On the Nature of the Gods

Ἡ οὖν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν σπουδή,
καὶ μάλιστα πρὸς τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἀλήθειαν,
εἶδος ἐστὶ τῆς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἐπιποθίας

The declaration that God is dead– the most foolish of hubris from the point of view of the ancients! One must reflect upon the consequence of taking this simple realization lightly.

Protagoras' famous dictum has seldom been correctly understood, and rarer still has its obverse been observed: *all things bear the mark of man's measure.*

Inquiring into the nature of the Gods is necessarily to inquire into the nature of man, in that the images which men hold of their gods have been always inseparable from their essential perception of nature.

The *sacred* is the conceptual space in which man and god meet. Any study of the gods, because it must take into account man's relationship to them, can thus be said to be a study of the sacred, of *hierology*, which mus be carefully distinguished from both psychology, which can only define a god in the reduced terms of its science, and from theology, which always assumes a set of initial conditions on faith.

Proper phenomenology: The subjective semantic content of the phenomena is not discounted or reduced, but is only taken for those of its elements which pertain to the overall model. In addition, the process of determining a model itself comes from a mechanical description of the phenomena as *cause and effect*. To treat phenomena as *static appearances* is the great error of phenomenology, which can only attempt to objectively treat the *kinetics* of phenomena.

Whether an image is *real* or *apparent* is of course a valid distinction: the former is to mean the image is generated by the sense organs and presented to the mind, while the latter is generated by the mind itself. The great hubris of modern man is made clear in the common judgement of the *merely* apparent, when it suits him, and when he is able.

Psychology has accomplished hardly anything more than a circular language of defining phenomena in terms of other phenomena; their tendency is to the *subterranean*, to declare superficial effects mere emergent properties of the genuine, deeper causes. We have yet to see a psychology which dares to proclaim the superficial as a valid and justified unit of study.

One must learn to evaluate beliefs by criterion other than their falsifiability. An example: taken as a falsifiable judgement, the declaration “the gods inhabit Mount Olympus” is of little value, but what is the consequence, in functional terms, which the believer of the statement experiences? It is simply this: When he gazes upon Olympus' snowy peaks, he is filled with an awareness of the gods.

Historical Progression of the Divine Idea

The question of what nature the gods possess, their essence, substance, and properties, is amongst those contested since the dawn of man's conscious reflection upon his own experience. For, some peoples have asserted that only a single god exists, while others claim there to be a few or many in number, and others still claiming that all is god, or that nothing is, or that each and every thing is itself a different god.

There has been just as little agreement on their number as their substance. Many among the ancients believed divinities to be composed of a physical matter, residing somewhere in the material universe, while others have believed them to be of an immaterial substance and existing somehow outside of the bounds of physical space. Still others claim that god is a quality which is dispersed throughout the universe and found as a part of all things, or yet still that god is the inherent substrate out of which all other things exist, or participate in to various degrees. The socially sophisticated view at the current time is that gods have no so-called "real" existence, that is to say outside of the human imagination, and are a purely psychological phenomenon.

It is obvious that there exists no common definition of deity by which all opinions might be agreed, for the standards and methods by which men arrive at their opinions is in every case different, and their answers to these questions are formed out of all manner of subjective and qualitatively unique experiences, being as it is that questions such as these escape the determining power of pure reason to settle dispute. One conception of god's nature is to another's interpretation an absurdity, and even within a particular creed, manifold opinions and disputes abound concerning the finer points of their theologies. Thus, one will never arrive at a satisfactory description of the nature of the gods from a *theological perspective*, but

must transcend all particular theologies, and attempt to redefine their elements in terms of a general and functional theory.

As a start to our inquiry, we will examine the foregoing theories and opinions; not to merely compile a compendium for history's sake, but rather to establish a knowledge of their common elements, that we might begin to formulate a general theory of the man-god relationship which might equally describe all such relationships. This, necessarily, requires a position of *distance*.

The assertion that god is of a material substance, whether a self-contained body existing somewhere in the intelligible universe which may been seen and felt, or as a material quality embedded in other substances, means necessarily that god is *falsifiable*. Wherever man looks and does not find the image of his god, means that his god must be removed to either a more remote place or a deeper, more subtle level of quality, if it is to continue its existence. As man's powers of description increase, the bounds of where his gods reside retreats before him.

This was noticed by ancient philosophers– the first philosophers, in fact, being so on account of this very realization– who were discontent to accept a picture of divinity which was imminently material and in the image of man, on account of the opinion, we must assume, that a power which retreats so readily before man's inquiries, and seems to be so obviously patterned upon himself, must not be truly divine. The philosopher of atomism, Democritus, kept the gods within the material– as indeed he believed there to exist nothing beyond the material– and abstracted them into a form not recognizably connected in any way to the traditional divine conceptions. Rather than possessing coherent forms, the gods of Democritus are swerving waves of atomic patterns, churning on a cosmic scale and impressing their perturbations upon the minds of men. Others held the gods to be this or that element, or to be in truth the observed heavenly bodies. They were all alike, however, in a firm rejection of the Hesiodic or Homeric description of the universe, and the conception of anthropomorphic deities which interfered willingly in the affairs of mankind was to them the folly of uncritical minds. This impulse towards the critical examination of natural phenomena, which would eventually come to dispel or displace the gods of poetry, must have had as its impetus the sharp and discerning Hellenic eye; the same eye which was able to discern fine sculpture within great masses of bronze or marble looked also

for the elegant secrets contained within the overwhelming presentation of the natural world. Paradoxically, it was this incessant search for ever more general *material* principles which resulted in the birth of a new kind of philosophy, one which subjugated material to the very mind which observed it.

As against both the traditional anthropomorphic divine conceptions which were now judged as naive, and the seemingly inescapable contradictions revealed by materialist philosophy, it was the philosopher Parmenides who set the realm of mental images against the world of sensory experience, and so rather than admit the unreality of the divine he might assert that the divine exists in a subtler, yet more *fundamental reality*. This conception, which we now call the Platonist one, as with Plato and his followers it comes to its fullest expression, follows the realization that if the perceivable materiality of the divine is found wanting, and perceivable materiality is equated with the real, then the divine can not be confirmed to be truly "real", and thus to save the conception of divinity the foregoing condition of reality must be denied. Sensory reality thus becomes the *merely apparent*, and the realm of the forms or ideas is posited as the real; an abode where divinity might dwell in safety beyond the reach of empirical investigation.

This philosophy of ideality governs the intellectual apprehension of divinity until the modern era, which is defined by its challenge to this interpretive schema. Empiricism was, to paraphrase Hume, carried into the most secret recesses of the enemy, and on all fronts the ideal was forced to retreat. The philosophic god-image of the European middle ages, dependent upon the primacy of ideality, precipitates a self-overcoming of ideality in its own will to truth, and thus a crisis of divinity occurs as the divine loses its power to function as a source of values.

We might see, from a vantage point which stands outside of all of the above conceptions of divinity in their progression, that there still yet exists a common ground on which they all are conceived: namely the assumption that the substance or substrate of "idea" is *fundamentally* different than the substance of empirically apprehended reality. This is no novel realization by any means, as modern philosophers have already cast doubt on this fundamental difference in substance; David Hume separates them not in substance but gives to them only independent classifications derived from their degree on a scale of *force*:

"Every one will readily allow, that there is a considerable difference between the perceptions of the mind, when a man feels the pain of excessive heat, or the pleasure of moderate warmth, and when he afterwards recalls to his memory this sensation, or anticipates it by his imagination. These faculties may mimic or copy the perceptions of the senses; but they never can entirely reach the force and vivacity of the original sentiment[...]It requires no nice discernment or metaphysical head to mark the distinction between them.

Here therefore we may divide all the perceptions of the mind into two classes or species, which are distinguished by their different degrees of force and vivacity. The less forcible and lively are commonly denominated *Thoughts* or *Ideas*. The other species [...] *Impressions*"

After Hume, Kant brings the matter into clearer elucidation by way of his famous refutation of the Ontological Proof. "Existence" as a predicated quality, argues Kant, does not impart any additional information to a description of an object, but posits merely that the thing is in some way represented to the subject, an occurrence already inherent in the naming of the thing. The common objection to this argument, which is an attempt to prove that "existence" is indeed a valid predication, is to bring up a comparative statement, such as: "the tree in my garden exists, but the tree in my imagination does not." This, however, is not a true refutation, and betrays a lack of understanding of the precision of Kant's argument. In the comparative statement above, the property of "existence" is narrowed into a more specific definition than the absolutely general sense in which Kant meant it, because it must be taken to mean "that which can be sensually represented", or "a body extended in physical space" or some other narrowly defining attribute. For, the equally valid sentence may be formed: "the tree in the garden exists in my sight, another tree exists in my imagination".

If we allow the concept of "existence" to expand to its natural limits, that is to say: we allow all which is represented to hold the appellation "real", and do not bifurcate the conscious experience into "exterior" and "interior" in the common heavy-handed way (which no doubt serves its purpose in the realm of everyday life), but rather allow that it is only specific and readily-determinable qualities by which one might distinguish the "mental" or "psychological" from what is objectively existent beyond the limits of our mind, then we are able to transcend the aforementioned dialectical opposition which results in the idealization of divinity and, ultimately, the so-called death of God as an inevitable historical progression, in order to examine the nature of divinity as it is *functionally* presented to the consciousness. The phenomenological understanding which transcends the "real" and "mental" must be understood as the

foundation upon which our present inquiry stands.

Divinity and gods have always been approached by Idealist philosophers with the methods of hypothetical reasoning, that is to say in the domain of metaphysics, or else by theologians, who speak within the semantics of a particular belief. Indeed, from the functional point of view which is the vantage point of this work, there is little difference between Idealist philosophers and theologians, and we will show later on that Idealist philosophy can itself be readily understood as a type of religious interpretation.

Psychologists who have attempted to approach the matter have generally been of two minds: either to dismiss the gods as a mere accident of cognitive evolution, or to affirm their importance as archetypal drives residing in the subconscious, which exert influence over the mind and personality. One can see that the proponents of each view are conditioned by a bias which blinds them to one half of the issue. For, the former limit their description of the gods to *effects* of *causes* which originate from within man, while the latter commit the inverse and only describe the gods as unconscious *causes* which have *effects* on man actions and perceptions. *How* and *whence* these reflections appear, that is to say the nature of the source of the light which is itself reflected in the mirror of action and perception, is left vague and unexplained, for the psychologists of *archetype* have been content to rest their search for the source of the gods at the border of the shadowy "unconscious", a concept which they have embraced for its utility, serving as it does as a convenient origin for whatever forces or drives they would like to posit in explaining man's behavior.

This present work is thus the first of its kind in that it is an attempt to describe in a systematic way the subjective experience of the gods *in toto*, that is to say as both *cause* and *effect* of phenomena.

Sense and Representation

IN what way is a god, or any being for that matter, presented? No one has yet demonstrated objective evidence of any god's existence, and so our inquiry is entirely limited to subjective phenomena. Thus, we must begin by clearly determining in what particular way the gods are represented.

Representations might first be classified into two general types: That which is existent in space before us we detect with the range of our sense organs– we might touch it, see it, and so on, but that which we perceive mentally exists in simulacrum of the higher senses only. For our imagination might perceive sights and sounds, but it is incapable of similarly conjuring simulacra of smell, taste, or the emotions.

In the case of sound and hearing, the perception as it is transmitted from the ear as a signal throughout the nervous system has an origin in the space beyond us, yet even without the generations of these signals by the ear the mind alone might imagine the quality or timbre of certain sounds if they have been previously transcribed in our memory. As a result the mind also has the ability to recognize sequence and pattern in both the hearing and recalling of sound, allowing for the encoding of information. The original element of language, the *name*, arises as the association of sequences of sound with their referents, and as a consequence, these referents themselves reflexively reference their names. Anything at all which is represented in any form to the perception might be named and introduced into this process, and the borders of the conceptual linguistic space are determined by what representations are named. (All that which is not named, but only sensed or felt, is what psychologists have called the "unconscious", a term which is wholly inadequate for this class of representations because they are, by definition, still represented in some form to the consciousness even if not encoded in language.)

What are the types of representations then which make up everything *besides* language? A word might reference another word, but ultimately language always ends a chain of reference in

something else, a non-linguistic representation: an *image*. The types of representations we experience are, as we have said already, in one class *sensations,* or the information taken in by the sense organs along with their corresponding simulacra recalled by the memory, to which we might add *feelings*, which are a type of internal sensation of a chemical nature, involuntarily triggered by thoughts and perceptions. The last class of representation are *concepts*, which are distinguished by their purely mental nature, for while they must necessarily be created out of, and consist purely of, information that is ultimately derived from sensation, they are fixed and given subsistence by a process different in kind. Concepts are differentiated from the representations of objective objects in that they are constructed synthetically. If I see a spade, my ideas about the spade are all derived from analysis of the spade itself through the process of *lysing* it into its constituent elements. This is the reverse of the process by which a man would have invented a spade, which was a process of *synthesis*, which starting from its disparate elements ends in a newly formulated image. Abstract concepts such as justice, or difference, or division, have beneath their appellations a ground of non-linguistic image as well. Even the realm of the most abstract, that of mathematics, can be shown to be ultimately synthesized from images, for images are the substrate of all mental processes, and any linguistic definition can do no other than to reference images. It must be stated that by "image" we mean not only optical information, but an imitation of any perception or grouping of closely associated perceptions. These perceptions might be grouped simultaneously to form a total concrete image, or sequentially to form an image of an action or process.

Thus having given a brief and general description of the different classifications of representations, we might again return to our pertinent question. Of which type of representation is a god? There are, of course, produced representations of the god-image in plastic arts or linguistic description, but these, in order to be produced, must have first been thought, which means that the god-image must have a precedent origin, which the plastic representations were merely *added to* in a synthetic process. We might say firmly then that the god-image is one of a conceptual nature, synthetically formed like the concept of the spade. A description of the constituent elements of the god-image and the synthetic process which results in its construction will be offered in the second part of

this work, but presently we will rest content with merely knowing the type of its nature.

