed. Instead, Hitler's expansionist ambitions were fed and World War II ensued. Even without the later war, how could it be "good" to hand over a country to another? Good for who? Not good for everyone.

Slavery is another illustration. For the economic good of southern plantation owners, an entire race was declared subhuman to justify their enslavement. The Civil War in the 1860's and then the civil rights movement in the 1960's would finally make plain the terrible evil of the philosophy.

How do we avoid similar mistakes in the future, not just on a country scale, but on a galactic scale? Do we enslave planets? Do we mine resources to our future detriment? All the mistakes we have made on Earth we will continually repeat on a larger scale.

In our short lifespans, and with our tendency to not learn from history, we are pretty good at making something work out favorably for a few people for a short time. If we lived hundreds, and especially thousands, of years at a time, we would view most of our decisions and actions quite differently. Some outcomes we now label as good would be greatly modified or even reversed. Now imagine living for eternity and experiencing the super long

range effects of our choices. We would not only change our decisions but we would also change our definitions of good.

This is why we need a person who knows what is eternally good for people. No machine or civilization we can possibly build is capable of knowing what succeeds or fails on an eternal scale, and no machine can know what is good for a person. Only a person can define and perform what is eternally good for people. We need an infinite person who not only knows what is good but is good to all of us.

Only infinity can make endless progressive patterns

When we were children, bouncing a ball was fascinating. We developed motor skills. We observed different behavior as the ball bounced off different surfaces with different forces applied. Then we mastered that skill. It became old hat. We turned to explore new things. Then we discovered basketball, football, baseball, soccer, and many other games we could play with a ball. Suddenly, a simple ball in various shapes and sizes became interesting again. We know by experience that the heart is sparked by hope which is sparked by new challenges and new meaningful things.

Here is the key concept missed in most of our religious views of the future and in our science fiction fantasies. A perfect universe cannot be the end of growth, but only and always the beginning. If there is no more growth, then there is no more hope. Hopelessness ensues and there is the inevitable downward spiral. If a perfect universe is a ceiling over our heads, then we will bounce off of it in the only direction possible—down.

We need an infinite good person who not only knows what is good on an eternal scale, but can make that goodness better and better. Behind every good experience, there needs to be an even bigger, better experience. Static goodness is a hopeless experience. Personal, profitable patterns need to be progressive.

Right now, while we are mired and tired in a mixed experience of good and evil, love and hate, pleasure and pain, an eternity of perfect peace based on zero growth sounds very inviting. Indeed, but such an eternity cannot exist for human beings who are motivated by hope. Sitting around on clouds playing harps and eating marshmallows or

staying in bed with 72 virgins will be exciting for perhaps a couple years or decades, maybe a little longer. But why not just take drugs if we want a zero growth eternity? We could all lock ourselves in stasis tubes and have an endless high.

Minus the pain, we actually thrive on challenge, discovery, exploration, and learning. Take that away and what do we have left to share? "Oh, we already saw that sunrise last year. Oh, you already told me that. Oh, that's old news. Everything is always old news." Once we have explored every planet in every galaxy and become friends with every being in the universe and exhausted the physical, intellectual, and spiritual resources of the cosmos, what do we have left? Nothing. What is our purpose then? What is the meaning of life then? Nothing.

Granted, that scenario would take billions of years to achieve, but even a trillion years is only a drop in the ocean of eternity. What do we do after we have done it all? What do we learn after we have learned it all?

Eternity must be composed of infinite progressive patterns that all work harmoniously for the good of all peoples. Such an eternity can be built only by an infinite giving person. Such an eternity will gradually unfold like an infinite flower tended by an infinite gardener who will make us better, more insightful, more awed gardeners as well.

Imagine running out of awe and wonder! We already know what that does to people. It makes them cynical, bitter, hardhearted, egotistical, arrogant. Do we really want an eternity of that?

We need an infinite giving person

We desperately need an infinite giving person who gives only good gifts. If an infinite person were to take, then everything we are and have would be taken in an instant and infinity would still not be satisfied. If an infinite good person were merely good, without sharing it with us, we would fail to benefit.

