Debunking the Origins of Morality;

the Individual's Commitment to Humanity



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**ABSTRACT**

In *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, Kant (1983) determined that we must embrace progress as the consequence of evolution because, "otherwise the sight of human history would become unbearable." (Flynn 2014, 16).  While gods and magic were essential for primitive homo sapiens to make sense of the world, the ugly side of humankind that persists well into the age of reason could only be rationalized by claiming that humanity was under orders from omniscient overlord(s)—superior being(s) of wrath and forgiveness.  Like soldiers guilty of gruesome war crimes, humanity refused to face its own brutality. I argue that humankind has more-than-sufficiently accessed the requisite intelligence and judgment to take full responsibility for its actions and condition. Yet the hidden justification of deific intervention persists, so we have to ask ourselves, was the evolutionary transformation of morality purely a 'natural' progression or *must* there be an omnipresent advanced consciousness inherent to humankind's development? My response is that it really doesn't matter. Humanity both bears and must accept responsibility.

Keywords: altruism, eudaimonia, the good, morality, religion, responsibility

The intent of this chapter is not to support or deny the existence of god(s), as it cannot be

justifiably accomplished; that which cannot be proved cannot be disproved. It is simply to

illustrate that insisting morality is of deific origin suggests the abdication of human reason and

justice;[1] attributing responsibility to an enigmatic possibility for one's condition is detrimental to

the rational acceptance of one's participation in the human condition, and the obligation to self

and others. It deprives one of authenticity [2] of being. Humanity is the author of morality, not

god(s), and not religion; humankind established primeval morality to facilitate its survival [of-

the-fittest]. Codes-of-conduct originated from sentient hominids, and were *later* "codified into

moral rules and principles by religions" (Shermer 2004, 32).

What demands clarification then, is how morality, constructed that humanity should

prosper, evolved into suprahuman virtues such as generosity, kindness, compassion, humility,

and etcetera, qualities that far exceed the base demand for durability. How did the individual

evolve from innate protector of the human species to, as Sartre (1989, 5) would write, "a

legislator deciding for the whole of mankind [wherein he or she] cannot escape from the sense of

complete and profound responsibility"?  Furthermore, what compelled humankind, in its desire

to shirk this responsibility, to hide behind the guise of god's authority? In *Perpetual Peace and

Other Essays*, Kant (1983) determined that humanity must embrace progress as the consequence

of evolution because, "otherwise the sight of human history would become unbearable." (Flynn

2014, 16).  While gods and magic were essential for primitive homo sapiens to make sense of the

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[1] Goldman, E. (1910). The Philosophy of Atheism. In *Anarchism and Other Essays*. New York: Mother
Earth Publishing Association; Bakunin, M.A. (2009). *God and the State*. New York: Cosimo Classics.
[2] A person of authenticity is "one who being true to self, is one who lives in accordance with his or her
[good] desires, motives, ideals, or beliefs, and whose sum of intents and actions is thus manifest as
beneficial to self and society" (Mullen 2016, 792).

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Plato proposed that humanity's access to the hidden secrets of virtue and knowledge is

provided by divine allowance via the reincarnate human soul. The theory of involution-evolution

supports the recognition of eternal truths or forms without the need for a reincarnate soul. The

anthropomorphic illusion of a deity, constructed in humanity's image and likeness, that reigns

over and sustains an interest in an ignorant species on a tiny sphere in a single galaxy of which

there are potentially 100 million life-inhabitable planets (within an observable universe

consisting of approximately one billion trillion stars) stretches logical imagination. Admittedly, it

is difficult to comprehend that matter and space just *happen* to exist and have always done so

without causal foundation, but the belief that a self-evident,[3] maximally excellent *entity*

intervenes in our relative triviality seems, for lack of a better term, chutzpah-dik.  Given this

sentiment, I can only conceive of god(s) as 'Incomprehensible'.  However, it is scientifically

reasonable that some enigmatic consciousness permeates our macrocosm—thrusting itself into

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[3] A proposition is self-evident if and only if upon understanding it one sees it to be true. Alvin Plantinga
distinguishes two features of a self-evident truth. First, a self-evident proposition has an epistemic
component: a proposition is self-evident if one knows it immediately, that is, noninferentially; Second, a
self-evident proposition has a phenomenological component: it has "about it a kind of luminous aura or
glow when you bring it to mind or consider it" (Clark 1989, 65).

the core of life—because logic determines it is impossible for *some-thing* to evolve from *no-thing*.

The concept of involution-evolution is predicated on the declension of [and ascension from] this *some-thing*. Evolutionary movement was made concrete by the Darwinian theory of natural selection in the late 19th century. Involution-evolution posits that *some-thing* [Incomprehensible] installs its spirit or being into the depths of matter in order for consciousness to evolve. Involution is required for evolution because, again, *some-thing* cannot evolve from *no-thing*. In the material world in which we live, matter is the origin of all existence and facilitator of all becoming.  Physics defines matter as material substance that has mass (as opposed to mind, spirit. soul, and etcetera), and occupies rest space, especially as distinct from energy. According to multiple theories, a rudimentary consciousness resides within matter. "The capacities which define the conditions of the possibility of novelty and self-creation must be latently present even in the lowest type of occasion in nature"[4] (Hosinski 1993, 94). This is one novel way to explain the evolution of consciousness that does not require constant Incomprehensible intervention.

Given the implausibility that humanity, in its relative cosmological insignificance, is the recipient of particular consideration from an Incomprehensible, it behooves us to take full responsibility for our condition—how we attend to that with which we have been provided.  This is humanity's strength: that fact that oversight for the wherewithal of all earthbound creations is not only our obligation, but the richness of our reason for being. Our significance is found in this, and it is of formidable value.


Morality, Religion, Ethics, Legality

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[4] Hosinski argues for Alfred North Whitehead's Theory of Concrescence.