There often promptly arises, in those who adhere to a realist view of the material-ideal divide, a sort of common sense dismissal of the potentiality of a conceptually formed image, with which we must deal with before going forward. This reaction takes form in interrogations such as the following: "If mental images can be said to have some form of reality, then why does one not feel an intense reaction to the image of a rapidly approaching tiger, when such a thing is imagined, as one would have if perceiving the same sequence of images directly with the sense organs?" To such arguments we must reply that, indeed, the image of the tiger represented in the imagination is of a different import than the one transmitted to our understanding by the eyes, in that it has a different set of implications, but it still holds its own kind of potentiality to affect the behavior of the organism. Indeed we might question that it is truly a difference in *kind* at all by the following demonstration: a tiger seen ten yards away produces a stronger reaction than one seen from one-hundred yards off, and still further removed from the reaction of spying the minotaur from one-thousand yards away. In each case, the feeling of fear lessens, but still remains in some form. If one were to increase the separation to many miles, so that he was viewing the tiger through some sort of remote apparatus, he would likely have little to no feeling of immediate fear, yet the potentiality of the tiger to inspire immediate terror would still be felt. Now, suppose that a man is trapped in a labyrinth, and has been told that a tiger- or perhaps a minotaur, this case- is somewhere inside. Though the man has not directly sensed the minotaur, there is still a very real capacity for the imagined beast to inspire a great fear. That a god-image might act in a similar way is evidenced by the fact that it too has the capability to inspire fear, whether in the most savage of primal superstitions or the cautiously reasoned Pascal's wager.

In a modern world so acquainted with psychology and psychological types of interpretation, the real potentiality of conceptual images should not be denied by anyone. An image recalled repeatedly, obsessively, is paranoia, and all manner of irrational fears undeniably exist. Terrors can be imagined with force of conviction which stir feelings and thus the real chemical reactions of immediate fear- the gut tightens, hair stands on end. Thus it is surely more accurate to explain the difference between imagined and

sensed images to be in degree of vivacity only, as was indeed postulated by David Hume, due to specific referents of the contextual information, rather than being truly different in kind from a functional perspective.

So much then for the "common sense" dismissal of the power of conceptual images to effect behavior, and as a result of this examination we might realize the ground of the dialectical positions of materialism and idealism: that the conceptual image and the directly sensed image which is existent in space before us differ in some essential substance, when in truth they are made different only by predicated conditions. "Image" taken for itself, transcends the interior-exterior divide, which is no doubt a real divide in its own sense and necessary for regular life, but nevertheless clouds the philosophical judgement and obstructs the examination of pure phenomena as such. This clarification we have purposely set out here in order that while proceeding in our inquiry into the nature of the god-image we might be readily understood. For otherwise we would quickly be accused, on account of the methods of our examination, by materialists of being an idealist, and by idealists of being a materialist, due to how in order to make sense of a thing which is subjective and conceptual in nature we are required to make use of both "interior" and "exterior" information. Indeed, it has been the finding of natural science that an organism's thoughts and perceptions are mirrored in corresponding states of the electrical impulses of the brain and nervous system, and so it can be said that both the sensory image and the conceptual image at least correspond to configurations of matter and energy, in other words these configurations exist in the same substrate as the object which is perceived. *How* these *brain states* give rise to *mental states,* or the reverse, if that be the case, is a question which has lately preoccupied our contemporary so-called philosophers and neuroscientists, and is of course unanswerable and absurd, as they would soon realize if they had the slightest bit of philosophical rigor in their thinking. For we can never have knowledge of that which produces awareness, or why we aware at all in the first place, because such "knowledge" would necessarily lie outside of experience and is thus impossible to grasp. The fact that there is a correspondence, however, between brain states and mental states, should be enough for the purposes of any psychological inquiry, provided that the psychologists give up the absurd bias against subjective information which has ham-stringed

any real progress in that science; its absurdity made all the greater by the fact that the objectification of this subjective information was initially the whole point of its study. In any case, one sees how energy, the animating force of all phenomena, flows into and out of the nervous system of the organism, taken in by sense and given over to schemas of interpretation, in which the signals echo and reflect within networks of synapses which we will call the *interpretive faculty*, and eventually find their end in the motor nerves activating muscular exertion, or in the triggering of chemical hormones which is what we call feeling, or in the thousands of unconscious actions of homeostasis which occur every second. Even if man might never answer *why* we possess awareness, the fact that our awareness corresponds to measurable flows of energy in the physical body at all is enough to form the basis of a functional science of phenomena.

With the foregoing clarifications made, we may now proceed in determining a description of image in general, and following this we will then be in a position to analyze the specific elements which inform the object of our inquiry: the god-image.

Images, as we have determined, correspond to states of energy in a particular organism's nervous system, owing their cause either to impactions upon the various sense organs, or arising out of an immediately precedent state of the nervous system. The process of transcribing images into the *memory* seems to occur simultaneously with their perception, as we are not aware of any specific "memory process" which exists on its own and apart from the simultaneous presentation of the image to the awareness in some way. It has been discovered that the brain works on the process of transcribing memories while we are asleep, and though we are not consciously aware of the images being presented to the degree we are asleep, nevertheless the brain state corresponding to the image is still conjured during the process of transcription. Thus the first conclusion we can make about conceptual images is this: all possible images conjured by the mind must have as the elements of their composition previous images which are transcribed in the memory. The theory that some form of memories may be transmitted genetically is no objection to this observation, for this merely means that the parent or whatever ancestor in question first perceived the image also transcribed it, and it is this transcription which is passed on. It follows from our observation that for any image which the mind summons forth there can in theory be found, when the image

is broken down into its constituent elements, corollaries of those elements originating in direct perception at some point in the past.

It is easy to determine how the elements of images derived from sensory perception come to be grouped together by the interpretive faculty; they are adhered to each other through a principle of association determined by proximity in time and space, and repeating elements (rhythms) come to be reinforced through some virtue of this repetition. This is an old intuitive insight, the truth of which has been demonstrated by experimentation in neuroscience. It is more difficult to determine the exact process by which conceptual images are formed out of the elements of memory. It is clear that the elements of perceptual images which stimulate a relatively stronger response are transcribed to memory and able to be recalled later, while the elements which fail to elicit a sufficient threshold response are either soon discarded or not submitted to transcription at all. Thus, the form of conceptual images are determined by the inclinations of the observer- separate people recalling the same event will all remember the major happenings, but will differ on which minor details they can recall, and perhaps even the exact nature of those details, being as it is required of them to interpret a hazy and not well-formed picture, since the mind, at the time of perception and transcription, was not strongly attentive to the details in question. The process by which we *think* and *imagine* is not much different than the process by which we *remember,* in that both deal with the conjuring and recombination of conceptual images. The only difference is that images which we recall as memories proper we have predicated some additional quality of objective reality onto, either linking this predication at the time of transcription or at the time of recall through a process of reason. I am inclined to posit the latter, based on the observation that very young children seem to report imaginary happenings with the surest conviction that they really happened, but can with persistent questioning eventually sometimes admit the unreality of the happenings, which would point to the predication occurring at time of recall. However, there seems to be a more elegant explanation for the objectivity predication occuring at the time of original transcription, in that the feeling of objectivity is imparted by all of the senses of waking conscious life being present at the time of the original perception. Regardless of how exactly the mind predicates objectivity onto what it deems to be legitimate memories, the process

of conceptual formation or imagination can be explained as similar to memory recall, but without the predication of this objectivity occurring. For, concepts must be formed out of the store of memory as well, the only alternative being that they exist somewhere outside of the mind and are received into it like an antenna picking up signal transmissions, an explanation which defies both reason and common sense. The concept of *dog* rests no less on an image than the remembrance of a specific dog, with the only difference that the details of the image are not fixed. There is a general *form* which is produced through the comparison of similar objects, when their similarities are abstracted and set apart from differences in the particular. Platonic philosophers have written exhaustively on this particular process since ancient times, and so we need not give it a full treatment here; what is of greater import to our present inquiry is to prove that concepts do indeed necessarily exist primarily in image, as Aristotle says, "οὐδέποτε νοεῖ ἄνευ φαντάσματος ἡ ψυχή".

In the beginning of this work we gave a brief exposition of the nature of language, which originally is wholly aural, and consists of sequences of sounds which can be associated with a particular referent image. It has been assumed by many that language and images are two separate and distinct *kinds* of elements of thought, and throughout the history of philosophies and religions a holy reverence has been imbued into the *logos* in consequence of this assumption, as being the lone refuge in which man can find repose and order against the ceaselessly changing and impermanent reality of the sensory images. This wishful idea falls apart when we consider the immense biological improbability of there existing two distinct and separate mechanisms of thinking, one for sense and images and another for processing language, which nevertheless can reference each other. Language itself, that ability so revered and wondered at, that supposed proof of man's distinguishing from those animals which he alone seems to have the power to *name*, is not privileged to any supernatural origin, but is like all other mental phenomenon formed out of the substrate of image. Even Arthur Schopenhauer, that great lover of animal life, did not go far enough in his explication of man's essential similarity to animals, as his reverence for the *word* causes him to still yet posit a stark, qualitative difference between man and beast rather than one of mere degree, when he writes:

"Now as representations, thus sublimated and analysed to form abstract conceptions, have, as we have said, forfeited all perceptibility, they would entirely escape our consciousness, and be of no avail to it for the thinking processes to which they are destined, were they not fixed and retained in our senses by arbitrary signs. These signs are words. In as far as they constitute the contents of dictionaries and therefore of language, words always designate *general* representations, conceptions, never perceptible objects; whereas a lexicon which enumerates individual things, only contains proper names, not words, and is either a geographical or historical dictionary: that is to say, it enumerates what is separated either by Time or by Space; [...] It is only because animals are limited to intuitive representations and incapable of any abstraction—incapable therefore of forming conceptions—that they are without language, even when they are able to articulate words; whereas they understand proper names."

Here is evidence of an inherited bias, long running in Western thought, of *logocentrism*. Right away, we see an error in Schopenhauer's conclusion that proper names somehow differ in kind from general words. *All* words, whether verbs, conjunctions or whatever else, are "names" in that they refer to an image, the difference in proper names is only the *degree* of specificity. Illustrative of an animal's ability to have some degree of ability to recognize abstract concepts is that they can obviously recognize and respond in a consistent way to animals of other species, even when the particular animal is different, and dogs can be trained to perform certain actions at a command which evidence ability to associate that command with a general type of target, that is, a general type of image, which logically can be nothing other than a type of abstraction. Indeed, Schopenhauer seems to be overlooking the glaringly obvious fact that animals can learn verbal imperatives which apply to a multitude of situations. The falsity of the conclusion is evidence of an error in the premises, and the error committed by Schopenhauer in this case, through being made clear, reveals a general bias which must be overcome in order to achieve a more accurate idea of human cognition. The reason that Schopenhauer comes to assert a difference between "proper names" and "words", an inane and absurd distinction in this context, is that he starts from the premise that abstract concepts, formed from representations by the process of sublimation and analysis have "forfeited all perceptibility". Thus, while Schopenhauer does not, like

medieval scholastic philosophers, attribute an explicitly holy significance to the faculty of language, he still asserts that *only through language is abstract thinking possible*. While it might be that human beings, based on the way our minds are constituted, require in many cases the *facilitation* of a system of symbols as conveniently manipulatable and lightweight references to the essences which they refer, in order to achieve higher thought *de facto*, this is not a *necessary* connection. How many great flashes on insight have occurred to men in dreams, or in moments of idleness, springing forth spontaneously like Athena from the forehead of Zeus, formed by the imaginative recombination of image alone and entirely without the intermediary of language? We must keep in mind that there is only an *imaginative* faculty, made up of the interpretive schemas of images linked by association, but that there exists no such thing as a *linguistic* faculty, i.e., a seperate process of the mind which is specially constituted to manipulate symbols as something fundamentally different from image. Symbols are themselves images, and are manipulated according to the same processes.

It is clear that the biological utility of the imaginative faculty is immense. For this is the ability by which the mind might learn through insight, refine its own thoughts and behavior, and prepare for hypothetical scenarios; as such it is active in matters of direct urgency and planning, but also is in relaxed states, when the interpretive schemas which constitute the imagination gently course with energy in moments of surplus and repose. Energy is always ceaselessly flowing between states of perception and imagination, and our awareness is totally composed of a sequential progression of images. Let us formalize a second general observation: for any given image there exists the precedent triggers which give rise to it, and the subsequent images which it triggers itself. Proceeding, a third: There are certain directions in which the energy may flow; sensory perception can trigger conceptual images and also feelings; conceptual images also may trigger further conceptual images or feelings, but never can a conceptual image trigger a sensory perception. Sensations flow into our thoughts, but thoughts can not directly produce sensations except through the intermediary of feeling or muscular exertion, though they might *shade* perceptions which lack sufficient clarity for the sense organs, as in when a shape seen in the dark is thought to be something it is not, or a sound mistaken for something else, but this exception merely proves the

general rule, and when sufficient clarity is introduced into a scene the mind loses its momentary power to cast its own ideas and interpretations onto sensations.

We have so far given an explanation of the process of imagining, which is a kind of subset of memory recall in which particular elements of images transcribed in the memory are abstracted, recombined and objectified, and have explained all of this as an emergent property of the simple *a priori* mechanism of association, a mechanism that has its reality supported by what we know of the biological makeup of the nervous system and the nature of the synaptic connection, explained in general by Hebb's famous phrase: “those that fire together, wire together”. We have also dealt with the so-called linguistic faculty, and revealed it to be only a subset of the imagination and not a distinctly different mechanism as has been often been claimed. Before we can begin to give a treatment of our intended subject, however, it is incumbent upon us to offer a description of a further faculty which is oft posited as enjoying an independent existence apart from image: that which is called *reason*. Do not the highly abstract processes involved in logic, mathematics, and the sciences point to some sort of other mechanism besides mere association of images, and to some other, innate faculty of man? The empiricist answer to this problem is hardly in need of our defense, for ever since David Hume demonstrated the sufficiency of the principle of association to explain the nature of reasoning capabilities, he has never been successfully refuted, despite the valiant attempt of Kant, and Hume's original ideas have been developed and refined since he first presented them. Despite this it will be beneficial for us to offer a brief outline of *cause-and-effect interpretation* in the terms of our own system, for clarity's sake, and because the description of the mechanism by which it operates is a fitting transition into the discussion of our ultimate subject.

