

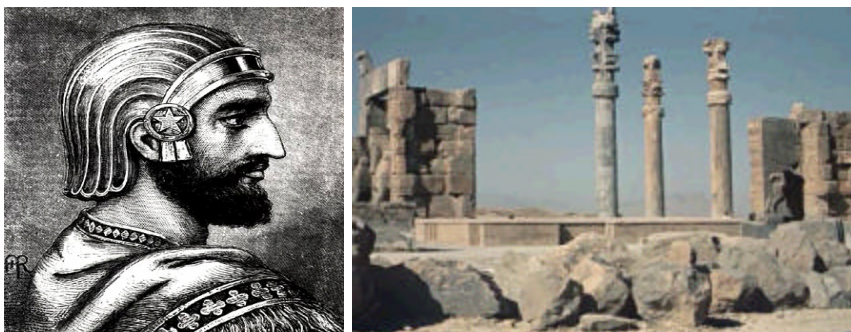
## Chapter Five

# CREATIONISM: THE HEBREW GIFT TO HISTORY

### 1. *Persia and the Prehistory of the Creationist Definition of God*

Historically and geographically, East and West meet in the ancient Middle East, the world that we encounter in the Bible. This Biblical world was not limited to the Hebrews. We locate the Bible in world history by saying that it offers a microcosmic reconstruction of a larger (macrocosmic) world that includes Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Hebrews, among others. All these cultures communicate in the mind of the ancient Hebrew. Under Persia they finally attained political unification, prior to being conquered by Alexander the Great in the fourth century, B.C.

Persian Empire was original among ancient empires in accepting cultural and religious diversity among subject peoples. The Chinese Empire was unified not merely politically, but also linguistically and culturally. In India, Hinduism integrated differences between population groups. The Persian Empire, founded by Cyrus the Great in 537 B.C., attempted no linguistic, cultural, or religious unification. In this sense, Persia was the first modern empire (Hegel 1927xi, Section 3, Ch 1). Like the Roman, Napoleonic, or Soviet Empires, it was a political conglomeration of culturally diverse elements.



Ali Issari. Persian king Cyrus the Great founded the Persian Empire in 550 BC. Its capital was Persepolis, which is located in the mountainous region of southwestern Iran. The high, dry climate has preserved much of the architecture, and archaeologists have uncovered and restored many of the ruins. Microsoft © Encarta © Encyclopedia 2002.

To use a term currently used to describe the United States, Persia was a multicultural society. Such an empire, though led by one nation, tends toward a federation. National identity is depoliticized, relegated to non-political ethnic culture. The Persian empire thus provides, to a certain degree, an historical parallel to the United States. According to the pragmatic theory of history writing, we study historical parallels to the present to avoid the disasters of the past. Some historians have suspected that the Persian empire collapsed because its various regions or satrapies failed to share the Persian same culture.

The idea of historical parallels suggests that the past can be repeated in the present. They suggest universal causal laws at work in history. If past initial conditions are repeated in the present, what followed those conditions in the past will follow in the present as well. If exuberant booms were followed by busts in the past, we would expect the present boom to be followed by bust as well. Yet historical parallels are never exact, and that is one thing that makes the future difficult to predict. The present is always unique, always different from the past, and so its future results are likewise different. There may be general historical laws of causation, but they do not seem to explain everything about any future event. The course of history thus shows the falsehood of determinism, of the belief that every event is completely determined by the past. (We shall return to this in Chapter Seven on Rome.)

As the United States gradually becomes an imperial power, it can manage conflicts between nations only by adopting a scrupulously even-handed point of view. It cannot allow its role as one nation among others, with its own national culture, to result in favoritism towards one or another nation. Yet, American pop culture and high tech culture are spreading as a world culture. Could this universal pop culture save the “American empire” from the fate of the Persian empire, which was defeated and overturned by the culturally homogeneous Greeks? Probably not. To take another historical parallel, France’s decline as an imperial power was not prevented by the fact that the French language, tennis, ballet, cuisine, and the universal rights of man—all French inventions—were adopted as a part of world culture. A national culture can unite a nation against other nations, but if it becomes a world culture it no longer do so.

The Babylonian kingdom toppled by the Persians was not yet multicultural. The Babylonian kings did not claim divinity. Like the Hebrew kings, they were not God, but were commissioned by God. The Babylonians, conquering Jerusalem, destroyed the Hebraic temple and carried the Jews into captivity (597, 586 B.C.). The Hebrews were forced to abandon their religion and to worship Babylonian gods. However, a first step of the Persian king after his conquest of Babylon, as we know from the Biblical account, was to free the Hebrews, allowing them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Their emancipation from Babylon allowed them the freedom that comes from living in a multicultural empire.

Persian tolerance of different cultures under its authority was a step in the direction of human rights, especially the rights to freedom of worship and to national identity. An apparent motive behind Persian tolerance was a desire to win the allegiance of subject populations by granting cultural autonomy in exchange for recognition of Persian political and military supremacy. The populations of the different satrapies were free to worship however they wished so long they acknowledged this supremacy. Yet it was a political supremacy purchased perhaps too cheaply. It lacked the staying power of a Chinese or Indian fusion of a political system with a whole civilization and culture. China and India are with us today, while the Persian empire is a memory. The Persian religion founded by Zoroaster never became the universal religion of the empire. It survives today chiefly around Bombay, India, where Persians sought refuge from Islam in the twelfth century.

The Hebrews, never a great power in the ancient Persian world, also survive today. They, with the Greeks, are one of the two main sources of Western civilization. Greek culture is visual,

it has been said, while Hebrew culture is oral. The Greek in us enjoys immediate visual and intellectual sights, while the Hebrew hears invisible voices from the past. The Hebrew exemplifies what the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard called ethical man, who is recalled to duty, to responsibility for the future, by voices from the past. The Greek illustrates aesthetic man absorbed in the immediate beauty of the passing sights of the world. Modern Western culture contains a contest between aesthetic and ethical man. A call to ethical life, after having tasted the Greek aesthetic art of living, can be oppressive.

In his first major work, *Either/Or* (2 volumes, 1843; trans. 1944), Kierkegaard described two spheres, or stages of existence, that the individual may choose: the aesthetic and the ethical. The aesthetic way of life is a refined hedonism, consisting of a search for pleasure and a cultivation of mood. The aesthetic individual constantly seeks variety and novelty in an effort to stave off boredom but eventually must confront boredom and despair. The ethical way of life involves an intense, passionate commitment to duty, to unconditional social and religious obligations. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002.

The cultural pluralism of the ancient Persian Middle East gives it a unique place in world history. World history as a continuous story line begins here. Each leading nation since the Persians (the Greeks, Romans, Europeans, the United States) was aware of having inherited a mission of world empire from the Persians. The Greeks were aware of having achieved supremacy through struggle against Persia. Until Alexander the Great, India existed only on the fringe Greek consciousness. China might as well have not existed at all. And the Romans were conscious of having displaced the Greeks. The European nations displaced the Romans, and after World War Two the United States, the latest descendant of ancient Persia, displaced the Europeans.

The Persian conquest of the Middle East thus began world history as a succession of multicultural empires with global ambitions. But the diversity of national kingdoms prior to Persia already made the ancient Middle East intrinsically historical. The rivalry of limited national kingdoms and regional empires (Sumerian, Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian) gave each of its peoples an historical self-consciousness. The Persians were aware of imperial civilizations before them, and they must have suspected others to come. Except for Soviet and Nazi interludes in the twentieth century, this development is geographically westward, and is largely directed to greater individual civil, political, and welfare rights. Yet the geographically Western character of Western civilization seems accidental. Newton was English, but Newtonian physics is human physics, not English physics. Human rights, even if Western in origin, can only be human in nature and validity.

A case for moral progress in history now emerges in outline: the Hebrews attained freedom from any purely human authority as illustrated from the liberation from Babylonian captivity. Persia was more multinational, less culturally repressive than Babylon. Greece, we shall see, was more attached to local political autonomy than the populations of the Persian empire. Rome was more attached to universal freedom of thought and to the universal extension of individual civil rights than Greece.

## 2. *Islam*

Islam achieved what the Hebrews never achieved, for it extended the Hebrew idea of

supernatural divine kingship onto the plane of universal political history. It has projected submission to universal theocracy as its vision of the end of history. It is free of any human authority that is not a vehicle of the authority of divine law (*sharia*). It is tempting to say that, by the moral standard of individual freedom of thought, orthodox Islam represents regression. In its most conservative interpretations it severely limits freedom of worship and freedom of expression, though it recognizes the stranger's right to hospitality.

The doctrines of the Sunnites were formed toward the end of the 9th century, and their theology was developed as a complete system during the 10th century. Both developments occurred, in large measure, as reactions to early schismatic movements, such as the Kharijites, Mutazilites, and Shiites. The Sunnites' inclusive definition of a Muslim, for instance, was conceived in reaction to the narrow extremism of the Kharijites. Their strong emphasis on God's power, will, and determination of human fate developed in reaction to the Mutazilite insistence on the absolute freedom of the human will. Their political doctrines emerged in the struggle against the legitimism espoused by the Shiites in the dispute over the succession to Muhammad...

Sufism arose out of various influences, among them a mystical overtone in some of the teachings of Muhammad, the founder of Islam; a desire to escape the hardships due to the social and political upheavals of the time; and a tendency toward quietism in reaction to the worldliness and extravagance of the early caliphs.... By the 9th century ad the Sufis claimed to have methods of finding mystic knowledge of God, or Allah. The Sufi mystic, described as a pilgrim on a journey, follows a path of seven stages: repentance, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God, and acquiescence to the will of God. Then, with the grace of God, a higher level of consciousness is attained, in which knowledge, the knower, and the known are realized as one. Some mystics believed that the supreme experience of union with God could not be expressed in words; others who tried to express it scandalized the orthodox by ecstatically proclaiming their identity with God. Eventually, formal pantheistic doctrines (see Pantheism) emerged Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002.

But just as Christianity cannot be reduced to orthodox Christianity, Islam cannot be reduced to orthodox Islam (Sunnite or Shiite Islam). If we do not judge Christianity merely by orthodox Christianity, it would be most unfair to judge Judaism and Islam merely by their orthodox versions. The non-orthodox (heretical) version of Islam is largely contained in the mystical Sufi tradition. Sufi Islam upholds an idea of God's presence in man that is absent in orthodox Islam but clearly found in Orthodox Christianity's idea of the incarnation. Sufi Islam moderates the orthodox Islamic stress on blind obedience to an external divine will by the notion that through mystical experience we can merge e with that will.

### 3. *Zoroastriansim.*

For Hegel, the Zoroastrian Persian religion had a transitional position between nature religion in the East and supernatural religion in the West (Hegel 1927xv, 422). In the East, the human personality was not yet differentiated from nature. The religions of the West, beginning with the Judaic and Greek Olympian religions, make this differentiation. In Zoroastrianism, God is identified with spiritual values such as the good and the true. Yet light and fire are natural symbols of the divine. Light, which is immaterial energy without mass, symbolizes supernatural illumination, goodness, truth, or justice.

Plato distinguished the physical eye, which sees double and falsely, from the mind's eye which sees true (Republic, Estienne nos 516-20). The goal for him was for the spiritual eye to free itself from the physical eye, which clouds intellectual vision. But, for Zoroaster, the spiritual eye sees through the physical eye. Physical light is an unconscious natural non-conventional

symbol of spiritual light and goodness. To be a conscious conventional symbol, physical light would first have to be distinguished from what it symbolizes. The Statue of Liberty is a conscious symbol of liberty: the very need to tell viewers what the statue means by giving it a name implies a distinction between it and the liberty to which it refers. A natural symbol has the meaning it has because of its natural resemblance to what it refers to. A conventional symbol refers by someone's arbitrary decision, which makes up for the indefiniteness of the symbol's meaning when the symbol is taken by itself.

