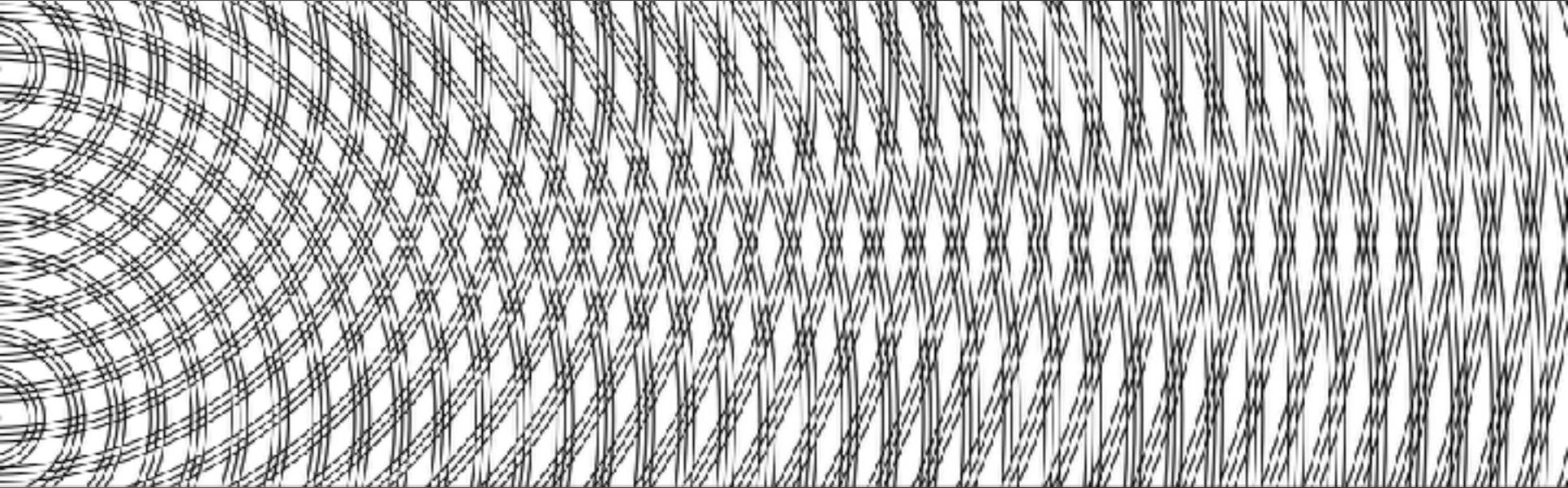


Paradox in Christian Faith

Simplicity and Complexity, With Insights from Theology and Modern Physics



Richard F. Carlson and Jason N. Hine

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Creation in the Bible

- ◉ Genesis 1:1 – 2:3, 2:4-25
- ◉ Isaiah 40:1-11, 12-31
- ◉ Job 38-41
- ◉ John 1:1-18
- ◉ Colossians 1:10-13
- ◉ Hebrews 1:1-3
- ◉ ... and many more.

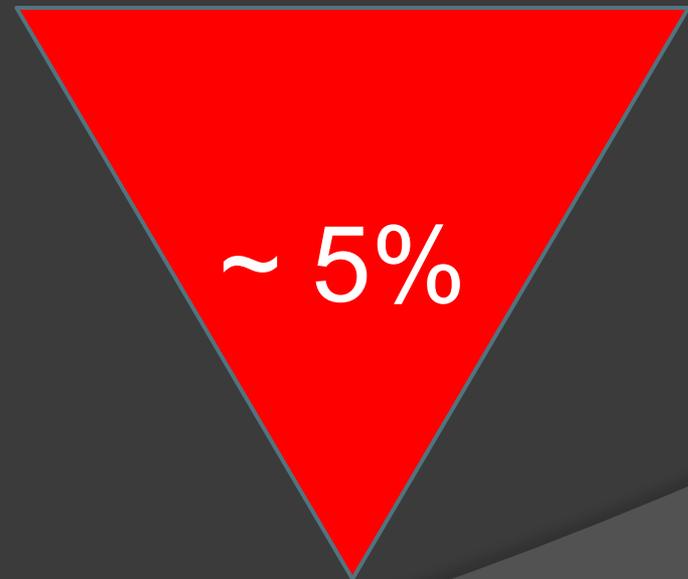
Paradox #1:

A creation that inflicts harm is “very good”?



