

# CREATION : BEFORE SCIENCE.

## CHAPTER 2,

### BEGINNING TO THINK.

Men probably began thinking seriously when they began to communicate effectively. No-one knows, of course, because it is too far back in the past; and there are no records, because of necessity writing, or the keeping of records, came long after speech and serious thought began. So it is all a bit speculative; but since even today those around you, or using more analytical language your relationships with other people around you, influence not only what you actually think, but also your patterns of thought, it seems a sensible speculation that communication preceded serious thought. Cavemen hunters, huddling round a camp fire, must have had certain metaphysical assumptions in common, if their little community was to have a common life. They must have had a system of thought, to give their little community coherence. It would not have been as perfect and self-consistent a system of thought as Euclid's geometry, but a pale imitation of it. And it would have been based on certain simple assumptions, which were unspoken, and of which they were only partly aware.

My view is that the basis of any coherent attitude of mind is the complex of unspoken and usually unconscious assumptions, and the nervous tension that goes with them, that provides the bedrock of that attitude of mind. It was the same for primitive man, as it is for us; except that for primitive man the attitude, and its underlying assumptions, were dictated by the ethos of the clan or tribe. Whereas for us, it is much more an act of free-will whether we subscribe completely to the prevailing attitude of mind, or not. Primitive man probably had no choice; whereas we have choice. And knowing how difficult it is to persuade anyone to change their attitude of mind now-a-days, in our comparatively free society, it must have been an extraordinarily slow process changing from the mentality of a hunting or pastoral way of life, to that required of a settled agricultural community.

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Yet even with an agricultural community, it is difficult to envisage much abstract thought. Surely without the very beginnings of civilization, structures of abstract or self-conscious thought are simply not possible? Abraham was the friend of God, and faith was for him as righteousness. In other words, his idea of God, how to pray to him, and how to serve him, were essentially primitive and without form; and I would say none the worse for that. Jesus too may have raised primitive prayer to unparalleled heights, but his was still primitive prayer. But you cannot build a civilized community on primitive ideas; and to be fair to Jesus he did not try. He proclaimed that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, and was going to exist in the comparatively short time between his death and resurrection and his Second Coming, which would be probably in the life-time of some of those present. This of course was fantasy, but Jesus was imbued with the idea prevalent at that time, that the end of the world was round the corner. He had to be! If he was to talk to Galilean peasants, he had to talk to them from where they were, and in language that they understood.

Even if Jesus had had a detailed knowledge of science and evolution, which I don't believe for one moment he had, he would have been wasting his time talking to Galilean peasants about evolution, because they would not have had the faintest idea what he was talking to them about. You have to talk to people from where they are themselves; I know because I addressed juries for 40 years. So whatever message Jesus wanted to get across to us, of later centuries, he had to talk to the people facing him within the limits that popular folk-lore imposed on him at the time. Fantasy it may have been; but he had no option. And everything he both said and did must be viewed in this context. It is not an attractive thought to Christians, that Jesus sometimes indulged in fantasy, but then we all do; nor that he talked nonsense sometimes; but then we all do. He was a man. He was not a god walking around in human clothes. He had our limitations. Professor Whitehead suggests that Capernaum was a Greek town in its culture; but Jesus turned his back on this, and preached in Aramaic.

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How am I able to say that in my opinion the bedrock of any attitude of mind is that group of unspoken and usually unconscious assumptions in the mind, together with the nervous tension in the body that creates and sustains that attitude? I can say it, because it is what my first book “Man’s Relationship with God” is all about; and the book illustrates how extraordinarily difficult it was to reach this conclusion. When one is oneself part of a process, it is extraordinarily difficult to have any insight into that process. How can one be a detached observer, when one is obviously not detached, but part of the process? No wonder some philosophers say a theory of consciousness always slips through your fingers! My solution was not to look for “permanence”, either in the physics and chemistry of the material world, nor yet in the ideal forms of thought in the mental world, which Plato preferred to physical permanence; but to accept instead that everything changes, even an indwelling with God changes. So I prefer the crude evolution of Heraclitus, to the polished dualism of Plato. And though I accept that there are things in the mind that seem to be innate, like the idea of truth and the ability to think Nature is comprehensible, I tend to think of these as “Assumptions”, rather than as “A priori knowledge”. I looked for “reality” rather than “permanence”; and I hoped to find reality in this mortal world in an indwelling with another human being, which complemented any indwelling I might think I had with God himself. This indwelling between people is so unbelievably rare, that I felt it was the nearest I was ever likely to get to being detached. And the justification for this hope of mine was that in the Army, morale is everything; and the bedrock of morale is comradeship, and regimental spirit. This then for me was reality in this mortal world; not money, nor social position, nor knowing the important people, but comradeship; and I hoped to find its apotheosis in an indwelling with another person.

