

THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION

(Prior to proceeding with this paper, it is only ethical that the following be stated. I am not the first person to think about the concepts that will be presented in the course of this paper. This is not to state that anything from this paper has been plagiarized from *any* type of source. I conceptualized these concepts entirely on my own without anyone else's assistance or, for that matter, the consultation of other sources. However, in the years since the original development of this theory, I have read of others who have thought along similar lines. *One* example would be Carl Sagan. At times, I have read of him expressing precepts similar to the concepts which will be presented herein. To put it succinctly, although I originated these concepts *without* resorting to any form of plagiarism, I have subsequently come to learn that I am not the first person to think along these lines.)

There should be clarification as to the precise nature of this paper as a result of some degree of ambiguity in the title. This paper will not, to any large extent, illuminate why *contemporary* man experiences religious beliefs. For that matter, it will not even outline why, since the dawn of human civilization, *formal* religion (i.e. Hinduism) has existed (although the concepts presented *will* provide a modicum of insight as to why the role of religion within society has become less prominent as civilization has progressed). This paper will elucidate upon the *origins* of religion. To be precise, this paper will deal with the basis of a religious belief within the *earliest human beings* who existed, not contemporary, or, for that matter, civilized man.

The reason that earliest man developed the belief in a supreme being (or beings) is as follows.

The need to explain natural phenomena which were impossible to explain via any other means.

The elucidation of this principle is as follows.

Firstly, at what stage in human evolution was the point reached where man developed a belief in a deity? This is a question for an evolutionary biologist. However, broad parameters for successfully answering this question can be established. It would be the stage where man made the transition from merely being an animal, to distinguishing himself from animals via some semblance of intelligent activity. When was the evolutionary stage reached when man went from merely engaging in survival (as is the case with animals) to engaging in more than that? Specifically, when was there the creation of tools, living in communities, the actual burying of the dead, drawing "art" on cave walls, etc. The precise question for the purpose of this paper is, at what stage of evolutionary development did some degree of intellectual development transpire?

An evolutionary biologist may ask the following. What magnitude of intellectual development would be required for the thesis of this paper to be valid? The magnitude of intellectual development which would have precipitated the development of religious beliefs, would have been the magnitude required to look at natural phenomena and wonder about it. The intellectual ability to look at the stars at night and wonder, where did it all come from? Why is it

sometimes very hot, and sometimes very cold (the seasons)? Why does the sky sometimes grow dark, produce water, make loud sounds, and produce strange light (a rain storm with thunder and lightning)? Where did *we* come from? Whenever this evolutionary stage was reached, this would have been the genesis of religion.

When this evolutionary stage was reached, these questions would have been very prominent within the minds of our ancient cavemen ancestors. When scrutinizing this situation, the question that contemporary man must ask himself is, how would they have answered these questions? As one example, would they have been capable of developing the correct scientific answer to explain rain storms? Clearly and unequivocally, no. Therefore, how *would* they have answered them?

At this stage of the paper, it is most judicious to briefly "sidetrack" for just a bit as there is one point which must be dealt with. A modicum of what is about to be outlined is contentious *in one specific respect*. All of these papers centre around the unconscious mind and its effect on behaviour. The question is, did our ancient cavemen ancestors even *have* an unconscious mind? This is impossible to answer since even at this contemporary stage of human development there is still much to learn about the unconscious. Therefore, it will only be stated that at some level which does *not* pertain to the implications of the human **biological** mind, the following situation would have prevailed.

Since they were (obviously) incapable of developing any type of scientific framework to answer these questions, they would have been left with only one "option". (The word option is in quotes as this certainly would not have been an intentional decision on their part.) *They would have conceptualized a being (or beings) superior to them which created these phenomena*. The precise rationale behind this is as follows.

Our ancient ancestors would have realized that they were the dominant species in their environment. No species that they knew of could be responsible for the phenomena they witnessed. Therefore, it must have been something superior to them which was responsible for these phenomena. Furthermore, to explain the plethora *and* magnitude of the phenomena they witnessed, the superior being must have been extraordinarily powerful and all pervasive. When it came to explaining why water fell from every part of the sky, temperatures changed everywhere, the existence of *so many* points of light (stars) in the sky, and explaining where we came from, how else to explain it but via the existence of a supreme, pervasive, and omnipotent force? This was the only possible solution to answer these questions which arose in the minds of our cavemen ancestors. Consequently, the need to explain natural phenomena which seemingly had no other explanation was the origins of the belief in a supreme being (or beings).

