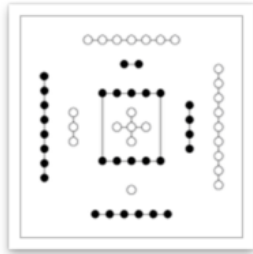
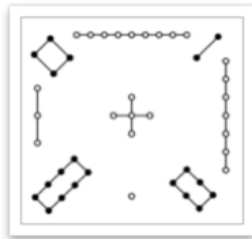


Eurasian Philosophy and Quantum Metaphysics

(Theology Reconsidered)



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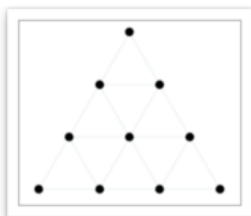
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Sanskrit Om.JPG



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by Juan Valdez

Dedicated to the memory of Swami Adiswarananda and Professor William A. Ward, without whom inspiration for this work would be lacking. To paraphrase Plato, the sparks that kindled the Soul as it were.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
LIST OF FIGURES AND IMAGES	5
INTRODUCTION	7
PROLOGUE: MYTHOS AND MYSTICISM IN ANTIQUITY	24
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MYSTICAL ARTS: BEYOND YOGA	25
MEDITATION AS A MYSTICAL ART: A BRIDGE THROUGH TIME	35
OVERARCHING THEMES: THE LAURASIAN HYPOTHESIS AND A NEW METAPHYSICS	44
SETTING THE STAGE: A BRIEF OF HISTORY OF MODERN MAN	58
PART I: ON CREATION MYTHOS (COSMOGONY)	70
FROM LANGUAGE TO WRITING: THE DAWN OF HISTORY	71
THE ANCIENT HEBREWS: THE TANAKH, TORAH AND FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES	79
ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MYTHOS: THE WEIGHING OF THE HEART, RA AND MA'AT	88
THE ENÛMA ELIŠ: SUMER- BABYLONIAN CREATION MYTHOS	105
ANCIENT PERSIAN THEOLOGY: ZARATHUSTRA AND THE AVESTA	115
CLASSIC HELLENIC THEOGONY: CHAOS, CHRONOS AND EROS	123
ORPHIC THEOGONY: THANES AND THE GREAT COSMIC EGG	132
VEDIC COSMOGONY: SKEPTICISM, PURUṢA AND HIRANYAGARBHA	147
ANCIENT CHINESE THEOLOGY: SHÀNGDÌ, PÁNGŭ, TIĀN AND THE DAO	163
ROMAN COSMOGONY: THE METAMORPHOSES OF OVID	185
EURASIAN MYTHOS: ESTABLISHING THE LAURASIAN HYPOTHESIS	196
PART II: ON ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY (LOGOS)	208
FROM THE FAR EAST: THE TRANSLATION CHALLENGE	209
MYTHOS OF THE FAR EAST: FROM SHÀNGDÌ TO TIĀN	219
THE METAPHYSICS OF THE I CHING: THE ALIGNMENT OF HEAVEN, MAN AND EARTH	232
UPANISHADIC PHILOSOPHY: BRAHMAVIDYĀ AND THE SOUL	253
BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY: IMPERMANENCE, SUFFERING AND THE "NO-SELF"	266
PYTHAGORAS: THE FATHER OF HELLENIC PHILOSOPHY	283
THE LEGACY OF SOCRATES: SKEPTICISM, KNOWLEDGE AND REASON	296
PLATO AND THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE: IDEAS, BEING AND BECOMING	305
EARLY CHINESE PHILOSOPHY: THE HUMANISM OF CONFUCIUS	332
THE LǎOZĭ AND ZHUANGZI: DAOISM AND THE WAY OF VIRTUE	343
INDO-EUROPEAN THEO-PHILOSOPHY: ON THE SOUL	357
LOGOS FROM MYTHOS: THE HEART OF EURASIAN PHILOSOPHY	371
PART III: ON RELIGION AND SCIENCE	385
THE INDO-EUROPEANS: THE GRANDPARENTS OF PHILOSOPHY	386
HELLENIC THEO-PHILOSOPHY: FROM MYTHOS TO LOGOS	398
ARISTOTLE'S METAPHYSICS: CAUSALITY AND THEOLOGY IN ANTIQUITY	411

STOICISM: <i>NATURALISM, CORPOREALISM AND LOGOS</i>	430
THE SEEDS OF CHRISTIANITY: THE HELLENIZATION OF JUDAISM	448
EARLY CHRISTIAN <i>THEOLOGY</i> : JESUS, <i>GNOSIS</i> , AND <i>LOGOS</i>	459
ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY: ALLĀH AS THE <i>FINAL CAUSE</i>	480
THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT: THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE	490
THE <i>METAPHYSICS OF MORALITY</i> : KANTIAN COGNITIVE <i>ONTOLOGY</i>	504
ALBERT EINSTEIN: <i>SPACETIME</i> AND RELATIVITY THEORY.....	522
QUANTUM MECHANICS: <i>WAVE-PARTICLE DUALITY</i> AND <i>UNCERTAINTY</i>	535
SCHRÖDINGER’S CAT: THE DEATH OF <i>LOCAL REALISM</i>	552
PART IV: ON <i>ONTOLOGY</i> AND <i>MYSTICISM</i>	568
THE VIEW FROM THE WEST: THE HISTORY OF <i>OBJECTIVE REALISM</i>	569
INTERPRETATIONS OF QUANTUM THEORY: PHYSICS MEETS PHILOSOPHY.....	579
MODERN PSYCHOLOGY: FREUD VERSUS JUNG	606
<i>SUBJECT-OBJECT METAPHYSICS</i> AND <i>QUALITY</i> : A REFORMULATION OF <i>LOGICAL POSITIVISM</i>	616
EASTERN PHILOSOPHY: BACK TO THE BEGINNING	627
VEDIC <i>THEOLOGY</i> : VEDĀNTA AND <i>BRAHMAVIDYĀ</i>	637
<i>MYSTICISM</i> AND FREUD: NEVER THE TWO SHALL MEET.....	653
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND YOGA: 20 TH CENTURY VEDĀNTA.....	706
PART V: <i>METAPHYSICS</i> IN THE QUANTUM ERA	722
THE CURRENT ONTOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE: A METAPHYSICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	723
THE LAW OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES: THE DEATH OF THE SOUL	738
INTO THE <i>MYSTIC</i> : THE GREAT EPISTEMOLOGICAL DIVIDE	749
<i>METAPHYSICS</i> AND <i>MORALITY</i> : TWO PATHS CONVERGED IN A WOOD	762
THE CRISIS OF OUR TIME: BACK TO THE BEGINNING	779
A QUANTUM <i>ONTOLOGY</i> : THE <i>METAPHYSICS OF AWARENESS</i>	788
INDEX OF KEY TERMS	805
SOURCES & BIBLIOGRAPHY	900
PRIMARY SOURCES	902
SECONDARY SOURCES	905

List of Figures and Images

FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF CAVE ART IN THE PALEOLITHIC ERA THROUGHOUT EURASIA	61
FIGURE 2: LASCAUX CAVE DRAWINGS, CIRCA 19,000 BCE IN MODERN FRANCE.	62
FIGURE 3: MAP OF THE WORLD SHOWING APPROXIMATE CENTERS OF ORIGIN OF AGRICULTURE AND ITS SPREAD IN PREHISTORY.	63
FIGURE 4: ANCIENT PHOENICIAN ALPHABET CHARACTERS	73
FIGURE 5: ANCIENT EGYPTIAN WEIGHING OF THE HEART SCENE FROM THE BOOK OF THE DEAD.	92
FIGURE 6: EXAMPLE OF CUNEIFORM SCRIPT WRITING FROM THE ACHAEMENID EMPIRE (C 5 TH CENTURY BCE).	106
FIGURE 7: PRINCIPAL SITES OF PREHISTORIC AND SHANG CHINA.....	165
FIGURE 8: STATE OF CHU CIRCA 3RD CENTURY BCE	173
FIGURE 9: ROMAN EMPIRE AT ITS GREATEST EXTENT UNDER EMPEROR TRAJAN, 117 CE.	185
FIGURE 10: DEPICTION OF ASSYRIAN TREE OF LIFE.....	194
FIGURE 11: THEO-PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT IN ANCIENT CHINA.....	220
FIGURE 12: CHINESE SEAL SCRIPT FOR TIĀN 天, "HEAVEN"	223
FIGURE 13: LEIBNIZ YIJING DIAGRAM, 17 TH CENTURY.....	234
FIGURE 14: FORMATION OF THE BĀGUÀ	241
FIGURE 15: EARLIER HEAVEN OR PRIMAL (A), AND LATER HEAVEN, OR INNER WORLD (B), TRIGRAM ARRANGEMENTS.....	243
FIGURE 16: 八卦 BĀGUÀ — THE EIGHT TRIGRAMS IN THE EARLIER HEAVEN ESTABLISHED SEQUENCE.....	244
FIGURE 17: EARLIER HEAVEN ("BEFORE THE WORLD") ARRANGEMENT.....	248
FIGURE 18: LATER HEAVEN (KING WEN), OR "INNER WORLD", ARRANGEMENT OF THE BĀGUÀ.....	250
FIGURE 19: GREAT BUDDHA STATUE, LOCATED IN BODH GAYA IN NORTHEASTERN INDIA.	269
FIGURE 20: THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM AT THE TIME OF EMPEROR ASHOKA (260–218 BCE).	281
FIGURE 21: PRE-SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE WEST	284
FIGURE 22: DEPICTION OF PLATO'S ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE BY CORNELIS VAN HAARLEM, 1604.....	309
FIGURE 23: PLATO'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL WORLDVIEW, I.E. THE ANALOGY DIVIDED LINE.....	321
FIGURE 24: CONFUCIUS AND LǎOZǐ FROM A WESTERN HAN (202 BCE - 2 CE) FRESCO	333
FIGURE 25: PIE CHART OF WORLD LANGUAGES BY PERCENTAGE OF SPEAKERS	389
FIGURE 26: CLASSIFICATION OF INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES.	392
FIGURE 27: MAP OF ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE AND HIS ROUTE	399
FIGURE 28: MAP OF THE NEO-ASSYRIAN EMPIRE AND ITS EXPANSIONS.....	402
FIGURE 29: THE ACHAEMENID EMPIRE AT ITS GREATEST TERRITORIAL EXTENT.	403
FIGURE 30: ARISTOTLE'S SCHOOL, A PAINTING FROM THE 1880S BY GUSTAV ADOLPH SPANGENBERG.....	412
FIGURE 31: HELLENIC THEO-PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT IN ANTIQUITY	458
FIGURE 32: IMMANUEL KANT, LECTURING TO RUSSIAN OFFICERS—BY I. SOYOCKINA / V. GRACOV	507
FIGURE 33: ILLUSTRATION OF THE CURVATURE OF SPACETIME IN EINSTEIN'S THEORY OF GENERAL RELATIVITY.....	533
FIGURE 34: CLASSICAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE FAMOUS "DOUBLE SLIT" EXPERIMENT.....	543
FIGURE 35: ILLUSTRATION OF SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT PARADOX.	562
FIGURE 36: ĀDI ŚĀṆKARA WITH DISCIPLES. BY RAJA RAVI VARMA (1848 - 1906).....	645
FIGURE 37: PARAMHAMSA RAMAKRISHNA AT DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE	654
FIGURE 38: SWAMI SARADANANDA, THE DIRECT MONASTIC DISCIPLE OF RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANSA.....	662
FIGURE 39: DAKSHINA KĀLĪ, WITH ŚĪVA DEVOTEDLY AT HER FEET.	684
FIGURE 40: SWAMI VIVEKANANDA	715
FIGURE 41: NEO-METAPHYSICS: A MODERN, SYNTHETIC THEO-PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	785

Introduction

This work started many years ago as an analysis or survey of sorts into ancient wisdom to ascertain what if anything could be gained or learned regarding the so-called “mystical arts”, what is referred to in modern academic circles as *mysticism*, that could perhaps facilitate their study in modern academic disciplines (the Academy) as it relates specifically to the seemingly unbridgeable gap between Science and Religion. As a byproduct, and perhaps for our own edification, we also thought that the exercise itself could also perhaps bear fruit for a more personal exploration of the same topics, shedding light on a seemingly intractable subject by looking at it through the eyes of the very first philosophers, before “objectivity” carried the kind of weight and import that it does today. And so began a long journey through many ancient civilizations, through many ancient texts, following the thread of philosophy up until the modern era, what we refer to throughout as the Quantum Era, in the end yielding the work as it stands today.

One of the most remarkable things that one finds after having studied these ancient texts for so many years, and in reading various translations and interpretations thereof from authors and philosophers from both the Western and the Eastern traditions, is how easy it is to get lost in the “facts” surrounding these ancient works, and by so doing lose sight of their true meaning and import to the individuals who wrote these ancient works, some of the very oldest extant works in existence in fact. Much of the modern academic and scholarly literature about these ancient texts, what we refer to throughout as “theo-philosophy” to illuminate not only their philosophical content but their implicit theological import as well, particularly in the Western academic tradition, falls into this category.

As such, in a certain fashion, and quite unintentionally in fact, one of the major themes of at least the first portion (Parts I and II) of this work, is to try and *recover* the true meaning - the *purpose* or *intent* - of this very ancient material, much of which represents some of the very first detailed musings regarding the nature of reality and the origins of existence. To do this, we use what you might call a multidimensional approach that includes, but is not limited to, the following varying perspectives, each of which we like to think is unique with respect to much of the material that exists today regarding philosophy in antiquity:

- i. look at ancient philosophy within a much broader theological, mythological and philosophical narrative in antiquity as a search for a better understanding of the natural world as well as a search for meaning within it,
- ii. look at ancient philosophy not as siloed within specific geographical or cultural areas in antiquity, but as reflective of a broader intellectual movement which runs parallel to the revolutionary advancements of civilization itself throughout what we refer to as *Eurasia*, a geographic area

which includes not only Northern Africa, i.e. Egypt, but also the Mediterranean (the ancient Greeks and Romans), the Near East (Sumer-Babylonia and ancient Persia), and also the Indian subcontinent and the Far East, i.e. China,

- iii. looking at ancient philosophy within the context of an intellectual progression which is preceded by myth and ritualistic worship (our *mythos*) and then crystalizes as philosophical literature proper (our *logos*) in the so-called “Axial Age” which in turn provides the foundation for *theology* proper (our *theos*) as it manifests with first Christianity and then Islam, the two most dominant forms of *monotheism* that exert profound influence throughout the geographic area in question not only in antiquity but through the Middle Ages up until the Enlightenment Era,
- iv. looking in depth at the intellectual and specifically Scientific advancements of the Enlightenment Era and the Scientific Revolution as rational outgrowths of this ancient wisdom and philosophical tradition, exploring in depth the ancient philosophical foundations which provide the semantic and philosophical basis for 20th century Science, Newtonian Mechanics, Relativity and Quantum Theory in particular, and finally
- v. reorienting this ancient *wisdom* within the context of the Quantum Era, an era which is characterized by Science, capitalism and from a philosophical perspective rests upon the principles of what we refer to throughout as *causal determinism* and *objective realism* – principles which are extraordinarily powerful with respect to providing the foundations for the revolutionary technological and scientific advancements which mark our age but which also sit in stark contrast to some of the theological, and inherently mystical, beliefs that are so characteristic of ancient man and which also sit at the very heart of Eastern philosophy even in its more modern variants.

By establishing this much broader perspective on intellectual advancements of modern man, which are rooted in antiquity more so than we typically consider, we hope to expand not just our understanding of *wisdom* and *knowledge* in toto, but also establish the grounds for a new intellectual paradigm that at least has the potential to support our needs as a global community in the 21st century and beyond. For despite all of our advancements in Science in the last few hundred years, we are still rooted in a fundamentally *reductionist* way of thinking, a perspective that is characteristic of the “West” in fact, and given the success and proliferation of this ideology to almost every corner of the globe in the modern era – our Quantum Era - has resulted in some very significant problems and challenges for the global community (global warming, wealth inequality, etc.) which this ideology as it turns out is wholly inadequate and unprepared to address.

In order to accomplish this, we take a primarily intellectual journey through the mind of ancient man, focusing on how he sees the world as is reflected in the earliest literary evidence we have, trying to understand these works not only within the broader “Eurasian” context, but also trying to look at them through the eyes of the ancient philosophers, theologians, priests and scholars who wrote these ancient texts (or in many cases were the ones to “compile” or “transcribe” these

longstanding theo-philosophical traditions) themselves within the context of the socio-political theological environment within which these works were created. This broader meaning we refer to as *knowledge*, which from a modern Philosophical perspective at least is referred to as *epistemology*.

This *knowledge* that we are trying to capture and reorient within the context of this work is what Philo Judaeus takes great pain to describe in his *exegesis* of the *Pentateuch* (*Genesis* in particular), what the Neo-Platonists take pains to describe in their literature which flourishes just as Christianity takes root and begins to supplant and snuff out their schools of learning and wisdom, it is what is alluded to in the so-called *hidden*, or *unwritten*, teachings of Plato and that which is *hidden*, kept *secret*, by the followers of Pythagoras and also in the Eleusinian mysteries and the alchemical Hermetic doctrines attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, and also what the *Upanishads*¹ refer to as *Brahmavidyā*, or knowledge of *Brahman*, that from deep antiquity is believed to be passed down from teacher to disciple - as Plato refers to in his *Seventh Letter* as that which is “brought to birth in the Soul, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter nourishes itself.”²

This work in its current form is to a large degree an outgrowth and evolution of the intellectual journey that is documented and mapped in the *Snow Cone Diaries*, and in particular an outgrowth of research done after *Snow Cone Diaries* was written exploring the nature and origins of early Hellenic philosophy and its relationship to early Chinese philosophy as well as ancient Vedic or Indo-Aryan philosophy as reflected primarily in the *Upanishads*, the latter of which was rigorously and systematically studied at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York under the guidance of Swami Adiswarananda to whom this work is dedicated to. However, having said that, while this work can at some level be considered to be extensive revision and expansion of the academic and intellectual pursuits that are reflected in the *Snow Cone Diaries*, it is distinctive in terms of scope, breadth and skill and much more “academic” in the sense that it represents a much higher level of scholarship than is reflected in the *Snow Cone Diaries*, having put to rest

¹ Proper, classic Sanskrit to English Romanization of the *Upanishads* (or the singular *Upanishad*) is *Upaniṣad* but we will use the more common Romanization *Upanishads* throughout for simplicity and familiarity sake.

² See Plato, *Letters*. Letter 7, aka *Seventh Letter* 341c – 341d. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 7 translated by R.G. Bury. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. See <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0164%3Aletter%3D7%3Asection%3D341c>. While the actual authenticity of the letter by Plato is debated by scholars it does for the most part reflect the writing style and philosophy as presented by Plato from the author’s perspective and so while perhaps not written by Plato’s hand, still nonetheless seems to accurately represent something akin to what Plato would write, specifically with respect to the specific part of the work cited herein.

(God rest his Soul) our dear Charlie.³ Given the breadth of the material covered in this work, the author in no way intends to represent it as an exhaustive study of any of the specific topics that is covered herein. In fact, each Chapter or section of the work could be covered, and is covered, in much greater length in a variety of works that are cited as references and for further study and research. The author has however taken great pains to try and refer to, and directly cite, the most influential and comprehensive works that cover the various topics in question and of course the interested reader can follow these lines of inquiry and these references to learn more about any given topic.

The specific source material that is used is not only cited directly throughout as footnotes, but is also covered from a much broader perspective in the Sources and Bibliography section at the end of the work. Perhaps more so than other works from before the 21st century, an era the author refers to as the “Quantum Era”, this work stands directly on the shoulders of many academics and scholars that have toiled and taken great pains to open up the world of antiquity to the modern Western reader and scholar through countless translations and historical books and records, many of which are now electronically available and upon which easy access the author has greatly relied. There are no doubt particular sections or chapters which the author has glossed over in a manner that may be considered to be “superficial”, particularly by academics and scholars who have spent the better part of their professional careers studying and writing about the specific topics in question.⁴ However, each of the lines of thought represented in each Chapter of each Part of this work represent a coherent and cohesive whole and in their entirety, and of course for the sake of brevity (as ironic a term that may be given the length and scope of this work), is intended to show as complete a picture as possible in one text.

The approach from a reference and bibliography standpoint is to have significant footnotes and references directly within the material itself rather than, as is the case with most academic works, at the end of a chapter or even at the end of the work. The footnotes, the explanations and small intellectual excursions which are reflected in the extensive footnotes that are included directly in the text not only serve to give credit to the reference material and the work and analysis put in by other academics and scholars on whose research and work mine ultimately depends and builds upon, but also as sidebar notes that may be of interest to the reader that provide direct links and references to works that the reader can refer to if they are interested in a certain topic

³ Two interim works were published by the author covering Hellenic philosophy and Chinese philosophy specifically that were leveraged as source material for some of the content herein, specifically some of the content in Parts I and II of this work. See *Philosophy in Antiquity: The Greeks* (2015) and *Philosophy in Antiquity: The Far East* (2016), both published by Lambert Academic Publishing in 2016.

⁴ In particular the author cites the sections on Enlightenment Era philosophy as well as Arabic/Muslim philosophy as examples of Chapters which could be expanded upon greatly and to a large extent do not do justice to the actors and individuals, and the belief systems which they put forward in their writings, described therein.

that is not covered in detail in this work.⁵ The footnote style that is used is essentially adopted from the writings of Swami Nikhilananda (1895 – 1973), one of the foremost Sanskrit and Vedic scholars in the West in the 20th century.⁶ Nikhilananda's works have in no small measure influenced the author, as he studied at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center which he founded in the middle of the twentieth century which was led by the author's teacher, Swami Adiswarananda from 1973 until his passing in 2007.⁷

In this context, Vedānta, and more broadly what we refer to as “Indo-European philosophy” in this work, is a central and constant theme throughout this work, in particular with respect to the modern conception of ancient Indian philosophy as it is presented in the teachings and works of Swami Vivekananda (1863 – 1902), one of the foremost proponents and most influential of the modern “Indian philosophers”.⁸ From the author's perspective, Vedānta, as reflective of one of, if not the, oldest and richest of the Indo-European theo-philosophical traditions, can (and should) be leveraged as an intellectual and theo-philosophical benchmark of sorts for the recasting of the definitions of *knowledge* and *reality* in the West, one of the main thrusts of this work.

The work is divided into 5 major sections, Books or Parts, following more or less the intellectual development of mankind since the dawn of “history” - history in this sense being marked by the invention and widespread use of writing after which we have a “direct” or “first hand” exposure to the mind of man, or at least into the minds of the authors of the works that are covered herein.

- I. *On Creation Mythology (mythos)*: a look at the ancient mythological traditions, what we call *mythos*, in antiquity throughout Eurasia, with a particular focus on cosmogonic and theogonic accounts, i.e. how the universe and its primordial deities or forces came into existence,
- II. *On Ancient Philosophy (logos)*: a look at the first ancient philosophical traditions from throughout Eurasia, focusing on the Hellenic, Indian and Chinese traditions in particular and focusing on ontological, epistemological and theological questions primarily,

⁵ The footnotes also incidentally serve as reminders and reference points to the author himself so as sections of material are revisited and/or reworked and/or revised, the pertinent sources are readily available.

⁶ Swami Nikhilananda is a direct disciple of Sarada Devi (1853 – 1920), the consort and wife of the 19th century Bengali sage Paramhansa Ramakrishna (1836 – 1886). He is also the founder of and subsequent leader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York from 1933 to 1973 and is one of the foremost interpreters (and translators) of Vedic philosophy into English in the 20th century. He has authored definitive translations with extensive commentaries on the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and he is also known for providing the definitive English translation of the *Srī Srī Ramakrishna Kathāmrita*, commonly referred to in the West as the *Gospel of Srī Ramakrishna*, a monumental work covering detailed teachings and events of the last few years of Ramakrishna's life as seen through the eyes of one of his foremost (householder) disciples, Mahendranath Gupta (1854 – 1932), or simply ‘M’.

⁷ See <https://www.ramakrishna.org/> for information regarding the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York.

⁸ Swami Vivekananda was the first to introduce Yoga and Vedānta to the West at the end of the 19th century. He was the foremost student and spiritual successor of Paramhansa Ramakrishna, a figure who is dealt with at length in Part IV of this work. Vivekananda's modern conception of Vedānta and Indian philosophy more broadly, is also covered at length in Part IV of this work.

- III. *On Religion and Science*: looking at how ancient *mythos* and *logos* transformed into what we today call Religion and Science, focusing on the Hellenic philosophical tradition primarily, and Aristotle specifically, and its evolution or transformation into Judeo-Christian, and Islamic, *monotheism*, as well as specific advancements in 20th century Science such as Relativity and Quantum Theory,
- IV. *On Ontology and Mysticism*: a deeper and more comprehensive look at the nature of *reality* understood through the lens of modern Science which is juxtaposed with the view held by Eastern philosophy, i.e. *mysticism*,
- V. *On Metaphysics and Theology*: a comprehensive look at various alternative ontological paradigms which (attempt to) explain *reality* as we understand it in the Quantum Era, ultimately proposing a new paradigm which incorporates Philosophy, Psychology, *theology* and *mysticism* – our so-called *Metaphysics of Awareness*

The chapters and sections in each of the respective Parts, or Books, are designed and written to be modular as much as possible. By “modular” we mean to say that they are written with the intention, again as much as possible, of being stand-alone essays or dissertations of their respective topics such that the reader can read a particular chapter without necessarily reading preceding chapters. That is to say, the design of the work itself is such that it need not be approached or “read” in a sequential fashion from start to finish. And as such, some material and content is repeated in the various sections and Parts of this work so that said “modular” design is achieved. Given the breadth of the topics covered herein, this type of modular design is not only intentional but is almost required in order for the work to have value. For if it is not read, it of course cannot have the intended impact or influence on modes of thinking which to a large extent the intended *purpose* of the work.

One of the main underlying themes of the work, especially in Parts I and II, is an exploration and analysis of the potentially shared origins of not just the mythology, or *mythos*, of the first “civilized” peoples in Eurasia, which we refer to throughout as the “Laurasian” *mythos* hypothesis, a term coined by Dr. Michael Witzel, the renowned Sanskrit scholar and mythological historian from Harvard University, but also an expanded version of said hypothesis which discusses the potential shared the origins of not just mythology of these ancient peoples, but also philosophy itself in its earliest forms that we find throughout the earliest extant literature in Eurasia, what we refer to as *theo-philosophy* throughout. Parts I and II of this work are primarily focused on this area in history, the 3rd to 1st millennium BCE when we have introduced into the historical record evidence and documents that outline the *mythos* of these early Eurasian peoples, specifically the creation narratives (what we refer to as *cosmological* or *theogonical* narratives), which is followed by a detailed analysis of the subsequent theo-philosophical tradition which emerges from, and is fundamentally and intrinsically related to, the underlying comsogonical narrative, i.e. again the respective *mythos*.

Part III focuses on intellectual developments that take place in the West post classical antiquity from the intellectual developments that characterize Hellenic philosophy, through the advent of more orthodox *religious* or *theological* developments, straight through the Enlightenment Era and Scientific Revolution periods of Western intellectual history where effectively the worldview is overturned and Science, as we define it in more modern terms, begins to eclipse the dogmatic religious and theological worldviews that had dominated the intellectual landscape in the West for some thousand years prior, the so-called “Dark Ages”. Part III then goes on to look at Scientific developments in the 20th century, Relativity Theory and Quantum Mechanics in particular, which call into question our modern (and pervasive) notions of *deterministic*, *objective* based frameworks of *reality*, what we refer to collectively as *objective realism*, which represent from the author’s perspective a somewhat unintended byproduct of the Scientific Revolution and which, given their limitations with respect to understanding *reality* – really *being*, or *ontology* - from a comprehensive or *holistic* perspective, require – in the same intellectual spirit and intent pursued by Kant, Pirsig and other post Enlightenment Western philosophers - a wholesale revision in order for not only the two theoretical pillars of modern Science (Classical Mechanics and Quantum Mechanics) to be understood in any meaningful way, but also such that the knowledge and wisdom of the East is integrated into our conception and understanding of *reality* as well.

