

Yon Wolfgang

Ms. Baulch

English III CPI

2/16/2023

### The Hidden Side of Chaos

The earthquake hit the city violently. People hid for cover, belongings were ruined, buildings were decimated, and even families were destroyed. A wave of utter panic spread throughout the city like a murky, thick fog, covering everything in a veil of confusion and distress. We all have a shared common-held view of what chaos is: panic, destruction, and tragedy. We often find ourselves picturing chaos as a cataclysmic, world shaking event on a large scale or we see it as an unnecessary evil that gets in the way of our daily lives on a small scale. The purpose of me writing this essay is to demonstrate that this belief is far from what is observably true. The fact of the matter is that although seen as dangerous, chaos isn't always harmful and can provide benefits that can occur either directly or indirectly in one's life.

Now, one might be wondering, how could any talk of chaos being beneficial possibly be true? If you ask just about anyone, chaos is something to be seen as evil, but why is that? If we take a look at Merriam Webster's thesaurus for the word chaos, then we can see several synonyms such as "jumble, tangle, medley, hodgepodge, knot, mishmash, morass, storm, snarl, and maelstrom" which all coincide with the idea of mixing stuff together or ensnaring them, which suggests that chaos has a property to tie stuff together or to entrap or tangle stuff in its own intricate bindings ("Chaos"). It ties into a negative connotation because people don't like being backed into a corner; nobody wants to feel trapped, and when they do, they feel threatened.

People feel ultimately trapped by chaos with no means of escape, which leads to most seeing it as a wholly negative thing.

That's what people perceive, but it is far from the truth. In fact, when looking at Merriam Webster's dictionary for the word chaos none of the definitions of chaos coincide with anything that is overtly negative. Chaos is defined as "a state of utter confusion... a state of things in which chance is supreme especially : the confused unorganized state of primordial matter before the creation of distinct forms... the inherent unpredictability in the behavior of a complex natural system" ("Chaos," def. 1, 2, and 3). Taking a closer look at sources where the definitions say that confusion is present, chance is in control, and unpredictability is abound definitely gives the perception of negativity, but none of these forces are harmful. We perceive negativity from the definitions because people like control and stability, they don't like to rely on chance and confusion isn't typically seen as something pleasant to experience. However, I disagree. Chance and confusion can provide benefits and lead to further thought. Chance, in fact, gave us things like the universe—as stated in the definition, chaos refers to the primordial matter that formed our universe. Chance and unpredictability also lead to new and exciting outcomes. The negativity comes from the lens we view the definitions through; if we use a wider lens, we can see more of the picture that we didn't previously perceive.

Another example of flawed perception can be seen in the Greek myth of Khaos. It is stated that, "From Chaos came forth Erebus and black Night; but of Night were born Aether and Day" ("HESIOD, THEOGONY"). Most would hone in on the fact that Khaos created night, which is seen as negative due to the lack of vision it provides and creating a mysterious, unknown atmosphere. That is the small picture people look at, but stepping back it can be observed that because Khaos created night, night would then go on to create day, which is seen

as positive due to its association with light and general goodness. The big picture is that day was created from Khaos whilst the small picture is that Khaos created night. Whether directly or indirectly, chaos ultimately led to the creation of a common positive and benefit thus dispelling the notion that chaos is a purely negative thing.

Chaos seems to many like something completely out of their reach, but when looking closer you may find that it is surprisingly malleable. People can directly use chaos to create a benefit in their lives from what may seem to be a negative. An example of this that ties in to the idea of the big picture from earlier is from the book *YoRHa Boys* written by Jun Eishima. The book centers around a male squadron of android soldiers fighting for the glory of humanity. In the prologue an android named No. 9 discovers that everything he knew about his existence was a lie and that his model would soon be destroyed, plunging his mental state into a deep confusion. He states, "My hands began to tremble. I couldn't believe it. That was the only human expression able to sum up the storm of feelings inside me. Bewilderment and turmoil flooded my mind, threatening to steal away any capacity for rational judgment. *I couldn't believe it.*" "Why? Why? *Why?!*" I couldn't comprehend it. I wasn't malfunctioning. My AI was working just fine. But I didn't *want* to comprehend. Zinnia had lied. He'd deceived us all." (Eishima, 10). His life is completely engulfed by chaos, everything he knew is now rendered meaningless by such a force. He is going to die, it's practically inevitable, or at least it would be if not for chaos. The same force that consumes his mental state soon after becomes his saving grace. He hatches a plan to immortalize himself into the android network preventing his death entirely, and to accomplish it he uses the same confusion that plagued his mind. He states, "After briefly stopping once more to place an incendiary device on the inside of the door, I stepped out into the corridor. I'd already rigged up similar devices in several other locations," (Eishima, 12). By using incendiary devices

