

**THE MYTH OF ORIGINS**  
(English translation)

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## Foreword

Many of the human cultures that lived on Earth have had their own “myth of Creation” in which the origins of that particular culture, sometimes identified with all mankind, were described.

The myth of origins was the source of collective thought, metaphysics or religion of the people. What is the influence of the myth on a culture’s behaviour towards Nature? The myth has a deep influence on people’s lives, even if individuals are not aware of it: an individual *must* have that behaviour because he is determined by the culture in which he was born, with no care if he “does not believe” in the myth.

There is no question about *the truth* of the effects we are speaking about, nor about *the true* origin of the world and mankind. We are speaking about the *behaviour* and *attitude* of people.

The peoples who adopted Jewish-Christian traditions as shaped during the last fifteen centuries, that is, the roots of the Western and Islamic peoples, have a precise myth: Genesis, from the Old Testament of the Bible.

Some cultures/religions of Indian origin (i.e., Buddhism and Jainism) give little weight to *origin*, which also has small importance in Jesus’s teaching. Here we shall have no care at all about what *is true*, and maybe the question is nonsense.

There are many examples of the importance of the myth in many cultures, such as *Asmat* in New Guinea (the so-called head-hunters of the nineteenth century); the *Dogon* near Niger River, studied by anthropologist Marcel Griaule; many American native cultures; and many others.

So, the following modern world attitudes come from the Biblical Genesis:

- the overwhelming exploitation of all other living beings and Nature in general (*anthropocentrism*), which are viewed as *things* at humans’ service;
- the scorn of any different culture, that is derived from the “elected people” idea;
- the gap between *duty-work* and *free time-entertainment*;
- the ever-present weekly cycle: it is rather evident that a holiday-work continuous-cycle rotation would be much better to have a good utilization of any plant or structure.

Due to the first point, Western and Islamic cultures are not aware of the position our species has in Nature, that is, as a cell kind in an Organism: many other cultures have a good perception of this, even if it is often concealed under myths or religious taboos.

Neither Copernicus, nor biological evolution, nor Konrad Lorenz were enough to enable us to understand that the “Whole Life” is a unique phenomenon, and that the “centeredness of man” is a mistake that brought about the awful situation of the living Earth. It also brought about the death of fifty million babies by starvation every year. It is important to note that all the so-called “great opposite ideologies” of the last century have similar ideas on these questions.

The myth of origin is the main reason for the strong anthropocentrism of our culture: its mythical tale is like a weighty stone on every thought.

In a culture centered on a myth like Genesis, Descartes and Francis Bacon’s ideas were well accepted! They have made all these questions worse, by adding a “competition winner” idea to power and the rights of man.

We have known well the uniqueness of Life since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: but there are a lot of questions about the never-ending conservation of a few frozen cells (if *human* only!), when almost no people are interested in the survival of all the gorillas on Earth, or in the good health of the whole Earth!

If we want the Biosphere to be able to live again – and we as well – *we must be aware that we can never forget that any variation must keep a steady state for the whole Planet and preserve its homeostatic skill.*

The *myth of origins* of science is not free from the weighty influences of the culture in which it was born: it is not by chance that the *Big Bang* theory is on the wave when our culture has a kind of religious worship for growth and expansion. Then, it is a theory in which a beginning and an end are viewed, in the same way as the Judeo-Christian tradition.

I now report a piece of an article by Verrecchia, printed in the Italian daily newspaper *La Stampa* on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1986, in which the author tells about an interview with Austrian scientist Konrad Lorenz:

...At my answer about the question if animals are self-conscious, Konrad replied, with his typical fondly and fascinating speech: *“No serious people can be uncertain on this. I am really sure, repeat really, animals have a conscience, are fully conscious. Man is not alone in having a subjective interior life”*.

...Etology has well confirmed what Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno understood by his philosophy-genius, that is all living beings are various phenomena of an unique universal substance. They originate from the same metaphysical root: their difference is in quantity, not quality, or – in Kant expression – phenomenon, not noumenon.

...It is complete nonsense to consider man as completely apart from the animal world. The finding that animals are able to lie – for example some species of Alpine birds, but many other as well – has caused the end of the dogma that only man has the skill of abstract reflection.

Western philosophy is too absorbed in theology. This was also thought by Nietzsche, who was a kind of reverse priest. The evil exists from the beginning: *“Multiply yourselves, and fill up all the Earth, and conquer it: all sea fish and sky birds and all beasts will be under your mastering”*. So you can oppress, kill and do all you want to any other living being: is this the way for a God to speak? Can he not spare these words, after making such an evil being as man? Lorenz, after an historical exam, calls this order “satanic”.