We can find examples of unconscious symbolism in Freud's interpretation of dreams. Dictionaries of dream symbolism have been created. Thus a snake is thought by Freud to symbolize the male sexual organ, along a fish, snail, cat and mouse. Such symbolism in dreams, when made conscious by interpretation, gives the dreamer access to repressed contents of the unconscious mind. When the dreamer becomes conscious that a dream symbolizes a particular unconscious content, the game of repression is up, and the forbidden content becomes conscious.

Natural light (e.g., the sun or sacred fire) is not a symbol of anything that is repressed or considered evil. It gives Zoroastrians immediate sensory access to spiritual light, truth, and goodness. But only the interpreter of Zoroastrianism, not the Zoroastrians as such, are conscious of light or fire as a natural symbol of God. Spiritual light is everything good, truth, justice and the Persian way. It is personified as Ozmad (Ahura Mazda), the god served by ancient Persian kings. Yet this personification only superficial. Since God, conceived as the principle of goodness, is immaterial, spiritual, or ideal, but is not really a person.

The Persian view of kingship ruled out the Egyptian or Chinese belief in the divinity of the monarch. In this respect Judaism, the Babylonian religion, and Zoroastrianism are similar. All three are moral world views. All three replace a divine king with an anointed king, a sacred king who is himself subject to divine moral authority. In Zoroastrianism this authority is contained in the ideals of truth, good, and justice; while in Judaism it is revealed by a supernatural person in the full sense of the term.

Judaism conceives God as a spiritual person completely abstracted from nature. It is a supernatural religion in which God is not revealed in unconscious natural symbols. God is not a superficial personification of an impersonal ideal. He is a fully individual, believable person with a definite personality and biographical record of past commitments and future responsibilities.

Most of all, Ozmad, unlike the Hebrew God, is not actually all-powerful. Over against Ozmad stand forces of evil identified with Ahriman (Angra Mainya). Men and women of good will are called on to join in a cosmic struggle to combat evil and to spread the empire of light and good. This is the meaning of history. What happens in history is not illusory as it is for the Hindus. But complete victory of good over evil, which depends in part on us, is postponed to the end of time.

If we join forces with Ozmad, he is potentially all-powerful. But, throughout history, his realm is limited by that of evil. In the great a world-historical epic struggle of good and evil, the God of good finds his own potentially infinite power to be limited. In Zoroastrianism a moral

dualism of good and evil becomes a theological dualism of God and the devil. The Christian and Muslim concepts of the devil originated in the Zoroastrian concept of Ahriman. Yet God in Christianity and Islam never suffers any limitation on his power. The devil is a fallen angel, but all angelic power derives from God. The devil is an instrument of the will of God. He is the great tempter, whose task it is to put each of us to the test of free will choice, so that each individual merits her or his eternal reward. There is never a moment's doubt that God will prevail over the devil. God for Christianity is actually, not just potentially, omnipotent.

Zoroastrians believe that Ozmad ought to prevail. But whether he does prevail depends on us. Good is inconsistent with the existence of evil. Good requires that every human will be converted from an evil will to a good will. Evil, the misuse of free will, cannot be prevented by Ozmad, and this makes it difficult for Zoroastrians to be sure that Ozmad will prevail in world history. Christians are confident that in God's providence good will prevail over evil in the world, but that is because they conceive good as divine justice, not simply as an eventual total elimination of worldly evil. Some human beings will continue to do evil, but it will be punished by Christ's justice at the end of time.

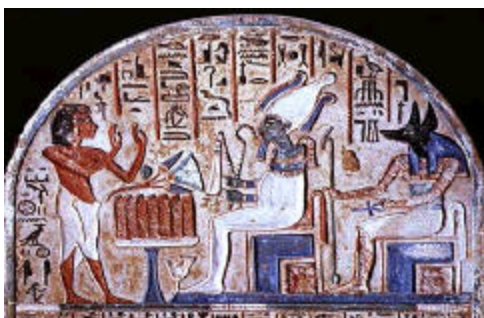
Monism in Zoroastrianism has precedence over dualism from the moral point of view (Hegel, 1927 xv, 425-26). Unsullied, undiluted good without evil is what ought to be, while the dualism of good and evil is what is. Much like the comic strip figure of Superman, goodness of Ozmad is abstracted from all evil, which it is then charged to eradicate. Friedrich Nietzsche used the figure of Zoroaster to express his own philosophy: the title of his book *Thus Spake Zarathustra* means "Thus Spake Zoroaster." By living dangerously, Nietzsche's Superman overcomes his mere humanity and at once overcomes the moral dualism of good and evil. He does not get beyond good and evil by eradicating evil as it is conventionally understood, but by recasting evil as ordinarily understood (as the will to power) to be good in disguise. In this respect, the Superman of Nietzsche's philosophy is vastly different from the Superman of comic strip fame. The comic strip Superman is much closer to Ozmad and to historical Zoroastrianism than Nietzsche's Superman is.

One of Nietzsche's fundamental contentions was that traditional values (represented primarily by Christianity) had lost their power in the lives of individuals. He expressed this in his proclamation "God is dead." He was convinced that traditional values represented a "slave morality," a morality created by weak and resentful individuals who encouraged such behavior as gentleness and kindness because the behavior served their interests. Nietzsche claimed that new values could be created to replace the traditional ones, and his discussion of the possibility led to his concept of the overman or superman. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002.

The mission of isolating good from evil at the end of history seems simplistic because goodness understood concretely is inseparable from the struggle with evil. It is the process of overcoming evil. Ozmad is not a convincing person because he includes no evil, falsehood, no lies, no death. Like the heroes of first-generation Westerns, and like the Superman of television and films he is too good to be true. The believability of the Hebrew God as a person is enhanced because he is subject to violent emotions like anger, because he can repent his acts, and because he can even be morally challenged by man (Job, 10:2-20). Of course, to say that the Biblical God Yahweh is a convincing person does not mean that he necessarily exists. He could be just a theatrical invention. That will be the main question of this chapter.

#### 4. *The Egyptian God Osiris*

Is Zoroastrianism an undeveloped supernatural religion—the worship of something beyond nature—or simply a developed natural religion? Light, fire, is a simple, abstract natural force or element within nature. Natural religion reaches its fullest development when nature appears in its most complete or developed form. Developed forms of natural religion are more clearly present in Syria and Egypt than in Persia. Life is the most complexly organized, most developed phenomenon in the natural world. Life leads to death, which prepares the way for new life, for rebirth. A natural religion representing the death of a living god would express the most developed concept of a natural god. This concept appears in the Syrian cult of Adonis and the Egyptian cult of Osiris. Here is a god that dies and is resurrected. But any suggestion that ancient Syria and Egypt anticipated the Christian death and resurrection of Christ is misleading. Adonis and Osiris are vegetation gods, whose death and rebirth signify the passage of the seasons and, in particular, the transition from winter (death) to spring (rebirth) on which the community depends for the harvest.



**Osiris and Anubis.** Egyptian mythological figure Osiris lived in the fabled underworld as the ruler of the dead. He is shown here (*center*) with the jackal-headed Anubis, another god of the dead. This depiction dates from the 18th dynasty in Egypt (1550-1307 BC) and is in the Museo Egizio in Turin, Italy. Microsoft © Encarta © Encyclopedia 2002

The death and resurrection of Christ are not reducible to the passage of the seasons or to any natural process. In orthodox Christianity, they answer rather to a moral need for reconciliation between the supernatural Lord and his creatures. Christianity is thus not a natural religion. Its originality lies in identifying the dying god with the supernatural and omnipotent Lord of the universe. In orthodox Christianity, the incarnation on earth of the Father as Christ dies like all human beings.

Osiris, however, is more than a pantheistic vegetation god of natural religion, probably with Oriental roots. It was not a natural god as opposed to being a spiritual god. For Osiris, embodied the annual vegetative cycle, but that cycle was a natural symbol of a spiritual process of death and transfiguration. Given ancient Egypt's preoccupation with individual immortality, the worship of Osiris was both a case of Oriental natural religion and a case Western supernatural religion. The winter and spring are a natural symbol of spiritual death and resurrection, a supernatural process.

In Egyptian mythology, Osiris was cut into pieces by Set and then arose Phoenix-like to new life. The god symbolized the natural transition of the seasons on which Egypt's survival in the Nile river valley. This is the pantheistic or panentheistic side of the Osiris cult. But Osiris was also the center of a supernatural mystery cult. The passage of the seasons became a natural symbol of a supernatural process of death and resurrection which assured immortality. Osiris, as

natural vegetation god, assured collective survival through the annual harvest. Osiris as the god of spiritual death and rebirth satisfied a desire for immortality of the individual soul. Death is not simply death, but is a passage to new life. And at this point the cult of Osiris begins to resemble Christianity. The cycle of the life and death of spirit defines God, and the individual attains immortality by partaking of this divine cycle.

### 5. *The Rise of Great Symbolic Art in Egypt*

Egyptian art produced, out of natural materials, artistic (artificial) symbols of the supernatural. Great symbolic art, like all great art, supposes that nature is not experienced as divine by itself. If, as in pantheism, nature is immediately divine, great art in the Western sense cannot exist. Such art has a religious function. It is not decoration, nor distraction, nor art for art's sake, but for the sake of a revelation the divine in a natural being which does not immediately reveal the divine by itself, but which is brought to reveal it by being transformed into a work of art. Egyptian art strives "to impress the inner spirit on the external formation" (Hegel, 1927xv, 470).

An artist transforms natural materials into works of art that symbolize, reveal, or call back to mind the divine. But natural objects by themselves lack divinity. In Egypt, identification with nature apparently failed to satisfy an emerging desire for individual immortality. This desire, evident in Pharaohs through their pyramids, set Egypt apart from the collectivism of the Far East. The Egyptians did not so much live in the fear of Pharaoh, their lord, as they and Pharaoh lived in the fear of death (Hegel, 1927xv, 49-60).



Karen Petersen  
**Egyptian Pyramids**

Located on the west bank of the Nile River on the outskirts of Cairo, the pyramids at Giza, Egypt, rank as some of the best-known monuments in the world. The ancient Egyptians constructed the pyramids to serve as royal tombs. Built without the use of cranes, pulleys, or lifting tackle, the massive structures stand as testaments to the engineering skills of their makers.  
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Arising against the background of a pantheism (or panentheism) in which nature reveals God directly, Chinese and Indian art fail to be "great art" in the Western sense. Indian art does not offer artistic revelations of any supernatural reality. It consists in symbols of something awe-inspiring and without limit, not in revelations of self-contained beauty in which the observer can come to rest, instead of being drawn out of himself toward the infinite. Great Western art reveals to the senses the harmony or disharmony of an otherwise invisible soul or spirit. It brings nature to reveal spirit, and that is what makes an artifact beautiful. Natural religion, not differentiating inner spirit from external nature, produces no artworks in which nature is transfigured as the revelation of spirit.

Hinduism produce what at first sight seems to Westerners to be grotesque distortions of

naturally occurring bodies, for example, statues with a multiplication of hands and arms. These deformations do not express the disharmony of a finite soul. Rather, they turn meditation toward the infinite cosmic substance that shimmers through the art without being fully revealed by it. The distortions prevent us from viewing the art object as an ordinary thing, and ordinary human body. It gives the swirling object it sublime, awe-inspiring quality.



