

INTRODUCTION TO THE THREE DISCOURSES AT THE WORLD EXPOSITION EXPO 2000 HANOVER “HUMANKIND, NATURE, TECHNOLOGY”

Why is it meaningful to conduct a Discourse of the World Religions at the 2000 World Exposition in Hanover, Germany? The multiplicity of religions is an outrage for those who are not religious and a problem for those who are. The former see in this multiplicity only a source of never-ending conflicts, which lead to nothing but new conflicts. It appears to non-religious persons, therefore, that the enlightenment of the human race requires destroying the entire nightmare of religions. Religious persons, on the other hand, recognize a problem in the multiplicity of religions, an unnatural, forced situation that calls their own faith into question. How can God permit a state of the world in which there exist groups of people, each including hundreds of millions of members, which understand and invoke him by completely different names? How can the one God be venerated by people in completely different ways, when he is the Lord of the world and the Lord of history? It seems that, as the Lord of history, he should have hindered the development of a situation in which there could be as many different convictions about his name and his nature as the multiplicity and diversity of the world religions has produced.

Within the multiplicity of religions there exists a theodicy problem: How can the situation of the multiplicity of religions in the world be compatible with the conviction that God is omnipotent and morally perfect? Two theodicy questions for the theology of religion arise from the multiplicity of the world religions. Both the radically exclusive conviction that only one of the existing religions is true and the radically inclusive view that all religions represent merely traces of the truth raise the theodicy question of why God permits the multiplicity and diversity of religions in the world.

If one is convinced that there is only one true religion, that poses the question of how the omnipotent God can permit so many people to be ignorant of that fact and to belong to other, heterodox faiths. If, on the contrary, one is convinced that all religions are merely traces of the truth, one must explain why God does not reveal himself to humanity as himself, why he hides himself so much that none of the existing religions is his full revelation. One must then ascribe to him, as Severus of Antioch in antiquity and Hegel in the nineteenth century already have, jealousy and a will not to reveal himself.

Since the multiplicity of religions is outrageous for those who are not reli-

gious and vexing for those who are, both groups would gladly be rid of the multiplicity of religions in the world, the former by the abolition of religion entirely and the latter by superseding all other religions by their own or by separating the world religions according to world regions: Each religion would receive a corner of the world, and there would be as little exchange as possible between them.

A world exposition worthy of its name must by definition be the opposite of this latter solution. In order to represent the world as it is, it must portray the multiplicity of religions on its grounds. And if it is really to bring the people of the world together, it must bring together the world religions, because hardly anything shapes the character of the world's people, their interpretations of existence and the structure of their lives, as much as their religions. A world exposition that truly wishes to address what is on humanity's mind, cannot disregard the problem of the multiplicity of the great religions. It can exclude this question in the face of neither the critics nor the friends of religion. It must make its contribution toward defusing the conflicts among religions for secular people just as much as toward promoting genuine dialogue among religious people of different faiths.

A dialogue of the religions is also unavoidable for another reason. The globalization of our life-world no longer permits the solution that each religion may determine the character of its own region and be the mistress of the religious house there – the principle *cuius regio, eius religio* – according to which the coexistence of the different confessions was regulated in Germany after the Reformation. The present globalization goes beyond the internationalization of previous decades. We no longer live and produce as nations for the international market; we live in nations that are determined by more than a religious and cultural tradition, and we produce intellectually and economically within a global context with contributions from many regions of the world. Our economic and intellectual life is increasingly characterized not only by international, but also by global exchange, which necessarily leads to a global encounter of the religions. Supporting this global conversation of the religions of the world at the 2000 World Exposition in Hanover was the wish and the intention of the three EXPO Discourses at the World Exposition in the year 2000.

To expand this conversation beyond the personal meeting of persons at the World Exposition to a worldwide exchange between authors and readers is the wish and intention of this series A Discourse of the World Religions.

P. K.

NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE RELIGIONS

Peter Koslowski

The World Exposition EXPO 2000 in Hanover adopted as its theme the relationships of humanity to nature and technology. This suggested making “nature and technology” a central theme of the inter-religious and “inter-philosophical” dialogue of the project Discourse of the World Religions before and during the World Exposition. The reasons for the occasion of the World Exposition and the systematic reasons for the centrality of the theme coincided. For the relationship of humans to nature is a central object of religious doctrine and ethics in all world religions. Since the religions respond to the neediness of human life, they cannot ignore the cause of this neediness, the tense relationship between the needs of our lives and the scope of the means in nature at our disposal. They cannot avoid addressing the relationship of the human person to nature and to technology as a means of increasing the yield from nature.

Technology and the economy are, as Friedrich von Gottl-Ottlilienfeld has shown, a means of liberating human beings from their predicament, from the predicaments of external nature and the predicaments of social dependence.¹ Both aim at the productive resolution of the predicament and thus at order: “According to their idea, consequently, the economy is order in the actions of meeting needs and technology is order in the carrying out of these actions.”² The order in the economy and the order in technology are part of the order of life and thus of the order of the religions and cannot possibly stand outside the life orders conceived and determined by the religions.

In addition to the practical, religiously-influenced, even if not religiously-determined relationship of the human race to nature in the economy and technology, there is also the relationship of humankind to nature that is religious in the narrower sense. Nature is venerated in the nature mysticism of the religions; it is elevated in cult and rite. The “Last Supper” and the Eucharist of Christianity are examples, as natural nourishment is elevated to the level of spiritual nourishment. Nature is seen in the religions as the mystery through which the higher world shines into the lower. For the world religions, the natural is the beginning

¹ Cf. Friedrich von Gottl-Ottlilienfeld, *Grundriß der Sozialökonomik, II. Abteilung: Die natürlichen und technischen Beziehungen der Wirtschaft, Teil 2: Wirtschaft und Technik*, 2nd Rev. Ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1923; repr. Frankfurt: Keip, 1985), p. 10.

² Ibid.

of the supernatural – not a beginning that can simply be left behind idealistically in the ascent to spirituality, but one that also has normative meaning in this life. Thus the importance of the body in all religions, in the Western tradition in Judaism and Christianity, but also in the Eastern traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as in Islam, which stands between East and West. The natural can be seen as a bridge to the spiritual in the significance of the garden and of bodily concentration exercises in Buddhism.

Paradoxically, the world religions, which attach special significance to eternal life or life after death, also place great value upon careful treatment of the physical nature of human persons and the natural environment that surrounds them in the life before death, whereas the secular Western world, which denies life after death, attaches less importance to the normativeness of traditional nature and subjects it to being completely at the disposal of human beings and their technology. This development is consistent with Max Weber's thesis that the end of nature mysticism and the veneration of nature, brought about by Protestantism, has brought about the modern domination of nature through technology.

1. Technology as Compensation for the Human Person as a Needy Creature and as Reform of Nature in the Religions

1.1. THE CONTINGENCY OF THE CREATION IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM: GOD AS THE MAKER OF NATURE AND HUMANS AS HIS CO-WORKERS

For Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the dialectic of availability and reverence of nature is characteristic. Nature is, on one hand, given to human rule by the commission to rule over nature in the biblical creation account,³ and it is at the same time withdrawn from humans and not given over completely to their disposal, because it is the creation of a personal being, of the personal God. The human person must instead respect the prerogative of the true creator and owner of nature, according to the religious world view, and prove to be a vassal, a trustee and caretaker in the stewardship of nature. In addition, there is a second idea, which likewise leads to the characteristic dialectic of veneration of nature and distance from nature in Judaism and Christianity: the idea of the difference *and* connectedness of the creator and the creation, the author and the work, which is characteristic of the theological idea of creation. The Jewish, Christian, and also Islamic doctrines of creation are essential poetic and thereby technomorphic.

