

THE SABBATH'S BRIDE



“One must prepare a comfortable
seat with several cushions and
embroidered covers, from all that
is found in the house, like one
who prepares a canopy for a bride.”

Quote from the Zohar

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I remember walking the surf line of a palm trimmed white sandy beach in the Caribbean - with tepid, crystal clear water lapping at my ankles. Looking out to sea, I was enthralled by the gradations of color, from a most vibrant azure to deep inky blues and violets met on the horizon by piles of billowing clouds of apricot fringed off whites set against a cobalt background. The warm, inviting surroundings sparkled with a tactile freshness that made me want to simply evaporate into it.

I remember standing at a roadside rest-stop on the Arizona desert, amazed by the enormous silence of the huge arroyo before my eyes. All the gold and russet of the immediate prospects faded off into a lavender and purple distance surrounded by a pale orange mountain range some thirty or forty miles away. Occasional dust-dervishes danced between the sage and cactus alarming the vast quiet with a soft hush. I felt that with one leap I could find myself on an opposite mountain peak, having been transported on the palpable silence itself.

I remember feeling totally humbled in the deep redwood forests of northern California, surrounded by the echoing melodies and contrapuntal rhythms of the birds and insects. As I looked skyward, the spectacular old trees reached up into a hovering veil of mist and sang hymns to the sun beyond. The damp ground gave off such a mesmerizing scent that it gave me the sensation of being one with the earth, that life-giving bed which eventually envelops man and beast, yet regenerates all it enfolds.

We all, I'm sure, have had similar experiences. Our unique engagements and intimacies with nature can be truly inspirational; they move us by what we may call a tactile goodness, a fundamental "grace" that brings thoughts of transcendency, a direct connection with something sacred. Those of us who like to call ourselves "thinkers" (indeed, that must be all of us) have an innate tendency to love nature; we relate because we're part of her. For some, that might not include the violence she more than occasionally shows us, but even in her violent throes there is an incredible beauty about her, probably because she is, for the most part, out of our control. She is free of us and our kind, independent of the harness and the bit, unrestrained by human exertion. Even when we strip her and pollute her in the most damnable ways, she gently responds, dresses her wounds, and gives of herself even more generously; showing us a side of (her) we mortals cannot claim. She will not hate us. When we contaminate her in serious ways, we become the victims of our own befoulment, and she goes on despite our poisonings, healing herself. We can not kill her without killing ourselves in the process. Our attempted "matricide" could be our own suicide on a grand scale. In an atomic age, no one can dismiss this as nonsensical.

I suppose it is the nature of human beings to continually try to simplify matters. In an extremely complex society, simplification leads, obviously, to further understanding of extant complexities; and uncovers other complexities of which we have no knowledge, fostering (again and again) a need to simplify in order to understand.

The reductionist technique is the essence of science: hypothesize and verify by repeated experimentation. Trying to understand things is what we do. Philosophy is the practice of inquiry into the nature of the physical and the metaphysical, revisiting some of the

vexing questions being human continuously presents. Simplification bordering on unification is generally what we've been after for millennia. An example from today's efforts at "unification" would be attempts by particle-physicists to establish G.U.T. (A Grand Unified Theory), which involve the four basic known forces of nature, using the hypothetical "graviton" as the elementary particle to mediate the force of gravity in the framework of the Q.F.T., the Quantum Field Theory, following the work of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. So far, no dice.

In an example from ancient times, it was the "heretical" Pharaoh Akhenaton, who adopted (Aten) as the (one) god of his (new) religion, rejecting what had been a veritable panoply of gods stemming from the myths of earlier times. He came a long way from the Ennead of Heliopolis and the family of Osiris and so on. Generally it's (wholeness) people are looking for. The integer 1 is the first of what may be a series of counting whole things, 2 for instance, are two whole ones, etc. Before the invention of the zero (0) we can only imagine how difficult it would have been to count and write a thousand or a million whole "ones." The zero was brought to Europe by Arab traders around the tenth century CE. It is the Hindu-Arabic system we use today. It was the development of the zero that certainly made higher mathematics possible, and marked the turning point in culture and civilization, and surely helped to further simplify much bigger "wholes."

The concept of infinity shows up in the Isha Upanishad of the Yajurveda in the fourth century BCE. According to Wikipedia, it states: "if you remove a part from infinity or add a part to infinity, still, what remains is infinity." Keeping the idea of infinity in mind, the (father) of the "whole" was Parmenides (c. 510 BCE - c.450 BCE). This founder of the Eleatic School was elucidating around the same time the Hindus were kicking

infinity around. His basic doctrine was that (Being), the One, simply is; and that Becoming, or change, is illusory. That did not mean that Parmenides was an idealist, his “One” was strictly materialistic. Fredrick Copleston SJ, in his wonderful “History of Philosophy” series, sorts out Parmenides’ thinking for us:

“The doctrine of Parmenides on the nature of the world is, that ‘it is.’ ‘It’ i.e. ‘reality, being,’ of whatever nature it may be, is, exists, and cannot (not) be. It is, and it is impossible for it not to be. Being can be spoken of and it can be the object of my thought. But that which I can think about and speak of can be, “for it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be.” But if “It” can be, then it is. Why? Because if it could be and yet were not, then it would be nothing. Now, nothing cannot be the object of speech or thought, for to speak about nothing is not to speak, and to think about nothing is the same as not thinking at all. Besides, if it merely could be, then, paradoxically, it could never come to be, for it would have to come out of nothing, and out of nothing comes nothing and not something. Being, then, Reality, “It” was not first possible, i.e. nothing, and then existent; it was always existent-more accurately, ‘It is,’”

That means everything that is, has always been - so it’s eternal. This view of the Elatics as opposed to the Pythagoreans leaves the nothingness of “empty space” an impossibility. Zeno of Elea (489 BCE) supports Parmenides. Fr. Copleston continues:

“Parmenides denied the existence of the void or empty space, and Zeno tries to support this denial by reducing the opposite view to absurdity. Suppose for a moment that there is a space in which things are. If it is nothing, then things cannot be in it. If, however, it is something, it will itself be in space, and that space will itself be in space, and so on indefinitely. But this is

an absurdity. Things, therefore, are not in space or in an empty void, and Parmenides was quite right to deny the existence of a void.”