*What is morality?* Morality is the distinction between right and wrong, subject to the majority of the fittest. Morality deals with behaviors as well as motives; it "is a prescription *for*, not a description *of* conduct" (Hocutt 2010, 35). It is a "complex of thoughts, feelings and desires of different kinds cohering in support of certain norms of behavior" (Whitely 1982, 437).  In classic philosophy the term 'moral character' ostensibly deliberates on the moral dimension of the individual. Morality is the criterion of what should be and what should not be, a model for how human beings "ought to behave, whether, in fact, they ever do so" (Hocutt 2010, 35). It is variant codes of conduct put forward by dominant groups or societies as guides to behavior by all the rational members of those groups or societies "who can understand it and govern their behavior appropriately" (Zalta 2011, 10). Determinates of morality, as Hinde (2002, 13) writes, emerged,

> *ultimately from 'human nature' as it has been shaped by natural and cultural selection in interaction with the physical, biological and social environments that humans have experienced in evolutionary and historical time and that are experienced in the lifetime of each individual.* (author's italics.)

Both morality and morals relate to 'right' and 'wrong' conduct established to facilitate the satisfaction of human desires and needs, as conducive to the greatest benefit of the greatest number. A religious definition might qualify morality as it relates to good and *evil*, but I leave the uncertainty of evil to Aquinians and other metaphysical philosophers.[5] Although many regard religion as in some way providing the genesis for morality "which supports the claim that moral truths can best be explained by God's existence" (Evans 2014), it is evident that humanity is the responsible party. While concepts of morality and morals are voluminous and interchangeable,

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[5] Like the concept of god(s), I cannot support or deny evil's existence because it cannot be proved or disproved, although I am partial to the Dalai Lama's belief that, perhaps, the "the term should be related more to the negative tendencies and impulses that lie within each of us" (Gyatso 1996, 98).

"the sphere of morality minimally includes some set of rules which must command extensive acceptance for a society to exist" (Hauerwas 1973, 80). Moralities are the consequence of interrelationship; "Individuals cannot live together … for any length of time at all before these impulses of different individuals are going to conflict. Some sort of a compromise is imperative" (Parsons 1923, 25)—compromises "aimed at reducing mutually harmful conflict and promoting mutually beneficial cooperation, usually with the goal of enhancing the … survival of the group by serving the needs of its members" (Hocutt 2010, 37). Our moral system is an evolved human concept built upon expediency for the purpose of providing assurance of individual well-being in conjunction with the "maximum welfare of all concerned" (Laney 1970, 19). Avoidance and prevention of harm to those within society who comply with prescribed sanctions determines the positive morality of the community, which "consists of the conventional morality of a particular society at a particular time, as recognized and acknowledged by the majority of the members of that society" (Roberts 1984, 85).  These are not innate values, according to Wolf (2010,580): "The individual is not born with these principles, but rather with the ability to absorb such moral rule".  It is up to the community to firmly establish a "set of guidelines for the individual to learn", clarifying those situations "on which his or her co-operation may be expected and demanded, as against other occasions on which he may follow his own interest and convenience" (Whiteley 1982, 439).  Although morality may find itself at variance with natural law, it is rarely at variance with divine law once the administrators of the latter have placed upon it their seal of approval.

Although Aristotle's discussion of moral character remains one of the favored deliberations on the topic, many prefer the succinctness of Socrates in the *Meno*,[6] where the

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[6] Plato (1961)

hapless antagonist (Meno), "a totally unscrupulous man" (Klein 1988, 36), attempts to interpret

Plato's concept of moral virtue, called *arête,* which refers to "specific virtues such as

moderation, courage, et cetera, but it is also used for *the* virtue or conglomeration of virtues that

makes a man virtuous or good". *Arête*[7] is also expressed as moral character which, to Socrates, is

the notion of excellence in the fulfillment of purpose—the act of living up to one's full positive

potential. Excellence is a quality best facilitated by an aggregate of moral virtue. That is the

relevance of Socrates philosophical notion: *aretê* is not a singular virtue but a totality of

constituents that make up the completeness of human excellence. An individual can possess an

affinity to certain moral arrangements and not be a person of moral virtue. How often has a

specific moral platitude been so charming that one is immune to the immorality of its author?

While the act is morally constructive, the actor may have other rationale, such as reputation, or

compensation. Each of us has a tenuous grasp on the qualities of human excellence, that grasp

grossly limited if merely for exhibition. A moral attribute is a *good* thing to have, but relatively

insignificant unless it lends itself to the notion of excellence in the fulfillment of purpose. Many

individuals are moral; few are endowed with morality. It's like affixing the bike pedal to the

crank arm—the accomplishment necessary and good but the vehicle is not yet suitable for riding.

The purposefulness of the bicycle requires the *totality* of the assembly, the excellence of the

endeavor.

   The onus of adhering to codes-of-conduct is on the individual, and therefore it is the

individual who is responsible for all matters under his or her control. While Kant's moral

argument states that [moral] justice will only be done if god exists, therefore It does, Sartre

(1989) responds, "Nothing will be changed if God does not exist; we shall rediscover the same

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[7] Klein (1988) translates *arête* as human excellence, Grube (1981) as virtue.

norms of honesty, progress and humanity". No matter the resolution, it is imperative to not use

god as excuse or savior for our condition. If we truly concede that the power to change is

resident within humanity, then so must be the responsibility for its condition. While we may not

have control over the cards we have been dealt, we are responsible for how we play the hand we

have been given.

   *Morality is not religion*. Bergson (1977. 13) affirms, "the first effect of religion is to

sustain and reinforce the claims of society". Codes-of-conduct are not issued by god(s), or

religion(s) using god(s) through surrogation. They are societal sets of rules established as the

arbitrator of conduct to which individuals are expected to adhere, and which power of

administration is seized by religion, "along with those other social institutions—to fill may roles,

not the least of which was the justification of power for the ruling elite", the codification of

"moral rules and principles", and the enforcement of "the rules of social interaction" (Shermer

2004, 46).  Tenets and axioms proposed by religious hierarchy state that morality "must rest on

an absolute authority … found only in the law given by God, which is to be communicated

through the church" (Pfleiderer 1899, 225): —an invalid assertion accepting the determination

that society originates morality, while institutional consequences of created god(s) only embrace

and facilitate its enforcement. Codes-of-conduct vary throughout societies and histories

dependent upon circumstance, superstition, social temperament and values, historical and

economic situation, religious and governmental authoritarianism, and conditions of communal

well-being and survival. It remains to humans, through cultural and economic determination, to

authorize, confirm, and legally bind its citizens to that morality. Morality cannot be determined

by religion, otherwise all codes-of-conduct would be normative, and there is little consensus

among believers about what god(s) require(s) of us. Rational scholars reveal the dichotomies and

ambiguities in the "disjointed [religious] documents, composed, revised, translated, distorted and "improved" by hundreds of anonymous authors, editors and copyists, unknown to us and mostly unknown to each other" (Dawkins 2006, 268). One's belief in morality as the direct word of god is foisted by those religious affiliates which assert god's favoritism through personal dictation.