³ Cf. the contributions by Micha Brumlik and Asghar Ali Engineer to this volume.

Even if the creation contains a technomorphic element through God, this does not imply that God is a technician. God cannot be a technician, because there is no universal technology of the creation of worlds. Because there is no technology of creation, God is not given any technology that existed before him or that he himself created. Since God created only one time, he needs no technology and also creates no technology of creation, because one does not create technology for a creative occurrence that occurs only one time: there is no technology for a singular event.⁴

According to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, God makes the creation and he is the artist who both realizes himself in his work and is different from it in his substance and is not dependent upon it. He does not realize himself in his nature through his work, as Hegelianism and pantheism assume. The relationship of God and the world, creator and creation, is a relationship of subject and object, but neither a relationship of separation⁵ nor one of the identity of subject and object, in which the subject God would be increasingly identical with his object, the world, as the identity-philosophers Hegel and Schelling assume.

The distinction, but not separation, of creator and creation anticipates the distinction of human producer and product, of the subjectivity of the human person and the objectivity of that which is produced, which is characteristic of every act of technological production. The producer does not first become conscious of himself and his spirit through his work on the object, as the elevation of the subject-object relationship in Hegel's logic assumes, but is instead already previously conscious and can create only because he is already conscious.⁶

The poietic analogy or analogy of poiesis, which considers the creation of nature to be something made and produced by a person, leads to a distancing of the human person from nature, because it is interpreted as a produced object and as a work that could also not exist, if its creator had chosen not to produce it. The idea of nature as creation means that nature possesses the mark of the contingent, of the non-necessary and non-eternal. Nature as creation is non-necessary and non-eternal, because it is not rooted in necessity, but in the freedom of the creative will of God, and it is not eternal and beginningless, but has its beginning in the six-day work of God, the *opus six dierum*, even if it is also created for eternity as the creation of God. The contingency of the creation in the will of the creator relativizes the holiness of nature in Judaism and Christianity: Nature could also not exist.

⁴ Cf. D. P. Chattopadhyaya in this volume, p. 91.

⁵ Cf. below Francis X. D'Sa, who brings out that the world is not an external object for God as its Creator.

⁶ On the theory of creation, see Peter Koslowski, *Philosophien der Offenbarung: Antiker Gnostizismus, Franz von Baader, Schelling* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2001), pp. 329-52 and 772-86.

The contingency of the creation is strengthened by its original state of being created for human beings. Already before the fall, nature is completed only by the collaboration of the human person in God's work of creation: God brought, as the creation account of Genesis 2,19 reads "every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens" to the man, so that he could name them: "And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name." With this sentence in the Yahwist creation account, the central, original collaboration of the human in the creation is expressed, which Judaism, Christianity, and also Islam accept already before the fall. The three ideas, the separation of creation and creature, the idea that the human person was created in the image of God and, therefore, according to his purpose, as likewise a creative being, and the idea that the human person is to participate in the work of creation bring about the distinction of man and nature and the dominant position of the human person relative to nature. This dominant position is not directed against nature. It implies, however, power and rule over nature.

Power can in turn be either good or bad rule. It does not necessarily decay into exploitation. Power is in danger of corrupting, great power is in great danger of corrupting. This is also true of human power over nature. The human person was corrupted by his power over nature and did not comply with his dominant position, thus read the theosophical interpretations of the biblical fall. The human person did not fall because of haughtiness and arrogance, but because of malice and laziness. He wanted to be like nature and, therefore, not to comply with his position as ruler over nature.

The biblical religions advocate the dominant position of the human person and his rule over nature. The relationship to nature determined by them is, therefore, subject to the ambivalence of the rule of nature and the danger of the non-respect of nature – perhaps to a greater degree than the nature relationship of Hinduism and Buddhism, which do not recognize the idea of the distinction of creator and nature and the idea of the contingency of creation to the same extent. There are, to be sure, traditions of Hinduism that also include a doctrine of creation.

Why is the idea of the collaboration of man in the creation so central to Judaism and Christianity? Why does the creator grant his creature, humanity, so much collaboration in the creation already before the fall? Man cannot make the creation better than the Creator himself; and it also reads that God saw that what he had made was good. Thus, the original collaboration of man in the creation must belong to that which was good in it. One cannot say more about the reasons that may have induced the Creator to will the collaboration of the creature.

1.2. TECHNOLOGY AS CONSEQUENCE OF AND COMPENSATION FOR THE FALL IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The doctrine of the fall, which occurred because man did not comply with his position, further strengthens the element of the collaboration of human persons in the creation – both by the idea that nature was changed for the worse by the fall of man and by the idea that the human person became through the fall a creature of deficiencies, who must himself remedy the deficits that he brought about in the world and himself by the effort of work and technology, as well as by the collaborative help of God: The human person has damaged nature and must now improve it with God's and his own help. Thus, the fall and the origin of technology move closely together. Technology became the prosthesis of fallen man, and he seeks with its help to compensate the deficiencies that he has caused for himself and nature by his fall. The fall is the *felix culpa* of technology. It has produced the deficient being man and the deficits of nature, which man will now heal by technology itself. Technology becomes, therefore, a component of the realization of the common good of the human race and the welfare of the human individual.

One can say with Friedrich Dessauer that God as it were continues the creation by means of technology.⁷ Technology stands at the service of the realization of the creation and “the idea of technology is the idea of service” according to Dessauer.⁸ At the same time, technology receives a dimension of historicity through the idea that it is compensation for deficiencies that have entered into the creation: It is a consequence of an historical fall and it should contribute to the realization of the common good in history in the historicity that entered through the fall.

This emphasis on historicity, the emphasis on historical revelation and the related thesis that divine revelation completes itself despite and through the fall, original sin, and historicity, as well as through the progress of humanity and technology, distinguishes Judaism and Christianity, so it appears, from the other religion that also recognizes its origin in the Bible: Islam. In Islam the verbal revelation of Allah in the Quran is more important than the historical revelation of God in and through history. This difference between Judaism and Christianity, on one hand, and Islam, on the other, can perhaps also explain the different degrees of the realization of technology in Islam and in Judaism and Christianity. In the culture of the West shaped by Christianity and Judaism, technology is an historical force of the compensation of deficiency and an element of the realization of the common good.

⁷ Friedrich Dessauer, *Philosophie der Technik: Das Problem der Realisierung* (Bonn: Cohen, 1927), p. 86. The 5th Edition is entitled *Streit um die Technik* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1956).

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 131ff.

HUMANKIND'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS OF CREATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY IN THE VIEW OF JUDAISM

Micha Brumlik

1. Western Critique of Judaism

The Church Father Tertullian (160-225), like many others who wished to strengthen the orthodox faith of the Church, was concerned with currents in the emerging Church considered to be heretical, including the doctrine (effective at the time of Hadrian) of Marcion, who made a distinction between the Christ of the Gospels and “the one whom the Creator God destined for transferring Judaism into its last state and who will someday return.” The Gnostic critique of the Creator God of the Hebrew Bible has a history of nearly two thousand years and lives on a Platonic motif, which in this tradition was read contrary to its original sense. In the *Timaeus*, in the speech of the dialogue participant with the same name, Plato develops an extensive cosmic speculation, in which a creator with the name of “demiurge” creates the cosmos in accordance with present examples or models, according to the discipline of a craftsman. Finding this originator and father of the universe would be just as difficult as making him known. Gnostic speculation later identified this demiurge with the Creator God of the Hebrew Bible, but also concluded from the experience of evil in the world that its creator must have been malicious. This idea-figure shaped all of Western history up to Martin Heidegger, who postulated a God who should liberate existing entities from the abuse of the machinations. Possibly, the identification of the Creator God and the merely technically-effective demiurge led to an anti-Judaic idea-figure in such a way that the God of the Hebrew Bible and those who professed him, the Jews, became the initiators of a process of domination, according to which human beings are the enemies of nature.

