

I did not choose to come here, and I have no say in whether I stay or leave this planet.

Yamin Kogoya

My journey here is a complete mystery. Did I get to decide if I wanted to come here? No.

I didn't choose to come here, and I have no say in whether I stay or leave this planet. This journey is arbitrary in the sense that I was thrown into this drama without my consent. As if I'd awoken from an eternal sleep into a world of pain and tragedy. I do not understand how I got here, where I came from, or why I am here. I cannot recall anything. There is only one thing I am aware of; I am here witnessing everything that is going on - at visible and invisible levels. I am eating, drinking, reproducing, fighting, and dying. However, most of the time I am unaware of what is happening right in front of me, as if I have been blinded or deafened by existential forces - as if I was being swept away in an eruption of lava.

The only thing I know for certain is that I owe my existence to my parents. They brought me into this world or provided a route for me to arrive here. In the Lani mystical language, they are called *Yikwanak* and *Yikwagwe*. My parents and a few of the individuals who raised me endured insurmountable pain. My mother especially endured a great deal of pain and suffering. Without them, I would not be here today. Whether I should thank or curse them or whomever decided on my journey to this planet, remains uncertain. Even so, I must still respect both my parents and those who helped me survive so far, since they themselves did not have the choice to be here prior to my arrival nor did they have to support my survival. But they did love me, nurture me, and protect me with all my flaws, mistakes, errors, and the pain I caused them and others by virtue of me being here.

With hindsight, strangely enough, my life was threatened immediately upon my arrival here on earth and continues to be threatened to this day. During those joyful but painful months, I even threatened my mother who carried me in her vulnerable mortal body.

While I write this piece, I am primarily thinking about the constant struggle of living and dying in a savage world populated by the human species. At one level, this species called 'human' is so simple, yet at another level, it is so deep and mysterious.

Sometimes I feel as if this species has been abandoned in the universe; forever voyaging through the realm of its fantasies, dreams, and imaginations while physically tethered to this rock and tortured by its nightmare of impermanence. As if it were constantly tortured with terror due to its awareness of its own mortality, fleeting existence, and incapacity to control it.

This species is born - imagining that they will travel someplace or build something new, but little do they realise that the entire time, they are building their own coffins and ending up in the grave. This game of 'birth and dying' just continues forever, and all we can do is keep ourselves entertained with own elaborate ideas, and the things that we are unable to see beyond our temporal perspective.

Many believe God is behind all the drama and tragedies in the world; others attribute these to spirits or entities; others say we are the result of bacteria mutation over billions of years. Some claim we are an experimental species that has been dropped here by extra-terrestrials who have either forgotten about us or are using us for an unknown purpose. A few esoteric philosophers would entertain themselves by suggesting that we have always existed, just as fish, clouds, trees, ants, stars, and all other forms of life. Though it is very poetic, it appears to be just another bedtime story that we tell our children to soothe their insomnia.

These are just a few of the most widely held theories I've heard during my very brief time on earth in the vast span of eternity of time and space. Many of them seem far-fetched; none of them address the root cause of human suffering; and all of them contradict one another. The human soul bleeds with the torment of world contradictions.

They might have elaborate theories about the root causes, but to date, no real solutions have emerged. On the contrary, their theories exacerbate confusion and pain. Humanity's soul still bleeds, and all organisms on this planet continue to tear each other apart for survival. We replaced religion, God, metaphysics, and tradition a few centuries ago with science and technology, but this new replacement has become yet another tyrannical dogma. The enlightened ideas of rationality and science that we once thought would shine light into the darkness now threatens us all. That is where we are – at the threshold between collective suicide or redemption.

In contemplating these issues, I sense a tiny voice inside telling me that something isn't right, so my search for that voice continues.

I initially thought my parents, professors, pastors, and others around me knew the answer, but I have now realised, they don't. It seems as if they are as blind as I am, naming and describing this God or any other infallible entity, spirit, or cultural heroes.