We need an infinite giving person who enjoys sharing personalized profitable patterns with us. Part of the joy of life is our uniqueness. That is what makes us interesting and different to others so that they are curious to find out about us. An infinite giving person will feed and sustain our basic needs of faith, hope, and love, but also flavor predictable, progressive, profitable patterns so that we

know we are individually cared for and loved.

Can't program that into a machine.

Imagine an infinite giving person

Step by step the arguments have been laid out. If we want an eternity of faith, hope, and love, then we need an infinite good person to share predictable, progressive, profitable patterns. We have not proven such a being exists, but we have clearly seen our need and know who we are looking for. We started at zero and have arrived at infinity. However, this is a mere line of reasoning. Our negative cultural and religious backgrounds tend to make our ideas of this Person into a machine or a distant being. We need to imagine the practical, personal reality.

I have used "infinite good/giving person" to get at the core characteristics of the deity we need, but like all people, this being needs a name or title for personal warmth and relationship. I choose "Father" because of my particular experience.

My human father, now deceased, raised us six kids in a constant atmosphere of autocratic fear. His word was law. He was never wrong. His anger was our rule of life. His thoughts were our religion. It was almost like our home was a little cult and we had to get away from it to experience normality. Which often meant we had to get away from each other. My dad ruined our family.

Those explosive, bond-breaking influences were a big part of my concluding one day that God had died or abandoned this universe. It was the only way I could reconcile my observations at the time. Then a series of providential experiences starting turning me in yet another direction.

As I turned from atheism to exploring the possibility of a higher being that might be different from the kind of God from what he taught, things became much worse. It finally came to the point, after a demonic-like ranting phone call, that I could no longer view him as "father." That moment turned my world upside down and inside out and I have never been the same since then.

It was almost involuntary. It was more of a realization than a choice. I felt it and said it at the same instant. He was no longer *my* father because he was no longer *a* father. He was an egomaniac out of control desiring only control.

The next instant my untethered soul was reassured by a Being so loving, so gracious, so humble,

so understanding and sympathetic, that I immediately accepted. "I am your Father," he whispered in music-like tones in the inner ears of my heart. My hatred and fear were turned into pity. My intimidation was transformed into confidence.

I am a believer in an infinite giving person. That Person is my Father, and my Mother, and my Friend, and my King, and my Soulmate in the highest sense.

Through Him I have come to understand and experience forgiveness, purpose, confidence, trust. I am unlimited in His infinity and therefore I can afford to give generously, be free and happy, and to love others even when it hurts. I have a constant Companion and source of strength. I am never alone. Whether or not anyone believes my evidence or agrees with my arguments, Father is with me and I am satisfied.

I still wish I had better memories of dad. Even at my age, I still wish I had a human mentor. However, there is nothing I am willing to trade in exchange for my connection to my infinite good Father. It is key to everything for me.

I do not merely believe, like in the sense of abstract, theoretical conceptualizing or imaginative inventing. I experience. Father and I are in constant two-way communication. We both speak. We both listen. We both enjoy each others company. Sometimes He gives me impressions, directions, or even clearly worded instructions in my mind. There is always a sense of togetherness whether I "succeed" or "fail."

In this world of suffering and evil it is often impossible to really determine what is a success or failure, because the ripple effect of any action is countered or augmented unpredictably by other helpful or hurtful actions. I have learned that results, both good and bad, are often temporary and transitory. To walk and work with my Father, trusting Him that He knows the long range outcomes, has become my goal. Through the graciousness of my infinite giving Father, I am becoming a growing giving person. That is both a sacrificing and rewarding experience at the same time. It is on a level like nothing else.

I rest in my Father's love. He arranges circumstances, not only for my good, but also for the good of those with whom I come in contact. The pain of my rejection, disappointment, and frustration is swallowed up in His approval. My Mother con-

stantly comforts me. By cooperating with Him who knows the end from before the beginning, I know I am helping to bring evil to an end, rather than merely complaining about it. "Sacrifice" becomes an investment.

It may be hard for you to imagine or believe my experience, but nevertheless it is real. There really is an infinite giving person — a Father, a Mother — wanting to make a uniquely personal connection with you. There is no shortage of resources, or of love. There is no need to fear rejection by Infinite Compassion. Transformation through connection awaits you.