Part IV covers in detail much of the material that was first introduced in *Snow Cone Diaries* with respect to the fundamental incompatibilities of Quantum and Classical Mechanics, going into (theoretical) detail not just with Relativity but also Quantum Theory, as well as some of the philosophical, and ultimately *metaphysical*, implications of Quantum Theory, covering two interpretative models in particular that the author thinks are relevant to the ontological questions that are the topic of Part IV – namely the *relative-state formulation* of Quantum Mechanics by Hugh Everett as well as the *pilot-wave theory* that is attributed to Louis de Broglie and David Bohm. The Metaphysics of Quality as presented by Robert Pirsig is also offered up as an alternate model for *ontological* inquiry given its adoption and incorporation of the direct perception of “intuitive” *reality* directly into its *metaphysics* as it were. Part IV then offers up various alternative interpretations of *reality* that attempt to present and synthesize what we understand about the nature of *reality* both from a scientific perspective, as well as from what we might term a *mystical* or *spiritual* perspective, models which directly incorporate *experiential reality* into account when defining *reality* or the extent of *knowledge* itself, i.e. what is referred to as *epistemology* in modern philosophical nomenclature. The models and analysis in Part IV directly take into account the role of *active consciousness*, *cognition* and *perception*, what in Quantum Theory has come to be known as the *act of observation* which from a Scientific perspective, at least again from the author’s standpoint, must be taken into account in any formulation of *reality* and in any definition of *knowledge*. The alternative approaches to defining *reality* and *knowledge* that are presented and described in Part IV basically synthesize typically

“Eastern” and “Western” worldviews, and from the author’s standpoint, are far better suited than existing philosophical or religious intellectual frameworks to prepare us not just as individuals to survive and thrive in the modern, Quantum Era, but also are much better suited to serve the society as a whole, from a national as well as global perspective, given the level of interdependence and interconnectedness of not just the human race, but also the natural world within which we live and depend upon for our survival moving forward into the future.

The last several chapters of Part IV, much more so than the author originally intended in fact, are dedicated to a fairly lengthy discussion of a relatively modern debate surrounding different ways or approaches to *interpret*, how best to understand, the life and teachings of the 19th century Bengali (Indian/Hindu) sage Ramakrishna Paramhansa, a tradition of course to which this author is closely linked from a theo-philosophical perspective. Ramakrishna in this sense, and how he is perceived and approached in these final chapters of this work, is the full manifestation of, and in turn the perfect example of, the limitations of Western “thinking” and the implicit *epistemological* restrictions and assumptions that while true, are fundamentally limited in their capacity to deal with anything that falls outside of the realm of Science proper and as such is dealt with as a case study of sorts for the need to integrate the *Science of the mind* as it were into any ontological framework that we are to choose that would include the knowledge of the East along with the knowledge of the West. This so-called *mystical*, or *supraconscious* experience, which is the intended result of the practice of the ancient art of *meditation* as it has been passed down to us through various classically Eastern theo-philosophical traditions - in the *Upanishads* in particular but also implicit in the writings and teachings of Plato and Greek Eleusinian mystery and Orphic traditions and of course in the teachings of Buddha as well – are presented as a necessary and integral component of any “redefinition” of *reality* and *knowledge* which, following any sort of rational interpretation of Quantum Theory must take into account the role of the *observer* and the *act of cognition* i.e. *perception*, into account in any coherent and complete model of *reality*. Along these lines, various intellectual frameworks and models which include direct *experiential reality* are explored and discussed at length in Part IV, with specific chapters dedicated to the re-interpretation of Upanishadic philosophy as presented by Vivekananda in the early 20th century as well as an objective analysis of the experiences and interpretation of the life of Paramhansa Ramakrishna in particular who according to tradition of course was the primary influence and inspiration for Vivekananda’s teachings and life in general. This analysis of course lends itself to one of the core and final arguments of this work, namely that the intellectual and metaphysical model that is applied to *reality* in the West, i.e. our *ontological* framework, while being extraordinarily powerful from a natural philosophical perspective, i.e. Science, is in fact an inadequate conceptual framework for the comprehension of the full scope of *reality* and therefore is in need of wholesale revision and/or significant expansion and extension metaphysically and theo-philosophically speaking in order to support a

more broad definition of *reality* through which a more complete and fuller understanding of existence itself can be at least approached.

Part V concludes the work, outlining and summarizing the various philosophical and metaphysical models that we have covered throughout the work, and then finally offering up an alternative model – what we call the *Metaphysics of Awareness* – to address the specific needs and requirements of the Quantum Era as well as providing a philosophical framework within which not only Western and Eastern philosophy can be seen as complementary domains of *knowledge*, but also through which Psychology and *mysticism* can be better understood not as subjective experiences but as fundamental ontological truths. In many respects, this new *metaphysics* is the culmination of the work, bringing together themes and disciplines explored in Parts I and II of the work regarding Eurasian philosophy - ancient *mythos* (ancient mythology, specifically ancient *cosmogony* and *theogony* narratives), *logos* (ancient philosophy), and *theos* (ancient *theology*) – and the themes explored in Parts III and IV of the work which follow the evolution of ancient wisdom and knowledge into the modern, Quantum, Era as they now stand in the fields of Philosophy, Psychology, Physics (in its Classical and Quantum variants), and *mysticism* under a single metaphysical paradigm, an augmentation of Kant’s cognitive framework, that we call the *Metaphysics of Awareness*.

When we speak of *ontology*, we refer to a designation of a specific discipline within Philosophy unto itself - a is relatively modern one, with its first use of the term coming only (according to the Encyclopedia Britannica) in the early 17th century by the German philosopher Jacob Lorhard (Lohardus) who used the word in Latin *ontologia*. This of course derives from its Greek (compound) counterpart - *óntōs* (ὄντος) which means “being” or “that which is” (derived from the present participle of the Greek verb “to be”, or “exist” – *ōn* - i.e. “being”, from “to be” - *einai*) combined with *logos* to mean “study of”, or “science of”. In a broader sense however, and converting the somewhat obtuse “being” into a (somewhat) more modern and understandable English equivalent (*reality*), *ontology* is the study of the nature of *reality*, even though again it is more technically accurate to say “being” but once you go down this road you have already entered the gates of *ontology* as it were. To clarify its usage, the oft quoted famous Shakespearean phrase “*to be or not to be, this is the question*” is in fact an *ontological* question, in that it relates to being as a concept in and unto itself, and therefore as such its answer, if there is one, would lie in the domain of *ontology*. However, this really only scratches the surface for the Greek *óntōs*, in particular in the Hellenic philosophical tradition, is a very loaded word/term, resting at the very heart of the Hellenic philosophical tradition itself. It is explored perhaps most

prolifically of course through Aristotle and Plato, both of whom used the term *óntōs* in some form as the basis for their respective *ontology* as it were.⁹

So we start by going back to the beginning as it were, trying to ascertain where and how this unbridgeable gap between Religion and Science came from, trying to understand how the ancients conceived of it. And what we found, as a sort of intellectual accident as it were, was that Witzel's Laurasian *mythos* hypothesis seems to hold a good deal of water as it were. That is to say, the underlying cosmologies of the various ancient peoples, or at least what we know of them when we start to see the advent of writing in the archeological record from the 2nd millennium BCE onwards, all seem to have some very basic qualities. Namely that we start with a notion of chaos, or a watery abyss of sorts, and from there two basic principles act upon each other – principles which are represented by dark and light, male and female attributes respectively, and from this basic interaction we then have various basic primordial components or materials of the universe which emerge, the proverbial *arche*¹⁰, upon which is superimposed a notion of *order*. But we take this basic Laurasian *mythos* hypothesis one, or several steps further. First after careful analysis and consideration, we find that the hypothesis can, and should, be extended to include philosophy, or theo-philosophy which is the term we prefer to use, as well as *mythos*, or in particular creation *mythos* which is the area of concern for Witzel at least. We find that the early theo-philosophical traditions across all of Eurasia share many common characteristics, enough common characteristics in fact that we argue that the best explanation for this commonality is some sort of shared common origins.

This argument as it were starts with the analysis of, and ultimate categorization of, the theo-philosophical traditions that we find in antiquity from the Indian subcontinent all the way West to the Mediterranean and even to Northern Africa as sharing a variety of common characteristics, much of which stem from the fact these theo-philosophical systems emerge from, or more likely are co-existent with, the theological traditions from which they emerge. To this extent we trace these similarities back through, and draw parallels to, philological studies which group virtually all of these peoples from a linguistic standpoint into one family and as such conclude that this family must have a common parent, namely the Indo-European language family. From here we show, and in particular as well look at Indo-Aryan, Zoroastrian, and Hellenic philosophy (in particular with Plato who represents the most comprehensive, early Hellenic philosophical system) and show that the similarities and parallels between these theo-philosophical belief

⁹ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Ontology', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 12 October 2017, 08:55 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ontology&oldid=804979645>> [accessed 3 November 2017].

¹⁰ *Arche*, or *first principles* - in the Hellenic theo-philosophic tradition we find earth, air, water and fire, each of which is assigned to various positions in the cosmological worldview depending upon the philosophical tradition, the *gunas* of Sāṃkhya philosophy which represent the primordial "characteristics" of the world which come together in various combinations to create the "world" as we perceive it, or the Five Elements of Chinese philosophy, i.e. wood, fire, earth, metal and water which combine together again in various combinations to create the universal world order.

systems are remarkably similar. Furthermore, we suggest that these similarities are not due to the Hellenic philosophers “borrowing” from the East (as is suggested by McEvelley or West or even Burkert for example), but that, like the philological theorists conclude, all share a common parent theo-philosophical system. This hypothesis not only better explains their relationship to each other but it also explains why that direct contact between these peoples – the Indo-Aryans and the Hellenes in particular - is basically entirely missing from the early historical record.

But we then extend this hypothesis regarding the shared origins of Indo-European philosophy to the Far East, effectively latching onto Witzel’s *Laurasian hypothesis* but extending his hypothesis to include not just creation narratives or *mythos*, but also theo-philosophical traditions as well. We do this by showing that this notion of chaos, or watery abyss features of the primordial beginnings of the universe, and the superimposition as it were by *order* on this *chaos*, and the basic primordial principles of male/female and/or dark/light from which the primordial *arche* are formed and out of which the entire cosmos or world order, which includes the world of man as well, can be found throughout all of Eurasia. This is evident for example in not just the notion of the primordial abyss which we find prevalent in the Indo-European theo-philosophical landscape, but which we find in the Far East as well, as seen in the notion of the *cosmic egg* mythical motif from which Heaven and Earth are born for example. But this notion of divine or cosmic order, justice or truth even - *Tiān* to the ancient Chinese, *Rta* to the Indo-Aryans, *Ma’at* to the Ancient Egyptians, *Aša* to the ancient Persians/Iranians, and *Nómos* to the ancient Greeks and the *Torah* to the Ancient Hebrews and even the *Dao* of the ancient Chinese – is everywhere and represents the founding intellectual construct (or more aptly referred to as the founding theo-philosophical intellectual construct because in all of its forms it has specifically *theological* origins) upon which all of the theo-philosophical systems throughout Eurasia, which in turn form the basis of their socio-political structures as well, are effectively constructed upon. Furthermore, we postulate that the proper interpretation of these ancient cosmological narratives, leaving aside the historical manipulation of them by various dynastic rulers through antiquity¹¹, is not as “naturalistic” interpretations and explanations by primitive peoples to explain how the world was created necessarily, but as *roadmaps to the essential nature of existence itself*. They are the *mystical* visions of the ancient shamans and priests which were codified into stories that were told and conveyed down through generations in language that people could understand, and

¹¹ The manipulation of these ancient creation myths or narratives by the ancient dynastic emperors and rulers is the source, at least from the author’s point of view, from which the second generation of gods which Witzel speaks of as part of the Laurasian *mythos* is an artifact of, i.e. effectively establishing the divine heritage of the emperor/pharaoh/ruler directly from the divine conceiver of the universe himself. This view is in contrast to Witzel’s conception of this second generation of gods motif being reflective of the Laurasian *mythos* proper. We find this construct in the West primarily, with Hesiod and Ovid in particular as well as in ancient Egypt (which is probably where the Greeks and then Romans got the idea from) but it is basically absent from the Indo-Aryan *mythos* and the ancient Chinese *mythos* as well, leaving aside the ancient Chinese notion of the Mandate of Heaven which effectively serves the same purpose.

conveyed in terms of divine principles and beings that the respective societies knew and understood.

So these ancient myths, these creation narratives served a dual purpose – they bound the people together behind a common “story”, a common “history” as it were that went all the way back to the beginning of time and the cosmos itself, and also at the same time encoded the divine mystery of the ascent of the Soul into the eternal and ever present substratum of existence itself, i.e. a guidebook to the mystic as it were. The early philosophers, especially the Hellenic philosophers, understood this to a large extent and this is why they did not deny the truth of the ancient theological and mythical narratives which preceded them, they simply attempted to put them in a more rational context, or in the case of the Hellenic philosophical tradition in particular, attempted to provide a rational explanation of the cosmological world order which was independent of the mystical, or mystery tradition itself. This is the origin of the Science and Religion split in the West. The Indo-Aryans, the forefathers of the Hindus, did no such thing. They again incorporated the mystical into their metaphysical frameworks. The ancient Chinese for their part, much like Buddha did as well, punted on the whole problem of *metaphysics* and just described the various means by which, in a very practical matter, that *enlightenment, nirvana*, peace could be attained. This is not only the essential characteristic of Daoism, but is also the very purpose of the *Yijing*, to bring one’s life into balance with the cosmic order that underlies all things. But they still nonetheless shared the notion of order itself, again *Tiān*, as well as the underlying *dualism (Yīn-Yáng)* from which the universe comes forth and is constructed and can be understood, as well as the basic elements from which universe is built upon and with (the Five Elements).

This of course forces ancient historians to take a closer look at this hypothesis of not just the common origins of the *mythos* of the peoples through Eurasia in antiquity but also at our understanding of ancient people’s understanding of what this ancient *mythos* really meant, what it signified. It also requires us to consider the possibility, again aligned here with Witzel, that the origins and age of not only these creation narratives but the ancient’s understanding of these creation narratives, their interpretation as it were, may reach much further back in antiquity than we currently consider. If we follow the genetic record for example, we’re looking at dates that reach back to 10,000 BCE for a common source and heritage amongst these ancient peoples of Eurasia if we presume that the common origins hypothesis is the best possible explanation for all of the similarities that we find once the written record starts to appear. For we know for certain that the written records reflect much older belief systems, we just don’t know how old these belief systems are and how far back into antiquity they reach back. If we think this common origin hypothesis as we have formulated it, our so-called *Laurasian hypothesis*, here holds water, we’re looking at a much deeper place in antiquity from which these ancient belief systems are sourced. It’s from this analysis that we not only conclude that this ancient *mythos*, with all its

similarities and common motifs, not only is derived from a common source rather than through any sort of cultural diffusion, but that this ancient knowledge that we find spread across Eurasia also found its way into the earliest philosophical traditions in antiquity – that we find in ancient Greco-Egyptian culture, the Indo-Aryans and Indo-Iranians in the Near East and the Indian subcontinent, and then even as far East into ancient China, i.e. the “Far East”. It’s this leap from *mythos* to *logos*, combined with our *Laurasian hypothesis* that we extend to philosophy (*logos*) as well as mythology (*mythos*), from which we establish the notion of *Eurasian philosophy* - a shared set of philosophical motifs and themes that represent an extension of the ancient *cosmogonies* and *theogonies* that supported all of these ancient civilizations in deep antiquity, in pre-history, that found their way into the first true analytical and rational philosophical frameworks that crop up throughout Eurasia after the proliferation of writing, in the so-called Axial Age of man. This effectively covers Part I and II of the current work.

Parts III and IV intend to show how we in the West have come to this great intellectual divide between Religion and Science, where *mysticism* lacks *objective reality*, and is therefore incapable of being described or defined from any sort of classically modern Western, Scientific, intellectual framework and as such rests outside of our conception of *knowledge* itself, i.e. what modern philosophers refer to as the discipline of *epistemology*. *Mysticism* at best from this vantage point is considered to be an “Eastern” phenomenon, or from a Western standpoint falls under the domain of Religion and is considered to be another term used to describe an altogether *religious experience*, and therefore rests outside of the domain of any sort of Western intellectual inquiry, i.e. Science. We show how we arrived at this point, following the thread of Hellenic philosophical inquiry through to its ultimate eclipse by Christianity and Islam, and how after the Scientific Revolution and the advent and adoption of heliocentric models of the universe which were followed by the developments of twentieth century Science which rest on the twin, somewhat irreconcilable and fundamentally incompatible pillars of Relativity Theory and Quantum Theory, we find ourselves having to question the very nature of *reality* itself as we have come to understand it through the lens of Physics, the academic and (Western) intellectual discipline that has arisen as the domain within which our understanding of *reality* is based - one which again rests squarely upon the notions of *objective realism* and *causal determinism*. In Parts III and IV of this work, we cover not only these twentieth century scientific developments, but discuss in detail what these underlying basic assumptions are which govern this perspective on the nature of *reality*, i.e. its underlying *ontological* assertions, but also look at in detail which of these assertions in particular are called into question, i.e. the notion of *local realism* which is a specific underlying tent of *objective realism* and *causal determinism* and the crux of the issue when trying to bridge the gap between Relativity Theory and its notion of *gravity* as the curvature of *spacetime* and Quantum Theory with its inherent “non-Classical” characteristics which are referred to in the scientific literature as the *uncertainty principle*, the so-called *measurement problem*, as well as the notion of *complementarity* and its close corollary *entanglement*.

We cover various interpretations of Quantum Mechanics which attempt to address these issues in some detail, at least within the context of Physics proper, notably those offered by Everett, de Broglie and Bohm which provide not only various, alternative *interpretations* of Quantum Theory - what it really *means* or implies about the nature of *reality*, or again its *ontological* implications – but also in some cases systems of *metaphysics* which provide the basis for which these two seemingly incompatible models of physical reality can be understood in a cohesive, and somewhat complementary manner. In this context, we review Everett’s notion of the *Universal Wave Function*, his so-called *metatheory*, as well as *de Broglie-Bohm theory*, aka the *pilot-wave theory*, as well as Bohm’s notion of *holomovement* as well as a system of *metaphysics* which Bohm refers to as the *implicate* and *explicate order*. However, while these perspectives do somewhat address the problems facing modern Physics with respect to how to reconcile Classical Mechanics with Quantum Mechanics, or at least offer up some explanations or intellectual frameworks within which these seemingly incompatible models can be reconciled somewhat, we nonetheless no doubt find ourselves in a fundamentally *ontological* quandary that originates from the fundamental assertions and assumptions that we have compiled about the nature of *reality* in the last few centuries, many of which have been almost inadvertent acquisitions in many respects.

Regardless, what should be abundantly clear from this analysis of the irreconcilable differences between Classical Mechanics and Quantum Mechanics, and various proposed explanations and interpretations thereof, is that our basic definitions of *reality* and *knowledge* in the West, definitions which rest upon the notions of *objective realism* or *causal determinism* as we define them in this work, are in need of wholesale revision and/or expansion. Furthermore, we assert that as we revise and expand such definition of *reality* and *knowledge*, we should include not only account for all models of *physical reality* as defined by modern Physics, but also include the inherently subjective and yet also at the same time *verifiable* notion of the so-called *mystical experience* - an *experience* which is given epistemological significance in the Eastern worldview is effectively defined as the *direct perception of the very ground of existence* itself. It is this assertion, this *ontological* problem as it were, that is explored in great depth in Part IV of this work which not only outlines the various interpretations of Quantum Theory, but also goes into some depth on the (what he deems at least to be) “pure” rational philosophy offered up by Kant where he subsumes Religion, Science, *morality* and *ethics* under *reason* itself into a single intellectual and metaphysical framework which has come to be known as *transcendental idealism*, as well as a review of modern conceptions of *mind*, i.e. Psychology, as framed by Freud and Jung specifically which effectively define the modern Psychological intellectual landscape as it were.

The rest of Part IV includes a detailed review of the classical, orthodox, Indian philosophical metaphysical and theological frameworks of Vedānta and Yoga, primarily viewed through the

lens of Swami Vivekananda, arguably the most influential expositors of Indian philosophy in the West in the modern era, as well as Patañjali from which Yoga as a philosophical system is established in the latter part of the first millennium CE. This foundation is then used to illustrate, in somewhat exhausting detail, the problems and pitfalls of trying to *interpret*, or *understand*, the vast range of what we refer to as *supraconsciousness* experiences that surround the life of perhaps the most well documented and studied mystics of the modern era, i.e. Ramakrishna Paramhansa using a Western intellectual lens - in this case primarily a Freudian psychological one. Part V again summarizes the metaphysical and ontological landscape, and then – building primarily off of the work of Kant – establishes the foundations for a new *metaphysics*, the *Metaphysics of Awareness*, through which not only can Eastern and Western philosophy be bridged, but Psychology as well, offering up unique insights not only into the rational foundations for theology, but a psychological interpretation of *mysticism* in general.

In brief then, from the author's perspective at least, this work represents a unique contribution to the longstanding intellectual – really *rational* or *philosophical* - tradition that is associated with modern man, i.e. *homo sapiens* or “thinking man”, in the following different *dimensions* - a must for any philosopher's library, philosopher in the ancient Hellenic sense as a (true) lover of *wisdom*.

- i. *Compendium of Knowledge*: The work as a whole is not intended to read from start to finish, and is intended to be a compendium of sorts for the intellectually curious or philosophically minded in the Quantum Era. As such the vast wealth of information herein is designed to be approached not only from the detailed Table of Contents – by subject matter area, topic from start to finish, or linearly - but also by topic or theme via the Index as well, allowing for a multi-dimensional approach into the body of knowledge since the dawn of civilization aligned with tagging, indexing and searching technology that is one of the hallmarks of the Information Age,¹²
- ii. *Eurasian philosophy*: As an overview and introduction to philosophy in antiquity, and with respect to the Hellenic, Indian and Chinese traditions in particular, this work is worth its weight in gold (and its heavy), again from the author's perspective at least. Nowhere else have I seen such a wide swath of coverage, at the level of detail and specificity, of philosophy in antiquity as is covered herein. This journey follows the linguistic roots (*philology*) as far back as they can go, through the Proto-Indo-Europeans, following core *mythos*, *cosmogonies*, into the Neolithic reaching into the Upper Paleolithic even - aligning *mythos* with ancient *human migration* patterns, following Witzel, and concluding

¹² Hence the subtitle of *Snow Cone Diaries* as “A Philosopher's Guide to the Information Age”.

that our ancient ancestors, even before there was writing, were philosophers nonetheless. One of the primary driving forces for the creation of the work in fact, was to cover this ground from this broad Eurasian perspective that had not been done before, establishing a new category of philosophy that covers all of the philosophy in antiquity across Eurasia, i.e. Eurasian philosophy,

- iii. *The Laurasian hypothesis*: : As a somewhat unintended byproduct of ii, what we end up concluding after our analysis and review of *mythos* and *philosophy* in antiquity across Eurasia, is that *philosophy* as a discipline and practice, seen as the application of *reason* or *logic* upon natural phenomenon, dates from much further back in time, from deep in pre-history (before writing) in fact – this is what we call the *Laurasian hypothesis*, effectively pushing the existence or development of *philosophy* and *theology* as rational disciplines much further back in time than is normally considered in the standard orthodox view of the history of civilization, particularly from a Western perspective as is reflected in *academia*. Within the context of this *Laurasian hypothesis*, we see *philosophy* as an evolution of *mythos* - conceived of as *logos* - rather than a revolutionary change in thinking as we typically see it in the context of the study of (Western) civilization in antiquity. Looking at *philosophy* and *theology* (as they were not distinct from each other in antiquity by any measure) through not only a wider historical lens, but also a wider geographical lens, provides a sort of triangulation effect, drawing out patterns and commonality in the ancient traditions, ancient *mythos*, that would otherwise not be seen or found, that in fact remain *hidden* within the traditions themselves. And lastly,
- iv. *Metaphysics of Awareness*: As a byproduct of ii and iii, and in the spirit of focusing on solutions rather than criticism of those who have come before us – intellectual giants all of them, those that are covered in this work – we offer up a way of recovering this vast reservoir of human knowledge that has been lost and remains hidden, by establishing a new *metaphysics* specifically designed for the Quantum Era to address the unique problems of our time, the *Metaphysics of Awareness*, that does not throw out the baby with the bathwater so to speak, but builds off of the currently well-established philosophical model in the West that was put forth by Kant at the end of the Enlightenment that effectively provides the foundations of Western philosophy as they stand today. We extend this system, adding a metaphysical construct, *Awareness*, that bridges the gap between Physics, Psychology, Eastern and Western Philosophy, Religion and Philosophy and recovers this lost *wisdom*, our dear *Sophia*, placing her at her rightful place at the top of the intellectual paradigm as it were, revealing her in her full glory not as some mystical fantasy, but as the very height of the (*Divine*) *Intellect*, as she was conceived of as Athena to the ancient Greeks, the Hellenes, from which it all really began

really, in Athens with the drinking of some hemlock by a self-proclaimed philosopher, the one who knew nothing and yet knew everything, so long ago...

Prologue: *Mythos* and *Mysticism* in Antiquity

A Brief History of the Mystical Arts: Beyond Yoga

The terms *mysticism* and *meditation* are used throughout this work, in particular with respect to the analysis and study, i.e. the “interpretation”, of the life and teaching of a 19th century Bengali/Indian sage called *Paramhansa Ramakrishna*, a topic of much of the last Part of this work.¹³ As such, it is required that we do our best to define these terms, even though quite paradoxically the field of study, or domain, within which mysticism as a concept or idea originates, is quite clear that the term defies definition – by definition as it were. Go figure. But we are Westerners here, and we’re certainly not Lǎozǐ or Heraclitus, and particularly given the intended audience of this work being Western academics at least to some degree, we must take the plunge and try to define the undefinable so if nothing else we round out the edges of what *mysticism* is not, at least from our perspective, and perhaps more importantly, try and place the terms within their proper intellectual, sociological and historical context. In this way the reader can then at least come to a better understanding of how the author views these terms and how they are presented throughout the work, even if again they defy definition in the classical Western intellectual sense.

Mysticism, and the somewhat related practice of *meditation*, are terms that from a modern, scholarly and academic context are typically associated with longstanding, classically “Eastern”, fields of inquiry. They have nonetheless taken root in the West in the last century or so, mostly within the context of what the West refers to as *Yoga*, and through this relatively modern cultural transmission many of the terms, words, phrases and ideas associated with *mysticism* and *meditation*, have taken root in the languages of the West – English in particular of course. These fields were not always “Eastern” however, and it is worthwhile to trace their roots and origins, back through history and time perhaps get a bit of insight not only into where this break between East and West occurred with respect to the mystical arts and practices themselves, of which *meditation* is of course one, but also come to a better understanding of the terms within the theological context within which they effectively “emerged”, *theology* of course being a major theme in this work.¹⁴

Meditation is a much more technically specific term than *mysticism*, even though it can mean or imply “concentration”, “deep thought”, or simply “focus”, within the context of the Eastern “mystical” tradition, the term has a fairly well defined history and context, as a translation of the Sanskrit word *dhyanā*, a word which plays a significant role in the fundamental practices,

¹³ Ramakrishna is the main figure, as it relates to the notion of *mysticism* and *ontology* in particular, in the last three Chapters of Part IV of this work.