to start fires throughout the facility he creates a mass confusion that allows him to execute his plan and become immortal. Chaos appeared to be a negative force in his life, but he took that chaos and directly utilized it in the similar form of confusion to his own benefit.

In a much similar but also different way to how No. 9 utilizes the force of chaos we can also see chaos repurposed in the book of Job of the Bible. The book states, “He was still speaking when another came and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their eldest brother, and suddenly a great wind came from across the desert and smashed the four corners of the house. It fell upon the young people and they are dead; I alone have escaped to tell you.” Then Job arose and tore his cloak and cut off his hair. He fell to the ground and worshiped. He said, “Naked I came forth from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I go back there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!” In all this Job did not sin, nor did he charge God with wrong.” (“Holy Bible”). Job’s children were killed by a force of chaos acting in the form of wind that caved his house in entirely, but instead of lamenting his life and cursing the world he takes that chaotic event and harnesses the energy of it into his worship. He transfigures tragedy into an opportunity to worship the Lord for allowing him to have those children for however brief a time. Through his own direct action chaos creates a time for him to be grateful for what he has and has had, giving a subtle benefit to his spiritual life.

In contrast to the subtle benefit presented by Job, there are much more blunt benefits when it comes to chaos. The famous French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte once said, “The battlefield is a scene of constant chaos. The winner will be the one who controls that chaos, both his own and the enemies.” (“Napoleon Bonaparte Quotes”). A negative connotation can be discerned as from the perspective of the “enemies” chaos is the factor that led to their loss,

however I believe that the benefit is portrayed much more prominently through the prospect of victory being a clear positive. Napoleon's quote is a demonstration that one can directly benefit through chaos by taking control of it and harnessing this natural power as their own.

Much as the sentiment of victory through chaos is echoed in Napoleon's quote, it can too be found in other forms of media. The song "Devil Trigger" by Cassey Edwards includes lyrics that talk about voices in your head, blinding to signify a state of confusion, and storms that are used to portray one's mental state during a battle. It also has more literal representations of chaos through Edwards describing their chaotic actions such as, "Like a silver bullet piercing through I throw myself into you". A chaotic connotation is derived from the recklessness of the action, as with the previous lyrics which all correlate to definitions of chaos. It can be interpreted that, similar to Napoleon, chaos is once again being used to control the tide of battle through the words, "Might just accept you're gonna lose". We can see an obvious benefit that results from direct action of a person as Edwards takes the initiative in battle and pushes forward to win with his chaotic actions and state.

Looking past the direct benefits of chaos there are still several indirect benefits that chaos provides that few tend to realize in the moment. Take, for instance, the character of Alan Grant from the movie *Jurassic Park*. In the film, Alan, along with two other scientists, are sent to appraise a park full of dinosaurs by a rich man named John Hammond. Things end up going off the rails, and they find themselves prey to the chaos of the prehistoric world. An important facet to Alan Grant's character is that he has an absolute disdain for children, and accompanying him on his park appraisal are Hammond's niece and nephew. Alan spends most of the movie with the kids helping them to survive through the chaos in the park, and on the way he overcomes his dislike and grows to like the children and be protective of them. I think it stands to reason that

Alan's change in character is most definitely beneficial as he learns to take a more responsible, caring role that throws out his previous negative thoughts. It also demonstrates an indirect benefit of chaos as although the chaos isn't specifically used or does anything to Alan Grant specifically, it leads to the outbreak of dinosaurs, which is what allows Alan the opportunity to protect the children and grow as a character. Chaos creates the adversity that gives Alan the chance to rise to the occasion. Without chaos's indirect benefit, Alan would have stayed a harsh man rather than growing as a person and becoming better.