In your words:

What specifically are you looking for in an infinite good person? Can you think of a better solution or greater fulfillment than an IGP? Describe your ideal father and/or mother.



Patterns over proof

When presented with the idea of an infinite good person I immediately saw that it was good. It is kind of obvious. However, I then wanted proof. A good idea needs to become a good reality.

After years of futile attempts to discover the once-and-for-all secret solution, I was finally ready to consider and accept the simple truth: *Any God worth proving cannot be proved*. So please let me now try to spare you from tying yourself in knots and wasting time researching dead ends.

Proving it is unprovable

Imagine yourself being transported to heaven. You are escorted directly into the throne room of God and talk with him face to face. The experience is incredible. The light is glorious. The answers to your questions are astounding. On the way out you are given a tour where you see all sorts of mind-

blowing technology and meet many wonderful people. Then you return to earth.

While the impression will remain with you forever, within five minutes you ask yourself a question that you will ask the rest of your life: Was that real?

And how will you answer it? How will you answer the objections and ridicule that you receive when you try to convince others of your visit? After a while, how will you avoid concluding that you were not dreaming or hallucinating? Will you not begin to wish, pray, and beg for another visit?

Now let's pretend that you are granted another visit, or at least a heavenly being visits you. Will you not then need another visit after that? And another one after that? In fact, will you not beg God to go public? Not just once, but repeatedly? Repeatedly enough to make a new normal, a new culture of accepting what was formerly thought impossible?

What you want, what we all want, is not a one time proof or sensational miracle, but a pattern. We want a big predictable, progressive, profitable pattern.

Only a pattern of visits with deity can dispel the rumors and conspiracy theories. Only a pattern can remake a culture of disbelief and define a new normal. Only a pattern, not a one time proof, can reshape our lives and thinking.

Therefore, what we really want now is a pattern of experiences with an infinite good person. Proof can only put a taste in our mouth, while only patterns can satisfy our repeated hunger.

Can't prove infinity

This idea of patterns over proof is not a cop-out or tricky excuse. It is accepting reality. Here's why.

An infinite good person is infinite in an infinite number of ways. We want to prove all of them, but let's pick just one of the simplest—size.

So there you are at the throne again. You peer as high as you can and you cannot see the top. You look left and right and you cannot detect any edges. You start walking back and forth and you still cannot see his sides. Then you get an idea.

You are given an endless tape measure and the gift of flight. You anchor the beginning of the tape, then you take off. Faster than an airplane and then faster than a rocket, but still you are not even

around the front. You increase your speed to faster than light. You travel for years, but still you feel like you are at the beginning. You have covered so much distance, but still there is even more to go.

Never, even in a million years or an eternity will you be able to finish your trip. You will never encircle infinity and end up at your starting point.

Can't prove future goodness

With extensive record keeping we can show a person's past behavior as good, evil, or mixed. But what about future behavior? What about present, internal motives? Do you see a problem already?

There is no way of seeing a person's future actions with 100% certainty. We simply do not have all the facts yet. We are unable to see the future two seconds in front of us. However, we are beings of trust, which is based on reason. If an infinite good person shows their self to be repeatedly kind, wise, and benevolent we can choose to trust what they do and why they do it forever. Until we are able to time travel and keep records of future events, we really have no other option. And what requires trust cannot be proven, and what cannot be proven needs trust. Therefore, no proof, no judging, just trust based on a trustworthy pattern, if we choose.

Any God worth proving cannot be proved

The only God worth proving is an infinite good person. Neither infinity nor future goodness can be proved. They can only be experienced repeatedly, which ultimately is what we really want. We want a pattern of meaningful experiences with our Father. We want a pattern of connection with infinite Good. We don't want a one-time miraculous proof then we die. We want an ongoing life, which means continual faith, hope, and love. So when we think about it, our problem is not proof. Our only real problem is evil.



In your words:

Can someone prove to you that they are trustworthy with just one action? Can someone prove they love you in just one act? How does strong evidence relate to proof? What do you think of a pattern of proof? Can you prove something to yourself and at the same time be unable to prove it to others?