¹⁴ Even though an historical and cultural context is provided, the author will also posit the notion that *mysticism* at some level is co-emergent with the (modern) human condition, i.e. a prerequisite and necessary condition for modern man, or *homo sapiens*.

philosophy and *metaphysics* of the Indian theo-philosophical tradition as a whole, to which the religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are fundamentally associated with. In this context, *meditation* should be understood not in its most broad sense as the word is used in the West, but from a more technical standpoint as defined within the context of the ancient Indian theo-philosophical tradition, Yoga and Buddhism in particular. And to be even more specific definitionally and contextually speaking, while the practice (the art really) of meditation is a fundamental aspect and core tenet of Buddhism¹⁵, and perhaps is most often associated with it, the most precise definition actually comes from the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, the foundational text of *Yoga* as we have come to know it in all its forms in the West today.¹⁶

Within the specifically Indian theo-philosophical tradition of *Yoga*, understood through the lens of the *Yoga Sūtras*, *dhyāna* - the Sanskrit corollary to the modern Western notion of *meditation* – is one of the “eight limbs”, or practices, that are to be cultivated in order for “*Yoga*”, *samādhi* really, to be attained. *Yoga* in this context, definitionally is a state of mind, a state of *being* really, where the fluctuations of the mind are halted, or ceased, by means of deep concentration or absorption more or less.¹⁷ *Dhyāna*, or “deep contemplation” (or again *meditation*), as the 7th limb of the system of *Yoga* is the next stage of maturation or development after *dhāraṇā*, the sixth limb of *Patañjali’s* system. *Dhāraṇā* signifies a state of mind that is somewhat less focused, or less intense, than *dhyāna* but is nonetheless a precursor to it. While *dhāraṇā* is the holding of one’s mind on a particular object of contemplation, a *mantra* or focus on one’s breath or the focus on a particular deity for example, *dhyāna* is a more profound state of contemplation where the particular object of *meditation* is fixed within the mind as constant stream of thought - where the fluctuations or perturbations of the mind, even with respect to the object of *contemplation* or *meditation* itself, is “one pointed” and “uninterrupted”. The difference between *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna* is more one of degree along the progression of *Yoga* as it is defined within the system itself, the end of which is the eighth limb which is a more commonly used, and nonetheless still not necessarily completely understood Sanskrit term called *samādhi*, the definition of which of course also hinges upon its precursor limbs, or states of mind, of *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*.

¹⁵ Think Buddha sitting in contemplation under the Bodhi tree where he “achieves” or experiences *nirvana*, what we in the West like to call “enlightenment”.

¹⁶ The *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* is a 3rd/4th century CE text made up of almost 200 aphorisms or verses which is attributed to the ancient Indian sage Patañjali. This work, and its place intellectually within the context of ancient Indian theo-philosophy (orthodox Indian theo-philosophy primarily), is covered in Part IV of this work in the Chapter on Vedānta and Yoga, and Vivekananda, the spiritual successor of Ramakrishna.

¹⁷ *Yoga Sūtras*, 1.2. *yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ* in Sanskrit where *citta* is a technical term that means “mind stuff”, *vṛtti* means “various forms” or “fluctuations” more or less, and *nirodhaḥ* means “inhibit” or “cessation”. Hence the English translation as something along the lines of “Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind”.

Yoga in the modern era, and in particular in the West, comes in many forms and schools but all of them nonetheless rest upon this eight limbed system of Yoga as it is defined in the *Yoga Sūtras* themselves, a theo-philosophical system which is classically “Indian”, in the sense that it is the legacy of, and emerges directly out of, the intellectual, theological and metaphysical belief system which is ultimately tied to what we refer to throughout this work as the “Indo-Aryans”, a people and culture who we know of and understand as reflected in the literary tradition to which it is directly tied to, i.e. the *Vedas*, one of the oldest extant body of literary work of known to man.¹⁸ In the context of this work, we refer to the Indo-Aryans as the people and culture which is reflected in the *Vedas*, and a people who spoke Vedic Sanskrit, the language of the *Vedas*.¹⁹ The Indo-Aryans lived and thrived in the Indian subcontinent starting from around the 4th or 3rd millennium BCE or so. The term Indo-Aryan then as we use it throughout, refers to a people and culture, and a related theo-philosophical belief system, that is co-existent with the Vedic corpus itself, i.e. the *Vedas* - a body of literature that is dated with respect to its so-called “composition” by most scholars (based primarily on linguistic evidence) to between 1500 BCE and 500 BCE depending upon the specific “layer” of material within the corpus itself.²⁰

However, while the dating of the so-called “composition” of the *Vedas* (as well as the “philosophical” portion of the *Vedas* which is referred to as the *Upanishads*, the earliest of which are believed to have been added to the Vedic corpus in the middle to late part of the first millennium BCE) is not disputed by the author, we do however argue that the oldest portion of the *Vedas* (for example the *Rigvéda*) reflects a set of beliefs, rituals and mythology that reach much further back into ancient history than most scholars consider. The argument for this rests primarily on not only the “form” or “structure” of the *Vedas* (*lyric poetry* primarily, what is usually referred to as “hymns”) which points unequivocally to the *oral transmission* of said hymns for generations, if not centuries, prior to their actual “composition”, but also the typically underemphasized and sometimes even overlooked nature, breadth and power of the *oral transmission* itself in antiquity – what the author considers to be a “technological innovation” of sorts that is one of, if not the, unique attribute of *homo sapiens* that distinguishes it from the rest of the species on the planet and in turn is perhaps (as a corollary to the actual invention of language itself) the very reason why mankind has become the most widespread, successful and dominant species on the planet.

¹⁸ The oldest strata of hymns in the *Vedas* can be reasonably dated as far back as the 2nd millennium BCE, if not prior.

¹⁹ Vedic Sanskrit is an Indo-European language, the root of the language tree of virtually all Western languages. Throughout this work we use the *philological*, or linguistic, term “Indo-European” to not only designate a set of people that spoke languages that share a (theoretical) common ancestor, but also who the author argues also share a common cultural and theo-philosophical ancestry as well. Linguistically this common shared, theoretical, ancestral language shared by all “Indo-European” language speaking people in antiquity is referred to philologically (the study of linguistics or language) as “Proto-Indo-European”.

²⁰ This time period in Indian history sometimes referred to as the “Vedic period” or “Vedic Age”.

For we know in fact that man, in its modern physiological form as *homo sapiens*, existed for tens of thousands of years in complex hunter-gatherer societies throughout Eurasia (and of course in Africa as well which we know from genetic evidence is where our ancestors in Eurasia came from) prior to the invention of writing and even prior to the advent of “advanced societies”, what is commonly referred to in the academic and historical literature in the West as the so-called “advent of civilization”. Furthermore it is also clear that in order to survive, these ancient humans had to work together and collaborate with each other, i.e. communicate, to not only facilitate the tracking, hunting and killing of large game upon which their survival depended, but also learn to inhabit and survive in a wide range of harsh habitats and environments across Eurasia – for which (archeological) evidence exists that shows that they did quite successfully for some 30,000 years or so give or take before these more “advanced” societies developed, and before agriculture was invented which facilitated the development of more advanced, stable societies which are the hallmark of the so-called “Neolithic Revolution”. It is also clear that in order to facilitate these technological and sociological innovations, “language”, as defined by the ability to communicate complex ideas and thoughts between individuals which of course depended upon at least some level the capability for abstract thought, was absolutely essential. And in turn, from the author’s perspective primarily again, along with these advanced intellectual and linguistic capabilities, there also developed and evolved in parallel a *means*, a method, by which these *ideas* - these technological and intellectual innovations as it were – could be effectively “transmitted” across generations such that the overall body of *knowledge* of *homo sapiens* could increase, exponentially really, to support and facilitate the proliferation of the species itself. In other words, in the author’s view, *oral transmission* techniques in and of themselves, techniques which we find throughout virtually all of the ancient texts across Eurasia, can be viewed as a specific intellectual (and technological) innovation as it were and as such reflected a form of *natural selection* from a Darwinian standpoint.

Furthermore, it is not too much of an intellectual leap to consider that this body of knowledge that was transmitted from generation to generation in antiquity, which again also included the method, the means, by which this transmission could take place in as invariant a form as possible, included not only knowledge of technology proper – how to make tools, how to build shelter, how to hunt and track game, etc. - but also cultural phenomena as well, “belief systems”, such that not just species survival could be supported and preserved but that cultural, or tribal knowledge, could also be passed down and preserved as well.²¹ This ability to transmit knowledge from generation to generation such that the overall body of knowledge of a people, culture or society would exponentially expand over time, greatly enhancing the probability of

²¹ Ancestor worship for example, which we find evidence of across virtually all of ancient human populations in pre-historical times, reflects this very principle in fact.

survival and persistence of not just *homo sapiens* itself as a species, but also of the specific permutations of said species, i.e. specific cultures and peoples. This technique of *oral transmission* then, is arguably a critically important trait, mechanism as it were, to support the flourishing or “thriving” of peoples and cultures in antiquity. In fact, we go one step further and argue that this technique of knowledge transmission, i.e. *oral transmission* techniques in and of themselves, combined of course with the invention of language itself which predates the techniques of transmission, represents *the* defining characteristic of *homo sapiens*, i.e. thinking man, in its later stages of development and is the specific technological, and fundamentally intellectual (*sapiens*, i.e. “thinking”) innovation which drives the advancement of proliferation of the species which underpin the Neolithic Revolution. These linguistic techniques in toto then, as we see reflected in the earliest literary treatises extant from antiquity across Eurasia more broadly, and in India more specifically in the *Vedas*, were *the* specific innovation that underpinned not only the species ability to out-compete, out-survive and eventually effectively take over dominion of the planet, but also underpinned the persistence, the survival, of cultures and nation states which we see take root in Eurasia in the 2nd and 1st millennium BCE as well.²²

The point we are making here is that in order for this to occur, in order for knowledge transmission to effectively take place, and in order for the scope of knowledge to continue to increase with each successive generation, there must have been technology, a means, by which this transmission could occur and be facilitated. And this very technology is what we find in the very first written records that show up in archeological and literary records once writing is developed and once the necessary tools to support writing on a wide scale are developed as well. In other words, shortly after the invention of language that supported the evolution of ancient hominids into *homo sapiens*, our ancestors, it is the author’s contention that the means to transmit this knowledge developed as well, the combination of which provided much of the distinguishing characteristics of these ancient peoples, ancient man, that supported their *natural selection* as it were as the dominant species of hominid on the planet, and throughout Eurasia in particular which is the primary geographic region of focus in antiquity of this work.²³ This particular technological innovation, again one which we see in the earliest literary records across Eurasia as well as in ancient Egypt in fact, is what is referred to in the literature as the *oral tradition*, or *oral transmission* techniques - techniques and methods that we find evidence for not just in the first written records that crop up in the 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE across Eurasia,

²²We know that at the same time that *homo sapiens* was spreading across Europe, the Mediterranean and Asia – collectively what we refer to as Eurasia throughout this work – that at the same time there existed other species of hominids in the same territory at the very same that *homo sapiens* competed with, and also in fact interbred with - Neanderthals for example.

²³ The argument we are making here is that the requirement for the effective transmission of knowledge, was in fact *necessary* for the survival of ancient man and underpinned his ability to dominate (and most likely exterminate) all other forms of ancient hominids. And all of this must have occurred well before the invention of writing which we don’t find in the (Eurasian) historical record come into widespread use until the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE.

but in fact techniques which appear to be co-existent with ancient (and modern) hunter-gatherer societies themselves which exist without the support of, or need for, writing. We find various *oral transmission* techniques employed for example by the Native Americans for example, by the native remote tribes that still exist in pockets in South America, by the Aborigines in Australia, even in pockets of remote areas in highly populated and relatively modern countries like India and China for example, in the remote regions of Tibet and Nepal – all of these people and societies have very rich and persistent oral traditions that go back generations, well beyond what many more modern, technologically advanced and writing dependent societies and peoples are capable of imagining, for the very reason that modern humans, those that have grown up with the support of writing and books, no longer have the need for, nor the capability, to memorize or remember bodies of knowledge like people in antiquity did prior to the invention, or widespread use, of writing.

It is not too far-fetched to imagine, and in fact we have modern day examples of this very fact, that the *oral transmission* of *ideas*, can persist in an essentially consistent form, for hundreds if not thousands of years. Mankind's survival in antiquity arguably *depended* upon this very capability, and therefore, necessity being the mother of invention as it were, there developed very specific techniques, intellectual “technologies”, to support this capability. It is these techniques in fact that we find in virtually all pre-historical peoples and societies, Eurasia being no exception, in order to support the transmission of the very particular and unique sociological, historical and theo-philosophical traditions of the respective peoples and cultures in question. Techniques, intellectual “technologies”, that again were “invented” or “devised” for the relatively invariant transmission of *ideas* across generations - the invariant transmission of sounds, ceremonies and forms of worship in fact, i.e. what we refer to herein as theo-philosophical *knowledge*. The specific tools that were used were *lyrical*, in the sense that specific verse and rhyming techniques, effectively *mnemonic devices*, were employed to facilitate memorization and transmission, along with of course the use of mythical narratives as well, i.e. *mythology* – all of which made things easier to remember, understand and pass down from generation to generation.

And this is precisely what we find all throughout the very first texts that show up in the archeological record after the invention of writing, where scholars, priests or poets, or scribes - a sociological designation which is an outgrowth of what are referred to sometimes as shamans - transcribed or wrote down, i.e. “compiled”, as the documentation of the very ancient lore that had supported that specific people or society for generations over a time period of centuries and millennia even. This is what we find inherent in the “form” of the Far Eastern texts of the *Dao De Jing*, and the *Yijing* (although the *Yijing* is not *lyrical* per se but more mathematically and logically structured), as well as the ancient Chinese poems such as the *Heavenly Questions*, in the major epics of the Hellenes such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and the *Theogony* of Hesiod which

were transcribed in *hexameter*, or *lyric*, verse, in the great Sumer-Babylonian epic the *Enûma Eliš*, in the *Pyramid Texts* and the so-called *Book of the Dead* of the ancient Egyptians, as well as in the earliest written records of the Indo-Aryans and the Indo-Iranians as well, that is in the *Vedas* and the *Avesta* respectively.

Scholars of ancient Studies typically consider that the “content” of these ancient texts could only be a few hundred, or at most a thousand years older than the date when they were “transcribed”, or “written down”, but it is the author’s contention that is altogether possible, and in fact probable, that the content of these ancient texts, and probably much of the underlying rhythmic and linguistic structure along with the mythical narratives themselves, persisted for thousands of years prior to them being written down. And in turn that the technology and capabilities which underpinned the *oral transmission* tradition which had supported mankind’s development during the Upper Paleolithic and into the Neolithic Era (a period of some 20 to 30 thousand years) dissolved for the most part once it no longer became necessary. In other words, once these ancient theo-philosophical traditions were written down, compiled as it were, the specific technological innovation which had supported the transmission of these *idea*, the intellectual capabilities that underpinned *oral transmission* as a “tool” or “technology”, disappeared along with it.

As such, it is the author’s contention (which although is shared to a certain extent by some ancient historians and scholars, none of them seem to allow for the *oral transmission* techniques to reach as far back in history as the author theorizes and concludes based upon the analysis and research in Parts I and II of this work) that the dates of the “content” of some of the oldest extant literature we find throughout Eurasia, the *Vedas* being the prime example, should be moved even further back in history than what most ancient historians and scholars attribute them to – a method of dating that relies on a much more “literal” and “factually scientific” dating technique that dates the specific texts relative to their associated archeological or linguistic context rather than their theo-philosophical “content”. This perspective on the dating of the “content” of this material which shows up in the archeological record once writing is invented, provides for an altogether different perspective entirely not just on the possible “dating” of the material itself, but (as we argue throughout this work and especially in Parts I and II) also supports the hypothesis of the potential *shared origins* of much of the theo-philosophical “content” that we find in antiquity - in Eurasian antiquity specifically which is the geographic nexus of this work. In this context, we can refer to and discuss a “Eurasian” theo-philosophical tradition that is “reflected” in the earliest extant texts that we have from all of these ancient peoples and civilizations within which we find many common themes, motifs and narratives.

The argument then, is that the “content” of the earliest extant literature from antiquity throughout Eurasia, *Vedas* included, are much earlier – millennia perhaps - than most, if not all,

ancient historians typically date the source material to. Once this is established, or at least granted as a potentially conceivable hypothesis, one can then begin to discuss the possibility²⁴ of a shared common (intellectual) ancestry of this material, i.e. the ideological content as it were, of the earliest extant literature we find from ancient history throughout Eurasia. This thesis again is based primarily on the known and well documented ability of people to transmit language in *lyric poetry*, form for hundreds if not thousands of years with very little variance, as well as the commonalities linguistically and theo-philosophically that we find in the earliest extant literature from all of these ancient peoples of Eurasia which are studied within the context of this work – specifically the Hellenes (the Greeks), the Indo-Aryans, the Indo-Iranians, the Sumer-Babylonians, and the ancient Chinese which are all explored at length in Parts I and II of this work.

Regardless of the strength of the arguments made here, in a time period that lacks much if any intellectual records in fact, what is certain however, is that the transmission of *knowledge* in antiquity, prior to the development of writing, was done in oral form and was facilitated by the use of *lyric* and or *hymnic* poetry. A specific linguistic technique which shows up in literary form in virtually all of the earliest extant literary treatises from the various cultures and peoples throughout Eurasia in antiquity (2nd and 1st millennium BCE primarily), a linguistic technique that facilitated, and was specifically designed for, consistent and persistent, i.e. *invariant, oral transmission* of *ideas*. We argue then that a case can be made, albeit circumstantial, that these techniques which facilitated and supported the transmission of *ideas*, in mythological and theological form mostly, for millennium prior to the invention and proliferation of writing, is in all likelihood the very reason, the necessary condition as it were, that mankind developed the capability of “advanced civilization” itself.

This period in ancient history has come to be known as the Neolithic Revolution and is characterized by the widespread use and adoption of agriculture and the domestication of animals, which in turn led to the establishment of trade and commerce, which in turn led to the invention of writing itself along with the tools and techniques that were necessary to support writing. All of which in the aggregate come to characterize what we effectively call “civilization” from an ancient historical perspective, even though it is altogether very likely, and in fact very probable, that long before the invention of writing - and long before the invention of agriculture and the domestication of animals - human beings, i.e. *homo sapiens*, were communicating and passing down complex *ideas* via the use of these linguistic techniques, intellectual *technologies* in a sense, in order to support, and in turn ensure, the survival of their “people” - from a socio-political perspective, as well as from (the very much related) theo-philosophical perspective as well. The latter being a main topic of Parts I and II of this work.

²⁴ As originally conceived of by the Harvard Sanskrit scholar Michael Witzel in his work *Origins of the World's Mythologies*.

Mysticism then, within the context this work, is distinct from the modern, 20th century usage of the term which was created primarily to distinguish “Eastern” spiritual practices (that underpin again Yoga and Buddhism primarily, and ancient shamanic practices more generally²⁵) from the study of Western *theology*, e.g. Comparative Religious studies, which is much more dogmatic and “scripturally” based. We use the term as a distinguishing characteristic of ancient theo-philosophy in general, a tradition that is reflected and preserved by means of language and forms of writing yes, but also by *oral transmission* techniques, as well again *lyric poetry*, primarily. It is these common themes and characteristics of virtually all of the ancient the-philosophical texts from antiquity that we find in the very earliest literary texts throughout all of Eurasia and the Mediterranean which all to some extent contain “mystical” undertones and themes – mystical in this sense denoting an experiential oneness and connection with the ground of being and universal existence itself, and one which only later, as ancient civilizations evolve and progress, becomes transplanted with – albeit in allegorical and mythological form – deities and their respective worship via means of specific rituals and incantations, i.e. hymns.

This later theo-philosophical development in antiquity, which is born out of its mystical roots as it were, is characterized initially by ancestor worship, and then in turn by ceremonial worship, which in turn evolves into cultural specific mythology and the worship of “divine” figures who are depicted as heroes and associated with various aspects of the natural world – like the mother goddess who is worshipped to support fertility for example. So even though *mysticism* then as a modern designation of these very ancient “belief systems”, along with their underlying *practices*, or *arts*, as exemplified by the Indo-Aryan art of *meditation* as it were, is a necessary designation to distinguish these types of belief systems and practices from Western theology, i.e. Religion in the most orthodox sense, within the context of the modern Western intellectual and academic, or scholarly, landscape, from the point of view of the ancient peoples themselves from whom these practices and techniques that we call *mystical* originate from, had no such designation as the worldview of these ancient peoples was fundamental mystical at the core. That is to say fully unified and experiential, passing even beyond the boundaries of death, and integral to life, and *reality*, itself – a fundamental and all-pervading characteristic of human experience, of *existence* in all its forms, and as such did not need definition per se.

Mysticism, from this specifically ancient theo-philosophical perspective, is virtually ubiquitous in the mode of worship and underlying belief system of all the cultures and peoples through Eurasia in antiquity which we see reflected and crystalized particularly in the earliest theo-philosophical treatises of the various peoples and cultures which inhabited this geographic region during this

²⁵ As put forth by Mircea Eliade in his body of work for example.

time period in ancient history (Eurasia during the 3rd, 2nd and 1st millennium BCE). If we then take the next logical step to search for the roots of this mysticism, we find that it can be traced – ideologically and linguistically - not just across the Indo-European linguistic and cultural landscape (the Proto-Indo-Europeans), but also even to Afro-Asiatic speaking peoples as well (in Northern Africa), begging the question of how far back in time these theo-philosophical tenets and principles upon which our definition of mysticism is based, could have potentially originated. This logical progression of the tracing of these ideas as far back as the 4th and even 5th millennium BCE, provides much of the basis for the argument of the shared origins of what we refer to throughout this work as “theo-philosophy”, common themes and literary techniques that are to be found throughout Eurasia in antiquity - despite the linguistic peculiarities and specificities of individual cultures, peoples and of course the ancient theo-philosophical works themselves (which surround the very first literary compositions which show up in the archeological record once writing is invented and is spread throughout its respective societies in its respective form – be it hieroglyphic, cuneiform, ancient Chinese, Sanskrit or Greek depending upon the culture and geographic region and people in question), which make them “appear” different from a theo-philosophical standpoint but at closer look can be seen as reflecting very similar ideas and concepts – theo-philosophically speaking at least.

It is upon this basis that we speak of and use the term *mysticism* to reflect the very ancient and longstanding theo-philosophical belief systems which underpin all of these ancient theo-philosophical works from antiquity across all of the cultures and peoples throughout Eurasia and Northern Africa really, and in turn the surrounding mythology (*mythos*) that is characteristic of ancient man in general. The cultural specific *mythos* traditions having evolved of course from their theo-philosophical precedents, ideologically at least, which presumes that the “spirit world” (which consists of the realm of the dead along with the realm of the “gods” as well) was not just “real” but that this aspect of reality actually governed, or presided over, the physical and natural world that ancient man depended upon for survival. It is this belief system of the role of the spirit world over the physical or natural world, that in fact underpins all of the ancient forms of ceremonial worship, and in turn provides the theological, and socio-political really, basis for virtually all of the nation-states that emerge in the ancient world as “civilization” takes root, and as more complex and advanced societies, which are the hallmark of the Neolithic Revolution in fact, emerge - where virtually all of the kings, emperors and pharaohs of these ancient nation-states all claimed descent from, or alignment with, these ancient gods or heroes in one respect or another.

Meditation as a Mystical Art: A Bridge Through Time

Meditation then, in the context of the fairly lengthy discussions and treatment of this specific discipline, or practice, throughout this work (primarily through an Indian theo-philosophical lens) is a fundamentally aspect of, a core component of as it were, the *mystical arts*. It is the scientific method, the means really, by which the culmination or end goal of all the mystic traditions is achieved or realized. That is not to say that *meditation* underpins every mystical tradition per se, but where we do find it, it is a key element of the underlying mystical theo-philosophical “system” as it were. Most modern readers will associate the term with Eastern philosophy no doubt (theo-philosophy in our nomenclature), but we stretch the term more broadly to fit it into the very ancient pre-historical context which is the thrust of Parts I and II of this work. From our ancient historical and theo-philosophical perspective, *meditation* as a discipline of the mystical arts can be traced to the classical period of the Indian theo-philosophical tradition in the 3rd/4th century CE – to the *Yoga Sūtras* specifically as the seventh of the eight limbs (*dhyāna*)²⁶ of Patañjali’s system which has become so popular in the West today.

However Patañjali’s system, albeit innovative and revolutionary from at least an intellectual if not theo-philosophical perspective at least, even within the Indian theo-philosophical tradition from which it emerged, nonetheless traces its own origins to the core of the (orthodox) Indian theo-philosophical tradition itself which has its roots in the much older and more expansive and varied Indo-Aryan theo-philosophical tradition, the roots of which – at least from a literary treatise standpoint - lie in the *Vedas* primarily, and the secondarily in the *Upanishads*, the more philosophical and metaphysical portion of the Vedic corpus. For example we see references to meditative practices, and contemplation more broadly, as an essential component of the spiritual practices outlined in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (the *Song of the Lord*), one of the most influential texts in the Indian theo-philosophical tradition whose composition is dated to the middle of the first millennium BCE or so (within the *Mahābhārata* epic of course), a treatise that has become one of the most important texts in the Indian theo-philosophical tradition, and in the theo-philosophical tradition of Vedānta in particular.²⁷

²⁶ *Ashtanga* in Sanskrit means “eight limbed”, from whence the popular system of Ashtanga Yoga, (aka *Vinyāsa Yoga*) derives its name, developed and popularized by the Indian Yoga teacher Sri K. Pattabhi Jois (1915 – 2009).

²⁷ “Some by meditation [*dhyānena*] perceive the Self in themselves through the mind, some by devotion to knowledge, and some by devotion to work.” *The Bhagavad Gita* Chapter 13 verse 24. Translated from the Sanskrit, with Notes, Comments, and Introduction by Swami Nikhilananda. Published by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York. Eighth printing edition, 2004. While we don’t see *meditation* or derivative forms of the word in Sanskrit used in the same technically specific sense in the *Bhagavad Gītā* as we do in the *Yoga Sūtras*, couched as it were within a much broader and collective set of spiritual practices that focus more on devotion and action rather than contemplation, i.e. meditation.

If we look to the Upanishadic literature however, the philosophical portion of the *Vedas*, the bulk of which is dated also to the middle of the first millennium BCE, we find several more specific, and altogether “Yogic” references to practices and techniques that we associate with *meditation*. The earliest of these which make direct reference to Yoga specifically, are from the *Katha Upanishad*, one of the most pre-eminent and influential of the Upanishadic philosophical treatises,²⁸ and the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, the latter of which outlines specific disciplines and practices of , and in particular some of the hallmark breathing techniques, i.e. *prāṇāyāma*²⁹. Both of these *Upanishads* are “Primary” or *Mukhya Upanishads* and as such represent the very heart of Upanishadic philosophy, clearly illustrating that Yoga, and the practice of *meditation* to which it is closely aligned and associated with, has its origins, at least within the context of the Indian theo-philosophical tradition, at least as far back as the middle of the first millennium BCE and in all likelihood at the very least a few centuries prior.³⁰

However, even more interestingly, and again in line with one of the major theses of this work - i.e. a potential shared intellectual, theo-philosophical, heritage of the peoples of Eurasia in deep antiquity - we find explicit references to very “Yoga-like”, meditative, practices and techniques even in the ancient Chinese theo-philosophical tradition. While the literary references are not nearly as widespread as in the Indian theo-philosophical tradition, nor do we find the practices encapsulated in as dogmatic and structured of a system as we find them represented in the *Yoga Sūtras* for example (a much later development, again 3rd/4th century CE), but nonetheless references to very “Yoga-like” practices, i.e. *meditation*, nonetheless exist. The specific passages we are speaking of are to be found in an ancient text that was discovered only at the end of the 20th century and is dated to the Warring States Period (403 – 221 BCE), a time of great philosophical and intellectual flourishing in ancient Chinese history - just as it was in fact to the West on the Indian subcontinent and throughout the Mediterranean - Egypt, Greece and the Near East essentially.³¹ The text, attributed to the Daoist tradition given its similarities in language and content to the Lǎozǐ’s *Dao De Jing* and Chuang-Tzu’s *Zhuangzi*, is called *Nei-yeh* or

²⁸ *Katha Upanishad* II.iii.11, which refers to Yoga explicitly as “the firm control of the senses” . *The Upanishads*, Volume One. Translation and commentary by Swami Nikhilananda. Published by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, 6th edition, 2003. *Katha Upanishad*, pg. 185.