The young Hegel's critique of Judaism is along these lines. The positivity of (Jewish) religion, which Hegel, with thoroughly historical concepts, again and again calls “condition” (*Zustand*), assumes the characteristic of a super-historical, persisting condition in his analysis. The character of Judaism reveals itself from the beginning of its history, which Hegel, like the Jewish tradition itself, begins with Abraham. Abraham's struggles, defeats, and triumphs bear

witness to the history of an independence without love, of the will to an independence that seeks a new home, completely without resentment, without being insulted and expelled. Hegel attempts to find evidence in Abraham's life of a fundamental rejection of nature – in the details of his nomadic existence, in his alleged inability to cultivate and improve the appearance of the land on which he grazed, in his digging of wells and quarrels over pastures, in his unwillingness to bless the places where God appeared to him – an attitude for which Hegel also reproached historical Christianity, with its eradication of Germanic religion.¹ Abraham was “a stranger upon the earth,”² and if his character shaped the character of his nation, it is also true of the Jewish nation that its attitude toward the world is fundamentally one of alienation. Since Hegel, in selective reading of the Old Testament, lets the creation story begin only with the Flood, the world and nature become simply an opposing principle for Abraham, something “carried by a foreign God,”³ Abraham's will to independence and freedom, tied to an indifference towards nature as his place of origin and home, which results from the renunciation of love, leads to his subjugation of it, and leaves him with nothing more from this world than the means of subsistence, in order to let everything else become unimportant, and to place him in security with respect to it.⁴ Therefore, according to Hegel, nature becomes the infinite object and the relationship to it necessarily becomes one of “domination” (*Beherrschung*). Thus the young Hegel already conceived a “dialectic of enlightenment” as the domination of nature, and explained it in terms of the Jewish relationship to God.⁵ Hegel paid tribute here to a Romantic *Zeitgeist*. The rediscovery of nature as a moral principle, the growing critique of Kant's moralism, and the rejection of Jacobinism and its terrorist crowds let Hegel construe the biblical Abraham as a precursor of the “absolute freedom” that was criticized later in phenomenology. Abraham – that is the epitome of the renunciation of love! The discussion of the sacrifice of Isaac, which began with Kant and was repeated again and again from Kierkegaard to Derrida,⁶ finds a first high point with Hegel:

He could love nothing, even the only love that he had, for his son and his hope of posterity, the only way to extend his existence, the only kind of immortality that

¹ G. W. F. Hegel, “Frühe Schriften,” in Hegel, *Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp), Vol. I, p. 197.

² *Ibid.*, p. 278.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁵ C. Jamme, “Jedes Lieblose ist Gewalt: Der junge Hegel, Hölderlin und die Dialektik der Aufklärung,” in C. Jamme and H. Schneider, eds., *Der Weg zum System: Materialien zum jungen Hegel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990), pp. 130-71.

⁶ S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); J. Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. D. Willis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

he knew and hoped for, could force him, disturb his disposition of self-isolation from everything, and set it in unrest. This went so far one time that he also wanted to destroy this love and was reassured only through the awareness of the feeling that this love was only strong enough to allow him the ability to slaughter the beloved son with his own hand.⁷

Abraham's love, which the young Hegel understood to be the typical Jewish kind of love, is self-seeking, related only to the extension or preservation of one's own person. This selfishness terminates in contempt of the world and nature, in – one could say – a universalism of negation, which necessarily led to the conviction that one's own God was not only the nearest and favored God, but also the only God, and consequently that the Jews were the only people who had a God at all.

The autonomy based on self-seeking independence, with the renunciation of love, worked itself out further for Hegel in the liberation experience that should be characterized not only for the Western religions, but also for the freedom semantics of modernity, the Exodus story. Consistently with his presuppositions, however, Hegel can tell this story as nothing other than a failure. It will be obvious to anyone with a sense of history, however, that the fallacious interpretation of the Exodus as an unsuccessful emancipation story does justice neither to the biblical liberation experience nor to modern emancipation thinking. To be sure, if it is permissible to read the "Exodus" positively as a great story of modern liberation,⁸ it is also fundamentally legitimate to depict it as a story of unsuccessful emancipation. Accordingly, the legislation imposed by Moses on the Israelites was supported by a principle that permitted only a servile consciousness of reward and punishment to be taught.

The varying – sometimes criticizing, sometimes praising – assessment of this idea of God does not permit the problematic nature of its basic structure to be forgotten:

The infinite object, the epitome of all truth and all relationships, thus actually the only infinite subject, since it can be called an object insofar as the human person with his given life is presupposed and is called the living, the absolute subject – the only synthesis and the antitheses, so to speak, are the Jewish people, on one hand, and the entire remainder of the human race and the world, on the other hand.⁹

Since Hegel took biblical creation theology seriously, the God worshiped as infinite becomes the infinite, living – and in addition the only – subject, in contrast to everything finite, and becomes at the same time void, something that is

⁷ Hegel, p. 279.

⁸ M. Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

⁹ Hegel, p. 283.

“without content and empty, without life, not even dead.”¹⁰ Hegel, therefore, attempts nothing less than a speculative derivation of the “soul of the Jewish nationality, of the *odium generis humani*.”¹¹ The identification of the Jews with the infinite, living God devalues the world and the human persons living in it and leaves them with no relationship to this environment other than that of physical dependence, which weakens its own life to the level of bestial existence. God’s guarantee of a secure life in the promised land does not go beyond it. The “eternal” values of honor, freedom, and beauty had to remain foreign to the Jews, because of their banishment by the infinite. Moses impressed his seal on this God relationship: “He brought the idea of himself before the servile spirit, the fear of physical power.”¹² Hegel does not grow weary of describing dependency and servitude as basic features of the Jewish relationship to God, the world, and human persons.

2. Judaism and Creation

It actually belongs to the liturgical obligations of devout Jews on Friday evenings to commemorate the creation of the world and the liberation from Egypt at the same time in blessings:

Blessed art thou, the Eternal, our God, King of the Universe, who hath sanctified us with his commandments, and found pleasure in us, and caused us to inherit his holy Sabbath in love and favor, as a memorial of the work of creation; for that day ranks first amongst the holy convocations in remembrance of the departure from Egypt....

The two events, creation and liberation, are related to one another and can be neither conceived nor understood apart from one another. Therefore, any perspective that would oppose the creation of the world and redemption or grace to one another is ruled out from the start. On the contrary, the liberation story sheds light on the creation, while the good of the creation willed by God attests the possibility of liberation.

