



The Evolution of Evil: An Inquiry into the Ultimate Origins of Human Suffering

Timothy Anders

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For all its beauty and splendor, the world is replete with suffering, hardship, and misery. Why does evil exist? Is evil necessary? Can we ever hope to abolish evil? Philosophers, theologians, scientists, and laypeople have often pondered these questions, but their answers have generally been unconvincing or unhelpful. They have sometimes tried vainly to show that all evil is really for the best, and sometimes to dismiss the problem of evil as too profound to be answered. In *The Evolution of Evil*, Timothy Anders offers an original and persuasive solution to the 'Problem of Evil,' one that is grounded in science.

According to Anders, the root of all human suffering, and hence of all evil, is to be found in the historical process by which human life was created: evolution by natural selection. The compelling simplicity of this explanation has been overlooked because of several widely-held misconceptions, notably the view that evolution favors the good and eliminates the bad, or that evolution favors an inexorable ascent to 'higher,' more intelligent, and more complex forms. At the heart of these misconceptions lie prejudices such as anthropocentrism -- the view that humankind is the 'point' of the universe, and that things therefore tend to be arranged for humanity's benefit; the assumption that nature is essentially benevolent toward humans; and political utopianism, which proclaims that it is possible to bring about a perfect or nearly perfect society. Anders exposes the roots of evil in humankind's biological background, showing that evolution is not benevolent or progressive, and that it tends to lead to suffering which can sometimes be mitigated but never entirely banished. Our primate ancestry has left us with many 'scars of evolution,' inefficient components which lead to pain and disappointment. Anders shows that humans are especially poorly adapted to their environment. The fact that they rely heavily on culture and intelligence is not an unmixed blessing.

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