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NEURO-APOCALYPSE 2: THE LORD OF THE APES

To Mama Coca

Pleased to meet you, hope you guess my name.

But what's puzzling you is the nature of my game. Aw yeah!

Sympathy for the Devil, Mick Jagger

In the beginning was the Word',² but what exactly began? The beginning of the physical world came long before language, of course, but the world of concepts and conceptions, we can conceive of is born with language. A word defines something, from *de* (marking completion), and *finis* (end). A word sets limits, and gives a thing independent existence. All animals communicate, with pheromones and grunts, puffed up chests and wagging tails. Dogs respond to words, parrots repeat them, but conscious manipulation of message-bearing signs may be unique to the great ape family: gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees and us. Unlike other primates, these species can be taught sign language, and compared to lower monkeys, all have enlarged language areas in the brain.

Another novelty is the apish hand. Monkey digits on monkey hands all point the same way and do basically the same thing, simple movements such as digging for worms, swinging about, picking fruit and scratching backs. In apes, the first digit begins to move round into opposition to the fingers. The thumb makes it possible to pick things up and manipulate them skilfully.

The tendency to oppose is our apish distinction, and it goes beyond morphology. A monkey in a room with boxes in the corner and the only exit in the ceiling will jump around unhappily until exhausted, but he will not reach the exit. He sees the environment as it is, a place from which he cannot escape. A chimp, however, imagines how the environment could be. She can pull the boxes out of the background, making them into individual objects in her mind. She stacks the boxes and climbs to freedom.³

Monkeys go with the flow, but higher primates raise a conscious island of stability out of the ocean of the unconscious, where objects can be manipulated and moved around in thought. The ego, according to Freud who named / discovered / invented it, tests reality and mediates between the conscious and the unconscious. Like the thumb, it can move round into a position in opposition, from where it poses questions: What if there was something else to stand on? What happens if I mix sulphuric acid with nitric acid? Why are plants green and not red? Why don't we invade the land of milk and honey?

Monkey hands and monkey minds grasp at the environment. Great apes manipulate it with their thumbs and their egos. These contrary appendages working together allow for tool use, then tool making and guitars, and socks, and not only socks but wrapped socks sold on little plastic hangers for you to throw away. Culture bubbles brew in contrary brains.¹ Orangutans build different shaped nests in different areas, and use different 'goodnight' calls.⁴ On one side of a river they pierce the hard, spiky shell of the neesia fruit with sharpened sticks, but on the other side they haven't cracked it, and they don't eat it.⁵ A penetrating question arises in the mind of a curious ape, and she eats the forbidden fruit.

Chimpanzees are also cultured creatures. Some troops go crop raiding, whilst neighbouring troops do not. At one point in time it was out of the question, but the question arose, and some bad-boy chimps opened a lucrative new racket. Culture develops when an individual acts *in opposition* to the world he knows, and the order is reordered. Neesia seeds are spread, farms are disrupted, documentary-makers are enriched, the ozone layer changes shape. Whilst gorillas are the dopey cousins of the family, who neither use tools nor develop culture, chimps are cultured enough to engage in premeditated violence. Other animals pack hunt, and collectively defend nests, but organised fights with neighbours at the frontiers of territories is a purely apish trait.⁶ The

¹ In zoological terms, culture is socially transmitted behaviour that differs between groups.

greatest ape merely takes the belligerent tendency closer to its logical conclusion, with firearms and philosophy on the frontline.

Our contrary nature generates unique problems. Whilst most organs work with negative feedback to return the body to equilibrium, the ego creates discord within the body by going against its natural urges. Sometimes this is for the good of the body, when we restrain ourselves from immediately scoffing the doughnuts on entering a pastry shop, for example, but often it is not. It keeps us up all night studying *The Bible* when we should be asleep. It makes people hunger strike to death for ideological reasons. It fills the brain with amphetamine faster than the liver can remove it. It drags the ape away from balance and towards extremes. The ego is a tricky tool. The idea that we should be without one is New Age claptrap, as far as this Reverend is concerned; we cannot, and should not be rid of our egos. We need only observe and understand them.

We have harnessed fire, and taken some control over our nervous systems. The conscious mind overrides even the instincts. For example, we instinctively drop a scalding hot pan, even before the pain registers. The circuitry governing the reflex is low down in the spinal column, so the hand releases before the impulse from the pain receptor has reached the brain. If there is a toddler nearby, however, a pre-emptive message is sent from the higher brain as the hand goes for the pan, the equivalent of ‘even if this is really hot, don’t drop it on little Janaina.’

Which came first, the chicken or the egg, or the word ‘egg’? Which came first, the message or the mind, the thought, the tool, or the word. The threads of our evolution are too tangled to unravel, as thumbs, language, tool-use, and culture emerge together. Symbolic culture dates back at least three million years, to the primate *Australopithecus*, who collected stones resembling faces. We can only guess at what they meant to this old ape, but they meant something to him. The earliest tool-maker, *homo habilis*, was performing funeral rites half a million years ago, and within 200,000 years, *homo erectus* was walking tall by day, engraving symbols by night, and curling up by a tamed fire.⁷

The first tool is the word, even a word unspoken. A word plucks an object from its background, defining ‘a box’, ‘a neesia fruit’, or an ‘I’, bringing it into the conscious mind. An ape picks up a stick from the forest floor, but how will he fit it into his frame? A thought rears up with a hiss, a forked tongue offering a choice and the audacity to choose. The most contrary monkey shimmied up the ‘tree to be desired to make one wise’.⁸ He picked the forbidden fruit with his outstanding appendages, his eyes flicked open, and he saw that he was naked.⁹ A question arose in his mind about his tool, so he covered himself to hide

from the shame of inadequacy, clothing his nakedness with culture, with ever more refined philosophies as he climbed up the Tree of Knowledge. Lucifer the light bearer shines his torch into the dark canopy above, always questioning, never satisfied. After aeons of climbing, the frame emerges precariously into brilliant light, and he sees he is balanced between the gods and the beasts, with the sun in his eyes, and a huge drop on every side.