Similar to how Alan was called to the park, we can see indirect benefit in the calling of characters from all forms of media. For instance in the game *Okami*, developed by Capcom under Hideki Komiya, we follow the Japanese sun goddess Okami Amaterasu in the form of a wolf after she is summoned to take on the evil eight-headed serpent Orochi. Throughout this first half of the game we see evidence of chaos through an evil miasma that appears to be spread by Orochi that brings monsters, contaminates water, kills trees, and even causes people to become much more cruel in behavior. This disorderliness in the natural world is the chaos that Amaterasu sets off to defeat and after quelling the beast, peace seems to return to the land, but little did any person know that a greater threat was looming. Yami, the Japanese god of darkness, went undetected as he planned to envelop the world in an absolute darkness that would encase the people's lives in chaos. Amaterasu does of course defeat him but she would not have been able to if not for the chaos of Orochi that the people summoned her there to deal with. As I stated, Yami's devious machinations went completely undetected and his plan would have succeeded if Amaterasu had not previously been summoned to the land. Due to the chaos caused by Orochi, a greater calamity was able to be prevented displaying an indirect benefit of chaos as it helped to save the world. If not for chaos, the fictitious world of *Okami* would be long gone.

Indirect benefits of chaos are not strictly limited to works of fiction. In fact they play quite a significant role in our world. In a paper that calls attention to the effects of climate change it is stated, "Prolonged heat exposure in mice resulted in...tumor necrosis factor," ("Brain Diseases in Changing Climate"). Climate change is often seen as this great evil we are destined to combat. It is chaotic in nature as it throws off the natural system, but is it truly all evil? I'm not trying to say climate change is a good thing by any means, but as stated in the quote the increase in heat also results in an increase in the tumor necrosis factor. Tumor necrosis factor helps the body to not only fight off infections but it also stops and even regresses tumor growth. It is something monumental as better health is undoubtedly a positive, especially in relation to tumors. The chaotic force of climate change is undeniably a negative thing, but its indirect effect of improving one's health showcases that even some of the worst things imaginable can have a benefit to them, be it scientific or otherwise.

Science and chaos go together much better than one would expect, and chaos even plays a role in one of the key defining features of our scientific existence. I interviewed my physics teacher Doctor Hemmer about the nature of chaos, and in response to my question of if chaos is necessary she said that chaos is necessary for the existence of the universe. Dr. Hemmer's presentation of chaos in the manner of a scientific law also relates back to one of the definitions of chaos that pertains to it being the creation of the universe. Chaos didn't mean to create our world, but through chance and the results of mixing, melding, and colliding primordial matter chaos indirectly led to the creation of our universe. It all boils down to the fact that without chaos we couldn't exist, and how could something like that possibly be entirely evil? To summarize all of my previous points into two simple words, it isn't.

Chaos isn't nearly as negative as it is portrayed. It does have its own fair share of bad sides like climate change, but it also has good points that can occur directly such as attaining victory in battle or indirectly through the creation of everything we know. I think a quote taken from an interview with my Grandmother Maryanne Wolfgang

offers a unique perspective. In one of my questions asking whether a life with order would be better than one with chaos she said, "Yes, it's probably easier and calmer but maybe not as much fun. A life with too much order would definitely be too boring. The reason I married Papa[Grandpa] was because it was crazy." Chaos adds the benefit of spice to our lives, we seek out that feeling of craziness without ever stopping to think that we're running towards chaos. Luckily for us, that chaos is only there as an opportunity for us to grow and benefit from it. From something as simple as relieving boredom to something as intricate as changing someone's feelings of hatred to love, chaos presents an endless world of benefit no matter how big or small. The next time you encounter chaos do not give up. Do not despair. Do not focus on every negative you see. If you spend all your time looking for the negatives you'll end up ignoring the positives that lay in front of your eyes the whole time. Seize the opportunity, chase after the benefits, and allow chaos to make a positive impression on your life.

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