With this early thinking, the Elatics were trying to de-bunk the position of the Pythagoreans who reduced everything to number. “To the Pythagoreans, not only was the earth spherical, but it is not the center of the ‘universe.’ The earth and the planets, along with the sun, revolve round the central fire or the ‘hearth of the Universe’ (which is identified with the number One). The world inhales air from the (boundless) mass outside it, and the air is spoken of as the Unlimited, i.e., space, or the Infinite.” In many ways, today's physics, following the Classical Physics of Newton, can support both positions. Today's Standard Model, anticipating the discovery of the Higgs particle, euphemistically called the “God particle,” would certainly lean in the direction of Parmenides. Around this time, and coming out of the paradoxes of polytheism, consideration of the “One” with regard to God began to take shape. Monism, whether it be theologically or philosophically grounded was again a matter of simplification on the part of human beings. Looking for “perfection” so to speak. Theism is the belief in the existence of a god or gods (opposed to atheism), but there are diverse forms of “monotheism.”

Wikipedia, under the key word (monotheism) gives us a concise list:

1. Henotheism involves devotion to a single god while accepting the existence of other gods. Similarly, monolatry is the worship of a single deity independent of ontological claims regarding that deity.
2. Deism is a form of monotheism in which it is believed that one god exists. However, a deist rejects the idea that this god intervenes in the world.

3. Monistic Theism is the type of monotheism found in Hinduism, encompassing pantheism, monism, and at the same time the concept of a personal god.

4. Pantheism holds that the Universe itself is god. The existence of a transcendent supreme god extraneous to nature is denied. Depending on how this is understood, such a view may well be presented as tantamount to atheism, deism or panentheism.

5. Panentheism, or Monistic Monotheism, is a form of theism that holds that god contains, but is not identical to, the Universe. The 'one god' is omnipotent and all-pervading, the universe is part of god, and god is both Immanent and Transcendent.

6. Substance monotheism, found in some indigenous African religions, holds that the many gods are different forms of a single underlying substance.

On the surface, monotheism is in contrast with polytheism, which is the worship of several deities. Polytheism is however reconcilable with Inclusive monotheism, which claims that all deities are just different names or forms for the single god. This approach is common in Hinduism, e.g. in Smartism. Exclusive monotheism, on the other hand, actively opposes polytheism. Monotheism is often contrasted with theistic dualism (ditheism). However, in dualistic theologies as that of Gnosticism, the two deities are not of equal rank, and the role of the Gnostic demiurge is closer to that of Satan in Christian theology than that of a diarch on equal terms with god (who is represented in pantheistic fashion, as Pleroma).

For me, the information above has interest because almost every person falls into one category or the other. It is said, for instance, that the American founders were mostly Deists, that is, they believed in God; they were certainly not atheists. They were, well-read in the European “enlightenment,” but did not claim godlessness, as some (not many) of the “enlightenment” did. Today the world population by religious group is as follows;

Religious - 86%

Non & Anti-religious - 14%

Of those groups:

Monotheists	54%
Reincarnationists	20%
Ethno Religionists	10%

It was through the Abrahamic culture, and the Hebrew Bible, created from the 10th century BCE to the 2nd century BCE, that the “sea change” from polytheistic practices to monotheism began in earnest. This carried over into Christianity and later into Islam. It must be stated, though, that in early Hebrew history, the transition was gradual because of the influences (on) the “tribes” of Mesopotamian, Syrian and Egyptian polytheistic cultures.

Wikipedia continues under the subtitle: The Shema, to tell us what claims Judaism has made enlarging on its "monotheism." Judaism claims to have an important advantage over all other religions because its earliest history, beliefs, laws, and practices are preserved and taught in the Torah (the Hebrew Bible) which provides the clearest textual source for the rise and development of what is named judaism's ethical monotheism which means that:

- (1) There is one God from whom emanates one morality for all humanity.
- (2) God's primary demand of people is that they act decently toward one another The God of ethical monism is the God first revealed to the world in the Hebrew Bible. Through it we can establish God's four primary characteristics:

God is supernatural.

God is personal.

God is good.

God is holy.

When Moses returned with the Ten Commandments, the second of those stated that “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3), right after the first, which affirmed the existence of God. Furthermore, Israelites recited the Shema Yisrael (“Hear O’ Israel”) which partly says, “Hear, O’ Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Monotheism was and is the central tenet of the Israelite and the Jewish religion.

This was picked up from Dennis Prager's Jewish Virtual Library.

Jewish monotheistic orthodoxy, that is, its literalism, was mixed with Greek philosophy by “Philo Judaeus,” aka Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-50 CE). He was one of the leaders of a large, well-to-do Jewish population in northern Alexandria which settled along the shoreline. Though being a loyal Jew, Philo was well schooled in the finer points of Middle Stoicism, Neo Pythagoreanism, Middle Platonism as well as Neo Platonism. I must admit that I have not gone through every word of his voluminous writings, but since he is the linchpin to Plotinus and Neo Platonism, it's important to show a bit of the material found at the end of his first book, “On Creation”: a commentary on Genesis with a Greek "twist" - including an emphasis on Pythagorean numbers. I shall sum up the lengthy paragraph regarding Moses' teaching:

1. The Deity has real being and existence.
2. He, Moses teaches us that God is One.
3. The world was created, refuting those who think that is uncreated and eternal.
4. We learn that the world thus created is one since also the Creator is One.
5. God exerts his providence for the benefit of the world.