The problem of evil

We want good and we need someone who is infinitely good to give it to us forever, but exactly what is good? We need to answer that question so we can understand its opposite, What is evil?

What is good?

Good is what works forever. By “work” I mean harmoniously, smoothly, without contradiction or conflict. The universe is all good when all of its parts forever interact for the mutual benefit of all.

When we were children we were taught that good is obeying mommy and daddy. Good is following the rules. We then try to be good by forcing ourselves into conforming to expectations. This way of looking at goodness has some value for children and criminals, but it is external and superficial. We look at goodness as something imposed. This is not the way of the eternal universe.

Deity didn't make a universe then impose a set of laws on it. Rather, of all the countless possibilities, he made a universe that works like a well-designed, well-oiled machine. The others didn't work, or didn't work as well. This universe works and is capable of working forever. This universe is good.

This is the only conclusion consistent with an infinite good person. Such a supreme being would make only a good universe, a universe that works infinitely without end. Before any feature is added, the IGP looks down the endless timeline to see if any problems will arise. If destruction or loss occurs, then the feature is not added. In fact, the feature must add to infinite growth and creativity.

Therefore, goodness is defined not by a set of arbitrary rules or laws, but whether or not the goal of eternal growth is met. This is consistent with faith, hope, and love, because it is a natural outgrowth. Father wants what is best for his children. His focus is not on checking boxes on a list or obeying made-up rules. This means that goodness

is normal. It is the natural way. It is the endless process of peace and harmony.

Faith is good because it includes both trust and trustworthiness. These are obvious ingredients of eternal happiness. With them, relationships never break down and wisdom always prevails.

Hope is good because it accepts and thrives without fear on eternally good growth.

Love persists even when goodness breaks down into evil, thus making it possible to transform evil back into good. Love commits to the future even before future goodness appears.

Good is faith, hope, and love forever.

What is evil?

Evil is anything less than good. In other words, anything that fails to work forever is evil. This is the only way to completely and consistently define it. Destruction, decay, death, selfishness, suffering, and loss all bring good to an end. The end of good is clearly not good. Therefore, it is opposite. It is evil. Evil is anything less than good.

To put this in concrete terms, evil may look good for a trillion years and it may work for a trillion people, but a trillion falls far short of eternity for everyone. A quality of evil is deceit, which is a partial destruction of eternal truth.

This means evil is like an attacking parasite. It cannot be created or survive on its own. It must feed off of good because it is a rejection of good. It is destruction in the midst of creation and so it first must have something to destroy. Only good could exist in an infinite good person's original perfect universe. Therefore, evil is a destroying force, or anti-force, that turns something into nothing and when all things are annihilated, evil must cease in its own black nothingness after turning all the lights off.

There are three aspects to evil. The *primary choice* which causes *secondary effects* such as pain and death. Even if innocent bystanders are far enough away to not be directly touched by secondary effects their questions and potential doubts are a *residual influence*.

What is primary choice?

By definition, an infinite good person cannot be the cause or source of evil. Everything Good thinks, feels, and does is good. Every action is only for the benefit and betterment of people. Therefore,

if evil did not come from God, then it could originate in the only place over which He does not have direct and full responsibility—personal choice.

Evil did not cause the first evil choice. There was no breakdown of good, because Goodness is infinite. Evil came into being because it was chosen, and choice does not need a cause. That is what makes it choice. There are motives involved in every choice, but no cause could exist for the first negative choice in a positive being in a positive universe.

We will soon look at history to see *how* evil arose, but *why* it did will forever be a mystery.

It is easier to explain the second evil choice.

Evil deranges and degrades the whole human system starting with the very innermost thoughts. The chooser thinks he/she has acted purely from eternal self-interest—“I need to do this to survive.” There is an immediate urge to defend, blame, and protect—“I had to do it because no one else cares.” There is a thrill and lust to repeat while avoiding getting caught. The parasite that did not exist before the choice is in control while deceiving the evildoer that they are in control.

The perfection of an unselfish universe where everyone has healthy concern for the well-being of everyone else is now brought crashing down in the heart of the wrongdoer. Distrust, fear, and jealousy take the place of cooperation and confiding love. Light and peace are replaced by darkness and guilt. Left unchecked, evil would rapidly divide and conquer individuals, societies, and the entire universe.