What men have called reason is exactly the ability to interpret objects as part of a causal chain, that is to say: reason is a *schema of interpretation*, a particular pathway of synaptic connections. It should not be understood as a function working upon information and sorting it from above, but rather an emergent system which arises as a consequence of the mind predicating certain qualities onto phenomena, namely that of being a cause, or being an effect. An object is interpreted *as* a cause or an effect, and by this predication it

is determined which consequent images will be triggered and represented. I can interpret the tree in my garden as an effect, and I will next think of the seed from which it grew, or the actual act of me planting it, or the progression of its species over a long period of evolution. I can also interpret the same tree as a cause, which brings forth thoughts of its fruit, or its benefit to me of shading me from the sun, or the catastrophic damage to my garden it might cause if felled by wind. It must be pointed out that there is nowhere to be found any common connection amongst these notions which can be distinguished as *causality* as such, only particular *causes,* all of which are absolutely different. The only commonality amongst these different relations is that they involve a progression in time. All causal interpretations are chains of chronologically proximal events, and the seemingly universal application of a reasoning power is only the application of empirically derived knowledge of the rhythms and regularities observed in natural occurrences. Our sensible images are always and constantly being associated with what immediately precedes and follows them- it is of interest that Schopenhauer, who like Kant attempted to refute Hume's notion of causality, asks us in "On the Fourfold Principle of Sufficient Reason": "who would think of asserting that musical tones follow one another according to the law of cause and effect?", because this is precisely the feeling that the best music evokes.

We have stated that there is no independent *mechanism* of causal interpretation, being that it can be wholly explained by the principle of association, the sole *a priori* mechanism of the mind. However, it is nevertheless true that men have formed an *image* of causation, abstracted out of observed causes, indeed that which allows us to even speak of causation or refer to it at all. We come to know through experience that certain elements, when placed in certain conjunctions and acted on by the progression of time result in new configurations of elements. This knowledge was intuited long before man ever had the means of language to define it (intuition being those swiftly executed interpretations, so reinforced and occuring so rapidly that they escape the grasp of the conscious reflection), and even the animals know it in some form. Every movement of the eyes and muscles since birth reinforces this fact, and it is perhaps the deepest and original intuition of the animal brain, which is why philosophers have so often made the error of assuming it to be an *a priori* process. The degree to which the creature

makes knowledge of causation an *object* we call its curiosity, and this is perhaps the impetus for play. Human science is the result of reflecting upon, and fixing as a clear concept, this image of causality, and willfully applying experience to association with it in a systematic way. Exploring the implications of the image of causality, both in its intuited and consciously conceptualized form, will do much to elucidate the nature of our subject, as we shall soon see.

The Divine Image

Having now completed a long, albeit necessary, diversion into the nature of image and its role as the basic substrate of all mental activity, we might now have a sufficient basis of knowledge at hand by which to classify and describe types of images. Thus we here return to our original inquiry. The gods, we have said, are necessarily originally known as conceptual images rather than sensational ones. Following from the earlier observation made on this distinction, a god-image, like any conceptual image, might have for its precedent triggers images of sensation, or feeling, or conceptual images, and in turn might itself trigger further feelings, or action, or conceptual images. Defining a particular species requires a determination of those qualities which are uniquely shared among members of that species. It might at first appear that one could thus produce a survey of all the known gods of men, and definitively state what a god in general is by abstracting those qualities shared by all gods; this is the *only* method by which gods have ever been empirically described, that

is, anthropologically, and it has never produced a satisfying result to the question of what a god *is* and what it means as a phenomena. The gods remain mysterious and inexact conceptions to empirical minds, and their description has been always left to poets, priests, and theologians. This failure is the consequence of a confusion, by which it is thought that one is able to create useful taxonomies of subjective information by the same methods that we classify organisms, or any other *objective* phenomena. Conceptual images, being subjective phenomena, require different methods of explication, such as those which we have already used to differentiate the broad classifications of phenomena itself, which is by determining their necessary relations within a networked system of associations, the principle of association being, as we have said, the only *a priori* mechanism of the mind. If we attempt to reach an explanation of the phenomena of gods which functions as more than a fruitless transcription into another set of concepts, we must move towards it stepwise, proceeding carefully and only in accordance with those observations that we have already made about the nature of image and the mind in general. The anthropological information does, however, guide the direction of our steps; we can know objectively what some of the outward effects of gods look like in the behavior of men who worship them, and can help us confirm when we have found *what* we are looking for, but it does not supply the information needed in order to describe the mechanism by which that behavior is conditioned.

Despite the mind of man being so constituted as to allow for seemingly endless wealth of variation and individual character, there is nevertheless a common nature to his functioning which imposes a set of limits and tendencies of his functioning. The objective parameters of his biology and the limited number of types of sensations which are open to him determine the bounds of his experience; and instill regular and nearly ubiquitous thoughts and behaviors in certain regards. As belief in, and worship of gods has been, for the greater part of mankind's history, and assuredly a significant stretch of his prehistory as well, a commonly exhibited behavior among all peoples and tribes, it is pertinent for us to ask if the gods must come to be known by all men through some similar process, that is to say through an emergent property inherent to his mode thinking. How historical men come to know gods, and the place these inherited images occupy within their interpretive

schemae, is a different matter than the question of how gods were originally conceptualized by men at some point in prehistory. Later we shall examine the latter question, here we begin with the former.

There are certain questions which arise, not merely as an application of cause-and-effect interpretation to phenomena, either for curiosity's sake or for the practically beneficial power it affords over the environment, but actually as a *consequence* of the reflected awareness of the causality-image itself. When causal interpretation is first recognized by children as a distinct process or *power* which they might employ, it is natural for them to begin to explore how far they might take it, as is evidenced by their overflowing curiosity and their constant interrogation of adults, which they undertake in an attempt to classify and organize their own mental images.

One discovers that there are certain questions which are themselves unanswerable, though they are necessarily encountered by the application of reason when taken far enough, and these questions mark the bounds of cause-and-effect interpretation. One such question is: why is there anything at all? This question is the necessary end result of a continual process of seeking a cause for an effect, and treating the resulting cause as an effect of its own while seeking a further cause, and so on until one reaches it. This is what we term the *cosmological question*. There is, of course, no answer which can be given to this question on the basis of reason. However, despite this the mind never fails to produce a sort of answer, as any image necessarily triggers its subsequent adherents in the unceasing flow of energy through the network of mental images. One finds that it is hardly possible for the mental activity of the mind to ever really "stop", for every impression points to the next, and this next one again in turn, and so on in an unceasing chain of energetic transmission which continues from before birth until death. The image which is pointed to by the *logically unanswerable* cosmological question we term the *cosmological image*. In arriving at the cosmological image, we now find ourselves tangential to one familiar type of god—a creator god. But is *any* answer to the cosmological question a god, merely by virtue of its position as being so? Surely not, otherwise our definition of a god would be so wide as to hardly be useful. What we have determined, however, is a conceptual space in which a god might be placed, as one of many possible conceptual images. Whether or not an individual does place a god in this position(or thinks to interpret this god itself as an effect) is a matter of

circumstance, but the position itself is *necessarily* reached by the application of cause-and-effect interpretation to certain universal facts of existence. Even a person of purely materialistic opinion, in attempting to trace the generation of the observable world by reasoning back in time through a causal chain, will eventually reach an effect for which he can not determine a cause. One might ask in light of this impossibility, whether it is even appropriate or useful to treat the earliest possible cause as an effect, but this is a question of *value*, and does not change the fact that the question might be nevertheless asked, and that in its asking one comes up against a limit of reasoning (indeed, the fact that this forces a necessary value judgement makes the answering image a valuable piece of information in psychoanalysis).

There is a marked difference in types of gods, then, depending on whether they are held to be an answer to the cosmological question or not. The *created* god might be a cause of interpreted effects, but not the ultimate cause of all effects, while the *creator* god somehow stands outside of cause and effect and gives rise to it, being itself the ultimate cause. The first type of gods, those *created,* we see given clearly in the Rigveda:

ko addhā veda ka iha pra vocat kuta ājātā kuta iya□ vis□□□i□
arvāg devā asya visarjanenāthā ko veda yata ābab

But, after all, who knows, and who can say
Whence it all came, and how creation happened?
The gods themselves are later than creation,
so who knows truly whence it has arisen?

And Hesiod, in the *Theogony,* relates at the beginning of the cosmogony:

ἦ τοι μὲν πρώτιστα Χάος γένετ'

In truth Chaos first of all came to be

Here "Chaos", though given as a proper noun, is taken to mean and endless space, a wholly different thing than the Olympians, which arise generations later in the *Theogeny.* Chaos can hardly be called a "creator god" in the manner of the personal and willful designer, who is taken to be the material, efficient, formal, and teleological cause of everything in existence. Yet, Chaos is an imagistic answer to

the cosmological question all the same.

The specific elements of the cosmological image notwithstanding, its position is necessarily created as an implication of reasoned interpretation of phenomena and will always escape the reach of such interpretation. The interpreter, in asking the question of first causes, is *always* forced to posit something eternal, infinite, and uncaused, no matter the bend of his religious belief. If one were to ask the Abrahamist faiths, "your god created all, but from whence did your God come, and what existed before his coming?" they will answer that he is eternal and uncaused. Similarly, those who explain the creation of the known universe by the so called "big bang" must, when pressed on what there was *before* the event, must admit that the substance of physicality must have already been in some form existent, and if uncaused itself, must necessarily be eternal. Platonist philosophy and its intellectual descendants hold- as Eastern philosophies do- that everything we know and experience consists of a process of necessary emanations from a single *One*, τὸ Ἕν, which is interpreted to be the *first cause* in a chain of being which is both formal and material. The inevitable antimony in conceptions which results from any mind's attempt to grasp what could be *uncaused* is described by Kant:

> "This unconditioned may be cogitated—either as existing only in the entire series, all the members of which therefore would be without exception conditioned and only the totality absolutely unconditioned—and in this case the regressus is called infinite; or the absolutely unconditioned is only a part of the series, to which the other members are subordinated, but which Is not itself submitted to any other condition. In the former case the series is a parte priori unlimited (without beginning), that is, infinite, and nevertheless completely given. But the regress in it is never completed, and can only be called potentially infinite. In the second case there exists a first in the series. This first is called, in relation to past time, the beginning of the world; in relation to space, the limit of the world; in relation to the parts of a given limited whole, the simple; in relation to causes, absolute spontaneity (liberty); and in relation to the existence of changeable things, absolute physical necessity."

Kant goes on, in the second book of the Transcendental Dialectic, to show the absolutely false ground of the cosmological problem. The reader is urged to read this section of the *Critique* for himself for a thorough understanding, but here we will at least quote Kant's summarizing conclusion:

"If the world is a whole existing in itself, it must be either finite or infinite. But it is neither finite nor infinite—as has been shown, on the one side, by the thesis, on the other, by the antithesis. Therefore the world—the content of all phenomena—is not a whole existing in itself. It follows that phenomena are nothing, apart from our representations."

Thus, asking the cosmological question is grasping at a shadow, and any given answer to it a mere phantasm without a possible justification according to an interpretive schema of cause-and-effect. It is the image of the breakdown of causal interpretation, the point at which some other mode of interpretation, motivated by a different value, takes up the torch which the will-to-truth could no longer bear.

Might this role of a god-image, as a stand-in cause, be not only applied to the cosmological question as the *primum movens*, but also in fact to any question of cause? It seems obvious that this is so, for all pre-scientific peoples have had ideas of gods causing natural phenomena, ruling the cycle of the seasons and heavenly bodies, and so on. This of course varies in the details in different cultures and beliefs, but nevertheless something like this idea can generally be found. For, while we afford the cosmological question special treatment because it is indeterminable *de jure*, there are of course, always a multitude of causes in the empirical world which are unknowable *de facto,* due simply to the constraints on our observation and knowledge. To posit a god as the cause of a directly observable effect seems, to a man of the scientific age, the most primitive of superstitions. He believes that all questions concerning empirical reality can be explained through reason and the scientific method. Mankind's total wealth of scientific knowledge, and the methods by which it is systematically conducted, however, is quite a different thing than the empirically-based reasoning capabilities of any one person at any particular time. The fact remains that while the man educated in natural science may be able to explain the material causes of much of the objective phenomena he perceives, even the foremost spearhead of science has barely penetrated the inner realm of man, and that which is closest and most personal to him-thoughts, dreams, motivations, feelings- have their origins shrouded in mystery. Man has a vague idea of subjective phenomena arising from somewhere within him, and he might even apply a rudimentary interpretation of physical explanation to the perception of his inner phenomena, but this will in practice fail to satisfy the rigors of actual

scientific investigation, while also being insufficient to keep up with the constant push and pull of forces which makes up the experience of active life. The scientific method is suited for times when it can be focused and applied with careful intent, but is too unwieldy a tool for constant application to experience. Thus, modern man arrogantly thinks that, due to the advancements of scientific learning, he clearly and rationally understands the world he lives in, when truly he is much of the time wandering in a world of shadow. Ask a modern man from whence his dreams come, and he is likely to be forced to admit ignorance, or say it is "up for scientific debate", or something along these lines. Now, how different is this quivering answer from the confident assertion of Achilles:

ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε δή τινα μάντιν ἐρείομεν ἢ ἱερῆα
ἢ καὶ ὀνειροπόλον, καὶ γάρ τ' ὄναρ ἐκ Διός ἐστιν

but come then, some seer or priest let us ask,
or else some interpretor of dreams, for a dream too is from Zeus

Thus we clearly see how the god-image functions as a *decisive* limit to the abstracted concept of the perception, in stark contrast to that which results from a faithful adherence to rational explanation. The man who attributes his inner feelings to the influence of gods has an immediate idea of whence they arise, and so he expends no energy in grasping for the cause of a sensation, and thus he is free to simply experience the state in question. The insistence on rationalization has the effect of taming the passions, as the energy of the feeling can be diverted into the process of analyzation, and the passion can be objectified and "distanced" from the observer.

