

What, if anything, is wrong with the world?

When this question was first propounded to me, it threw me into a state of puzzlement. Am I to find some singular thing? One thing or many things? Things that have to do with humans, specifically? Or things that effect everything in existence? How about animals? How about atoms? The world is so big it seems impossible for a person to study all of it. Is that something wrong with the world, or is that expectation (that I ought to have the time to study the world to totality), in itself something wrong with the world? It's a complicated world, to be sure. Perhaps that is what's wrong with the world: that I have seen documentaries about quantum physics and that I have not been taught quantum physics to my satisfaction. What laughter I would receive if were to speak up, in a political conference, and insist that everyone in the world receive an education in quantum physics! Get this man out of here! I hear them say. But surely it is good that man explores the universe that man ventures further and further into chaos. Who would argue with that? Perhaps mortality is to blame. Death cheats us all of our investment, here on earth. We create artifices and machines and leave those artifices and machines behind us, thinking that we have benefited the world. But how does a mortal organism benefit the world? We always enter a world more complicated than the world of our predecessors. The libraries, the oceanic volumes of ink humans spend communicating their thoughts grows deeper each and every year, the accumulate markings of animals that have slipped down helplessly into death. And then we hurl our words on the young. Save us! Help us! Our teachers cry, but they cannot be saved. Not really. People go to the schools and the universities and they earn their degrees, which become for some like a license to stay as far away from a world where a majority of people labor. Is that an injustice, a wrong? If death is the real dispenser of justice, then perhaps there is no wrong and there is no injustice. Now I feel that I should add that just because I write something that does not automatically mean that I like writing that something I write. Frustration is not a happy emotion, and yet it's frustration that I feel when faced with this particular question, which I cannot find any answer for. I find myself now recalling the ravings of the Unabomber, the impact he made on the likes of Ray Kurzweil. It was an instance in time when a man was driven crazy by the thought that the technologies we've accumulated will only burden generations, not elevate them. Technology will be for us what our stomach is for us now, Ted might argue. There is no hope. There is no reason to balk at this kind of thinking: manically depressed priests have cried about the hopelessness of life from behind their pulpits for centuries. Ray, as his writings suggested to me, saw the truth of this argument, and because it really is a serious argument, concluded that a passionate pursuit for immortality, whatever for it will take, is our only recourse. And not matter what we humans think, the universe will continue to pull aggregates of atoms and molecules together into things that feel, and perhaps suffer. Sometimes I imagine a product being made, a product into which all mankind enters and goes away. This product was the product of a genius, they say. But most people cannot comprehend this product and therefore do not know where they will go once they enter the (technological) product. To enter the product is like entering death, the majority thinks. I do not know what the product is but the product itself assures me the product is a great project, the majority thinks. Then I also imagine a great number of people having angst about the product: people who cannot comprehend the inner workings of the product and hence want to stay as far away from the product as possible. The product could be torment, they think. The product could be death, they think. Because the product is just as incomprehensible as death, the product is viewed in a similar manner by those who cannot tell the difference. I have created this puzzle for myself and I am hurling this puzzle at myself: the difference between (incomprehensible) death and the (incomprehensible) product! Faced with a dilemma, or puzzle, such as this, seems akin to facing a nightmare. Perhaps nightmarish scenarios such as these play out in the minds of our students; perhaps such nightmares haunt them and perhaps that haunted, nightmarish, scenarios such as these playing out in the minds of our students is what impels them to reach to the likes of Kafka for support (and I can only speak for my personal experience here, but it seems as though there is an increase in his popularity as of late). Kafka was a bewildered, suicidal, man. He might have become a rabbi, had he not been so paranoid and had he not been so focused on killing himself. But he was, I think, patient with himself. Kafka did not publish his writings because he was not done with his writings, not done with himself, not done with his puzzles. So I try to think that his patience was in many ways a solution to the problematcalness of his position relative to the world. Social justice is another notion that's thrown around passionately as of late; and no, I do not view it as a wrong (although I am puzzled by it). Let's suppose you are living in Iraq while I am living in Sweden. Can there be social justice for us? Are we to occupy the same point in the space-time structure? What, exactly, is social justice? I should hope that social justice is not a pretext for erecting institutions which hold up placards which state: give money to our institution directed against social injustice. But can the executive of such an organization be, at the same time, the hirelings of that institution? Such an institution sounds impossible. Butler, another loud voice today, has stated herself that she wants the impossible. I am sure there are a great many people who want the impossible, impossible people that have been consigned to lunatic asylums. In a sense I do see this as a problem: encouraging interest in what's impossible rather than what is possible. Thousands of people, crazed, clamoring for the impossible! Movies, music, art, the internet, can become for some an educator which fills the minds of the young with what is impossible. The reader should recall the image I conjured earlier, of millions of helpless people being poured from one incomprehensible product (pre-birth) into the next (the product). Earlier I was fooling around with Tarot cards and I drew the hanged man. It prescribed patience: the world is impatient.