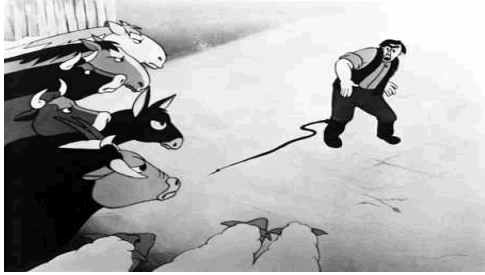
Brahma

Great art assumed its classical form in Greece. But it emerged in Egypt. In Egypt dawns awareness of a distinct non-natural reality, the kingdom of the living dead. A first form of this awareness lies in unconscious symbolic art. One is conscious of the non-natural reality only through a sensory artistic symbol that is produced in nature itself. Great symbolic artists are unaware of what is symbolized apart from the symbols used. The artist is unaware of using symbols; the symbolism is unconscious. A symbol refers to the object symbolized by the symbol's resemblance to the object. The symbol is pregnant with unarticulated meaning.

Suppose the artist is aware of the symbolization, able to distinguish the meaning from the sensory symbols, and able to see the resemblance between symbol and meaning. There is then no need of symbols to be conscious of the meaning. The artist could dispense with symbols and convey their meaning by scientific statement. The use of symbols would be contrived, artificial, or mechanical. The great symbolic artist is unconscious of the symbolic meaning of the art object (Hegel, 1927 xii, 426-29). Such an artist does not consciously translate abstract ideas into concrete sensory symbols. For the artist does not yet have any abstract concepts or theories to translate. The artistic struggle with symbols is serious because they are the artist's sole access to deep content.

If the artist already had clear abstract ideas, symbolization would obscure what is already clear. A conscious disguise of one's meaning may characterize secondary forms of art (for example, allegory). Such conscious symbolism, illustrated by George Orwell's *Animal Farm*—which was quite consciously a commentary on totalitarian states of the twentieth century—may be motivated by the desire to make the meaning accessible to a young audience, or in some cases by a need to conceal one's meaning from censors. But conscious symbolism is ruled out as long as art is still a vital search by the artist for his or her own greater clarity and understanding.

*Animal Farm* (1945) is an allegorical fable written by British author George Orwell. The novel, one of Orwell's most popular works, depicts the abuses of power among a group of farm animals who rebel against their human owners and attempt to form an egalitarian society. This photo is from a 1954 animated motion picture based on the book, created by the studio of John Halas of Hungary and Joy Batchelor of the United Kingdom. Microsoft © Encarta © Encyclopedia 2002.



The distinction between the natural symbol and the non-natural content that is symbolized—much like the distinction between the fragment of a dream and its repressed content—becomes conscious only in the mind of the interpreter. Yet the meaning of unconscious symbolic art is not necessarily repressed. It need not be something of which the artist is afraid to be aware. It may only be a thought whose importance the artist feels while still being incapable of stating it discursively.

The symbolic artist may not even realize that there is any meaning represented by his or her work. In painting a sun, for example, the artist may think of the painting as nothing but an image of the sun, and thus may not see its symbolic function. The artist is painting the sun, but there is a reason why he or she has chosen to paint the sun and not something else. If he or she is a truly great painter, the choice of the subject of the painting is not arbitrary. It is not, for example, a purely commercial choice. The artist intensely feels the sun to be a deeply significant object. But the painter cannot state in logical discourse what this significance is. A painter who could state it would have much less need of the art work; of artistic creation, to clarify his or her own thinking. The attention of the artist is riveted to the subject of the artwork because he or she has no access to his or her deep meaning apart from struggle with that subject.

If the artist does realize that he or she is trying to represent something other than the sun itself by the image on the canvass, the symbol becomes an enigma or puzzle. If the artist solves the puzzle and discovers what is symbolized by abstract thought, the symbol loses its interest. One goes on to state the meaning in abstract terms and without obscure symbolism. When symbolism is still used, it will be conscious symbolism, and it will not be great art. A consequence of this concept of the great symbolic artist is that great symbolic artists are not great theoreticians or lucid philosophers.

Animal forms, pyramids and other Egyptian art symbolize but do not reveal the human spirit (Hegel, 1927xii, 481). The pyramids were tombs, houses of the dead for spirits who have left the natural realm. Hegel believed that the Sphinx was the most striking example of Egyptian symbolism. Indeed, it can be viewed from a Greek perspective as a symbol of all history understood as the story of freedom (Hegel, 1927xi, Section 3, Ch 3). For ancient Egyptians, the Sphinx, placed next to the pyramids, depicted the entombed Pharaoh. But the Greeks found in the Sphinx a symbol of something its Egyptian creators never suspected. Its human head, emerging from an animal body, symbolized the human spirit working its way from bondage in nature to free self-conscious expression in history. Half human and half animal, it presents us with a mutation never seen in nature, a riddle. The solution to this riddle, according to the Greek account, is the transition from Egypt to Greece, from nature to humanity, from symbolic to classical art, to the human spirit released from bondage to nature and expressed in a classical

Greek statue.



#### Great Sphinx

More than 4000 years old, the Great Sphinx of Giza is the most famous emblem of ancient Egypt.

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B. Annebicque/Syigma

### 6. The Hebrew World View

Politically the Persian world is no more, while the Hindu and Chinese worlds are still with us. An exception among ancient nations of the Persian world is *Israel*. But Israel exists today, after nearly two thousand years of non-existence as an organized state, because of its religion. Judaism, the religion of a minor ancient nation, survived the political eclipse of the Persian world to assume an importance far exceeding the political importance of the ancient Hebrew state. Israel accomplished this because its all-powerful, infinitely good and totally supernatural God could not let it down.



The empires of China and Japan could not survive military or economic defeat because their divine emperors were mortal human beings whose divinity could be called into question by disasters such as military defeat. When the Hebrews faced defeat, God is not a part of that defeat. It could be inferred that the defeat was all part of God's mysterious plan for redemption of the people. But since Hirohito renounced divinity after World War II, it would be harder to claim that the Japanese defeat was part of his plan as a divine emperor for the salvation of Japan.

This religion of Israel, by preparing the way for Christianity, formed like Egypt a link in the transition from East to West. If we abstract from faith and view the Bible merely as a literary revelation of the Hebrew experience of the world, the germ of Judaism may be found in the project of *Abraham*, its founder. A free choice, by which Abraham created his own identity, became a destiny for the people tracing its origins to him. Abraham chose alienation from his natural environment and from the social environment in which he was reared in order to become a wanderer on the face of the earth heeding the call of his god (*Genesis* 11:31-13-18).

**Abraham placed himself in the hands of the lord.** Abraham was about to sacrifice his son Issac to God [as commanded]. But an angel intervened and stopped him, pointing to a nearby ram as a substitute. Italian artist Giovanni Battista Tiepolo painted this scene between 1726 and 1728. It is in the Palazzo



*Sacrifice of Isaac* Scala/Art Resource,

Forsaking his urban, commercial roots in the Sumerian civilization of Ur, he reverted to a more primitive nomadic past. He became a herdsman and a wanderer on the face of the earth, divorcing himself from the bonds that previously held him to the world of his earthly father.

He turned his back on his ancestors and their worship of many gods. The historical Abraham probably lived in the nineteenth century and was perhaps a *henotheist*, believing in a highest personal god for his people, rather than a *monotheist*. But as recollected by later Hebrews projecting their own monotheism on him, Abraham placed himself instead in the hands of the all-powerful God of the universe, and of all peoples.

Natural catastrophes like the *Biblical flood* means a rupture with nature. *Noah's* response, in the tradition of Abraham, was novel. He could have chosen the classical Oriental despotism of China or Egypt. In *Genesis* this was the response of *Nimrod* (Genesis 10:8-11). Nimrod tried to subjugate the population by promising them security against hostile natural forces symbolized by the flood. He then sought to subject nature to the control of despotically organized mass labor. Abraham's understanding of the rupture between himself and his world is continued in Noah.

Instead of submitting to a human despot, or perhaps seeking despotic control over nature himself, Noah subjected himself to lord of the universe, a supernatural infinitely enlightened despot. A despot exercises external authority over those under his authority. A natural despot is a human being exercising such authority. A supernatural despot is a divine being exercising similar power. Since natural despots can cease to be all-powerful and divine if they lose the mandate of heaven, total security is not possible by placing oneself under their care. The Hebrew God, who issues the true mandates of heaven, can never lose that mandate.

Noah places himself in the hands of the Lord:

[11] The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

[12] And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

[13] And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth....

[1] And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

[2] Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

[3] Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

[4] For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

[5] And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him. *Genesis 6-7*

In one sense Judaism presents us with the ultimate development of despotism. Through Judaism, patriarchal despotism entered human consciousness to the point of serving as the very model or conceiving ultimate reality. God is a patriarch. The God of *Abraham* and *Isaac* is an individualized person with a biographical record of plans and human-like actions. He promises his people prosperity in his kingdom if they obey his law. A human despot rules through his human intelligence; a divine despot rules by absolute wisdom. In the case of a divine human king, only the results of policy decisions show whether his wisdom is divine or merely human. The Hebrew God is an infinitely enlightened despot. Because his wisdom is unambiguously superhuman and supernatural, it cannot fail in the face of apparent disaster.

This Judaic concept of divine despotism is the ultimate form of despotism. Yet this Judaic elevation of despotism to the supernatural level abolishes earthly despotism. *Despotism, magnified beyond human proportions, is overcome as a human institution.* Newly settled in the *promised land*, the ancient Hebrews long resisted the temptation to follow neighboring nations in establishing kingship. When *Gideon* was offered a crown, he refused, reminding Israel that it already had a heavenly king (*Judges 8:24*).

When the Hebrews finally yielded to the temptation of human kingship, the kingship they established was historically original. *Solomon*, despite legendary splendor, was not a despot in the usual Eastern sense. Unlike the Chinese emperors or Egyptian Pharaoh, the Hebrew kings were not divine. Rather, they were anointed of God. Even if they were kings, they were, like their subjects, the subjects and servants of God. Thus the Hebrew Bible gave the West the idea of *sacred kingship* as distinct from *divine kingship*. This was the idea of kingship that would come to have such immense influence European monarchies (e.g., France, England, Spain) in the Middle Ages and modern times up to the French Revolution. Such a king serves neither his own ends, nor those of his people, but the larger purposes of God.



Bridgeman Art Library, London/New York  
**Michelangelo's David**

One of Michelangelo's best known creations is the sculpture *David* (1501-1504). The 5.17-m (17-ft) tall marble statue shows an alert David waiting for his enemy Goliath. It originally stood in front of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, Italy, but was later moved to the Galleria dell'Accademia.

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King David was the most revered example of a sacred monarch.

The Chinese emperor served the Mandate of Heaven. But Heaven was but an abstract concept. Heaven (*t'ien*) was conceived as issuing mandates only by the most superficial personification. The requirements of Heaven were determined either by the harmonies of existing social relationships or, as long as the empire remained prosperous, by the will of the emperor. Deification of the emperor meant his identification or at least association with the impersonal might of the cosmos. Natural or political disaster called this identity into question, thus leading to the overthrow of dynasties.

In Judaism, the will of God is presumed to be good even if what is willed is not humanly known, and even if it brings about apparent disaster. If disaster strikes, God has not let us down. Rather, we have not kept our side of the bargain in the *covenant* or *social contract* that we have struck with him. Thus Judaism, unlike Chinese emperor worship, could survive and grow in strength during the decline or defeat of its political base, despite the total destruction of Israel as a sovereign state by Rome. Israel, after several other setbacks and defeats, ceased to exist as a sovereign state 70 A.D. as it was absorbed in the Roman Empire.

Judaism reached an ethical pinnacle in the era of the *prophets* who preceded and accompanied the destruction of ancient Israel and Judea. Trust in the supernatural patriarch could not be destroyed by temporal misfortune. If God punishes the wicked and rewards the virtuous, the misfortune of his people suggests that *there is more to virtue than meets the eye*, or even (as the Jewish philosopher *Spinoza* said in the seventeenth century) that *virtue is its own reward*. Those who seek material compensation from God for their virtue do not understand virtue. God commands *duty for duty's sake*, not duty for the sake of any *happiness* external to doing your duty. This idea foreshadowed the idea of the eighteenth century German philosopher *Lessing*, according to which *adulthood* lies in allowing one's will to be determined by nothing other than one's own *insight*. "Adults" who are motivated by creature comforts and pleasure are really still children. *Immanuel Kant* held that virtue was reverence for moral duty, without regard to the consequences of doing our duty.