Although thus – indisputably – God’s action in the Book of Genesis is portrayed according to the model of the productive craftsman, or even of the ruler enjoining through his commanding word, it can be seen that the relationship to the world and to nature developed there is not one of instrumental rationality. Appropriate critique has oriented itself above all to the command of God in Genesis 1,28 of a fruitful human race according to his will, translated by Luther

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 288.

thus: “And God blessed them and said to them: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subjugate it.” (“*Und Gott segnete sie und sprach zu ihnen: Seid fruchtbar und mehrt euch und füllt die Erde und macht sie euch untertan.*”) In the German translation by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, which is more faithful to the spirit of the Hebrew language, the same verse reads: “God blessed them, God said to them: Be fruitful and multiply and fill this earth and make it yours.” (“*Gott segnete sie, Gott sprach zu ihnen: Fruchtet und mehr euch und füllt diese Erde und bemächtigt Euch ihrer.*”) The Hebrew word for “subjugate” (German, *untertan machen*) is *kibschu*, which literally means “conquer.” The “earth” spoken of here is characterized in the Hebrew as *haaretz*, which means “land” in contrast to “sky” and “ocean.” Thus, translated literally, the humans are told to conquer the land and then, in the continuation of the verse, to expel fish and birds. Buber and Rosenzweig translate this as “Rule over the fish of the sea” (“*Schaltet über das Fischvolk des Meeres*”). The Greek-language Septuagint – originating in Alexandria in the second century B.C. – translates the Hebrew *kibschu* with *katakryieusate*, which means “subdue” (German, *unterwerfen*).

Thus it can be determined as a first result that the accusation of a technological seizure of the earth by the commission of the Creator God, recited from Luther until the civilization critique of the 1920s and 1930s, even widely until the end of the twentieth century, is to be attributed either to malicious misunderstanding or to mistranslation. The experiences of hydraulic, water-building societies of the Middle East in the first half of the first millennium B.C., particularly in Babylon, in which the Book of Genesis probably originated in the sixth century B.C., are fundamentally different from those of a Hellenistic – Egyptian large city, such as Alexandria in the second century. While *kibschu* names an extremely concrete process of settlement – for instance, taking land and building dikes along the North Sea – the Greek *katakryieusate* actually identifies a social relationship: after all, *kyrios* was the monarchical epithet not only of Zeus as king of a hierarchy of gods, but also as the lord of marriage, as well as the kingly sovereign over a territory. It must be admitted, of course, that the medieval Jewish exegesis, fed by Talmudic traditions, still followed the sovereignty model. Thus the commentator Raschi (1040-1105) of Worms, in relation to the Talmudic and midraschic sources, interpreted *kibschu*: “to teach you that the man rules over the wife, that she not always leaves the house; and furthermore to teach you that the man, whose role is to rule, not the wife, is obligated to reproduction.”¹³

Terms of technological-poietic acts in the narrower sense are found in the Book of Genesis primarily in the story of the creation of the humans and the genealogical stories of Cain and his descendants.

¹³ Raschi, *Kommentar zum Pentateuch*, (Basel: Goldschmidt, 1975), p. 5.

THE WORLD AS CREATION AND CREATION AS A COSMOTHEANDRIC REALITY IN CHRISTIANITY

Francis X. D'Sa

1. Introduction

Every religious tradition is characterized by a specific understanding of the three realms: God, World, and Human. But not every tradition (for example, the religions of the Adivasis, Aborigines of India) reflects thematically on them. Thus the Adivasi religions speak uninhibitedly of the World, Humans, and of the Highest Mystery. They see no problem in this, because they still live in a world of faith. The world of faith is so obvious and immediate to them that it is the perspective, though non-thematic, in which they experience, understand, and act. In such a case it is the world of faith that gives meaning; but as a matter of fact reflection does not belong to their horizon of meaning. The experience of faith is normative, on the one hand; but reflection on the world of faith is missing, on the other. The strength of such traditions is the immediacy of their faith-world. Their weakness, however, lies in the danger that they are not able to distinguish between faith and belief.

But the case is different with religious traditions where reflection plays an important role. A tradition of reflection testifies to the fact that the world of faith is no longer the centre of that tradition and that in some cases it is not always operative. In such cases reflection encounters the world of faith as a subject encounters its object. Reflection constitutes the centre, which poses questions and doubts, but the immediacy of the world of faith is conspicuous by its absence. Reflection demands that the world of faith give an account and a justification for its faith. Faith here is no longer taken for granted. The strength of such traditions lies in the fact that they discern before they believe. Their weakness lies in the fact that their reflection concerns beliefs, and so are not in contact with faith. The danger is that their exclusive concentration is on beliefs.

Besides that, there has to be a hermeneutic dimension in a mature tradition of reflection. Without a hermeneutic consciousness there is danger that religion gets caught up in the realm of reason. A hermeneutic accompaniment protects it from such a danger and sees to it that reflection constantly strives towards the wholeness of being-in-the-world. It does this by reminding us of the diverse presuppositions of being and thinking. The presuppositions of humans and their

cultures are different; the same culture manifests in the course of its history different presuppositions. Because of this, the same thing is understood differently. This explains not only why there are different interpretations of the same religion, but also why it has to be so.

2. The Significance of the Belief in Creation

Most of the Christian traditions are reflection-traditions. To a great extent they are occupied with beliefs. They try to understand and explain everything, i.e. God, World, and Humans, from the viewpoint of their beliefs. Their beliefs are products of their Scripture and Tradition. The Christian tradition to which I belong has much to do with the Western tradition. In what follows, I wish to highlight the specificity of this tradition.

2.1. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CREATOR AND CREATION IS UNBRIDGEABLE

The Semitic traditions lay stress on the difference between Creator and created. The biblical tradition perceived itself as surrounded by divinizing personifications of natural forces and so distanced itself from any kind of divinization of nature. It did not tolerate any exception and regarded any failing in this respect as the greatest sin. When such failing did occur, the punishment was so severe that in the course of time the temptation became gradually weaker.¹ The first and greatest commandment of the biblical traditions highlights God's sovereignty unambiguously. The first commandment is the first, not because of the numerical order, but because it is the most important commandment. The chasm between God and creation was so exaggerated that it was in danger of separating God and creation. Major problems were connected with this. It is important to note that the difference between Creator and creation in the biblical traditions is unbridgeable.

This distinction was taken so seriously that it has gravely affected the Christian tradition. It appears that in the course of time it even affected the epistemological process. It is true that complex factors led to the separation of Creator and creation. However, the distinction between Creator and creation seems to have become the occasion for the separation of the knowing subject from the object that is to be known. The misunderstood distinction between Creator and creation appears to have been the prototype, as it were, for the distinction between Subject and Object. This in turn seems to have led to a metaphysics of Subject and Object. On such a metaphysics rests the whole realm of the

¹ Exodus 32.

sciences.

We know that history is not a linear, logical process. It has its own dynamic, which does not respect human intentions. Complex combinations of happenings, which no computer programme, however clever, could decipher, bring forth processes that determine the course of history. In such a history the environmental crisis is the world-expression of the separation of subject and object, where humans behave as subjects and treat the world as object. In spite of the appearance that the biblical tradition is responsible for this, it is important to look at the historical processes in order to find out what is to be done.

The subject-object perspective, which in itself is valid in a limited area, has come to determine today the whole realm of the epistemological process. What is reality, how do we reach reality, and which kind of knowledge is valid, are being determined by a scientific mentality that overlooks, neglects, or even denies the most important areas of being.²

No one, whether scientist or a simple soul, can deny that our being-in-the-world is primarily an experience of our limitedness. Limitedness means that there are areas in life that we cannot manipulate at our pleasure. The Ultimate escapes us; we do not have the last word. The acknowledgement of the experience of limit is, ontologically speaking, nothing other than the acknowledgement of our total dependence. Total dependence may sound abstract; what is in effect experienced, however, is our limitedness on the ontological level and our vulnerability on the psychological level.