'The stone that the builder refused shall be the head-corner stone,' spake Brothers Tosh and Marley of the Wailing Masons. Consciousness is born in opposition. The challenge is to balance the rejected stone, to harmonise the conscious mind with the world lest it fall, as Lucifer fell for his pride. Another Masonic allegory comes to mind, described to me after a lecture on the Bardic Tradition of Albion, in the pub, where the speaker was still speaking. He was a walking, quaffing encyclopaedia of occult lore, an ex-monk, ex-Freemason, ex-Golden Dawn initiate, and all-round ex-pert, wearing a pin-brooch shield of the Knights Templar, of whom he was a researcher, and no doubt a member. He talked of code chiselled into the walls of modest country churches, of shadowy secret servicemen and the dodecahedral universe before the big bang, tales interspersed with Irish songs about black-skinned kings and other unlikely heroes. Freemasonry, he explained, was about building New Jerusalem, and the first requirement for a city is an architect, a builder of arches. An arch requires a frame, a frame requires a carpenter, the carpenter is Christ, and the frame is his cross.

Jesus is both rebel and Saviour, who bears his cross as he walks between the worlds to his destiny, to be reunited with his indefinable, unlimited father behind the contradictions. He is tempted by his shadow, the devil, and he stumbles as he walks, but he drags himself up the hill and onto his cross, and leaves his scarred flesh behind. Questions and yearnings shape the head-corner stone, but once it is set at the top and the arch is built, leave your tools behind, leave the carpenter to perish on his frame, and let the suffering end.

Back in Eden, everything was perfect. Adam was with the Lord, naming the creatures He showed him,¹⁰ and the Garden was so rich that it contained everything, including a rebel raising questions. The Lord warns Adam not to eat the fruit, 'for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'¹¹ Rubbish, says the snake:

Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.¹²

They eat the fruit, and the snake's words come true:

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.¹³

With the knowledge of good and evil, the things they name take on meaning, and choices have consequences for better and for worse. But what is this evil we are talking about? The English word 'evil' has a certain nuance of serial killing and dark forces, but the Hebrew *RA* can also mean food that has gone bad, like rotten figs, or 'naughty [RA] figs,' in the *KJV*, 'which could not be eaten, they were so bad [RA].'¹⁴ It doesn't have to have a moral dimension, and where it does, it is complex. Even the Lord is about to do the 'evil' [RA] of destroying the Israelites, until Moses persuades Him to change his mind.¹⁵

How do the characters of Eden fit into our usual categories of good and evil? When Eve was still innocent, she saw that the fruit was 'good for food, and ... pleasant to the eyes'.¹⁶ Is she evil for eating it, even though she was without Knowledge of good and evil when she did? Is the fruit evil for making them suffer? What about the Lord? Adam does **not** die as the Lord warned; he lives, and the Lord punishes him 'all the days of his life'.¹⁷ Is the Lord a liar? Or is He a poet threatening them with a metaphor? Is the snake evil, though he tells the truth? The Lord creates both temptress and temptation, issues a draconian threat, and then punishes the entire cast for disobeying Him? What makes us think He is the goody?

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.

Was the snake 'more subtil', or was he 'more naked'? The Hebrew *YRVM* means both, and also 'prudent'.¹⁸ It is translated 'subtil' here in the *KJV*, but nine words before it is 'naked', emphasising the innocence of Adam and Eve; 'and they were both **naked**, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.'¹⁹ If covering oneself is bad in the sight of the Lord, is nakedness good?

'He was more naked/subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made' raises other questions as well. It is unclear, in both English and Hebrew, whether the Lord God made the snake, as He made the other beasts. Was the snake already there, waiting in the darkness? Was the snake created by something else? Wherever he comes from, he knows more than the other animals, more than Adam, and even more than the Lord. Or is it more than the Lord God is willing to reveal?

What is behind this double name of 'Lord God'? *YHVH Eloheinu* was just 'God' (*Elohim*) in chapter one, and generally 'the Lord' (*YHVH*) in later chapters. Is it a double title or a double deity? Is it two deities on the same wavelength or two aspects of the powers? Is the Lord talking to God or vice versa? Is it the powers through the filter of the Lord? It can also be translated 'Lord our God', so is this is the God we recognise as ours? Are there other parts we don't recognise? Is this the mysterious 'us' we keep hearing about?

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of **us**, to know good and evil

Who is He is talking to here? Is He talking to the snake, whose eyes are already open, who was already there when the Lord arrived? *Elohim* is a strange plural; is God talking to his other faces? This 'us' pops up at the Tower of Babel as well, when *YHVH* (without *Eloheinu*) confounds the languages?²⁰ Why is something omnipresent addressing something else anyway? If there is nothing else, why is the Lord 'a jealous God'?²¹ Of whom is He jealous? If not omnipresent, how about omnipotent? How Almighty is He when every other speaking part in Eden goes against Him? The Lord God loses track of His little man, and asks 'Where art thou?'²² 'I hid because I was naked (or prudent),' replies Adam. 'Who told thee that thou wast naked?' 'Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?'²³ Why is an omniscient being asking anything at all?