PROP. XLII. Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself; neither do we rejoice therein [in virtue], because we control our lusts, but, contrariwise, because we rejoice therein, we are able to control our lusts.  
*Spinoza, Ethics, Part Five, trans. R.H.M Elwes*

The history of the Jews brought out the *ethical character of Judaism*. Obedience to an all-powerful and just God is necessarily rewarded, by virtue of the *covenant* struck between Him and His people. God always has sufficient power and goodness to reward it. If the fortunes of history appear to turn against His people, faith leads them to conclude that obedience to God's will is more than external compliance with ritual, or that material rewards are not genuine, or both.

Even on a lower moral plane, the Hebrew relation to God is necessarily ethical. Even if Judaism is only ritualistic, keeping the feast days and other rituals is ethical, since it consists in keeping *promises* to God—within a contractual relationship of commitment, obligation, and dedication to an ever-renewed task. This statement cannot be fairly made about Hinduism or Buddhism. *Hindus* seek reincarnation in a higher caste by proper conduct, and *Buddhists* value charity and love of one's neighbor. But in both cases, ethical conduct serves a purpose that is non-ethical: the extinction of personhood through union with Brahma or the attainment of Nirvana.

To be a person in the West, as the concept was best stated by the nineteenth century Danish Protestant philosopher *Søren Kierkegaard*, is to be subject to individual moral responsibility, to place obligations upon oneself, to promise, and to live in the disturbing knowledge of unfulfilled tasks. To be a *person* means to live simultaneously in the past, present,

and future, with a recollection of commitments made, and a sense of responsibility for living up to these commitments in the present and future. Depersonalization sets in when we forget past commitments and become wholly determined by the present. Total permanent depersonalization may occur in the case of someone in a coma, but total temporary depersonalization may occur when someone goes into a dreamless sleep, or when an individual is completely drunk or under the influence of drugs. Partial temporary depersonalization can occur when an individual is on vacation, so that his or her professional responsibilities are temporarily forgotten while responsibilities to friends and family are retained.

<p><u>Mother hood of Jane</u></p> <p><u>Active role as wife of John</u>                      <u>Active role as wife of George</u></p> <p><u>Active role as daughter of Ruth</u></p>
<p><b>Example of overlapping strands of personal commitment in a person who maintains personal identity only in the weak sense.</b></p>

Your *personal identity* consists in all your present commitments or obligations. You have the commitments you have by placing obligations on yourself through promises to yourself to keep those obligations. *Promises* to others are sincere only if they are also promises to yourself. *Personal change* enters when we undertake new commitments that contradict the commitments of the past. Since each of us is constituted by very many commitments, partial change of personal identity can change without total change. It is possible that your personal identity at seventy years of age has nothing in common with your personal identity at twenty years of age, since all the commitments which you had at twenty are have gradually been replaced. *Personal identity in the strong sense*, which requires some commitments to endure from the onset to the end of a person's existence, would be absent.

Presumably some *recollections* of what was felt or done at twenty, but these would be recollections would be recollections of the thoughts and feelings of someone else. There would be two *intra-organic persons* within the life of the same organism. You might also discover that you have the same DNA as some twenty-year-old body tested in the distant past. It would be the DNA of the same organism, but not of the same person if no commitments were shared. However, assuming that total amnesia was not present, strands of personal commitment overlap even if no strand endures through the organism's whole life. This would make for at least a *weak sense of personal identity*.

If this is correct, the seventeenth century philosopher *John Locke* was wrong in believing that *recollection* was the criterion of personal identity through time. It would also be incorrect to say that the identity of a human body through time is the criterion of personal identity. On the one hand, there can be different persons internal to the life of a single organisms, in which case we speak of *intra-organic persons*. Total amnesia may lead to commencing an entirely new circle of acquaintances.

However, a single personal identity can bridge different human organisms, which case we may speak of an *inter-organic person*. If Socrates' commitments as a philosopher are understood and identified with by later philosophers, so that thanks to these later philosophers the Socratic project remains alive in the present and progresses toward greater realization, the

later philosophers are each partially identical in personal identity with Socrates.

According to a more Eastern concept, to be a person is to be a representative of the morally responsible community. *Collective responsibility* does not eliminate individual guilt. But the individual can disgrace not just himself but the group. Both Hinduism and Buddhism ultimately aim at a mystical state of depersonalization in which awareness of anxiety and guilt is laid to rest. Judaism, however, heightens such awareness: it conceives God to be essentially personal, and our relationship to him to be essentially contractual and thus inherently ethical. In *Judaism* the only way to escape guilt is to live up to divine law. In *Brahmanism*, the mystic escapes not only guilt but the law, since God is not an external law-giver.

So far we have discussed the ethical originality of Judaism, but the importance of Judaism lies as much in its metaphysical originality providing an unprecedented view of the world. The Hebrews never developed a native tradition of *metaphysics* such as the Greeks. But metaphysics, as a view about what is *real* versus what is *merely apparent*, is common to us all. It does not require a formal metaphysics. Ordinary Hebrews conceived the abstract idea of a disembodied divine person. This being of pure thought, not localizable as a statue on the altar of any temple, they worshipped as God.

Judaism as a *popular metaphysics* differs from the Greek metaphysical tradition. Greeks such as Plato and Aristotle developed a monotheistic critique of the popular Greek *polytheism* which was loosely similar to the Judaic critique of polytheism. But the Greek critique, unlike the Judaic one, remained aristocratic, the property of an intellectual elite. Plato's *dualism of immutable Being and things which change* (see next Chapter), of things which become, and thus which only share in Being, was restricted to those who had received a philosophical education, while the Judaic *dualism of immaterial Creator and created world* was the property of the people.

Modern Western civilization has largely resulted from the mutual reinforcement of these two dualisms, and finally from the triumph of the Judaic over the Platonic dualism. For *Plato*, the material things of this world are not empty of ideal beauty. Beauty is an ideal model that is to some extent present in each thing in this world. For the *Hebrews*, the divine spirit is an all-powerful creator, not a model of things in this world. God is beyond the material world which he creates, and which (with the paradoxical exception of humankind made in the *image of God*) is conceived as spiritless. The world according to Plato is not created by God, but imperfectly partakes of God. The Judaic *dualism* is a rigid, while the Platonic dualism tends to *monism*. Imperfect beauty strives to merge with perfect beauty.

The state as a contractual exchange of *obedience* for *security* (Hobbes) is a starting point for understanding the Hebrew covenant. The difference between a purely *human contract* between the ruled and the ruler and the *covenant with God* is that God is an all-powerful creator in whom total trust is possible. Labor, *John Locke* thought, brings things out of the *state of nature* and makes them the *property* of the laborer. Divine creation as a form of labor makes God the owner of all creation. Our total security depends on acknowledging God's total proprietorship over our world.

In *Genesis* God creates merely by the *divine word* (by the words “Let it be...”), out of no preexisting raw materials, out of nothing. The effect of the creation doctrine is to reinforce the despiritualization of the natural world. The world, insofar as it is *created*, is *non-creative*. God has a monopoly on creation. *Any creative power possessed by creatures is borrowed from God*. God’s labor in creating the world gives him ownership, but ownership implies control. Only dead matter can be fully controlled. Judaic theology leads to the despiritualization of the prehistorical animistic world of spirits in nature.

The worship of natural objects is condemned as *idolatry* by the Hebrews. It implies the autonomy, creative power, and spiritual dignity of natural things. It denies nature’s status as God’s property. Polytheists adore a statue of a god (e.g., the golden calf in the box below) as the sensory incarnation of a divine spirit. The Hebrew sees a senseless and humanly degrading worship of a material thing. They do not detect any indwelling divine spirit.

[7] And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: [8] They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.  
*Exodus 32*

A Hebrew depoeticization or disenchantment of nature is evident in the Biblical concept of *miracles*. The very idea of a miracle supposes that nature is, for the most part, a domain of regularly interacting things. The Hebrews did not create natural science. But they did hold a view of the world that makes *natural science* possible. A miracle is an exceptional divine intervention in the order of nature. Pantheism lacks miracles. It lacks the idea of a natural order devoid of divinity. Every natural phenomenon incarnates God in the pantheistic view. Everything is miraculous, and so ultimately nothing is.

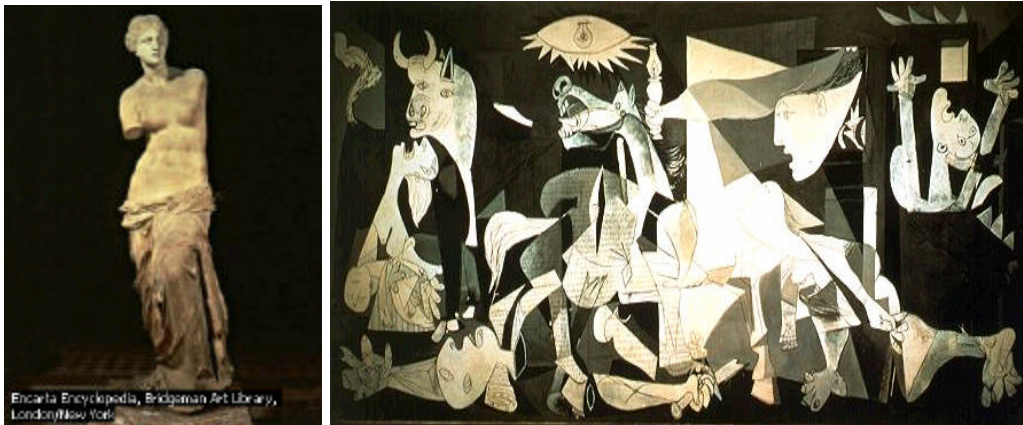
Hindu pantheist thought is not pure *thought* totally abstracted from *nature*. Brahma, the cosmic substance, is a thought object universally present in nature. Hinduism, based on Brahmanist pantheism, natural religion. Judaism, abstracting spirit from nature, is supernatural religion. God stands above, sometimes even opposes, the natural world.

The *disenchantment and despiritualization of the world* accompanying the *disembodiment of God* (the projection of God beyond nature into the supernatural) means that, for the Hebrews, nothing in the world could be beautiful in the Greek sense. Beauty is the sensory realization of a limited divine spirit. The experience of Greek beauty is excluded from the Hebrew experience. But art allows for a specifically Hebraic (and Islamic) form of poetry which is *sublime* (more specifically, negatively sublime). In the classical Greek world view, beauty created by the hand of a human artist is essential to the expression of the spirit of a god. Revelation of the god requires a human artist, and this drives Plato’s dualism of the changeless and the changeable in the direction of a *panentheism* in which the god includes both the human being and art. Theistic creationism, by contrast, views everything in the world as the handiwork of a God who has no essential need of the world, who stands sublimely beyond all his handiwork.

The created world displays an artistic beauty produced by a *supernatural artist* rather

than any *human artist*. But the *negative sublimity* of the artist as an awesome absent creator—a sublimity conveyed by finite works only indirectly as they point to the sublimity of their infinite transcendent source, overshadows their own beauty. The cult of God's infinite genius overshadows admiration of the beauty of his various finite works.

Classical *beauty* is a harmony of a finite soul with itself, with its expression in bodily form, and with its form. *Ugliness* is a disharmony of a finite soul with itself, so that it is incapable of harmonious external expression. Just as we distinguish *natural beauty* (a sunset) and *artistic beauty*, we may distinguish natural ugliness and artistic ugliness. Urban decay is unintended *natural ugliness*, and a painting of it may intentionally have the quality of *artistic ugliness*. Not all art aims at beauty. In an ugly world, artistic realism that aims at ugliness may be more honest than art that aims at the beauty of escapism.