The first part of “Man’s Relationship with God” was essentially an exploration of this idea, rather like threading one’s way through the hills of our native land in thick mist, even though one has not been among those hills

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before, something which I have done many times. In Chapter 11 of “Man’s Relationship with God”, I make a declaration of faith: that all true relationships preclude analysis; in other words that falling in love is a reality that is not to be explained away. It is when you “explain” it away, that you rob it of any meaning which it might have; and incidentally demonstrate your own naivety and folly. Part I of the book ends with the picture of the mutual love of man and woman as being an expression of what we as individuals hold most dear; the two ideas of immortality and love of God.

However, although “love” may be what makes the world go round, it is not the fundamental lubricant of society. When you are tying up a boat to a quay, the waterman on the quay does not want to know that you love him, he wants you to throw him a rope so that he can catch it, and tie it to a bollard. In Court, the victim of crime does not want to know that prosecuting counsel loves her, she wants him to present a competent case, so as to give her the best chance of being believed, if she is telling a credible story. Similarly, she does not want to know that the Judge loves her, (he probably doesn’t love anybody); she wants him to conduct a fair trial, which is highly unlikely to attract an appeal, and impose a hefty sentence, if the gravity of the offence justifies it. Then she need not fear the midnight knock at the door, with the accused asking why she had dared to give evidence against him? It is competence and mutual trust that keep the secular world going. And Part II of “Man’s Relationship with God” attempts to explore the inevitable gaping chasm between our ultimate verities and the rough and tumble of our everyday world.

In Part III, I attempt inadequately to sketch out how one copes with this in practice, by the growth of one’s strength of character as one has to shoulder ever greater responsibility. With this burden comes the challenge of meeting the ever greater sophistication of the evils that come with it, which require every ounce of character to cope with them at all. Many Judges develop “judgitis”, which may take the form of a prickly awareness of their self-importance, or a

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pomposity that would be funny if it were not for their power. This may be their attempt to cope with the burden of evils that are hopelessly beyond them. But it suggests to me that they were keener on obtaining the job, than on learning to cope with the burden that went with it.

If the “Epilogue” of my book is a hymn of praise at the journey’s end, as I suggest, it also hints at the fearful cost I had to pay to create this outline of a theory of consciousness at all. No-one creates anything new and worthwhile without great spiritual turmoil first. And I suggest that my experience was a tiny microcosm of what society had to endure, before it became capable of abstract thought. It must have taken a long time, and been achieved at fearful cost.

For primitive man, this is essentially a world of spirits. There are spirits everywhere, in every brook and wood. And if one lived in the jungle or in the bleak forests of Northern Europe, it would be natural to find every coincidence an omen for good or ill. It must have been an extraordinarily slow progress from the belief that there were spirits everywhere to the belief that there was one supreme spirit, and from there to the belief that this spirit was good rather than evil, loving as well as righteous. The Jews, to their eternal credit, were the first to make this mental journey. A few great men in every civilised community, probably, believed in the one Supreme Being, amidst the polytheism of the common people. But the Jews were the first nation to do so; although if one reads the minor prophets, they kept reverting to polytheism with painful regularity. And part of the process of recognising the Supreme Being was to credit Him with the creation of the Universe.

So the Religions of the Book accept the account of Creation in Genesis as the finest prose-poetry that it is possible to write. Science alas is speechless. It talks about the Big-Bang as the fashionable description now-a-days of what happened in the moments after Creation. But it is ignorant and inarticulate as to how you create something out of nothing.