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Agency and Identity: How to Get the Ending You Want Every Time

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I spent so long searching for happiness, contentedness. In creation... or the Winchesters. But the only ones who will ever really "get" us... is us.

— Chuck ("Unity" 15.17)

It's often said that the Lord works in mysterious ways, and yet, there seems no shortage of people confident in their understanding of those ways. Despite explicit claims to the contrary in the Old Testament (Isaiah 55:8-9, Habakkuk 1:5, Ecclesiastes 11:5)—shared teachings among the Abrahamic religions—efforts to justify, excuse, or simply make sense of God's doings are the currencies through which many contemporary organized religions trade. Through the divinely inspired word of the prophets, God's will is revealed, and through religion that will is interpreted in many different and sometimes opposing ways. There was an easier time, however. A time when gods served to explain the common, yet, misunderstood occurrences of the natural world. The daily activities of the deity Apollo explained the sun's perceived movement across the sky for classical Greeks and Romans. Their gods of mythology cared little for the totality of humanity but nevertheless served as a tool for humanity to explain the unexplainable.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and David, on the other hand, is said to care deeply for humanity, going so far as to pick favourites and maintain a chosen people. For Christians, that god miraculously became human and spent about 26 – 29 years working to develop and clarify that relationship. Despite

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these presumed efforts, the results have been surprisingly mixed. The fact that an omniscient and omnipotent god wants a relationship with humanity at all is puzzling, but the surprising lack of agreement over that god's will—and the real human suffering that results—is worth considering, even if our limited intellects only extend so far. After all, it is difficult to form a close relationship with anyone, much less a god, if we do not have a reasonably accurate understanding of them.

It is, of course, no coincidence that the "God" of *Supernatural*, Chuck, has unclear motivations. But to be fair, the motivations of any agent are rarely made explicit, and when they are—"I did this for the betterment of humanity!"—the need to announce the motivation tends to undermine its authenticity. When ascertaining the motivations of ordinary, mortal agents like humans, we typically use a method of inductive reasoning, e.g., an inference to the best explanation. From someone's actions, we infer their motivation, and if the proposed motivation is the best explanation for an agent's action, then it is reasonable to conclude that it is probably the agent's motivation. Unfortunately, this type of reasoning is less conclusive for Chuck or the god of the Old Testament. They aren't ordinary, mortal agents—limited by time, space, power, and intellect.

This essay explores the role agency plays in the identities of Sam, Dean, and Chuck. *Supernatural* explores this theme extensively, and although the show is ostensibly fictional, it is nevertheless another human adaptation of the classic tale of God's relationship to man. The well-worn tropes of free will and its presumed antithesis, determinism, present in *Supernatural* are relevant, but can eclipse the interrelated themes of personal identity, self-actualization, and how those core internal beliefs define many aspects of our relationships and vice versa. I know I am not alone in admitting that my feelings for many characters on the show have shifted significantly in its 15-season run. I had absolutely no love for Dean at the show's outset in 2005. Now almost 16 years later, I find myself grasping at amateur psychoanalysis to explain to new viewers how Dean's off-putting uber-masculinity masks the deep trauma of a broken person. So, either I have changed or Dean has changed, or both. The lesson further explored here, of course, is that who we are and who we want to be shapes our relationships, even with our favourite fictional characters.

Worthy to be Praised

Look, I get it. You wanted him to care about you, but humans... they'll break your heart every time.
— Chuck ("Unity" 15.17)

I have no issue assuming from the outset that our limited nature curtails a greater understanding of the gods. If their prophets are to be believed, we were made this way quite intentionally.[1] We can hardly be blamed for not knowing them fully when we are not equipped to do so, and fortunately, neither Chuck nor the god of the Old Testament seem to care that we know them perfectly anyway. Instead, they appear more concerned about what we do for them. Where the Greek and Roman gods served human needs as useful explanations for otherwise unexplainable events, Chuck and the god of the Old Testament demand that we worship and serve them to some extent, but really, *how* we serve them matters most. It is not enough that Jack be killed in "Moriah" (14.20); Dean must do so willingly. Likewise, it is not enough that Isaac be sacrificed on a mountain in Moriah (Genesis 22:2); Abraham must do so willingly.