*Morality is not ethics*. Due to their fraternalism, ethics and morals are poorly conflated; even "dictionaries make no clear distinction" (Hinde 2002, 3). The primary contrast is that morals deal with behaviors as well as motives—subjective, and often personal—while ethics are practical, conceived as shared principles promoting fairness in societal interactions. Morality is the overarching principle upon which one's judgments of right and wrong are based. Ethics is the study of and theories about moral principles in context of the rules of a social group. Morality relates to conduct conducive to the greatest benefit of the greatest number, supporting the satisfaction of human desires, needs, and potentialities. Ethics are principles of conduct that an individual chooses to govern his or her life as a guiding philosophy under the dominating auspices of regulated morality. The exercise of ethical principles depends on the individual; if this exercise conflicts with the prescribed social morality, the latter takes precedence. Ethical freedom is limited by the ideological constraints which flow from the necessities of social life. In other words, one has the freedom to believe in what he or she desires but if those beliefs counter those of society then the individual is not in conformity. Should these beliefs be pursued, then jurisprudence may prevail. Ethics is thus the sphere of ideal forms of life set by individuals for themselves in maneuvering amongst individual values, community norms, and the legal order, "which must reflect the current social morality but it is far from identical with it" (Vasanthakumar 2016, 3). The facilitation of a functional society is a delicate balance. When ethics conflict with morality to such an extent that it causes such spiritual consternation that

compliance becomes problematic, then it is the obligation of the individual to take such action, as necessary, to assert his or her perspective with the rational expectation of failure, derision, and/or ostracization, but without which there would not be the possibility of change.

*Morality is not legality* although "there is an increasingly active reciprocal interrelationship between the legal and moral order" (Vasanthakumar 2016, 3), as they provide alternating dominance. A person on the wrong side of morality may be socially reprimanded, but legally inculpable depending upon applicable law and, in a litigious society, subject to civil action. It is far preferable to be on the wrong side of a certain moral ambiguity than on the unacceptable side of the law. While Einstein (2007, 156) remained "convinced that a vivid consciousness of the primary importance of moral principles … does not need the idea of a law-giver", especially one "who works on the basis of reward and punishment", their coexistence is essential for homeostasis. Both law and morality serve to oversee our behavior, balancing "the world in a way that our lives have coherence and unity" (Hauerwas, 1973, 77). Bergson (1977, 9) offers the following analogy:

> We should compare [morality] to an organism whose cells, united by imperceptible links, fall into their respective places in a highly developed hierarchy, and for the greatest good of the whole submit to a discipline that may demand the sacrifice of the part.

Law accomplishes this discipline through the threat of sanctions. Morality, too, is motivated by incentives: bad acts may result in guilt and disapprobation, good acts in virtuous feelings and reputation. In essence, morality governs private, personal interaction, while the legal system governs the community as a whole, often interacting between total strangers. When society determines that it is obligated to monitor personal interaction in order to facilitate some freedom or another, then the law is used, as necessary, to invade the personal space established by morality and ethics. Laws do not establish morality but, like religion, enforce it, the former

through threat of physical incarceration; the latter, spiritual condemnation. Of course, legality

often supersedes morality through compelling intimidation, especially under totalitarian or

fundamentalist regimentation. Such are the vagaries of authoritarianism as it pertains to parochial

and provincial intolerance.  The individual must always remain aware that that which has been

gained can as easily be forfeit.  One may disapprove of what other people think or say but must

defend their right of expression. If a situation or condition is uncompromisingly distasteful to

one's ethics or morality, that individual has the obligation to speak out, and allow others to

defend his or her right to do so.

<div align="center">Morality as Evolutionary</div>

James Seth (1889) provides the evolutionary underscoring of morality through Darwin,

Herbert Spencer (1900), and Leslie Stephen (1907).  Although more than a century old, their

scientific hypotheses validate survival-of-the-fittest as foundation for rules of conduct.

"Morality, like Nature, has evolved; and neither can be understood except in the light of its

evolution" (Seth 1889, 27). When early humans came in contact, the fight or flight paradigm was

ostensibly the initial response but, as the advantages and curiosities of mutual interaction

evidenced themselves, certain basic rules of engagement became essential. Inevitably, the most

competent at hunting and other survival skills became the arbiters of morality, separating the

wheat from the chaff, *selfishly* ostracizing and subjugating those less adequately fit.  As the

grasslands crowded, and humans aggregated, very basic guidelines of social behavior were

enacted in order to adapt to competing interests. "The fact that conceptions of the self, nature and

society have evolved in different forms may be explained genetically by reference to

adaptational processes" (Wolf 2010, 583). The establishment of a community, even a primitive

one, raises issues of dominance, labor division, cooperation, and other practices in order "to

avoid mutually harmful conflict and promote mutually beneficial cooperation in the service of

their biologically rooted needs" (Hocutt 2010, 47).

<div align="center">Altruism, Virtue and, Friendship</div>

Coined by Auguste Comte in the 19th century as the philosophical object of egoism, the

term 'altruism' has found its way into the annals of sociology, psychology, evolutionary

biology and now neurobiology. For purposes of this chapter, I employ the term as it pertains to

the social evolution from survival to the more *friendly* aspects of advancing consciousness.