Note that Philo did not stress that the world (universe) is one (with) God, but one “since also the Creator is One.” This

enforces a duality of real-being. The oneness of materiality and the oneness of spirituality, i.e., the metaphysical universe of intelligence, mind, thought, etc. Here's how Samuel Sandmen put it in his *Philo of Alexandria*, Oxford University, 1979:

“Consistent with both Platonic and Stoic dualism, Philo speaks here and throughout his writings, of the distinction between the perceptible or the sensible world (*kosmos aesthetikos*), that is, the world which the senses (sight, hearing, and the like) can encounter, and the world of concepts, the intelligible world (*kosmos noetos*) which the mind, proceeding from and beyond the senses, can encounter.”

The next step in the human compulsion to oneness is a big one (excuse the expression). Following centuries of classical Greek philosophy, the rise of Rome, the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the Jewish Diaspora - along with a growing Christian presence, a new school of philosophic thought began to form. The Neo Platonist synthesized much of earlier "thinking" and were led by Plotinus (204-270). *The Essential Plotinus*, translated by Elmer O'Brien S.J., Hacker Publishing, 1964, gives us most of his influential work. O'Brien eases us into Plotinus' "mystical doctrines" which "he seems to have taken over from his predecessors." It's best to let Fr. O'Brien speak for himself:

“The distinguishing characteristic of Plotinian mysticism and the keystone of his entire speculative system - is the doctrine of The One, of a source and term of all being that transcends all being quite as it transcends all knowledge. He derived it, ultimately, from Philo (30 B.C. - 40 A.D.) .. The good case that has been made for its being derivative rather from Plato is not altogether convincing. It was Philo, after all, who effected that minor revolution in Greek thought that established as *point de depart* in philosophy not sense nature, which had hitherto been the accepted procedure, but instead a wholly transcendent and unknowable one. The very unknowableness of the Plotinian

One, if nothing else, should alert historians, one would be inclined to think, that it could not be Platonic in origin.”

How Plotinus came upon it, since he seems never to have known the writings of Philo at first hand, is a matter about which scholars are happy to conjecture. Philo’s oneness of a “material” nature and oneness of a “intelligent” nature seems to be superseded by Plotinus’ (One) beyond both. It was Plotinus who confused many of the early “Fathers” with a God beyond God.

It is astonishing, at least to me, how today’s brilliant physicists are probing matter (actually condensed energy) to find the “infinite.” Once the “final particle” is mathematically placed in its proper order there is still a “void” to be dealt with, the flip side of the space/time continuum, namely, causality. In my opinion, there are no answers (in) the created, only signs; signifiers that point to the Primal Cause which is beyond human comprehension. Those who presume they know, or will know all there is to know find themselves attacking the unknowable (One) as an impossibility, and are comforted by the fact that what (is) is not! Every hypothesis is hyper-analyzed but no threshold is crossed to the reality of a power beyond the self, regardless of the deliverance of Christ and the promises he made to all of us in the name of the Father. The contention is, simply, what is not natural is not thinkable; conversely, on a moral level, what is un-natural is not only thinkable but desirable in a Godless world, where man is the measure of all things. Where we all get hung up is with the eternal question:

“What is truth?” and, who are the keepers of truth? We surely know that it’s not (only) religion that claims exclusively. For a very long time now, determinists have been trying to prove, without a doubt, that human consciousness is entirely a phenomenon of nature, This hypothesis is only proved by the (faith) science proclaims of its being true - which is, in itself,

metaphysical. Petscans have not proven (mind). The science of “mind,” and its philosophy, is far from being resolved.

Let’s press on to the next phase in the quest for simplification. Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) was born to immigrant Portuguese parents in Amsterdam on November 24, 1632. They were likely Morranos: confessed “Christians” secretly retaining their Jewish faith, and had escaped persecution by the “Inquisition.”

Spinoza was thoroughly educated in the tradition of Amsterdam's Sephardic Judaism, and was a “gifted student.” At a very early age he became disenchanted and “unsatisfied” by orthodox Judaism and was ritually excommunicated from the Torah community; after which he simply saw himself as a citizen of the nascent Dutch Republic and made his living as a lens grinder. I suppose, more than anything else, it was proximity to the new physics and “enlightenment” philosophy taking place all over Europe at the time, plus the abandonment of his faith and personal religion, that encouraged his involvement with philosophical thought, theology and politics. Steven Nadler's, *Spinoza, A Life*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, put it very succinctly:

“As a Jew, even an apostate one, Spinoza was always, to a certain extent, an outsider in the Calvinist land in which he was born and from which, as far as we know, he never traveled. But after his excommunication from the Talmud Torah congregation and his voluntary exile from the city of his birth, Spinoza no longer identified himself as a Jew. He preferred to see himself as just another citizen of the Dutch Republic - and perhaps, as well, of the transnational Republic of Letters. He nourished himself not only on the Jewish traditions to which he had been introduced in the synagogue’s school, but also on the philosophical, theological, and political debates that so often disturbed the peace of his homeland’s first hundred years. His legacy, of course, was as great as his appropriation. In many respects, the Dutch Republic was still groping for its identity

during Spinoza's lifetime. And as much as Spinoza's Dutch contemporaries reviled and attacked him, there can be no denying the significance of the contribution that he made to the development of Dutch intellectual culture. It is, perhaps, as great a contribution as that which he made to the development of the character of modern Judaism."