In the philosophy of action, "agent" is a term for something with the ability to act, and the concept has far reaching implications for our lives and our relationships (Schlosser 2019). Not to be confused with "mortal agent," which is simply a term I made up for an agent who is mortal, most humans are a special kind of agent called, "moral agents." While many non-human animals can act, we humans have the ability to control our actions through the choices we make. At least, most of us think we can, and thinking that we are capable of this type of control over our actions is generally enough to hold ourselves and others responsible for the choices we act upon.[2] From *The Fundamentals of Ethics,* Russ Shafer-Landau explains that moral agents are "those who bear responsibility for their actions, and who are fit for praise or blame… [They] are those who can control their behavior through reasoning" (Shafer-Landau 2018,

[1] Humanity in the Old Testament and on the show *Supernatural* is explicitly the result of God's/Chuck's will.

[2] Because we think we can control our actions and that we could have done things differently had we wanted to, we assume our choices are our own and that the choices of others are their own. As a result, we hold others responsible in the same way we hold ourselves responsible. Whether or not we can, in fact, control our actions through our choices is irrelevant to our subjective experiences of them. It feels like we can control our actions, and that is enough for us to feel justified in claiming ownership of those actions and acknowledge that ownership in others as well.

77-78). Unlike the real world, *Supernatural* is filled with a myriad of non-human moral agents with whom Sam and Dean regularly interact, some mortal and some immortal. Castiel, Crowley, Rowena, Jack, and Lucifer, to name a few, are each responsible for their own choices, because they all have the capacity to think through and control their own actions. If they did not, then we could not praise them for the good that they do or blame them for the evil they inflict.

As far as gods go, Chuck is surprisingly insecure. His self-esteem is easily undermined, and he seeks reassurance from humans: "It's not about that," he says. "It's about everywhere I look, I'm reminded of my failures. Like, why did I go with carbon-based life? Why not silicon? Or yttrium? Zeroing out-- starting fresh. That's what I need" ("Unity" 15.17). Contrary to Psalm 18:3, Chuck doesn't believe himself to be worthy of any praise. But if anyone is responsible for anything in *Supernatural*, then surely Chuck Shurley is responsible for virtually everything, isn't he? Chuck made the sun, the moon, the stars and Heaven above, the Hell below, the Purgatory adjacent, and all the agents and non-agents that fill the Universe and every other Universe in every other dimension, with the one clear exception of Amara, his twin sister.[3] Chuck Shurley seems to be a moral agent. Not only did he decide to aid the Winchesters in averting the Apocalypse, Sam and Dean were able to convince him to help stop Amara from destroying all of his creation. In both cases, Chuck could be reasoned with, and so it seems as though his actions were under his control. He does things for reasons, which is quintessentially what it is to be an agent. Although, extrapolating these features isn't entirely obvious with Chuck.

How can an all-powerful god "control" his behaviour through reason? Being all powerful or having limitless power means there isn't anything you can't do, like be controlled, so we're left with what appears to be a bit of a paradox. Chuck can't be controlled, but Chuck can't fail to control himself. And so, for the sake of discussion, we will assume that limitless power can control an all-powerful entity, and when the limitless power and control of the all-powerful entity are one in the same, Chuck, the contradiction fades. Chuck is a moral agent that controls his actions according to his reason alone. So, despite what his son the Archangel Michael confesses he led humanity to believe, Chuck is worthy to be both praised and blamed ("Inherit the Earth" 15.19).

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[3] Death and the Shadow both claim to be as old or older than Chuck as well, but Death can't remember for certain and while the Empty existed before Chuck made everything, the fact that the Shadow always sleeps makes it difficult to know when it came into existence.

Free Will, Responsibility, and Identity

> *I don't know how to explain it, but what I found out about Chuck... it's like—it's like I wasn't alive. Not really. You know, like, my whole life I've never been free. But like, really free. But now... now me and Sam, we got a shot at living a life. Without all this crap on our backs.*
>
> — Dean ("Unity" 15.17)

As I noted at the outset, the concept of moral agency is often associated with free will because it is commonly assumed that free will is necessary for moral responsibility. How could anyone deserve a punishment like Hell if not for their own freely made choices? If people had no freedom to make their own choices, then an afterlife of eternal suffering would serve no motivating purpose, since there would be nothing a person could do differently to avoid it. This is largely why Sam and Dean take great umbrage when they discover friends and family have been sent to Hell after freely choosing to sacrifice themselves saving humanity. The life choices made by Kevin Tran, John and Mary Winchester, Adam Milligan, Eileen Leahy, and others were all praiseworthy and deserving of something good. When they got the opposite, it struck the brothers (and most viewers) as entirely unjust. Hell is a place for people who choose to do wrong things, like curse a bus full of children or sell their soul to a crossroad demon for a Supreme Court seat. Those types of people are responsible for the bad things in the world. They are moral agents, and they could have chosen to do otherwise and avoided the horrific consequences. They could have chosen to do good, or at very least, something neutral, but they did not. And so, they got what they deserved. At least, this is the common way of justifying the existence and use of Hell as a punishment.[4]