Although the practical definition of altruism is selfless concern for the well-being of others, most

believe selflessness an unrealistic component of human nature (although one to which humanity

aspires); even the most generous gesture is compensated by feelings of personal gratification. In

social evolution, altruism is used to convey certain behaviors that increase the fitness of others

while decreasing the fitness of the actor, but if the survival of the society is underscored by

altruistic acts than the self-satisfaction in the act negates the purity of the altruism. The

foundation of social evolution is self-preservation, and "motivationally, moral action then has to

be based solely on dispositions regulating altruistic feelings" (Wolf 2010, 585).  Altruism is

consequence of the interactions of "subjects with incompatible desires", according to Kitcher

(1993, 505), "psychological disposition[s] that involves modification of desires that might lead to

action so that the desires that ultimately initiate action take into account the interest of others".

Primordial altruism did not require a moral underscoring since "there are many species of

animals that are naturally inclined to help others of their species, and yet do not have moral

beliefs" (Swinburne 2004, 217). According to a neuroscientific study of behavior in animals

(Lim and Young 2006, 506-7), altruism can be attributed to "the neurohypophyseal hormones

oxytocin and vasopressin [which] play central roles in the regulation of affiliative behavior and

social bonding in animals", analogous to the "affiliation between adults [which] can also be

viewed as a measure of social approach and motivation". The following subsets of altruism are

natural to humans as well as other creatures, as "the origin of the moral sense is thus found in the

social impulse, a primary animal instinct which demands its satisfaction as immediately as any

other instinct" (Seth 1889, 28).

 *Reciprocal altruism.* Evolutionary biologist, Robert Trivers (1971, 35-36) provides the

example of the downing person. When a complete stranger with nothing to gain risks his or her

own life to save the victim, the act is one of altruism. If the victim is the rescuer's own child,

then the altruism is non-reciprocal as the child represents the familial bond *and* the continuance

and durability of the family genes. If there is the premonition or possibility that the drowning

victim might later reciprocate in some way or another, then the rescuer's act is that of reciprocal

altruism. While this form of altruism temporarily reduces the fitness of the actor while increasing

that of the recipient, the act is accompanied by the expectation that it will be compensated in

some similar manner. The maxim of reciprocal altruism is illustrated in multiple philosophies

and religions: *do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

 *Non-reciprocal altruism* "increases the welfare of another individual at an actual or

potential cost of the individual who performs the act" (McGlynn 2010, 1). The biologist provides

the example of the squirrel who alerts other members of its den to the appearance of a hawk,

which can focus the predator's attention on the vigilant squirrel. W. D. Hamilton (1964)

theorizes that evolutionary success ultimately depends on leaving behind the maximum number

of copies of itself in the population through the indirect reproduction by those who share

identical copies of the same reproductive trait (*Kin Selection*). Hamilton's (1964) rule states:

"altruism is favored when the benefits (*B*) of the altruistic act to the recipient, multiplied by the

relatedness (*r*) to the actor, exceed the costs (*C*) to the actor". McGlynn (2010, 2) illustrates

Gerald Wilkinson's (1984) study which evidenced that bats were biologically more inclined to

share blood with "bats they were likely to encounter in the future", thus maximizing the

continuance of the species.  This non-reciprocal altruism, manifest in eusocial animals (colonies

that correlate to the human community) is more *friendly* than selfish altruism, although both

underscore the fundamental self-interest of species' survival.  While Wolf (2010, 582) supports

Richard's Joyce's (2006) argument that "morality cannot simply be reduced to altruistic

emotions", it is arguable that non-reciprocal altruism is a behavioral advancement within

individual consciousness. Whiteley (1982) writes:

> The sum-total of patterns of behavior and feeling which members of a community learn
> to regard and right and wrong constitutes that community's morality. A morality always
> contains, as it must if the community is to survive and prosper, a strong reinforcement of
> the individual's propensity to behave in a friendly fashion towards his neighbors.

Non-reciprocal altruism supports natural selection in the successful continuity of a species or

tribe, which instinctively supersedes the needs of the single individual. All forms of altruism

were obvious forerunners to virtue in variant degrees.

*Virtue* is a quality regarded as good or desirable in a person, such as patience, kindness,

and etcetera; constituents of and particular forms of moral excellence (OED 2016), It is

important to recognize the distinction between morality and virtue as the two are also easily

conflated. The easiest way to divorce the concepts is to relegate morality to behavior, and virtue

to the quality of how that behavior is facilitated. The quality of a virtue remains a matter of

degree and interpretation. It is the inner value, the strength of commitment, the determination for

justice—in essence the vitality and tenacity that underscore the individual's intent—that forms

our best criteria. Socrates "implicitly affirms many times over that virtue embraces concern for

the good of others" (White 1990, 119). *Good virtues* are products of reciprocal altruism—an

exchange of mutual correspondence. *Better virtues* that may benefit the actor are products of

non-reciprocal altruism. The *best virtues*, the true selflessness implied by pure altruism, are

reaches that exceed our mortal reach.[8]

    *Friendship.* Some social anthropologists credit *friendship* as the next decisive phase of

behavioral evolution.  Rather than an intimacy or kindly disposition, friendship originated as a

necessary accord, an alliance, a state of tentative mutual assurance—in themselves leaps from

the primary emotional rigidity of selfish altruism. Parsons (1923, 25) attributes the concept of

friendship to advanced cognitive reasoning, when individuals become more cooperative as "they

realize, no matter how vaguely, that they can do more, can fight better and are more likely to live

long collectively than individually".  This collaboration necessitated an evolutionary

embracement of trust, a sense of belief in the integrity of others, which Whiteley (1982, 438)

writes, "is possible only if there is … a certain amount of friendliness", amicable relationships

superior to the products of base altruisms.