It was the age of "Reformation"; and while many had been protesting against Rome, Spinoza, in effect, was hatching the "egg" of reformed Judaism. He reflected on the "Caballah" and the works of Maimonides, Descartes et al. An ex-jesuit and teacher, Van den Enden, rounded out and completed his education. Nadler elaborates:

"In addition to the education they received in classical literature and philosophy, Van den Enden's students were almost certainly introduced to more modern material, including recent developments in natural science. It seems likely that Spinoza's familiarity with sixteenth and seventeenth-century thinkers began under Van den Enden's tutelage. His teacher could have given him lessons in the 'new science' and had him read Bacon, Galileo, and the Italian Renaissance philosopher Giordano Bruno. He may also have directed him to humanists such as Erasmus and Montaigne, and to the sixteenth-century Dutch spiritualist Dirk Coomhert. Spinoza's interest in political and theologico-political questions no doubt sprouted when Van den Enden, a radical, knowledgeable in the history of political thought, told him to read Machiavelli, Hobbes, Grotius, Calvin, and Thomas More."

"The most interesting question about Spinoza's intellectual apprenticeship, however, concerns when and how he started reading Descartes, the most important philosopher of the seventeenth century and, without a doubt, the dominant influence on Spinoza's philosophical growth. When Lucas says that Spinoza, after taking up with Van den Enden, "thought

only of making progress in the human sciences,” he is referring above all to Descartes’ investigations into nature. Descartes was, as Colerus puts it, Spinoza’s master teacher [*Leermeester*],’ whose writings would guide him in his search for knowledge.”

It is not easy to put into a few words his central thought, but like the others, he was intent on simplifying man's relationship with God, certainly starting with a strong Judaic background. (Substance) for Spinoza, is what is called “cause of itself.” Copleston explains:

“The definition implies, therefore, that substance is completely self-dependent: it does not depend on any external cause either for its existence or for its attributes and modifications. To say this is to say that its essence involves its existence. I understand that to be cause of itself the essence of which involves existence and the nature of which cannot be conceived except as existing.”

Later Spinoza argues that there is one, and only one “substance,” and that substance is God. “Once given this definition it follows that, if two substances possessed the same attributes, they would possess the same essence; and in this case we should have no (reason) to speak of them as ‘two,’ for we should not be able to distinguish them. But if there cannot (be) two or more substances possessing the same attribute, substance cannot be limited or finite, it must, therefore be (infinite).” Copleston continues:

“In the philosophy of Spinoza, we find the many beings of experience causally explained by reference to the unique infinite substance which Spinoza called ‘God or Nature,’ *Deus sive Natura*. He assimilated the causal relation to the relation of logical implication, and depicted finite things as proceeding necessarily from infinite substance. Here he differs sharply from the Christian mediaeval metaphysicians, and for that

matter from Descartes, who postulated one ultimate cause but who did not attempt to deduce finite things from that cause.”

This is a very important distinction. Simply put, God and Nature are interchangeable. This is plainly Pantheism. Substantially, God is nature, and Nature is god! I believe most “environmentalists” tend in this direction if they are neither atheists (nor) religious, in a manner of speaking.

Leibniz (1646-1716), the German mathematician and natural philosopher, continues the thought and said: “Reality cannot be found except in one single source, because of the interconnection of all things with one another”(1670). As future science unfolded, (man) was indeed on to something, since, as we have said many times, matter is condensed energy. The One became thought of as God.

For those of us who have not had the pleasure of reading Cicero (106-43 BCE), it's probably a good thing to add just a couple of his comments here. In Book One of *The Nature of the Gods*, he says: “All things depend upon the question of the existence and nature of the immortal gods. Surely even those who believe that they have attained certainty in these matters must feel some doubts when they see how widely wise men have differed about so crucial a question.” And further, “The universe must be a rational being and the Nature which permeates and embraces all things must be endowed with reason in its highest form. And so God and the world of Nature must be (one), and all the life of the world must be contained within the being of God.” To put it bluntly, Cicero says: “Only an arrogant fool would imagine that there was nothing (in the world) greater than himself, therefore there must be something greater than Man. And that something must be God.”

From the last century before the Common Era to the Seventeenth of the Common Era, there was a concerted effort on the part of most philosophers to simplify the notion of God,

certainly (not) to abandon the known and conscious idea of the existence of a Primal Cause as the ultimate power behind “creation,” i.e., the gods or God. Scholarship knows full well that this concept goes far back into prehistoric times. It is only lately, let’s say, from soon after the “enlightenment,” that atheism, or the absence of belief in the “Deity” was proclaimed as a persuasion. That idea has been chugging along since the advance of what we call modern science, although not by leaps and bounds.

Both Galileo and Newton, as well as most of the “fathers of modern science,” were surely not atheists. Generally speaking, it was not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that hard core determinists began to claim atheism as a belief. From the marvelous *Summa Theologica* and *Contra Gentiles* of St. Thomas Aquinas’ attempt to prove God by reason, to the explicit “God is dead” by Fredrich Nietzsche, the high-point of cynicism and earthly despair, man has sought the “face” of a Creator by every means of mind and matter available to him.

How does one love and serve the (One) one does not see?

This has been the “eternal” question! We shall attempt to shed, at least, some light on that preponderant thought a little later on, but right now, it is good to know, that (to see) is a (dichotomy); one may see and not perceive, one may hear and not understand. The marvelous dualism, as scripture presents it, is Jesus’ use of the word “seeing” not only in a physical sense, but more in a perceptual sense, as a comprehending mental grasp of a complete idea. “eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear” (Rom. 11,8). “Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.” (Jn. 9, 32), “born blind,” meaning never having understood the (meaning) in the long term truths before the mind.

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad

your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!” (Matt. 6, 22-23). Without seeing this in its (meaningful) way, the saying becomes an obvious, obtuse factoid, a non-poetic oxymoron; similar to the one: “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away;” or “They said to him, ‘Lord, let our eyes be opened!’”

