



The Origin of the Human Self I

THE FIRST PART of this discussion will briefly deal with historical highlights associated with the emergence of the self. This involves tracing the convergence of God and of man (male and female) as an animal in their journey toward becoming human selves.

A Consideration of Prehistory

Let us first consider prehistory. While this involves some supposition, there have been much valuable scholarship and reflection on this area. Furthermore, although this discussion necessarily includes certain hypotheses, yet it draws heavily from established scientific understanding of the universe.

We begin with God, then with the universe that emerged by his Creation. God therefore transcends the universe. We use the word *transcends* to mean that God is the precondition, the cause.¹ The universe is the effect. It is his Creation.

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Scientists now generally acknowledge that, on one hand, there is an “implicate order” — a timeless, spaceless quantum order from which emerges all that can be observed. This implicate order is undisclosable, invisible and unobservable. On the other hand, the observed universe is an “explicate order” — the order of time, space, matter and energy.

It has been scientifically observed that time and space are bent or curved and that this bending or curvature of time and space is an expanding bending. Furthermore, scientists propose that the bending or curvature of time and space produces “gravity.” We are all subjects of gravity. Without it we would be floating. Scientists call gravity “negative energy.” As a consequence of negative energy, there is “positive matter and energy.”

With this scientific background, let us consider one school of thought on how God worked with the universe as it emerged. God took time and space — the first primordial

elements of the explicate order — and he bent them. Gravity emerged as negative energy; and, as a consequence, positive matter and energy emerged. Now an expanding cosmos or universe began to form, with galactic space and phenomena such as quasars, pulsars and supernova. When a star explodes, it releases the ashes of its combustion. These are the heavy elements of which we are made. Very simply, we are made of the ashes of stellar combustion. So God worked over billions of years to produce an explicate order of time and space, gravity, matter and energy, form and substance, and life — emerging microbial, plant and animal life-forms. Finally, man was observed on this planet.

The Universe of Primitive Man

We now move to the third millennium BCE, when scientific data strongly suggest that primitive or ancient man was universally “god-conscious.”² Like other animals, including primates, man was governed, dominated, supervised and controlled by instincts and drives. As birds know when to fly north or south, so

primitive mankind instinctually knew how to hunt and gather. They had a god-conscious instinct in their brains that we would now call a hallucination. Although now this is pathologic, then it was not. Ancient mankind had the visual and auditory direction of god-consciousness to tell them what to do, when to do it, and how to do it.³

The Canadian neuropsychologist Michael Persinger has electrically stimulated various parts of the brain cortex of patients who are presenting for brain surgery.⁴ Along with other neurosurgeons, Persinger has found that if the temporal lobe of the human cortex is electrically stimulated in a certain location, this can elicit a god-experience or god-concept. People can hear God and see God. They can hear angels sing and see heaven opened. We now know that what is experimentally possible in the laboratory, à la Michael Persinger, is manifested in certain pathological states such as schizophrenia and partial-lobe epilepsy. Here are observed recurring god-experiences, a recovered god-consciousness.

Summary

To summarize, early man was “god-conscious.” There was no self. In the earliest written works — such as the Iliad and the Odyssey — there were no such words as *I* and *you* and *me*. There was no concept of the self. Mankind were god-conscious. They were not self-conscious.

With a universal god-consciousness, mankind inevitably developed a sacralized or divinized universe. For example, because everyone was god-conscious, it was assumed that a rock was god-conscious and a cloud was god-conscious. Today we would use such words as *animism*, *panentheism* (everything is in God; God is in everything), and

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pantheism (everything is God; God is everything) to describe this phenomenon of a sacralized or divinized universe. People worshiped a stone, the river Nile and the clouds. They worshiped the sun and moon and stars. Everything was God, and God was everything.

Endnotes

1. See Stephen E. Erickson, *Human Presence: At the Boundaries of Meaning* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984). Cf. Hebrews 11:10.
2. See Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976).
3. See *ibid.*
4. See Michael A. Persinger, *Neuropsychological Bases of God Beliefs* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987).

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