Thus we see what can be the great adaptive advantage of a worldview ordered by a system of god-images, not in the common anthropological interpretation in which religion is seen as conducive to maintaining a social order, but on the level of the individual psyche. The gods, as readily familiar images, "surround" conceptual schemas of interpretation, that is to say that the concepts within the domain of association of the god-image, when subjected to a causal interpretation, find a quick end to the causal chain in the image. The god-image puts an end to inquiry, questioning, and anxiety, as it is simple and complete. Thus, the gods are *facilitators to action*. But is there any special quality to a god-image which allows them to fulfill this role better than other types of images? For, cause-and-effect

interpretations might be condensed into short-hand concepts which are not always scientific, and which function much like the god-image in this role. While the religious man might ascribe a sudden insight to a god-given clarity of vision, a deist or an atheistic man may credit a vague notion of "synchronicity", or some other abstract concept. It may seem that functionally there is little difference between the two interpretations, both facilitate a seemingly decisive "answer" to the question of the cause of the phenomena, and allow for the man to freely continue in his thought process. Yet, there is a difference: an abstract and vague image such as "synchronicity" is a concept arrived at *out of* the occurrence of the phenomenon itself, whereas the god-image has its own identity, its own *being,* which exists *outside of* the narrow bounds of a single type of occurrence, and from this exterior position *bestows* this quality to the perception. Synchronicity, as a concept, can describe one particular type of perception, it has a form which is limited to describing a single phenomenon, and indeed the very reason of it being a concept at all is that a name was given to this specific phenomenon to fix it in the mind.[1] The god-image, meanwhile, exists independent of the particular type of phenomena, for gods subsume various domains of influence into a single being. The bolt of lightning and wisdom are both phenomena which fall under the domain of Zeus, but what have these things to do with each other? What is the nature of the image of Zeus, that it is able to contain such disparate elements? We must say that the god has a *character.*

What we call character is a concept made out of a complex of traits found in an individual or a type, but there is also a sense in which the character has its own, deeper existence which reciprocally generates the traits. We form an idea of an individual's character by observing their behavior and determining their specific traits, yet when we say we "get to know" the individual in question, what we think of as their character seems less a sum total of traits than a deeper, core quality, of which the observed traits are only outward manifestations. How peculiar then, this attribute of the gods so taken for granted, that they have *character.* If we attempt to explain the gods as only explanations for observed effects, why is there not always to

1 The creator god-image, it must then be observed, can hardly be called a god at all, or if we admit it into the same genus, it is surely a different species than a god of domains. For the creator god *to the extent that it is merely a creator* is really more similar to an abstract notion, like that of synchronicity which we cited in the example above, limited to being a relation to a specific question than as enjoying a truly independent existence.

be found in every tradition innumerable gods, different for every possible domain and effect? Something like this is indeed nearly the case in certain instances, and one observes that the more gods there are within a religious interpretation of the world, and the more separate and limited their domains, the less character they necessarily have. This is because the idea of character must come from a sum of different traits before the *abstract* notion of the character as the generator of those traits can be formed. Why do higher forms of polytheistic religion, in which there are fewer gods with greater character (as opposed to the lower form: more gods of lesser character) ever come to be at all? It seems that there must be something more to the idea of these higher types of gods than merely being a stand in for an unknown cause. In the following section, we will trace the development of man's conception of the divine, in the hope that, in arriving at a theory which might offer explanation for this process of development, the different types of god-images and their standing in relation to each other will be made clear.

Origins of the Divine Image

The gods are indelibly bound up with man's intuition of character. We must be careful, however, not to make the assumption which is so often made, that the origin of the gods is a consequence of man projecting his intuition of character onto phenomenon. For, this is in no way an obvious truth, and it might equally be that man first knew the gods, and his intuition of character comes from projecting *their* image onto phenomenon. Or still yet, it may be that the two matters grew up simultaneously in coevolution, or that they spring from a common source.

It seems like an injustice, and a will-to-ignorance, to simply dismiss the creation of the gods as being due to some idle fantasy of man, as if they might be of the same quality and origins as any invented character with which men fill their fictions. It is commonly thought by the anthropologists that the god-images are informed by the values and ideas of a people, and a concretization of those values. Following this idea, it is still unclear in what way they came to be, whether the work of artists or poets or something else, and if they were indeed the projected creations of relatively few individuals, why then did they enjoy unanimous reverence for such a long period? The force and vivacity of the god-image, and its place of awe-inspiring authority over elements of nature, means that their origin in man's imagination as a *desired* or consciously *willed* phenomenon is unlikely. While man can often have a will towards creating characters and fictions, how would this result, in the deepest

remoteness of prehistory, in a complete pantheon, in which all domains of nature are divided without embarrassing contradictions and overlap in the roles of the gods, in addition to the fact that in the meeting of remote cultures, they were often able to instantly recognize their own gods in the images of the other? That a mere creation of man of the same nature as any other could possess such vivacity and commanding reverence, that the images spread all throughout the world with the migrations and wanderings of people into divergent groups, and that over aeons still retained a level of consistency in their form which allowed them to be comparatively identified with each other, is hardly likely. It is more likely that there is something *endemic* about the gods and god-worship which explains its universality. The particular values of a people may have indeed informed the expression of their images, but in the same way as in intuition of character, we might ask in this case also: did the value arise first, or the god? Or are the two, again, divergent from out of a single quality or process?

We have, in the previous section, given some account of different species of god-images which might be grouped under a genus. But these collectively might be subsumed under a higher classification, that of the δαίμων (daemon): a spirit particular to a person, place, or narrow activity, and eventually coming to mean a lower power than a proper *god* or θεός. But δαίμων is also used to denote the quality of *divine power in general,* as such it is a word to express *fate*, *chance*, and any sort of power unseen to humans in its origins, imbued with a sense of agency. The process of the differentiation of the θεός out of the δαίμων will prove, in its explication, invaluable to our understanding of the geneaology of divinity and the god-image.

That primitive and indigenous cultures unanimously exhibit an *animist* view of the world is perhaps the most well attested fact in the anthropology of religion. (The naturalness of animism to the organism, and its place of precedence to all other forms of spiritual interpretation, is evidenced by the fact that it is seen to develop, untaught, in young children.) Animism itself can be defined, in terms of interpretive schemata, as the association of phenomena with an intuition of *agency.* At least, this is how it appears to us, looking backwards in development. As for the animist himself, his perception is not *imbuing* an *abstraction* of agency *into* phenomena, indeed this is not how the worldview is formed at all. Rather, it is only later in the

development of his interpretive schemae, when man creates the abstract concepts of *animate* and *inanimate* and proceeds to subject phenomena to classification by this division, that a concept of animism can even be seen from outside and named. It is probable that the great majority of human beings who have ever lived never even reached this realization, despite it appearing as the most fundamental sort of knowledge to us. The distinction between animate and inaminate only occurs at the moment which the perception does begin to "cast" qualities upon what it percieves, when the associations between bodies and movements gathered in a sufficiently powerful memory become strong enough to recognize a distinction and thus create a framework for perception- a schema- which classifies those things which seem to originate movement within themselves apart from that which can only be moved upon impact. Growth, too, is a kind of movement, which brings even plants into the former class; however a distinction of animate and inanimate should not be mistaken for an awareness of *biological* life, which itself is a further realization. The rivers and ocean, the wind, and the heavenly bodies all seem to generate their own motion, but they are marked apart by their apparent eternality. The creatures and plants of the earth, the principal "movers" that one would recognize, are all characterized by growth, change, and a passing away; paradoxically it is only through observing death that the interpretor is able to distinguish what we now think of to be living things as a subclass of movers.

In coming to create a class of *living movers*, what is the second class which is necessarily created as its counterpart? It is surely not *dead movers*, for a dead thing is already by definition a non-mover, and the interpretation which takes rocks and corpses to be imbued with spirit is that more primitive form of awareness which we already leave behind when we make the distinction between movers and non-movers. The counterpart classification is really *non-dying movers*, or, more exactly: non-*changing* movers, δαίμων. And hence man at this stage, while no longer perceiving individual spirits in trees, rocks, and clouds, still perceives spirits *behind* them, just one that is more concentrated and encompassing. Thus, spirit is concentrated from out of objects into places; the δαίμων is of the forest rather than individual trees, the spirits of soil and grains condense into the earth, the clouds and weather into the spirit of the sky, and so on. We must take care to remember, however, that when we say the perception of

spirit is concentrated, we are talking about an interpretive schema which interprets phenomena as effects of causal agents being *reduced* so that it might explain a greater amount of effects by relation to a fewer number of agents, or spirits. The animist is not in actuality *aware* of spirit, because he lives *within* a world of unbounded agency and, like a fish in water, he can not form an abstract concept of spirit until he develops a more restrictive and discerning mode of interpretation which is able to *deny* spirit to phenomena. This power to deny an individual spirit is exactly that of rational intepretation- in the most primitive animist state, the tidal wave coming into shore is a spirit of its own, self-contained and motivistic, it is the cause of its own effect. At a higher level of sophistication, man might notice that the phenomenon of the tidal wave always comes to be out of previous conditions, in other words the wave is placed within a broader system of causes and effect, and the agency is now perceived to be antecedent to the wave itself, in the sea storm. Then further, the storm is conditioned by its necessary origination in the sea itself, therefore the sea finally becomes the perceived agent, who conjures the tidal wave as a power. As this process of interpreting phenomena in terms of more antecedent causes- or, concentrating of spirit- continues, we come out of the primeval, animal state of awareness into something recognizable as polytheism, and a percieved dual-order of god and man.

Taking a step back, we might extrapolate from this change to recognize a process working through the whole course of the history of religion. As man's powers of rational interpretation increase in their efficacy, mundane causes continue to be posited for effects, and the bounds of spirit are pushed to more antecedent stages in the causal chain. Fewer and fewer instantiations of spirit cover a greater number of phenomenon, until eventually we arrive at a single god which is the sole fount of all spirit.

So far, we have only been examining this process with regard to man's perception of the spirits in those natures exterior to himself, but what about his inner perception, that of the forces which work within? Does man's interpretation of his inner motivations follow a similar trajectory to that of exterior forces, developing from a perception of individual spirits acting on his body to eventually coalesce into a single source of spirit, *his own spirit,* from which all his inner phenomena commences? This general hypothesis has been put forward in various forms, most famously by

Julian Jaynes in his *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind,* and Bruno Snell in *The Discovery of the Mind in Greek Philosophy and Literature.* The former posits environmental stress induced by the collapse of bronze age civilization as a driver of self-realization, while the latter posits instead a developing tension between the individual and the collective, specifically occuring among the Greeks. I believe that the progression in self-awareness which both scholars are attempting to describe is a real one, but is exaggerated in both cases, and attributed to causes which are much too narrow. For even indigenous animist peoples display some degree of a sense of self; they may not, in the traditional way of Westerners, believe in a persistent, unchanging being at the root of their own selves, but they doubtlessly have the capacity to recognize their own person as a *source of movement*. The development of the sense of the individual clearly has degrees, but the universality of this occurence across cultures seems to fly in the face of it being attributable to some specific historical time and place, and it is better explained by the innate tendency in man to refine and expand his interpretation of cause-and-effect. The same process by which he forms ideas of external movers by the coalescing of images to centers of their generation also applies to the inner world of experience, in which out the flux of interior forces are formed notions of distinct agents. Feelings, motivations and realizations can be attributed either to exterior spirits or to an inner source of the self, which man then in turn interprets as a distinct mover, and comes to be what is called the soul. Snell is probably correct to say that a particular sense of self- that which we would term the soul-image- is first uniquely developed in Greece, and through the Greek development of the image, subsequently bestowed onto Western conceptions of self; however the explanation that the particular distinction which makes possible this concept is a consequence of a particular social organization is too limited in scope; we would rather assert that the soul-image arises out of a more integral and endemic process: that of distinguishing foci of causes from out of the flux of experiential images. The self, being that which is felt to exist within the limits of the physical body and its organs of sense, will naturally be determined to be a *mover* when subjected to the classification of a sufficiently discerning intellect. This explanation for the sense of self we hold to be simpler and more universally applicable than previous attempts.

The development of the image of the self, then, is a result of the same process by which the interpretor develops the images of the daimons. but in the world of interior perceptions the self-image is by no means the *only* image interpreted as an agent, for the daimons exist behind inner phenomena just the same as exterior, as competing images amongst interpretations. It is probable that throughout a long stretch of prehistory the self-image was constructed slowly and through struggle, and is an ongoing process which moves by degrees, rather than the result of a sudden change which occured in a quality of consciousness. The process moves in tandem with its coevolutionary partner, the process of daemonic concentration; as spirits coalesce into more general powers, the greater the conceptual space which may be alotted to the agency of the self and the development of the individual personality. Thus we recognize a trend in the history of man's perception: in the state of animal awareness there is little to no reinforcement of the self-image, and spirit is a quality recognized equally everywhere and in all phenomena; there then might be defined all manner of intermediary stages in which the self-image becomes progressively reinforced while spirit is concentrated into fewer agents; and finally at the extreme opposite to the animal consciousness we see an interpretation of experience in which all matter is inert and spirit has been concentrated as far as possible, into the single point, while the self reaches its utmost bounds. Of these three broadly defined stages we have offered a description of the first, our task remains to detail the other two.

What we may broadly call the theistic interpretation is known to us best through our relation to antiquity, but even over the course of that age, from the world of the Homeric poems to the Edict of Thessalonica, religious expression and the nature of the god-images changes greatly. What distinguishes this class of interpretation as a whole is that the daimon is crystallized into more-or-less fixed images upon which conceptual associations might be made, and we mus note that by this definition is ecompassed so-called polytheistic and monotheistic religion alike, which are more akin to each other than either is to the philosophically sophisticated monist or emanationist interpretations of the divine. We might trace in its earlier stages the development of *character* in the god-images, and the very different form this takes among various peoples, and how in certain times and places the tendency towards their abstraction (as a result of rational

interpretation) creates a situation in which they are little differentiated from mere concepts.