²⁹ See *The Upanishads*, Volume Two, translation and commentary by Swami Nikhilananda. Published by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, 4th edition, 2004. *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* , II.8-15, pgs. 91-94.

³⁰ For a good overview of the literary evidence of “Yogic” principles, practices and techniques from the Upanishadic literature, see the online article entitled “The History of Yoga, References in the *Upanishads*” by Jayaram V at <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/upanishads/essays/history-of-yoga-references-in-the-upanishads.asp>.

³¹ Again, hence the term Axial Age that you will find used throughout this work to refer to this unique time period in human history, geographically bound in what we refer to as Eurasia but more specifically includes Northern Africa, the Mediterranean, the Middle and Near East, the Indian subcontinent and then the Far East, i.e. China.

simply *Neiye*, translated into English typically as *Inward Training*, or alternatively as *Inner Cultivation*, or *Inner Development*.³²

The *Nei-yeh* text (26 poetic verses in all, some 1600 Old Chinese characters), was preserved by ancient Chinese scholars/librarians as part of the *Kuan Tzu* (*Guanzi*) collection of texts, a fairly extensive compilation of mostly political and economic treatises compiled circa 300 BCE but most likely edited and revised up until the very end of the 1st century BCE³³. [However, as is the case with all ancient theo-philosophical works really, such texts no doubt preserved content, and betrayed theo-philosophical traditions, that were in existence well before the text was actually written. As to how long before, that is one of the topics and areas we explore in this work, as reflected in the study of *oral traditions* more generally in antiquity, seen specifically as a (linguistic) technological innovation that allowed for the transmission of *ideas*, in a very particular and specific linguistic form, order and cadence, over generations at least, centuries in all likelihood, and perhaps much longer than that.] The *Nei-yeh* was written in ancient Old Chinese, the oldest attested literary form of Chinese that was used during the Zhou and Warring States Periods, i.e. roughly throughout most of the first millennium BCE. The text is composed almost entirely of poetic, rhythmic verses that clearly represent an *oral tradition* which preceded the composition of the actual text, precisely the same technique used for the transmission of theo-philosophical ideas and practices in the Indian theo-philosophical tradition, as we see in the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Upanishads* for example.

As an example of references to very “Yogic”, “spiritual” practices, techniques and principles, i.e. *meditation*, in the *Nei-yeh*, take the following verse in English translation below, keeping in mind the rhythmic and poetic structure of the language in the original Chinese, similar to the literary style of the *Dao De Jing* (hence, along with the philosophical content itself as well, the association of the text with the Daoist tradition):

*By concentrating your vital breath as if numinous,
The myriad things will all be contained within you.
Can you concentrate? Can you unite with them?
Can you not resort to divining by tortoise or milfoil
Yet know bad and good fortune?*

Can you stop? Can you cease?

³² *Inward Training* derives from the Chinese characters/words *nèi*, meaning “inside”, “inner”, or “internal”, combined with the Chinese word/character *yè*, which means “work”, “deed”, or “achievement/production”.

³³ See *Original Tao: The Foundations of Taoist Mysticism* by Dr. Harold Roth (Columbia University Press, 1999) pgs. 18-23 for a detailed look at the formation, content, history and dating of the *Kuan Tzu*, *Guanzi* i, collection, within which the *Nei-yeh* treatise was preserved.

*Can you not seek it in others,
Yet attain it within yourself?
You think and think about it
And think still further about it.
You think, yet still cannot penetrate it.
While the ghostly and numinous will penetrate it,
It is not due to the power of the ghostly and numinous,
But to the utmost refinement of your essential vital breath.*

*When the four limbs are aligned
And the blood and vital breath are tranquil,
Unify your awareness, concentrate your mind,
Then your eyes and ears will not be overstimulated.
And even the far-off will seem close at hand.³⁴*

Clearly, we can see here the description of some sort of meditative practice, one that is tied to the overarching goal or end of the theo-philosophical system itself - in this case the *Dao*. This general structure, metaphysical architecture if you will, is almost precisely what we find in the Indian theo-philosophical tradition as reflected in the *Upanishads* for example. Furthermore, the technique described here is quite specific, emphasizing the role of “breath”, or “vital energy”, *ch’i*, or *qì*, a critically important concept that permeates the entire ancient Chinese theo-philosophical landscape really, beyond just the Daoist tradition. This concept almost precisely corresponds to the very important Indian theo-philosophical concept *prāṇa*, which more literally translated from the Sanskrit also means “vital breath” or “vital energy”, but also (like the word/character *qì* in Chinese) has etymological roots tying it more broadly, and anthropomorphically, to “breath” and “air”.³⁵ We also see here a fairly specific allusion to the cessation of thought as a component of the “practice” as well, an idea that is integral to very definition of Yoga as it is outlined in the *Yoga Sūtras*, albeit a much later (3rd/4th century CE) text³⁶.

³⁴ *Nei-yeh*, XIX.1-19. Translation by Dr. Harold Roth. *Original Tao: The Foundations of Taoist Mysticism* by Dr. Harold Roth (Columbia University Press, 1999) pgs. 82/83.

³⁵ If we tread even deeper as it relates to this notion of “vital breath” and its importance from a metaphysical perspective in antiquity, the association of the basic energy or life force of the universe being “tapped into” by an individual by harnessing, or “tapping into” its manifestation in the body (i.e. *meditation*), we find “wind” and/or “air” as core metaphysical/cosmological constructs (the *arche* in the early Greek philosophical tradition, specifically with the Pre-Socratics) all throughout Eurasia as manifest in the earliest treatises, myths and divine world orders represented by these various peoples and cultures. We take for example the relevance and importance of the god Vāyu in the Indian Vedic tradition, the lord of the winds, or even the system of five elements that underpins Ayurvedic philosophy of which wind/air was one. Or to the Far East in ancient China, we find Wind/Air, *Xùn*, as one of the primary metaphysical constructs of the cosmological world order, one of the eight primary *bāguà*, the metaphysical system which underpins not just the *Yijing* but also more broadly all of Chinese philosophy. We also of course even find wind/air playing a central role in the underlying elemental, or again *arche*, metaphysical/cosmological systems outlined by many of the very first philosophers in the Greek tradition as well, i.e. the Pre-Socratics – the more commonly known system of Four Elements in the Western “mystical” tradition as it were, Earth/Air/Water/Fire. This notion of Wind/Air, or cosmic breath which is equated with a universal, and anthropomorphic, life force, reflects a very ancient belief system no doubt.

³⁶ *yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*, or ‘Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations/modifications of the mind’.

Furthermore, we find at the end of the verse, a reference to the seat or posture, i.e. “alignment of the limbs”, to which a parallel can clearly be drawn to Yogic *āsanas* (“seat” or “posture”), a notion that of course is pivotal to many schools of Yoga, particularly many of the schools which are practiced in the West today which derive, at least theo-philosophically, from the Yoga of Patañjali.

Altogether, we see a striking resemblance of the meditative practices and techniques described in the Daoist *Nei-yeh* text to the meditative practices and techniques that underpin the Indian theo-philosophical tradition. This begs the question of course, a seed thought that was a major driving force of this work in fact, as to how these practices and techniques found themselves in the ancient Far East, well before there is any evidence of trade or communication of any kind really between the cultures and peoples that inhabited the Indian subcontinent in antiquity, and the peoples and cultures that inhabited what we refer to today as China in antiquity, being separated by a massive mountain range as it were, i.e. the Himalayas. What we find in fact, is that not only are the practices and techniques described very similar, but some of the core theo-philosophical principles at work are almost exactly the same as well, as is the literary form (rhythmic, rhyming, “poetic” verse), within which the ideas are preserved and transmitted.

If we take this now quite broad view of *meditation*, as a cross cultural practice that has its roots in deep antiquity (rather than as an Indian or Yogic/Buddhist practice), and we furthermore look at the practice as form, or manifestation, of the *mystical arts*, one that is removed or abstracted from devotional or ceremonial worship, theologically agnostic in a way - even though it is probably from these very old and ancient, pre-historical ceremonial forms of worship to the gods and deities of the basic natural of cosmic world order (wind, sun, earth, moon, stars, etc.) from which the practice was synthesized and cultivated from. From this vantage point, we can perhaps transform our somewhat dogmatic and theologically specific (religious really) notion of *meditation* into something more universal and ever present - a practice which has existed for millennia, and which crosses all sorts of geographic and cultural boundaries and therefore isn’t “owned” and wasn’t “created” by any one person, nation or theological system (again religion). Herein lies the *wisdom* of the Indian theo-philosophical tradition who attributes the knowledge of the *Vedas* to “ancient seers”, or *rishis* (*ṛṣi* in Sanskrit) who “divined” the knowledge and transcribed it, formulated it as it were, to the Sanskrit tongue. In contrast to the orthodox and scripturally obsessive Western theological tradition, the Indian theo-philosophical tradition emphasizes the eternal existence of, and the fundamentally reality and truth of, the “content” of the *Vedas*, not the words of the *Vedas* (although they are holy no doubt just not sacrosanct in the way that Biblical scripture is held to be in the West), and that the underlying truth therein is timeless and ageless and co-existent with the universe itself.

From this perspective then, *meditation* as an art and a practice was certainly not “invented” by Patañjali in the 3rd or 4th century CE, nor was it invented by Buddha some 8 centuries prior, it can be looked upon as the crystallization, the culmination if you will, of millennia of spiritual, theological, metaphysical and ultimately *mystical* practices from pre-history that manifest themselves in these various theo-philosophical traditions from antiquity – the ones that we know from history class that we can study “through” not just the archeological findings, but through their literary traditions as well which gives us a much more expanded and complete perspective, intellectually speaking, into the belief systems of these ancient peoples. *And what we find is that meditation, in the more broad and general sense that we use the term here and throughout this work, as a mystical art that is a shared heritage of humanity really, I arguably one of the defining characteristics of modern, civilized man.*

In effect then, when we speak of and refer to (the art and practice of) *meditation* in this work, we’re speaking of a practice from a theological and historical context that reaches well back into pre-history, as far back (at least) as the 3rd and 4th millennia BCE when we know the “Indo-Aryan” people were performing ceremonial and devotional worship, along with the recitation of hymns in some form of very old Vedic Sanskrit, evidence of which we find not only in the archeological evidence in that region of the world, the Northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent, but also in the literary tradition as preserved in the oldest strata of the *Vedas*, in the *Rigvéda* in particular. The practice of *meditation* that we find outlined and described in the *Yoga Sūtras*, i.e. *dhyāna* is in a very real sense a crystallization, semantically and technically (spiritually speaking), of a very old set of practices that were fundamentally intertwined with the forms of worship of the “Indo-Aryans” that goes back millennium.

What’s unique about the description and usage of *meditation* (*dhyāna*) in the *Yoga Sūtras* then is not the idea or concept, or practice really, itself, but the fact that it is extrapolated from the underlying theological and mythical intellectual landscape from which it had been inextricably linked for so long. With the introduction of the *Yoga Sūtras*, we have the practice defined in such a way that it can be used as a means to higher states of consciousness no matter what (devotional) symbols, or even theological or divine beliefs, that the practitioner brought to the method. While the practices described and methods described in the *Yoga Sūtras* are no doubt spiritual, and in that sense theological or religious, they are not anthropomorphic in the Western sense (or even in the Indo-Aryan / Hindu sense) and for that reason the system can most certainly viewed as more philosophical than theological, just as Buddhism³⁷ can as well in fact. In this

³⁷ Buddhism is also an Indian theo-philosophical tradition although it, in contrast to what are referred to as the “orthodox” schools of Indian philosophy, does not look to the *Vedas* as the source of its knowledge per se, its underlying theo-philosophy – the so-called “Middle Way” - being an innovative and unique (primarily) philosophical system that was developed, or according to tradition “divined”, by Siddhārtha Gautama himself, a figure who lived and taught mostly in the Eastern part India during the middle of the first millennium BCE or so. Buddhism is considered to be one of the “heterodox” Indian theo-philosophical schools,

sense, the art of *meditation* as it is defined in the Indian theo-philosophical tradition specifically, and as we use the term throughout this work as well, is considered to be, a *Science of the mind*” of sorts, to denote this altogether theologically independent nature of the practices therein.

And yet at the same time, *meditation* in this context is still nonetheless *theological* - in the sense that the practices described should be understood, in their proper historical and intellectual context, as related to the direct perception and experience of the divine (*theos*). *Meditation* as we use the term is also fundamentally *ontological* in the sense that the practice was designed, again in its original theo-philosophical context in antiquity, to facilitate the direct experience of “the ground of reality”, the *samādhi* of Yoga or *nirvana* of Buddhism. As such *meditation* at its core, from an ancient theo-philosophical perspective is an “ontological” pursuit, although not just an intellectual pursuit as the word ontological implies and denotes in modern western academic circles where the term originated, but ontological in a more *mystical* sense – here borrowing the term from modern western academic circles and expanding its definition to the ancient theo-philosophical intellectual landscape which is the core part of Parts I and II of this work.

Mysticism then, and its associated arts and practices such as *meditation*, is used in the context of this work to signify the underlying belief systems which are reflected in the earliest theo-philosophical literary traditions throughout Eurasia in antiquity. Theo-philosophical belief systems which emerge with the advent of writing which supports the ability to explore and define these belief systems in a much more sophisticated and comprehensive way than could be done prior to the advent of writing no doubt, but intellectual systems which nonetheless are characterized primarily by what we refer to as *mythology* and *theology* in modern Western academic literature. But this distinction is misleading somewhat, at least with respect to how the ancients viewed the world, as these theo-philosophical belief systems were not considered *separate* domains of knowledge necessarily in antiquity – separate from physical or scientific reality – but reflected the very basic and elemental aspects of existence itself. Even though this *mystical* knowledge was considered to be *sacred* in antiquity, and as such was necessarily kept “secret” and held within the hands of the very select few, the whole of reality from the ancient’s perspective was considered sacred so this distinction of the sacred versus the non-sacred is misleading at best and altogether inaccurate and wrong at worst.

the term *heterodox* designating its rejection of the *Vedas* as the ultimate source of truth as it were. Buddhist philosophy however, despite its distinction from “orthodox” Indian theo-philosophical schools (all of which are covered in detail in Parts II, III and IV of this work), is nonetheless representative of “Indian” philosophy, even if it reflects an altogether distinct theo-philosophical tradition. Buddhism is perhaps the most well-known, lasting and influential example of what is referred to sometimes as *Śramaṇa*, the name given to various “religious” movements and schools that arose in India around the middle of the first millennium BCE and were characterized primarily by asceticism and renunciation, the Sanskrit word *Śramaṇa* meaning “seeker” or “one who performs acts of austerity”, or “ascetic”.

So while this delineation of the *mystical arts* then, i.e. *mysticism* in general, is necessary in order to facilitate the discussion and analysis of these ancient belief systems within the classically Western intellectual, philosophical and altogether “scientific” perspective, this delineation or designation is essentially an artificial one that is superimposed by Western academics (for good reason mind you), but most certainly does not reflect how the ancients viewed reality, i.e. their worldview. For their *reality*, what came to be called *knowledge* specifically within the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition³⁸, included the so-called “spirit world”, the realm of the gods and the surrounding myths as it were. And even in the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition the *mystery cults* traditions were considered to be a fundamental aspect of this *knowledge*, even if it could not necessarily be explained or articulated in a rational or logical way.

And the very essence of this ancient *mystical* tradition, its most profound and systematic description as it were, is in the author’s view at least, reflected most prolifically and, in the West at least, most influentially by the Indian theo-philosophical tradition of Yoga, a theo-philosophical belief system which for all intents and purposes underpins, and somewhat defines to a large extent, *mysticism* itself as it is understood again within the context of the modern Western intellectual landscape within which the term itself is to be understood. And within this theo-philosophical tradition, a *Science of the mind* has been defined and outlined, again independent of theological conceptions more or less, which has become widespread in the West and throughout the world in the last century or so and within which the ancient (mystical) art of *meditation* is defined and outlined in detail within the particular Indian theo-philosophical landscape form which it emerges.

It is from this perspective then – intellectually, historically and theo-philosophically - which the terms *mysticism* and *meditation* are used throughout this work, and it is within this context that we view and explore the life and teachings of Paramhansa Ramakrishna as a *mystic* in the very ancient Indian theo-philosophical sense, and as such a definitive example or *embodiment*, the illustrative truth as it were, of a very ancient belief system, a conception of *reality* and *knowledge*, that rests well beyond the domain of modern Western notions of reality, thereby forcing us to confront how we define *reality* itself within a Western intellectual and “scientific” context. This is why we use the term *ontology*, throughout this work, and in particular in Part IV which deals with among other things the inherent challenges and problems of analyzing Ramakrishna’s life

³⁸ It is in this context then, that we should view the *knowledge* which is embedded in these earliest texts that we find throughout antiquity in Eurasia and the Mediterranean, which is not just philosophical in nature, as juxtaposed specifically with *theology*, but as intrinsically mystical in the sense that it reflected these very ancient belief systems and emerged out of them, as more complex theo-philosophical systems in general, but nonetheless did not – at least not initially – reject the very ancient forms of knowledge which were again primarily mystical in nature as we define that term throughout.

and teachings, or *mysticism* in general for that matter, through a classically Western intellectual and metaphysical lens.³⁹

³⁹ Paramhansa Ramakrishna plays a prominent role in the latter part of this work and a figure who emerges from and out of the very heart of the Indian theo-philosophical heritage, having fully practiced, and according to most fully realized, virtually every form of Indian *mysticism* – from the *dualistic* and world embracing tradition of Tantra Yoga, to the devotional, ceremonial and ritualistic practices surrounding Bhakti Yoga, to the *non-dualistic* theo-philosophical system of Advaita Vedānta as espoused by Śaṅkara himself.

Overarching Themes: The *Laurasian Hypothesis* and a New *Metaphysics*

While we have attempted to describe the nature of the work, and its underlying “purpose”, in Aristotelian terms⁴⁰, whenever the author stops to think about it, or whenever he is asked “why” he’s doing it, there never appears to be a clear and concise answer to the question, and least not to the author even though a logical and rational response can be given. In fact, it is arguably a reflection of such a basic materialistic and self-obsessed capitalistic society that we live in (that the author lives in at least that is the very source of a) the question itself, no one would consider creating art for art’s sake, and b) a reflection of this basic philosophical quandary that the author is attempting to uncover and potentially solve that the answer that he provides is never really satisfactory to anyone who asks.

In brief then, it’s never really not quite clear to the author *why* we should complete such an extensive and broad reaching work such as this. The author certainly never set out to do such a thing at the start, and arguably had he known how significant an effort it was we never would have embarked on it to begin with (but the same could probably be said for many works of creation so in that sense this is no different). Nonetheless, here we are. So “go figure” is perhaps as good an explanation as any that can be found to explain the “situation”, if we may call it that. But the *how* we got here is a point worth noting as well. The means of production as it were, especially given that the author did not embark on a this extensive a work to begin with. In fact, quite the contrary, after *Snow Cone Diaries* we thought we were “finished”. But what we found was that once we started writing and producing material on a broad range of topics, mostly regarding theo-philosophical development in antiquity, each topic led to another related one, which in turn led to another, and another and so on and so on until a very broad and far reaching chain was developed and certain patterns emerged that the author could not find in any of the existing literature.

And so it was simply by the constant authoring and writing (and publishing draft material periodically on the web)⁴¹ of small chunks of thought as it were, essays really, that after a long period of time of relatively consistent effort on topics that were all of interest, and all connected in one way or another, and all authored from a perspective that the author thought was unique, it became clear not only that such a work was possible, but almost that it was essential and that “it had to be done”. It’s hard to explain really, but perhaps it is not much of a stretch to imagine

⁴⁰ In Aristotle’s *metaphysics*, the notion of the purpose, or final end of a thing was a crucial element of his idea of *knowledge* itself, i.e. what has come to be known in philosophical circles as *epistemology*. The term in Greek is *telos*, a Greek word meaning “final end” or “purpose” which is one of the four pillars of Aristotle’s *metaphysics* which is based upon the notion of *causality*. Aristotle’s *metaphysics* is outlined in detail in Part III of this work in the section on Aristotle and *substantial form*.

⁴¹ The blog along with many of the early drafts of chapters and content presented herein can be found at www.snowconenyc.com.

that many authors have similar experiences with their creative process, and indeed such was the reliance and import of the Muses of ancient Greece who were believed to *inspire* the mythic poets of old in fact.⁴² From a pure *academic* perspective, which is shorthand for Western intellectual and Scientific perspective, there are at least two prevailing sentiments or theories that are put forth in Parts I and II of this work that the author believes should force us to recast or reformulate modern views and perceptions, our fundamental understanding of really, the relationship between and among the prevailing *mythos* (primarily *cosmogonic*, i.e. creation narratives and mythologies) and philosophical traditions of the respective civilizations that are covered in this work – namely the civilizations of the “West” as exemplified by the ancient Sumer-Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian and Greco-Roman cultural traditions, and the civilizations of the “East” as exemplified by the Indo-Aryans - as reflected specifically in the literature attributed to this ancient people namely the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, and the philosophy put forth by Buddha - and the philosophy of the ancient Chinese peoples as reflected in the *Yijing*, the *Dao De Jing* and the other ancient Chinese “Classics”.

First, as we scale our view out from a regional and historical perspective, looking at the overall development of human intellectual developments from a more global, or perhaps more specifically a more integrated “Eastern” and “Western” view, we find and explore the meaning and definition of what we term “Indo-European philosophy”, a term we define as the set of beliefs, the underlying theological and philosophical views, which underpin not only the Hellenic philosophical tradition which basic provides the foundations of the Western intellect (which we know borrowed at least to some extent from its “direct” neighbors to the East, i.e. the so-called “Near Eastern” traditions which much of the academic material refers to as “Oriental” but really consist of the Sumer-Babylonians and Persians/Iranians mostly), but also the philosophy of the Indo-Aryans as well, which is reflected most directly in the *Upanishads* but which also forms the basis of Buddhist philosophy as well. All of these theo-philosophical traditions emerge in the historical record throughout Eurasia, from the Mediterranean to the Indian subcontinent to the Far East, in the middle of the first millennium BCE or so, give or take a century or two, therefore representing the age of man that we refer to as the “Axial Age”.⁴³

Second, as we analyze and study the various theo-philosophical traditions that emerge across Eurasia and the Mediterranean in the first millennium BCE, the author concludes that the similarities and common threads of thought that we find in these various theo-philosophical traditions represent not the specific borrowing and exchange of ideas, but the remnants of ancient belief systems that reach much further back in antiquity than considered by most

⁴² *Snow Cone Diaries* was penned as “musings of Juan Valdez” as a veiled reference to such considerations.

⁴³ The term “Axial Age” which was coined by the famed German philosopher Karl Jaspers in the 19th century. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Axial Age', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 3 December 2016, 01:26 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Axial_Age&oldid=752746150> [accessed 3 December 2016].

scholars and academics of ancient history.⁴⁴ One thread of commonality already mentioned is traced back to a distinctly Indo-European theo-philosophical system that runs parallel (backward in time) to the spread of Indo-European languages, a subject of theoretical philological (study of languages) inquiry in the last century or so which provides the basis for the term “Indo-European”, a language family which is known to include Sanskrit, Greek and Latin among other languages that were prevalent in the Mediterranean and Near East in the 4th, 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE.

We extend this philological theoretical construct, i.e. “Indo-European”, to the domain of “theo-philosophy”, arguing that the commonalities that we find throughout the Indo-European landscape from a theological and philosophical perspective are the result of the shared theo-philosophical ancestry of these peoples that populated this region in antiquity rather than the result of cultural borrowing and/or some type of *collective unconscious* (in the Jungian sense), positing the existence of parent theo-philosophical belief system of sorts that runs parallel with Proto-Indo-European language that was inherited, or at the very least strongly influenced, the (spoken) languages of the Greeks, the Indo-Aryans (Sanskrit speaking), the Sumer-Babylonians and the Persians (the Indo-Iranian family of languages). We extend this theory to include not only these people that shared linguistic characteristics with each other, but also to include the (ancient) Egyptians as well, an ancient civilization that although clearly has a different history and origin than the ancient Hellenic people, i.e. the ancient Greeks, it nonetheless evolves from a cultural and theo-philosophical standpoint very much aligned with the ancient Greeks after the 2nd millennium BCE or so when the two cultures begin to have very constant and persistent contact with each other.

The thesis is that this Proto-Indo-European theo-philosophy provides the basic theological and mythological structure, and the underlying and associative meanings which then morph into philosophy proper as writing becomes more prevalent in the first millennium BCE, providing the foundations from a theo-philosophical perspective for the majority of Eurasia in antiquity – outside of the Far East/China basically which in the author’s view reflects an even older theo-philosophical tradition, older than Proto-Indo-European that is. Along with this Proto-Indo-European theo-philosophical belief system, we propose an even deeper lineage across all of Eurasia that naturally presents itself as one looks across these classically “Eastern” and “Western” divides and invariably finds many common intellectual threads and similarities between the

⁴⁴ This theory of common origins sits in contrast to for example the ideas presented in the works by M. L. West in his book *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* published by Oxford University Press in 1971, arguably the most comprehensive work on the comparison of Greek and Indian philosophy ever produced authored by Thomas McEvilley entitled *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* published by Allworth Press 2002, as well as, albeit perhaps to a lesser degree, the ideas put forth by Walter Burkert in his article “Prehistory of Presocratic Philosophy in an Orientalizing Context” published in the *Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, Oxford University Press 2008.

different metaphysical and philosophical systems. This theory effectively follows the lines of the Laurasian *mythos* hypothesis of Harvard Sanskrit scholar and professor Michael Witzel that he outlines in his seminal work, *Origin of the World's Mythologies*, but we extend the hypothesis from a simple shared narrative as it were that explains the shared *cosmologies* of these ancient peoples throughout Eurasia, to a shared intellectual worldview of sorts, one which provides the foundations for theo-philosophical systems that emerge in the first millennium BCE that we find reflected in the earliest works of these respective “Eastern” and “Western” early civilizations when writing first develops and these belief systems are first codified and philosophy in antiquity starts to take shape across Eurasia.

These developments establish what we have to come to refer to throughout this work as “Eurasian philosophy”, an altogether unique perspective on philosophy in antiquity that brings together both Western philosophy and Eastern philosophy (in antiquity) under a single umbrella so as to emphasize the fundamental *relationship* of these seemingly disparate and distinctive worldviews, worldviews that nonetheless share many common motifs and themes which point to common (intellectual) lineage from the Neolithic Era which our modern understanding of genetics and human migration sheds significant light on. From this more broad and deeper perspective surrounding these ancient bodies of knowledge that we find in the first extant set of literature that appears in Eurasia in antiquity, we can recognize Western and Eastern philosophy as representing two different streams of thought yes, but also at the same time as individual manifestations and interpretations of a single, shared, base of wisdom that reaches deep into antiquity. It then shows up in this so-called “Axial Age” throughout Eurasia in various forms that are socio-politically, linguistically and geographically distinct, but nonetheless representative of a body of knowledge that comes at least to some degree from a shared heritage, providing insights into the mind of pre-historical man that have never really been explored before, allowing for (calling for really) a new approach and framework for understanding ancient philosophy from which our modern designation of “Eastern” and “Western” comes from.