<div align="center">Magic, Ritual, Myth, the Gods, and Religion</div>

    As the awe and fascination at the vagary of nature subdues through accustom and

repetition, humankind forges its "fluid inter-relationship" (Vasanthakumar 2016, 4) with magic,

ritual, myth, the gods, and religion—the hierarchal sequences of these conjectures and traditions

ambiguous. "Archeological materials relating to religion and ritual are fragmentary … rested on

fanciful reconstructions of the distant past" (Fogelin 2007, 56). Analysis of primitive ritual is

either through excavation, or the academic origin approach which compares the ceremonies of

ancient humans with those of modern tribes in the belief that ontogeny recapitulates

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[8] In Greek fashion, I have delineated the qualities of certain virtues, as well as the interactive concepts of
goodness (happiness, pleasure, and eudaimonia) into the three collaborative subdivisions of *good, better*,
and *best*—the latter beyond humanity's mortal grasp.

phylogeny—contemporary tribal replication of ancestral cultural tradition. While bones and

artifacts may evidence an event like funerary rites, no matter the scientific approach, the

accuracy of primordial ceremony remains unproven. Belknap (1932, 575) tells us that "… magic

may not be the sole or even the most primitive root of religion, that other motives and functions

may be present". Segal (1980, 175) writes "myth is the script of ritual and arises along with it",

and follows "to explain it". Fogelin (2007, 58)[9] emphases their integrality: "Rituals are not seen

as preserving or enacting stable sets of religious beliefs, but rather rituals construct, create, or

modify religious beliefs". Both religion and magic used symbols, were preoccupied with death

and resurrection, and personified souls or spirits: magic onto nature, religion onto supernature.

Notwithstanding which came first, it is obvious that the "aspects of one are necessarily related to

aspects of the other" (Fogelin 2007, 56). In animism, the spiritual world and physical world are

correspondent as spirits are personified onto animals, plants, rocks, and other factors of nature as

living, mystical forces.

*God(s).* When nature and local spirits did not respond to human demand with desired

efficacy, more potent agencies were created, promising expanded control and requiring more

personal devotion. "Each [god] was created by the imaginations and wishes of man who could

not account for the behavior of the universe in any other satisfactory way" (Van Doran 2007,

139). Gods became dominant personifications, summoned and worshipped for fair weather and

plentiful crops, a successful war, auspicious birth—mythological incentive for the taming of

nature. Experienced and assertive individuals endowed themselves with abnormal powers—the

ability to manipulate rainfall, to heal the diseased, and speak with the gods. "The believer who

has communicated with his god is … a man who is *stronger*" (Segal 1980, 178). An individual

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[9] Citing Bell, C. (1992, 1997).

who desired to appear powerful, to assume the mantle of moral and/or authoritative leadership,

became a god-whisperer. As power naturally breeds contempt, anyone who disputed the

authority of the leader/god-whisperer had to be contained, so envoys, or priests were created to

ensure the status quo.

> Since challenging these claims was mortally dangerous, dissent was infrequent and
> usually unvoiced. Eventually, a habit of forced compliance would turn into a reflex of
> unquestioning belief. Thus were the correlative myths of divinely instituted law and the
> divine right of kings brought into being, piggybacked on credulity and fear. (Hocutt 2010,
> 43)

*Ritual*: As states evolved into bona fide civilizations, the interrelationship between

humans and god(s), demigods, animal spirits, demons, and goddesses was accompanied by

displays of political and cultic power, illustrated by prescribed and symbolic acts or observances.

Simple ritual expanded into theatric display intended to 1) promote the positive outcome of an

event such as a marriage, ordination, or rites of passage, 2) prevent the negative aspects of illness

and demons, 3) support certain beliefs and taboos, and 4) aid in the expression of mourning.

Ritual was not merely a request for a good and prosperous life, it was "a social quest" (Hocart

1935, 349).  It was as important for society as for the individual; ritual re-enforced codes-of-

conduct while mitigating the loneliness and alienation of individuality by providing comfort in

the embracement of similar beliefs.  Ritual "organizes an individual's life and, when practiced in

common, organizes a society" (Segal 1980, 181-2). Early rituals were enacted to psychologically

ensure the resurrection of spring, and fertility of crops. Primitive man reawakened spring through

imitation. "Ritual works on the basis of what Frazier[10] calls the *Law of Similarity*, the belief that

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[10] While much of Frazier's work is subject to contemporary reevaluation, he is still regarded a dominant
influence on social anthropology. The underlying theme of his work is his theory of a general
development of modes of thought from the magical to the religious and, finally, to the scientific; his most
famous work is 1922's *The Golden Bough.* London: MacMillan.

the imitation of an action causes it so happen" (Segal 1980, 175). These ceremonies later became huge festivals embracing mythological such deities as the sun-god Mithras, whose winter death was resurrected in spring; Osiris; Egyptian god of regeneration, responsible for overseeing nature's springtime cycle; and the Greek festival of Dionysus, with its "drunkenness, frenzied dancing and song, rending and devouring of raw flesh, sexual license, obscenity, phallophoria, scurrilous inventive, ritual sorrow" (Belknap 1932, 576)—rituals that "serve to enact or promote symbolic meanings in a format that can easily be understood by the masses" (Fogelin 2007, 57). In China, Houji is the mythological hero who bestowed grain onto humanity during the time of the Xia Dynasty (c. 2070 –1600 BC). Houji was supernaturally conceived when his 'barren' mother stepped into a footprint left by the supreme sky god, Shangdi. In early Greece we have Demeter, goddess of the harvest, and Persephone, her daughter by Zeus. When her daughter is kidnapped by Hades, god of the underworld, Demeter destroys the crops until a truce is established allowing her Persephone to live with Hades for the six months of winter, and reunite with her mother for spring and summer. "These mythical happenings, while themselves outside of real time, by being reenacted in ritual make possible the inner-worldly temporal events", such as the agricultural renewal of spring. "Myth authenticates ritual … [it] is endowed with power both to constitute and to preserve the world and life. (Baumgartner et al 1974, 195)

These customs we celebrate today are not god-prescribed but reproductions of human generated traditions. We know that Halloween stems from the 2000-year-old Celtic festival of Samhain where the dead made their annual appearance, and ghoulish costumes were worn by the living so that the departed would avoid them as one of their own.  Funeral rites among the Neanderthals extend back 60,000 years, embalming originated with the early Egyptians, burial tombs date back to 5000 BCE, and 3000-5000-year-old funeral urns have been unearthed in

England and China. Much of our daily lives is consumed by rituals: grace before meals, sports, baptisms, and funerals.  Rituals allows us to share our emotions with others—the pride of graduation, the bonding of marriage, the sadness of loss, and the hopefulness of curing 'what ails'. As in life, there are rituals that benefit, and those that terrify such as the goose-steeping of fascism. While it is nonsense to believe that a rabbit's foot, or painted face predestine the outcome of an event, the psychological connection is consequential; it is the confirmation and validation of shared values and its long tradition provides a cohesive illustration of our integral participation in the *being* that is humanity.