The acknowledgement of our limitedness, I submit, has to do with the first commandment. Not only our experience and our activity are limited; there is also something beyond our experience and activity, however we may name it, which we cannot control. The first commandment demands an acknowledgement of this realm, without which humans would have a fundamentally wrong self-understanding. Since any self-understanding has to do with meaning in life, the role of a right self-understanding cannot be underestimated. Hence one must not behave as if this were unimportant or irrelevant. True, religion and philosophy concentrate *ex professo* on this field. Still, it is fitting that humans concern themselves with and think about meaning in life. For it is a matter that has to do with the highest values and their role in life, where a one-sided scientific mentality cannot be of service.

² H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Method: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, 4th Ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1974), p. xxvii: "Das Phänomen des Verstehens durchzieht nicht nur alle menschlichen Weltbezüge. Es hat auch innerhalb der Wissenschaft selbständige Geltung und widersetzt sich dem Versuch, sich in eine Methode der Wissenschaft umdeuten zu lassen. Die folgenden Untersuchungen knüpfen an diesen Widerstand an, der sich innerhalb der modernen Wissenschaft gegen den universalen Anspruch wissenschaftlicher Methode behauptet. Ihr Anliegen ist, Erfahrung von Wahrheit, die den Kontrollbereich wissenschaftlicher Methodik übersteigt, überall aufzusuchen, wo sie begegnet und auf die ihr eigene Legitimation zu befragen."

2.2. CREATION MEANS TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON THE GOD OF CREATION

Being created means being totally dependent upon God and God's Word and God's Presence. There is no area in which a creature would be self-dependent and independent of God. Creation means a complete, total in every respect dependence on the God of Creation. To believe in God means nothing else but to believe in the God of Creation. In the biblical tradition God is always the God of Creation. In other words, Creation means that God, no other divinity, is really the Life of all that is created. With Hans Kessler, we can formulate it thus: God is the one, without whom there is nothing.³ This implies a very close relation between Creator and Creation. The existence of every single creature is a pure gift of the Creator. No creature can give itself existence, much less keep itself in existence. Creation in its very depths is dependent on the Creator.⁴

The other side of the belief in creation refers to the fact that all creatures are intimately connected with one another. Creation is a living unity in diversity. A human being, to say nothing of other creatures, can do nothing by him/herself. Not only breath, but every aspect of all life is the result of this belonging together. Appearances to the contrary, not even our breathing in and breathing out is a human achievement. We can breathe in and out, because it is made possible through mutual interdependence and belongingness.⁵ Humans as trustees carry responsibility for the maintenance of this belongingness; they have to see to it that it is in no way destroyed.

Right up to our times, the biblical traditions have been blamed for the fact that humans have "subdued" the earth. For has not the Bible revealed the unambiguous command of God: "Subdue the earth, rule over the animals" (Gen 1, 26-28)?⁶ A refutation of such views would be out of place in this paper; it would disrupt its whole scheme. It is enough to point out that serious studies

³ H. Kessler, *Das Stöhnen der Natur: Pläydoyer für eine Schöpfungsspiritualität und Schöpfungsethik* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1990), p. 52.

⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, "Schöpfung," *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd Ed., Vol. 9, 1967, p. 464: "Die Totalabhängigkeit, in der das geschaffene Sein, sofern es Sein hat, dem Schöpfer zugeordnet bleibt, wird von der traditionellen Theologie als 'Erhaltung' der Schöpfung bezeichnet, deren konkrete Bedeutung in der Lehre von der Mitwirkung Gottes näher durchreflektiert wird."

⁵ H. Kessler, *Das Stöhnen der Natur*, p. 54 emphasizes that the human person is created in solidarity with all beings. He also cites the more recent literature, which has worked out the details of this aspect. The overemphasized anthropocentricity of the earlier Christian interpretations of creation makes room today for a solidarity of the human person with creation in its entirety. The anthropocentric tendency of Walter Kern is exemplary. See his "Zur theologischen Auslegung des Schöpfungsglaubens," in J. Feiner and M. Löhrer, eds., *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, Vol. II (Einsiedeln/Zürich/Köln: Benziger, 1967), pp. 529 ff.

⁶ C. Amery, *Das Ende der Vorsehung: Die gnadenlosen Folgen des Christentums* (Reinbeck: Rowolt, 1972); E. Drewermann, *Der tödliche Fortschritt: Von der Zerstörung der Erde und des Menschen im Erbe des Christentums* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1983).

express a different conclusion. They show that such sweeping statements and suspicions are short-circuits that distort historical facts.⁷

2.3. CREATION IS AN ON-GOING HAPPENING

Creation is an on-going happening. It is not as if God first brings the universe into being and then the universe moves on its own; as if God had so created the world that it continues to work, as it were, on its own steam. Sometimes creation has been understood in this manner as a once and for all event. As a matter of fact, creation, which is the beginning of the history of salvation, leads to eschatology, which is its fulfilment. The continuously running history of salvation is a continuous creation.⁸

Clearly the biblical language of creation is a symbolic language, not an in-

⁷ H. Kessler, *Das Stöhnen der Natur*, pp. 32-35. Kessler summarizes both the refutation of such opinions and the interpretation of the relevant biblical passages and the historical development as follows:

Zunächst ist es historisch falsch, die Entwicklung von Naturwissenschaft, Technik und Naturobjektivierung im Abendland einfach auf die Voraussetzung des jüdisch-christlichen Schöpfungsglaubens (mit seiner Unterscheidung von Gott und Welt und seiner Entdivinisierung der Welt Dinge zu Geschöpfen) zurückzuführen. Der jüdisch-christliche Schöpfungsglaube mußte überhaupt nicht zu solchen Entwicklungen führen, wie allein schon ein Blick auf das östliche oder das äthiopische Christentum erweist oder auch der Codex Justinians (529), der eine die Mitkreatur einbeziehende Humanität vertritt. Wie wir noch sehen werden, spielten ganz andere (geographische, kulturelle usw.) Faktoren eine ausschlaggebende Rolle – neben der schon antiken Durchsetzung der anthropozentrisch-sophistischen statt der ionischen Naturphilosophie... Sodann: Der biblische Schöpfungsauftrag wurde bis in die Neuzeit hinein in seinem ganzen Zusammenhang gelesen und so gerade nicht als Aufforderung zur selbst-herrlichen Instrumentalisierung und Ausbeutung der Natur verstanden. Ganz im Gegenteil. Von Beginn an spielte im Christentum zum Beispiel die Psalmenfrömmigkeit mit ihrem Lobpreis für alle Geschöpfe eine nicht zu unterschätzende Rolle – im Gottesdienst und im täglichen... Stundengebet: wer bei Tagesanbruch die "Laudes" anstimmte, konnte anschließend kaum die Natur – dazu noch im Gegensatz zur Auffassung der Zeit – als seelenlos empfinden. Allein schon von daher erstaunt es wenig, daß sich nicht nur im ostkirchlichen, sondern genauso im westkirchlichen Christentum eine reiche Fülle von Zeugnissen von Naturfrömmigkeit findet. Sie zeigen: hier wie dort hat man durchgängig in einer Schöpfer und ganze Schöpfung umfassenden Dreiecksbeziehung Gott-Mensch-Natur gedacht und diese nicht zu einer bloßen Beziehung Gott-Mensch bzw. gar Gott-Seele verengt; diese verhängnisvolle Verengung blieb wesentlich der westlichen Neuzeit vorbehalten. Historiker urteilen daher: "Wer nicht über die Gabe verfügt,, 'Gras wachsen' zu hören, dürfte Mühe haben, vor der Neuzeit merkliche Unterschiede zwischen östlicher und westlicher Naturtheologie und Frömmigkeit wahrzunehmen." Und auf die Art des erkenntnismäßigen Umgangs mit der Natur überhaupt bezogen: Es gibt in der Geschichte der Naturerkenntnis mit dem Eintritt des Christentums in die Mittelmeerwelt...keinen schroffen Bruch, sondern allenfalls Akzentverschiebungen.' Ganz entsprechend läßt sich eine durchgehende Kontinuität der abendländischen wissenschaftlichen Tradition von der Zeit der Griechen bis zum 17. Jahrhundert" feststellen; erst dort ist ein tiefgehender Traditionsbruch zu erkennen."