This *Laurasian hypothesis*, which is in effect a deep, pre-historical *shared ancestry hypothesis* for the ancient peoples of Eurasia, not only aligns quite well with the archeological record, as evidenced for example in the Cave art findings⁴⁵ as well as the Venus figurines motif⁴⁶ that we find spread across Eurasia in the of the Upper Paleolithic (circa 50,000 to 10,000 years ago), but also aligns with what we know is the common lineage from a genetic standpoint that all these ancient peoples share, having discovered in the last decade or so that all European as well as Asian peoples (and Americans as well) all stem from a relatively small population of homo sapiens

⁴⁵ A more detailed look at Cave art findings can be found in the Chapter on the Pre-History of Man, in the Neolithic Era which is the last part of the Stone Age, can be ifound in the introductory section – Prologue - of this work.

⁴⁶ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Venus figurines', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 2 January 2017, 14:30 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Venus_figurines&oldid=757925423> [accessed 2 January 2017].

that migrated out of Africa roughly around 100,000 years ago and which in turn gave rise to an Eastern expansion some 60,000 to 70,000 years ago give or take.⁴⁷

While this reaches very far back into ancient history, much further back than we have a record of from an historical perspective of course, and into a time period of history where even the archeological record is quite sparse, from the author's perspective these common theo-philosophical threads that we find across Eurasia as exemplified in the very similar systems of *metaphysics* and *theology*, and underlying themes of *numerology*, *skepticism* and *idealism* that we find predominant in both the *Yijing* and the *Dao De Jing* from the Far East as well as in the theo-philosophy of both the Pre-Socratics (e.g. Heraclitus, Parmenides which then dovetail and influence the theo-philosophy of Plato) as well as the Indo-Aryans and the Indo-Iranians is best explained by a shared common ancestral hypothesis, i.e. the *Laurasian hypothesis*, coinciding of course with a much more lasting and persistent theo-philosophical system which is typically attributed to these "pre-historic" peoples, rather than any of the alternative theoretical hypotheses that have currently been proposed, with perhaps the "cultural borrowing" and "cross pollination" hypotheses being the most widespread despite the lack of evidence surrounding it.

We see traces and threads of this shared common ancestral theo-philosophical belief system from the late Upper Paleolithic throughout Eurasian antiquity as reflected in the underlying worship of the great god of the heavens as the greatest of all deities and presider over the natural world, the emergence of the "ordered" cosmos from a "watery, dark abyss", the myth of the primordial "*cosmic egg*" from which the earth and heavens are born, sacrificial worship in general to anthropomorphic deities that are representative of various aspects of nature, the worship and veneration of ancestors, i.e. hero worship, etc. We find more or less most of these theo-philosophical features persistent throughout virtually all of these Eurasian cultures in the first millennium BCE as these distinctive civilizations begin to emerge and flourish, as respective areas of imperial influence start to spread and expand and spheres of socio-political influence along with it, and in turn as the respective theo-philosophical belief systems become codified and systematized as writing is invented in order to support these vast empires with a more cohesive and synthesized "culture" to a large extent.

While forms of worship and the perspective on the "divine" are very different in ancient China than in the area of Indo-European influence no doubt, the systems of *metaphysics* and the core *flavor* as it were of the underlying theo-philosophical systems that emerge in these geographically distinct regions for which we have no evidence of cultural contact points to either a) some sort of shared common theo-philosophical source from which these belief systems

⁴⁷ See the National Geographic Genographic Project for details on the somewhat revolutionary discoveries related to the shared ancestry, and ultimate migration path, of ancient man at <https://genographic.nationalgeographic.com/human-journey/>.

stemmed from that aligns with *human migration patterns* and settlement (Witzel's *Laurasian hypothesis* mapped to *philosophy* rather than *mythology*), or b) the existence of an eternal and ever present theo-philosophy of sorts which aligns with Jungian *collective unconscious*, or c) some combination of the two. These facts, these similarities and common ground from a theo-philosophical perspective across such a wide expanse of geography in regions that we do not have any evidence for direct cultural or economic contact at the very least forces us to consider whether or not the similarities and commonalities are shared precisely because they all stem from a common source or origin which reaches much further back into antiquity than is previously thought and again reflects a theo-philosophical tradition, and a corresponding intellectual capability and transmission mechanism, of ancient man that reaches much further back into pre-history than is commonly held in academic and ancient historical circles today.

While the *Laurasian hypothesis* then might seem perhaps somewhat far-fetched upon first glance, upon deeper reflection and analysis, at least from the author's perspective having studied such topics over a long period of time, the hypothesis starts to look a lot more possible, and in fact perhaps even probable, once the ancient theo-philosophical systems are looked at through a broader and more expansive lens and when the context of *human migration patterns*, and the overlapping archeological evidence as thin as it is, is all taken together as a whole.

Another one of the fundamental topics and themes underlying this work, in particular covered in Part IV of this work, material devoted to *ontological* considerations⁴⁸, is that how we define *reality*, what we consider the basis and boundaries of *knowledge* itself, must encompass psychological and perceptive "conceptions" in order to be considered "complete". This is, from the author's perspective, not only an absolute requirement from a rational and logical perspective but also from a Scientific perspective as well as reflected in some of the implications of Quantum Theory, one of the most revolutionary Scientific "discoveries" of the modern era.

In this author's view, this necessary *epistemological* expansion as it were, is based not only upon the state of Scientific knowledge in the 21st century as reflected in the current state of Physics as

⁴⁸ *Ontology* is typically viewed from a modern western intellectual standpoint as the study of the nature of *reality*, or more precisely, *being*. The domain is related to, and most often considered a sub domain of, *metaphysics* – again from a modern, Western intellectual standpoint. While *ontology* is a relatively new word in the history of Western literature and philosophy, believed to have first been used in the early 17th century by the German philosopher Jacob Lorhard, it nonetheless has very deep origins and implications from a Greek linguistic and philosophical standpoint, the root of which stems from the present participle of the Greek verb "to be", i.e. ὄντος, Romanized as *óntōs*. This term is explored in depth not only by Parmenides, but also by Plato with his notion of *Being*, and then in turn Aristotle with his notion of *being qua being*. The principle as a whole arguable forms the basic and underlying intellectual framework, and topic for debate and disagreement, of virtually all Hellenic philosophy. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Ontology', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 4 January 2017, 15:48 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ontology&oldid=758290928>> [accessed 4 January 2017].

reflected by the prevailing truths of Classical Mechanics as well as Quantum Mechanics, but also based upon what we consider to be the basic, self-evident, *truths* surrounding the *reality* of states of consciousness that are evoked and produced by the art of *meditation*, what we refer to as the *supraconscious* throughout this work. We will show that these states of *Being* as it were, borrowing the terminology used by the earliest Hellenic philosophers such as Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle, represent the very source of Western philosophical and intellectual tradition itself and yet have been effectively lost from an *epistemological* perspective as the state of *reason*, and *theology* in general, have evolved over the last 2500 years.

These pure states of unadulterated consciousness, i.e. what we refer to throughout as *supraconsciousness*, that are effectively *experienced* by advanced mystical practitioners, represent the very foundation of *mysticism* in all its forms and are in the author's view indicative of a *reality* that exists beyond the realm of *subjects* and *objects*⁴⁹ and as such should, and must, be incorporated into any comprehensive and complete description of *knowledge* (i.e. *epistemology*) that is to serve mankind going forward such that our relationship not only to ourselves (viewed as “spiritual” entities rather than physical biochemical and neurological processes) is better understood and comprehended in order to support a more “fulfilling” and “nourishing” life experience, arguably the goal of each and every one of us, but also that our relationship to each other and the natural world, i.e. our “environment”, is better understood to effect a more harmonious and balanced existence for human society as a whole.

These states of *Being*, the so-called *supraconsciousness*, are looked at in detail not only within the context of the Indian philosophical tradition as a whole, but also within the context of the well documented and studied spiritual practices and experiences of the 19th century sage Ramakrishna⁵⁰, the teacher and spiritual inspiration for one of the most influential and prominent figures of the modern Yoga tradition in the West, i.e. Swami Vivekananda. The *reality* of the *supraconscious* is a constant theme throughout this work and is explored in detail in Part IV and V of this work and from the author's perspective has significant implications on not just our definition of *knowledge* itself, but also on the place of *theology*, *morality* and *ethics*, as well as *metaphysics* (again what is referred to as *first philosophy* following the tradition of Aristotle) within the context of any inquiry and study of the nature of *reality*.

We argue that the initial conception of *knowledge* by the earliest Western philosophers, i.e. the Pre-Socratics, Plato and Aristotle specifically, incorporated (or at the very least did not altogether

⁴⁹ This modern conception of *reality* as broken into *subjects* and *objects* is the outgrowth and culmination of some 2500 years of intellectual evolution in the West and is referred to throughout this work, following Robert Pirsig, as *subject-object metaphysics*.

⁵⁰ Ramakrishna (1836 – 1886) was born in West Bengal and is most referred to in this work using his full spiritual name which includes the epithet *Paramhansa*, i.e. Paramhansa Ramakrishna. A description of the meaning of the epithet *Paramhansa* is given toward the end of Part IV of this work where various interpretations and/or explanations for Ramakrishna's *experiences* are presented and analyzed in detail.

dismiss) the experiential reality that was reflected in these so-called “mystical” experiences, even if they did not explicitly discuss or analyze them directly. This is reflected for example in Plato’s conception of *knowledge*, i.e. his *epistemology*, as divided into the world of *Being*, which was eternal and changeless, and the world of *Becoming* which is characterized by constant change or movement – a metaphysical and theo-philosophical conception which in fact forms the basis of Aristotle’s *epistemology*, i.e. his notion of *being qua being*.⁵¹

We further argue that this notion of *change* as *the* basic underlying principle of the natural world is not only a characteristic of early Hellenic philosophy, but is also a prominent theo-philosophical construct of ancient Chinese philosophy, i.e. the philosophy of the Far East in antiquity, providing the basis as it were for the argument of a shared theo-philosophical heritage that reaches much further back in antiquity than is typically considered and which connects all of the ancient peoples throughout Eurasia to at least some degree. As such, one of the overarching themes of this work is that in looking at the roots of rational inquiry in the West, through the looking glass as it were, we not only find a much broader and comprehensive definition of *knowledge* and *reality* which from the author’s perspective is a more *accurate* and *complete* depiction of the full state of human experience as well as the natural world and surroundings which he finds himself in, but that it – as Quantum Theory forces us to do to a large extent – includes the exploration of the nature of the Soul and the full spectrum of cognitive experience, along with *theological* inquiry in general – all attributes that are completely absent from modern Science.

The author argues that this *epistemological* and *metaphysical* expansion or revision as it were, represents a requisite intellectual step that we *must* take as a species in order for us to progress and evolve in the 21st century and beyond in order to comprehend not just our fundamental interrelationship and interdependence upon each other for the achievement of individual, social and global harmony and order, but also a requisite step to truly comprehend and incorporate the fundamental interdependence and interrelationship we have with our natural environment and the planet as a whole, and in turn the universal cosmic order. For like it or not we have reached a point in our human history and evolution, and the state of the planet and the environment in fact, where our relationship to the environment is no longer just a philosophical or theoretical problem to be studied or debated, but that the dire state of the planet itself, our home upon which we (as well as all the species on the planet in fact) depend upon for survival, is a natural byproduct and outgrowth, a direct causally related phenomenon, of the very fundamental and basic misconceptions and misunderstanding of the nature of *reality* itself, the full exploration of which again is a core theme that underpins the bulk of this work.

⁵¹ Plato and Aristotle’s theo-philosophical systems are reviewed in detail in the relevant Chapters in Part II and III of this work, On Metaphysics and Theology respectively.

As an illustration of the implications of such a reformulation of how we define *reality* and *knowledge*, rejecting what we call *objective realism* as inadequate and incomplete at best, let us look at how *reality*, and knowledge thereof, is conceived of by Aristotle, a discipline known in philosophical circles as *epistemology* and a constant theme throughout this work. While we cover Aristotle's philosophy and *metaphysics* at length in specific chapters within this work, let's summarize the principles here and in so doing look at how that compares to the *objective realist*, i.e. *subject-object metaphysics* conception of *reality* which provides the foundation of the Western intellectual and academic tradition, i.e. Science.⁵² From a *subject-object metaphysics* perspective, a conceptual and metaphysical framework which rests upon the notions of *causal determinism* and *objective realism*, *reality* - and in turn (empirical) *knowledge* itself in fact - is fundamentally defined and characterized by various quantitative and qualitative measurement phenomena. Effectively if we cannot "measure" a thing, if its *objective reality* cannot be confirmed or verified, it doesn't exist.⁵³ Science as it were sits at the very pillar of Western intellectual thought, with all other disciplines subservient to it, which is not quite the way the early Hellenic philosophers, our intellectual ancestors, conceived of the world to say the least.

From an *objective realist* point of view then, this work – this very Book which you hold in your hands right now and are reading (unless you are reading it electronically in which case we refer here to the tablet of device upon which you are electronically seeing these words and reading them upon) - is defined by various quantitative and qualitative measurements, each of which when combined together give us an empirically verifiable definition of what this work, this Book

⁵² This approach to using the content of the work itself in order to illustrate the import and meaning of the work is inspired by Carl Jung's introduction to Wilhelm/Baynes classical translation of the *I Ching* (*Yijing*) where Jung actual "consults" the *I Ching*, i.e. uses it as a *divination* tool which is its primary purpose (the underlying philosophy and metaphysics was an implicit part of the work and not its primary purpose, being expounded upon only much later when the "Confucian" commentaries, i.e. the *Ten Wings*, which described the origins and various interpretations of the 64 hexagrams that constituted the core of the *Yijing*, was added to the text) in order to assuage some of his concerns that he harbored regarding writing the introduction itself given the nature of the text and given his background and profession as a "scientist". In so doing, he described not only how to use the text, how it was traditionally used throughout the Chinese history, but also in many respects the underlying metaphysical, and psychological, interpretative value of the text itself, these qualities arguably being representative of the source of his deep and lasting interest in the text.

⁵³ Or even if its existence is not completely denied, it nonetheless lays outside of the intellectual framework of Science which again is based upon empirical and verifiable data and information only. In the intellectual disciplines where non-measurable and/or non-objective phenomena, like mystical experiences for example, are not altogether discounted, like Psychology for example, they are nonetheless not regarded as *real* per se, certainly not in the classic scientific conception of *reality* given that their existence cannot be empirically verified. Instead these types of non-objective phenomena in these disciplines are for the most part regarded as theoretically and intellectually conceived *notions* or *concepts* that while may have utilitarian purposes in their respective and specific domains of study, cannot however be said to be a part of Science proper. While Psychology as a discipline is considered to be "scientific" by some (certainly by Psychologists for example), it most certainly lays well outside of the domain of Physics necessarily, the domain to which our modern notion of *reality* is ultimately tied to and rests squarely upon in fact. [The Psychological theories of Freud and Jung, each of which represent two ends of the Psychological theoretical spectrum in the modern era as it were, are covered in detail in Part IV of this work.]

in its published form, actually “is”. What makes it “real”. How we describe it and upon which its reality in the physical world ultimately depends upon. In this sense we can say definitively, in a manner that is “verifiable by *scientific methods* of inquiry” that it consists of a certain number of words, a certain number of pages, a certain number of Chapters and Parts, that it was written by the author, that it was written using software called Microsoft Word, that it is written in the English language, that it was “published” in 2017, and even that it “references” and “quotes” various other texts in a variety of disciplines that were “published” by other authors at other dates and times in history.

In its final form, this work “exists” as a physical Book with a certain number of pages that is published by a certain publisher, that it weighs a certain number of pounds, that the pages are made up some form of paper that comes from some sort of tree perhaps, and that even a certain number of “copies” of the book are sold and delivered via various forms of mail and shipping centers. All of these are accurate “facts” and again, verifiable “truths” that describe this work and can help another person understand what it “is” from an objective realist perspective of course. However, it should be readily apparent to the reader that these facts, while true and descriptive at a very basic and “physical” level, leave out very significant “characteristics” of this work that make it unique and help us more fully understand, or comprehend, what this Book truly “is”. In more simple terms, it should be reality apparent that the aforementioned definition, while accurate and “descriptive”, is inadequate and lacking to a large extent.

As an alternative definition and description of this work, we look to Aristotle’s more broad conception of *reality*, how he defines the qualities of a “thing” which provide the basis for our understanding it as it were, a notion which is typically transliterated in modern philosophical circles as the somewhat misleading (and most certainly obtuse) expression *being qua being*.⁵⁴ To Aristotle, to understand the nature of a “thing”, the qualities which make it “real”, we must understand all of the ways, all of the “reasons”, which brought such a “thing” into existence. This is the topic that he covers in painstaking detail in his seminal work *Metaphysics*, or that which literally comes *before* Physics, as Aristotle initially conceived of the intellectual discipline, and what we refer to throughout this work, following modern Western philosophical parlance, as *first philosophy*.

From the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy we find a good explanation of Aristotle’s epistemological framework, an intellectual framework which underpins his entire system of

⁵⁴ From the Greek to *ti ên einai*, or “*the what it was to be*”, a concept which underpins virtually all of Aristotle’s philosophy and represents the cornerstone of his epistemological framework, underpinning his rational approaches to defining what we now refer to as *science*, but what he called *epistêmê*, i.e. *knowledge*. For a detailed analysis of the context and usage of this phrase, as well as alternative phrases that Aristotle uses to describe the same concept throughout his corpus, see Shields, Christopher, “Aristotle”, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/aristotle/>>.

philosophy in fact - that *knowledge* of a thing, what Aristotle himself referred to in the Greek as *epistêmê*⁵⁵, must be underpinned by a *complete* and comprehensive causal based depiction of said object of understanding.

In Physics II 3 and Metaphysics V 2, Aristotle offers his general account of the four causes. This account is general in the sense that it applies to everything that requires an explanation, including artistic production and human action. Here Aristotle recognizes four types of things that can be given in answer to a why-question:

- *The material cause: "that out of which", e.g., the bronze of a statue.*
- *The formal cause: "the form", "the account of what-it-is-to-be", e.g., the shape of a statue.*
- *The efficient cause: "the primary source of the change or rest", e.g., the artisan, the art of bronze-casting the statue, the man who gives advice, the father of the child.*
- *The final cause: "the end, that for the sake of which a thing is done", e.g., health is the end of walking, losing weight, purging, drugs, and surgical tools.⁵⁶*

Knowledge then from Aristotle's perspective, Aristotle's *epistemological* framework as it were, as defined as the sum total of these four distinct types of *causality*, types which while are somewhat mutually exclusive are yet at the same time (from his perspective at least) exhaustive, not only consists of in the aggregate a much more broad conception of the notion of *causality* itself than we are used to in modern intellectual and academic circles in the West, but also allows for, and fundamentally supports, a much broader definition of *reality* itself as compared with the modern Western intellectual conception of *reality* which again is underpinned by the twin pillars of *causal determinism* and *objective realism*.

Aristotle's conception of *reality* then, is based upon the very same notion of *causality* which underpins the prevailing intellectual paradigm of the West, i.e. the Western *worldview*, i.e. *subject-object metaphysics*, which as it turns out has significant *ontological* (i.e. the study of the nature of *being* or *reality*) implications – a subject which is covered at length in Part IV and Part V of this work. However, Aristotle's notion of *causality*, the foundation of his epistemological framework, *integrates* the notion of *form* (in the Platonic sense), as well as *purpose* (*teleology*), into its very definition and therefore provides the basis for a much broader intellectual paradigm of *understanding* than what we are accustomed to in the West, one which comes closer (although

⁵⁵ It is from the translation of the Greek word *epistêmê* from which the modern English word Science actually derives, through the Latin translation of *epistêmê* as *scientia*.

⁵⁶ Falcon, Andrea, "Aristotle on Causality", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/aristotle-causality/>>.

not quite entirely) to the Eastern philosophical conception of *reality* in fact, one which includes the broader conception of what we have come to call *consciousness* itself.

Using Aristotle's epistemological framework then, we can describe the *material cause* of this work, this Book, as the computer and software which was used to write the words and design the chapters and format the paragraphs, pages, footnotes, etc. The *formal cause* is the overall structure of the work, its intended form from an organizational perspective – the structure of the Parts and their respective Chapters – as well as the overall content of the work, i.e. its subject matter. The *efficient cause* is the author himself, the writer of the work, and the *final cause*, the purpose for which the work is completed, is for the advancement of human knowledge in general, not only as it relates to ancient history, but also as it relates to modern conceptions of *reality* of course.

Once we understand each of these causal aspects of *how* and *why* this work, this Book came into *being* as it were, what makes it *real*, each of them individually as well as all of them collectively together, we arrive at a *proper* and *complete* understanding of this work, i.e. everything there is to know about it. From the author's perspective, this level of understanding gives the reader a much broader perspective, and in fact a much *better* and *complete* understanding of the work itself. While it includes the *material* aspects, it also includes the *structural* and *formal* aspects, as well as the *teleological* (the purpose) aspects of the work as well.

It is this last part, the *purpose* or *meaning*, that is actually almost entirely left out of any modern conception of *reality* in the West, conceptions that are grounded almost exclusively in the "physical" world and as such any sense of *purpose* is by definition excluded given that it has no *empirical* or *objective* value as such. While *causal determinism* and *objective realism* are very powerful guiding intellectual principles that have done a great service to humanity by furthering the development of Science as a discipline unto itself, our blind faith in Science has in fact left us with a somewhat unintended byproduct of a much narrower, and less *holistic* and less descriptive in fact, notion of *reality* itself. Hence the need for a revision of the underlying intellectual model as it were. Back to *first philosophy* in some sense.

As a further illustration of the effect of the broadening of this definition of *knowledge* we can look at Part IV specifically with respect to "interpreting" Ramakrishna using a fundamentally Western intellectual epistemological lens, one that although is broadened to include and recognize Psychology, as a theoretical framework for understanding the mind and its effect on behavior specifically (Freudian psychology specifically) nonetheless comes with boundaries and assumptions that altogether prevent us from fully appreciating, or even comprehending, Ramakrishna as an historical figure who has had such a profound effect on *theology* and spirituality across the globe since his death at the end of the 19th century – most of which is due

to the teachings and organizations established by his most well-known disciple Swami Vivekananda.

The Soul to Aristotle is viewed through this epistemological lens of *causality*, this broad definition which although is not unscientific necessarily, it is one nonetheless which includes not just the *formal* aspects of change, i.e. the model as it were of that which is being shaped, but also of course the *final cause* as well which represents the underlying *purpose* or *meaning* behind anything that we are trying to fully understand, appreciate or in turn whose very *existence* can be understood. It is these last two aspects of *causality* that bring about the full meaning and appreciation of Paramhansa Ramakrishna as a spiritual or religious figure, whose one true goal in life, the very *reason* or *ultimate cause* behind the sum total of his spiritual practices and his life in toto in fact, is the *realization* of God.

This assumption regarding the existence of God, and his (or her as the case may be) *realization* as it were, is not abandoned or ignored in this *epistemological* framework, but is (at least according to later theological interpretations of Aristotle's *metaphysics*) integrated into the model as it were. This is the notion of the *prime*, or *first*, *mover*, which is equated with God, or Allāh, by the Muslim philosophical tradition for example. As such, understanding the driving force, the true meaning and significance of Ramakrishna's spiritual practices using an Aristotelian *epistemological* lens, one can at least appreciate, and in turn interpret, his life and teachings within the context within which Ramakrishna himself lived as opposed to the somewhat contrived application of a Western intellectual *materialistic* and *causally deterministic* framework which invariably leads to confusion and/or total misinterpretation or misunderstanding.

In other words, while *causal determinism* and *objective realism* are extraordinarily valuable and powerful tools for understanding the *physical* world, it is nonetheless entirely inadequate as an intellectual framework for not just Quantum Mechanics, but also as an intellectual framework for understanding the full scope of human existence - an existence which must include some level of appreciation or acceptance of the *wisdom* of the East as it were. For it is from the *wisdom* of the East, of which traces can even be found in the ancient Western theo-philosophical tradition, that we find not just the fundamental belief in the existence of higher states of consciousness, i.e. *supraconsciousness*, but also the explicit belief that these states of consciousness can in fact be *realized* and that they in turn not only represent an aspect of *reality*, but also that they represent a higher order, or form, of *reality itself* - one which subsumes and *transcends* physical reality. This is not only the basis for all *mystical* practices and the experiences associated therewith which are the legacy the Eastern philosophical tradition, the Indian philosophical tradition in particular, but also represent the core underlying message of all the prophets of all the ages, Ramakrishna being no exception of course.

In brief, if the true nature of *Being* - an understanding of that which characterizes and underpins *being* in and of itself, what it means to *be* or *exist* - is what we are trying to understand, then *causal determinism* and *objective realism* are simply not adequate and a broader, and in fact a more ancient, *ontological* and *epistemological* system must be sought.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ In Bohm's terminology, there must be an underlying, or overarching *implicate order*, which does not rest on these principles and which is a necessary condition, a predicate in fact, to coming to a (more) complete understanding of *reality* in all its forms and aspects - hence the title of Part IV of this work, On Ontology – a review of the 20th century physicist David Bohm's work on *ontology* specifically, his notion of the *implicate order*, can be found in Part IV of this work.

Setting the Stage: A Brief of History of Modern Man

The genesis of this work stemmed from an initial seed thought, an idea as it were. A question really, “Is it possible that the basic *metaphysics* underlying the theo-philosophy of the ancient Chinese as well as the Greeks, stemmed from the same initial intellectual framework”? If the answer was yes, or even maybe, it would push the date of the origins of theo-philosophy and *metaphysics* in antiquity much further back in history than previously considered – by a few millennia at least in fact. This view is contrasted with the more orthodox view, the standard textbook view as it were, that these two belief systems evolved independently from each other.⁵⁸

The question, while at first may seem almost moot given the lack of evidence available in the time period that would need to be understood in order to build evidence for such an outlandish hypothesis, actually upon reflection and a little bit of research seems not to be as altogether outrageous as one might think. In fact, in light of the latest research surrounding the analysis and understanding of the human genome as it relates to the origination, and population, of the world by modern species of man along with a somewhat revolutionary hypothesis on the origins of mythology in antiquity as posited by the Vedic/Sanskrit scholar Michael Witzel, i.e. the so-called *Laurasian hypothesis*,⁵⁹ we find ourselves in the somewhat awkward position that this *common origins hypothesis* of what we term “Eurasian theo-philosophy” becomes at the very least possible, and perhaps even probable - given the extent of the intellectual similarities combined with the geographic disparity, or separation, of the civilizations within which these ancient theo-philosophical systems are first seen to emerge.⁶⁰

By (re)aligning the study of the world’s mythologies with the latest developments in human genetic research, linguistics, and archeology, Witzel theorizes that perhaps the similarities in mythological narrative that can be found across many disparate and geographically separated cultures and civilizations throughout the globe, both today in modern times as well as in ancient history, is due not to some *collective unconscious*, as theorized by Jung for example, but due to the “invention” and subsequent “spread” of what he refers to as a “Laurasian” mythological story

⁵⁸ The paper that reflects these commonalities from a *numerological* perspective between the Pythagorean school as reflected in the *Tetractys* and *Yijing metaphysics* as reflected in the *Ten Wings* commentaries is entitled “*Numerology and Arithmology in Pythagorean Philosophy and the Yijing*” and can be found here: https://www.academia.edu/27439070/Numerology_and_Arithmology_in_Pythagorean_Philosophy_and_the_Yijing.