In order to illustrate how this is a rudimentary human characteristic, we shall conduct what is known in physics as a thought experiment. What this entails is the establishment of conditions which are far too ideal to actually replicate in reality, therefore we shall merely think through it. For readers who have no experience in physics (which undoubtedly is the majority of you) you may feel that this is an exceedingly foolish exercise. Consequently, keep the following in mind. Thought experiments do arise with some frequency in physics since they are a useful tool. Secondly, a very important concept from Einstein's theory of General Relativity (the principle of equivalence) was initially predicated upon a thought experiment (an elevator in outer space). The conditions for this thought experiment will be as follows. We shall have 1000 different islands in various parts of the ocean. These islands are completely habitable and provide all the food and fresh water that are required to keep a population of humans alive for a

life time. The conditions which are far too ideal to replicate in reality are as follows. We place a few dozen babies on each of these islands and state that somehow they are able to initially care for themselves without the need for parents to take care of them. Furthermore, as they grow older they acquire language. They know nothing of the outside world or our civilization. Their entire "world" is this island they're on. These same circumstance prevail on all 1000 islands. Once they're old enough to talk (or more importantly, think) what will be their reaction to the various natural phenomena they witness? Their reaction will be the same reaction that our cavemen ancestors experienced eons ago. The only possible explanation for their origins, the origins of the universe, and the natural phenomena they witness is the existence of a pervasive and omnipotent force. This is the *only possible* explanation for such primitive people. Furthermore, this reaction will not transpire on 900, 990, or even 999 of the islands. It will transpire on *all* 1000 of them. How can such a stalwart claim be made? For two reasons. (The following two concepts will be of a *highly critical* nature and play a very prominent role in substantiating the thesis of this paper.)

1. *Logic dictates that once there is intellectual development of sufficient magnitude, there will inevitably be questions about origins and natural phenomena.*
2. *When there is a complete void of scientific knowledge, the **sole singular** way of answering these questions is through the development of a belief in a supreme being (or beings).*

A certain proportion of the readers are, no doubt, of the following view. One cannot attribute the development of religion to a psychological factor. This is for the simple reason that God (or Allah) has told us of his existence through various holy writings and his prophets. My only comment is this. This precept will, to one extent or another, be addressed in the following paper.

The central thesis of this paper, does have some bearing on civilized (even contemporary) man. In relation to contemporary man, I have personally met people whose religious beliefs are predicated upon a refusal to accept science. In their opinion, evolution or the Big Bang theory of the universe are nonsensical. As far as they are concerned, the *only* way to explain origins is through God. Therefore, *their* religious belief is the direct result of the thesis presented in this paper. However, these individuals constitute, in my opinion, only a tiny percentage of the general population. (It goes without saying that there are others who are so stalwart in their religious beliefs that the acceptance of scientific explanations behind origins would be blasphemous.) Although the thesis is merely applicable to an incremental amount of the population, this thesis is somewhat germane to the general population as a whole.

As the centuries (and latterly decades) have elapsed, the population, as a whole, has become less religious. Potentially, there are many reasons for this. However, one *contributing* factor to explain this would be this thesis and the precise manner in which our civilization has developed. As science has progressed, we no longer *require* the existence of a supreme being to explain age old questions. Science can take the place of God in answering our questions. Consequently, there would be a tendency for people to become (somewhat) less religious. An example to illustrate how this phenomenon could take effect can be found at this web site. Under the astronomy section is my new theory of the origins of the universe. If it is accepted by the scientific community, it would be vastly superior to the existing Big Bang model (as an

explanation of the origins of the universe). My theory answers *far more* questions and is more complete. *If* it were successfully disseminated to the lay public, with time, there would be a general reduction in the population's overall level of religious devotion. This is for the simple reason that my model is complete enough, *that there is no room for a deity to do anything in the creation of the universe as a whole*. Therefore, an age old question pertaining to origins would be answered in a (reasonably) complete manner, thereby reducing (to some extent) people's level of religious devotion. (As already stated, the provision of scientific answers is merely a contributing factor to society's overall reduction in religious devotion. The explanation of why the population, as a whole, has become less religious over the course of time requires a far more intensive analysis.)

There are those who will strive to counter this paper via the following. None of this can be accepted as valid for the following reason. Since there are scientific explanations behind origins and various natural phenomena, most people should have abandoned their religious beliefs if this paper is valid. However, (as already stated in this paper) there are those who refuse to accept scientific explanations of origins as this would be blasphemy. Since this reality exists, this paper cannot be accepted as valid. This is not a valid criticism for two reasons.