If not for this line of thinking, we could lay all the blame at Chuck's feat. The "Free Will Defence" is a popular theodicy among Church goers wishing to sidestep the Problem of Evil (Plantinga 2014). In *Supernatural*, the fact that humans have a choice means Chuck is not to blame for all the terrible things people do or the fact that there are so many people suffering in Hell. It also means Chuck cannot take credit for all the great things people choose to do either. Moral agency means having control of our actions and being responsible for the bad and good things we do. Ultimately, this is the foundation for Dean's utter contempt for Chuck, and not surprisingly, it is the main thrust of the entire show's penultimate and final climactic moments.

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[4] There are many reasons to think Hell is unjustified even if humans are moral agents and have freewill (Foresman 2015 and Foresman 2013).

For the Winchesters, free will isn't simply an explanation for the good and bad ways agents act in the world. It is, for them, the only power they have in the face of impossible odds. When the deck is utterly stacked against them, Sam and Dean can still ignore all the rational alternatives, and in an utterly mystifying way, choose to take on the impossible, like the Apocalypse, Death, the Darkness, Nazi Necromancers, God, etc. Whatever it is, Sam and Dean are down for the fight. That is just who they are, and like everyone else, their identity is formed through their choices. But, when that foundation is rocked with the knowledge that those choices were contrived by God, it is enough to make Sam and Dean—mostly Dean—question whether they are just the protagonists in an otherwise tragic puppet show. A surprisingly persistent, 15-season puppet show that we all very much love.

For Dean, free will is the tool by which he chisels his identity. The French Existential philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in *Situations* 9:101 said, "you can always make something out of what you've been made into," which underscores this central connection between personal identity and our freedom to choose (Flynn 2011). When it is revealed that Chuck has been pulling the strings from the beginning, team free will literally experiences an existential crisis. As a result, Dean struggles to find a distinct identity for himself that is free from Chuck's meddling. Dean is no longer the self-sufficient, full grown, adolescent, man-child of his own making. And while that would come as a relief to most, Dean the "Meat-Man" Winchester has grown rather fond of seeing himself that way. Discovering that Chuck had been pulling the strings all along meant Dean lost himself.

Predictably, Dean is entirely incorrect in his personal self-assessment, which fans should recognize almost immediately, because Dean reacts exactly how we'd expect him to. He gets angry and wants to kill God. Perhaps it is this very predictable nature that infuriates him; maybe he sees it as evidence of a lack of free will, complete powerlessness to do anything other than what Chuck Shurley wants him to do. Worth noting, none of this really matters to the audience. We like Dean either way; he's a praiseworthy guy most of the time. The fact that he is a character on a television show with absolutely no real control over how he's written, makes no difference to us. We give him credit for the good things he does, and we are disappointed with him when he behaves reprehensibly. With a wilful suspension of disbelief, we hold him responsible for his actions regardless of whether he could control them.

The Principle of Alternative Possibilities

DEAN: *Just when we thought we had a choice. You know, whenever we thought we had free will. We were just rats in a maze. Sure, we could go left. Sure, we could go right. But we were still in the damn maze. Just makes you think, if all of it... you know, everything that we've done... What did it even mean?*

SAM: *It meant a lot. We still saved people.*

("Back and to the Future" 15.1)

In a surprising reversal of roles, Dean's introspection is met with blunt pragmatism from Sam. In the final season, we find Dean's straight-forward, uncomplicated approach to hunting monsters and fighting for family has found an anchor in Sam, who is more naturally the morose and self-reflective of the two. Nevertheless, Sam is still a thoughtful guy, and his attitude reflects a measured approach to moral agency called, "compatibilism." In most introduction to philosophy texts, compatibilism is situated as a theory of responsibility among alternatives like free will and determinism. In Sam's response to Dean, he seems to think it doesn't matter whether they are determined to do the things they do; they are, nevertheless, responsible for the good that they've done for others. As we'll soon see, our perspective as viewers may be very different from Sam and Dean's subjective experiences, we assume they are responsible for all that good too, which is a part of why we like them.