⁵⁹ *The Origins of the World’s Mythologies*, E.J. Michael Witzel. Oxford University Press, 2012. In this work, Witzel His work looks to (re) categorize and revolutionize the study of mythology, which as analyzed by the likes of Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung in the twentieth century, had already found many common parallels across many different cultures and (ancient) civilizations that could not be explained by simple so-called “cultural borrowing” alone and which in no small measure led Carl Jung to develop his theory of the *collective unconscious*. See pages 208-278 specifically.

⁶⁰ Comparison of ancient mythology, with a specific focus on cosmological motifs in particular, along with the ancient theo-philosophical systems from antiquity across “Eurasia”, represents the bulk of Parts I and II of this work.

line, i.e. what he refers to as a basic narrative, by a male, shamanic based culture which spread in parallel to and aligned with the migration of modern humans out of Africa and into the Mediterranean, the Near East, the Indian subcontinent and the Far East (collectively what we refer to, following Witzel, as “Eurasia” throughout this work), i.e. the so-called *Laurasian hypothesis*.⁶¹

Irrespective of the strength or weakness of his hypotheses, a topic much too broad and involving too many disciplines that the author is in no position to speak critically about one way or another, this *Laurasian hypothesis* does rest on fairly sound developments with respect to genetic research specifically and human population migrations that have been widely accepted by the scientific community in the last twenty years or so. This research stems not just from a detailed mapping of the human genome, but also by developments and discoveries in the rate of progression and “mutation” of Y chromosomes across generations (passed down on the paternal lineage) as well as the rate of mutation and progression of mitochondrial DNA (passed down on the maternal side), along with the mapping of the human genomes of various indigenous (i.e. relatively constant and non-itinerant) populations from across the globe over the last twenty years, all of which has provided the basis for sound empirical evidence of the following theories of *human migration*, revolutionizing our understanding of the history of mankind over the last 200,000 years or so.⁶²

These revolutionary advancements in genetic research regarding the path of *human migration* across the globe out of Africa point to the following important facts, all relevant to the themes and related conclusions, if we may call them such, presented throughout this work:

- a) there existed a genetic bottleneck of sorts circa 100,000 years ago where the overall genetic diversity of modern humans, i.e. *homo sapiens*, was greatly reduced⁶³,
- b) modern humans migrated out of Africa in waves starting around 75,000 years ago, initially populating the Near East and Southeast Asia by around 50,000 years ago and spreading all the way to Australia (through Indonesia presumably) by no later than ~46,000 years ago, and

⁶¹ Witzel deduces from the archeological, genetic, literary and oral evidence of the study of these ancient creation narratives or stories (*mythos* as we refer to them primarily) that this “Laurasian” creation narrative can be traced back to, and aligned with, a *human migration* across Eurasia that takes place roughly between 60,000 and 40,000 years ago and follows a route out of Africa and into the Mediterranean and the Middle East, into the Near East and Southwest Asia and then passes into the Far East. He juxtaposes this mythological narrative with what he refers to as “Gondwana” mythological narrative which predates it and is more prehistoric, and in turn less sophisticated, in its narrative form.

⁶² See the National Geographic Genographic Project for details on the somewhat revolutionary discoveries related to the shared ancestry, and ultimate migration path, of ancient man at <https://genographic.nationalgeographic.com/human-journey/>.

⁶³ It has been estimated that only some 10-15 thousand humans were part of this population pool from which all modern humans originate from. Some estimates of this so-called “bottleneck” estimate it to be as few as 7,000.

- c) this same “genetically affiliated” population of humans arrived in Europe ~43,000 years ago, supplanting the pre-existing Neanderthal populations there, and
- d) these genetically distinguished modern humans reached and began to populate East Asia no later than 30,000 years ago and most likely by at least 40,000 years ago.⁶⁴

Furthermore, we combine these facts with respect to what we now know of *human migration* across the globe in prehistory (i.e. before writing) through study of the human genome, with the evidence that begins to appear for Cave art drawings as well as Venus figurines in the archeological record starting around 40,000 years ago across Europe, Asia and Australia, a picture begins to emerge of the potential diffusion of intellectual, and perhaps even theological, views across Eurasia in a more cohesive manner than is typically considered.

The existence of these “archeological” artifacts reflects at the very least the existence of abstract thought combined with basic tool making and language (the sum total of which arguably distinguish man, modern man, from the rest of the species on the planet as well as from his “less civilized and intelligent” predecessors) but also marks the beginning of the use of visual and material forms of “art” – shape, form, color and image to represent an “idea” – along with of course the existence of the technological developments necessary to create such “art” as well as the requisite intellectual developments (i.e. abstract thought, symbols, belief systems in and of themselves) for the creation of said symbols and arts in various forms.

⁶⁴ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Early human migrations', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 3 December 2016, 02:14 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Early_human_migrations&oldid=752750758> [accessed 3 December 2016].



Figure 1: Distribution of Cave Art in the Paleolithic Era throughout Eurasia⁶⁵

This step in the evolution of modern man also importantly, and very relevantly to this work, marks the beginnings of mankind's perception of the world around them as "sacred" to a large extent. For in these caves, we find colorful and descriptive scenes upon the walls of these cave which consist of various animals and beasts to which prehistoric man no doubt had a distinctive and powerful relationship to, but also distinctive hand markings and other half human and half animal type forms, similar to what we find in the depictions of Egyptian gods and goddesses for example.

These Cave art "spaces", and the other evidence within the caves themselves such as their location deep within the caves and the evidence of the use of fire along with the existence of bones of other species of animals along with the distinctive elaborate artwork itself, arguably represents the very first evidence we have for the establishment of a "sacred space" of sorts, where some form of ritual or ceremonial "worship", again if we may call it that, occurred and "symbols", mostly depicting animals and female archetypical images, begin to take on a life of themselves in some respect, becoming elements of "worship", again using that term in a broad sense.

⁶⁵ Image from <http://www.ancient-wisdom.com/caveart.htm>.

It's important to note that just because the first evidence for this type of "thinking", if we may call it that, as reflected in these Cave art drawings and "sacred spaces" that we find evidence of in the Upper Paleolithic Era throughout Eurasia does not mean that the views and thoughts, the way of thinking or perception of man's relationship to their environment and the animals and natural environment and their surroundings, did not exist or was prevalent prior to the date of these findings only that we can definitively say that we do not have evidence of man's ability to create these images, the necessary tools and the requisite "mindset", prior to this time in human prehistory based upon archeological evidence as it exists right now.⁶⁶



Figure 2: Lascaux Cave drawings, circa 19,000 BCE in modern France.⁶⁷

These Cave art drawings show not only the importance and metaphysical symbiotic relationship that these early humans had with their "environment", in particular the animals that they relied on for sustenance and survival, but also some of the beginnings of the perception of the "mother"

⁶⁶ As is often said, *absence of evidence is not evidence of absence*.

⁶⁷ Image from <http://www.ancient-wisdom.com/caveart.htm>.

and “womb” as archaic elements of importance. As we find not only depictions of the “mother” or “Venus” like figures on some of these Cave art paintings, but also the fairly widespread existence of so-called “Venus figurines” in the archeological record across Eurasia during the Upper Paleolithic as well.⁶⁸

We then are presented with the evidence for the next major advancement in human civilization in the form of the invention of agriculture as well as the domestication of various animals, all developments that are characteristic of the so-called “Neolithic Revolution”. These developments first appear in the archeological record in the “Fertile Crescent” area in Southwest Asia⁶⁹ around 10,000 – 9,000 years ago and then spread throughout Europe and Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent shortly thereafter, and to the Far East, i.e. Northern China and the Yellow River basin, by around 7,500 years ago.

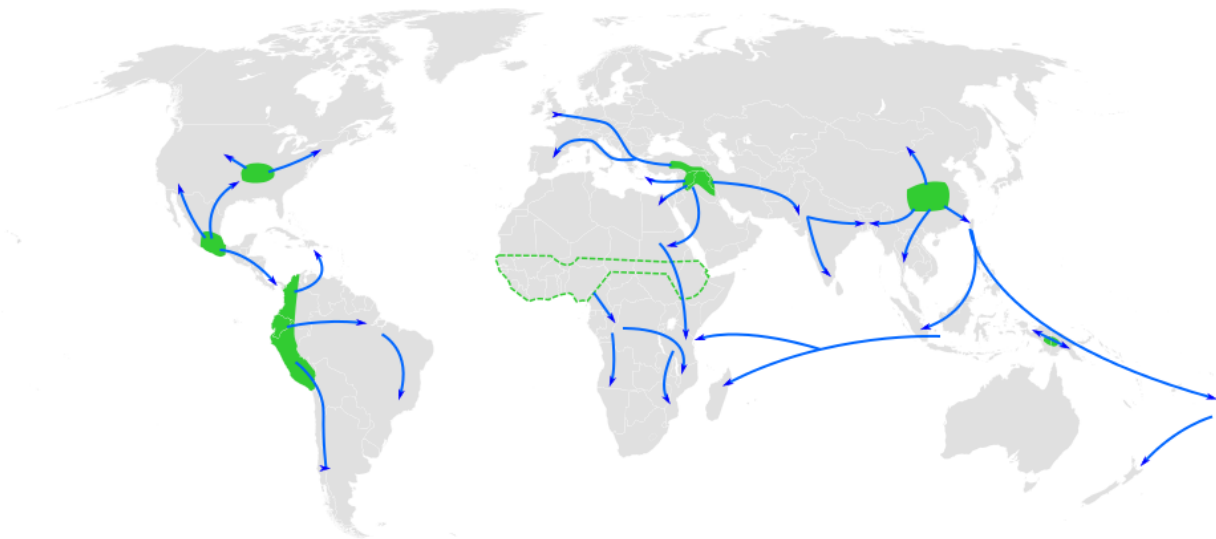


Figure 3: Map of the world showing approximate centers of origin of agriculture and its spread in prehistory.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ For a review of the widespread existence of various forms of the universal mother in the Upper Paleolithic archeological record see *The Mythology of Venus: Ancient Calendars and Archeoastronomy*, Chapter 1, “The Emergence of the Goddess: A Study of Venus in the Paleolithic and Neolithic Era” by Helen Benigni. Edited by Helen Benigni and published by the University Press of America 2013.

⁶⁹ The Fertile Crescent geographical area consists of the regions of modern day Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, the southeastern part of Turkey and the western fringes of Iran, a region where the first evidence of agriculture and early “civilization” is found in the archeological record. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Fertile Crescent', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 6 December 2016, 21:42 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Fertile_Crescent&oldid=753389296> [accessed 6 December 2016].

⁷⁰ Map of the world showing approximate centers of origin of agriculture and its spread in prehistory: the Fertile Crescent (11,000 BP), the Yangtze and Yellow River basins (9,000 BP) and the New Guinea Highlands (9,000–6,000 BP), Central Mexico (5,000–4,000 BP), Northern South America (5,000–4,000 BP), sub-Saharan Africa (5,000–4,000 BP, exact location unknown), eastern North America (4,000–3,000 BP). From Wikipedia contributors, 'Neolithic Revolution', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 1 December

The effect of these “technological” innovations and sociological advancements that characterize and ultimately define what historians refer to as the “Neolithic Revolution” on the structure of human society and the support it provided for the advancement and proliferation of modern humans in general throughout the world, and in particular in Eurasia, of course cannot be overstated. For as agriculture and farming becomes adopted, and the dominant source of food and sustenance migrates from meat, fish nuts and fruits and other forms of food that had dominated the diets of hunter-gatherer societies for centuries, millennia even, prior, more permanent and larger centers of habitation start to develop, towns and small urban centers, reflecting the transformation of man being subject to and under the dominion of his environment, i.e. Nature, to man beginning to take more control of his environment and learning how to manipulate it to enhance his chances for survival. It is this more sedentary lifestyle that is primarily considered to be the cornerstone of *specialization* which in turn facilitated the proliferation of modern humans throughout this region in antiquity and this in turn led to further social and technological advancements, ultimately leading up to the invention of writing after which we begin to have written records of course which give us much greater insight into ancient man.

During this time period throughout Eurasia we see the development of large towns and small urban centers and the advent again of *specialization*, where individuals and societies as a whole begin to advance more special roles and skills which allow for the further advancement of knowledge and technology in general which of course facilitates the so-called “advancement” of society and “civilization” in general. At this time, the social structure of these ancient peoples begins to become more stratified, and a distinction arises not just between individuals responsible for ruling and governing and those that are governed, but also the people that are responsible for “doing the work” so to speak, and those that were in charge of, or managed, those doing the work, as well as the development of a specific warrior class as well that was responsible for defending (or expanding) one’s territory as the case may be.

Lastly, as part of this stratification of society, this *specialization* as it were, we see the development of a “scholarly” or “priestly” class, probably an outgrowth of the ancient shamans, who were not only responsible for presiding over special forms of ceremonial worship but were also responsible for communing with the spirits and ancestors, as well as “divining” the will of the gods or spirits and performing the necessary sacrifices and ceremonies to “appease” these

2016, 23:52 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Neolithic_Revolution&oldid=752563299> [accessed 1 December 2016]

entities to bring about, and ensure, good fortune. This is for example the social stratification we see in the ancient Vedic literature, what is referred to as *Varna*.⁷¹

The invention of agriculture and the domestication of animals and the advent of a more stable form of society, the beginnings of “civilization” as we understand it today in fact, marks the end of the Upper Paleolithic and ushers in the Neolithic Era, a time period of rapid innovation and human expansion throughout the globe and especially in North Africa, the Fertile Crescent, the Indian subcontinent and in the Far East – i.e. what we refer to as “Eurasia” in this work primarily.

From an intellectual perspective, what we find from the archeological records throughout this region during this era of rapid human expansion and evolution is not just technological advancements of the use of stone tools for various means of construction of more sophisticated homes and towns, complex building structures and systems of irrigation as well as the development of more advanced forms of weaponry and more sophisticated forms of pottery for example, but also the development of more sophisticated and complex places of worship, or again “sacred spaces”. We find evidence of this for example in the creation of the Megaliths”, or large stone structures or monuments, during this time, in particular in Europe (Stonehenge being of course the most famous example) but also throughout the Near East and into the Far East as well – again Eurasia – representing one of the archeological hallmarks of the earliest forms of “civilization”.⁷²

These developments no doubt reflect the evolution of mankind’s relationship to his environment as more “religious”, or “sacred”, to a large extent, and these early forms of “worship”, which are reflected in their very earliest form in the Upper Paleolithic “Cave art” drawings, and then come to have a more concrete manifestation in the Megalithic structures, many of which have been shown to have an astronomical significance, start to shape and form the basis, the connecting force as it were, for the various peoples in the various regions throughout Eurasia. Religion in its earliest form in fact, was “naturalistic”, in the sense that various forms of nature were appealed to, were worshipped, so that they would “produce” and “support” the necessary means of survival for the respective cultures and societies that developed. It wasn’t until later in the development of more advanced forms of civilization, in what is typically referred to as the Bronze Age, where we see the first elements of proto writing as well as more advanced forms of

⁷¹ In the first 1st millennium BCE or so we see evidence in the written records of a class stratification of the Indo-Aryans into four classes, what is called *Varna* or “type”, “order” or “class”. The warrior, or ruling class was referred to as the *Kshatriyas*, the agricultural, farming and merchant and tradesman were referred to as the *Vaishya*, the workers were referred to as the *Shudras*, and the priests were called the Brahmins. A social structure which persisted more or less unchanged until up until the modern era in fact. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Varna (Hinduism)', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 12 January 2017, 22:36 UTC, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Varna_\(Hinduism\)&oldid=759740198](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Varna_(Hinduism)&oldid=759740198)> [accessed 23 January 2017].

⁷² For a detailed look at the widespread use and various forms of “Megalithic” or “large stone” structures throughout the Upper Paleolithic, see Wikipedia contributors, 'Megalith', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 18 November 2016, 07:03 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Megalith&oldid=750191618>> [accessed 18 November 2016]

metallurgy (hence the name Bronze Age). It's also during this period of human evolution, in the earliest forms of "civilization", where we start to see in the archeological records not just more advanced and elaborate forms of "religious structures", but also evidence for more advanced forms of ceremonial "worship".

Alongside these archeological developments we of course find parallel social developments where a specific class of society develops to support this critical function, i.e. what we now call "priests" or "shamans", but whose function was to preside over the various "religious" rites and ceremonies which from a certain perspective formed the heart of these early societies. These individuals not only had intimate knowledge of the "spirit world", the world of deceased ancestors, but also had divinatory or fortune telling type skills, where they could read various omens and provide guidance on when the best time it was to wage war, plant crops or make sacrifices to the "gods", and also in many cases were healers, or medicine men, as well. As disease in antiquity was primarily looked upon as a form of "spiritual" ill or the possession by some sort of evil spirit.⁷³

These developments, in particular the growing importance of agriculture in the survival and success of these civilizations as they start to emerge throughout Eurasia, forces these early peoples, the harbinger of the modern "civilization", to come to a much clearer and better understanding of the nature of the cycles of the Earth and the seasons, and no doubt caused the ancient peoples to come to a greater reliance on the nature of water and irrigation as the ultimate source and sustenance of life. Necessity is the mother of invention as we know so well. We see these developments, this reliance and obsession with the importance of these "natural" resources and cycles in the survival and sustenance of these early civilizations throughout Eurasia reflected in the early mythological narratives that we find associated with these early peoples once the written records start to emerge, once writing is developed and these early myths are written down and "standardized", or "canonized", as it were.⁷⁴ These ancient peoples all worshipped the sun, the earth and the moon, and also in some early societies the planet Venus as well whose clear visibility in the night sky and whose cycles and rhythms, along with the moon

⁷³ For a detailed look at the evolution and function of these early shamans, at least in the European and Near Eastern region, see *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* by Mircea Eliade. Princeton University Press 1964.

⁷⁴ As we see with the *Enûma Eliš* epic creation myth of the Sumer-Babylonians for example, portions of which are believed to have been chanted during the New Year festival which was marked by a procession of a statue of the great god Marduk - the central figure and head of the Sumer-Babylonian pantheon as elucidated and told in the creation *mythos* of the *Enûma Eliš* - throughout the city to a final resting place outside the city walls. See Ancient History Encyclopedia entry on "Enûma Eliš" - The Babylonian Epic of Creation" at <http://www.ancient.eu/article/225/>

of course, came to represent not just the feminine rhythms of creation, preservation and “rebirth” but also came to symbolize fertility as well.⁷⁵

We find the early creation stories from the earliest written records across all of Eurasia really, for the most part without exception started with the notion of a “watery abyss” from which a semblance of order and the first pantheon of gods emerge, from which the heaven and the earth are ultimately formed. It is during this time period that we find evidence for the first astronomical observations and evidence for fairly sophisticated predictability of various seasonal events which undoubtedly represented a fundamental aspect of these people’s survival.

This “Neolithic Revolution” ushered in what is referred to as the Bronze Age of human history, a time period throughout Eurasia which is characterized not just by the invention of much more sophisticated means and methods of the creation of tools, advanced weaponry, pottery and more sophisticated forms of agriculture and irrigation techniques, but also the invention of writing in the 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE after which “history”, replaces “pre-history” and first-hand accounts, i.e. the written word or inscription, becomes the primary source (combined with archeology of course as well) of our understanding of how these people in antiquity thought, lived and behaved within the context of their environment. A new age had dawned and man had now become “civilized” in the modern sense of the term.⁷⁶

We find evidence for the existence of various forms of sophisticated language, and writing, from at least 4,000 BCE onwards⁷⁷, a development that coincides with the end of the Neolithic Era of human history and occurs within a thousand years or so across all of Eurasia. It is this archeological evidence and the similarities in man’s perspective on the world as reflected in the earliest forms and symbols that we find throughout Eurasia in the Upper Paleolithic, as well as the earliest written records from all of these disparate and geographically separated peoples and societies, along with the now firm genetic evidence that speaks to the common ancestry of these

⁷⁵ For a review of the association of the planet Venus with various forms of fertility and feminine worship in prehistory in particular in prehistorical Europe see *The Mythology of Venus: Ancient Calendars and Archaeoastronomy*, edited by Helen Benigni and published by the University Press of America 2013.

⁷⁶ For a more detailed look at the evolution of “Paleolithic” man from the Stone Age into the Neolithic Era to the advent and discovery of agriculture from a theological, historical and religious perspective see the first two chapters of Mircea Eliade’s seminal work *A History of Religious Ideas, From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries*, translated by Willard R. Trask. University of Chicago Press 1978.

⁷⁷ We don’t know when “language” itself was invented but there is reason to believe that at least by the time when mankind first began to differentiate itself from the rest of the homo species around the globe and began to take its place in the world as the most sophisticated and advanced species on the planet, circa 75,000 years ago, language in all likelihood played a role in these advancements and facilitated the spread of modern man by supporting the growth of larger and more complex societies which in turn supported their ability to survive and thrive in a variety of environments and geographical regions throughout the globe. Also, the Cave art findings which we find starting from around 40,000 BCE or so certainly represent a form of abstract thought and form of thinking that is the hallmark of language itself, making it highly unlikely that the people responsible for creating these “sacred spaces” and creating these sophisticated forms of art, as well as the tools and means necessary to draw the art itself, were not only capable of advanced thinking but also would have required advanced forms of communication to support such creation.

people who settled throughout Eurasia in prehistory, that begs the question that is stated earlier in this Prologue - namely: does Witzel's *Laurasian hypothesis* as it applies to *mythos*, specifically creation *mythos*, hold water and in turn is it possible that it can be extended, intellectually speaking, to apply to *theo-philosophy* as well as *mythos*?

If we were to ask this question twenty or thirty years ago the answer would be a resounding "No!" and you would no doubt not find a single scholar who was willing to put forth such a foolish thought without entirely suspending reason. However, given the advancements in the fields referred to described above, along with the work of some scholars who have proposed direct connections between and among the ancient *mythos* and intellectual strains of thought between the ancient Sumer-Babylonians, Indo-Aryans and ancient early Greeks (the Hellenes), combined with Witzel's work which draws parallels both linguistically, genetically and mythologically between and among these peoples across the entire Eurasian region in antiquity, it does beg the question as to when how far back in history can these narrative lines, these ancient mythologies, and in turn these ancient theo-philosophies, be drawn, and when the art of expression, i.e. spoken language, is actually born to carry with it consistent and persistent symbolic thought.

It's not an enormous intellectual leap to hypothesize that the first stories that are told, and are preserved, are the mythological narratives that Witzel specifically analyzes, what we have come to refer to as "myth". But *mythology* morphs and is interwoven into *theology* deep in antiquity and arguably the two domains of study as we delineate them today, do not split from each other until much after the advent of the written word, and in turn philosophy, in the latter part of the first millennium BCE. In other words, if any symbolic set of thoughts, words or ideas were to be preserved and/or spread amongst these early Upper Paleolithic populations of modern man which we have ample evidence now that had and were spreading throughout Eurasia during the Upper Paleolithic (c. 50,000 years ago to 10,000 years ago until the advent of the Bronze Age), it would in fact be the kind of ideas, figures, shapes, symbols and relationships that we find being explored by the Pre-Socratic philosophers as well as the original authors and interpreters of the *Yijing*.

Hence the question as to what extent the core, underlying symbolic representations of these seemingly disparate philosophical systems are fundamentally similar and if so to what extent can this similarity potentially be explained by a shared common ancestry that reaches much further back into prehistory than is commonly thought, believed or taught by modern scholarship in ancient history. For what is clear, and for which there exists no evidence whatsoever, is that there was very little if any direct cultural exchange, intellectual economic or otherwise, between the civilizations of the Mediterranean and Near east and the Far East across the virtually

impenetrable Himalayan mountain range in the first millennium BCE when the first written records appear in these respective civilizations throughout “Eurasia”.⁷⁸

Therefore, if any strong patterns of similarity and analogy could be drawn between the seed theo-philosophical systems of these geographically separated and culturally distinct civilizations, once could make a strong argument, i.e. the *Laurasian hypothesis*, that these similarities are due to the spread or diffusion of similar ideas by prior generations of men rather than distinct inventions by two separate and vastly different intellectual centers of development if we can call them such.

⁷⁸ While there is evidence from Herodotus and other sources that there was cultural exchange occurring in at least the beginning of the first millennium BCE between the Greeks and the Mesopotamians (Sumerians), the Chaldeans, the *Magi* (Persians) and even as far East as India (so-called “*gymnosophists*”), and most certainly we have cultural exchange occurring toward the later part of the first millennium BCE with the conquests of the Macedonian Alexander the Great reaching as far East again as India, we have no evidence whatsoever from the archeological or historical record that there was any cultural or intellectual exchange between peoples of the Mediterranean - dominated first by Greek (Hellenic) and then Latin (Roman) civilization - and the peoples of the Far East (i.e. China) that were dominated by Chinese language and culture; that is prior to the spread of Buddhism throughout modern day China in the first few centuries of the common era.

Part I: On Creation *Mythos* (*Cosmogony*)

From Language to Writing: The Dawn of History

The development of alphabet based language systems in general, a development that occurs in the Mediterranean at around the end of the second millennium BCE or so, represents a major evolution in the history of mankind. It's invention, if we may call it that, reflects the need for a system of writing that a) meets the need to document various languages that existed at the time in a single form of writing, i.e. a phonetic description of words rather than a symbolic representation of meaning, b) the need for a writing system that could be more easily learned, transcribed and understood by a broader base of intellectuals and scribes.

This invention had an interesting byproduct however, one which was perhaps not originally intended when it was invented, it allowed for the development and systemization of much more precise, complex and abstract intellectual systems of thought than was possible in the older, more archaic forms of writing which were more symbolic, had little or no grammatical structure, and were generally less specific in terms of meaning. This allowed for a much more accurate transcription and communication of ideas and led in turn, almost directly, to the development of the various disciplines of philosophy which were so exemplary of the classical period in and around the Mediterranean starting in the first half of the first millennium BCE – most notably first with the epic poets Hesiod and Homer and then in turn with the Pre-Socratics who at least at some level started to use writing to expound and teach their ideas, and then of course culminating in the Classical Greek philosophical schools started by Plato and Aristotle – all of which ran parallel to the creation of the *Torah* in Hebrew which mirrored this same intellectual development but reflected the Hebrew rather than Hellenic belief systems.

Contrast today's, or even Ancient Greek or Latin, alphabet systems/languages with the first writing systems that mankind developed – for example cuneiform (circa 4th millennium BCE) which was the form of writing used by the ancient Sumer-Babylon peoples, or the somewhat later (circa 3rd millennium BCE) Egyptian hieroglyphs, both systems of writing which were not (at least initially) alphabets or phonetic based, but were “idea” or “picture” based writing systems - consisting of what linguists call *logograms*, aka *ideograms* or *pictograms*, where each character or symbol represented a specific “concept” or “idea” rather than a specific sound which underpinned a specific word in a specific (spoken) language. Expounders of religion, theology or philosophy, or even history, that lived prior to the invention of alphabets, or prior to the invention of writing itself for that matter, did not have the luxury of being able to communicate sophisticated *ideas* outside of *oral traditions*, mouth to mouth so to speak. It was these ancient *oral traditions* which had been passed down for generations that began to be codified and documented in the Mediterranean when writing systems, and in particular alphabetic writing

systems, were developed – hence the explosion of theological and philosophical texts that are so representative of this era, and this geographical area, of antiquity.

It is important to understand and recognize the significance of the fact that writing systems, more specifically alphabetic writing system are the means by which *spoken* words in a particular language can be represented, as opposed to *symbolic* or *ideological* representations of meaning which were codified in the older, more archaic forms of writing like Egyptian hieroglyphs for example. The invention of the alphabetic system that is widely adopted throughout the Mediterranean at this time is attributed to the Phoenicians, i.e. the “Phoenician alphabet” which is the parent system of not only the ancient Greek alphabet, but also the Hebrew alphabet, the latter of which was used to codify and document Biblical Hebrew, a Canaanite Semitic language spoken by the ancient Israelites, i.e. the language that was spoken by the authors of the *Torah*⁷⁹. The words of these ancient writing systems, as they are today in all Western European languages, are phonetic *correspondents* to the spoken word, i.e. the letters are grouped into words to capture specific sounds, i.e. words, and in turn these words are compiled into sentences which not only reflect the spoken words themselves, but also together convey a specific meaning.