At this point in our lives, hopefully, we are not literally blind, but our prayer must always be - “Lord, that I may see!”; This is what moved Jesus to compassion. The “door” to be “knocked” on is not literally made of wood, but, through Jesus, we know that the Father “listens” to us even if we’re not always able to recognize the answers we may be getting. The things we do, our actions, are much more “prayer” than what is commonly referred to as “formal prayer.” Worship is an act. Treating another with the same care as one cares for herself - takes an act, not simply a wish. Self sacrifice for a right-cause is most often an offering to God, or the “good”. The Mass is a perfect example of this.

Seeing the work of God in all things admits of “good in itself” as part of the unity of creation. We can understand that. Man, the zenith of being, is the closest organism to God’s nature, actually made in his “image”; as long as one does not see “image” as the man with the white beard in Michelangelo’s “Creation” in the Sistine Chapel. If so, this is how superstition, or an overactive imagination can creep into honest prayer and become inadvertent idolatry. Art is only physically real as color in plaster. Without its meaning, without its reaching into our minds and hearts, it’s nothing more than technique.

The structurally blind can make art, look at Monet. The structurally deaf can make music, listen to Beethoven. The true reality is beyond the cellular or granular make up of organic life. Arguments to the contrary are either specious or ignorant, at least, in my view.

This brings us to a unique group of people who helped to minimize the common and ancient (innate) belief in God, with some of the most momentous and exciting scientific discoveries since Newton's gravity. Max Planck, Albert Einstein, W. Pauli, Neils Bohr, Prince Louis de Broglie, Werner Heisenberg, Erwin Schrodinger, Edwin Hubble, Paul Dirac, Max Born, David Bohm and many others too numerous to mention, are the "saints" of modern science, (let's say from 1900), whose work tended to shake the very foundations of religion, if not "faith" within religion.

Fully forty years earlier, in 1859, a new door for critical speculation with regard to the meaningfulness of religion was opened with Charles Darwin's and Alfred Russell Wallace's theory of evolution by natural selection in the book, *The Origin of the Species*. Principally written with only biological implications, it became one of the cornerstones of scientific advancement. Wikipedia elaborates: "In the 1930s, Darwinian natural selection was combined with Mendelian inheritance to form the modern evolutionary synthesis, in which the connection between the units of evolution (genes) and the mechanism of evolution (natural selection) was made. This powerful explanatory and predictive theory has become the central organizing principle of modern biology, providing a unifying explanation for the diversity of life on Earth." Note the line: "providing a (unifying) explanation."

It should be known that Darwin was a (theist) while he was writing the Origin but after the death of his daughter Annie, he shed his faith in God as "primal cause" and adopted an agnostic stance. Many statements attributed to him showed a strong denial of atheism. It was only after others picked up where he left off that the marvel of evolutionary theory became associated with the emptiness of atheism and the cause celeb of the "godless." For me, however, it has been one of the major proofs supporting the teleological argument (Intelligent Design

Theory). John F. Haught, in his immensely thoughtful book, *Deeper Than Darwin*, states:

“Today it seems to experts like Weinberg and Dawkins that science is bringing everything in nature up to the surface with such clarity that nothing remains to be illuminated by other avenues of exploration. Religious intuitions that the world is inexhaustibly deep seem harder to sustain than ever before. And it is very difficult for many scientific thinkers to believe that there will be any real mystery left over after scientific probing into the cosmos has finished its work.

“Nature”, says physical chemist Peter Atkins, is just “simplicity masquerading as complexity.” In other words, beneath its overt display of complexity, nature’s depth turns out to be nothing more than unadorned elementalism that has now been uncovered by physics. Beneath that austere simplicity there lies — absolutely nothing.

Science has already penetrated to the very bottom layer of nature’s illusory profundity. In agreement, the late physicist Heinz Pagels wrote that in the future ‘the universe will hold no more mystery for those who choose to understand it than the existence of the sun.’ ‘As our knowledge of the universe matures, that ancient awestruck feeling of wonder at size and duration seems inappropriate, a sensibility left over from an earlier age.’ Today, numerous scientists and philosophers believe that only a scientific reading can put us in touch with rock-bottom reality. Life, accordingly, turns out to be *nothing but* lifeless matter, and mind is *nothing more than* neurons. Evolution is merely the result of blind chance and impersonal law working algorithmically on mindless stuff. There is ‘literally’ nothing else going on.”

When Darwin says: “For myself, I do not believe that there ever has been any revelation. As for future life, every man must judge for himself between conflicting vague probabilities.” For

many of us, evolution (is) revelation and God himself entered that “chain” at the Incarnation. For more than one third of the world's population, Jesus Christ is infinitely more than a “vague probability.” Whether one is able and willing to trust in the truth of the “Kingdom of God” is another story. That acquiescence lies somewhere in the experiencing of God in our lives, and or from a direct infusion of “sanctifying grace” over which we have little control but to accept it or reject it. When the (grace of God) is there, generally we know it.

Out of the hierarchy of the saints of modern science, certainly three stand out in my non-scientific estimation, as ranking above the others. They are Max Planck, Erwin Schrodinger and Albert Einstein.

Planck suggested that radiation is quantized (it comes in discrete amounts) (1900). He was truly the father of quantum theory. Einstein took Planck’s theory seriously and proposed a quantum of light (the photon) which behaves like a particle. He also explained the equivalence of mass and energy, the particle/wave duality of the photon, the equivalence principle, and special relativity (1905), as well as explaining the curvature of spacetime (1912).

Schrodinger developed wave mechanics which describes the behavior of quantum systems for bosons (the force carrier particles) (1926). The father of quantum mechanics.

Before we get knee deep in physics, which is certainly not my intention, the purpose of bringing these men into this essay is to uncover a bit of their personal relationships with the Deity. There is no question that these three, just for starters, were, by every stretch of the imagination, geniuses. Through their work (and, of course, the work of many others), life on earth was inexorably changed. In my opinion, this gives them more credibility than your average scientist or garden-variety philosopher. Surely not all thought the same way, but these

three were right on the cusp of the determinist/indeterminist argument, but for all of them there was something (more) beyond the constituents of matter and the natural law.