Here's a question, my Lord: Who are You, Lord? Why the duplicity? Why the hints of plurality? If this is a test, why test an innocent man, whose eyes are unopened? Why 'put a stumbling block before the blind', something You later forbid in Your law?²⁴ Why all the punishment afterwards? Adam has already learned about shame, but You pile on the suffering, declaring that the snake will eat dust and the woman will suffer in childbirth, that the ground will be cursed, and Adam will sweat for his bread. This is just the beginning. You unleash Satan on Job, who is completely innocent. You direct the Israelites to the Holy Land, through merciless massacres and pillage of other tribes, then send Nebuchadnezzar, whom you describe as 'my servant',²⁵ to destroy their temple. This nominally unlimited Lord is looking somewhat limited, not only in power, but in character as well.

In the beginning, He was a different sort of deity. Chapter one was all large gestures, commands were invitations for life to grow. 'Let there be light. ... Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself... Be fruitful and multiply!²⁶ By the end of the first week, *Elohim* saw that 'it was very good'²⁷ and took the day off, but in the second chapter, His character is

completely different. Gone are the 'let it be' days; the Lord is taking a more active role. He remakes man, even though 'the heavens and the earth were finished' and man and woman had already been created in the first chapter.²⁸ The Lord God shapes mud and breathes life into it, and then, quite unprompted, decides it 'is not good that the man should be alone',²⁹ and forms Eve as well. In chapter one, 'God said, Behold, I have given you... every tree... for meat',³⁰ but the following week the Lord God is forbidding fruit and making threats, and angry at the challenge to his authority.

The snake questions the change of character. 'Hath *Elohim* said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' Eve replies that *Elohim* has forbidden only the tree slap bang in the middle of paradise, but something is wrong here. She uses a different name. Not *Elohim* but *YHVH Eloheinu* imposed the ban, and it is the He who has been out of sorts throughout chapter two. The artist formally known as God produced good stuff in his early days, but came out of retirement for a nasty comeback as 'the Lord God', singing a new song. He fools the woman, but the snake is more subtil, and calls His bluff:

Ye shall not surely die: For *Elohim* doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as *Elohim*, knowing good and evil.³¹

Soon everybody's eyes are open, and things are looking suspect. *YHVH Eloheinu* has contradicted *Elohim*, and His lie has been exposed. The veil is beginning to fall in *Genesis* 3, but then the Lord God reveals his / their jealous side. He casts the couple out, not for their transgression, but to stop them from becoming immortal:

and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.³²

Who is this *YHVH*? Jews call Him *Adonai*, meaning Lord. He appears out of nowhere, fashions a paradise that contains His enemy, and then Lords it up, drawing lines, making the individual from the general, making Adam from man and Eve from Adam. *YHVH* demands that Adam till the ground, and Cain follows his father, but *YHVH* prefers Abel's lamb, and when Cain becomes angry, the Lord fills him with neurosis, telling him he should have done better, that poor performance leads to sin. It does indeed. Cain commits the first murder shortly afterwards.

YHVH gets inside people's heads as pride. Pharaoh decides to free the Israelites after every plague, but every time the Lord 'hardened

Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go'.³³ The Lord keeps ordering air strikes of locusts and flies, but at the same time He hardens Pharaoh's heart, and doesn't release him until his army has been drowned, but it is *Elohim* who takes the Israelites out of captivity, not *YHVH*.³⁴ The Lord makes the earth swallow Korah and his followers as punishment for a democratic movement.³⁵ Throughout the genocidal orgy of *Numbers*, the only role *Elohim* takes is to turn Balaam's heart to favour the Israelites.³⁶ Of course, when Balaam lapses, *YHVH* takes over again to punish him, sending an angel to block his way, and this leads to a classic trickster moment; his donkey rebels against his instructions, and then starts arguing with him. This is the only Biblical animal apart from the serpent to speak. By contrast, *Elohim* drives a happier story in *Daniel*. *YHVH*'s only role is to deliver the Jews into the hand of their enemy,³⁷ and Daniel spends a whole chapter persuading Him to 'let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem'.³⁸

YHVH is 'the God of the spirits of all flesh',³⁹ whereas *Elohim* is 'the God in whose hand thy breath is'.⁴⁰ *YHVH* walks in the garden looking for Adam, but *Elohim* never enters our world. *YHVH* takes an active role, sending helpful pillars of smoke to follow and punishing sinners with fire and brimstone;⁴¹ *Elohim* sends dreams and blessings, and his name is invoked, but he is apart. He works behind the scenes in the cycles of nature and of empires. 'He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and ... revealeth the deep and secret things'.⁴²

Few mortals approach *Elohim*. When prophets such as Noah 'walk with *Elohim*',⁴³ they go beyond the normal world. 'And Enoch walked with *Elohim*: and he was not; for *Elohim* took him'.⁴⁴ *YHVH*, however, walks in the world, turning men's hearts, punishing His enemies, and enflaming hearts with rage, with pride, with fear, and with desire.

Elohim is the first name in *The Bible*, but it is a name unlike others. A name defines a thing, but these 'powers' are plural. They create (or allow), and it looks like they are created by a nameless entity in the first verse of *The Bible*, as discussed in *Japanese Whispers*. In the first verse of *The Tao Te Ching* 'the unlimited father and mother of all limited things' is also nameless. The Gnostics imagined the source to be female, as it bore the universe. It did so without a male to fertilise it, and this is the virgin birth in some Gnostic interpretations. The nameless creates

¹ In *Numbers* 16:22, rebels pleading for leniency call *Elohim* 'the spirit of all flesh'. They are appealing to the wrong name, and they receive no mercy.

the earth, the heavens, and the powers moving through them. The powers create the sun, the sea, the animals, and mankind.

The first singular name is *YHVH*, but this four-letter word is too terrible to pronounce. *YHVH* is the first entity, and the king of everything as far as He is concerned. He pulls things out of the background and shows them to Adam, making them conscious. He defines, but He is not the creator. He sets limits and divides the world into chunks. The chunks are still unnamed, however, as there is still no namer. Even *YHVH's* name cannot be said. *YHVH's* first act is to define a man, and now we have our namer.