*Moral Fables, Stories, Legends, and Myths.* "If our lives are to be reflective and coherent moral vision must be ordered around dominant metaphors or stories" (Hauerwas 1973, 76). Stories, folk tales, and chronicles are oral narrative accounts of fictional or biographical events, often meant to entertain a philosophical position. The moral fable is meant to illustrate a particular lesson through the human interrelationship with god(s), using events current in popular belief in order to provide design or unity. If these stories persist they are eventually written down.  Legends are quasi-historical records subject to overt exaggeration, created for the purpose of honoring heroes and persons of distinction such as kings, gods, saints, and mystics. Each narrative form is intended to underscore the social values of the community as well as the social structure of the time for which they were transmitted so that younger generations can recount them when confronted with issues and situations that correspond to earlier events.

"The foundation of morality should not be made dependent on myth nor tied to any authority", Einstein (2007, 158) advised, "lest doubt about the myth or about the legitimacy of the authority imperil the foundation of sound judgement". A myth is a traditional oral narrative of the deeds of humans and gods— "a statement of a bigger reality still partially alive … in that

its precedent, its law, its moral, still rule the social life of the natives" (Barnes 1955, 121).[11] The

myth provides explanation or rationalization for tribal history, mystical beliefs or rituals, or

events such as war or natural phenomena. "Myth justifies phenomena of diverse kinds … The

survival of society depends on the continuing acceptance or practice of these phenomena" (Segal

1980, 178).  Through ritual reenactments, participants impart their earthly continuance and

durability and their permanence in an afterworld. Myths are a "set of coherent metaphors and

stories that constitute an understanding of the nature of the world" (Hauerwas 1973, 76), and its

reinvigoration through ritualistic imitation. Whatever its evolution, the power of the narrative on

social morality and bonding cannot be disputed; "this aspect of our moral existence is better

associated with certain stories and metaphors than simply with general moral principles"

(Hauerwas 1973, 77). Be they Aesop's fables, the Jākata tales, or certain accounts in the

Christian Bible, "the myth comes into play when rite, ceremony or a social or moral rule

demands justification, warrant of antiquity, reality, and sanctity"[12] (Segal 1980, 178).

The life of Christ is a reproduction of the events of India's Krishna and Buddha, Egypt's

Horus and Osiris, Persia's Mithra, and so on. Horus (c. 3000-2500 BCE), in his form as a falcon,

boasted a dozen disciples, walked on water, was visited by three wise men, was crucified and

resurrected. Mithra (c. 2000 BCE), known as *the Way, the Truth, and the Light*, was born of a

virgin (as was Krishna), swaddled in a manger, had twelve companions, died to save the world,

and was resurrected after three days (as was Osiris). Buddha (c 500-400 BCE) offspring of a

white elephant, healed the sick, walked on water, and was resurrected. They were all producers

of miracles. The concept of resurrection is found in the mythology of the Canaanites,

Phoenicians, Greeks, Arabs, and Hebrews. The great flood of Genesis appears in Mesopotamian,

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[11] Citing Malinowski B. (1954, 126).
[12] Citing Malinowski, B. (1948, 84).

Greek, Hindu, Norse, and Mayan mythological cultures.

    *The Advent of Religion.*  While Frazier (1922) makes a clear distinction between the Age of Magic and the Age of Religion, many support their mutual evolution, any clear-cut distinction "meaningless and controverted" (Wax and Wax 1963, 24).[13] While magic, "presupposes a rigid relation of cause and effect, unaffected by supernatural beings", religion believes "in supernatural beings, whose actions relative to man may be influenced and even controlled" (Philsooph 1971, 183). What appears evident "is that each was generated" by humanity desiring to "bend nature to [its] wishes" (Wax and Wax 1963, 496)[14]. Ellenberger's (1979, 35) claim that, "Magic can best be defined as an inadequate technique of power of man over nature and a fallacious anticipation of science", is supported by Arthur C. Clarke's[15] fictional Third Law: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" (Dawkins 2006, 98).  In primeval tribes, there is little fundamental distinction between magic, science, or metaphysics, and "the first effect of religion is to sustain and reinforce the [established] claims of society". Tylor (1913) claims the advent of religion "represents a response to strictly intellectual problems, not to social, or existential ones", while Segal (1980, 174) postulates a more *lived* emphasis: "Religion rises from wonder—from a desire to explain one's experiences.  It is composed almost entirely of beliefs, not practices". As Chaudhuri (1972, 191) advises, "at the present state of our incomplete scientific knowledge it would certainly be wise to keep an unbiased and open mind, without slamming the door upon any possibility, however occult or mysterious".

<p align="center">The Axial Age and the Good</p>

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[13] Citing Lowie, R. H. (1937).
[14] Citing Frazier, J. G. (1922).
[15] Clarke, A. C. (2000)

According to Jaspers (2011), the Axial or pivotal age of transformative philosophical thinking occurred between the 8th and 2nd centuries BCE. Historians cite the golden years of Persian-Greco-Indic interaction between 545 and 490. In the 5th century, Confucius formulated his concept of morality, justice, and the sincerity of social interaction, further expanded by Mencius (c. 372–289), and Xunzi (c. 314–217). Las Tse (c. 600–400), reputed author of the *Tao Te Ching*, emphasized harmonic accordance with nature through the path of *wu-wei* (action through non-action). Buddha (c. provided oral teachings of the *Middle Way*, later presented as written scripture in the Pali Canon. In what is now Turkey, the 'father' of Greek philosophy, Thales of Miletus (c. 650) constructed his theory of geometry, Anaximander (611–-547), a systematic philosophical view of the world, and Anaximenes the scientific formation and mechanism of the universe. Heraclitus of Ephesus (535-475) expressed the natural interchange of elements, symbolized by fire and governed by the law of change. Pythagoras (582-504) illustrated universal homeostasis. Plato (428-348), embracing Socrates as narrator, was succeeded by pupil, Aristotle (384-322). McEvilley (2002) provides comparative collaboration "between the *Rigveda* and Thales of Miletus; Anaximander's *aperiōn* (the indefinite) and early Upaniśadic texts [and]; Anaximenes' concept of "divine air" and the *Atharva Veda"* (Mullen 2010, 35-61). The Axial Age heralded the critical exchange of ideas among India, China, and the Mediterranean Southwest, providing collaborative discourse on art, culture, numbers, philosophies, and spiritualties. The universe in the Platonic and Vendāntin systems was construed "in the Sumerian tradition of macrocosm-microcosm correspondence, as a mathematically-tuned, living being" (McEvilley 2002, 165), characterized by the integrality of individual and world souls. Greco-Indic interaction illustrated the comparability of Orphism, Pythagoreanism, and Platonism to Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism through a panoply of