Their explanations fail to make sense to me, and everything I observe still seems to be mourning. In my observation, those who believe or place their faith in these infallible entities are generally more optimistic than those who don't. Even so, I question the credibility of their optimism since even the most trustworthy and devout believer in such infallible entities weep at night when their loved ones are lost to tragedies and death. They desire to ascend to heaven, but not by death - their entire molecular structure protests this path. But do they have the power to refuse this arbitrary decision cursed upon self-aware creatures, we humans? Birth and death? I want to say no, but I don't know. Despite their apparent optimism, these believers still endure great suffering, or they may become perpetrators of these sufferings, resulting in cruelty, injustice, and despair throughout all of life on Earth.

Moreover, optimism does not necessarily have to relate to reality. It seems to me that as long as we are able to sustain our optimism with stories, we create for ourselves and the world. These may serve to keep us grounded as we line up in front of the execution line without losing hope or giving up while we endure a day more while breathing the oxygen of the earth and feeling the torture of innocent souls, as well as hearing the cries of stranded prostitutes on the streets of civilised society.

The actual *status* of the human species on this planet is uncertain. There is no point of reference from which we can make sense of anything. We keep digging in the past and injecting our own blood into it, retelling the stories from our point of reference to fill in the gaps. We keep projecting a future world and injecting our blood into it to create a better future, but any given contemporary human existential reality hardly improves with new information we generate. New information is often used as an ideological tool by those who possess it to oppress others.

In other words, it appears that the original template from which new information can be generated is already faulty, making it difficult to be certain that any new information introduced by humans will result in the emergence of new species. Consider great teachers, such as Jesus and Buddha and the chaos we have created in their name.

People who attempt to restore sight to blinded mankind are immediately perceived as threats by us (humans) and tragically often by their own people.

I am willing to stake my life on the proposition that should Jesus appear on the streets of New York today and claim to be Jesus, he would be arrested immediately, imprisoned, and possibly killed. Throughout history, humans have murdered all prophets sent to this planet. A tortured soul of humanity, Fredrick Nietzsche wrote about this tragedy decades ago. Not only are we murderers of each other, but we are murderers of God as well. 'God is dead, God remains dead, and we have killed him,' declared Nietzsche.

It is as if humans continue living through the same horror movie repeatedly. All that has changed is the use of more advanced screens to display the same horrors in our living rooms. Human species are still savage animals at their core, except embellished with external decorations. These decorations come in many forms - material, philosophical, religious, and racial decoration - but when stripping this species naked of all decorations; the species remains angry and savage.

As a species, I sense that humanity is already in the dark, not knowing anything for sure and walking through a thick, dense forest, yelling at one another. We listen but do not hear; we look but do not see; we touch but do not feel; we speak but do not speak the truth; and we are alive, but we do not live. We are but a dead soul inside a living body, pretending that all is well when it is not – crime, murder, rape, suicide, torture, violence ... all continue behind a thick curtain. We are afraid to lift even a centimetre of that curtain lest we behold the monster; yet we are unaware that *we* are that monster behind the curtain. The Lani elders say, '*Nit Aap yi kugi aret*', which means 'we humans are the monsters.'

We are not brave enough to say what is going on here and now. *Instead*, we tend to retreat into our little havens of religion and culture for safety. We are afraid, which is why we continue to invent flags, ideologies, and religions to wage war against one another on superficial levels.

We continue to inflict suffering on each other for meaningless things, like whose culture and beliefs are better or who is more superior. The list goes on and on until the person with the biggest weapon ultimately decides the fate of all others. How indifferent.

Animals do not engage in violence of this kind. They do not kill and destroy each other for an idea, belief, pleasure, or a symbol. But humans do, and that is a great tragedy. Mankind becomes

a victim of life, or life becomes a victim of mankind; it's hard to tell which. We think humanity's wars are over. No! Please, wake up from this illusion.