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.⁴⁵

Adam's own name is introduced for the first time in this verse, the first pronounceable singular name, fusing breath (*A-*) with mud (*-dam*), but *YHVH* does not name him.⁴⁶ *YHVH* names nothing in the entire *Bible*, and *Elohim* names very little, only Day, Night, Heaven, Earth, and Sea. Adam names Eve first, and from there on they and their descendents have the last say on the names, with two important exceptions.

The first incidence is when He promises Abram he 'will multiply thee exceedingly'.⁴⁷ Sounds good to ME, thinks Abram, his will firming up. Then *Elohim* takes over.

And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.⁴⁸

Here *Elohim* sends the Lord with a promise of potency and expansion, but the powers also use the threat of dissolution. Jacob already has a magnificent ego, taking advantage of both his blind father and his hungry brother, and bedding both his wives and their maids. *Elohim* comes to him as an enemy trying to destroy him, even putting his thigh out. Jacob fights for his life all night, and in the morning God renames him Israel, which means 'wrestles with God'. The struggle continues immediately afterwards. Israel has the audacity to ask his enemy's name, but he slithers out of the question by turning on the prophet. 'Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?'⁴⁹

These are the only two names that *Elohim* chooses, and it is as if he is setting some limits here. In these two episodes, he provokes the

fundamental urges of the ego: to expand, and to survive. *YHVH* builds you up from the dust, makes a man of you, breathes life into you, gives you a soul and a sense of self.⁵⁰ He unleashes your potential, but He does not explain. His desires are not bound by words, and they do not make sense, but He pushes the plot forward. *YHVH* simply expands and defends the ego; the enemy dissolves it. Both are in the service of *Elohim*. The ego constantly shapeshifts between these two processes as it adjusts to its environment. And man provides the names, the meaning, and the memory, trying to make sense of the story.

God approaches the prophets as *YHVH*, in a manner they can relate to, though he often gives another name, related to the Hebrew *SDD*, to destroy:

YHVH appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am *El Shaddai*; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

To Moses, however, *YHVH* speaks ‘face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend’,⁵¹ and He reveals the limitation of His name. *YHVH* catches the prophet’s eye with a burning bush. ‘And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him’.⁵²

And *Elohim* spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am *YHVH*. And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of *El Shaddai*, but by my name *YHVH* was I not known to them.⁵³

‘Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?’ asks a rather meek Moses. God tells him he will be with him. Moses wants to know whom exactly he is dealing with, so God introduces his enormity more formally: ‘I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE’, he says, but you can just call me ‘I WILL BE!’ to your friends.⁵⁴ *I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE* is a fractal of manifestation, from the powers down to the n^{th} power: *I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE...* He carries the fractal of becoming into a world of limitation, shifting, growing and developing, and that is a bit much for minds bound by static definitions to conceive of. He gives the simpler name ‘I WILL BE’ for those not ready for the infinite.

The ego finds and defines things. It creates a conscious place and sits at its edge, between the boundless and the bound, between *Elohim* and Adam. It tests the environment as it extends its dominion. It translates urges into actions, but it has not the sense to fathom the depths from which the urges arise, nor does it understand what it is doing. *YHVH* comes before words. He is senseless, and without a conscience. The guy who said ‘Thou shalt not kill’ sends she-bears out of the woods to devour 42 children, because they taunted his prophet with ‘Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head’,⁵⁵ which is hardly

serious slander. This is the jealous Lord, whose moves are mysterious. There is nothing rational about Him. Adam's descendents in the thinking mind make sense. They are poets making stories of His antics, prophets passing His demands on to the children of Israel, even when they contradict each other.

'I WILL BE!' shouts the big man.

'Oh no you won't,' comes a hiss from the canopy. The snake questions assumptions, and man wrestles to pin down his question. He reflects upon the world and his place in it. In the language of psychoanalysis, Adam is the superego, but he's far more super than Freud imagined. He is usually bound by his conditioning, and has no more than analytical reasoning as a weapon, but he does have executive power over the ego, even over the instincts. Man can play follow the Lord, but the best of the Israelites live up to the name of Israel, and take the Lord on.

Adam tries to pull a fast one but then he hides, so the Lord sends him into the Land of Nod, and it's game on. Noah's poor defence lets the Lord dribble all the way up to His goal of total destruction, and *The Zohar* raises a flag at the timid prophet. 'Surely they were "the waters of Noah," for they were due to him, since he did not ask for mercy on the world.⁵⁶ (*One-Nil*). The Lord lines up a shot at Sodom, but Abraham asks him 'wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? ... That be far from thee to do'.⁵⁷ The Lord mitigates His judgement, and Lot's family is spared (*One all*). Later, the Lord looks down on His 'stiff-necked'⁵⁸ children worshipping the Golden Calf, and asks 'let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them',⁵⁹ but Moses has Him marked. He tackles the stiff-necked God in whose image they were made. He reminds Him of the good old days, 'and the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto his people' (*One-Two*).⁶⁰ The second half begins with dreadful defending by Elisha, and 42 dead children (*Two all*),⁶¹ and then the Lord's servant Nebuchadnezzar obliterates the defenders to take Jerusalem and the lead (*Three-Two*). Job, however, takes a shot all the way from his own penalty box:

Behold, he will kill me; I have no hope. Nevertheless, I will maintain my ways before him.⁶²

Job strikes true, and his wealth and family are returned to him (*Three all*). The game goes into extra time, but the Lord has left the pitch. Job's shot is decisive. From the end of *Job* to the end of the

Hebrew Bible, God never speaks again, and we are left with only human poetry, reflection, and history.¹ Job's defence was immaculate, and Israel's victory is decisive.⁶³