1. Classical beauty: Venus of Milo

2 The Ugly: Picasso's *Guernica* Spanish artist Pablo Picasso painted *Guernica* in 1937 in reaction to the German bombing of the Spanish town of the same name. Francisco Franco, the Fascist general who eventually defeated Republican forces in the Spanish Civil War, ordered the bombing, which decimated this town in the Basque region of northeastern Spain. Picasso took only two months to complete his huge oil painting, which depicted the anguish and suffering caused by the bombing. Microsoft © Encarta ® Encyclopedia 2002. © 2001 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York./Bridgeman Art Library, London/New York

A *negatively sublime object* is a finite sense object pointing to an infinite thought object which is not expressed in that sense object. The sublime object opens onto the boundless, and draws us out of ourselves. It dwarfs us, overwhelms us, intimidates us, freezes us in our steps, and immobilizes us. *Dynamic sublimity* is seen in the destructive force of a nuclear explosion. The *static sublimity* of the cosmos in its vastness is experienced as one gazes at the stars on a clear night in July, lying on one's back on the grass. Neither a nuclear explosion nor the night sky is infinite. Yet each intimates infinity. We distinguish *positive sublimity* from negative sublimity. Hindu pantheistic sublimity is positive (Hegel, 1927xii 484-89): a natural phenomenon is experienced as a direct incarnation of the cosmic substance. The finite becomes sublime insofar as the infinite momentarily appears in it.



Let us admit that there is much more to Judaism than creationism. Contemporary Judaism draws on post-Biblical rabbinic commentaries, especially the *Talmud*. But our purpose is not to give a complete or even balanced account of Judaism. Our purpose is to highlight the creationist world view, a metaphysics and theology that historically originated among the Hebrews, and that has had immense impact since, especially on *Christianity* and *Islam*. Our subject has been the ancient *Hebrew creationist world view*, not the Judaism that lives today as much as in ancient times. In philosophical world history we examine the ancient Hebrews. But we treat contemporary Israel no more than we treat that contemporary Italy that exists in cultural continuity with ancient Rome.

Our subject is the awe-inspiring *sublimity* of a God who absconds from the natural world where Orientals had always places him. (See Hegel, 1927xii, 485 on the Hebrew God's *negative sublimity* as overshadowing and negating the awe-inspiring sublimity of everything in nature). God is otherworldly, and thus is not directly revealed in the natural order, despite its beauty as his handiwork. Natural things reveal God is only by pointing to what is totally other than they. The *Psalms of David* achieve give expression to the negative sublimity of God: they sing praises of a Lord whose grandeur exceeds anything which is known to the senses.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.. (*Psalms* 19).  
 [3] When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;  
 [4] What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?  
 [5] For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.  
 [6] Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:  
 [7] All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;  
 [8] The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.  
 [9] O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! (*Psalms* 8)  
 [4] The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.  
 (*Psalms* 94)

### 7. Theistic Proofs for the Existence of God and the Right to the Product of Labor

Under the influence of Greek philosophy, creationism (theism) came to be supported by argument. Theistic arguments in turn support basic *human rights* in the image of corresponding *divine rights*. God has property rights over the created world, in which he has invested his labor. Assuming we have a human right in the image of this divine property right, we have a reduced right to the product of human labor. A *right to the product of labor* would seem to be the only human right justified by theism. It replicates a divine right. God needs no welfare rights, nor any political rights.

Theism can justify human *welfare rights* or *political rights* only very indirectly. Since God has a right to all creation as the product of his labor, and since human beings belong to his creation, to take the life of a human in any way, whether by *capital punishment* or by starvation,  may be a violation of the God's divine right to the human life he has created. The *human right to life* derives from the *divine right to the product of divine labor*. But, as creatures created in his image with a capacity for further creativity of our own, we have a human right to what we as human beings have made. However, our human right to the product of human labor is reduced by God's right to his portion of the same product (*Genesis 11:26*). Human beings are unique in belonging to two realms at once, the realm of creation understood as *what is created* and the realm of the creation understood as the *activity of creating*.

If the theistic view of the relation between God's right to his product and the human being's right to his product is correct, the human right of less productive human beings is reduced relative those of more productive human beings. The right to the product of labor is a right to more or less, depending on the extent of one's product. If we can prove that God has created human beings in his own image, at least one human right must exist. If no proof is possible, a theistic belief in a universal right to the fruit of labor rests on faith, and may not be forth-coming where faith is absent.

...every man has a property in his own person: this no body has any right to but himself. The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his [just as the work of God's hands is God's]. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.... Nothing was made by God for man to spoil or destroy.... God, when he gave the world in common to all mankind, commanded man also to labour, and the penury of his condition required it of him. God and his reason commanded him to subdue the earth, i.e. improve it for the benefit of life, and therein lay out something upon it that was his OWN, his labour. John Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, Ch. 5, Sections 27, 31, 35.

## 8. *The Design Argument for the Existence of God*

*Local Design.* We shall first examine proofs for God's existence that depend on the existence of design in the world that depends on a superhuman divine designer. One form of the argument from design depends on *local design* in the world (Pale, 1802). Another depends on a *universal design* (order, natural law) of the world capable of supporting human civilization (F.R. Tennant, 1937, 79). Both versions suppose that wherever design exists there is also a designer, with property rights. The argument from local design distinguishes two kinds of design. Some design has a *natural designer*, as the design of a bridge by the labor of a human engineer. Other design lacks a natural designer, such as a tree. The design shown by a tree, like all design, shows that it is property. Whatever shows design commands respect through expressing self-assigned ends of some designer. Without a natural worker expressing his or her ends in a naturally design tree, we are obliged to assume a *supernatural designer*. God is the supernatural designer of all design in nature that cannot be explained by a natural designer.

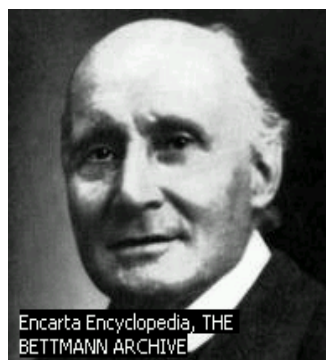
According to many people, *Charles Darwin* refuted this version of the design argument. His *theory of evolution* showed that it is possible for an organism to show design, to be

functional with respect to some goal, but lack any natural designer. The design of the human eye arose spontaneously, without any designer, by an accumulation of fortunate accidental mutations that proved to have *survival value* in the environment. Natural selection produces design without intending any result.

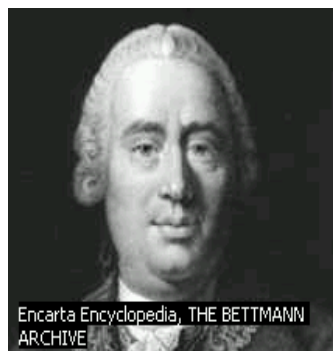
*Universal Design.* The second version of the design argument replies to the criticism of the first version. Refutation of the existence of an external designer for a single organism in this or that corner of the universe does not refute the existence of an external designer for nature as a whole. The fact that nature operates according to *universal causal laws* means that nature as a whole belongs by right to a supernatural designer. We can imagine a world without gravity, a world in which bodies are mutually repelling rather than mutually attractive, although this would make *earth-bound human civilization* impossible. Why do these *alternate possible worlds* not exist rather than the actual world? A world of mutually repelling bodies is consistent with our general notion of natural bodies. The *law of gravitation* is an *empirical law*, and this means that no self-contradiction results from its denial. Sensory empirical observation shows it to be true, but there is no contradiction in the supposition that observation might turn out to be different. Since gravity makes us adhere to the surface of the earth, and since sticking to the earth in this way is necessary for the emergence of civilization, that the universal law of gravity points to benevolent design.

When we contemplate the design of an individual organism, which is limited by an external environment, we allow that such design might be caused by external causes in this world (e.g., natural selection by the environment). For the design of a finite organism is not a design of the whole universe. But in the case of any design of the whole space-time world, either we must suppose 1. that such design is produced spontaneously by the operation of natural laws or 2. that we must go outside the world to find the cause.

The first solution, tracing the world's overall design to natural law, has been defended by *Alfred North Whitehead*: natural laws are the *regional habits of natural events* (Whitehead, 1933, 254-57). Nature in this *cosmic epoch*, in this time and region of the universe, has generated certain habits to which events in this region largely conform. But different habits of interaction between events might be self-generated in other cosmic epochs. From Whitehead's perspective, a creationist must show why events cannot spontaneously order themselves according to the various designs we observe.



Encarta Encyclopedia, THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE  
Alfred North Whitehead, 1861-1947



Encarta Encyclopedia, THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE  
David Hume, 1711-1776

The design argument must assume the general creationist view that nature as a whole consists in *dead matter* to the extent of lacking the power to create the orderliness of a world governed by universal causal laws. These laws are imposed from the outside on things in the world that lack the habit-forming power to design themselves by sensing one another, adjusting to one another, and conforming to a common regional pattern (Whitehead).

The source of order in the space-time world must be external to it, but it is not “external” in the sense of being temporally or spatially outside the world. The cause of the world’s design is supernatural, and it must be outside space and time because it is outside the world. This cause cannot be modeled on Darwinian accidental mutations or anything else in the world. Nor can the cause be a natural designer contained in the very order to be explained. The cause must be a goal-directed, purposeful agent outside space and time—however difficult it is to conceive such a person. For personal agency as we know it is in time. *First* you define a problem, *then* you think of solutions, *afterwards* you select the best solution, and *finally* you execute that solution.

Yet this second version, as well as the first version, is subject to an objection based on the problem of evil. Human *moral evil* is the evil for which we are responsible when our will yields to temptation. Such evil does not refute the goodness of God and of his creation because God is not responsible for the evil we do. For it seems better for God to create us with the dignity of being persons, with *free will* to do good or evil, than to create us as machines rigged to do nothing but good

Assuming *moral evil* due to a misuse of free will, *natural evil* for which human beings are not responsible (e.g., earthquakes) has been viewed by some creationists as punishment for human moral evil. An ecological crisis might be viewed this way. If we view natural evil as *divine punishment*, such evil is not divine moral evil. Indeed, it is justice on God’s part, it is a fair punishment, and hence is a moral good. The Lisbon earthquake of 1757 was viewed by some as punishment for the arrogance of human beings who built buildings with several stories. Yet this explanation of natural evil as something morally good from God’s viewpoint may be doubtful due to the innocent unborn who will suffer as a consequence punishing the guilty by natural disasters. To pursue this defense of the design argument we would have to assume that many people who suffer have performed undetected sins, and that many happy people who are apparently evil have done good deeds of which we are not aware.

The *theory of reincarnation* holds that those bad or good deeds were performed in a previous life, and that bad deeds in this life will be punished in the next life. In fact a main reason for believing in reincarnation might be to reconcile the existence of God with the apparent misfortune of good people, and with the apparent happiness of wicked people. Many of us, however, come to think of these theories of hidden vices and reincarnation as a far-fetched ways of explaining away the facts of innocent suffering and fortunate villains which are best accepted at face value—to the detriment of the design argument for God’s existence.

According to the eighteenth century Scottish philosopher *David Hume* the distinction between natural and moral evil, far from supporting the design argument, provides a refutation of creationism. Any God creating this world was *either* not powerful enough to prevent natural evil *or* not good enough to want to prevent them (Hume, 1779, Pt 10). In the first case, the world

escapes God's control and he is not all-powerful. In the second, case God controls the world but does not direct it to a good end. Since *being all-powerful* and *being all-good* are both *divine attributes* (attributes essential to God), to say that God lacks either attribute is to say that God does not exist. It is to say that God is not God. But given natural evil, it is argued that God must necessarily lack one of these characteristics. Most refutations of proofs for the existence of God lead only to *agnosticism*, the view that we cannot know whether there is a God or not. This refutation of the design argument leads to *atheism*, the view that there is no God.