When an image is transcribed to the memory it takes its place within the network of associations, and as such conceptual qualities may be predicated upon it. At first the lightning bolt is functionally equivalent to a spirit or a god, and then in a subsequent stage the agency is shifted from the phenomenon itself to an unseen power which presides *behind* the lightning bolt. The phenomenon itself, which is seen, becomes only an effect and a sign, while the gods, the true forces of nature, are unseen. What this means is that the animating forces of natural phenomena are intuited, yet their definite form cannot be supplied by the senses. As such, other forms of their manifestation, are supplied by the imagination in addition to those sensed phenomena which signal their presence. The manifestations of the gods vary among peoples– assuming animal forms, or the anthropomorphic figures characteristic of Indo-European descended peoples, or the chimaeric forms of the Egyptians. The types of forms which arise are doubtless determined by a great number of factors, and most likely correlative in some way to the values and character of a people. How exactly the attributes and qualities of a people's gods come to be settled upon and widely recognized among them is a difficult question to answer; it is possible that a relatively small number of talented persons, fulfilling a role which could be seen as a common ancestor to both the priest and poet, were responsible for intuitively generating the myths which describe the actions of the gods and teaching them to their fellows; this, however, is only speculation.

In any case, what does it mean that gods be manifested through imagined forms at all? Why do they not remain impersonal and formless? For, nearly all peoples of the world have found it natural and necessary to formulate these symbols of their being.

These forms grow to encompass different aspects and qualities which are seemingly unconnected, as when we previously pointed out both lightning and wisdom to be attributes of Zeus. It would not do to explain this as a merely random collection of images, for gods have a certain unity of form in many cases if not all, and certainly those of the Greek pantheon appear especially well-formed and coherent, the individual members spanning the whole gamut of human experience, yet with clear separation between their respective domains. There must necessarily have been something

existent which was intuited, some nexus around which the disparate qualities gravitate and coalesce upon to bring about the stable image of the gods. For even if we postulate a process of mimetic selection, by which the more well-formed and better received images persisted while the images that were not to a people's liking were forgotten, there must still be something existent, some recognition of value or truthful accuracy which was the basis for this selection process.

It seems reasonable that anthropomorphic images are more likely to be spread and be retained due to their greater capacity to impress upon the human mind. As social creatures, the interpretive schemata by which we arrive at judgements of human character from observations of their behavior are particularly well-formed and reinforced. While it is true that man finds character not only in men but in things as well, *human* character is the most subtly displayed and contains the greatest capacity for differentiation and complexity amongst our interpretations. Indeed the language we use to describe human characters is transplanted from the whole gamut of experience- what else besides a person could be described in so many manners as fiery, slippery, dark, bright, bubbly, rough, dry, cold, thorny and so on, with the meaning of all of these being immediately clear? The necessity of anthropomorphic representations of the gods becoming the dominant ones is thus also because it is the form capable of the greatest nuance. If the language and images of the human being make up our most developed system of description, it would follow that the gods, perceived with awful reverence on account of their powers and eternality, and thus as greater than humanity, would reach their greatest possible expression in terms of the human– this being the best that humanity could achieve. Thus, the images of the gods are given through the myths, in which they interact with the world and each other in a way similar to humans, and the character of their power translated is into human terms. The gods then, are organized in the perception by the relationships between each other, and also between themselves and that which is directly observed to be their effects in nature. This organization and speciation lays the ground by which differentiation then becomes possible; once the domains of the individual gods are defined as a system of interpretation, phenomena might be inductively classed into those domains, and so over time the gods pick up the attributes which naturally go along with their character. The question of what is the *primary* or *original* attribute of any particular god is a matter for

investigation which must take into account a great complexity of factors which differ in each individual case. In some instances such as the various forms of the Indo-European Dyeus, the Roman Mars, or the widely recognized Earth-mother archetype, it is easier to put forward a likely hypothesis, while in other cases such as a Hermes there is more room for speculation.

It can be seen that the basis of this anthropomorphic interpretation is formed by intuition, and not developed by a rational process, but we must not lose sight of the fact that it was a sort of increase in the rational powers which brought man out of the animal and then the animist awareness. By instigating a recognization of objective causes which relieved a thick humidity of spirituality, and condensing spirit out of the whole of phenomena into a fewer amount of more general and subtle powers, the increase in rational interpretation brings man to the polytheistic form of religion. The process of bringing those sensed powers into fixed images through myth and art is a separate process, undertaken with different modes of interpretation, but meanwhile the process of increasing rationalization of experience can continue, and indeed does continue, driven on by the desire for increased power over the environment which objective knowledge of cause-and-effect promises to grant. This ongoing process, which has so far in our examination brought us to polytheism, continues to be interwoven with the genealogy of gods. For one, the polytheistic pantheon begins to be subjected to rational interpretations, abstracting the gods and challenging the place they occupy within man's interpretive framework; meanwhile secondly there is another quite momentous effect, the birth of an altogether new species of god-image, the conception of Τὸ Ἕν, the One, or μονάς, the monad.

Once the gods are more-or-less solidified in their forms and fixed as concepts, it becomes possible for man to look at them anew, through a different, rational mode of interpretation. The will to interpret phenomena as effects for which causes must be found, the same will which brought man quite unconsciously to recognize individual agency in both himself and others, at some point becomes a more deliberate process, and an *end* to itself. This moment is the birth of *truth* as a value. Formerly, truth was a valuable asset towards the attainment of other values; it was good to know how things work in order that one might have power over them or control their processes, such as the truth that certain exercises keep the limbs of

the body supple and strong, or the ratio of metals that produce the strongest type of bronze. Cause-and-effect interpretation was thus intuitively applied in the service of *arts*; and the function of *analysis,* which means to dissolve the unity of images into their constituent elements, was always employed in preparation for synthetic recombination of those elements. This double process of analysis and synthesis is of course what has made possible the technological progression of man from the time of the first stone spearheads to the present day, it is the basic methodology of all his arts and sciences.

Man's intrepid application of rational interpretation to the phenomena he experiences takes quite a different turn at some point in ancient times when a certain type of man, who we now call the *philosopher*, makes a value of analysis for its own sake, and attempts to *lyse* experience as a whole into its most basic elements in order to discover its most general principles. On one hand, the hypotheses of the pre-Socratics regarding the ἄρχαί, fundamental elements and processes of nature, do not strictly displace the traditional Greek pantheon, for in the Greek conception of theogeny the gods are *created* beings along with all other named beings, works of nature which, like men, she only arrives at by working up to them; at this point the history of religious thought has yet to arrive at the cosmological arguments resulting from the positing of an *uncreated* god. Nevertheless, the gods themselves become objects of scrutiny and analysis as a result of this inquiring nature, naturally leading to critical sentiments such as that expressed by Xenophanes:

Ἄνθρωποι μὲν γὰρ τὰς θεοὺς εἶναι νομίζουσι γεγενημένας,
ὁμοίας φωνᾶς καὶ εἶδος καὶ σῶμα ἔχειν ταῖς ἰδίαις.
εἰ δὲ βοῦς ἢ λέον ἢ ἵππος χεῖρας εἶχεν
καὶ εἴργαζεν ὥσπερ ἄνθρωπος, ἵππος ἵπποις
ἄν τ' εἶδος θεῶν ηὐξάνετο καὶ ἔργα ἰμάτια τε
οἷα περ οἱ αὐτοῖς θεοῖς τετράσχοιεν ἄν,
βοῦς βοός τ' ὁμοίως καὶ θεοὺς οἷα τοῖς ἵδοις ἐποίουν

Mortals suppose that the gods are born, and that they have clothes and voices and shapes like their own. So if oxen and horses and lions had hands or could paint with their hands and create works of art like those made by humans, then horses would paint the forms of the gods like horses, and oxen like oxen, and they would make the bodies of the gods in the same way as their own.

Despite that the truth of Xenophanes' conclusion is by no means demonstrated(for if man knew of a being greater in power than

himself, would he not think them a more fitting representation of god than himself? Likewise, men might as well be the gods of oxen and horses, for the power they exert over them), nevertheless the bias inherent to the sentiment is one that, while regarded as impious by the wider society of Xenophanes' own time, will come to dominate the opinions of the later Hellenistic age. Over that time we see a self-consciousness develop in the Greek mind, at least among the educated, towards their own anthropomorphic representations; out of this uncertainty comes the rise of popular philosophies such as Stoicism and Epicureanism, the reduction of the gods to abstract, impersonal principles, and also the embracing of Eastern mystery religion in which the mythologies serve as formulae for a personal process of salvation, with the gods becoming interpreted as elements of these formulae. The new attitude of the learned and sophisticated allowed for one to opine upon the ways in which man might relate to the divine, this tendency being clearly ripened to maturity by the time of Plutarch, who says:

Ἡ γὰρ πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν ζήτησις, θείων πραγμάτων ὑπόθεσιν ἔχουσα καὶ ἐξετάσεις, ἔργον ἐστὶ καθαρώτερον ἁγίων βίων καὶ νεωστί τινος λειτουργίας

> For the search for truth requires for its study and investigation the consideration of sacred subjects, and it is a work more hallowed than any form of holy living or temple service

Such a thought would have been incomprehensible to the Greeks of a time that was still steeped in the more-or-less traditional religion; Homer's heroes declare the will and tendencies of their gods as proverbial wisdom, knowledge of them is communal and references to them are interspersed liberally throughout their speech. To men of such a culture, an individual "search for truth" regarding the gods would be quite a foreign concept.

The work in which the above quoted passage of Plutarch is found, a section of his *Moralia* devoted to the explication of Egyptian gods Isis and Osiris, is itself indicative of a relationship to divinity which aims towards generalization and abstraction, for only through such means is syncretism possible. Plutarch goes on in the same work:

ἐπεὶ ὁ θεὸς ὁ πάντων ἀγαθῶν τε καὶ ἀληθῶν ἔργων ἐστὶ ποιητὴς καὶ οὐδὲν

παρὰ τοῖς θεοῖς δυσαρέστου ἢ συμφορωτέρου γένους, δῆλον ὅτι τὰ τῶν διαφόρων λατρειῶν ἓν εἶδος ἀλλήλοις συμφέροντα ὑπάρχει. ὁ μὲν γὰρ θεὸς πανταχοῦ καὶ πανταχόθεν ὀνομαζόμενος εἷς τις καὶ ἀναπτύσσων ἐν πᾶσιν ἡμῖν τὴν ἰδέαν, ὁ δὲ τὰ πάντα ὡς ἕν θεωρῶν καὶ πάντα τοῖς ἕνι λόγοις κυριεύοντα μᾶλλον οὐδὲν τῶν ἑτεροζητημάτων, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, προτάξει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τοὺς τῆς πολιτείας ἢ τῆς ἔθνους νόμους καὶ δόγματα, οὐδὲ ἀπαιτήσει τὰς ἰδιωτικὰς λειτουργίας καὶ θυσίας.

And since the Deity is the author of all that is good and true, and since there can be no conflict or opposition among the divine powers, it is clear that the various forms of worship are in essential agreement with one another. For the Divine Being, though called by various names, is one and the same in all countries and among all peoples. Moreover, he who regards all things as one, and sees the universe as a single great whole, will not, I imagine, be likely to lay down laws and ordinances for the conduct of human life that are peculiar to some one city or nation; nor will he require from men the performance of special rites and ceremonies

What this interpretation requires is a conception of divinity which has been abstracted away from any individual god or pantheon, a recognition of the divine as being more than adjectival but as something with its own being, of which the gods may partake in or be emblematic of, but are not synonymous with. While previously, a thing was divine if it comes from or originates with the gods, now divinity has become a condition which has certain other requirements and parameters, arrived at by extra-theological means, and the gods themselves are subjected to judgement by its standards. The example of the Greeks, and their movement in this direction from the Archaic and Classical ages into the Hellenistic, makes the matter exceptionally clear, due to the wealth of writing we have inherited from stages all along the process. We come to a point somewhere after Pindar, at which arguments of all philosophies and opinions going forward- whether they affirm the divine status of the traditional gods or whether they deny it whilst positing some alternative image– have as a common ground the assumption that this divine quality has *some* meaning on its own, which is not dependent upon the gods themselves. In Homer, the word denoting the divine quality, θεῖος, is always taken to mean *the quality of being from the gods*[2]; in other words, it is the connection to the gods which

2 Subtly distinguished from the genitive plural of the word for a god proper: τῶν θεῶν, in that while this may also be translated into English as "of the gods" it implies a direct sense of either possession or origin, while the predicative adjectival form dispels of these competing notions, not meaning that the thing *comes out of the gods,* nor that it is *being of the gods* in the sense of being a god itself, but rather only *of the gods* in the purest sense, in that the same excellence which they

makes a thing divine. It is peculiar that an interpretive shift occurred which could retain the idea of divinity whilst possibly denying the gods which gave rise to the term in the first place.

It must be understood that this is a radically different way of ordering the divine image than all which came before. What we might call the organic synthesizing of the original representations of the gods resulted in something much more than an intellectualized, abstract concept; the gods, as condensed points of a previously all-pervasive awareness of spirit, served as man's connection back to the animal awareness, what we might call a total and uninterrupted state of religious experience. The divine was anything which they the gods bestowed, synonymously meaning anything in which the characteristic pattern of their excellence was to be found. How different, then, are the philosophers' conceptions, like that of Plato, with his list of requirements which the divine must satisfy in order to *be* the divine. It is only that which is: Τὸ ἀγαθόν, *the good*; ἀμετάβλητος, *immutable*; τέλειος, *perfect*; ὑπερκείμενος, *transcendent*; and so on. This sort of conception is *also* synthetically constructed, it is true; however this differs greatly from the traditional polytheistic interpretation in that while the images of the original gods were formed by qualities coalescing around fixed points of perception- the points themselves known from *direct* experience of natural phenomena- and thus forming "domains" of images, the philosopher's god is meanwhile formed wholly from abstract conceptions which are themselves synthesized out of the lysed elements of experience.

The characteristics of these new god-images vary widely among the different sects of philosophy; Epicurus' requirement of the divine was that the gods be eternally contented and free from worry; the Stoics held that only the forces which created the world could be regarded as divine, and so like many others decided upon the necessity of a god being *uncreated;* meanwhile others dare to deny any existence at all to the gods.

By far the most interesting school, and most relevant to our inquiry, is the Platonist one, for the way in which those of his influence, which includes most of Western philosophy since, take the methodology of a purely abstract notion of divinity to its farthest conclusions. For, while all of the schools mentioned subjected the idea of the divine to rational interpretation, Plato goes further in

posses might be found in the thing.

making a conception of the divine *out of the very process of abstract thinking itself,* an idea which has perhaps had the greatest influence of any upon the history of thought; what he names the ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ εἰκὼν, the image of the good.