The God of the Israelites changes his mind and his nature, shifting as he covers the whole pantheon, and as the story develops. He is the Creator of *Genesis*, the lawgiver and punisher of *Leviticus*, the saviour of *Exodus*, the lover of *Psalms*, and the bully of *Job*. His law reflects his inconsistency:

Thou shalt not kill.⁶⁴

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven ... A time to kill, and a time to heal⁶⁵

Blood... defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.⁶⁶

Jewish law is not the law of nature, like the *dharma* of the Hindus or the Tao. It is often against nature. There is nothing natural about wearing a hat indoors, for example, and in the second most popular Jewish book ever, Maimonides explains that circumcision is necessary to reduce the natural sex drive.⁶⁷ The law, like the world, is fundamentally problematic:

Abraham said to God: 'If you wish to maintain the world, strict justice is impossible: and if you want strict justice, then the world cannot be maintained. You cannot hold the chord at both ends at once... Unless You can compromise, the world cannot endure.'⁶⁸

Jews dealt with all this by arguing over it. The word Torah derives from *yarah* (instruction); it is the text plus the discussion around it, and when the Torah is opened, the debate begins. Debate has been at the centre of Jewish religious life since at least the Babylonian exile of the sixth century BC. The argument is at least as important as the judgement, as illustrated in a Talmudic dispute over the kosher status of an oven:

On that day Rabbi Eliezer brought forward every imaginable argument, but the Sages did not accept any of them. Finally he said to them: 'If the Halakhah (religious law) is in accordance with me, let this carob tree prove it!' Sure enough the carob tree immediately uprooted itself and moved one hundred cubits, and some say 400 cubits, from its place. 'No proof can be brought from a carob tree,' they retorted.

ⁱⁱ Church fathers changed the order of the Bible, but traditionally the prophets came after the books of Moses.

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And again he said to them 'If the Halakhah agrees with me, let the channel of water prove it!' Sure enough, the channel of water flowed backward. 'No proof can be brought from a channel of water,' they rejoined.

Again he urged, 'If the Halakhah agrees with me, let the walls of the house of study prove it!' Sure enough, the walls tilted as if to fall. But Rabbi Joshua, rebuked the walls, saying, 'When disciples of the wise are engaged in a halakhic dispute, what right have you to interfere?' Hence in deference to Rabbi Joshua they did not fall and in deference to Rabbi Eliezer they did not resume their upright position; they are still standing aslant.

Again Rabbi Eliezer then said to the Sages, 'If the Halakhah agrees with me, let it be proved from heaven.' Sure enough, a divine voice cried out, 'Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer, with whom the Halakhah always agrees?' Rabbi Joshua stood up and protested: 'The Torah is not in heaven!' (*Deuteronomy* 30:12). We pay no attention to a divine voice because long ago at Mount Sinai You wrote in your Torah at Mount Sinai, 'After the majority must one incline'. (*Exodus* 23:2)

Rabbi Nathan met Elijah and asked him, 'What did the Holy One do at that moment?'

Elijah: He laughed, saying, 'My children have defeated Me, My children have defeated Me.'⁶⁹

The arguments could become extremely involved, because the texts are mysterious, and Hebrew is a vague language. The sense of a word changes according to which syllable is accented. There are no vowels, and nothing to distinguish between certain hard and soft consonants such as 'b~' and 'v~' or 'p~' and 'ff~', leaving the sound and the meaning somewhat open. The pronunciation was fixed well after Christ,ⁱ but even with fixed pronunciation, the meaning is vague. Verbs have very few tenses in Hebrew anyway, and Biblical grammar is very concise and often confuzing, flipping between plural and singular, with adjectives in ambiguous places. There are also words that are only known from *The Bible*, so the meaning must be inferred from other verses, and there is some flexibility in interpretation. Hebrew has few root words, and each can mean various things. We have already discussed how one can be prudently and subtly naked in Hebrew, but even a fairly straightforward word like *charar* can mean hot, dry, scorched, and angry, and *yadah* means know, show, distinguish, confess, and also have sex with, as when Adam knew Eve.⁷⁰

ⁱ See The Mark of Zoroaster,

There is a line from *Deuteronomy*, translated in the *KJV*:

And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel.⁷¹

The verb 'to set' is *SUWM*, which sounds a bit like *SM*, which would render the line:

This is the law with which Moses poisoned the children of Israel.

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi offers one of many possible interpretations in *The Talmud*:

If a person merits, [the Torah] becomes an elixir of life for him. If a person does not merit, it becomes a deadly poison.⁷²

Note the exquisitely convoluted Jewish mind at work. They are not even the same root letters in this case, but the rabbi uses the similarity of the sounds to develop a point completely at odds with a simple reading. *Ezekiel*, however, is more straightforward, even in translation:

Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live; And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord.⁷³

The Lord gave contradictory laws in ambiguous language, and his people have been arguing over it ever since. Sometimes it is just impossible to decide which position is correct, and in one famous Talmudic story, a voice from the sky calls a draw, declaring that 'both these and those are words of the living God'. Even the decision is ambiguous; it could also mean 'the living words of God'. The language is alive. God is alive. The Torah is alive. It is flexible, and responsive, as long as the debate continues. In this story, tellingly, the judgement goes with the school that argues with more courtesy, because 'they teach opinions of both schools, and moreover, they give the opinion of their opponents first.'⁷⁴

Everything changed, however, with the Greek tongue. Greek is a precise language, where Aristotle's laws of logic make sense:

there cannot be an intermediate between contradictories, but of one subject we must either affirm or deny any one predicate⁷⁵