What are secondary effects?

While it is impossible for us to now know the original connections between intelligent beings and their environment, the decisions of evil became behaviors which imbalanced and destroyed the fine-tuning of nature. Rippling outward and down through time, almost everything we see is affected by inefficiency, loss, suffering, and death. As more shortsighted decisions are prompted by the deceit and foolishness of evil, multiple avalanches are started that flow together in one massive tidal wave of destruction and misery. Innocent animals and relatively innocent people are buried by consequences in which they had no involvement. Sometimes it is fairly clear that a person has caused their own suffering, but usually we are just doing our best to deal with uncontrollable influences set in

motion before our time.

What is residual influence?

The politicians were eager to close the issue. The police were anxious to prosecute someone for the crime. A man was executed so leadership could claim justice. However, shortly after his death, he was discovered to be innocent. Impatience and sloppiness led to incomplete evidence in the courtroom.

The population was enraged. Even those unaffected by the crime and not connected to its victims were angry. A revolution began to brew to overthrow leadership.

We have seen scenes like this repeated many times in the riots and protests of history. Injustice, or perceived injustice, can spark a fire that sweeps through society faster than flames through dry grass. Even justice properly executed can touch off a firestorm in a disapproving population.

Residual influence goes far beyond, and can last much longer, than the original event and its effects. Fires we thought were out were just smoldering underground ready to flare up later. Wars and feuds can persist for generations and centuries after the original combatants are dead. Deeds of evil can have unintended, long-term consequences. Influences can persist that cannot be directly traced to the original crime.

We are still wrestling with the residual influences of the Nazi Holocaust and the atrocities of Soviet Russia, Communist China, and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. These and many others raise questions of justice, mercy, human depravity, and God's role.

In your words:

Can you think of other types of evil? Give examples of each of the three types. If Good does not deal with evil in a good way, would you begin to have questions and doubts?



Contradiction and solution

With all this evil can there possibly be an infinite good person?

When we say we want an IGP, we want something more than words on paper. We want a person in real life. However, when we look around, it seems impossible that such a being can exist. Good and evil are as opposite as light and dark. They cannot coexist. Turn on the light and the darkness disappears. Flip the switch and there is no more light. How can there be an *infinite good* person in this evil universe?

This was the very contradiction I faced as a boy. At the time, the only way I could reconcile my observations with the existence of a good God was to kill Him. Especially in light of rampant evil in religion, including the community I was raised in, I logically concluded that God had died a long time ago. With my limited knowledge, this made sense at the time. Later I discovered another option that makes much more sense because it explains a much bigger data set than I had then.

Good and evil are indeed mutually destructive opposites. They cannot coexist in peace and harmony. Also, evil cannot have the approval of Good. Therefore, anyone who concludes the universe must be good or God must be dead is reasoning logically from their assumptions.

However, a good and *giving* God can invent another option that we rarely consider, but with which the modern world is now familiar—quarantine.

An infinite good person desiring to transform evil people would permit them to exist in a quarantined area of the universe. This does not approve evil, but it buys time to cure attitudes and change hearts.

Because light destroys darkness, yet light is

needed to transform darkness, patterns inside the containment zone would need to be adapted. Think of how painful it is to have bright light shined in your eyes to wake you up. The light must be dimmed (which signals evil), but it must be dimmed for the sake of the patients (which sends a good message).

So a quarantine is indeed a mixed message both to the people inside and outside. It is a contradiction made to exist for a time for the purpose of buying time for the solving of the patients' problems.

Quarantine is a contradiction leading to solution, not to capitulation.

Just as a nation isolates its citizens to protect them from a spreading pandemic, so a quarantine is a contradiction that shows an infinite good Father's care and compassion for everyone.

From whom are we being quarantined?

There are good reasons to believe that there are probably trillions of intelligent beings out there, but some of them will take time to explain. For now, let's look at scientific possibilities.

Hundreds or thousands of planets have been discovered that appear to have life supporting features. Let's just conservatively estimate that every galaxy has at least one planet like ours. Even if only a fraction of a percent of those planets have life, there are still billions. Each of those species that have remained good—that have continually chosen the positive way of faith, hope, and love—do not want our selfishness, disease, and death. So we are contained.