Planck was a theist and a Christian. In a lecture “Religion and the Natural Law” (1937), Planck expressed a view that God is everywhere present and held that: “the holiness of the unintelligible Godhead is conveyed by the holiness of symbols.” Atheists, he thought, attach too much importance to what are merely symbols. In his later years, he devoted more and more of his writings to philosophical, aesthetic and religious questions. Planck saw the scientist as a man with imagination (and) faith. For example, the causality principle in science is neither true nor false, but rather a heuristic act of faith on the part of the scientist. “Religion is the link that binds man to God,” he said. “The respectful humility before a supernatural power, to which all human life is subject and which controls our weal and woe.”

“Planck regarded the unity and order of religion as similar to that of science. Hence he regarded these as compatible inasmuch as they are logically separated; they both have the same goal, i.e., ‘recognition of an omnipotent intellect ruling the universe.’ They agree that there is a rational world independent of man, and that the character of this world can not be known directly, but only indirectly recognized or suspected. On the other hand, they do differ; in the case of religion one deals with a personal God, given directly and immediately, whereas in the case of science one has only sense impressions. Thus science enables man to learn; religion requires him to act. Science operates primarily with the intellect, religion with sentiment. Science is objective in that it is concerned with truth or falsity in the material world; religion is subjective in so far as it deals with values, i.e., what ought or ought not to be - good or evil, noble or base. Yet they both oppose skepticism and dogmatism. In their common, overlapping area, however,

they do move toward the same objective - like parallel lines toward the point at infinity. 'No matter where and how far we look, nowhere do we find contradiction between religion and science' - there is 'complete concordance.'

This, from the father of quantum theory, which ultimately moved us into the "space age." Though I disagree with the fact that religion only works as sentiment, there is no doubt in my mind that God and Christ figured heavily in his life and work; it was his way of praying in my opinion.

Erwin Schrodinger with Paul Dirac won the Nobel prize in 1933 for their work on quantum mechanics, again a significant step in the enhancement of life on earth. In my last little essay I quoted Schrodinger on the front leaf. He said: "We know, when God is experienced, this is an event as real as an immediate sense perception or as one's own personality." Though Schrodinger did not believe in a personal God, he was well aware of causality beyond nature. He said that Plato: "was the first to envisage the idea of timeless existence and to emphasize (it) - against reason - as a reality, more real than our actual experience; this, he said, is but a shadow of the former, from which all experienced reality is borrowed"... "learning by reason has the nature of remembering knowledge, previously possessed but at the time latent, rather than that of discovering entirely new verities." In other words, we knew - before we got to know. Sounds incredible, but it is the very reality true religion deals with; spoken of by the prophets - promised and earned for us by Jesus Christ. In more modern parlance, it's the flip side of materiality which many scientists are trying to reach through "hyperspace" and "worm holes."

"My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18,36).

We are made in the "image and likeness of God" not only do we know him innately but we know (of) him as eternal. This

also coincides with the so-called myth of the eternal return, which Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell have written so eloquently about. Right at the beginning of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part One, Chapter One, 1.27, it says: “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God and God never ceases to draw man to himself.” This, I believe, is the intrinsic knowledge possessed by an evolving human consciousness. For many who cannot see beyond materiality this seems preposterous, but certainly not for Schrodinger, who, by the way lit the fuse of DNA. We all live in the militancy of the “Kingdom of God,” some simply (will) not recognize the “King”! The “Kingdom of God” stretches to include all living human beings whose hope it is to reach a (oneness) with God as was promised by, and through, Jesus Christ. This hope is not exclusionary of those to whom the “kingdom” is not known, but subsumes that every human creature has been brought to life by the (will) of the (One) Creator, God. Following Schrodinger's thought, Livio Melina in Spring 07's *Communio* writes: “For the sake of its own self. preservation, scientific rationality, too, [needed] to recognize a broader and more foundational rationality that is open to the mystery of a Creator Logos,” ... “Thus, even in the deepest foundation of the common good we find the acceptance of an (authority), which is the basis of the intrinsic value of every human being and the goodness of that reciprocal relationship.”

When Albert Einstein said: “I believe in Spinoza's God who reveals himself in the ordinary harmony of what exists, not of a God who concerns himself with the fates and actions of human beings.” What was he saying? He was surely saying that he was (not) an atheist; but from his point of view God and nature were interchangeable, such as Spinoza proposed, though in a more complex way. Spinoza was a philosopher, Einstein, a scientist probing the ambiguities and mysteries of the components of elusive matter, much of which we do not “see” -

like the Creator - only by faith, signs and intuition; (except, of course, for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, admittedly not within Einstein's reach). According to *Albert Einstein, The Human Side*, edited by Helen Oukas and Banesh Hoffmann, in response to a child's letter asking:

"Do scientists pray." Einstein responded: "Scientific research is based on the (idea) that everything that takes place is determined by the laws of nature, and therefore this holds for the actions of people. For this reason, a research scientist will hardly be (inclined) to believe that events could be influenced by a prayer, i.e., by a wish addressed to a Supernatural Being."

In 1936 the world was on the edge of two colossal human events, the breakthrough of Quantum Mechanics and therefore the breakdown of deterministic hypotheses, as well as the breakout of World War II. In *The Human Side*, he also is stated as saying: "My religiosity consists in a humble admiration of the infinitely superior (spirit) that reveals itself in the little that we, with our weak and transitory understanding, can comprehend of reality." This quote leans, certainly, more in the direction of indeterminacy rather than rigid determinism. Then comes a most interesting quote where he says: "I have repeatedly said that in my opinion the idea of a personal God is a childlike one, (but) I do not share the crusading spirit of the professional atheist whose fervor is mostly due to a painful act of liberation from the fetters of religious indoctrination received in youth. I prefer an attitude of humility corresponding to the weakness of our intellectual understanding of nature and of our own being." If in Einstein's case, he believes in Spinoza's God, that is, nature (as) God, and with the fact that we do not know who or what we are, he exposes a nervousness only found in the deepest meanings of mind over matter or matter over mind, or at least, in the theoretical existence of primal cause, i.e., the (One) uncreated God. Again, a positive bent toward the teleological argument; supporting, in effect, the Anthropic Cosmological Principle. In plain talk, the existence

of God. We (can) say that Einstein was not a religious person per se, but in another saying he put it this way:

“The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description ... If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism.”