doctrines including the problem of the One and the Many, and the epistemological nature of the

self. Philosophy flourished with its underlying perspectives on wisdom, knowledge, reality, and

humankind's reason-for-being which underscored the evolution of the desire for goodness.

<div align="center">Goodness</div>

*Good goodness.* This basic level of goodness is determined by an individual's desires,

motives, ideals, or beliefs, which sum of intents and actions is thus manifest as beneficial to self

and society. In the *Republic*, Plato offers his analysis of goodness as,

> between things that are to be welcomed solely for themselves, others that are to be
> pursued only for their results, and, best of all, a category of things that are both good in
> themselves and good because of their consequences. (Kraut 2013, 450)

Socrates envisioned humanity as "naturally motivated to seek the good" (Reshotko 2009, 1).

Aristotle claimed "that well-being is a (indeed the) good to be achieved by humans (Charles and

Scott 1999, 208). The Confucian conceptions of *ye* (righteousness, morality) and *ren*

(humaneness, goodness) were behaviors one should emulate in order to live a good life.

*Better goodness* demands more complex decision-making through reflection and inner-

discourse. This more liberal goodness is underscored by option-oriented decisions made through

cognitive analysis as, "the human good is to perform well qua reasoner, and there are many

excellent activities involving reason" (Charles and Scott 1999, 212). In *better goodness*, the

individual is presented with cognitive complexities such as emotions, perceptions, outside

influences, and considerations of cause and consequence through contemplation, reflection, and

analysis. *Better goodness* is the evolution into the behavioral and psycho-philosophical

complications of justice, temperance, generosity, equanimity. The Axial individual was self-

encouraged "to compare various views of what goodness is, and then also to grasp the true

conception of what ends are really good and should be pursued in conflicting situations" (Yu

1998, 330).

*Best Goodness*. Philosophical descriptions of this 'greatest' good are values that *should*

*be,* and *ought to be* sought. They reside in the realm of the desirable, beyond the capability of

humankind's inherent earthly nature. *Best goodness* is a quality with which individuals flirt

without consummation.  It is perfect moderation, the mental state of consistent equilibrium in the

Confucian *Doctrine of the Mean*, the Buddhist *Middle Way*, Lao-Tse's *Way of the Tao*, and the

Aristotelian *Golden Mean*—the desirable homeostasis of the extremes of excess and deficiency.

In Christianity, it is the equilibrium of the Holy Spirit caught between the flesh of the Son and

the essence of the Father. In Kant's view, it is "a world in which both moral virtue and happiness

are maximized, with happiness contingent on virtue" (Evans 2014, 14).

Worldview philosophy revolves around a singular ethical question. How should a person

live? For Plato, it is to choose the life that resides in the mean and shun the excess of extremes—

"this is the greatest happiness for man" (Rachlin 1985, 8). It's the courage that melds cowardice

and rashness into perfect sensibility, benevolence in lieu of greed and sloth.  It is to peer into the

realm of *best goodness*, a perfection unattainable in mortal time and space.

<center>Pleasure, Happiness, and Eudaimonia</center>

The elements of pleasure, happiness, and eudaimonia overlap, intertwine, and are

dynamic and integral constituents of the whole, which offers the potential *best* of what is

possible. Any attempt to isolate one constituent from the others mitigates cohesiveness; the parts

without the whole, as well as the whole without its parts, inadequate.

> Aristotle believes that the total life of a human being consists in a variety of types of
> activity, each of which is an instance of living in a certain way", each a certain capacity
> of the soul, so that the totality of one's life, "according to Aristotle, consists in

perceiving, growing, digesting, walking, feeling emotions, thinking, etc. (Heinaman
1988, 32)

*Pleasure*. Rachlin (1985, 5) asks and answers, "What abilities do you need to tell the

difference between pleasure and good? In the long run good behavior is intrinsically harmonious

while bad behavior is not".  Reshotko (2009, 8) tells us that, to Socrates[16] "goodness is pleasure".

Scott (1999, 238) argues that it is "the pleasures which accompany virtuous activities that are

unconditionally good". Aristotle's discussion of eudaimonia "in the *Ethics* suggests that it

[goodness] is not disconnected from pleasure …otherwise no one would pursue it" (Barnhart

2012, 28). Pleasure is "an activity in accordance with one's nature" (Reshotko 2009, 12), and

"should be done for the sake of happiness, not the other way around (Rachlin 1985, 6-7). The

difference between pleasure and happiness is temporal; pleasure is a short term interest to the

long-term interest of happiness, and "behavior that results in pleasure often conflicts with

behavior that results in happiness" (Rachlin 1985, 6-7).

*Happiness*. For Plato, intelligence alone is not enough to ensure happiness. "Happiness is

achieved when intelligence is balanced with pleasure [which] constitutes the harmony in a

person's life. The ability to establish their ideal balance Plato calls 'wisdom'" (Rachlin 1985, 16).

Aristotle proposes certain conditions for the constitution of happiness, "such as friends or money

for certain actions, and food and drink for staying alive. … moral action or contemplation, plus

perception, etc., plus all the necessary conditions of eudaimonia—food, friends, shelter, etc."