What a feeling and deep difference from the Buddha’s words to his horse when he freed him: *“Go, you too are going to nirvana”*.

This tale could touch Schopenhauer or Wagner, but has no effect over our philosopher-theologians’ brains: they prefer Descartes, who thought that animals are only machines...”

Only in recent times was some correction tried, speaking about “a natural world assigned to man as its caretaker”, but I think Lorenz’s interpretation was correct: in a catholic version of the Bible (Marietti, 1970), we can read:

*God said: “I will make man in my image and similarity: he will have dominion over sea fish and sky birds, over beasts and any earth animal and all creeping snakes.”* (Genesis 1:26)

*...and God said: “Be fertile and multiply, fill all the Earth and subdue it with your dominion over sea fish and winged birds, over beasts and all animals on Earth.”* (Genesis 1:28)

*God blessed Noah and his sons and said: “Be fertile, multiply and fill up all the Earth. The fear and terror of you will be in all Earth animals and in all beasts and sky birds. Regarding creeping snakes and all sea fish, they are all under your power.”* (Genesis 9:1-2)

The concept is repeated three times, leaving no room for interpretive doubts! Konrad Lorenz is fully right: the idea of “good care” is completely missing in Genesis, besides the particular position given to man in the Genesis creation tale.

For people who feel “Christian”, but do not agree with any of the “Christian Churches” that (self-)claim to represent Judeo-Christian tradition, as born in the first centuries of our age, we note that no idea of Genesis and the Old Testament is in Jesus’ teaching.

### **Some traditions outside the West**

From an inspiring text of Hindu culture:

*Rivers flow to the west or to the east. They come from the Heavenly Ocean, and come back to the Ocean, they become the same Ocean itself. Water cannot remember which river it was: in the same way living beings, coming from Being, don't know their own origin. Any living being they were on Earth – man, tiger, lion, wolf, worm or butterfly – they exist forever as Tat.\* This thin entity is everywhere in the Universe, it is reality, it is You. (Chandoya Upanishad, 10<sup>th</sup> khanda)*

A deep difference from Genesis is very clear.

The following statements are taken from the Italian version of the book *Buddhism: A Quest for Unity and Peace* by Johan Galtung (1993):

*Tenets of anatta are essential in Buddhism. According to this, there is no individual or permanent soul. Rather, something impermanent or in continuous change is present. It could be a kind of collective soul in the Western meaning: an empathy with other sentient beings wherever they are. Only the great emphasis on the individual, on a unique self, particular and apart, proper by the West, is a guarantee of an eternal life. Anatta can include a feeling of transpersonal unity with all other sentient beings crossing any kind of border with all nature, not exclusively with other animal....*

*The general Western trend is to see connections in a competitive way, likely “I win, you lose” or vice versa. In Buddhism the chance to grow, or decrease, together, is very strong, because of the binding among beings. The network among them is more important than individuals, as the network and pattern are more important than knots.*

We read in the same Galtung book the following statements about Nature, told by representatives of five religions (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist) during a meeting in 1986:

*...The representatives of these religions have found the best for their attitude to Nature in their books, for that opportunity: it's interesting to note a East-West line that is clearly favorable to East on this viewpoint. Only the Buddhist statement speaks about “non-human beings” like us: they too are “sensing happiness and pain”. In Jewish statement there's no reference at all to Nature, but only the concept that Earth is a finite planet, recommending a scientific approach for man's welfare. In Christian and Muslim statement man is the care-taker of Earth as a part of God mind: there's no doubt that man is greatly over nature, not on the same level. Hindu statement is a middle way between Westerner and Buddhist ones.*

It's clear that traditions with a great gap between man and nature, and very similar philosophical viewpoints, are inspired by the Genesis tale.

Also in the above mentioned book: Christianity is intended to convey the present Judeo-Christian tradition and not only the tenets inspired by the original teachings of Christ, which were more similar to Buddhism (“compassion/love to all sentient beings”).

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\* The Sanskrit word for “that”. It is used for the primeval substance that is everything and appears as psychis, matter, energy.

The following statement is shared from the book *Buddhism and Ecology* (1992) by Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown (Chapter three):

*To discharge the guilt of pollution, degradation, etc. to industry or political people, as we do, is only an instinctual reaction of our mind, that is acquainted with dualism and divides the world into innocent and guilty. But, if we are in the same gap illusions, we too are responsible, because we maintain a worldview that causes all these problems.*

A last thought about the idea our world thinks of as “proper of human nature”:

The actual attitude in the Western culture is to act, modify, leave one’s mark on history, change the world, to be the first, to gain remembrance in the future, and so on.

What a difference from this thought from a Native American culture:

**A person must never leave marks so deep that the wind can’t erase.**