

Extremes are a way of thinking.

It is actually a very mathematical way of seeing the world.

For every equation we have to prove where it trends onto infinity.

Even the most simple equation has complex results, but ultimately can be described in simple extremes.

For $Y=X$ (a straight, increasing diagonal line through the origin), it is complex to say exactly which Y value is of importance when there are, simply put, an infinite amount of Y values to consider. Of course, it is easy to say what Y is when we know what X is, but just how many Y values are there? Too many for anyone to consider.

This type of thinking goes for any moral problem when the person in consideration is a linear thinker.

Consider the man who responds positively to good times and negatively to bad times. When X is negative so is Y . When X is positive so is Y . His quality of a response is Y and the quality of the times are X .

In less abstract thoughts, let's consider the boy from The Giving Tree.

In the beginning, time trends forward toward life and the results are positive.

In the middle, time trends anywhere and the results are both positive and negative.

In the end, time trends backward toward death and the results are negative.

Extreme 1 - Positive Results from Positive-Quality, Infinite Time

What was happy about the beginning of the book?

Whenever he went to the giving tree as a boy, everything was happy. He trended toward infinite happiness whenever his only goal was to play on the tree. Likewise, the selfless tree had infinite happiness whenever the boy used the tree to play on. Both characters at the extreme end when time was positive infinity had a positive infinity of results.

This is to say, when time is positively infinite they have positively infinite results.

Middle Ground - Finding out if it is Good or Bad

What can be said, happy or sad, about the boy and the tree in the middle of the book?

We can never truly know. But we can say, it is both good and bad.

Here's the complicated, localized answer. Well where are we on the graph? Time seems finite and time seems to have different qualities of good and bad for each of the characters. Results also seem finite and have different results of good and bad for each of the characters.

We will never know if what is achieved is good or bad during good or bad times.

Say we're talking about when the boy sold apples to make a living. Of course there's always good times because trees can always grow more apples. However how sad is it that the giving tree is producing them for free while the boy sells them at a cost to other people? Are we dealing with good times or bad times and is the result good or bad and for whom are we talking about?

It gets complicated the more we deal with situations not at the extreme. However, the most about the human condition can be said in the middle. (Please read my Mini Lecture, "Yin and Yang" to understand more). What is justice but the allowing of the most justified bad and good when we live in a complex world with no definite answers? Is it fair that the boy sold apples? What about his labor to provide for other people? Is it a bad time for consumers if they can afford freely produced goods? Is it a bad time for the boy to charge apples to people who can afford the apples? Who knows? We can only guess given the situation.

This is to say, when time is somewhere in the middle, between extremes, we can have either positive or negative results.

Extreme 2 - Negative Results from Negative-Quality, Infinite Time

What was sad about the ending of the book?

The giving tree had nothing left to give and felt sad that the negative times leading up to the end of the story only produced bad results for its selfless nature and for the boy's selfish nature. The boy felt sad that he had nothing to take and felt sad that the negative times leading up to the end of the story only produced more and more bad results for humanity, his selfish self, and the tree's selfless self.

This is to say, when time only has negative qualities it produces only negative results.

CONCLUSION

What about when we think in extremes? If we are to, then life is simple. If we are not to, then life is complex.

Bad times lead toward death and good times lead toward life.

Most stories begin going toward life and end up leading toward death.