Often, compatibilism is somewhat mistakenly defined as a form of "soft" determinism, the philosophical theory that combines the concepts of responsibility with determinism. Determinism—also vaguely misogynistically referred to as "hard" determinism—is the position that every event, every action, every choice, etc. is determined entirely by preceding events, actions, choices, etc.[5] According to the hard determinist, because every choice and action is determined by preceding events, then no choice or action is ever free, so we cannot be responsible for them. Hard and soft determinists agree over the claim that everything is determined by preceding events, but they disagree over whether we can be responsible for our actions as a result of that determination.

Compatibilism is generally equated to soft determinism, because it argues that responsibility is compatible with determinism. This is mistaken because it

[5] Not to be confused with "fatalism," which is the philosophical position that holds that we are fated, inevitably to do the things we do, regardless of preceding events. Hard determinisms holds that we will do the things we do precisely because of preceding events.

only tells half the story. Compatibilism holds that responsibility is compatible with both determinism and *indeterminism*, the position that not all actions, choices, events, etc. are entirely determined by preceding events. If at least some actions are not determined, then indeterminism is true. Free will theories deny that all actions or choices are entirely determined by prior events. Free will is typically conceived of as the ability to make a choice that is free—to some degree—from the constraints of prior events, actions, and choices. Of course, prior events are going to have some bearing on our situation and will thereby have an impact on our options and the reasons we use to deliberate, but for the free will advocate, those prior events do not entirely determine what we will choose to do. There is some indeterminacy in our choices which permits free will.

The problem, however, is that indeterminacy can preclude responsibility as well. Since, under this view, I am free to make choices unfettered by prior events, then my choice could be anything among the possible options. This may sound reasonable, but it leaves no way to determine what I might choose, even for me, the one making the choice. The person choosing is doing so arbitrarily, because nothing determines what they we do. If, for example, I give a reason for choosing apples over oranges, then my reasons—among other things—determined what I chose. If I have no reason for choosing apples over oranges, then the fact that I did so is random happen stance. If others were happy about my choice of apples, I should not be praised for my decision. I didn't really make a decision. I allowed randomness to select apples instead of oranges. While I was the person to get the apples, indeterminism means I played no role in choosing the apples.

The point, here, is that neither determinism nor its opposite, indeterminism, provide a sufficient conceptual framework to account for our ascribing responsibility to someone's actions. There is no question that responsibility hinges in some way on our actions, but the type of actions—if any—we are responsible for remains unclear. Ultimately, how we conceptualize responsibility has significant repercussions for how we evaluate our actions and the actions of others. A demon possessed person has no control over their actions, and we blame the demon for whatever the meatsuit appears to do. The same is true for the vessels containing angels, although the individual would be responsible for giving the angel permission to be used as a vessel. In either case, the problem with holding a vessel or meatsuit responsible is that the vessel (or meatsuit) has no control over the actions of their body.

Dean's crisis of identity stems from what appears to him to be a lack of control over who he is and what his life has been about. In his words, "All my life, I've been nothing but a hamster in a wheel. Stuck in a story. And you know whose fault that is? Chuck's" ("Drag Me Away (From You)" 15.16). He played no role in the seeming choices that he identifies with, because he could not have chosen to do anything else. He could not have chosen a different car to love. He could not have chosen to eat healthier. Mistakes and successes in his life are no longer his own; they are the machinations of Chuck Shurely. Sam's pragmatic response to Dean, on the other hand, while none the less angry to find out what Chuck has been doing, appears far less concerned about the status of his choices and identity. Sam's more concerned about the consequences of their actions, which are undeniably heroic. The difference in their reactions appears to be the result of a tacit assumption made by Dean called the "Principle of Alternative Possibilities" (PAP). According to PAP, "a person is morally responsible for what she has done only if she could have done otherwise" (Robb 2020). Since Dean believes he could not have done otherwise than what Chuck has had him do, Dean concludes that he is not his own person. He cannot claim responsibility for his actions or who they have made him.