Simply put, something either **is** or **is not**. This makes sense to us as well, not because it is true, necessarily, but because it is also built into English grammar. Something is either 'a man' or 'not a man', 'a harp' or 'not a harp'. The limits of logic, or rather, of Greek grammar, were questioned even before Aristotle, when Zeno imagined dropping grains

of sand one by one. We begin with ‘not a heap’ and end with ‘a heap’, but at what point does one become the other?¹

Zeno’s paradox went unresolved, and Aristotelian logic spread with Hellenism. It first became a concern to the Jews in the third century BC, when scholars began translating *The Bible* into *The Septuagint* for Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt. According to legend, 70 scholars performed the work individually, and all miraculously produced the same translation, a text with only one face. The tradition changed completely when radical Jews following Yeshua Christus and bi-curious pagan Christians wrote new chapters in Greek. Whereas Jewish men had always been literate in at least two languages, and obliged to read and debate the text in Hebrew from manhood at thirteen, many early Gentile Christians could not read even Greek, and almost none understood Hebrew. The language fixed the meaning, and so did the theatrical nature of Hellenistic life. Early Christians listened to biblical stories from the pulpit along with a sermon, as they might listen to a politician or philosopher speaking in the public square. Men still argued, of course, but the arguments had a fundamental difference. In Greek, they were debating the nature of things, whereas Hebrew arguments revolve around the interpretation of text. The priest’s sermon was ‘the truth’, take it or leave it. A rabbi’s statement is an invitation for a ruck.

The Jewish oral tradition was called ‘the fig tree’, and it was this fig tree that Jesus cursed to wither in the Gospels.⁷⁶ He cut through the layers of interpretation, and also simplified the horrendously complex law, which specifies exactly what is kosher, what to do with a leper, and how to punish a man who is chopping wood and accidentally kills someone when the head of his axe flies off mid-stroke.⁷⁷ For Jesus, the spirit of the law was more important than the letter, which was Good News for the less convoluted Gentile mind, but bad news for Biblical purists. Without a gang of belligerent rabbis debating the letter of the law, the stories began to change. Job’s absolute defiance (quoted above), softens in the *KJV*:

¹ When does a banana become a nasty mess? When is it an insult to offer someone the object called either ‘a banana’ or ‘a nasty mess’ depending on its age? In Japan, only spotless greeny-yellow bananas are eaten, and you would never offer a guest even a banana with a tiny brown spot on it. In England, spotty bananas are ripe, and in Africa, bananas are ripe when they are good and black. Even a simple fruit is defined differently from different standpoints. Is it because black people like black bananas, yellow people like yellow bananas, and freckly Englishers like freckly bananas? Or is it that the Reverend is very freckly, and had a bad time with unripe bananas in Japan?

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.⁷⁸

This is very different. Job becomes a paragon of endurance rather than defiance. Hebrew magick was fashioned into Greek tragedy. *The Bible* was reordered, verses were doctored, Gospels were written and rewritten; various sects arose and were divided between 'orthodoxy' and 'not orthodoxy', or heresy. And the questions asked in Greek were completely different.

Binary thinking is the founding stone of Western philosophy, and it gradually came to dominate western philosophy. Scholars once studied formal logic as a branch of rhetoric, the art of putting what is known into a convincing format. It has nothing to say about unknowns and maybes. The half-known makes for bad rhetoric, and is not subject to the laws of logic. Logical reasoning need not be studied anymore. It has become common sense, and we have forgotten that there used to be other ways to think.

Aristotle convinced the generations that followed him of all kinds of nonsense. He argued, for example, with flawless syllogistic logic, that the semen of the young lads he took such interest in was infertile up to a certain age,⁷⁹ and that it was produced in the spinal column in both men and women. He was quite a rhetorician. Logic was specifically designed for conflict, and it worked, not only in the senate or academy, but also on the battlefield. As soon as Aristotle's pupil Alexander came of age, he rode out to conquer the known world, torching cities and massacring anyone who stood in his way.

Western natural philosophy grew upon the exclusive proposition, but nearly everything Aristotle deduced has been debunked. Galileo trashed his optics, Paracelsus his medicine, Descartes his maths, and finally Einstein punctured his conception of space. Today binary is even losing ground in programming, mainly in Asia, where fuzzy logic outperforms zeros and ones in camcorders, helicopters and underground trains,⁸⁰ but we are still stuck with his bloody-minded 'well is it or isn't it?' logic. It is the exact opposite of charity, and if charity is the most exalted of Christian virtues, logic is a much more Antichristian than poor old Nick.

Logical rules were imported into morality as well, and things became seen as either 'good', or 'evil'. In Hebrew, things are never so black and white, but the fig tree withered, and *YHVH's* nature changed, and so did His name. *YHVH* has been called 'Jehovah' by the persistently erroneous, 'Yahweh' by blasphemers, and 'Yao' by heretics. Modern logicians of the Church of Scyense usually call Him 'NOT', and

mainstream churchgoers tend to go with 'IS', but how would He define Himself, if He had the words?

I dunno!

Adonai?

Add an I?

'I deny,' hisses the snake from the undergrowth. In the Garden of Eden, in a field in Oxford, he sticks out his forked tongue at the spotlights of *YHVH*'s chopper chop-chop-chopping overhead. The snake takes the ego on when Adam gets too big for his boots. He tells him his boots are ugly. He tells him his haircut is wrong, and his soul is rotten. *YHVH* inflates, but the snake's teeth are sharp. He raises doubt and questions assumptions. He asks what is right, what is necessary and what is superfluous, and his questions promise something better. As soon as there is Knowledge of something better, the skin will suffocate if it does not break. The serpent symbolises transformation, shedding his skin as he grows and overcomes his boundaries, and also symbolises death with his bite.