Firstly, towards the very beginning of this paper it was stated that this paper would pertain to the *origins* of religion, *not* the basis of a religious belief in contemporary man. Secondly, although the following is outside the domain of the thesis of this paper, it will be *superficially* addressed in order to contend with the (potential) criticism of the last paragraph.

It is almost inevitable that almost everybody in today's society will experience a religious belief *during the earliest stages of their lives*. This is for the simple reason that the idea of God *absolutely permeates* every aspect of our lives. In the West, a child's favourite time of the year would be Christmas. From the time an American child can read, on his money he will see the phrase, "In God We Trust." The list of examples could be endless.* For the majority who adhere to their beliefs, for various individual reasons (which, again, are far too extensive to even *briefly* address) their resolve in their religious convictions will only magnify themselves as they become older. For many of these individuals, their religion is more important to them than their own lives. They will allow *nothing* to even incrementally weaken their faith. They believe in God not because of a need for answers to questions, but because they have always believed since they were a child. Their society simply "dictates" that God is real. Furthermore, their beliefs are so intense as a result of individual influences which they have experienced during the course of their life. Those are the two reasons (a belief in God since they were children, and individual influences which have dramatically strengthened their faith) that scientific explanations behind origins do nothing to even incrementally weaken their faith. Consequently, the (potential) critique cited two paragraphs ago is invalid.

What follows has no bearing on the origins of religion. However, since the thesis of this paper is (somewhat) germane to some people (in a different respect), it will be expounded upon.

There are people in society (even our contemporary society) who have not developed an effective sense of logic and rationale. These people have a tendency to jump to illogical and

* One will only become atheist if he is raised to be so, or, as he becomes older he realizes (through various means which are far too extensive to even briefly delve into) that the belief in God that he has adhered to since he was a child, is not valid.

irrational conclusions when faced with a fact which *seems* to defy logical explanation. An example will elucidate.

The genesis of the myth of the Bermuda Triangle was a few decades ago. Some fighter planes were flying in a particular area. Suddenly, they vanished. Over the course of the next few days, there was an intensive search for these planes. There was no sign of them, or, for that matter, any kind of indication that they had crashed (I am under the impression that there was no radio contact from the pilots just prior to their disappearance which indicated that something had gone wrong). From all outward appearances, they just vanished into thin air. When these planes just seemingly vanish without a single trace, there was indeed a substantial mystery on our hands. However, that doesn't mean we jump to the conclusion that the Bermuda Triangle is a refueling base for U.F.O.'s which happen to be stealing various vessels entering the area. This is the conclusion of irrational people who refuse to adhere to the fundamental tenets of logic. Unfortunately, there are people like this in our world. Even when it comes to individuals who should know better, some of them seem to fall "victim" to this phenomenon. It is my understanding that incidents along the following lines have transpired within the U.S. Air Force (whose officers are university graduates and should really know better). On their radar screens, they suddenly witness an object which was not there previously. It should not have just "appeared" at such a close range as the officer would have seen it approaching at a significantly greater distance. After watching this "blip" on the radar screen, it disappears just as suddenly as it first appeared. They proceed with a diagnostic on their equipment. The diagnostic indicates that all systems are functioning within normal operational parameters. Therefore, a "blip" suddenly appeared, flew towards them for a brief period, and suddenly disappeared. No aircraft that they're cognizant of could accomplish such a thing. Therefore, how do they explain such an event? It is at this stage that they foolishly record in their reports the possibility of a U.F.O. They did not bother to wait for a more logical and reasonable explanation. Eventually, the following is ascertained. Their "possible U.F.O." was nothing more than a flock of geese which temporarily tightened its formation. (If a flock of geese fly too far apart, there will be no radar return. However, if they temporarily tighten their formation to a sufficient extent, it may present a radar return.) It is these individuals who are responsible for propagating ridiculous myths which are obviously absurd. To make matters worse, when they repeat (as an example) their experience with a psychic, they distort the experience to such an extent, that they end up telling an absolutely incredible (and false) story which cannot be solved by a logical third party because of the magnitude of the distortion.

Consequently, if we experience strange facts in life which (seemingly) have no explanation, keep in mind the thesis of this paper. However, for these purposes the thesis is altered to state, "The need to explain natural phenomena which are *seemingly* impossible to explain via any other means." Merely because there doesn't seem to be a logical explanation at present, that doesn't mean we should start to conjure up exotic and fanciful explanations. Secondly, for those who do not adhere to the tenets of logic, and "succumb" to this thesis, when they are reporting their "supernatural" experience, there may be a tendency to greatly distort the nature of their *actual* experience. These distortions may render the development of a more logical explanation close to impossible.