This is a guess, but the evidence keeps pointing in this direction. To say that no other races exist out there is as egocentric as the ancients who thought the whole universe orbited around Earth. Our movies make the human race into cosmic heroes, but we would do better to humbly acknowledge that we are a violent, corrupt and corrupting race inhabiting a speck of a planet.

🧠 *In your words:*

How can a quarantine potentially cause extra pain and separation in its attempt to heal? How is the pain of the surgeon's knife different from the pain of the mugger's knife? Is the surgeon's knife approved? Is the mugger's knife approved? Com-

pare and contrast quarantines, hospitals, prisons.



Soul transformation

So why doesn't infinite Good just come down, snap his fingers, and heal everybody? Because the primary problem is evil choice. If the root cause was secondary pain and physical death, then a snap of the fingers would indeed solve the problem instantly. However, we are dealing with attitudes, choices, motives, distrust, despair, hatred, prejudice, fear, pride.

We are in a spiritual quarantine as well as a physical containment zone. Spiritual problems demand spiritual solutions. The way out of the quarantine is not in a spaceship, but through a soul experience.

God can fix my body, but if my heart is still determined to be self-centered and do foolish things, then I will need to be fixed again and again, not to mention the other people I repeatedly hurt. The evil tree inside of me needs to be chopped down at the roots or else branches will continue to sprout and bad fruit will ripen. The cause must be fixed.

"But," you ask, "if the root problem is not physical but spiritual, then doesn't that mean negative faith, hope, and love?" Yes. "That means it is a problem of choice and you can't fix it against someone's will." Correct. "Then how can we fix it?" With predictable, progressive, profitable patterns. Those will fix the heart, if a person chooses to let them.

This means an infinite good person must invest himself. A quarantine does not heal by itself. It needs a doctor. Our Father must come inside, not just once or twice, but repeatedly. A lecture or sermon will not cut it. Infinite Good must show us how predictable, progressive, and profitable he really is. We then have something and someone to trust, to hope in, and love.

Through patterns of experience with Good, we

receive faith, hope, and love. Then we have faith, hope, and love to give. We gradually become less a part of the problem and more a part of the solution. We help more than hurt. We create more than destroy.

This growth process transforms us. We no longer take advantage of others. We no longer destroy the planet to lavish resources on ourselves. Greed and envy no longer drive our impulses. The material world is no longer our goal. The superficial culture is no longer the source of our identity and approval. We are citizens of the cosmos spreading light and love, answering evil with good, ready to live or die unselfishly because that is the way of eternity.

Good in, good out. Good freely received, good freely given. That is the way eternity works.

"But I'm stuck inside this dark quarantine!"

Follow the light, however dim or foggy or painfully bright. Stumble forward. Resist the urge to turn back. There is a bigger picture than we now see in the moment as we wander in the woods. There is a whole universe waiting to be explored, an endless future waiting to be experienced.



In your words:

Do you want to be transformed? How would others around you benefit from your transformation?



Soul sacrifice

The dilemma of unselfishness

It is nice to say that we need good patterns to transform us into good. It is nice to say that the infinite good person will give them to us. But what does that really mean and what does it really look like?

Think back over some of the people you know. You probably know more than one "nice" person who turned out to be unreliable or backstabbing or

corrupt. Infinite Good has to be much more than nice or kind.

You probably also know of the flattering gift giver who ends up manipulating, abusing, and controlling. Our Father needs to be much better than the creepy guy in the car following us down the street offering us a ride and lots of candy.

We have already discussed how and why we cannot prove future goodness. So how do we know infinite Good is truly good? Religion seems especially prone to bait and switch tactics. How do we avoid getting hooked?

These questions pierce especially deep when we consider what is being asked of us. To join the universe "out there" we need to be totally unselfish. This sounds like what cult masters ask of their followers! Am I to give everything, receive nothing, and then in the end be left looking stupid?!

For all of these reasons, an infinite good person must fully live and die for us. Only total commitment from him will inspire total commitment in us. Father must love me first so I can love him in return, because if left on my own all I can generate is selfish "love."