The Equalizer

SAM: *You know what, I've been thinking about something you said, about how we don't make the rules, and you're right. We don't. We never have. But that doesn't mean we can just give up.*

DEAN: *Oh, come on, man.*

SAM: *We have moves to make here, Dean. We do. I mean, you think Chuck wanted me to shoot him? Of course not.*

DEAN: *You sure about that? Maybe that was part of the plan, you know? That's the thing, man. I don't know what's God and what isn't, and it's driving me crazy.*

SAM: *All I'm saying is we'll find a way to beat him. We will. I don't know how yet, but we will 'cause we're the guys who break the rules. But I can't do it without you. I can't. Just like I couldn't do it today without you. I need my brother.*

("Golden Time" 15.06)

The Principle of Alternative Possibilities has been a common assumption in discussions of moral responsibility for literally thousands of years, extending at least as far back as the ancient Greek philosophers (Robb 2020). Intuitively, it seems true. If Dean could not do otherwise than what he did, then he had no real choice in his actions. The choice he thought he made was, in fact, merely an illusion, and if this is true of every choice Dean's made throughout his life, then what does that say about him and who he thought he was? Once the locus of control is removed from our lives, we aren't much different than those meatsuits and vessels controlled by demons and angels alike.

Fortunately, in his ground-breaking article, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," philosopher Harry G. Frankfurt (1929 – Present) argues that PAP is false (Frankfurt 2003). According to Frankfurt, PAP's intuitive plausibility trades on our belief that coerced acts are also beyond the scope of our responsibility. If you have a big bag of your boss's money that you've promised to deposit in the bank and a mugger threatens to kill you if you don't hand it over, then the fact that the mugger is coercing you by threatening your life typically ameliorates the blameworthiness of handing over the money you promised to deposit. Of course, that is not say you couldn't refuse, so the coercion doesn't completely absolve you from some responsibility, but the idea that your responsibility varies depending on how much you were pressured to act is the very same thinking that makes PAP intuitively plausible. By making the alternative option so unpleasant that it is virtually unthinkable as an option, coercion can make it nearly impossible to choose to do something other than the coerced act. PAP simply takes that reasoning all the way to its logical conclusion such that you are no longer being coerced into doing something. Instead, you are entirely unable to do that thing (Frankfurt 2003).

But, what if a person were already going to do something that an external force is going to force them to do anyway? Suppose Sam and Dean are asked by Bobby to investigate a murder case. The murders are horrific, as all murders are, and they quickly discover that the killer, a librarian named "Susan," is possessed by the demon, Banal. After a quick "SearchtheWeb" research session, Sam discovers Banal enjoys killing people in utterly pedestrian ways, mostly by pushing people into heavy traffic. (Not one to be accused of being overly picky, Banal will also push someone in front of a moving train if an otherwise unassuming opportunity presents itself.) Once captured, during the exorcism (back when Sam and Dean did exorcisms), Banal reveals that every time he was about to force Susan to push a person into traffic, Susan went ahead and did it on her own. In fact, Susan does not even know she's been possessed, because Banal hasn't ever had to force Susan to kill anyone. Susan was going to push them into traffic anyway. She wants to do it and quite enjoys it.

According to Frankfurt, a case like Susan's *demon*strates PAP is false. Susan could not have done otherwise than what she did, because at a moment's hesitation Banal would have taken control and pushed the person into traffic anyway. Susan's actions are motivated by her own wants and desires, and so the fact that Banal is at the standby—there to prevent her from doing otherwise—is completely irrelevant to Susan's moral culpability. If during Banal's confession, Susan argues for a reprieve because Banal would have done it anyway, it is unlikely Sam or Dean would sympathize. As Frankfurt explains following his example starring Jones and Black:

> This, then, is why the principle of alternate possibilities is mistaken. It asserts that a person bears no moral responsibility—that is, he is to be excused—for having performed an action if there were circumstances that made it impossible for him to avoid performing it. But there may be circumstances that make it impossible for a person to avoid performing some action without those circumstances in any way bringing it about that he performs that action. It would surely be no good for the person to refer to circumstances of this sort in an effort to absolve himself of moral responsibility for performing the action in question. For those circumstances, by hypothesis, actually had nothing to do with his having done what he did. (Frankfurt 2003, 174 – 175).

And so, in laying PAP to rest, Frankfurt dispatches the keystone to Dean's existential woes. The fact that neither Sam nor Dean could ever do anything other than what they have done makes no difference to their status as moral agents. More importantly, it makes no difference to who they are, which Sam desperately tries to remind Dean. They are the brothers Winchester, and they break all the rules and always find a way. Central to their identities is their relationship, and it is that relationship that Sam leverages to help Dean find a path forward. One brother cannot lose faith in who he is without both brothers experiencing the fallout. So, while being brothers was not their choice and has determined a great deal of their lives, Dean never considered the relationship a yolk to his freedom or identity. To the contrary, in fact, because when Dean reclaims his role as Sam's brother, they are freed to do the impossible.