Humanity cannot put aside their trivial differences and unite as a species to explore the universe and build a galactic level of civilisation. We are enmeshed in the mud of human ideas and beliefs; and are killing each other over them. *The great war* is coming. The great reset is coming. Be prepared. Right now, there is no moral referee, no court of law, and no legal system that exists to prevent humans from killing each other. The true perpetrators (humans) have become the referees, judges, and directors of all these legal institutions. After the second world war, these savages created a platform (the United Nations) to bring peace to all of humanity, but do you really believe this institution will accomplish that objective? In my opinion, the answer is no. As a matter of fact, those with big weapons have weaponised this institution to serve their own pathological interests. The killers of killers, the murderers of all innocent souls of humanity, are now in charge of this institution. Do you know who these people are? Humans.

As a species, we are well-armed and dangerously so. Why? It's what we do for a living. As absurd as it may seem, we are always preparing for a war against ourselves. Tragically, why we kill one another is still a mystery – not the superficial reasons; not the slaughter over lands, ideals, and differences, but the *real* reason ... the explanation of the nature of human madness and its never-ending thirst for destruction and division.

We cut down billions of trees and turn them into paper, which we use for essays and dissertations explaining why we tear each other to pieces. But no answer has yet been found in the gallons of ink we spill.

Human language seems to perpetuate these endless tragedies because the written word tears apart reality, like a sword. Someone's reality is shattered by the lexicon and semantic power of another.

As it has been said of the animal kingdom, the rule is kill or be killed, and in the human realm, the rule is define or be defined. 'Fate hangs in those four letters (BE and ED) in the English language.' It is for this reason that language becomes the first point of attack in a colonial domination strategy.

There are times where I wonder if we created our flawed reality, or whether reality was flawed before we were conceived, or if we co-created it. Ancient Greek tragedians believed that our fate, our choices and decisions in existential drama, and our transcendent myths were all intertwined in the creation of this tragedy.

We live in a world where we know and do not know at the same time. Despite knowing we should not do something, we still do it, whether knowingly or unknowingly, and we all suffer the consequences. A tragic ancient hero, such as Oedipus, the king of Thebes, whose events and prophecies all came together at the end as a perfect example of how fate and actions are intimately entwined. Despite knowing there would be a tragic outcome if he continued his fateful path, he didn't or couldn't stop destiny from playing out. At the same time, he was a powerful actor and powerless in the drama of his own demise; unable to change the outcome. That is the true definition of tragedy. In this situation, there is no evil, only tragedy - living in a state of knowing and not knowing simultaneously, being aware of the potential problem but unable to resolve it.

Tragedy often strikes at seemingly innocuous times when everyone is distracted or calm – the snake is always lurking somewhere in the garden of happiness. Although things may appear calm and normal on the surface, underneath or behind these images there may be a threat of some sort lurking. It is impossible to foretell what is going on behind the scenes unless we receive a special revelation about our fate from the unknown. Sometimes, despite revelations revealing themselves everywhere, like a danger warning, we are unable to see, hear, or feel them.

We rarely hear danger sirens in moments of epic celebration, where everyone is happy, the food and wine are delicious, the music and dancing are heavenly, and the atmosphere is blissful. That's when we are most vulnerable. Despite seemingly making all the right choices, an innocent human's life can still be turned upside-down in a matter of moments.

The risk of natural disasters tearing down our homes and havens is always present; societies, families, and systems can be cruel to each other. We can also be destructive to ourselves for all sorts of reasons, and life itself can be so cruel and unfair. The fact that the fellow creature next to you experiences tragedies and death first, does not mean they will not happen to you as well. Next on the list are you and me.

In the end, no matter who suffers first, we all suffer - the only question is *how* and *why*. Because the question of how and why grieves humans more than anything else?

People suffer for a variety of reasons, some of which are incomprehensible. Having been thrown into this universe, we must not just learn how to live, but also how to deal with so many tragedies. The question, 'why me?' still gnaws at us. This seems to be what breaks people's hearts - the torture of the unknown - the answer to the ultimate question, 'why me?'