I cannot live unselfishly. By that I mean it is humanly impossible to live unselfishly merely. I must dedicate my life to something positive. I cannot avoid the negative without a positive goal or purpose. To live without worrying about me, I must know that me is taken care of.

This change of heart is like what we hear in the stories of people saved from the brink of death who then turn their priorities completely around and serve others with their special talent and/or in a manner similar to the person who saved them. They give up their life to live for others and consequently they live like never before.

This transformation is like the slave who kept shouting from the auction block, "I won't work! I won't work!" Then the master who bought him stopped the horses on the way home and set him free. From that moment forward the former slave freely served the one who loved and respected him.

I cannot live unselfishly so I can get out of the quarantine and live forever, that's selfish.

I cannot live unselfishly, but I can selflessly live for someone who selflessly lives for me.

This is why an infinite good person must be a giving person, a very giving person. In fact, they must be totally giving. If he/she holds back, then

they are selfish and therefore incapable of inspiring selflessness in me. I can love no more than the pattern shown to me. Only love can inspire love. Only unselfishness can inspire unselfishness.

An infinite good person cannot merely give me a gift. He cannot "sacrifice" a part of himself, or die only a bodily death. Infinity must sacrifice infinity. That will influence me to sacrifice 100%.

Infinite Good must sacrifice his soul.

It is the only way I can know that nothing is being held back, that 100% is given to me. It is the only thing that will lead me to sacrifice my selfish motives, my selfish soul. Soul sacrifice is the only solution to the problem of evil. Any other philosophy, theology, story, or strategy fails, miserably.

When the infinite good person not only climbs every mountain and walks through every fire to reach me, but he also lays himself down at my feet so that I may walk across the chasm to safety, then I know he is serious. When Father offers to give me his health and take my bed in the quarantine so I can go free, then I know true love. When infinite Good offers to trade my evil dying soul for his eternal living soul, then I know unselfishness. I live unselfishly as I live for him.

I still cannot guarantee future goodness, but I would be a fool to reject total selflessness because it is the only possible foundation for eternal faith, hope, and love. Any eternity without such love is not worth living and will fall apart anyways.

Soul sacrifice is the only solution to evil. My evil, your evil, our evil, past, present, or future evil, it can all be solved only infinite faith, hope, and love which flows to us through the unending fountain of soul sacrifice.

In your words:

Would you trust and love someone who is willing to sacrifice their eternal life for you? Why would anything less than a 100% commitment fail to extinguish evil and its residual influence? What if your father (or Father) told your kidnapper, I'm not willing to pay beyond this limit? What if your mother (or Mother) was not willing to run into traffic to save her child? How much does Infinity care with anything less than an infinite sacrifice?



Ending that which ends

More apparent contradictions

On the surface, it appears contradictory for Good to end that which ends because that would seem to make Good into an evil ender. However, that is only a superficial reaction based on popular literature and religion. To end evil, which ends goodness and creativity, all that needs to happen is to switch on the light to normal full power. Then the darkness disappears. Then the destructive force self-destructs.

If evil does not come to an end, then all goodness must end. If Good does not eliminate the parasite from the universe, then the universe must be eaten into nothingness or Good must explain why the parasite is now an eternal attribute of life.

A quarantine must close or be redefined. If the containment zone of evil is not closed, then it becomes a permanent feature of the universe. If it is permanent then it is eternal and by definition it becomes good. If what is in the quarantine is good, then there is no longer a boundary needed to separate it from the good universe. The quarantine just redefined itself out of existence. (But now the whole universe is in peril.)

However, if we are going to redefine the purpose of the quarantine, then why not redefine it at the beginning, before isolating the patients and subjecting them to the pain of a cure that does not work? Redefining after quarantining is a cruel contradiction.

To avoid a quarantine, evil must be avoided, because evil is the only reason to have a quarantine in a good universe. So when evil arises, either it is contained or redefined to be good. However, redefining evil makes infinite Good a compromiser and a self-contradictor. Good and its opposite cannot both be good. Therefore, the best option is to quarantine evil and seek to transform evil people

rather than to redefine evil.