Creationists may reply that it is arrogant for the finite human mind to judge, in matters of good and evil, the infinite mind of God. Apparent evil, they say, may be good in disguise, a means to a greater good. Yet the creationist's (theist's) insistence on the limitations of human judgment reassigns the issue of the goodness of God's creation to faith in a divine plan for the world (*divine providence*) rather than proof or philosophy. First the objection is raised to the design argument that we cannot demonstrate the world to be essentially good. Birth defects, for example, seem to show that it is not fully good. Then, to restore the force of the design argument we are told that we must have faith that God in his providence will bring good out of apparent evil. *But this means that we must circularly have faith that God exists in order to prove that he exists!* The argument seems to presuppose the very point at issue. It is a case of circular reasoning.

The design argument as a rational proof seems discredited by what we must still judge to be the possibility of *overwhelming natural evil*. Overwhelming evil—such as the future *heat death of the universe* of which physicists speak—overwhelms the good of the world, instead of contributing to its greater good. It is not a convincing means to any higher good, not a successful challenge to the overcoming of evil. Perhaps no overwhelming evil has yet occurred. If poverty leads to unusual effort, it may not be pure evil. If pain leads to adaptive responses that help assure survival, it is not unmitigated evil. But without a faith in divine providence that presupposes the existence of God, we cannot be sure that no overwhelming evil will ever come. Perhaps the heat death of the universe would be such an evil.

Finally, the design argument must deal with another objection by *David Hume*, namely, that it confuses a designed world with a created world (Hume, 1779, Pt. 5). A *designer* (who may work with pre-existing matter) is not a *creator* of nature out of nothing. A designer's right over a designed object is not as complete like a creator's right over created objects. A designer takes objects out of a state of nature and fashions them; a creator takes nature out of a state of non-existence. Human labor is design. The *argument from contingency* which follows below helps us judge whether divine labor, unlike human labor, can create.

### 9. The Argument for God's existence from Contingent Being

That triangles are three-sided is, upon analysis, a *necessary fact*, and the statement (proposition) that asserts this is a *necessarily true proposition*. That triangles are studied in the fourth grade is only a *contingent fact*, a fact that might without contradiction have been otherwise. This is the logical sense of "contingent" as applied applied to *facts* and *statements*. In a second explanatory sense, a "contingent" fact is contingent *on* some other fact which helps to explain it. If a fact is logically contingent, it is usual to suppose that it is also contingent on some

explanatory fact. *That triangles are studied in the fourth grade is contingent on the fact that some curriculum committee made a certain decision.*

In a third sense, “contingency” is a property of *things* rather than of *statements* or *facts*. More precisely, it is a *property of the properties of things*. Thus, being studied in the fourth grade is a contingent property of triangles; being a closed figure is a necessary property of triangles. An argument from contingency for the existence of God, stated by several philosophers—including Saint Thomas, Saint Bonaventure, and Leibniz—arises from the assumption that *existence* is a property. It is a contingent property of things in the space-time world. But it may be a necessary property of God who is not in the space-time world.

If something causally depends on other things, it may cease to exist if those other things cease to exist: in other words, characteristics essential to its identity may no longer be exemplified. If something that exists and is not dependent on externals causes, it will not change or disappear even if external things change or vanish. It will seemingly exist through itself alone, by its nature rather than by other things. It will exist necessarily. It will be *necessary being*. This totally independent being, which exists through itself alone, is what the argument from non-necessary (contingent) being calls “God”.

*To exist* is to have properties. But that means that nothing can have the property of not existing. For if it had the *property of not existing* it would have properties and that would after all exist. Instead of saying that wing horses do not exist, we state ourselves less misleadingly by saying that being a winged horse is unexemplified, uninstantiated. In other words, it is not the case that something exists that exemplifies the property. We cannot coherently say that any individual winged horse does not exist, but we can say that *it is not the case that something exists which is a winged horse*. This is that same thing as saying that being a *winged horse is not exemplified*. To be exemplified is to be exemplified by something which has the property in question. The argument from contingency would show that God must exist if the existence of contingent things is to be explained.

*Immanuel Kant* believed that existence cannot be a property. It is odd to add “and, oh yes, it exists” to complete the description of anything. Yet the reason it cannot be added to complete any description is that existence is presupposed by any and all descriptions. We do not say “x is green, square, and existent.” The reason is that to say “x is green” presupposes that it exists. Existence is defined as a special sort of property: it is the *second-level property* of having *first-level properties* such as greenness or being square. A first-level property is defined as a property that names no further property. Being green, square, or human are such properties. But the *property of having all the properties of a good general* refers to courage, intelligence, and other properties. It is therefore a second-level property. Ambition is also a second-level property. It is the property of wanting to have the property of being very successful. Identity with something is the property of having all the properties of that thing, and so also a maximally general secondary property. And existence, as the property of having properties, is another general secondary property. Everything that can be truly described exists.



Leibniz, 1646-1716



Kant, 1724-1804

The argument from contingency starts from the premise that the *natural world* might have not existed: its existence is contingent. The “riddle of the universe,” in one sense, is the riddle as to why there is a natural world rather than none at all. We can conceive the possible non-existence of each and every thing in the world. Hence, we can ultimately conceive the *possible non-existence of the world* as whole. Many of us have, at some time or other, contemplated the startling possibility that the entire space-time world might not be, or might suddenly cease to be. No contradiction is apparent in this supposition.

Let us grant, then, that the world might not have been, though in fact it is. Let us also grant that every fact that might not have held requires an explanation through other facts. Every contingent fact requires that some other fact hold that suffices to explain why it is thus and not otherwise. We will say that *facts explain* while things and events can operate as causes. The *fact* that it has rained explains the fact that the pavement is wet. But the *event* of this morning’s rain causes the event of the pavement’s wetness.

And the moon with its mass (a thing) causes the tides, it causes the event of the ocean’s expanding and receding. Translating out of the language of causation into that of explanation, we would say that the fact that the moon has a certain mass explains the fact that the tides rise and fall.

The fact that the world exists itself requires an explanation. Since it exists contingently, since there is no contradiction in supposing it does not exist—that being the world is not exemplified—the fact that it exists is not self-explanatory but must be explained by other facts. That the contingent world exists must be contingent *on* the explanatory fact that something else exists and acts causally. But anything beyond the contingent world must be a non-contingent or *necessary being*. But “necessary being”, which is non-contingent and hence supernatural, is a description of God.

Unless we can show that creation occurred in time, that there was a time before the world’s existence, we must find a version of the argument from contingency that does not assert a time before creation. Such a version, defended by Leibniz, asserts that creation did not occur *in* time at all (Leibniz, 1714, 31-45). Rather, the contingent world that God created is the spatio-temporal world, *is the temporal order*. It is the creation of time. Things related spatially as side by side, near or far, are simultaneous in time, while other things and events related are successive in time. The world, the temporal order, is a succession of things or events, or of collections of simultaneous things or events. Creation is the creation of time, and of all the things and events that are temporally related as simultaneous or successive. For Leibniz time was not, as for *Newton*, a container of events that might be an empty container. Empty time, for Leibniz, would be no time at all. Time consists in the relations of simultaneity and successiveness between

things and events.

We have referred to things and events. Let clarify. A *thing* can undergo *accidental change* and remain essentially the same. The concept of a thing, we saw in the chapter on India, was clarified by Aristotle. He called it a *primary substance*. What happens to a thing at a certain time is an ordinary event. If John walks, his walking is an event. If John gets married, his marriage is an event. Is an event that happens to him and his spouse, that belongs to their biographies. An event of walking is not possible unless there is someone who does the walking, and a marriage is impossible unless there are two people to whom it happens.

These events that happen to things or persons we shall call *ordinary events*. Thus a jump is an event of jumping *by* somebody or other. There are also events that belong to nothing and no one. A flash can occur without happening to anything. Explosions happen to bombs, the Big Bang happened to matter energy, but the momentary *quantum events* of microphysics do not happen to anything or person. We may call these events *free floating events*, meaning that they occur independently of any things or persons. In fact, persons and things emerge only through the emergence of various patterns among quantum events. This is the Buddhist view.

When other patterns occur, or perhaps when pattern yields to chaos, quantum events still occur, but there are no things or persons. Ordinary events are appropriated events that presuppose things and person as their proprietors. Free floating events are unappropriated, and, according to present physics, they are presupposed by any emergence of things or persons.

We have seen that there is no empty time according to Leibniz. Time is the relation of succession between events. Yet he came close to viewing time to be an illusion. He believed that when God created you he knew what he was doing. Thus if we knew this complete concept which existed prior to God's creation of you, we would know everything you are still going to do in your life.

This doctrine may be called a *logical determinism*, the view that the future can be analyzed out of the past. It implies that things and persons do not really change. Rather, they are on a kind of railroad track on which their future logically unfolds from their complete essences. Thus they only appear to change. If you are going to be in India five years from now, that is already true of you in the present. Either you are going to be in India five years from now or you are not. If you are, you would not be you if you failed to be in India five years from now. All that happens in time is that your "future" states, which are already determined, become increasingly clear to you. You presently have only a vague feeling being in India five years from now, or no feeling at all. To a large extent you do not know yourself. But as the fatal year approaches, it first dawns on you and then becomes clearer and clearer that you are in India in such and such a year.

The result is that whatever you do you will necessarily do. You are incapable of doing anything else, since if you did anything else you would not be you, you would contradict your complete concept which is a contradiction. This logical determinism must be distinguished from the *empirical determinism* which we shall discuss in the chapter on Rome and Stoicism. Empirical determinism holds that the future is determined by contingent experimental

discovered causal laws as well as by the established state of things at some time in the past. Contrary to Leibniz's logical determinism, empirical determinism holds that we could not logically deduce the future from a complete analysis of the past. We would also need to know empirical laws of causation, such as the law of gravity.

Most people today reject logical determinism. The experience of differences between our successive states is so impressive to most people that they cannot conceive how our states at some future time already belong to us in the present. Clearly, however, our future states are *temporally-indexed states*. This means that your future state is not simply a state of being in India or China. It is a state of being in India at a certain time. You now have the state of being in India, but you may now have the state of being in India five years from now. Still, the impression that you do not have even that temporally-indexed state may be so powerful that if you were actually to turn up in India five years from now you would want to say you had gained a property you did not previously have. Our ordinary experience is that we are constantly gaining properties we did not previously have.

There is one change that, it seems, even Leibniz could not explain away, and that is the *change in the clarity of your perception* of what you are going to do. Changes in intensity are still changes. Let us suppose that changes in intensity or clarity of perception take place. Can such changes be continuous? On a *continuum* there is always an infinite number of positions or states. In a finite duration of time an infinite succession of states can occur only if all states but a finite number of them are instantaneous, totally lacking in duration. For an infinite number of states all having duration would take an endless time to transpire, and thus the succession would never be completed. This leads to the conclusion that the increase or decrease of clarity of perception, since it can be completed, is not continuous, but is rather ultimately a discontinuous series of states. Further, each ultimate state in the series must be static. For if it embraced any change in intensity or other change in its finite duration, *either* it would be an infinite series of states in a finite duration of time (which we have seen to be impossible) *or* it would be a finite series of states and thus would not be an ultimate state unanalyzable into enduring sub states.