Previous to Plato, already Pythagoras, and to a lesser degree Xenophanes and Parmenides, had brought forth conceptions in which divinity and spirit are condensed as far as possible into a single, indivisible point– a monad. The tendency towards the monad is the inevitable result of a human will which attempts to carve out an ever greater space for itself, and stands as the opposite extreme to that state of animism in which all perception is bound up with spirit. The monad, in whatever form it takes, is the *philosophical* god *par excellence*, distinguished by the fact that it is in all cases something which is originally a *predicated attribute* being taken to possess a *substantive* quality. Take, for example, the Pythagorean idea that the material cause of all substance is its participation in number, and that the number series itself possesses primacy, leading to the conclusion that the first number from which the number series is derived, the one or the monad, is the material cause of the universe. Number, originally arising *out of* images as a quality or element which can be separated by analysis, is here taken to exist with a primacy of its own, and the predicate-image relationship is (conceived as) inverted. Take again the further example of Parmenides, who presents a more sophisticated monist interpretation of reality than the Pythagoreans; in this case the predication which is elevated to the level of unconditioned substance is *being* itself:

Μόνος δ' ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο λείπεται ὡς ἔστιν

Yet still one path is left to speak of: *it is*.

The innovation in interpretation here that results in such opaque language (even despite the liberality of my translation done for clarity's sake) is that the verb for *to be* becomes a substantive. “Being” is seemingly the most general and abstract quality that one might arrive at, and Parmenides in his elevation of this quality to a status of fundamental primacy has made a great stride in the philosopher's quest, that is, to negate as much as possible any and all positive qualities of the cosmological image, in determining the most general principle, the form of forms. To Parmenides, everything that

is, is substance, and all of sensible phenomena in its multifarious variations exists only on a lower plane of the accidental formulations of this substance. Of course, if this substance is to be found everywhere and everything is made *of* it, it cannot be distinguished by the perception, for there is nothing by which it might be differentiated.

It seems that Parmenides has here succeeded in generating the first concept of the divine which is wholly negative, i.e. that nothing positive can be asserted in its definition. The divine is not only restricted to the most focused point possible as Pythagoras had tried to do by condensing all generation and spirit into the monad, but now all positive qualities of the image which might arise are brutally supressed. Yet Plato carries the process a step further, and in doing so sets the ground for all metaphysical reasoning until Kant and the *Critique*. For, there is a gap in Parmenides' conception which we must examine, one which allows generation and mutability to creep back into his construction like tenacious vines extending tendrils through a crack in the concrete.

From a functional perspective, Parmenides' realization is the fixing of *ways of knowing* as images in their own right, by becoming objects of the perception represented in his work as the , "paths". He relates the words of the goddess[3]:

Εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἐρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας,
αἵπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι·
ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,
Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος- Ἀληθείῃ γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ-,
ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι,
τὴν δή τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν·
οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐὸν-οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν-
οὔτε φράσαις.

Come now, I will tell thee - and do thou hearken to my saying and carry it away - the only two ways of search that can be thought of. The first, namely, that It is, and that it is impossible for anything not to be, is the way of conviction, for truth is its companion. The other, namely, that It is not, and that something must needs not be, - that, I tell thee, is a wholly untrustworthy path. For you cannot know what is not - that is impossible - nor utter it

3 Indeed, the very fact that this knowledge itself is given by a goddess (and presented by Parmenides in dactylic verse no less) is an interesting indication that he has not fully seperated from traditional Hellenic religious notions

There is the way of knowing what *is*, in other words, recognition of the essential substance of all things to be permanent and unchanging, and the way of knowing the "that something must needs not be", that is to say the knowledge of the world of change, the phenomenal world. We have already pointed out that an essence common to all things is in effect a meaningless predication, as it can never be distinguished by the perception, and the reason that Parmenides does not make this conclusion is because his thinking is preoccupied with determining the source of representations in things-in-themselves, his thinking, though it can be said to be epistemological in content, is still wholly directed *outward,* and in this he remains in line with the pre-Socratics and their search for the arch-principle of reality, the ἀρχή (arkhe). As long as he fails to reconcile the two ways of knowing, his conception will necessary involve two wholly separate and irreconcilable worlds rather than fulfill the role of a true unitary principle. The goddess had presented two paths to Parmenides, two ways of knowing, but to what kind of knowing did she make the presentation? What is the nature of the mind, represented by Parmenides himself, which can stand before the two paths and consider them separately?

This is where we return to Plato, now capable of recognizing the full import of *his* innovation. While Plato too remains fixated on things-in-themselves (as his realm of the forms is conceived as external to the understanding), *functionally* he succeeds in establishing a sufficient unitary principle, because he is able to construct an interpretation of phenomena which accounts for the two "ways of knowing" of Parmenides under a single one. The world of the forms is in one sense separate from the phenomenal world, but both worlds are apprehended by one and the same mind. In the allegory of the cave, the shadows cast on the wall do have an immediately present source, the knower merely lacks sufficient knowledge about their nature. Parmenides' two paths are likewise apprehended by the same mind, but the fact is left unexamined in his interpretation, and so his fundamental conception can not avoid a duality. It takes Plato to assert that the most fundamental principle is not only an object of knowing but *that which makes knowing possible.*

Thus in Plato we have arrived at the *non plus ultra* of pure reason. The final conceptual space which he establishes for the remnant of spirit- the form of the good- is as close as one can come

to a pure negation of divine image. For in making his god the form of all knowledge, Plato assures that it will never be grasped, but will always escape any attempt at description. For, how could an eye see the process of sight? Yet, the observer is bound to admit the existence of sight, for it is that by which he sees. Philosophers and theologians grappled with this unknowable divinity for centuries in the wake of Plato, and it was only the modern era's recognition of the *phenomenon* as the fundamental unit of consciousness, and thence the birth of psychology, that there began to be sophisticated interpretations of the fundamental nature of experience built up outside of the interpretive framework which he constructed. Even long after this occurrence, modern pseudo-philosophers continue to speculate upon so-called unitary principles and first causes, like those Japanese soldiers abandoned on Pacific islands, still thinking the war to be ongoing decades after its end.

The relevance of these developments to our subject is that the "form of the good" represents a logical end point to a process which is indelibly bound up with man's conception of the spirit in nature. It might not do to call the "form of the good" a true god, yet it is of the same matter as the gods, being as it is a foci for the interpretation of that spirit. To the animal awareness, spirit is dispersed throughout the range of perceptions, and the "form of the good" represents the extreme opposite end of the scale, in which spirit has been hyper-focused into a singular conception. Theistic religion represents a range of belief somewhere in the middle of the two extremes.

The Consequence of Belief

Now we must ask, of what import is all of this? For up until now we have been describing various interpretive schema as *effects*, that is, we have been inquiring into their causes, and have determined the progression of conceptions regarding the divine to be driven by a natural process of human inquiry: the tendency to grasp towards ever more general principles. It is now left to us to regard the different divine conceptions as *causes*, that is, we must now determine their subsequent effects. Knowing as we do that the gods appear as a particular form of the recognition of spirit, we can phrase the question thus: in what way does the schema of causal attribution effect the functioning of the organism?

The types of functions which are effected must necessarily be connected to the causal attributions in some way. This requires that some elements of the images integral to the function be associated with elements of the images of the spirits, and undergo sufficient reinforcement through repeated instances of association. It is not merely a matter of open-ended association, however, for while association is indeed the only *a priori* mechanism of the mind, there are always certain parameters imposed by the nature of the environment, both in the immediate sense of the substrate of the organism and in the sense of the wider environment. Agency-detection, as we have said, is a form of pattern-recognition, and an unavoidably consequent function of the mind which we inherit in infancy, prior to the possibility of any reflective or abstract thoughts. Our notion of the self as an independent entity is dependent upon this deeply ingrained interpretive framework, as is our recognition of other beings as coherent entities, and is really nothing more than the reinforced associations of images which coalesce around rhythmically persistent representations. That we know people by their faces is a result of the extreme plasticity of the infant brain being impressed by

the ocular images a person's face while simultaneously receiving impressions from the ear of the person's voice, from the nose of their scent, and from the skin the resistance of the body in space. As a result, in later development and into adulthood we carry a response towards human faces which operates quite outside of our will, and facial expression seen on another can activate the feelings involuntarily, against any effort to suppress them.

The recognition of *beings* is thus a recognition of the persistent sources of motion which produce more-or-less reliably predictable effects. As we said previously in the first part of this work, we arrive at a concept of a *character* through observation, and then in turn that concept of character is subsequently applied to recognize and predict the behavior of the being. In this light, the gods of theistic religion appear to us to not be so unsophisticated and superstitious has been usually thought. Man's knowledge of them is his knowledge of the manifestations of various characters of nature, not so immediately present as the flux of spirit in which the man of the animist awareness is immersed in, but characters of a deeper sort, the stable and eternal presences *behind* the unceasing maelstrom of immediately apprehended phenomena. An interpretion of the world which recognizes such ordering forces gains by consequence a surety of the self's place within it. Cicero relates:

> Nam divina ratio atque ordo totius naturae sic est, ut ea quae accidunt, non casu, sed consilio et mente aliqua gubernentur.
>
> For the divine reason and order of the whole of nature is such that things which happen do not occur by chance, but by some sort of guidance and intelligence.

The interpretation of spirit, far from being a mere fanciful concern of the understanding, entails real consequences for the functioning of the awareness. The interpretation evidenced by Cicero, typical of those with firm theistic beliefs, is indicative of a relative lack of *anxiety,* if we understand Kierkegaard's wonderfully apt definition of anxiety as the “dizziness of freedom”. Anxiety, seen from a functional point of view, is the degree of recursivity of the images of the interpretation. The anxious mind is that which is experiencing a failure to decisively choose– the anxious thought is the image that is continuously reinterpreted without finding any release in the exertion of action. The animal awareness, of course, has little capacity for anxiety. The interpretive structures of the purely

animal mind are efficient and rapidly executed, energy flows in and out of the nervous system largely uninterrupted, without the formation of eddies characteristic of the flow of thought of more rational minds. Even when the animal feels uncertainty or nervousness, it seeks to immediately dispel the energy with all manner of excited gestures; they run about in circles, shout, whine or stomp their legs. Only in humans with a developed pre-frontal cortex is it typical for nervousness or agitation to effectively *immobilize* the organism, and thus enter what we call a state of anxiety. As Kierkegaard points out, the generation of anxiety is made possible by the presentation of a choice, and what we would interpret as the momentary inability for one possible course of action to prevail over the others, because none of the courses stand sufficiently above the rest in their level of associative reinforcement. One can see, then, how seemingly remote ideas such as the cosmological image, the death image, the soul image and so on, because of their necessary place within the interpretive schemae of the mind, can have far-reaching effects down to the minute behavior of the organism.

The degree to which man attempts to avoid or represses these images is the degree to which he *makes himself animal*, as the awareness of these images, being the result of cause-and-effect interpretation of nature, is quite what distinguishes the human from his bestial cousins. The animal, of course, enjoys great advantages from our perspective, due to their efficiency and quickness of action, going along with their complete lack of perceived freedom (lack of perception of the self as a distinguished spirit). By contrast, a human brought up in a mental environment in which philosophical teachings have repressed spirit to the most narrowly confined point will have a great sense of freedom, and along with the great possibility of personal differentiation which this condition makes possible comes also a great capacity to experience anxiety. The modern atheistic man, of course, cannot completely escape all daemonic spirits, though this may be his wish. The feelings, firmly rooted in our chemical nature, defy the control of the willful self, and rob man of the sense of freedom which he has come to covet; because anxiety has the effect of triggering negative emotions, the sense of freedom itself, when untempered, sentences man to be a constant victim of these feelings, or else forced to follow courses of action which minimize them. It is thus the great punishment of nature for hubris, that the self-sense of freedom and autonomy, the

sense of freedom to *choose*, when taken too far, has the effect of reducing freedom as taken in the sense of freedom of *action*, freedom to *perform*.

The theistic interpretation of experience, then, can be seen as range of medians between two extremes. The natural world, and even perhaps a part of man's inner motivations, remain attributed to daimon, yet to his own spirit is attributed powers not insignificant. The dual nature of spirit represented by a cosmic order of both gods and men differs from the monistic conception in that men and gods are interpreted as being of fundamentally different substance, rather than as merely differing manifestations of a single one. Whilst the monistic and emanationist interpretation seeks harmony in unity, by relating everything back to a first principle of which all manifestations are emanations, the theistic interpretation rests with a dual-order conception of being. Thus, a harmonic order of the world is achieved by resolving the tension inherent in the duality between the divine and the mundane. This is the impetus behind the rites and sacrifice of theistic religion, a subject which will be treated more thoroughly in the next part of this work. It is, however, relevant to the present point to show here exemplars of the different interpretations of religious rites, as an example of the clear divide which occurs between the theistic and the monistic conceptions, and how the resulting interpretations of the *relationship* between the divine and mundane consequently differ. As representative of the traditional, theistic religion, words which Agamemnon relates to Menelaus in the *Iliad*:

> ‘χρεὼ βουλῆς ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ διοτρεφὲς ὦ Μενέλαε
> κερδαλέης, ἥ τίς κεν ἐρύσσεται ἠδὲ σαώσει
> Ἀργείους καὶ νῆας, ἐπεὶ Διὸς ἐτράπετο φρήν.
> Ἑκτορέοις ἄρα μᾶλλον ἐπὶ φρένα θῆχ’ ἱεροῖσν

Need have we, both thou and I, O Menelaus, fostered of Zeus, of shrewd counsel that shall save and deliver the Argives and their ships, seeing the mind of Zeus is turned. To the sacrifices of Hector, it seemeth, his heart inclineth rather than to ours.

And as representative of the monistic religion, the Platonist philosopher Proclus:

> Οἱ μὲν γὰρ θεοὶ μηδὲν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἡμῶν τῶν δωρεῶν, ἀλλὰ πᾶντοτε αὐτοκέραστοι καὶ αὐτάρκεις εἰσί· τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους χρὴ διδόντας καὶ

δεχομένους εἶναι δῶρα καθαρσίους, καθ' ἃ δεῖ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν ἐντεῦθεν ἀναβῆναι καὶ θεοειδεῖς γενέσθαι.