⁷⁹ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Biblical Hebrew', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 19 August 2016, 06:33 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Biblical_Hebrew&oldid=735203916> [accessed 24 August 2016].

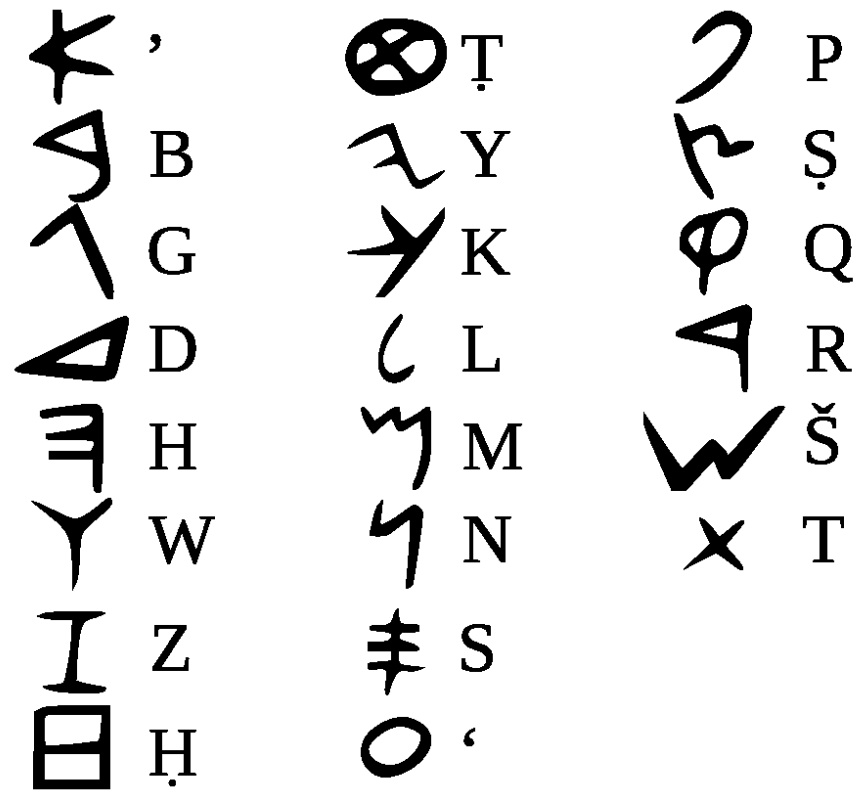


Figure 4: Ancient Phoenician alphabet characters⁸⁰

While this may seem like an obvious fact, this is a very important characteristic of the written word as it developed in antiquity and has specific implications in particular when trying to reconstruct not just the sounds and pronunciations of words that are represented in ancient writing systems, but also how these words and sentences (and some of the ancient scripts did not have punctuation to even delineate sentences even after alphabetic writing systems were introduced) are to be understood and in turn “translated”.

When trying to understand the meaning of a particular word or phrase in an ancient writing system for example, when trying to “translate” the word, or perhaps more accurately “transliterate” the tem, especially when a word or phrase is representative of a language that may no longer be in use at all today (i.e. is “dead” in linguistic terms), it is sometimes impossible to not only know how the word was spoken or pronounced, but in some cases (in particular when dealing with writing systems from before the turn of the first millennium BCE), but also sometimes not possible to truly understand the “meaning” of the word or phrase that the ancient

⁸⁰ Source: Wikipedia contributors, 'Phoenician alphabet', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2 September 2016, 22:17 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Phoenician_alphabet&oldid=737455990> [accessed 30 September 2016]

author is trying to convey. In many cases however, while it is not possible to know exactly how some ancient dialects and languages “sounded”, or how some ancient words we find in ancient texts were actually “pronounced”, we can still at some level at least come to understand the *meaning* of a word written in ancient language representing a spoken dialect that is “dead”. This issue is very relevant for example in the field of linguistics where word pronunciation rather than word spelling or writing is the dominant factor in trying to determine the origins and/or descendants of specific languages and categorizing language families in general.

For example, in these ancient myths which are transcribed by various scribes in various languages in various different writing systems, the names of gods and deities and their naturalistic counterparts which they represented (such as Air, Water, Earth, Fire, Sky, or Heaven for example which are in turn the first archaic principles which manifest in the material universe in almost all creation mythology) were looked upon as relatively synonymous concepts or ideas, almost interchangeable in fact, to the ancient author given the belief system and language (spoken and written) within which he was conveying his ideas. Whereas to the modern day translator who is utilizing a language system which presumes that the natural principles and the deities which were representative of them are two different concepts entirely. Hence a marked and unique difficulty in translating these ancient tongues as well as perhaps the reason why the belief systems of these ancient peoples are sometimes, in fact often times, misconstrued as “polytheistic” This becomes an especially significant problem that is many times overlooked, or at the very least underemphasized, by modern scholars who we rely on to for modern translations of ancient texts into various modern languages which are presented to the modern reader as accurate “translations”. This is especially true when trying to translate the ancient mythology; like the language in *Genesis*, Hesiod’s *Theogony*, or even more so in the Sumer-Babylonian *Enûma Eliš* for example, all of which represent some of the very oldest prose extant from ancient civilizations.

While ancient Hebrew does not necessarily fall under this group or heading of languages whose sounds or meanings have not survived given its continuous use by rabbinic scholars and the Jewish community into modern times, that does not necessarily mean that all translations of the Biblical Hebrew we find in the Hebrew *Bible* into modern languages accurately reflects the true meaning or symbolism that the words may have had in antiquity, in either their written or spoken form. It is important to recognize that these mythological and historical narratives which represent some of the oldest written historical texts we have from early and pre-civilized mankind were written down in antiquity so that they could be faithfully transmitted and distributed, so that they were preserved as it were, and were meant to complement rather than replace the surrounding oral and teaching tradition. A tradition which was marked by a direct transmission of “knowledge” from a competent and learned teacher to competent and properly trained student, representing a base of “knowledge” that reaches much further back in antiquity

than we have written records for. The *Torah* is no exception to this hence the scholarly disputes on the date of the *Old Testament* texts.

Furthermore, while a spoken language and its writing system are closely related, they are not necessarily equivalent, i.e. there is not a one to one relationship between a spoken language and a written language in antiquity as there is today. This is not just a happenstance characteristic attribute of ancient writing systems, but in fact a *fundamental characteristic*, and arguably the underlying purpose and intent of their invention. In other words, writing systems in antiquity, and in particular alphabetic writing systems like Hebrew and Greek, were perhaps developed specifically to solve this very problem, i.e. to represent different spoken languages in a single script or writing system that could be easily learned by different scribes from different tribes or peoples such that a socio-cultural mythological tradition could be accurately preserved not only in content but also in spoken form. The spoken word in antiquity was looked upon with much greater reverence than it is today and this must also be kept in mind when trying to interpret the meaning of these ancient texts. This is how these textual traditions came to be understood as “divinely inspired”, or in later terms as “the word of God” as we find in not just the Judeo-Christian textual tradition but also in the Vedic tradition as well as the Muslim tradition surrounding the *Qur’ān*.

Cuneiform for example was used to express many different languages in the ancient Sumer-Babylonian region of the Near East for example – Akkadian and Old Babylonian among others. Perhaps the best known illustration, and ultimate power, of this concept is the well renowned Rosetta Stone inscriptions from ancient Egypt which captures the same passage, i.e. the same groups of “spoken” words or “language”, in three different ancient writing systems – Demotic (a form of Egyptian script), ancient Greek, and hieroglyphics. The Rosetta Stone of course was a critical instrument to helping modern scholars and linguists translate to and from these ancient writing systems into modern languages. In other words, a language can, and was in many cases in antiquity, represented by different writing systems and while this was a common practice in antiquity, it is rarely done if at all in modern times. The English language is expressed in the Roman/Latin alphabet today and no one would ever think to express it in a different form of writing, in say Arabic for example. The situation in antiquity was markedly different however, and this needs to be taken into account whenever dealing with ancient textual translations.

It’s also worth noting that oral communication in and of itself does not distinguish mankind from the rest of the life on the planet. For example whales or apes can communicate with each other orally and have even been shown to have different “dialects” that vary between geographic regions and specific names, or sounds, for individuals. In many respects, what distinguishes mankind from the rest of the species on Earth is writing, a development which supports the

systematic construction of ideas and concepts that in turn allowed mankind to flourish, and ultimately dominate, life on Earth.

Prior to the development of writing however, for tens of thousands of years at least, mankind (*Homo sapiens*) leveraged the same tools as many of the other species on the planet for communication, namely oral communication and the creation of sound vibrations to communicate ideas between individuals. Hence the sacred perspective mankind had on almost all ancient language and forms of writing - the Sanskrit of the Indo-Aryans, the Hebrew of the Jews, and even the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians, they all believed that language and writing itself was wrapped up in and fundamentally related to the divine, as they perceived the whole world.

This is also why virtually all of the ancient philosophical schools regard the transmission of oral teachings as just as important, if not more important, than written doctrines for true “understanding”. This holds true not just for the Vedic tradition, which has an unbroken *oral transmission* tradition that lasts to this day, but also with the Jewish tradition as well which from an orthodox standpoint rests true understanding of the faith upon the “Oral Torah” (Hebrew: פה שבעל תורה, or *Torah she-be-`al peh*, literally translated as the “Torah that is spoken”) just as much as the written *Torah*, or *Torah* proper. The Oral Torah, or Oral Law as it is sometimes called, consists primarily of the *Mishnam*, compiled in the second century CE, as well as the *Gemara*, a series of commentaries on the *Mishnam* and *Torah* writings in general compiled in the 5th century CE, which together form what is known as the Talmud, *talmud* in Hebrew meaning literally “instruction” or “learning” stemming from the verb to “teach” or “study”.⁸¹

We also see very clear evidence for the existence, and importance, of true understanding, if we may call it that, to Plato and its relationship to his *theory of forms* in a few notable passages in *Phaedrus*.

Socrates: Writing, Phaedrus, has this strange quality, and is very like painting; for the creatures of painting stand like living beings, but if one asks them a question, they preserve a solemn silence. And so it is with written words; you might think they spoke as if they had intelligence, but if you question them, wishing to know about their sayings, they always say only one and the same thing. And every word, when once it is written, is bandied about, alike among those who understand and those who have no interest in it, and it knows not to whom to speak or not to speak; when ill-treated or unjustly reviled it always needs its father to help it; for it has no power to protect or help itself.

⁸¹ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Talmud', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 18 August 2016, 06:33 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Talmud&oldid=735032742>> [accessed 24 August 2016] and Wikipedia contributors, 'Oral Torah', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 11 July 2016, 14:15 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Oral_Torah&oldid=729334359> [accessed 24 August 2016]

...

Socrates: Now tell me; is there not another kind of speech, or word, which shows itself to be the legitimate brother of this bastard one, both in the manner of its begetting and in its better and more powerful nature?

Phaedrus: What is this word and how is it begotten, as you say?

Socrates: The word which is written with intelligence in the mind of the learner, which is able to defend itself and knows to whom it should speak, and before whom to be silent.

*Phaedrus: You mean the living and breathing word of him who knows, of which the written word may justly be called the image.*⁸²

Here Plato is clearly pointing out the limitations of *writing*, the very tool that has come into such widespread use by the time he is teaching, and a tool in fact that was not used at all by his teacher, Socrates. Here he establishes the supremacy of *knowledge* over “book learning” so to speak, knowledge which can be gained only by true understanding, what he refers to quite eloquently as the word *written in the mind*.

The tradition of Plato’s teachings in general in fact were surrounded by this notion of *unwritten teachings*⁸³, speaking to the existence of teachings which he never wrote down and which he presumably taught only to his closest and most direct pupils or disciples as it were. We know of the existence of these *unwritten teachings* from a variety of sources in antiquity, but perhaps the most intriguing is from the *Seventh Letter*, a letter in all likelihood written by Plato himself to a friend defending himself with respect to his involvement and ultimate responsibility for the beliefs and expositions of one of his former pupils, Dionysios, who had become embroiled in a political dispute in Syracuse.

Thus much at least, I can say about all writers, past or future, who say they know the things to which I devote myself, whether by hearing the teaching of me or of others, or by their own discoveries-that according to my view it is not possible for them to have any real skill in the matter. There neither is nor ever will be a treatise of mine on the subject. For it does not admit of exposition like other branches of knowledge; but after much converse about the matter itself and a life lived together, suddenly a light, as it were, is kindled in one soul by a flame that leaps to it from another, and thereafter sustains itself. Yet this much I know-that if the things were written or put into words, it would be done best by me, and that, if they were written badly, I should be the person most

⁸² Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9 translated by Harold N. Fowler. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1925. Phaedrus. Phaedrus 275a - 276b. From <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0174%3Atext%3DPhaedrus%3Asection%3D276b>.

⁸³ Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 19 August 2016, 16:46 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Plato%27s_unwritten_doctrines&oldid=735270414> [accessed 24 August 2016].

*pained. Again, if they had appeared to me to admit adequately of writing and exposition, what task in life could I have performed nobler than this, to write what is of great service to mankind and to bring the nature of things into the light for all to see? But I do not think it a good thing for men that there should be a disquisition, as it is called, on this topic-except for some few, who are able with a little teaching to find it out for themselves. As for the rest, it would fill some of them quite illogically with a mistaken feeling of contempt, and others with lofty and vain-glorious expectations, as though they had learnt something high and mighty.*⁸⁴

Here Plato explains, that he did not commit these type of teachings to writing by design, as true *understanding*, or *knowledge*, of his teaching as he puts it, can only be transmitted from one person to another after much learning and life experience, this “*kindling of fire from one soul to another*” as he puts it, cannot be gained by any sort of textual transmission which is indirect, but only passed from “one soul to another” after much thought and consideration and much experience of “living the teaching” so to speak before true understanding, knowledge, can be awakened as it were. The message here is certainly consistent with that we find in the relevant passage from *Phaedrus*.

We also see references made to these *unwritten teachings* by Aristotle (*Physics* and *Metaphysics*, see *Physics*, 209b13–15), and also indirectly by Aristotle’s student Aristoxenus who in his treatise on harmonics (*Elementa harmonica* II 30-31) calls out Plato’s public “Lecture on the Good” as a failure mainly due to its esoteric and abstruse content on the mathematical and *numerological* underpinnings of *first principles*. i.e. the *Good* and the *Same*, teachings which do not find, at least directly, spoken to in his *dialogues*.⁸⁵

⁸⁴*Seventh Letter* by Plato. Translated by J. Harward. From http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/seventh_letter.html. While the actual authenticity of the letter by Plato is debated by scholars it does for the most part reflect the writing style and philosophy as presented by Plato from the author’s perspective and so while perhaps not written by Plato’s hand, still nonetheless seems to accurately represent something akin to what Plato would write, specifically with respect to the specific part of the work cited herein.

⁸⁵ In the beginning of Aristotle’s student Aristoxenus’s treatise on harmonics, he explains to the reader that Plato’s public lecture ‘On the Good’ was not well received due to the lack of clarity within the context within which it was presented. That is to say the topic heading, i.e. ‘The Good’ was misleading to the audience because they were expecting a lecture on the all things that were “good” and “admirable”, practical advice on how to lead a good life perhaps, and what they got was a lecture on *first principles* and the *mathematical* (and *numerological*) basis for the preeminent existence of the *Good* as an *ontological first principle*, a direct reference to Plato’s *unwritten teachings*. Whether or not Plato’s public lecture ‘On the Good’ actually took place is the subject of debate and a good overview of the arguments on either side can be found in “Plato’s Lecture ‘On the Good’”, by Konrad Gaiser. Published by Brill in *Phronesis*, Vol. 25. No 1 (1980) pp 5-37]. Also see Wikipedia contributors, ‘Plato’s unwritten doctrines’ at Wikipedia contributors, ‘Plato’s unwritten doctrines’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 19 August 2016, 16:46 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Plato%27s_unwritten_doctrines&oldid=735270414> [accessed 25 August 2016].

The Ancient Hebrews: The *Tanakh*, *Torah* and *Five Books of Moses*

As a specific example of how a word, a concept, can be disfigured and lose its fullness and richness of meaning as it moves through successive languages of translation and cultural evolution, let's look at how the Hebrew word *Torah*, which carries so much significance in the Jewish community, has come to be more understood as *law* or *custom* rather than the full revealed and complete theological and spiritual framework that it implied to not just its original author, Moses, but also to the audience to which the treatise was originally compiled and transcribed in the ancient Hebrew.

For example, the *Torah* is sometimes loosely translated into English simply as "law" or "the law", coming from the Greek word for law, or "*Nómos*" (νόμος). *Nómos* is a fairly loaded term in Greek antiquity that plays a very prominent role in classical Hellenic philosophy. To the Hebrews, their governance structure, the guiding social structure of their people, is established and rationalized via the narrative and stories in the *Torah*, hence the inclination to use the Greek *Nómos* as a transliteration of the underlying purpose of the text. In many respects, this concept is analogous to the *Ma'at* of the ancient Egyptians which is the deity and notion that provides the rational foundation, and mythological tradition, that provides the basis for balance and harmony, justice and "law", in human affairs.

The word "*Torah*" in Hebrew is derived from a root that means to "guide" or "teach", so a good translation for the word directly into English might be "teaching", "doctrine", or "instruction". But in the Greek *Septuagint*, which was transcribed in the first or second century BC in old Koine Greek by a group of Jewish scholars at the behest of Ptolemy II (309 -246 BCE) in Alexandrian Egypt which by that time had been infused with Hellenic culture. In the *Septuagint*, or simply the *LXX*, the Hebrew word "torah" was translated into Greek to as *Nómos*, which in fact is the Greek word for "law" or "custom". In Hellenic intellectual and philosophical circles however, *Nómos* had a much more complex and rich meaning. A Greek Orphic hymn to the god *Nómos* illustrates its depth of meaning of this concept to the Ancient Greeks, a tradition that undoubtedly was in the minds of the translators of the *LXX*:

The holy king of gods and men I call, heavenly Nómos, the righteous seal of all: the seal which stamps whatever the earth contains, and all concealed within the liquid plains: stable, and starry, of harmonious frame, preserving laws eternally the same. Thy all-composing power in heaven appears, connects its frame, and props the starry spheres; and unjust envy shakes with dreadful sound, tossed by thy arm in giddy whirls around. 'Tis thine the life of mortals to defend, and crown existence with a blessed end; for thy command alone, of all that lives, order and rule to every dwelling goes. Ever observant of the upright mind, and of just actions the companion kind. Foe to the lawless, with avenging ire, their steps involving in destruction dire. Come, blest, abundant

*power, whom all reverse, by all desired, with favouring mind draw near; give me through life on thee to fix my sight, and never forsake the equal paths of right.*⁸⁶

So *Nómos* then, at the time that the Hebrew *Old Testament* was transcribed into Greek, is very much akin to the *Ma'at* of the Egyptians, the personification of which becomes and is synthesized with the (Orphic) Greek notion of *Nómos*. Having said that, given how steeped in tradition and custom the Jewish faith is, still following today in many respects the ways and customs of the ancient Hebrews that was codified and captured in the teachings of Moses, one can certainly see why the Greek Jewish scholars in the 3rd century BCE used this word.

The translation of *torah* then *Nómos*, and in turn to the its Latin successor *lex*, which has a much more direct association with our modern conception of “law”, has historically given rise to the notion that *Torah* signifies or emphasizes laws or customs rather than the implying the complete historical and socio-religious narrative captured in the scripture of the Jewish faith, i.e. “teaching” where *torah* is not just the law that governs human affairs but the law, and underlying order, of the cosmos which in turn human affairs should be aligned and consistent with.

This history or etymology of the phrase, “Law of the Hebrews” which we find in modern readings of the subject and is associated with the *Torah* illustrates how the richness of meaning and fullness of the original word in the original language developed over the centuries and effectively “stuck”. But the true meaning of the word and its relation to the Jewish faith in general is best understood when looking more closely at its etymology. Words and ideas lead to understanding, or misunderstanding as the case may be, just as Plato has told us.

Christianity and Islam are the most widespread and influential religions in the world today by any measure, and both sprung from and were heavily influenced by the monotheistic traditions, and metaphysical and philosophical systems, that preceded them - most notably Judaism, but Zoroastrianism as a close and far less recognizable second. These influences are evident by the obvious incorporation of Judaic mythology and tradition directly into the canonical version of the *Bible* as we know it today, along with the explicit references to the Abrahamic prophetic lineage, including Jesus himself, in the *Qur'ān*. Less explicitly however, we find the incorporation of many of the theological themes and divine principles of Zoroastrianism integrated into Christian belief systems, perhaps not surprisingly so given the Persian influence in the region that Jesus was born and taught in.

⁸⁶ *Orphic Hymn 64 to Nómos (trans. Taylor) (Greek hymns C3rd B.C. to 2nd A.D.).*

The written tradition upon which the Jewish religion, or religion of the Hebrews as it was called in antiquity, is based upon what is called in Jewish circles the *Tanakh*, which corresponds to the canon of the Hebrew *Bible*, what we have come to know as the *Old Testament*, which includes the *Torah*, or *Books of Moses*". The *Torah* represents the heart of the Jewish written and historical tradition and rests squarely on the writings and teachings attributed directly to the prophet Moses, a pseudo-mythological and historical figure who lived, if we believe in his historicity at all, sometime in the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE.

The written tradition also includes "non-canonical" writings, specifically a companion tradition of rabbinic commentary which is called the *Talmud* which consists of commentaries upon the Jewish faith on topics ranging from law, *ethics* and customs, theology and philosophy, as well as history and mythology, and provides the basis, along with the *Tanakh*, for Jewish law. According to the *Talmud*, much of the contents of the *Tanakh* were compiled by the "Men of the Great Assembly" in the middle of the 5th century BCE. While this date of composition is the topic of much debate in modern scholarship, most scholars of ancient history would agree that the *Tanakh* in its present form was shaped for the most part in or around the 2nd century BCE.⁸⁷ The origins of some of the writings however, particularly in *Genesis*, clearly have origins that can be placed much further back in antiquity.

The *Tanakh* and *Talmud* were mostly written in Biblical Hebrew, although some parts written in Aramaic, a closely related Semitic language. Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic (as well as Arabic) are in the Afro-Asiatic/Semitic family of languages, a distinct branch of the language tree from the Indo-European languages from which almost all modern European languages descend, a branch which includes English of course.⁸⁸

Judaism has its roots deep in ancient history, and in many respects represents one of the oldest and most well documented ancient theological traditions. Some of the historical narrative of the *Old Testament* can be placed well back into the second millennium BCE judging by the historical evidence from within the text itself, as well as corroborating archeological and other historical (written) evidence which supports at least some of the historical narrative in the text.

⁸⁷ There is also credible historical evidence at least that indicates that the final Jewish canon in its present day form was still as yet finalized by the first century CE, as reflected for example in the writings of Jewish historian Josephus among others, see Wikipedia contributors, 'Tanakh', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 30 July 2016, 02:19 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tanakh&oldid=732165354>> [accessed 23 August 2016]

⁸⁸ Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic were written in an alphabet system that was closely related and derived from the Phoenician alphabet system, the very same alphabet system and form of writing for Greek, Arabic, and Latin. The lineage of these different ancient languages and their corresponding writing systems within which their respective languages were encoded as it were is important because it provides us with some insight as to the challenges in translating the Hebrew text into English, sometimes through the intermediary language of Greek to which the *Old Testament* Hebrew texts were translated in 3rd century BCE Hellenic Egypt (i.e. the *Septuagint*).

Judaism today, and from its outset upon its founding by the pseudo-historical prophet Moses, teaches that there is only one God and no other God is to be worshipped other than He, namely Yahweh and that he, through Moses and the line of prophets descendant from him, has outlined very specifically how the Hebrews should conduct themselves and how they should organize and structure their faith and worship. The Jewish mode of worship, its religious practices and ritual, and even its ethical and moral precepts, are based upon both this written tradition as encapsulated in the *Tanakh* and *Talmud* but also a vibrant and lasting oral tradition as well which is referred to as the “Oral Torah” and is to be studied in conjunction with the written word, with the assistance of a competent Hebrew scholar and teacher (i.e. a Rabbi) in order for full appreciation and understanding of the teachings to be realized.

The *Tanakh* is broken down into three different parts or sections, almost all of which were included in the Christian Biblical canon as part of what we have come to know as the *Old Testament*. We first have the *Torah*, or again the “teaching” which is directly attributed to Moses, then the *Nevi'im* or “prophets”, and then finally the *Ketuvim* or “writings”, the sum total of which represents the written teachings of the ancient Hebrews which is looked upon even today by the Jewish community as the guiding principles for the leading of a good and just life in the eyes of God (Yahweh).

The *Torah* consists of five books, all of which are attributed to Moses and all of which are believed by modern scholars to have been written by one individual - hence the *Five Books of Moses*'. In the Hellenic philosophical tradition, we find these books referred to as the *Pentateuch*, literally “five books” in Greek and as they come down to us through the canonization of the *Bible*, we have come to know these as these books as the first five books of the *Old Testament*, namely *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*. In Hebrew, the original language of the *Torah*, each of the books is known by the first prominent word or phrase in each book, a custom that was common in antiquity, and sometimes in the Hebrew intellectual and theological tradition we see the books referred to by their Hebrew names which are:

1. *Bereshit* (בְּרֵאשִׁית, literally "In the beginning"), i.e. *Genesis*
2. *Shemot* (שְׁמוֹת, literally "Names"), i.e. *Exodus*
3. *Vayikra* (וַיִּקְרָא, literally "And He called") i.e. *Leviticus*
4. *Bamidbar* (בְּמִדְבָּר, literally "In the desert [of]"), i.e. *Numbers*
5. *Devarim* (דְּבָרִים, literally "Things" or "Words"), i.e. *Deuteronomy*⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Wikipedia contributors, 'Tanakh', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 30 July 2016, 02:19 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tanakh&oldid=732165354>> [accessed 23 August 2016].

In these books, Moses tells the story of the creation of the world and mankind, down through the origination and lineage of the Hebrews, culminating in a detailed pseudo-historical account of the life of Moses himself and the famed story of the leading of the Hebrews out of Egypt by Moses as told in *Exodus*. It starts however, in the first few verses of *Genesis*, with the famed creation of the world in 7 days, perhaps the most well-known and commented on passage from any text in the history of mankind:

1 *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

² *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

³ *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

⁴ *And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*

⁵ *And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.*

⁶ *And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.*

⁷ *And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.*

⁸ *And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.*

⁹ *And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.*

¹⁰ *And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called the Seas: and God saw that it was good.*

¹¹ *And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.*

¹² *And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.*

¹³ *And the evening and the morning were the third day.*

¹⁴ *And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:*

¹⁵ *And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.*

¹⁶ *And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.*

¹⁷ *And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,*

¹⁸ *And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.*

¹⁹ *And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.*⁹⁰

⁹⁰ King James Bible. Genesis 1-19.

In this creation narrative, one that no doubt has shaped the theological beliefs of Western society for some 2000 years at least, we have the formulation of structure and time as underpinnings for the story itself – God creates the world in seven days – but we also see the emanation of various basic universal elements, and then the heaven and earth itself, that emerge from the “primordial waters”, a very old cosmological motif that is virtually ubiquitous in ancient civilization of the Middle, Near and Far East.