There's a story in the Christian Bible, about a Jewish man who lived thousands of years ago. His name was Job. Job was described in this story as a wealthy, upstanding man who had family and fortune. However, Satan argued that Job was faithful to God only because he had everything he wanted, so if everything was taken away from him, he would turn away from God. So, God agreed to test this claim. Satan then cursed Job with a deadly skin disease and took away everything that he loved and owned. As a result, Job was in a dire state. Friends of Job visited him one day and sincerely sympathised with him. They discussed, in depth, the tragedy of existence, and tried to explain why Job's health was so poor. Job's friends spoke and concluded that it was all his own fault, but their answers did not satisfy him. With this complaint, Job turned to God for an answer to the question, why me?

At the end of the story, God demonstrated the structure of existence beyond Job's own suffering by helping him realise that God is in control in both good and bad times. God acknowledged Job's suffering, but God wanted him to see that it was connected by a broader existential phenomenon taking place at the cosmic level that was beyond Job's comprehension. Job and his friends weren't aware that God and Satan were placing a wager in the cosmic courtroom to find out whether Satan's allegation against Job was true or not. It might seem that Job had no right to ask why, but his response to suffering appears to have been crucial to the outcome of a war waged behind the scenes at a cosmic level.

Ultimately, Job surrendered to God and accepted his sovereignty as the undisputed ruler of the whole universe. Job won the race, God won the bet, and Satan lost both. After Job won the race, God doubled his losses and rewarded him with healing. Regardless of where you are in life, whether in a blissful state or in the depths of a dark pit, you may be disconnected from the source that sustains both.

What if Job cursed everything and everyone including God, and committed suicide to avoid the agony? This is a question I leave to you. Birth-life-death will be a constant struggle until something drastic changes at a cosmic level. However, it is unclear what that 'something' is. For Job, it was the sovereign God.

Job's story is exceptionally strange, in that, despite being in a dark place, Job played a crucial role in deciding the outcome of a cosmic verdict between two forces in the cosmic justice system. The fate of the cosmos appears to be inextricably bound with Job's fate, and his response to his condition was vital, no matter how painful and insignificant it might seem. Human actions on this planet at the outset seem to revolve primarily around procreation, survival, and death. Despite this, there is a larger story unfolding behind the scenes, and we are part of it whether we like it or not. Therefore, our choices do matter, regardless of how trivial, insignificant, or mundane they appear to be in the course of our daily lives. Thus, even a simple act of smiling in the face of adversity, such as Job's has cosmic implications.

Job's story offers hope to believers of the Christian faith, but many people from other faiths and cultures may not see it in the same way. As the topics of suffering, God and Satan are understood and perceived differently, and these differences are often the source of human conflict and tragedy. For me personally, I think there is some universal wisdom in Job's story and since I already declared that I had no choice but to come to this tortuous planet, having the attitude of Job is the only appropriate attitude to deal with life's tragedy, even though it is the most difficult attitude to adopt.

Since European tribes launched the modern world as we know it 500 years ago, the metaphysical aspects of human reality have been removed from many people's worldviews. According to them, science and rationality would eliminate human misery or provide an answer to it. Certainly, technological achievements and material wealth have made our lives easier and more convenient, but we are sick and deteriorating from within.

As this uncertainty spreads in the hearts of human beings, fear ensues, and fear will unavoidably lead to fatal tragedies between human cultural and religious groups. There is no indication that humans will accept one another's differences. Some humans purposely inflict suffering on others to have virgins in another realm, while others contend with the law of karma and disagreements about God, Satan, history, and the destiny of creation. Human tragedy can be attributed to the complex descriptions we give in language of these infallible ideas.

Philosophers, sages, gurus, and thinkers throughout history have all attempted to answer these questions - why and why not? Why does it exist as it does rather than not existing as it does? Why is there something rather than nothing?

Philosophical inquiries in the Western philosophical schools are full of such frustrating questions. Today, there are still no real answers, and even the definition of what constitutes 'real' is contested in all philosophical discussions.