The gods do not need our offerings, for they are always full and self-sufficient. Rather, it is we who need to offer, for through our offerings we become more like the gods and thereby elevate our souls.

Proclus conceives the gods as higher-order instantiations of a chain of being, a chain which extends down to man, and up to the absolute One. The relationship of man to the gods is, in this conception, one of gnosis, of knowing, and is entirely introverted. The gods take no interest in human affairs, and merely *are.* Their benefit to man can only be as a source of knowledge by which man might order his own behavior in emulation of them. In the Homeric conception, by contrast, the gods possess a will which is actively concerned with the actions of men, and the results of human endeavors are dependent upon their favor or lack of it, the sacrifices being a necessary, but not sufficient, factor in obtaining that favor. Agamemnon says that the favor rests with Hector, but he does not feign to think that the favor can be won back for the Argives by merely offering more sacrifices. Is is implied as given in his words that both the Trojans and Achaens offer sacrifice to Zeus, but that Zeus, by some additional determination, has favored the offerings of the Trojans. To think that the gods' favor could be won by mere quantity of sacrifice would place all freedom in the hands of men, and allow none to the gods, for their will would be mechanistically determined by the actions of men.[4] Yet this is the kind of interpretation which Proclus seems to be reacting to. He would surely attribute a boundless freedom to his gods, and sees the idea that they could be swayed in any way, in any sense changed in their inclinations by actions of men, to be an infringement of their self-sufficiency, and this is the sense in which Proclus is thinking of freedom. His gods posses a freedom *from* care*,* but paradoxically this conception denies them another kind of freedom, the freedom *to* care, to choose to be swayed. For, if men choose to experience tragedy in drama, why should the gods not choose to experience the lives of men?

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4 Incidentally, the Argive council which convenes to determine a solution to their plight results in the night mission of Odysseus and Diomedes, a crafty undertaking in which those heroes are aided by the goddess who favours them. Despite that Zeus refuses to grant victory on the open battlefield, Athena grants success to an operation of individual skill and bravery.

To attribute to the gods the freedom to interfere in the world is, in some fashion, to deny the freedom to men to pursue their own course. We see in the ancient Greek myths, the Homeric poems, and the later Greek dramas, that all of man's designs and strivings might be brought to utter ruin by the merest whim of a deity, or the incomprehensible mechanisms of fate. His trials and courses of action too, are often not a result of his own choosing, but prescribed for him by the gods. As a result, the reaction towards the spirit of one's own self is greatly reduced; much of the blame of one's own failures and defeats is placed on the will of *other* spirits, spirits which nevertheless must still be revered. The world is a stage for the play of spirit, and man's own spirit is in no way the most sovereign, thus he must recognize the lot which he has been cast or struggle vainly against powers incomparably greater than his own. How different then is this conception of the divine order in comparison to one wherein man's immortal soul stands individual and self-contained before a great celestial judge, such as we find in the Myth of Er? Not even to mention that all of the cruelties inflicted by the theistic gods[5] stand in the shadow of the possibility of an *eternal* damnation, when even death is no escape from a painful existence, the important fact is that in this type of conception man is granted an unavoidable personal culpability which extends beyond the mundane, social realm, to have ultimate ramifications in his relation to the divine order. In the Phaedo, Plato's Socrates tells us that the soul which has failed to attain wisdom will wander hopelessly through successive lives, an idea remarkably similar to the Buddhist conception of *samsara*, despite the addition of a persistent soul, and in many other traditions a comparable image is found; later Christianity of course goes further in making each soul correspond to only a single life, dispensing with the idea of reincarnation which is perhaps the *last* vestige of intuitive naturalness to be found in a process of divine judgement. The potential for the inducement of anxiety when the full weight of destiny rests upon the shoulders of the individual is immense; it is no wonder, then, that those most firmly set in such interpretations, the Buddhist monks, show the

5 In this we include the *original* god of Yahwism, who, despite this fact being obfuscated by a piling-on of anachronistic Christian intepretations, is never spoken of in the Jewish bible as being related to any notion of an eternal afterlife, and dispenses his favour and punishment in a very material sense. Later judaic religion does, after the influence of Dueteronomy however, grant a great deal of personal culpability to men in that they are judged based on adherence to a literal set of commandments, and have an explicitly codified notion of sin.

behavioral outcome of avoiding worldly action altogether; the Platonist tradition similarly tells us that the most worthwhile action is contemplation. We must be clear here as to not be mistaken: it is *not* the damnation itself which inspires anxiety (as Kierkegaard has said, fear and anxiety are distinct feelings), but the *freedom* which man possesses to avoid that damnation. While it is no doubt true that the theistic gods too may at times serve a type of judgement upon mortals, the scope of man's behavior which is subject to their judgement is limited, and the proscribed behavior is never known beforehand, except in the special cases of hubris and especially direct defiance of the gods themselves, such as in the desecration of a shrine. In these instances, one could hardly say that the threat of punishment for these things might produce anxious recursivity, for the sin itself is the very lack of consideration for the gods. Indeed, in these theistic interpretations there is nowhere to be found any offense to the gods which might provoke retaliation, which is not either a direct affront to the gods themselves or an affront to some person, thing, or aspect beloved of them. When Athena chooses to let the mortally wounded Tydeus perish rather than granting him apotheosis, due to her abhorrence at his descent into cannibalism, this is indeed a *judgement* on the part of the goddess, but it is a quite natural repulsion, as the bestial action is incompatible with her nature. Furthermore, Tydeus was not in that moment *free* to avoid committing the offense, as the point is that he was overtaken by a savage passion; no more free was he to avoid this fate than Actaeon was free to not stumble upon the bathing Artemis. Thus the theistic gods inspire care in action in no wise different than a fellow human person might, in that their tendencies and character must be taken into account and respected when one interacts with them, if one wishes to be reciprocated positively; the difference is only in their greater power to punish a transgression. One must only take care to not offend *them* directly, that is, to contradict their character when acting within their particular domain. In this light, then, the knowledge of the gods, and the conscious threat of self-destruction which one brings upon oneself in failing to honor them, facilitates rather than immobilizes, for the gods serve as clear exemplars which organize the conceptions. The monistic interpretation meanwhile, in all realms apart from that of the dialectic which gave rise to it, facilitates only one action: *retreat.*

We might make the difference in conceptions further distinct

by examining the assumptions which make it possible for Plato to even have stated his famous dilemma in the *Euthyphro*:

> ἆρα τὸ ὅσιον ὅτι ὅσιόν ἐστιν φιλεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν,
> ἢ ὅτι φιλεῖται ὅσιόν ἐστιν;
>
> Is a pious thing pious because it is loved by the gods,
> or do they love it because it is pious?

The argument by analogy that Plato goes on with through the mouth of Socrates is, like so many other instances in the dialogues of dialectical analysis of the virtues, a work of cleverness designed to divorce the thing from the realm of direct experience. The so-called vicious circle which Euthyphro falls into in an attempt to answer the riddle thrust upon him is really just an indication of a standard of value other than abstract truth, for when the standard of value is taken to be the gods themselves and the qualities which they represent, i.e. the values of the traditional theistic Greek religion, the logical contradiction ceases to have any import. It is only within an interpretative framework that must carry an idea into the realm of the purely abstract before relating it back down to a tangible idea of proper conduct that this particular bit of dialectic serves any purpose at all; for an interpretive framework firmly rooted in the theistic religion and its lived experience, piety naturally ends its chain of association in the pure image of the god, and conversely the image of the god through its associations inspires the conduct of piety. The notion of the "vicious circle" might on the surface seem to fulfill our definition of anxiety as recursiveness in thought, but it has no real existence outside of a chain of purely logical associations. In the actual nervous system of the organism, recursive in relation to these ideas only occurs when that chain of logical associations is itself propagated as its own phenomenon, in other words, when the interpretive framework has been trained to not "let go" of an idea without successfully relating it back to more general principles. To the follower of the non-philosophic strain of religion, there is no recursivity inspired by this purely logical circular reasoning, for the images find real and immediate expression in behavior. The gods point to piety, which in turn points to a mode of action.

Meaning of the Sacred Acts

Now that we have offered a phenomenological and functional description of the gods and what a god *means* to the psychology of man, we are in a position to understand all of the ways in which man has sought to relate to his gods in appeasing, honoring, contemplating, petitioning them and so on. There is a question for which we must be careful not to merely assume an answer without proper examination: are the manifestations of the man-god relationship, such as prayer and ritual, a merely incidental effect of the god-image and the place it holds within the interpretive framework of experience? Or, does ritual arise out of its own origins, its own functional purpose, not coming from the gods *per se* but growing as its own phenomenon alongside them, with its own determining trajectory?

Let us restate the basic observations derived from our analysis so far: the image of a god, like any other conceptual image, has its precedent associations as well as its subsequent associations which it gives rise to in turn; also an image may be "strengthened", which is to mean that the synaptic link between it and its associations may be reinforced by repeated instances of that association. Therefore, the two aspects of any image we have to consider are its "place" within the interpretive framework, and the intensity of the reaction which it inspires in calling to mind its subsequent associations. What we call the degree of the mind's plasticity is the degree to which it is sensitive to forming associations between impressions. Plasticity varies not only between individual minds but also in the same individual, and is dependent upon various conditions.

As a cautious beginning to our inquiry, we can posit that all forms of religious *practice* in which the god-image is represented have the *effect* of reinforcing an association between the god-image and the elements of the practice. This, at least, is directly determined by our knowledge of association as the *a priori* mechanism of the mind. Further questions then arise: What is the nature of different forms of practice and what differentiates them from one another? Is ritual a

form of prayer? Is prayer a form of ritual? Does one originate out of the other or do these things have wholly different origins? Does the nature of the god-image inform the nature of the ritual contact, and if so, how?

We might start by determining a semantic definition of ritual and prayer, and then analyzing these definitions from a functional perspective. "Ritual" comes to us from the Latin *rītus,* cognate with the Sanskrit *rītí:* the form of custom; the right usage of a thing; a ceremony or procedue; in the most general sense: anything done with *custom* as its impetus. Closer to our popular notion of ritual, denoting a specifically sacred content, is the Latin *caerimōnia,* cognate to our *ceremony* (and the Sanskrit *kárman,* which, by contrast, denotes merely any action, and from which the familiar concept of *karma* draws its name). With this is mind, the *ritual ceremony* we see to be that set of acts, done according to customary formula, which involve a representation of the god-image. Thus the ritual ceremony can be distinguished from the more casual or cursory instances of merely thinking or contemplating the god-image, yet nevertheless the same basic process of association is at work, and the specific elements of the ritual must therefore be seen to serve as a sort of modifying condition which either effects the situational placement of the image in the interpretation, or the intensity of the association itself (increased plasticity in the practitioner).

The elements and occasion of ritual ceremony serve to place it in an interpretive context of direct contact with the god-image, and a strengthening of the awareness of that image. Prayer is the barest and simplest form of this contact, in that while it can be a necessary part of a greater ceremony, it can also stand independently. Prayer is therefore the ceremonious act which may involve only the language and focus of the practitioner; it is, in its simplest definition, speech directed towards the god, and so forms the core of any event in which a relationship is established. Of course, this speech is always purposeful, and is always done *to some end.* In the etymologies of words for prayer in the Indo-European family, there is in many cases an origin in a verb to *ask*, to *entreat*, *request*, *supplicate*, or *implore*; the Latin *precor* and the Sanskrit *prcchati*, as well as the Ænglisc *fregnan* all point to this inseperable meaning, and likely share a common root. The Hellenic word for prayer, εὔχεσθαι, carries a slightly different connotation and origin, sharing its meaning, and its root, with the Latin *voveō*, and meaning to *vow*, to *promise*, but also in certain

contexts to *wish for* or to *long for*. The Latin term also is used to signify consecration or devotion of an object to a deity. Thus in the two etymological strains which both come to signify prayer as speaking to a deity, we can reconstruct an original formula for prayer which involved a reciprical arrangement; the practitioner on one hand makes the contact in order to gain something, for which he wishes to enlist the aid of the deity's powers in obtaining, yet also he must vow or consecrate something to the deity in return. A three-part formula for prayer, which in addition to the vow and entreaty involves an extolling of the deeds and epithets of the deity, makes up nearly the entirety of the Rgveda, and also clearly survives in the verses of the Iliad, such as in the prayer of Chryses to Apollo (here the vow being a reminder of all that Chryses has consecrated to the god *already* rather than a promise to consecrate a thing in the future, but the place in the formula is nevertheless present):

κλῦθί μευ ἀργυρότοξ', ὃς Χρύσην ἀμφιβέβηκας
Κίλλάν τε ζαθέην Τενέδοιό τε ἶφι ἀνάσσεις,
Σμινθεῦ εἴ ποτέ τοι χαρίεντ' ἐπὶ νηὸν ἔρεψα,
ἢ εἰ δή ποτέ τοι κατὰ πίονα μηρί' ἔκηα
ταύρων ἠδ' αἰγῶν, τὸ δέ μοι κρήηνον ἐέλδωρ:
τίσειαν Δαναοὶ ἐμὰ δάκρυα σοῖσι βέλεσσιν.

Hear me, one of the silver bow, guardian of Chryses
and holy Killas, who rules mightily over Tenedos;
Sminthus! If ever in pleasing you I have adorned the shrine,
or if ever I have burned for you the fat thighs
of bulls and goats, grant to me this wish:
that the Danaans might pay for my tears with your arrows.