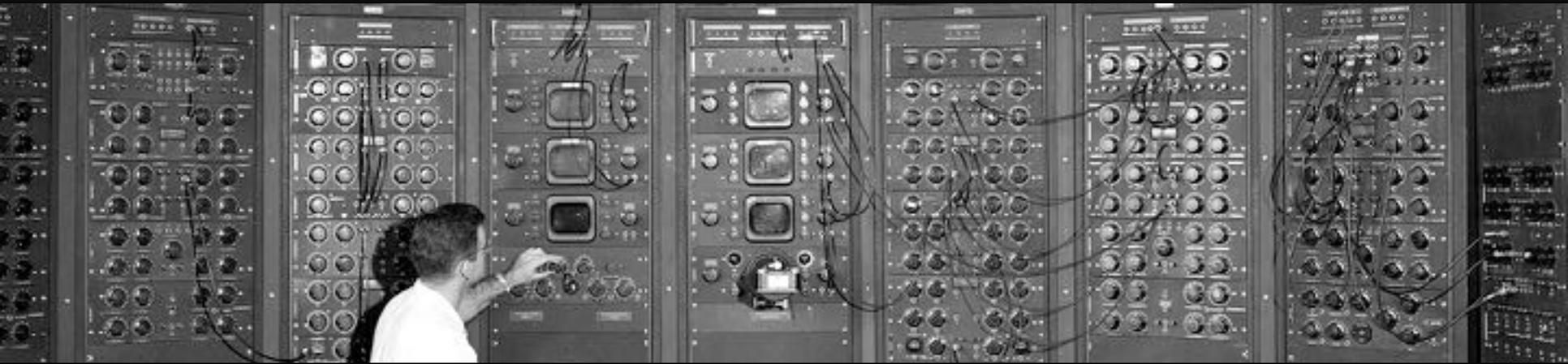
positive

negative



~ 5%

A finely-tuned creation



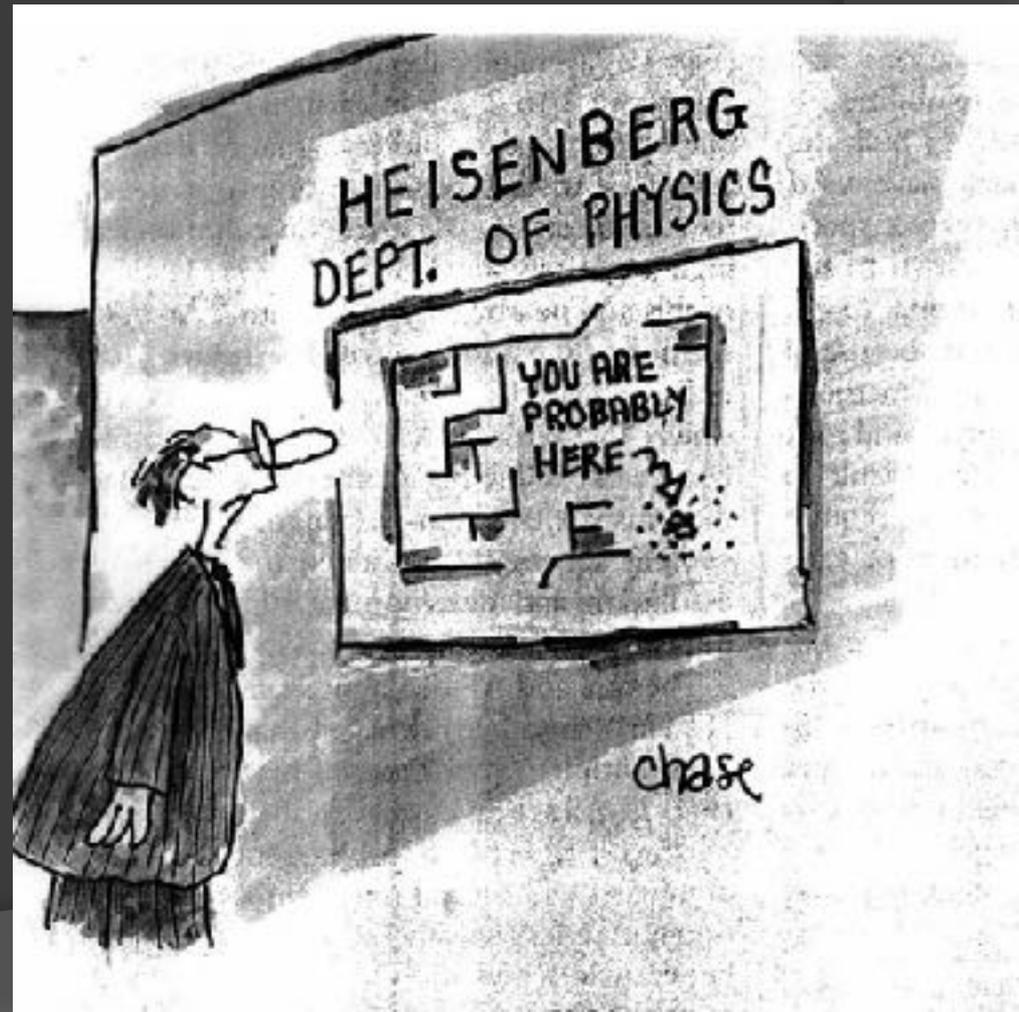
“It is not simply the numerical values of certain parameters that must be ‘just right’ in order for life to develop. No, it’s the entire formational economy of the universe that must be ‘just right.’”

– Howard Van Till, *Science and Creation – Four Views*

Paradox #2:

Creation is neither completely deterministic...

... nor
completely
random.



Paradox #3:

God is just...



... yet all people suffer.

- ⦿ A creation that inflicts harm is “very good”.
- ⦿ Creation is neither completely deterministic, nor completely random.
- ⦿ God is just, yet all living things suffer.

Paradox #1:

Creation is
“very good” ...



... *yet it* contains danger
and harm. Just ask Job,
Jonah, the author of
Mark...



Response to Paradox #1:

What kind of world did God create?

One that:

- functions well
- supports the emergence of sentient life
- involves dynamic processes

Natural events, both beneficial and harmful, are *crucial* to the well-functioning of creation.

Paradox #2:

Creation is neither completely deterministic...



... nor completely random.

Deterministic aspects of Christian theology

- ◉ God makes determined decisions, and takes determined actions.

- ◉ God interacts with specific people in specific ways, at specific times.



Indeterministic aspects

- ◉ God gives humans free will.



- ◉ God gives creation a degree of freedom.

Both aspects are needed

- ⦿ The lawfulness of determinism
- ⦿ The freedom of indeterminism



Paradox #3:

God is just... yet people and creation suffer.



Retribution Principle

The good deserve blessings, but the wicked deserve evil.



God's *mishpat*

justice / cosmic order / governance / sovereignty



Out of the Whirlwind – Creation Theology in the Book of Job
by Kathryn Schifferdecker

Applying the paradoxical

- ⦿ Creation functions as God intends and actively upholds it to function.
- ⦿ Sovereign God has granted a degree of freedom to creation, enabling growth and Christ-like love.





Suffering from natural causes

- ◉ Not divine punishment
- ◉ Common experience of creatures in a universe:
 - Finely-tuned for life to emerge
 - Built on lawful randomness



Three things will last forever –
faith, hope and love –
and the greatest of these is
love.

- 1 Corinthians 13:13