The snake is between two worlds, belly scraping the gravel and tongue testing the tasty air. Unlike other animals, he speaks. Like *YHVH*, he speaks, but he tells the naked truth. Like Adam, he speaks, but he raises a question. Maybe it's not true? Maybe bombing amphetamine is a good idea? Maybe these boots really are ugly? Maybe it is time for a haircut? Maybe it wasn't such a good idea after all?

What does the Lord want? He certainly wants to expand, but does he demand compliance? Cain follows His command to Adam to till the land, but Abel adds another string to mankind's bow, and the Lord prefers his livestock to Cain's boring old crops. *YHVH* backs down under pressure from Abraham and Moses.⁸¹ He is to be argued with, but not pleaded with. When the Israelites plead, they call on *Elohim*: 'Would *Elohim* that we had died when our brethren died before *YHVH*!⁸²

Maybe laws are made to be broken. For a later rebel, the Sabbath was made for man. From man's point of view, the law changes in *The Bible*. At first it is direct divine punishment, with a fall and a flood, and then God hacks into the mainframe of the tower growing towards Him. Later, the Children of Israel suffer under the laws of their Egyptian oppressors, and then they receive the Mosaic Code, which is clearly defined, and hardcore. The rabbis got to work expanding the law, in *The New Testament* Jesus relaxes it, and Paul does away with it entirely. For Paul, faith is what it is all about. And a new dualism begins.

There is no absolute good or evil in *The Bible*, just questions and limits in a world of limitations. There are neither goodies nor baddies,

but there is something behind the scenes, manipulating dualisms to push the plot forward. Both the snake and *YHVH* serve 'the powers' which lie behind the distinctions, pushing Adam towards his destiny, towards mind unlimited. Without *YHVH*, there would be no narrative. Without the snake, there would be no hope. We are offered a choice. Life. Or death. Expand. Or dissolve. *Elohim* is the energy of the universe, created in the beginning along with heaven and earth, but his manifestation on earth is with what we understand; the urgent dualisms of greed and fear, expansion and survival. We build an ego to suit our world, and like it or not, we are stuck with it, with both sides of it, with the humourless Lord and the sneaky snake, unzipping taboos in the shadows. The challenge is to understand how they work together, and to bring them to balance, to know both 'good **and** evil',⁸³ not **the distinction between** good and evil.

YHVH comes storming down the high street, wagging his finger, stamping his feet, issuing plagues, shouting 'WRONG! BAD, VERY BAD! WRONG! YOU AS WELL - ... YOU OVER THERE WITH THE TACHE, KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK ... BUT YOU, OVER THERE. STOPPIT RIGHT AWAY!' He rages and thunders, but he says whatever makes Him larger. Man makes sense afterwards. He says what's what, and the final decision lies with him. The urge to expand is bearing down upon him whilst the enemy snaps at his heel, but he decides, and after *Job*, only his word is heard. The trouble with we sons of Adam is that we live in fear. We are still bound by *YHVH's* contradictory commands and urges, and troubled by the snake's suggestions. If we block our ears, only the loudest hisses come through clearly, desstructive urgesssss and sssssick ideasssss. The Saviour points the way around the law and between the worlds, between expansion and dissolution, between the Lord and the devil, fighting over our souls.

Adam disobeyed, but then he hid rather than standing up for himself. Unfortunately for him, he still didn't know anything, and when he found out, he was ashamed. The Lord is only merciful when convinced, but we should know better than old Mud-breath. We have had the text for millennia, though we have been reading in fear. We know our egos, our megalomaniac desires dressed up as opinions, but we still defer to them. Ego is a tool, but unchecked it expands and takes over. Knowledge of good and evil is no sin. Eve's sin was her inattentional blindness. 'And God said, Behold,' and Eve was told, but behold she did not. She became absorbed in the game, and didn't notice a gorilla striding onto court, pounding his chest. She missed the character switch, and so did we. Our tradition, though not necessarily the text, reports that the snake is the baddy and *YHVH* the goody, so

we miss the trick. The Lord stays on top, our authorities and urges dominate us, and there is enmity between man and his snake.⁸⁴

It is said that when *YHVH's* name is pronounced, the world will end. When the thinker pins down his own ego, limitations dissolve and the world collapses into boundless possibility. Within the frame, words are weighted, scenes are skewed, and memories are constructed. Decisions slice through chaos, carving out an Aristotelian maze where everything either **is** or **is not**, where every wall casts a shadow. We see the edge of an object as the extent of it, but the lines are only straight when we look straight at them. The next time we look, they are straight again, but in different places. The only thing fixed is a mind made up. Rules are straight and rigid; they cross each other, and they break at extremes. The Tao is soft and unbreakable, and it flows silently around obstacles.

Minds are mercifully changeable, but once something is said, it is fixed. Words coagulate, 'law' sticks to 'order', 'evil' to 'madman', 'scheming' to 'Jew', 'do not step' to 'on the grass'. It is bad enough with chunks of compacted philosophy floating clumsily through our neural networks, but when they get written down in Bibles and textbooks the whole system gets blocked, and streams of consciousness become stagnant lakes, gathering mind mosquitoes and itches and fevers. We are saved from complete monoculture of the mind by the snake's forked tongue, by different linguistic systems and interpretations channelling the stream in different directions, but all limit, and man struggles against his limitations, balancing expansion and dissolution with reason.