In the first two lines, the god-image is conjured and, through the epithets and attributes, fixed as a point of focus. In the second third of this prayer the priest goes on with the reminder of his dedications and sacrifices in honor of the god, thus, the upholding of his part of the relationship. Finally then, he comes to the purpose which impelled the prayer in the first place, that is, the desired outcome which the god is to bring about. This give-and-take, reciprical arrangement of powers, in which the mortal devotes things and actions to the god in return for aid, seems to be the predominant form of interaction with the god-image in earlier stages of ancient religions, with the contemplative, intellectual understanding of the god through myth and poetry taking

precedence only at a later time. The epithets and deeds of the god are of course learned through the myths, but as we see in the Rgveda as well as the Homeric literature, the understanding of the myths is never wholly seperate from the meaning of the god in what can almost said to be a practical sense. In otherwords, the character of the god as developed through myth is always closely tied to the benefits, or the ills, which that god might bestow. The knowledge of the mythic character of the god is used as a preamble to the entreaty, which confers a sort of reverence to the matter in that the retelling of the myths and epithets is literally what keeps the god's presence alive in the world of mortals, and thus the force of the entreaty is strengthened. While there may be ample examples of what seems like ritual or prayer without a specifically stated entreaty, such as thanks given after a successful venture, there is still in this case a sense that the thanks is done to incur favor, so as to assure *future* success and continue to enjoy the general blessings of being favored within a certain god's domain. It is only late in religious progressions that we begin to see the development of mythic understanding or contemplation for its own sake.

We must now ask one of the fundamental questions regarding religion and the gods: is this reciprocal relation of service, praise, and sacrifice in exchange for the granting of petitions merely a superstitious misalignment, an accident of the process of the god-image revealing itself to man? Has man, in his prayers and supplications, been speaking to a void which does not hear him and does not respond? Proclus would seem to think so, in his view that the gods are self-sufficient and completely independent of man. Modern man, too, tends to look upon the ancient forms of religion with a condescending eye, assuming it to be the mere folly and growing pains of an evolutionary process. Yet, this type of prayer obviously came about for some reason, and continued to be performed with the utmost sincerity for thousands of years– does not this point to at least the possibility that this practice did indeed confer some real benefit, an advantageous adaption?

The fundamental essence of the question is twofold: first, do the gods as they are perceived possess powers? And, if they do possess powers, does man with his petitions have any sort of influence on the direction of those powers? To the faithful believer in the gods, three things are perceived: first, the god possesses a will. Second, man posses a will. Third, these wills might be brought into alignment

through ritual and prayer. The realist argument against this belief is that if the god-images are only conceptual entities, which man generates from his perceptions of patterns behind natural phenomena, then there is nothing to suggest that these images correspond to any sort of willful entity which might be capable of hearing, understanding and responding to man, for even if the gods take the form of a willful character in the context of myth, this is quite a different thing than being present in the properly physical world, and having influence over its machinations in the same manner which they enjoy *in* the myths. It is from this point of view that the whole of theistic belief is then discredited wholly as a psychological *flaw* or a matter of ignorance. The assumption which goes unexamined in this, however, is that the image must have a sort of internal consistency in all of its instances of representation, that it must function in the same way in relation to its mythic associations as it does to all others, or else it is to be repressed. To put it simply: those who repress the god-images in this way have mistaken myth for history, and thus judge theistic beliefs to be nothing more than ignorant and naive histories. Yet, myth is different than history and should not be interpreted as if it were, if one is to understand it; for the myths are not the work of historians, but poets, and the use of their image in song was never meant to create a falsifiable framework of facts, but rather to develop those images and relate them; and indeed the myths are not merely a form of art, but are the original form of it.

What, then, are the effects produced by the god-image in its ritual, rather than purely poetic associations? As we said before, the interpretation involved attributes spirit, or will, to both the practitioner and the god, and attempts to bring them in line with one another. The proper supplication always involves the reciprocal action of a vow, a consecration, or sacrifice. The religious supplication is different than what me might call magical or demonological, in which the magician attempts to command spirits to do his own will, in that the religious worshipper does not hold the god-image as something to be used as a tool. While the supplicant indeed petitions for a desired effect, and thus could be said to be attempting to bring a god under his will, he is at the same time letting himself be drawn under the *god's* will. The gods, as revered objects, by their nature demand a sort of compatible character on the part of the worshipper if he is to hold any sort of contact with them.

The mode of mind in which a man is capable of sustaining focus upon the images of the god for any period of time without allowing the immediate environment to influence his concentration, and which can at the same time be free of self-conscious recursivity which would have the effect of interrupting the process, is one kept rapt by the stimulus of feeling of reverence. Thus, only a character capable of this reverence, one who has true *feeling* for the images, can be said to be capable of prayer.

Thus a real consequence of the will to prayer, the will to entreat the powers of the gods, is that to the practitioner this will is synonymous with manifesting a certain character. The gods *praise* some actions and condemn others, and for a man who does not honor the gods, requesting their assistance would be a fruitless endeavor. Too often is a modern bias projected onto types of ancient worship which are sacrificial and ritual in nature, a bias in thinking of the gods as only creations of men, and a claim that this invalidates any claims they might have to a real sort of power. Yet, the relationship of gods and men is reciprocal, and the flow of influence between the god-image and the self-image goes both ways. When the character of a people, or a certain subset of them, determines the certain gods which rise to prominence in worship among them, this will of theirs becomes in a sense crystallized, or projected into the future, as the character of subsequent generations are shaped by the will which they find in the god-image.

One might object to say that it is all well that we could define a real effect of ritual practice in this way, that it has the effect of changing the character of the practitioner, yet does this not bring us back to the conception of Proclus, and his interpretation of the gods as self-sufficient beings to whom man approaches for his own benefit only, for the changing of his own nature, being unable to effect any sort of change in them? After all, the contrary example we gave to his opinion, the words of Agamemnon in the *Iliad*, come from poetry, while Proclus is reasoning upon the realm of primary experience. Yet, does not the meaning of ritual prayer and sacrifice, as well the entire edifice of the reciprocal relationship between the god-image and the self-image, fall apart when the essential faith in the gods as willful beings is doubted?

Both Proclus' idealist interpretation and the atheistic materialistic one are opposing sides of the same dialectical ground of realism. The idealist conjectures that the gods must exist in the *real*

realm of form, while the materialist states that if the gods exist, then they must exist in the *real* sense of extended space, as this is what constitutes their definition of real. From a purely phenomenological point of view, the gods of course *exist* (to even say so is redundant), yet what can we say about the will or self-determination of a phenomenologically presented being? For, if their existence is wholly conceptual, any "will" would be, by a realist definition, in actuality a competing will within the mind of the thinker. Yet what is the difference in this from any other being we might have experience of? If a man persuades another man to enact his will, there is nowhere to be found a so-called "real" force of will which travels through space from one to the other, there is only, in speech, the oscillating pressures of air molecules in which the meaning of that will is encoded by the speaker and subsequently decoded in the mind of the listener. After all, one can not achieve much persuasion over another who does not share the same language. Any effect of persuasion will be ultimately the result of a will which is necessarily existent only within the listener, which, upon receiving the information originating from the other, may present a course of action or interpretation in accordance with the meaning of that information. As such, *any* instance of persuasion, whether one is coming in line with a god or an objectively present man, has for its immediately precedent cause a generative process within the person's own interpretive faculty. One does not need to hear direct speech from a god to confirm what their will might be, just as if one knows well the character of a man, he can know with accuracy what the will of that man would be in any certain situation, even if he is not present or even long deceased. There is no real functional difference between the statements, "my father would have wanted me to do this" and "the gods smile upon this action". In both, there is an interpretation of the event through the judgement of another character, one who may not be immediately present, but who's character is *known* just the same.

Now, in light of this explanation, it becomes clear how indeed, contrary to Proclus' realist-idealist conception, man does indeed enact a change in the gods through his actions. The answer is quite obvious, once one has taken up a point of view outside of realist assumptions; it is merely that man is solely responsible for the *propagation* of the gods existence. Without men upholding their image, the gods would simply cease to be, and this is why the

relationship between gods and men must necessarily be reciprocal. Both materialism and idealism, as opposite dialectical positions of a realist ground, if they assert the existence of a god, are forced by their realist assumption to hold that the god must enjoy an existence completely independent of man. If the god does not exist independently, then it is not "real", and therefore an invalid conception. The god-image, however, is unique among man's conceptions in that at its root is the essential mystery of man awareness of himself, for both the god-image and the self-image, as we have explained previously, arose out of the same process of mind. It was out of the animist world of undifferentiated spirit that this double awareness was developed, resulting in the conception of two distinct orders- that of the gods and that of men, both of which are required to uphold the total order of the world.

This dual-order conception finds clear expression in the complementary Greek words ἱερός and ὅσιος. Both terms relate to the realm of the sacred, the point of contact between the divine and the mundane, yet from opposite positions. ἱερός is used to denote that which man dedicates or consecrates to the gods; ἴερεύς and ἱέρειᾰ are the priest and priestess, ἱερόν the temple, and ἱερεῖον the victim offered in sacrifice. Conversely ὅσιος is used to denote that which is apportioned, allowed, or ordained to man by the gods. ὅσιον χωρίον is the space where man is permitted to enter by divine sanction. Thus we see in ancient religion from earliest historical times a sense that man owes sacrifice and dedication to the gods, and the gods in turn provide for man's benefit. Thus man finds himself occupying an important and meaningful role within an all-encompassing cosmic order, one which supersedes and subsumes the self-image as an individual soul. This is then patently different than the philosophic developments of cosmology and the soul-image, in which the soul's teleological end is to work for its own salvation, or, as a seperated shard of a cosmic unity, to achieve a sort of reunion with the monistic principle, or the source of emanation, this still being a purely independent path. The ancient theistic conception meanwhile we can say to be of an extroverted character, and not meaning by this merely to denote the public nature of its ceremonies and practice, but that the source of divinity itself is to be found exterior to the individual, by observation of nature rather than primarily by introspection. The thought that one could "find god within one's own soul" or some such thing would be

incomprehensible to someone employing the mode of interpretation we are describing. The reverence for the god as an *exterior* phenomenon means that their image is judged *aesthetically*, that the objectified image inspires the feelings of reverence is a reaction to their percieved qualities of beauty and power. The more that the god-image is developed and made of qualities, the greater the capacity for the aesthetic reaction, and thus the more extroverted in nature we say the religious schema to be. By contrast, that tendency to repress the qualities of the god-image, and subjugate it to the most abstract and general principles possible, the *philosophical* religious schema, manifests a tendency towards introspection, as one cannot make an extraverted aesthetic judgement of something which has no perceivable qualities. To successfully eliminate *all* qualities of an image is, of course, impossible, as qualities are the very elements which make up the image itself. However the tendency is towards repression, and the impossibility of the complete attainment of an image-less concept appears to have not dissuaded philosophers from the pursuit of it.

When the religious image is embraced, rather than repressed, we might say that the interpretor is exercising an aesthetic judgement rather than a reasoned one; in our functional terms this is to say that the elements of the image have associative links to the feelings. The strong potential of images to trigger feelings is the explanation for reverence, and it is out of reverence that man apportions and dedicates to the gods. Here there arises a self-perpetuating process, because the act of apportioning, and all of the ritual ceremony and prayer accompanying it, further reinforces the feelings of reverence, which then in turn inspires future dedications. This self-perpetuating property of the religious phenomenon is responsible for its ancient endurance, practiced by man for thousands of years and accompanying him out of prehistory.

One of these ceremonies of the most antiquity, which arose out of the flowering of this cycle, is the sacrifice. In nothing else is apportionment better exemplified than in the sacrifice. The celebratory feast being to ancient peoples a momentous occasion of great import, it is fitting that they channelled the energy excited by the event into a strengthening of the divine image. The best animal on hand is preferred for the apportionment, and the best cuts of meat, this division of the honors having a functional purpose as a deeply-ingrained symbol of great significance, having its origins as it

does in the rewards enjoyed by the successful hunter who brings the kill to his clan. In the verses of the *Iliad* are recorded similar scenes in which the cuts of honor, often the backstraps of the animal, are given to the heroes who have distinguished themselves in battle. Few things might reach into the most basic instinctual functioning of the carnivorous *homo-sapiens* as strips of delectable flesh, freshly cut and glistening with fat before the light of the fire. To give up and offer such a prize, whether to a god or a man, is a symbol of honor which would be immediately recognizable to our most ancient of ancestors, proximal to the dawn of humanity.

It must be pointed out that the reasons for sacrifice, and the types of feelings and judgements the act is tied to, can vary. In contrast to the Indo-European descended traditions, in which the sacrifice is born out of thanksgiving, wish for aid, and to gain favor, we see a contrary tradition of sacrifice out of the Ancient Near East, evidenced by the Egyptians and Hebrews, in which the sacrifice is framed in terms of a transfer of debt or guilt from the worshipper to the victim. Herodotus relates the Egyptian sacrificial practice of severing the head of the animal, and uttering an imprecation over it as it is cast into the river, for the purpose that any evil which is to befall the sacrificers, or all of Egypt, be redirected to the discarded head. The rest of the sacrifice is then burnt while the devotees whip and beat themselves. Nowhere is the generally Semitic motivation for sacrifice more clearly laid out than in the book of Leviticus, where the Lord spake unto Moses that "the life of the flesh *is* in the blood : and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls : for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul." Almost everywhere in the Hebrew bible, except for a minority of cases done out of the spirit of thanksgiving, the language of sacrifice is one of this *atonement*, as a method of extirpating uncleanliness and sin, and is thus done from the motivation of penance and guilt. This is quite a different motivation than what we find among the Indo-European peoples, who, while they may offer sacrifice to appease the wrath of a god they have personally angered, do not take by this to conceive any *personal* change within themselves; their conception of their own status before their gods are just as it would be before men, in that it is a relationship of wills which may become at odds and may be reconciled. As time goes on, the Hebrew conception of sacrifice as specifically an *atonement* becomes more pronounced, more distinguished from the Roman world which the

Jews attempt to differentiate themselves from, until finally it is inherited by the Christian sect, who create out of this method of atonement the central event of their faith, the sacrifice of Jesus himself. As Paul writes in his Epistle to the Hebrews: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

This difference in the interpretation of sacrifice is dependent upon a difference in the respective god-images. To the degree which an image is repressed in favor of abstraction, we find moralistic judgements emphasized. Conversely, to the degree which the image is reinforced in its elements of *character* we find the aesthetic judgements emphasized. What we are here naming two types judgements are really not dialectical opposites, but rather labels for two ends of a scale of degrees, which measures the degree of *character* of a god. The less character, the more abstract, thus moralistic. The more character, the less abstract, thus the more aesthetic. Thus the most fundamental consequence of the worship of the traditional gods is laid bare: in this practice, we find the aestheticization of experience.