The reference to Buddhism here bears a similarity to Chardin's references to “Christocentrism”, but as to the elimination of “self” in Buddhism, things natural (and) things spiritual have a meaningful unity only if we are, by nature, a person, and a valuable self! Buddhism is not a religion, it was and still is a philosophy of life.

Further, Einstein says:

“Nobody, certainly, will deny that the idea of the existence of an omnipotent, just, and omnibeneficent personal God is able to accord man solace, help, and guidance; also, by virtue of its simplicity it is accessible to the most undeveloped mind. But, on the other hand, there are decisive weaknesses attached to this idea in itself, which have been painfully felt since the beginning of history.”

Einstein was a pantheist, and no pantheist is an atheist. They leave room for God, because they (see) his “face” in the mysterious beauty and simplicity of nature.

“Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” (Mark 1 0,15).

Albert Einstein was a genius, but aside from $E=MC^2$, his childlike humility and his theistic inclinations will endear him

to us forever, regardless of his misunderstanding of religion with regard to the Buddha.

At this point, it's probably a good idea to jot down a few words about what is known as the double standard. A double standard is a standard applied more leniently to one group than to another. In this case, the determinists, the (matter over mind people), or the indeterminists, the (mind over matter people), i.e., the religionists. It is said that the religionists use a double standard when confessing a belief in God because they use faith (which is not knowledge), as a proof. The Eternal Universe people, the determinists, say they have proof of no God, i.e., the self evidence of the universe's existence; we see it! God, on the other hand, we do not nor can not see. Still the determinists know very well, that as a result of the breakthrough in Quantum Mechanics and therefore the breakdown of deterministic hypotheses, plus the 2003/4 NASA Wilkinson Microwave Anisotrophv Probe (WMAP), the Big Bang seems to be a "creation" reality, suggesting that there was "nothing" before it. So far, all other ideas, such as the "string theory" and the like, need to be also understood by faith - but a cosmological faith. As a result of this, there is no double standard. Both parties believe (what) they believe by faith, in my opinion.

We are the earth-bound. If there are any among us who say they, themselves, totally control every facet of their lives, we call upon them to think again. We did not control our own conception, and though we can lengthen our lives by healthy living we can not control our eventual departure. In between these two incidents, we are generally swimming upstream. We would rather say we have been fortunate; and many may be sorry to say they have been unfortunate. We did not choose our parents, and often do not choose our acquaintances or even our friends; sometimes it all just seems to happen and we respond to the chemistry of circumstances. Our minds are always pressed, and continue to make varying decisions, some of

which are urgently important, some trifling; we use the very best understanding we have. No one is totally ignorant except for serious mental disorders, which require the intense involvement of loving care givers. Pure joy is fleeting, and happiness and sadness alternate according to occurrences and conditions. Keeping things in a happy state of being is always the short and the long term goal - but it is not always possible. With a positive frame of mind (the glass half-empty half-full analogy) we make every effort to keep the glass half full; this engenders hope for the future, but which we can never foresee. We simply try to keep the “now” in good shape, and try to forget the mistakes and misfortunes of the past. We generally relieve our guilt by taking the blame for our misdeeds with a good conscience, correcting our trespasses, and carrying on with a firm purpose of renewal. That’s life!

What with all the philosophy, psychology and theology we have heretofore researched and written about, ultimately it is we, if we’re believers, who need to know where and how an Almighty God fits comfortably in our communal lives. It is one thing to repeat the revealed truths of sacred scripture and carry on the traditions of one’s confessed creed and religious practices - and quite another to physically and mentally (feel) the presence of the Deity. Further, when and if we pray, how do we pray and how do we know our prayers will be answered or not answered? These are the questions all saints and sinners cerebrated and meditated about. It is a fact though, that simply meditating on the subject of God is already prayer. When we ask for something we think we deserve or for help with an issue for ourselves or others, addressing it to that great cloak of silence God wears, can be disheartening and confusing when nothing seems to show up as a response, no sign, no reverberation. The issue of faith always remains before the “eyes” of the mind— Is God there? Am I sure of it? How could I possibly know without an answer?

Worm holes and string theories are the determinist's way of extending himself into eternity. All they know is the (self) on a material level; whether walking around or rotting in the tomb we are strictly matter and that's all we are! Everything beyond that is illusory— but that is the very issue. There are things beyond that matter did not nor could not create if matter was created. Many say there was something in “space,” out there, so to speak. Some thing from which everything came to be, perhaps a leftover universe before this one, and one even before that one; the continuum. But, from particle physics we (now) know with a good deal of certainty that there appears to have been nothing before creation, nothing before the primal cause except an immaterial causer. Call it Spirit, or the uncreated Deity. From eons of primitive believers to thousands of years of theologizing, Christians, the latecomers, of necessity have come to call the Godhead the Trinity. Three persons in One God. It's the God probability that endorses the Christian faith, not simply from meditation or dreams, but from the words and deeds of witnesses, those who (knew) and touched the person Jesus Christ the One who was crucified and rose from the dead in a “glorified” state beyond earthly credulity and complete human understanding. Divine life became one with us by becoming one of us. He left us much to act upon and meditate about. We think about ourselves and our relationship with him, his “Father” and the Spirit of which he spoke and with whom he is joined beyond our sensibilities. He has shown us what it is to trust in and love God, and to love our neighbors by acts which, as it is said, speak louder than words. Still, that does not suggest we should stop asking to receive, seeking to find, or from “knocking” in supplication, or from accepting the Eucharist as his body and blood! What can we possibly request or require from an Almighty God except that his “will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” Sooner or later every answer is given; it will be done though, according to (his) word, and not as the world gives. See if the world gives you what you deserve, or satisfies all you believe you require.