⁸ The natural scientist and theologian A. R. Peacocke expresses this as follows: "*Gott erschafft kontinuierlich; Gott ist semper creator. Gott ist der immanente Schöpfer, der in den Prozessen der natürlichen Ordnung und durch sie schöpferisch wirksam ist*" ("Natur und Gott: Für eine Theologie im Zeitalter der Wissenschaft," in *Gott, der Kosmos und die Freiheit: Biologie, Philosophie und Theologie im Gespräch*, ed. G. Fuchs and H. Kessler [Würzburg: Echter, 1996], p. 179).

HUMANKIND'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS OF CREATION BY TECHNOLOGY FROM AN ISLAMIC POINT OF VIEW

Asghar Ali Engineer

1. Creation, Human Beings, and Nature

According to all scriptures, it is God who created this universe and all that is within it. According to the Qur'an also, Allah is the creator of this universe, of nature, and of human beings. There is also the Darwinian theory of evolution. Some support the theory of evolution and reject what is called "creationism" and some people support the dogma of creation and totally reject the concept of evolution. The Qur'an also talks of creation; but the question is whether it rejects the concept of evolution? It is essentially the question of interpretation, after all. The most important question is: are the concepts of creation and evolution mutually exclusive? Most people would maintain yes. But I think they are not necessarily exclusive. They are rather inclusive. The question is: evolution of what? It is evolution of what exists. The Darwinian theory of evolution, if properly understood and interpreted, does not necessarily reject the idea of creation, though it was thought to have done so. In fact, rationalism was emerging in Europe with great verve in the 19th century and the rationalists were looking for explanations for the coming into existence of human beings and various other species. Darwin's observations and the theory he built on the basis of the empirical evidence he collected became a powerful weapon in the hands of rationalists. It is as if the rationalists were waiting for someone to theorise along these lines and Darwin became their hero, who provided them with the much-needed explanation.

Those people who held orthodox religious points of view rejected, on the other hand, Darwin's theory and dubbed it "atheistic" and damned it with all the force at their command. For them, belief in evolution amounted to interfering in the domain of God. The human being, according to this point of view, was a humble creature of God and his duty was to submit humbly to the Will of God. He could not interfere with the work of God, let alone aspire to be His partner. Thus creationism and evolutionism were on a collision course. They are even today for many believers. Both creationists and evolutionists took narrow and dogmatic views. In fact, creation and evolution are complimentary, rather than

contradictory. Both of the concepts support each other, if dogmas are discarded. The theologians take a very narrow view of creation, as if creation were a one time perfect product and, as a result of God's word "be," it "became." It is this narrow understanding of the concept of creation which is quite problematic. Similarly, the rationalists, too, took a very restricted view of evolution and totally ruled out the possibility of creation. Such a view is equally problematic – evolution of what, if nothing existed before?

Thus if we talk of human partnership in the process of creation, we will have to drastically change our thinking about both creation and evolution. However, today, according to the believers, it is God and His power of creation that is final and cannot be interfered with. In this view, the human being is a mere helpless creature without any power. The opposite point of view holds the human being as supreme, God as mere myth, and evolution as the final reality. It is very difficult to reconcile such opposing and dogmatic points of view, and the question of human partnership with the divine is not posed.

Whatever the point of view, one thing is clear: The human species is an integral part of nature. Nature can exist independently of human beings, but human beings cannot without nature. The very sustenance of human beings is derived from nature. It is nature that sustains humans. Both those who believe in religion and those who do not support this point of view. Those who believe in God maintain that God created the entire universe, and at the end human beings. Those who reject religious belief also maintain that humans are products of nature. Thus, the relationship between humans and nature is, so to say, beyond dispute.

What is Islamic point of view?

What does the Qur'an say about creation and evolution? If it is interpreted literally, as it is by orthodox believers, the Qur'an also teaches the concept of creation, leaving no place for evolution. However, if literalist interpretation is replaced with metaphorical and symbolic interpretation, there can be room for reconciling the concept of creation with that of evolution. As far as creation is concerned, the Qur'an says, "And when He decrees an affair, He says to it only Be, and it is" (2:117). The orthodox theologians maintain that once whatever Allah decrees, is created by these words. But many others, especially the modern interpreters, do not agree with this understanding of the above verse. Thus Maulana Muhammad Ali, a modern commentator of the Qur'an, observes:

Kun fa-yakun is the recurring phrase in which Allah's act of the creation and annihilation of things is spoken of in the Holy Qur'an. It is not meant by this that there is no gradual process in the creation of things: evolution in creation is in fact plainly spoken of in the very first words of the Qur'an, where God is spoken of as *Rabb* (Evolver) of worlds, the *Fosterer of a thing in such a manner as to*

make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of completion. It is, in fact, an answer to those who think that the creation of things by God is dependent on the previous existence of matter and soul and the adaptability of their attributes. The argument given here in the word *badi'* is that man, who stands in need of matter to make things, also stands in need of a pattern after which to make them, but God stands in need of neither. The verse seems particularly to refer here, however, to the revolution that was to be brought about by the Prophet. It seemed an impossibility to men but Allah had decreed it. And in fact, the revolution brought about in Arabia by the Prophet was so wonderful that the old heaven and earth of the peninsula may be said to have been changed into new ones.¹

Thus it will be seen that there are many shades to the word "*kun*" ("be"). Allah's command to create human beings can certainly play a role in further shaping things. It is for man to rise to the level both through perfection of technology and value orientation, where he can play a role of partnership with Allah in perfecting or re-shaping the process of creation. A noted poet of Urdu Muhammad Iqbal says: Raise thyself to such level that Allah, before shaping the things will consult thee what thy opinion is! Is human partnership in divine creation possible and desirable? Can the modern technology support the process of creation? Well there are differing points of view. Some maintain that human beings, since they are themselves created, cannot become partners in creation or participate in the process of creation. The other point of view accepts such a possibility. In every religious tradition, be it Christian, Hindu, or Muslim, there is no single point of view. The orthodox viewpoint always differs from the liberal and progressive one.