YHVH creates, Adam names, and the snake reconsiders, but behind the divisions, the universe is unified. Half-blind blasphemers, we think it is all over with Jehovah, but there is something more between the definitions. As the frame grows and the world becomes detailed, sticks that don't fit gradually become invisible. Children with their softer brains notice things the rest of us miss, and their naïve questions cut through our assumptions. Nearly a third have imaginary friends, as real to them as their 'real' friends.⁸⁵ Psychologists assume that these kids develop faster because they practice socialising with their illusions, but perhaps their friends really teach them, until the Scientific Inquisition lays concrete over them. Perhaps you would eventually filter out cockroaches if you were told to grow up and stop talking rubbish every time you mentioned them? The young Swedenborg had imaginary friends so wise that even his parents believed in them,⁸⁶ and they survived with him into adulthood. Jung had imaginary friends. Anyone who has a relationship with God has an imaginary friend (or is he real?). My cat used to chase her imaginary friends around the house,

often ignoring the cockroaches; she was a great witch's cats, but not much of a huntress. Spiritualists and ayahuasqueros have imaginary friends, but we learn to keep quiet about them, because communicating with dead people and archangels and luminous spheres from Sirius is what loonies do. It's all imaginary really, tables and potatoes and wedding rings, images imagined in the visual cortex. But are they true? They may exist, but who knows? We only know the names. We make it up as we go along, and we get so used to it that we can't imagine anything else.

Could it be different? Yes, my good people of the pews, it could. In the following sermon, we will see what we can learn from mental conditions that bend the frame, meditations that move the sticks around, and strange brews that dissolve the scaffolding.

Hold tight. The monkeys are shaking their cages.

Ω

1 *Sympathy for the Devil* - Rolling Stones

2 *John* 1:1

3 *Contemporary Readings in General Psychology* - Robert S. Daniel (Michigan, 1965) p. 193
I must admit a slight of hand here. Chimps have been observed stacking boxes to reach for a bunch of bananas, not to escape, but an escape in the ceiling makes for better poetry.

4 Saint Luis Zoo homepage

5 *Orangutan Cultures and the Evolution of Material Culture* - Carel P. van Schaik et al, *Science* January 3rd, 2003: Vol. 299. no. 5603, pp. 102 - 105

6 *Animals in Translation* p. 150

7 *Grammatical Man: Information, Entropy, Language and Life. The Story of the Modern Revolution in Human Thought* - Jeremy Campbell (Middlesex 1984)

8 *Genesis* 3:19

9 *Genesis* 3:7

10 *Genesis* 2:19

11 *Genesis* 2:17

12 *Genesis* 3: 4-5

13 *Genesis* 3:7

14 *Jeremiah* 24:2

15 *Exodus* 32

16 *Genesis* 3:6

17 *Genesis* 3:17

18 *Strong's Dictionary* H6191 & H6174

19 *Genesis* 2: 25

20 *Genesis* 11:7

21 *Exodus* 34:14

22 *Genesis* 3:9

APPENDICES

- 23 *Genesis* 3:11
- 24 *Leviticus* 19:14
- 25 *Jeremiah* 27:6
- 26 *Genesis* 1:1-22
- 27 *Genesis* 1:31
- 28 *Genesis* 2:1
- 29 *Genesis* 2:18
- 30 *Genesis* 1:29
- 31 *Genesis* 3: 4-5
- 32 *Genesis* 3:22-23
- 33 *Exodus* 13:18
- 34 *Exodus* 10:27
- 35 *Numbers* 16:1-32
- 36 *Numbers* 23-24
- 37 *Daniel* 1:2
- 38 *Daniel* 9:16
- 39 *Numbers* 27:16.
- 40 *Daniel* 5:23
- 41 *Genesis* 19:24
- 42 *Daniel* 2:21-22
- 43 *Genesis* 6:9
- 44 *Genesis* 5:24
- 45 *Genesis* 2:19
- 46 *Genesis* 5:2
- 47 *Genesis* 17:1-2
- 48 *Genesis* 17: 1-5
- 49 *Genesis* 32:24-29
- 50 *Genesis* 2:7
- 51 *Exodus* 33:11
- 52 *Exodus* 3:4
- 53 *Exodus* 6:2-3
- 54 *Exodus* 3:11-14
- 55 *II Kings*: 2:23
- 56 *The Zohar* 31:236
- 57 *Genesis* 18:22-25
- 58 *Exodus* 32:9
- 59 *Exodus* 32:10
- 60 *Exodus* 32:14
- 61 *II Kings*: 2:23
- 62 *Job* 13:15 (Hebrew Names Version)
- 63 *Arguing with God, Talmudic Discourse, and the Jewish Countermodel: Implications for the study of Argumentation* - David A. Frank in *Argumentation and Advocacy* 41 (Fall 2004): p. 74
- 64 *Exodus* 20:13
- 65 *Ecclesiastes* 3:1-3
- 66 *Numbers* 35:33,34
- 67 *The Guide of the Perplexed* - Moses Maimonedes
- 68 *Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship III* (Reform Synagogues of Great Britain 1994) p. 529
- 69 *Tractate Baba Metzia* 59a
- 70 Strong's Dictionary, H3045
- 71 *Deuteronomy* 4:44

NEMU'S END

- 72 *Talmud Yoma*, 72b
- 73 *Ezekiel* 20:25 - 26
- 74 *Encyclopedia of Religious Freedom* - Catherine Cookson (Taylor & Francis, 2003), p. 250
- 75 *Metaphysics* - Aristotle (W. D. Ross trans.) Book 4, part 7
- 76 *Matthew* 21:19
- 77 *Deuteronomy* 19:5
- 78 *Job* 13:15
- 79 *On the Generation of Animals* - Aristotle, chapter 5.
- 80 *Fuzzy Thinking* - Bart Kosko (Flamingo 1994) pp. 38-39
- 81 *Exodus* 32:14
- 82 *Numbers* 20:3
- 83 *Genesis* 3:5
- 84 *Genesis* 3:15
- 85 *Imaginary Companions and the Children Who Create Them* - Marjorie Taylor (Oxford, 1999) p. 32
- 86 *The Fortean Times*, November 2007, p. 41