When the world presents her cold hard facts, isn't there surely more of a tendency to trust in the mercy of God? It's human to believe! Mary's simple and fortunate response may be an example for us: "Be it done unto me according to your word." Perhaps that should be the complexion of our prayer in order to have the Savior come to (us) in a very real way as well. We each have to answer the call in our own way!

I have learned something from the Hebrew word "shekinah" which is even more beautiful in its meaning than it sounds. Reference.com says: It is the term used in the Targum (Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible) and elsewhere to indicate the manifestation of the presence of God among his people.

"Whenever the Hebrew text speaks of the presence of God in a way that implies certain human limitations, the Targum paraphrases by substituting the word *Shekinah* for the word *God* (e.g., 'And I will cause my Shekinah to dwell,' in the Targum Onkelos). Although the Shekinah is rarely intended by the rabbis in the Talmud and Midrash as an intermediary between God and people, the word is sometimes used in such a manner that it cannot be identical with God, e.g., 'God allows his Shekinah to rest.' The medieval Jewish philosophers, however, wishing to avoid the problems of anthropomorphic interpretation of this concept, posited a separate existence for the Shekinah, which played a minor role at best in their systems. In the Kabbalah and other mystical works of the later medieval and modern periods, the Shekinah is given far more importance and is often treated as the consort of God who can only be reunited with God through human fulfillment of all the divine commandments, which would likewise signal the messianic age."

Synthesizing six pages from Wikipedia: "The Shekinah is the presence of God," held by some to be the feminine attributes of that presence. It is said to have been manifest in the Tabernacle and the Temple of Jerusalem. Shekinah is said to have caused the

prophets to prophesy and King David to compose his Psalms. The Shekinah is also said to manifest itself as a form of joy, connected with prophecy and creativity. The Shekinah is associated with the transformational “Spirit of God.”

“A paragraph in the Zohar starts: ‘One must prepare a comfortable seat with several cushions and embroidered covers, from all that is found in the house, like one who prepares a canopy for a bride. For the Shabbat is a queen and a bride.’ This is why the masters of the Mishna used to go out on the eve of Shabbat to receive her on the road, and used to say: ‘Come, O bride, come, O bride!’ And one must sing and rejoice at the table in her honor... one must receive the Lady with many lighted candles, many enjoyments, beautiful clothes, and a house embellished with many fine appointments.’

“The tradition of the Shekinah as the Shabbat Bride, the *Shabbat Hamalka*, continues to this day.”

“The Shekinah in the New Testament is commonly equated to the presence or indwelling of the Spirit of the Lord (generally referred to as the Holy Spirit or Spirit of Christ) in the believer, drawing parallels to the presence of God in Solomon’s Temple. Furthermore, in the same manner that the Shekinah is linked to prophecy in Judaism, so it is in Christianity.”

“For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21 ASV). In a minority of Christian sects, Shekinah is identified with Sophia, the feminine aspect of God.”

Two pretty obvious words which may convey the same emotion as Shekinah are: (aura) or in some respects (awe). “A distinctive and pervasive quality or character, air or atmosphere.” With respect to God, perhaps an invisible breath, emanation or radiation.

“A distinctive but intangible quality that seems to surround a person or thing, or in our case - a place.”

Now, going back to the start of this paper, I painted a few small pictures describing my intimacies with locations I have visited; and suggested that you may have had the same kind of ethereal sensation at some “awesome” place of nature you may have visited. I am suggesting here, that this could have been the practical pathway of how Spinoza came to his conclusions regarding the “substance” of God being one with Nature; to which he supplied reasons by philosophical discourse culminating in his Pantheism; that is, “seeing” god as nature and Nature as god, an example of “Shekinah” perhaps. It sounds reasonable because his “beyond” was an impossibility. Only what (is), as Parmenides also thought, was eternal. Just (one) substance, and that substance was god for Spinoza.

It's easy to see how Einstein, and in a lesser way Schrodinger, would think as pantheists as well. These men, along with Planck, who thought differently, were busy all their lives probing the unseen reaches of matter, uncovering the mysteries of what exists. Perhaps reaching for eternity in situ. Confronting the face of nature, with the overpowering feeling of “shekinah” may have been the same for them as seeing the “face” of God, a God that answered their emotional yearnings with a whispered “Here I am.” Still, they could not touch him, they could only see him, as St. Paul said: “Through a glass darkly.” What these men saw with the reassuring sight of their organic eyes, produced a condition of the worship of rocks and streams, trees and rills, convincing enough for them to say: “I see God in nature”; not at all unlike prehistoric man.

The ancient Israelites "saw" God in the tempest and in the signs and wonders of their trek through time from Abraham to Moses. One of their sons, Albert Einstein, had the genius to (link) time and space - and bent it to suit the eyes of an observer wherever he may be, thus enabling a visit to the moon and planets (not yet) at the speed of light.

Others, with the eyes of a mind not tied to material horizons, rest with the fact that through the merits of Jesus Christ, crossing the boundaries to which matter subscribes, is not only feasible but spiritually and physically attainable because of an immutable faith in the word of God, i.e., the promises Christ made to those who love God in himself - and see him in others. It is the other side of materiality which philosophers, scientists and theologians have always arduously sought. The Absolute Truth, The Center, The Creator, The Redeemer and the Love between them. The One and only God, the Uncreated "who never ceases to draw man to himself": "Lord that I may see" (Luke 18:41).