The general conclusion to which this argument leads is that the world is much more jerkier, jumpier place than it appears to be. The universe is digital, and its non-digital appearance of smooth continuous alterations arises from the extreme minuteness of the ultimate *digital unit events*. The world operates on the all or nothing principle. Thus there are successive energy states of an electron between which, according to quantum physics, there are no intermediary states. This means that what we call "the electron" is really a series of electronic events without any threat of continuity between them. Each *atomic event*—as distinguished from a *serial event* such as World War Two—emerges with total suddenness, without announcing itself in gradual stages of itself. This means that a sound goes from zero decibels to some number of decibels or fraction of a decibel instantaneously at its onset, without passing through any intermediary sound levels.

The logical determinism of Leibniz fares rather well only if we do not limit our selves to viewing an ordinary person or thing as the substantial static unit from whose complete concept all its states can be deduced. Apparent changes in the course of your life indicate that you are not such a unit, but are (like a digitally recorded melody, or presumably like quantum events) a

series of such units.

If logical determinism does apply to ordinary things and persons, possibly it applies to *quantum events*. Such an event, like any event, takes time. It has duration. To be happy for no time at all is not to be happy at all. As we saw in the chapter on India, instantaneous events do not occur, unless of course we include the beginning or end of an event (e.g., a race ) as an event. But the beginning and end of a race are purely *abstract events* which cannot exist by themselves but are essentially dependent on the *concrete event* of which they are the temporal boundaries.

But logical determinism when applied to modest quantum events or other events in a finite duration means that the nature of the event is determined as long as it exists, but not (as Leibniz thought) that your whole life is determined to the end of time. As the present state in the course of your life seen as a series of states suddenly ceases, it may be replaced by a new state that is not fully determined by the previous state.

After this exploration of Leibniz's logical determinism in relation to the more contemporary concept of an event, let us return now to the argument from *contingent being* or the existence of God. Some believe this to be the most powerful argument. The argument from design seems weak by comparison, although it probably remains the most popular argument. Indeed, the argument from design is readily understood by children as they listen to their mothers' replies to questions about why the sun is in the sky or why there are cows. The sun exists to give us light, and the cows to give us milk. The argument from contingency is not so easily understood. The idea of a master architect of the universe who cares for our needs is more readily comprehensible than the idea of necessary being which we shall now examine.

The argument from contingency as presented by Leibniz is consistent with the created natural world having always existed in time. God created the entire temporal order, and thus did not create at any point in time. There was no time before creation. The argument starts from some fact about the natural that makes us think that the world does not suffice unto itself, that is points beyond itself to supernatural cause of its existence. Some arguments start from the fact that caused changes occur in the world. They then move to the conclusion that there is a first *uncaused cause* (or self-caused caused) beyond the world. For without an uncaused cause mover, the changes in this world would form an endless series, and in our attempt to explain any change we would fail by cutting off the explanation with some *caused cause* or motion whose cause we have no time to investigate.

What distinguishes the argument from contingency is that it starts out from a necessary, feature of the world. We can conceive of the world as having no motion or change, but we cannot conceive of the world as lacking contingent existence. Necessarily, the world might not have existed. If the world existed necessarily, it would be divine. It would be self-caused, independent of any external conditions, it would be totally self-sufficient and would exist through itself alone. But common experience shows that the things and persons of this world come into existence and go out of existence. If they existed necessarily it would be contradictory to say that any of them is mortal, capable of not existing. But since everything and person in the world is capable of not existing, the whole world, which is the collection of such things, can also go out of existence.

Hence, the world exists contingently, not necessarily. Each of us can conceive the possible non-existence of the whole world. But if the world's existence is contingent, it cannot give existence to itself. Either its existence is totally uncaused or it has received its existence from an external source. That external source can only be necessary being, a being that gives existence to itself and to other things as well. For if we said that the world received its existence from something that itself received its existence from something else, we would fall into an *infinite regress* of externally caused causes of the world's existence. A cause that itself requires an external cause of its existence cannot give a final explanation of its existence. Only necessary being, only God, can do that. And so God exists to account for the existence of the world.

Existence is the only necessary attribute that the argument proves God to have. Yet Leibniz held that all God's attributes are necessary. Thus God necessarily creates this world of all possible worlds because it is the best possible world. If God did not create the best possible world, God would not be God: either he would not be powerful enough to do so or he would not be good enough to want to do so. This argument presupposes that God has the properties of being all powerful and all good as well as the proven property of existing necessarily. But being all powerful and all good may be considered to belong to the definition of divinity with which the argument begins.

The argument from contingency can be developed, however, without assuming with Leibniz all divine attributes to be necessary. To exist, we said, is to have properties. If these properties are all contingent, the existence which they bestow is contingent existence. But it seems that some divine attributes, though not all, are contingent. Thus God has an existence as a person through choosing the Hebrews, which is a contingent choice. Only existence through having at least one necessary divine property such as goodness is necessary. God has necessary existence though some divine properties are contingent: only if God is a person with contingent properties in the course of his biography can he have a relationship to a created world which might not have been created, hence which exists contingently. By this reasoning, God can still have necessary existence (e.g., through having necessary goodness). God is beyond all things of this world by his necessary existence in general. God is with other things in this world by contingent properties relating him to the contingent things of this world. God's love for you must be understood as a contingent property.

Every creative act by God is contingent, being the creation of a contingent thing or event. The monotheistic interpretation of the contingency of some divine properties implies a self-limitation by an infinite, all-embracing God. Theism insists that God is infinite, so that God's relation to the world cannot consist in God being limited by anything external to himself. For such limitation would mean a finite god such as can be found in the dualistic Persian religion. God is infinite, but he freely chooses to limit himself in creating the world. God's limitation by the world is a limitation by nothing other than the result of his own free choice. God is limited by nothing other than himself.

Let us see how a non-Leibnizian version of the argument from contingency might be developed in the direction of panentheism. In this view, God is infinite, but without personal

self-limitation as in theism. Temporal things, persons, and events are in God. If we say that God creates them what this means, according to the twentieth century panentheist Alfred North Whitehead, is that events (actual occasions) throughout the universe exemplify creativity in endlessly different ways. Creativity is a cosmic constant. It is a metaphysical category. In other words, it is a concept that is exemplified universally by all events, and they all exemplify it only in God.

Since God himself is creative if he is has individual agency of his own, but even without individual agency he is creative through the creativity of events (actual occasions) that he embraces. Roughly, each event is creative by apprehending (physically prehending, in Whitehead's language) the world of countless just past events as aggregate to be harmonized into an organic or holistic experience. The aggregate becomes an organic whole, and is thereby increased by one member. But this is to give each event individual agency: the event first confronts the aggregate of inputs as a problem, and then integrates them in an original solution. This means that there are stages in the event. In other words, we are talking about a serial event.

But quantum theory, we have seen, asserts that every serial event is a sequence of non-serial digital all-or-nothing events. These quantum events emerge as the ultimate units of reality. Each quantum event—for example, each moment in your apparently continuous stream of consciousness—has its identity through its properties and indeed through all its properties. If it is impossible to objectively distinguish an event's essential properties from its accidental properties, if all its properties are essential to the event being that event and none other, the only way we can continue to use the Aristotelean term substance is by saying that each digital event is a substance.

Digital events, it was suggested, are self-creative in that their existence cannot be deduced from past causes. If they are not completely caused by their causal past but must somehow still be caused, we are tempted to say that they are *self-caused*, self-creative. It is certainly true that no present event can be deduced from any past events. The causal relation of the past to the present is not a logical relation of present facts being deducible from past facts. From the fact that the cause of fire occurs—the *complete cause* of empirically necessary conditions, heat, combustible material, and friction—it does not necessarily follow that there will be a fire. This conclusion only follows empirically, as a result of a generalization from what David Hume called a past *constant conjunction* of the complete cause with subsequent fire.

If indeterminism is true, not everything is caused in all respects. Even if what an event is may were wholly caused, the very fact that an event *is* might remain uncaused, at least if there is no creator God to make it exist. It is ultimately better not to slough over this fact by speaking of atomic, digital events as being *self-caused*. It is far better simply to say that they spontaneously *emerge* without their emergence being caused. It seems that anything “self-caused” would have to exist before it exists, or apart from its existence, in order to cause itself to exist.

Past causes Saint Thomas called *secondary causes*. These secondary causes are the four causes distinguished by *Aristotle*. They may be illustrated by the causal explanation of a statue's existence: 1. the *material cause* (for example, stone) out of which something comes, 2. the *efficient cause* (for example, the sculptor and chisel) by the agency of which something is

caused, 3. the *final cause* (for example, embodiment of the god in the statue) for the sake of which the thing is made, and 4. the *formal cause* (being a temple statue) consisting in what the thing is. The main point about secondary causes is that they determine what something is, but they cannot determine that it is. What you are is partly determined by things, persons, and events which no longer exist. The material and formal causes are, of course, simultaneous with what they cause, which is formed matter. The matter of which you are made and the humanity that forms that matter do not merely precede you; they are in you. But the efficient causes of your existence may no longer exist even while you exist. For example, your parents may be deceased.

If the existence of future events cannot be deduced from that of past or present events, it seems equally true that the existence of past events cannot be deduced from that of present event, at least not from recollection of the past in the present.

On the one hand, it seems consistent with the existence of past causes that the world might cease to exist after the present moment, as soon as it becomes past. Though your parents determinate you to be human, neither they nor any other set of past causes can determine you to exist today.

On the other hand, from the fact that the world does exist now it does not logically follow that it did exist in the past. All your recollections might be recollections of a past that never was! For God might have created you only now, but complete with a set of false recollections of a past that never was. Since memory can deceive, since it in fact has deceived us, it seems we must agree with René Descartes that that we are never permitted to assume that recollection is correct. It might deceive as to what the past was like. But it could also deceive us as to the very existence of the past. The person you remember having meet may only have been dreamt. So the recollected past cannot be deductively inferred from the fact of our recollection of it. However,

*A.N. Whitehead* held that the *causal past* can be inferred from an analysis of the present event which constitutes itself by apprehending (*prehending*) it. Your present perception of a red light interprets a just past red sense impression. If perception is perception of a sensory object, and if it always arises through an act of placing a sensory given that it already there under a concept—e.g., "It is a house"—the present act of judgment in every sensory perception necessitates the existence of a just-past uninterpreted sensory given. And this opens at least one interesting path to deducing the past from what is present.

So from the fact that matter did exist at the certain time it does not logically follow that it will exist after that time. If the world does not cease to exist with every passing moment, if it keeps coming back, it seems to require what *Saint Thomas* called a *primary existential cause* beyond its secondary causes. If there is a creator God, the fact that the existence of future events cannot deduced from the existence of past events means that when God created the world at any one moment he did not thereby create the world at all subsequent moments. The work of creation is never done. God must remain active in the *continuous creation* (Malebranche, 17<sup>th</sup>) of the world.

The creator is the world's existential cause, the cause of its existence. But how must God's relation to the created world be conceived? Theism starts out by assigning personal

agency to God. God owns the world he creates, since its existence and nature are the product of his labor. You have no primary ownership of your own body, since God has prior ownership of it. God has simply lent it to you. God, according to Saint Thomas, is the pure infinite *act of existence* which shares itself with you. Creation of the world is then a generous, charitable overflowing of divine existence. Your existence the received the gift of participation in divine existence. Yet this view falls short of pantheism. By partaking of divine existence you do not become God. God is necessarily loving, but he does not necessarily share his existence lovingly with any particular contingent being. Contingent beings are not, as in pantheism, illusory appearances of necessary being.

Pantheism and panenthism, unlike theism, hold that God is impersonal, and thus not comparable to a human agent with rights. By itself the argument from contingency does not allow a decision between theism, panentheism, and pantheism. According an pantheistic interpretation of the argument from contingency, necessary being is implied by illusory contingent appearances of it. Everything in time and space is an appearance of necessary being, but it is an illusory appearance because it is misperceived to be an appearance of some isolated contingent being. Your body is taken to be an appearance of merely you, not of Brahma. The argument from contingency starts out from things that are taken to exist contingently and moves to the necessary being of which so-called contingent things are manifestations. In reality everything is identical with God. Spinoza, the great Dutch pantheist, believed that God was necessary being. But since he believed that so-called contingent beings were necessary being apprehended under a false description.