Before we deal with this question, we would like to throw light on the concept of creation in the Islamic scripture, i.e. the Qur'an. The Qur'an uses two terms for creation: *ibda'* and *khalafa*. Both have distinct meanings. *Bada'* refers to creation out of nothingness. Such an act of creation does not require any imitation of others and anything so created is called *badi'*. Allah is called *mubdi'*, who creates without any pre-existing material or without any tools or without space and time. Such an act of creation is only for Allah; no one can assist him or participate with him in this process of creation.²

Khalafa, on the other hand, also means to create; but it has a different shade of meaning. It means creation with tools, with assistance, with pre-existing material and in time and space. When it refers to Allah, however, *khalafa* could be synonymous with *ibda'*, i.e. creation without any assistance, without any tools or outside time and space. Thus Allah has created this universe, the heav-

¹ Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 6th Ed. (Lahore: AAI Publishers, 1973), p. 51-52, f.n. 163.

² Cf. Imam Raghīb, *Mufradat al-Qur'an*. Urdu trans. Sheikhul Hadith Maulana Muhammad Abdahu (Lahore: Ahle Hadith Academy, 1971), p. 76.

ens and earth, and for that the Qur'an uses both *bada'* (2:117) and *khalaqa* (3:16). But as for humans, the term *bada'* cannot be used, because human beings cannot create without assistance, without tools and outside time and space.³ Thus no human being can participate, as far as Allah's creation in the first sense is concerned, i.e. human beings cannot be *badi'*, but they can be *khaliq*. It is in this sense that the Qur'an describes Allah as *ahsan al-khaliqin*, i.e. best of the creators (14:23).

Thus, in the later sense, human beings are also creators and can become participants in the process of creation. Here it will be important to point out that creation cannot be isolated from sustenance, and that sustenance is not possible without deep concern (compassion) for the creation. Allah is, therefore, described in the Qur'an not only as creator but also as sustainer (*rabb*) and as *Rahman* (1:2-3). Allah creates this universe, sustains it, and feels deeply concerned for His creation. Human beings thus also participate in the process of creation by participating in the process of sustenance and caring for the creation of Allah. To preserve and protect this earth, which we inhabit and which is the creation of Allah, and to feel deeply concerned for it is very important for us humans. Allah has taken upon Himself to be Merciful and Compassionate. The Qur'an says, "He has ordained mercy on Himself" (6:12). Thus, He cannot but be Merciful. Mercy is His very nature. It is this nature of God that sustains the universe. Thus, human participation in sustenance of this universe – this earth as far as human beings are concerned – is participation in the process of creation. Human beings have to design technology to further the process of sustenance of this earth.

As pointed out above, human beings cannot create out of nothing, only out of existing material and with the help of tools. And modern technology is the most powerful tool that human beings have designed. However, since technology is a tool, not an end in itself, it has to be such as to strengthen the sustenance of human beings on this earth and the earth itself. Modern technology can be destructive as well as creative. The question is: is our technology such as to enable us to participate in the process of creation and sustenance? Or is it otherwise? There is no categorical answer, because there is much ambiguity in human action. There is no such ambiguity in Allah's action, as He has ordained mercy on Himself. Among His names in the Qur'an we find *Nur* (light), *Rahim* (Merciful), *al-Hadi* (The Guide), *al-Wahhab* (Generous who gives in plenty), *al-Razzaq* (Provider and Sustainer), etc. All of these names are Allah's attributes, which indicate how He looks after His creation and how He is the Benefactor of His creation. But for Him the creation would not survive.

This is not true, however, as far as human beings are concerned, even though they aspire to be participants in the process of creation. Allah creates and sends

³ Ibid, p. 316.

His guides for human beings to guide them to enhance the value of His creation. However, human beings give greater importance to their selfish interests than to the creation of Allah. He even devises utterly destructive technology to promote his selfish ends. He has created nuclear technology in order to destroy God's creation? Nuclear technology not only wreaks havoc and destroys all that is here on earth, but also destructively affects future generations of human beings, plants, water resources, etc. through radiation. Yet human beings, despite being fully aware of the destructive nature of nuclear technology, do not desist from creating it. Not only that, but several countries have nuclear weapons which together can destroy this earth several times over and also destroy all future possibilities of creation of life for millions of years.

For human beings to participate in the process of creation with God, they have to devise technologies which will be life enhancing, not life destroying. To accomplish this, human beings must rise above selfish interests and imbibe positive values contained in the Divine Attributes. As I wrote above, human actions are, unlike God, ambiguous and capable of both enhancing and destroying life. It can be said that Allah also destroys life, in the sense that He ordains death – the death of all species. This destruction, however, is not for the sake of destruction, but for fresh creation. Human destruction, on the other hand, is not only for the purpose of destruction, but also for destroying all possibilities of life to come into existence. Allah in His Mercy has gifted humankind with the precious gift of intellect, which has tremendous life-enhancing, creative potential. This potential can be actualised only when humans rise above selfish interests and devise technologies that can help humanity to flourish.

Intellect is not only a precious divine gift, but also a powerful tool of human creation. As pointed out above, divine creation does not depend on any external tool, whereas human creation does. But God Himself has gifted humankind with the power of reason, so that it can assist Him in the process of creation. Thus it becomes the sacred duty of humankind to make the best possible use of intellect and to become a part of the divine process of creation. It is in fact Allah's will that humankind assists Him in the process of creation by preserving His creation through devising appropriate technology. That is why the Qur'an says, "We created human being in the best make." (95:4). This implies that human beings are endowed with all the positive qualities, physical as well as mental, corresponding to the functions that this particular creature is meant to perform. It is for man to make the best possible use of these innate qualities given by God. But the next verse also describes his innate evil tendencies, when it says, "Then We render him the lowest of the low." (95:5). A similar statement is made in verse 91:7-8: "He reveals to it (i.e. human soul) its way of evil and its way of good."

Thus human beings have potentialities for good as well as for evil in them. It is for them to decide – and human beings are free agents in this sense – whether

DISCUSSION OF THE RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

Presentations:

MICHA BRUMLIK:

Humankind's Relationship with Nature and Participation in the Process of Creation through Technology in the View of Judaism

FRANCIS X. D'SA:

The World as Creation and Creation as a Cosmotheandric Reality in Christianity

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER:

Humankind's Relationship with Nature and Participation in the Process of Creation by Technology from an Islamic Point of View

Moderator:

PETER KOSLOWSKI

Summary:

FRIEDRICH HERMANNI

1. Creation and Freedom

The Jewish religion does indeed assume that the world was created by God, but it nevertheless believes that human beings are free to act both rightly and wrongly. Thus, the idea of a Creator God does not imply determinism in Judaism. How is the relationship between freedom and creation seen in Indian Christianity? (BRUMLIK)

In the Indian tradition, it is not the question of human freedom that stands in the foreground, but the problem of blindness to reality (*maya*). In so far as human beings in their blindness reduce the reality of the world to an object, they are not free and are led by false interests. Therefore, in the Indian tradition, the ultimate goal of the human person is liberation from this blindness and the false interests that result from it (*mokṣa*). *Mokṣa* can succeed only through a self-opening to the secret of the world. In addition to the perceptible and the perceiving dimensions, this deep dimension must be recognized as the third dimension of reality. The "purity of heart" that contains the overcoming of false interests is the condition for such a vision of what goes beyond the boundaries of percep-

tion. It is also the opening of the self to the deep dimension that is understood as wholeness. But since human beings are in fact never disinterested, it is difficult to describe them as free. (D'SA)

2. The Abrahamic Religions, Creation, and Nature

There exists the thesis that the Abrahamic tradition, to which the three speakers belong, was conducive to the development of technology, because the relation of God to the world is interpreted as an act of making. Is there such a specific inclination of the Abrahamic tradition toward technology? Or are the differences between the three religions so large that we cannot talk about it in this respect as *one* tradition? (KOSLOWSKI)

What is called control of nature today has been shaped more by the development of modern man than by the Abrahamic tradition. Modern man essentially changed the biblical tradition in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and broke from the ancient-Christian and ancient-Jewish understanding of the world. The early-modern development of autonomous subjectivity is the sufficient prerequisite for the control of nature.