The existential knots we are entangled in will probably require an outside liberator to free us, since any liberation ideas brought by humans will almost certainly end in tragedy. As I watch this cosmic novel of human drama, I wonder if there is an error in the script. The number of tragedies people are suffering on our planet could well be seven billion, eight hundred and seventy-five thousand. As I write this, this is the number of people being counted in the Google system. It's not clear how they came to that conclusion, but that's what the data said.

I could complain endlessly about existence and how unfair it is. But in the end, I ask myself, who am I to complain about the nature of existence and the unfairness of life? As I was not given the option to come here, and I will not have the option to stay or leave. I do not feel that I have a right to complain about the unfairness of the situation. The best I can do is try to make sense of all the information I have gathered over the course of my brief time on this planet and see if I can connect some dots before my departure.

One such piece of the puzzle I have come across is that the majestic displays of cosmic power in nature often leave me speechless. Even in the midst of all these gloomy works, I feel that life itself is indeed a 'miracle'. I have no idea how or why this miracle exists apart from my brief temporal observations.

The whole of reality itself shows that my very existence really does rest at the mercy of something or someone greater than my stint on this planet. Job acquired a new vision of existence after he posed questions to God.

That realisation is that I cannot ask or complain about how and why I was sent here to suffer. It is because my individual existence and experience cannot serve as a cosmic frame of reference to judge everything, everyone, God, and the universe. But what I think, say, and do in response to life's tragedies, pain, and suffering matters, because they have an immediate impact on my environment within my family, friends, neighbours and communities.

There is no way for me to ascertain whether both cosmic forces - God and the Devil - have bet on my race in the cosmic Olympics of existential tragedies? I am not certain, but Job's story suggests that this is what is at stake. My only challenge is whether I can trust that force wholeheartedly. I believe Job also faced that challenge at the end of his interrogation of God with questions due to his despicable state.

As I write this, the sound of dripping water on a silent night is a harbinger of my time on this planet drawing to a close. There is no way out. I'm waiting for existential execution. Lani elders say, *'Aap n'ndarak ti, kambirak n'nduk aret ndak'nogo menggarak'*, meaning 'we are born to die.' This is a dramatic statement; it omits any explanation as to why that is the case. To say that we are born to die is equivalent to saying that livestock exist to be consumed by humans.

All these propositions say nothing; they simply describe a phenomenon we already know. What we need to know is why. But some humans have already concluded that the why question is the wrong question. In asking why me? I may as well ask why the sun, the moon, the ant, the grass and the trees and other living beings are here on earth, as I am somehow mysteriously connected to each of these. But I suppose what I need to know is why to all these?

People say the two most important days of your life are: 'the day you are born, and the day you find out why you were born.' Knowing the 'why' gives us the strength to handle the wretchedness of existence. If you know the why, you can live anyhow, 'said Friedrich Nietzsche, during his inquest into the nature of human madness and tragedy. For Job, his big 'why' was God. As for Nietzsche, I don't know what conclusion he came to at the end of his tragic journey.

As for me, although Job's response makes sense. This makes sense only because he had gained a new vision of the larger cosmic drama playing out before him, and his miserable suffering of pessimism, he later realised, was connected to that larger cosmic drama.

I will leave the answer to the question of why to the next generations, for I will be remembered as a bundle of memories by anyone who knew me, loved me, or despised me. These memories may be passed on to future generations, as Job's and Nietzsche's stories have. Otherwise, I will be forgotten, just like the billions that came before me and the billions that will follow me as if I never existed.

In my view, however, stories like Job's deserves to be passed on to our children, since it illustrates that the worst tragedies can befall humanity, but it is about how we respond to them. Whether

you believe in a cosmic bet between two forces (God and Satan) taking place or not, that is not the point here; the real point is how we respond when we have everything we desire, and when everything we have is then stripped away from us?

So, I embrace my life as if it were my last, as I wake every morning in the doorway of the living and the dead, consumed by the excruciating uncertainty of choices and decisions triggered by confusion, disappointment, regret, expectation, and dreams.