According to a panentheistic interpretation of the argument from contingent being, God and contingent beings are never really identical. But God includes them, since otherwise God would be finite. You are *in* God, but you are not God. God is an infinite community of things, of persons, and ultimately of creative events. In other words, God is defined sociologically. But God is a community of individuals who communicate and overcome mutual alienation to identify with one another within him. God is not an individual member of this community, but is the spirit of whole community.

But how can such a panentheism retain the argument from contingency for the existence of God? A vast dance of contingent events can exist as such according to panentheism. They are not illusory as in pantheism. Is the necessary being that must exist if these events exist the abiding spirit of such events? That spirit is creative through the creativity of its individual members, much as when we say that a human being actually picks up a hammer through the act of its hand picking up the hammer. According to this quite ordinary way of speaking, the *whole* acts through the action of the *part*. But the whole is not beyond the part like the lord and creator of the universe is beyond the space time world. It is really not necessary to prove the existence of God if you are a panentheist (or pantheist). You exist, and you are an integral part of God. It is enough for you to understand yourself correctly in your total context to realize that God exists. *Only a God who is absent from the space-time world, a God who has departed, needs to be proven.* The argument from contingency is clearly needed to prove the existence of God only in theism, which denies the God is universally revealed in the world.

If impersonal necessary being—the *God of the metaphysicians* (Blaise Pascal, 17<sup>th</sup>

century) found at the conclusion of a dry argument—exists, it is not obvious that it also exists under another description as the *God of religion* who responds to the prayer of simpler folk. Of course, necessary being need not be merely necessary being. But we would have to show that *necessary being* and *being a person* can be combined without contradiction in the same concept. If a person is a holder of rights and obligations, it may not be impossible for necessary being to be an immortal person with obligations to his people and a right to their worship.



Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662

The only way that necessary being can be avoided, it appears, is if we deny the law of universal causation, which Leibniz called the *law of sufficient reason*. If every event has a sufficient ground or cause as to why it is thus and not otherwise, there must a sufficient cause of why the world exists instead of not existing. But if certain things can occur without a sufficient cause, the existence of the world might be one of those things. Maybe the world is just there, without an overall cause even though events in the world cause other events. Is necessary existence an indispensable divine attribute? Can God be God even if he might not have existed?

#### 10. *The Ontological Argument for God's Existence*

One objection to creationist (theistic) interpretations of the argument from contingency is that it pictures God in human form. The creator lying beyond contingently existing things is conceived on the model of a human creator making contingent free will decisions. Thus Spinoza, while accepting God as necessary being, argued against the theistic view of necessary being as a person or lord (Spinoza, 1675, Pt 1, Appendice). Supposing the falsehood of popular *anthropomorphic* (human-like) interpretations of theism, theists are challenged to reconceive their position non-anthropomorphically—as Saint Thomas did in viewing God as the pure act of existence. *Saint Anselm* in the twelfth century avoided anthropomorphism by conceiving God merely as the perfect being, the most perfect conceivable being, rather than as the creator of the world.

Saint Anselm held that to be God is to be *the most perfect conceivable being*. A God who did not necessarily exist would not be as perfect as a God who did exist, and so would not be God, since it would not be the most perfect conceivable being. According to Anselm it is objectively better to exist than not to exist. So a non-existing God would be the most perfect conceivable being, and thus would simply not be God. This reasoning is known as the *ontological argument* God's existence. But in what does perfection consist? For Anselm, *perfection* meant existing safe from all the contingencies and limitations of things in this world.

The German philosopher *Lessing* held that if he had a choice between enjoying instant satisfaction of all his deepest aspirations and a life of ceaseless struggle for such satisfaction without ever attaining it, he would pick the latter. Thus for him perfection did not mean what it

meant for Anselm or for traditional creationism. The highest perfection consists in a ceaseless for *self-improvement*, not in *non-improvability*. Thus according to Lessing God is not the most perfect conceivable being, since such a being could never improve. One improvement might be the acquisition of existence!

In support of Anselm it might be said that God could not have the property of non-existence. If to exist is to have properties, God would have to exist as a condition of having the property of non-existence. By this line of reasoning, God having the property of non-existence is like being a square circle. Still, the non-existence of God can be conceived in another way without contradiction. Instead of trying to conceive God having the property of non-existence, which is impossible given our definition of existence, try conceiving divinity (being God) to be an unexemplified characteristic. If divinity is (like going faster than the speed of light) unemplified, it would follow in looser language that God does not exist. And if God does not exist, he cannot improve by acquiring existence. God has no properties at all, and thus cannot undergo any change in his properties.

But is the enjoyment of necessary being, totally secure from anything that can threaten one's existence, even one of our deepest aspirations. Would such an aspiration improve anything that acquired it? *Martin Heidegger*, twentieth century German existential philosopher, argued that *being toward death* is essential to authentic existence and fulfillment. Only when you acknowledge inwardly the fact of death do you begin to take your life seriously as a work with the beginning, development and end. If you had all the time in the world, would you not waste it. You would tell yourself that you could always become serious later. Is not life precious because it is a scarce resource? Yet Heidegger's reasoning may only be sour grapes philosophy. Maybe he says he does not want immortality only because he knows he cannot have it. Considerations like these play a part in deciding whether the argument from contingency is a valid proof of God's existence. If the desire to escape contingency reflects a false value system, the argument is not valid.



Saint Anselm 1033-1109



Lessing, 1729-1781



Martin Heidegger, 1889-1976

## 11. Creationism in History as the Story of Freedom

In Judaism the relationship of *spirit to matter* is in part a metaphysical projection of the economic relation of *proprietor to property*, creative labor to its product. This is not to say with atheists that the Hebrews invented God by the psychological projection of the sociological phenomenon of patriarchy. Yet possibly Hebrew disenchantment with Egyptian captivity, with

the despotism of Pharaoh, was the mechanism by which a very real God led the Hebrews to him.

The Hebrew relation to God is close to one of bondage to a lord. The religion of the Hebrew Bible would probably be incomprehensible to a pre-pastoral society of hunters and gatherers, prior to the invention of durable property (herds, tilled lands) and patriarchal social relations. We can intelligibly define God as the Father only after a patriarchal revolution on earth has given us a finite model to magnify in our concept of a heavenly father.

The same patriarchal economic basis allows for different religious developments. In China and Japan we saw that revolutions that led to political despotism led in religion to divine emperorship. In India we found a mystical reassignment of human despotism to the realm of illusion (*maya*). But it has been considered escapist by Westerners because its logic tends to leave despotic conditions intact (though desanctified) in this world.

In Judaism paternalistic religion reacted upon its paternalistic social basis, leading to a moral reform of earthly political despotism. Judaic theology could not have arisen except in patriarchal conditions. Earthly despotism, whether of Pharaoh or the Babylonian king, was the initial model on which God, the king of kings, was conceived. But this theistic theology so reacts upon its sociological base as to transform the Oriental institution of *divine kingship* into the familiar European institution of *sacred kingship* in which the king is the “anointed of God,” the first servant of God, but not divine. The phenomenon was apparent from the first Israeli kings to the demise of absolute monarchy in modern European history.

India and Judaism form a fork on the legendary road to freedom. In India we encounter a *mystical religious freedom* which is compatible with political bondage in the world of illusion. In Judaism we find *political freedom* joined with religious bondage. The Jew who knows no earthly master does subjects himself to no human ruler. Hebrew institutions of tribal democracy, which persisted prior to the creation of the Biblical monarchy, were preserved in the sacred monarchy established by *Saul*. The history of the *prophets* shows the strength of popular dissent even under the monarchy.

The choice between *Brahmanist mystical freedom with political bondage* and *Judaic bondage to God with political freedom* is not arbitrary. But the choice will depend on metaphysics, your world view. If this world is illusory the Hindu solution is the higher principle. Lifting a finger against illusory despotism would not be worthwhile: the act would itself be illusory. (The only qualification is that the path of reincarnation is the path of emancipation from illusion, so that resistance to a despotism blocking that path would be justified.) But if the story of freedom in this world is non-illusory, the Hebrews represents the higher principle.

Exporting despotism into the otherworldly realm with the Hebrews expels it from this world. An inner despotism of the voice of conscience is freedom from external social authority. Exchange of an earthly master for a heavenly master is progress in the history of freedom. Bondage to God is bondage to a purely inward, spiritual principle. Such bondage is not yet the highest freedom. Indeed, in one way slavery to the voice of God is more tyrannical than ordinary slavery, since God sees all. Yet such bondage may be a step toward freedom. The fear of the Lord may not be wisdom, but it is its beginning (*Proverbs 15:33*). One must learn to obey in

order to learn to command, even in order to learn to command oneself (Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk 7, Ch 14, 5-7)..

We will describe the Hebraic world view as ethically, politically, and philosophically an original perspective along a road from earthly divine kingship to democratic self-government and human rights on earth. The ancient Hebrews accomplished a momentous revolution in the history of human world views. But Judaism—like Buddhism, Hinduism, or Confucianism—also lives in the present. A nation is justly proud of a stunning debut in history, but justly resentful when it is reduced to that awesome beginning. Judaism is not a fossil. It is one way of getting at the truth about the world, under descriptions which are still viable in living communities. These descriptions may even be correct. Yet today many secularized Jews, like many secularized representatives of other great religious world views, have passed from *democratic self-government under the external voice of God* to *self-government under the autonomous and rational voice of conscience*.

## 12. Religious Ethics

A final consideration concerns the ethics that many people have derived from creationism. It is usually called *religious ethics*, and it holds that right and wrong depend on the *will of God*. If God owns the world he has created, he has a right to do with his creatures what he wishes. Divine law does not determine what the human creature with free will always does, but it does determine what a human being ought to do.

A major problem with religious ethics is to know what divine law requires. Religious ethics has been interpreted very differently by various Jewish, Christian, and Muslim practitioners. Creationists may appeal to faith, to a church, synagogue, or mosque, to a holy book, or to a personal revelation received directly from God.

Sometimes it seems that God commands individuals to do what would not ordinarily appear to be ethical from any rational perspective. Apparently *Osama bin Laden* was following religious ethics in masterminding the death of three thousand people in September 2001. But if we say that divine commandments must be ethical by some *rational standard*, we depart from religious ethics. For right action is then ultimately determined by that rational standard and not by the will of God.

Either appeal to the will of God is ultimate, and there is no rational control over it, or the will of God must be reasonable, and then reason rather than the will of God is the ultimate standard. If there is no reason to do something beyond the fact that God wills it, there is simply no reason to do it. If there is a reason to do it, God's will will itself be determined by that reason, and if we understand that reason there is no need to depend on divine will in deciding what to do.

All creationists should be personally concerned by the events of September 11, 2001. Creationism is consistent with rational ethics only if we assume the divine will is subject to divine reason and divine knowledge of what is right. But if divine reason is difficult for human reason to understand, we might still feel we must depend on the divine will to know what divine

reason requires. However, though the divine will may be infallible, human interpretation of God's messages (*religious hermeneutics*) is highly fallible. We only need look at all the various interpretations produced by creationists, on which they can never agree. In such a circumstance, some creationists are evidently burdened with false beliefs about the will of God.

The best way to know right and wrong, even if one is a creationist, may be to follow one's God-given *human reason*, rather than to try follow divine reason or the divine will. If God created human beings in his image with a power of human reason, presumably human reason is good, and God expects us to use it. *We thus see that, although many have derived religious ethics from creationism, it does not logically follow from it.*