Closing the containment zone

So the quarantine must close to put evil out of existence. Preferably, this would happen naturally when the last patient heals. But what if there are patients who refuse to heal? Because the disease we are discussing is an illness of choice, what if there are patients who refuse to choose positive faith, hope, and love? What if they refuse to even acknowledge that they are patients?

This is when all good people have a difficult choice. When do you end that which ends? When do you abandon the building and let the fire burn itself out? When do you pull the plug and let the patients die in their own system failure?

Not until after 100%.

Not until after an infinite good person has given 100%. Not until after all good people have given 100%. Not until after the patients have decidedly rejected 100%. Closure—the solution to the problem of residual influence—cannot be achieved until after 100%.

It is very sad whenever someone needs to pull the plug on a loved one or put down a pet. The agony becomes bearable only after every other option is exhausted. Sadness magnified by guilt (would of, should of, could of) becomes crushing. Residual influence lives on in the privacy of the heart and in the public consciousness. Those doubts will erupt at a later date to start the fire of evil all over again.

After 100% is given by all, then good Father and good children can stand together and support each other as they tearfully pull the plug on the quarantine and its selfish stubborn patients. The choices of former family and friends are honored at great pain to everybody.

When the plug is pulled, the Light stops shining into the containment zone. Evil is permitted to fully get what it always seeks—total darkness. With no more light or love on which to feed, the parasite of evil consumes itself in a great collapse. Destruction destroys itself.

Light and life immediately fill the collapsed space and the universe is whole and clean and harmonious once again. The hole of destruction is filled with creativity. The zone of darkness is turned into light. Death "dies" as life takes its place. That which ends is ended by a new and glorious be-

ginning.

Father and Mother and children can now close the book on that sad story. 100% was given. Nothing else could be done. Decisions had to be honored rather than force people to live contrary to their wishes in endless torture, because evil people are tormented by good just as good people are tormented by evil.

With the quarantine collapsed, everyone now knows everyone gave 100%. There are no lingering doubts, no nagging questions to spoil complete faith, hope, and love. With an infinite good Father leading a harmonious family, the universe moves on into the ever brightening future never looking back on the failed experiment of evil. Like tried and proven veterans of a long exhausting war, the universal family is a team built on trust with all questions answered, all doubts removed, all weaknesses addressed.

Faith, hope, and love reign supreme and sincere forever. Darkness will never push away the light and find a home, because all have seen it for what it really is and all have rejected it. The first sunrise of eternity bursts fair and clear to begin an endless day where the sun will never set.

In your words:

Would you keep the misery inside the quarantine forever or would you pull the plug? Would either option be easy? Would an endless quarantine increase the faith, hope, and love of the good people outside?



Checkpoint

Simple observation showed us that the whole universe interacts. We are all connected by influence and affect each other. We also share fundamental motives for all of our choices: faith, hope, and love. Clearly, we are wired to be one united spiritual family.

Our experience of faith, hope, and love springs from the patterns we all give and receive. Evidence grows and our responses get accordingly stronger. Whether we respond positively or negatively is our choice, but our choices have consequences that affect everyone around us.

Because we want to live, rather than die, and because we are spiritual people, our paradise instinct drives us to look for and hope for eternal goodness. This can be supplied only by an infinite good person.

However, such a being seems impossible because of all the evil in which we are immersed. Yet, there is one complete, consistent explanation that resolves this apparent contradiction—quarantine.

We are inside a containment zone with both destructive and healing influences. Its purpose is not to isolate us forever, but to transform us so that we can join eternity on the outside. Our healing requires an example of, and commitment to, 100% soul sacrifice. Without a sacrificing Doctor-Leader we have no one to follow and no way of escape.

Only such a dedicated Father would know when nothing more can be done to save more of his children. Only at that time would it be right to pull the plug, then the quarantine must end or else evil will exist forever and contradiction will be enshrined. Once the parasite of evil is terminated, the universe emerges cleaner and wiser and forever immune and happy.

So now we have all the basic principles of life. Yet, it still feels theoretical. Our minds want to believe, but they question, Is it real? If so, where is this infinite good person and how do we communicate and connect?

The next book starts that search by using the process of elimination which will lead us to a set of communication devices that is worth investigating to test their reliability. Get ready for an infinite good person to reveal himself in history—our history!