Concerning the concept of "making," there is an important difference between understanding the creation of the world as a metaphor for the completion of a workpiece and interpreting it as a master's linguistic act. If creation is the completion of a workpiece, we can speak of a subject-object relationship. If the world was created through language, we cannot. (BRUMLIK)

BRUMLIK is correct in saying that the modern development of technology is to be attributed to modern thought, not to a biblical tradition. The question of the extent to which this thought can be separated from its roots, however, remains open. (D'SA)

Talking about the Abrahamic religions appears to conceal more than it clarifies. Concepts such as *maya* and *mokṣa*, which are of importance in Indian Christianity, have nothing to do with what can be called Abrahamic. (BRUMLIK)

Mokṣa seems to designate an extremely individual spiritual event. The Qur'an, on the contrary, attaches special importance to the community of believers. (ENGINEER)

Although there are many similarities in these three religions, in view of the fact that one cannot even speak of a unified Islam, one can hardly speak of *the* Abrahamic religions. (ENGINEER)

Is the concept of "making" really at the center of discussions of a Creator God? The question is much more what it means today to believe in such a God, and, therefore, is a hermeneutical question. Furthermore, a statement about the creation is not a rational proposition, but a dogmatic proposition, and must be treated as such. (D'SA)

3. The Bible and the Relationship between Humans and Nature

To what extent do other passages in the Bible, such as Genesis 1,28 (“Fill the earth and subdue it”) play a role for the relationship between humans and nature and the human understanding of technology? (KOSLOWSKI)

The prophetic texts and the Book of Proverbs can be referred to as possible sources. It can be derived from the prophetic texts that nature also suffers under human injustice. This can be seen already in the utopias and visions of Isaiah’s peace with animals. Although the creation is fundamentally good, it can be true that, as a consequence of human injustice, it lives non-peacefully and is not redeemed. This state of not being redeemed, however, is not fundamental, but only a consequence of unjust human actions. In the Book of Proverbs it is written that nature itself is pervaded by reason and for its part can teach humans the principles according to which they should live. (BRUMLIK)

4. The Relationship between Humans and Nature in Hinduism

Are there stronger approaches to a careful relationship with nature in the Hindu tradition than in the Christian tradition? (KOSLOWSKI)

In the Hindu tradition the human self-understanding is interpreted differently, and, therefore, the relationship of humans to nature is also different. Humans and nature cannot be separated from one another as they are in the biblical religions. Thus the human body is also regarded as a part of the cosmic being. (D’SA)

5. Human Cloning, Mind and Body, God and the World

Where in the individual religions are the greatest problem zones of technology seen? (KOSLOWSKI)

Human cloning clearly crosses a limit for Jewish ethics. Making a new human being and, therefore, the renunciation of the way of reproduction prescribed in Genesis contradicts God’s will. Since at the moment it cannot be known to what extent cloning serves the saving of life, it cannot be legitimated by this highest principle of Jewish bioethics. (BRUMLIK)

Cloning is not creation from nothing – only God is in a position to do that – but creation from something and, therefore, from something that was in turn created by God. The human person uses materials and intelligence that are given by God. Anything that the human mind creates only shows God’s creativity. It is too early to reach a verdict about cloning. Every kind of technology can be misused. The question is: *For what purpose* is technology used, not whether

cloning is intrinsically morally good or bad. Only the objective toward which technology is employed is ethically relevant. (ENGINEER)

Catholicism teaches that God creates every individual soul from nothing. Only the body is created by the act of procreation, not the soul. From that it would follow either that we cannot possibly clone human beings or, if it is possible, that we must reconsider the Catholic teaching. (KOSLOWSKI)

A splitting of mind and body in this sense does not originate from the Bible, but instead from the Platonic tradition. The Bible thinks much more integrally here. (BRUMLIK)

Cloning, along with many other technological developments, is a result of a certain world view, in which the world is reduced to an object. This objectification can be understood as original sin. Since the world is more than an object, however, the separation of humankind and the world reveals a false understanding of this world. Such an attitude is unacceptable for a religious person. This is also true of the separation of God and the world, as it takes place in the Abrahamic religions. (D'SA)

R. BALASUBRAMANIAN emphasized in the First Discourse of the World Religions that a distinction between Brahman ("World Soul," God) can be found increasingly today even in Indian thought. (KOSLOWSKI)

Brahman and the world cannot be separated from one another, in so far as the inspired person is described in the *Bhagavad-Gita* as the person who discovers his own being in the being of everything. The individual indeed has limits, but the person can be enlarged by entering into relationships with other persons. (D'SA)

A precise distinction between God and world seems, however, to be a step forward. The Abrahamic religions place a great amount of emphasis on the statement that God is *not* the world. (KOSLOWSKI)

In the Vedānta there is a clear distinction, but no separation, between God and the world. "I am not different from God," understood in Christian terms, does not mean "I am God," but "I am God's." (D'SA)

6. Technology, Human Persons, God

D'SA had emphasized that technological progress has not benefited the poor and the elderly. This fact appears, however, to be more of a problem of politics than one of technology itself. (Remark from the audience)

The effects of technology are *actually* directed against the poor. Therefore, the question must be asked whether the development and use of this kind of technology is not a fundamental mistake. Is it possible to conceive of a kind of technology that functions comprehensively? (D'SA)

The concept of a comprehensive species of technology is a contradiction in

itself, since technology is based on a subject-object relationship. The comprehensive use of technology appears, on the contrary, to be possible. (BRUMLIK)

In the developing nations, not everyone has access to technology? That is based on an economic problem. Precisely the poor, however, could profit from a new kind of technology. (ALBRECHT)

It is unambiguous that the biblical world view is open to anthropocentrism. How can we overcome this anthropocentrism? (question from HORUZHYY to D'SA)

The anthropocentric interpretation of the Bible is not established by the Bible itself. The Bible is more comprehensive than it appears to its interpreters. (D'SA)

The Bible describes God and his actions as anthropocentric. The very concept of action is anthropocentric, since nature does not act. Consequently, an acting God has characteristics of a person. If one were to remove this concept of action from God, the entire concept "God" would break apart, since a God that does not act is not God. (BRUMLIK)

In Islam there are two species of conceptions of God. The "Hanbalites" advocate the thesis that God's essence remains inaccessible and that it is impossible to speak about God. The theologian al-Ash'ari, for example, defends the opposing position that a certain analogy between God and the world exists and, consequently, that concrete statements about him can be made. (ENGINEER)

D'SA said in his presentation that the human person is more than Logos. We read in John 1,1, however, that Christ is Logos and nothing more than Logos. Is the human person more than Christ? Such a restricted – postmodern – understanding would not be a Christian position. (HORUZHYY)

The contemporary use of "Logos" is characterized by a rational understanding. If we were to return to the original meaning of the concept, this would be correct. (D'SA)

In response to a question from the audience, about whether suffering from technocracy is a necessary phase, through which God lets man attain a new discovery of himself, BRUMLIK answered that the technologizing of the world does indeed give humans new ways to become aware of their creatureliness, but that God surely does not intervene in history in this way.