Don't You Cry No More

CHUCK	*This… This… This is why you're my favourites. You know, for the first time I have no idea what happens next. Is this where you kill me? I mean I could never think of an ending where I lose. But this, after everything that I've done to you… to die at the hands of Sam Winchester… of Dean Winchester, the ultimate killer… It's kind of glorious.*
DEAN:	*Sorry, Chuck.*

CHUCK: *What? What?*

DEAN: *See, that's not who I am. That's not who we are.*

("Inherit the Earth" 15.19)

Poignancy is not something I would ever expect to attribute to Dean's words, but I believe it is fair to say he has grown throughout this final apocalypse. His exchange with Chuck reveals the fatal flaw and great difficulty of a god that wants a relationship with its creation. Limitless power and virtual omniscience mean there are no surprises, no challenges, and no room for change and growth. If not for Chuck's creations and the stories he's told through them, there would be nothing at all, an Emptiness—who we know does not make for a good companion. Everything that makes Chuck God also makes his existence incredibly boring and lonely. His desire to create and interact with that creation is inherently limited by his own wants and desires, and what he clearly wants is to write the story and be a part of it at the same time. Unfortunately, he can't do both without giving up part of his identity in the process, either as creator of the world or participant in that world.

As God, creator of everything, Chuck can author the story, create the characters, set the plot in motion, and watch the action unfold exactly as he planned it. As author, if Chuck appears in the story—as he does—then he is a character with a defined part that he wrote and is acting out, but play acting is not the same sort of experience had by Sam, Dean, and the rest of the world. Chuck would simply be acting as a non-player character (NPC) in a massive live action role play (LARP) that is our lives. If Chuck decides to do anything other than act out his NPC role, then his actions will change the story and he will become a participant in the world he created.

Why can't Chuck be both author and participant? Unsurprisingly, it comes down to responsibility. As author, Chuck is fully responsible for every event that occurs in the story. As demonstrated in the dismantling of PAP, a participant is responsible for doing the things they want to do. To avoid continuity issues or maintain consistent personalities for characters, an author may decide that behaving in certain ways rather than others is suitable or fits the personality of the character, but again, such choices are entirely up to the author, not the character. Sam didn't decide to love Celine Dion. From Sam's perspective, he just does ("Moriah" 14.20). Castiel didn't decide to love Dean. He just does ("Despair" 15.18). The participant is responsible for acting on their wants and desires, but an author is responsible for creating those wants and desires. As a participant, Chuck has no control over his own wants and desires, only whether he acts on them. If, on the other hand, Chuck did have control over his own wants and desires as an author does, how would he go about deciding what his own wants and desires should be without relying on his pre-existing wants and desires? And was Chuck responsible for those pre-existing desires too? And if so, did he decide on them based on other previous wants and desires? The result of authoring and then fully participating in the world (not as an NPC) creates an infinite regress for Chuck's motivation to do anything. Much like the classic chicken and egg problem, it is unclear how Chuck the author of everything would compose a part for himself in creation that wasn't simply a role he plays when he pseudo-participates in the world.

In the end, stripped of his powers Chuck is stripped of his identity as the author, which makes him a full participant, and is revealed when he points out that he doesn't know what will happen next. Participants don't know their role. They don't know what happens next. He assumes Sam and Dean are who he authored them to be, but Sam and Dean are participants who have broken those rules, which is why they were able to surprise and defeat Chuck at all. They aren't in control of many things, especially what they want and desire—that's on Chuck. They are, however, entirely responsible for giving life to those wants and desires through their actions. And because they do so, we infer their motivation through a form of inductive reasoning, like an inference to the best explanation. So, when we wonder why Sam and Dean saved the world once again, it's entirely reasonable to conclude that they did so because they are awesome people. And why did Chuck want to destroy his favourite Winchesters? Turns out, because Chuck was the author of everything except his own wants and desires, which are the arbitrary result of an infinite regress, and so there was absolutely no good reason.[6]

[6] Special thanks to the *Supernatural Wiki: A Supernatural Canon & Fandom Resource*. One of the finest fan-supported sites, and an irreplaceable resource for episode transcripts. http://supernaturalwiki.com/Supernatural_Wiki

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