(Heinaman 1988, 34). In fact, according to MacKay's (2005, 548) study, Aristotle believes, "The

best/only way to make sense of the claim that no good thing can be added to happiness that will

make it better, is if happiness (already) includes all intrinsically good things". Wolf (2010, 581)

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[16] Protagoras 351e5-6.

writes: "The common everyday view assumes that individual life is striving for happiness or

well-being", and Evans (2014, 15) adds, "it is a psychological fact that humans necessarily desire

their own happiness". Yet how does one define and thus determine happiness, as the word means

many things to many people.  *Happiness* is derived from the 14th century, Middle English *hap*,

—luck or chance—which translates contemporarily as *happenstance* of fate or occurrence rather

than something that is individually determinate. Roget's Thesaurus (2013) provides us with

forty-six synonyms to happiness, among them prosperity, glee, well-being, optimism, and

euphoria; the disciplines of biology, philosophy, economy, religion, and psychology all struggle

to come up with an finite definition. Many equate happiness with doing the right thing, others

with complacency. Maslow (1968, 28) calls "happiness or pleasure … the consequence of

amelioration of this unpleasant state-of-affairs of wanting, of desiring, of needing", which

strongly correlates to Buddhist thought.

> Any realistic morality, be it religious or secular, links morality in some way with
> happiness, that is to say, with what human beings on reflection actually desire for its own
> sake rather than as a means to something else. (Sia 2008, 704)

Freud (1930, 38) found happiness "in the enjoyment of beauty, wherever it is to be found", and

Maslow (1968, 73) in peak-experiences: "the mystic, or oceanic, or nature experience, the

aesthetic perception, the creative moment".  In *Euthydemus* (v. II, p. 186), "Plato is at pains to

divest human happiness of any accident and ground it in an act of choice" (Rachlin 1985, 6),

which concludes that accidental happiness is not as virtuous as that which results from good

intent.

     *Eudaimonia*. For Socrates, "eudemonia is true and absolute good" —as well as perfect

knowledge and virtue—perfections above and beyond those which exist in space and time"

(Reshotko 2009, 16), which notions the tellurian incapability of experiencing eudaimonia.  For

Aristotle, the *primary* happiness or eudaimonia is achieved only through contemplation (Charles and Scott 1999, 226), with moral activity as secondary.[17] "Aristotle asserts that eudaimonia is activity in accordance with the best virtue, and identifies this with theoretical contemplation, the exercise of wisdom" (Heinaman 1988, 32). In fact, Aristotle envisions eudaimonia as dual constituents, claiming that both contemplation and moral action count as Eudaimonia while asserting the better of these is contemplation, and "the best kind of eudaimonia [comprises] more than contemplation since the best total life plainly comprises more than contemplation" (Heinaman 1988, 33).

There are as many methods of contemplative practice as adherents. One immediately recognizes India where individuals in orange robes sit cross-legged, eyes unfocused, hands in supplication. In the Bhagavad-Gita, contemplation is one of the four yoga's, each representing the homeostatic union of the mind, body, and spirit. Total contemplation, when the self melds into the universal, is considered penultimate consciousness. In Buddhism, it is the apex of the Eightfold Path. For Plotinus the aim of contemplation is a loss of consciousness of self in order to seek unity with the One, and St. Augustine "conceived of alienation as a state of ecstatic contemplation in which the human soul or spirit is elevated" (Ogilvy 2010, 45). Socrates possessed the ability to fall into depths of reflection or contemplation without warning,

> "looking at something within himself" (*pros heauton ti skepsamenos*),[18]… At those times he remains standing,[19] lost in search, impervious to anything about him, reflecting *(synnoêsas)*, that is, "turning his gaze back into himself".[20] (Klein 1998, 93)

Scripture tells us that Muhammad climbed Mount Hira to seclude himself from the world in contemplation; Buddha went to Bodh Gaya, and Jesus to the wilderness. In contemporary

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[17] Citing Nichomachean Ethics, X 7 and X 8.
[18] *Phaedo* 95, e 7. CF. *Phaedrus.* 277 d 4 – 6 (per Klein, 1988).
[19] *Symposium.* 175 A 7-9; 220 C 3-5 (per Klein, 1988).
[20] Ibid. 174 d 5.

psycho-spirituality, contemplation is deep introspection, the intense examination of one's

thoughts, desires, and actions and how they are supported and enhanced by the body complex. It

is reflective inner-discourse—looking within oneself and conducting an honest and deep

emotional and intellectual conversation with one's respondent reflection. Of course, there are

those who believe the art of contemplation a wasted exercise. Xunzi, one of the three great early

commentators on Confucian philosophy, saw "pure reflective thought as having little value for

learning. He writes, "I once tried spending the whole day in thought, but I found it of less value

than a moment of study"[21] (Schofer 1993, 118).

White (1990, 122) compares the universal human quest for eudaimonia to the integral

refinement of the ultimate craftsman: "just as builders, shipwrights, doctors, trainers and the rest

introduce proper arrangement and order into the objects of their concern, harmonizing parts with

parts until the result is something well-arranged and ordered … so does the good man go to work

on the soul".  Reshokto (2009, 4) confirms, "all moral expertise is compared to the techne of

expert craftspeople".

Accepting that humanity is the architect and arbitrator of morality, and not some

Incomprehensible, nor Its flatterers, it is up to us, as the individual facilitator of growth and

change, to ensure the endurance of good goodness, encourage the acquisition of better goodness,

and seek the otherworldly abstraction of eudaimonia. Humankind's ergon, its defining character,

lies in its capacity for good choice and action. All knowledge, virtue, and ability reside within

the individual through the involution of spirit into the consciousness of matter—they merely

require accession. One must accept full responsibility for one's condition. To iterate, while not

responsible for the cards dealt, the individual is responsible for how he or she plays the hand

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[21] Citing Watson, B. (1963).

given. Humanity must assume the obligation to ensure that *good* goodness is preserved, *better* goodness pursued, and *best* goodness championed. Morality must not remain static but evolve in similar dynamic to society and consciousness. Only we, as individual constituents of the whole of humanity, have the power to effect spiritual, social, and political change. No matter one's beliefs, philosophy, or spirituality, if rediscovering all the things that make one fearless and committed—all of the intrinsic and beautiful qualities of one's true nature that contribute to the individual well-being and that of humanity—than isn't that time well spent?

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