But core to this narrative in fact, and underlining the Judeo-Christian world-view (which in turn is shared by the Muslim tradition despite its basic disagreement with its Judeo-Christian brethren on the relative importance of various prophets and basic theological stances such as the Holy Trinity and its implications on the underlying unity of God/Allāh) is the role of God, the grand creator, preserver (and ultimate destroyer) of not just humanity but the universe itself. In this tradition we do not have any thread of philosophical questions with respect to the unity of existence, duality from unity or even any epistemological questions as to what could be known or who it could be known by (the chicken and the egg question so to speak), we simply have a creation story in succinct form which lays out what was created, when, by whom in quite literal fashion – laying the groundwork for a moral and ethical framework which is just as unforgiving as it were, given its lack of philosophical foundations, despite the longstanding work done by the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition to facilitate these philosophical lines of questions.

Genesis then is the first part of the *Torah*, the scripture of the Hebrews within which we find not only the famed story of the creation (two of them actually), but also the famed legend of the Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and their fall from grace via the temptations of the great snake, as well as the story in *Exodus* of the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses by Yahweh after his people had been led out of tyrannical Egypt through various miracles performed by Yahweh on behalf of their “chosen” people, and many of the other legendary tales that have come to represent the *mythos* of the modern day Judeo-Christian (and again to a lesser extent Muslim) world. It is in the *Pentateuch* where we find the historical and theological underpinnings of the Jewish faith, the philosophy of the ancient Hebrews as it were.

The *Nevi'im*, or “Prophets”, consists of eight books and cover the history of the Jewish people from the time Hebrews enter the land of Israel until the time of Babylonian captivity under the prophet Judah in the early 6th century BCE. Books of the *Nevi'im* include Joshua, Judges, Samuel I & II, Kings I & II, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

The *Ketuvim*, or “writings”, sometimes referred to by the Greek name *Hagiographa*, consists of eleven books which include the *Book of Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Job*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Daniela* and *Chronicles* among others. Two of these books are the only ones were that have significant

portions written in Aramaic rather than Hebrew, and some of the books are in poetic form rather than prose which is standard for the rest of the *Torah*. The contents of the *Ketuvim* are considered to be later editions of the *Torah* and although not as authoritative as the “teachings” are nonetheless considered instructive and crucial to understanding Hebrew philosophy (the Jewish faith) and were therefore canonized along with the contents of the *Nevi'im* and *Books of Moses*.

With respect to the underlying history and evolution of the *Torah* as a written textual, and associated oral, tradition of the ancient Hebrews, scholars best guess for the actual compilation of the (earliest) material is, at the earliest, in the middle of the first millennium BCE. Given the historical material in these works, and there is much historical material that can be corroborated with other ancient authors, our best guess as to when Moses actually lived, as the historical figure rather than the author, is *at least* a thousand years or so before the earliest parts of the *Torah* was compiled, leaving plenty of room for doubt and question as to whether or not a) Moses was the author of the Books attributed to him, or b) what the actual socio-political factors were that drove its adoption and prevalence among the ancient Hebrews for a thousand years after Moses died and handed over the care for the Jewish people (and state) to his successor Joshua.

Ancient *oral traditions* were strong no doubt, but how much was lost or transformed within these 1000 years before the *Old Testament* was officially compiled and transcribed by the Men of the Great Council in the 5th century BCE and the centuries thereafter? This oral tradition problem, or *prophetic separation* if we may coin a term, existed in almost all religious systems, at least the ones that are most commonly practiced today. Even the *Qur'ān* was not written down by Muḥammad himself, implying that even if we leave aside the problems of language and socio-political interpretation of the text, we're still left with some level of *prophetic separation*, the time period and possible miscommunication of ideas between what the prophet *actually said*, or communicated, and what was *actually written down*, or transcribed. This notion of prophetic separation is reflected in the Islamic tradition by for example slightly different versions of the *Qur'ān* that have persisted down to present day.

As far as authorship goes for the *Pentateuch* itself, it is very much debated by modern scholars and theologians as to whether or not it can be established that Moses was in fact the true author. Having said that it is clear that the five books attributed to Moses provide a consistent and cohesive narrative however and that would seem to indicate that there was a single author or editor who compiled at least these 5 books. Whether or not this was actually Moses is a different question entirely of course. There are however many references in the *Books of Moses* themselves, as well as throughout the rest of the *Old Testament* (and even in the *New Testament*), that indicate that Moses is in fact the author in question, but identifying whether or not this individual was in fact the historical Moses or some other later individual who later wrote

down the narrative remains a matter of speculation. The tradition of the compilation of ancient material from a long standing oral tradition associated with an historical figure from many generations prior to authorship is of course a common practice in antiquity - the Vyasa of the Vedic tradition or Zarathustra of the Avestan lore, and even Orpheus being from the Greek tradition being prime examples.⁹¹

The core of the Jewish faith and tradition however rests in the *Torah*, and from the Jewish vantage point its author, at least the first five books, is Moses. The Moses to whom Yahweh (Elohim) revealed his message to directly, which was captured in the *Torah*, in both written and oral form, and passed down through the ages via the Rabbinic scholars and teachers into present day. According to the Jewish tradition, the contents of the *Torah* were “revealed” to Moses by Yahweh himself, in the very same way the Zoroastrian, Christian and Islamic faiths had at their core the belief that their scripture was revealed by the one true God of their respective faiths through their respective prophets - Zarathustra, Jesus and Muḥammad respectively⁹².

The Jewish tradition, referred to in antiquity as the religion of the “Hebrews”, was born out of the eastern Mediterranean and therefore not surprisingly shows marked Sumer-Babylonian influence, influence that has now been well documented by modern scholarship. This influence can be seen most prominently in the mythology and historical narrative laid out in *Genesis* (“in the beginning”), where the stories of creation and fall from grace from the garden of Eden bear striking similarities to motifs and mythological narratives that we know were commonplace in the Assyrian/Babylonian civilization that lay just to the East. The story of the Noah and the Great Flood and the preservation of mankind from the wrath of God also in *Genesis* can also be found in the *mythos* of the Near East within the great *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

The Sumer-Babylonian/Assyrian civilization from which these stories clearly originated, or at least from which we have the earliest evidence of their existence, preceded the compilation of the theo-philosophical tradition of the Hebrews by some centuries, millennia even, but at the same time provides evidence for the cultural milieu within which Moses the prophet lived and transcribed the ancient Hebrew narrative in what has come down to us as the *Pentateuch*, surviving to this day as one of the great cultural heritages of the West in the canon of the not just the Hebrew *Bible* but the Christian *Bible* as well as the *Old Testament*, incorporating much if not all of the ancient Hebrew *mythos*.⁹³

⁹¹ See <http://bible.org/seriespage/introduction-pentateuch> for a fairly detailed account of the scholarly debate and evidence of the authorship of the Pentateuch.

⁹² Vedānta as reflected in the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas* holds the same belief, namely that the scripture was divine revelation and therefore was to be held sacred.

⁹³ The story of Noah and the flood in the *Torah* is very similar in terms of the narrative as a whole as well as some of the specific features of the tale in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, perhaps the most prevalent and popular of the Sumer-Babylonian myths from

So with the Jewish monotheistic tradition then, we see some outside influences on the scripture itself from Sumer-Babylonian and other Canaanite *mythos*, but the faith, as with all of the Abrahamic traditions, is centered around the belief in the direct revelation of the Word of God to its prophet, Moses, and the subsequent transmission and codification of this revelation to its people. But what should not be lost, and is true most certainly for Christianity and Islam as well, is that the canonization and standardization of the faith and its practices down through the centuries after the passing of its prophet, was intended to unite its people, and somewhat distinctly for the Jews, to legitimize and establish their ancestral homeland in Israel.

But with Moses and Judaism, as was the case in each of these other ancient monotheistic traditions, the prophet taught the message of the one true God to students and followers, their people, and then generations after these teachings were transcribed from the oral tradition into written form in order to unite its people, each revealed tradition transcribed in the language that was prevalent in the civilizations within which the religions flourished. For the ancient Jews, it was Hebrew, for the Zoroastrians it was Old Avestan, for the Indo-Aryans it was Vedic Sanskrit and for the Christians it was Greek and then Latin, and for the Muslims it was Arabic. The language within which each of these ancient religious frameworks was documented reflected and mirrored the civilization within which they took root, each civilization unique in its own way and this uniqueness was reflected in the prevalent language and form of writing which was most common place, for language and civilization evolved together no doubt.

antiquity. Also, the creation of the world as laid out in *Genesis*, as well as the myth of the Garden of Eden can also be found in Sumer-Babylonian *mythos*. For a very detailed analysis of the Garden of Eden's antecedents in Sumer-Babylonian *mythos*, as well as the potential origins of Jewish Kabbalistic practices from the Babylonian "Tree of Life", please see the article by Simo Parpola on *The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy* published in the Journal of Near Eastern Studies, Vol. 52, No. 3 (July 1993), pgs. 161-208 published by the University of Chicago Press.

Ancient Egyptian *Mythos*: The *Weighing of the Heart*, Ra and Ma'at

Perhaps the earliest mythological tradition we find documented, or evidence of, is that of the ancient Egyptians, a culture and civilization that evolved out of the settlement of the Nile delta river region in Northern Africa around the turn of the fifth millennium BCE. The Dynastic period of Egypt begins according to conventional Egyptian chronology with the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt circa 3150 BCE under the first “pharaoh” called Narmer, more commonly referred to as Menes. Archeological evidence for human settlements in the Nile River delta goes back to the end of the Upper Neolithic period, a period of human evolution going back to the 11th and 12th millennium BCE before the advent of agriculture and the advanced domestication of animals. We have evidence for more advanced settlements coalescing in this region in and around the 6th millennium BCE however, evidence that points to a society that had mastered various arts of animal husbandry and domestication, had developed techniques for the creation of pottery and ceramics, and had also invented and were using advanced stone tools and copper that allowed for them to begin to manipulate and leverage the rich and fertile Nile River delta to build more developed and advanced society.

These people from Pre-Dynastic Egypt clearly had at least the beginnings of a fairly evolved religious and/or mythological tradition, a tradition that allowed for the unification and consolidation of various nomadic tribes from the region and provide for socio-political stability that supported the unification of the Upper and Lower Egyptian valley, what we have come to know and call in Egyptology circles as “Dynastic” Egypt from antiquity.⁹⁴ Ancient Egypt was a land conquered by many ancient civilizations over the centuries, and yet one with a deep and rich history itself, one steeped in the rule of the Pharaohs in the land of the North African Nile River Delta valley, an area inhabited by mankind since as least as far back as 30,000 to 40,000 years ago, and one which developed a rich and unique *mythos* and social structure which rested on the firm belief that their leader, their King or Pharaoh, was the human manifestation of the divine on earth, directly connecting the established authority and governance of the people with their worship and belief in god, which for most of Ancient Egyptian history was associated with Atum, or Atum-Ra.

Before ancient Egypt was conquered and ruled by foreigners starting with the Persians in the middle of the first millennium BCE, then followed by the Greeks under Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, then the Romans in 30 BCE for some 5 or 6 centuries and then the Muslims/Arabs for some thousand years plus thereafter, it was one of the most sophisticated and advanced of all

⁹⁴ Wikipedia contributors, 'Ancient Egypt', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 15 July 2016, 07:45 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ancient_Egypt&oldid=729888188> [accessed 21 August 2016].

the ancient civilizations in the Mediterranean and Near East, with a system of writing and architecture that dates back to the 4th millennia BCE, making it one of, if not the, oldest civilization of mankind. The beginning of Ancient Egyptian civilization is typically marked by the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt by its first pharaoh⁹⁵ in the latter part of the 4th millennia BCE, what modern historians have come to call the *Predynastic Era* which succeeded the end of the Upper Neolithic in the Egyptian delta. This period of unification of Upper and Lower Egypt is also the time period associated with the emergence of Egyptian forms of writing as well, at first with hieroglyphs which we find inscribed on the tombs of pharaohs from this period, and later in the tombs of the upper and middle class as hieroglyphic inscriptions became more common and the hieroglyphics evolved to include not only *ideograms* and *logographic* (picture) elements, but also alphabetic elements to capture specific pronunciations and annunciations of spells designed to capture the specific annunciations and words used by the Egyptian priesthood for specific ceremonies and rituals, most notably of course the burial of the dead.

Alongside the development of hieroglyphs which evolved for some two millennia (and was still used up until the 3rd and 4th centuries CE after Egypt came under first Greek then Roman rule), a sister script called hieratic⁹⁶ also emerged which although closely related to hieroglyphics was character and phonetic/alphabet based. Hieratic was easier to write than hieroglyphs and like its sister hieroglyphs, was initially only used by priests and scribes to transliterate specific rituals and spells. Eventually, in the middle and latter part of the first millennium BCE, hieratic evolved into demotic, a script designed for more secular use that in most instance was used to capture the language of the period of the same name, i.e. Demotic, which succeeded Middle and Late Egyptian which had been the language spoken by Egyptians for the preceding few millennia in some form or another.

The Egyptian Demotic language (not to be confused with the modern Greek language with the same name, i.e. “demotic” which is typically written with a lower case “d”) and the script that supported it that is referred to with the same name, i.e. *demotic*, was prevalent in the middle and late first millennium BCE and was used for almost a thousand years up until the 5th century CE or so. Both hieroglyphics and hieratic script are used throughout ancient Egypt from the Predynastic Period (c 3100 BCE) all the way through the 6th century CE or so and it is through

⁹⁵ Menes, aka Narmer is the first pharaoh said to have united Upper and Lower Egypt. It is notable that the ancient Egyptians did not use the term *pharaoh*; this word is taken from the *Old Testament* context and then later applied to ancient Egyptian history. King is a more appropriate term but we will use King or pharaoh interchangeably throughout. For more information on the etymology and history of the term pharaoh see <http://ashraf62.wordpress.com/ancient-egypt-knew-no-pharaohs/>.

⁹⁶ The word hieratic was first used by the Christian theologian Clement of Alexandria who lived and wrote in in the late 1st and early 2nd century CE and is derived from the Greek word *hieratika* which literally means “priestly writing”.

these writing systems, and the languages transcribed therein, that we can get a glimpse of the *theology* and religion of ancient Egypt.⁹⁷

Our current historical view of categorizing ancient Egyptian history into Dynasties, typically marked by roman numerals, is derived from the first Egyptian historian Manetho, a 3rd century BCE priest and historian from Egypt who authored a three-volume treatise of the history of Egypt entitled *Aegyptiaca*, or “*History of Egypt*”, a period of Egyptian history when it was under Greek, or Hellenic influence hence the use of Greek to author his work. Manetho, according to later historians and excerpts of his work that do survive, gave a detailed and Egyptian perspective on the history of Egypt, beginning with the period of Egyptian societal consolidation under the rule of a single unified King or Pharaoh which he calls Menes circa 3100 BCE. His work is presumed to have been motivated by providing an Egyptian perspective on the history of Egypt in contrast to the one provided by Herodotus several centuries prior, whose perspective was not only foreign but also lacking with respect to a proper chronology and depth of coverage.

Later, more modern Egyptian historians (aka Egyptologists) break down the periods of ancient Egyptian civilization into different successive periods, each earmarked by the transition from one dynasty to another, where a dynasty doesn’t necessarily represent a blood lineage from one ruler to the next but some cultural or societal break in Egyptian history that denotes the transition into different period. All ancient Egyptian texts and inscriptions fall into one or more different periods, and Egyptologists typically use the Dynastic classification to denote the period within which a particular text, form of writing, or inscription is found so in order to have proper context of the time period and socio-political context of a given theological text or inscription, it was important to be able to classify it in the appropriate Dynasty and/or period.

The Dynastic period of Egypt lasting some three thousand years or so reaching far back in antiquity is characterized not only by a rich and unique pantheon of gods and their associated mythology (and ritual) that not only emphasized the belief in their ruler as a manifestation of god on earth whose authority derived from divine provenance, but also by a marked with what can only be call an obsession with the transmigration of the soul and the belief in an afterlife, emphasis that perhaps derives from the context within which almost all of this material and inscriptions survive down to us, namely first through Pyramid and Coffin (sarcophagus) inscriptions in the 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE, and then later on papyrus documents as the literature become more widespread and prevalent in society, and more standardized as what is known today as the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*.

⁹⁷ Demotic was succeeded by the Coptic writing system/alphabet (and the Coptic language which it is designed to render) which started to take root in the 3rd century CE and is still in use in some Egyptian churches and other places today. The Coptic alphabet is based upon the Greek alphabet with strong Demotic influence.

This extant material, inscriptions in hieroglyphics within pyramids, tombs and on sarcophagus and then later in hieratic and hieroglyphic script on papyrus, indirectly refers to and incorporates their cultural and spiritual belief system and worldview, corresponding to what today we would call religion. All of this material was in fact crafted and designed specifically to protect, guide, and preserve the bodies and souls of the Egyptians into their journey into the afterlife, perhaps better translated as the “netherworld”, giving rise to their practices of mummification and pyramid and tomb building which were attempts to preserve the body, and its soul, for its journey beyond life into the afterworld.

The incantations, spells and utterances inscribed in these burial sites which constitute the core part of our knowledge of the *mythos* of ancient Egypt was apparently initially reserved only for the Kings and Pharaohs in the early dynastic period and Old Kingdom. These writings have come to be known as the *Pyramid Texts*. This tradition then spread to the aristocracy during the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom where we find inscriptions on various sarcophagi and tombs, texts and literature that are known to modern historians as the *Coffin Texts*. This in turn evolved to its most mature and standardized form in Egyptian antiquity which was adopted more broadly by the general population in the New Kingdom dynasties through the Ptolemaic Period and is known to us as the famed *Egyptian Book of Dead*, a compilation of myths, stories and fables from Egyptian lore are found on papyrus scrolls associated with burial grounds of many tombs from this era⁹⁸.

Egyptian *mythos* is undoubtedly best known for this association, perhaps more aptly described as an obsession, upon the burial and rituals associated with death and the extensive steps taken to prepare the Soul (most commonly associated with the Egyptian term “*Bâ*”) for its journey into the afterlife, and it is from this context surrounding death and the afterlife for the most part from which we gain insight into Ancient Egyptian religious beliefs. Therefore, ancient Egyptian religion is closely associated with these sophisticated and wide-ranging spells and incantations and their associated mythology surrounding death and the journey of the Soul in the afterlife.

The Egyptian notion of *Bâ* was somewhat different than our conception of the Soul, perceived to be the aspect of the individual in toto which was permanent and persisted beyond death, perhaps best described as the fundamental essence of the individual which was deathless and timeless. *Bâ* was also used in reference to inanimate objects as well, denoting the broader meaning of the word in Egyptian to describe the essential nature of a thing, either animate or inanimate, with perhaps a close correspondence to Plato’s notion of *form* and/or Aristotle’s *being qua being*, or

⁹⁸ *The Book of the Dead* in Egyptian is actually titled, in Egyptian, *rw nw prt m hrw* which is more accurately transliterated into English as the “Book of Coming Forth by Day” rather than the more popular name it has been given by modern scholars and historians, the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*.

that which characterizes the primary essence of a thing and defines its existence, which he outlines in his *Metaphysics*.

Furthermore, as reflected in the *Book of the Dead* which represents the most mature form of the Egyptian religion/*theology* as it stands from the latest part of Egyptian antiquity, special importance was given to not only the individual's *name* which was given to them at birth, *rén* or *rn*, which the Egyptians held supported the continued existence of the soul as long as it was kept alive and spoken, but also special significance was given to the heart, *ib* or *jb*, which was looked upon as the seat of all human emotion, feeling, thought, will and intention. The importance and relevance of the heart in Egyptian *theology* can be seen from the classic *Weighing of the heart* ceremony which is depicted taking place in the underworld upon someone's death where the individual's heart was weighed/balanced against the feather of *Ma'at* representing truth, justice, or order; the outcome of such balance determining the ultimate fate of the individual. This practice and imagery as depicted in the *Coffin Texts* and then later encapsulated in the *Book of the Dead* most certainly has parallels to the Christian moral framework based upon the notion of Last Judgment.

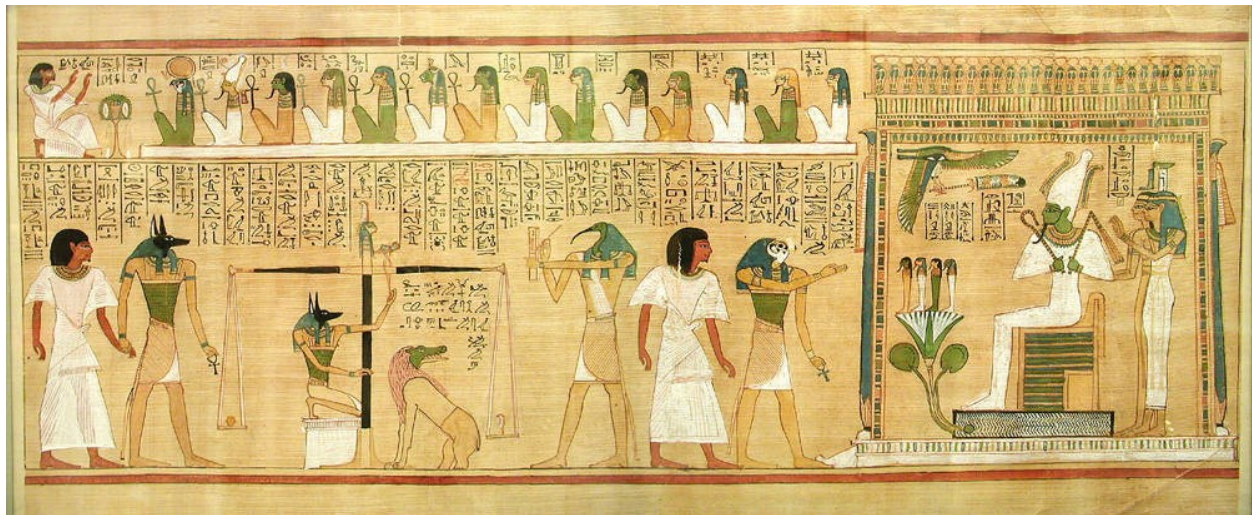


Figure 5: Ancient Egyptian Weighing of the heart scene from the *Book of the Dead*.⁹⁹

Ancient Egyptian theological and mythological beliefs from antiquity, as reflected first in the *Pyramid Texts* from the Old Kingdom, the *Coffin Texts* from the Middle Kingdom, and then further

⁹⁹ From <http://www.ancient.eu/image/113/>. Original image by Jon Bodsworth and uploaded by Jan van der Crabben, published on 26 April 2012 in the Public Domain.

structured and canonized in the *Book of the Dead* in its various forms, displays a fairly advanced and complex system of beliefs characterized by the worship of many different deities in a variety of forms, each reflecting some aspect of nature and/or some anthropomorphized (or pseudo-anthropomorphized as the case may be) aspect of God, consistent in fact with almost all of the middle and late Bronze Age contemporaneous cultures and civilizations in the Mediterranean region and even into the Near and Far East.

A byproduct of the deep antiquity which was represented by these various (primary) sources of material, is the variety and breadth of the Egyptian *mythos* in general. There isn't just one creation narrative that we can find, there are in fact several versions that survive. And while each of the versions is basically stacked with the same cast of characters, each tells the story with its own nuances and with the prevalence and predominance of one or more Egyptian deities over another, reflecting the religious emphasis on the worship of particular deities in the "Egyptian pantheon" (if we may call it that) that were representative of a particular metropolitan center or geographic region within Upper or Lower Egypt and/or the particular background and genealogy ascribed to a particular king during a particular era. These mythological narratives then became associated with particular city and region, and a particular time period, each again associated with its own "host" or "native" deity as it were, from which vantage point their mythology, and again more specifically their creation narratives, were told.

Generally, when studying the theo-philosophical traditions of ancient civilizations and cultures before the advent and proliferation of writing, one must rely less on actual firsthand accounts - like the Greek historian from the 5th century BCE Herodotus or the Egyptian historian Manetho (3rd century BCE) for example - and more on archeological evidence and general knowledge of the way of life of these ancient peoples. A way of life that is characterized by the transition of nomadic tribes, who spoke various languages and had their own distinctive customs and belief systems, to a more domesticated and stationary existence. An existence that typically sprang up around a fertile river delta region that facilitated farming and agricultural developments and went hand in hand with various technological developments like architecture, irrigation and warfare. For once one settles in a particular region one must at the very least have the capability to defend it and at the very most have the ability to expand it as most ancient rulers had the desire to do. All of these developments required a more consistent cultural and linguistic narrative in order to facilitate this advancement of civilization, one that for the most part was in the best interests of the people themselves, i.e. represented a more stable and persistent life style and community.

What complicates matters for the study of ancient Egyptian history however, more so than for the study of ancient Greek or Roman history for example, stemming in no small measure due to

its deep antiquity, is that first hand sources and accounts were limited at best, and mostly come from burial grounds or inscriptions of kings and aristocrats which represent a somewhat skewed and distorted version of history, a version that they wanted told and remembered and does not for the most part have the reliability and accuracy of later historical records, i.e. they blended mythology and hearsay alongside historical fact and it is more often than not difficult to tell the difference.

For what characterizes the earliest of civilizations is the eventual congregation and assimilation of various groups and tribes of people into larger communities that share a common language, i.e. form of communication, common belief system, and a cohesive and codependent livelihood. A livelihood where each member of the community serves a given purpose to serve the larger good so to speak and supports the overall growth and protection of the community at large. This presumes, and evolves in parallel to, what historians call “specialization”, where members of the community have specific skills that can be leveraged by the broader community and through systems of barter or trade, each of the members of the larger community can depend upon each other to support the growth of the community at large. As these early civilizations evolve to support larger numbers of people across more geographically expansive regions, systems of recording transactions, tracking history and lineage, the establishment of governance and authority and the classification of society necessary evolves out of necessity. Hence civilizations and what we call in the West “progress”, must in fact evolve to support larger and more complex socio-political environments.

Belief systems, which are encoded in language and ritual, evolve along with these other characteristics and typically in antiquity this meant that older forms of “worship”, were kept under close supervision and secrecy by a priestly (and later literary and scholarly) class of citizens who were closely affiliated with, and were sponsored and supported by, the ruling class. The priestly class general speaking then in antiquity, and specifically characteristic of Dynastic Egypt, were directly associated with the king. For the Egyptian king, that later came to be known by outsiders as the “pharaoh”, was thought to be descended from the ancient gods themselves and it was from this authority that he ruled the people. Because of this dependency, the prevailing mythology, and the capital city as well, tended to move and evolve with the leader depending upon which god he (or she) was primarily affiliated with.

This is in contrast to the Greek or Roman civilizations for example, where the culture, and in turn the mythology and theology, was much more distinct and separate from the ruling class, even if ultimate authority was still kept with the Roman Emperor for example, of the Greek Assembly – each of which throughout its history used this power to influence theo-philosophical thought. For if nothing else we inherit at least this basic concept of separation of “church and state” if you will, from these classically Western civilizations, the same civilizations to which we attribute the

invention and establishment of the first forms of democracy. As the Greek form of government at least was not authoritarian per se, at least not based upon divine authority or upon royal descent from the gods, an attribute that was later acquired by the Roman Emperors even though it did not carry the same sort of direct theological descent attribute that was so characteristic of the earlier civilizations of the Mediterranean and Near East.

It is this socio-political feature of their society in particular that lends itself to a more consistent and coherent mythological (and in turn theo-philosophical) tradition, as the theologians, or priests as it were, could more or less perform their duties somewhat separate from and removed from those that legislated and ruled. This classically Western socio-political structure in turn what allows for an environment within which the likes of Homer, Hesiod and Herodotus, and then in turn the later Hellenic philosophical tradition as a whole most notably represented by Plato and Aristotle, can flourish.

In studying and analyzing the ancient Egyptian *mythos* from antiquity as evidenced by the archeological evidence as well as the written records, and in particular in looking at their various creation stories or myths, i.e. their metaphorical and allegorical descriptions of the creation of the universe, one of the distinguishing characteristics that stands out and is reflective of the ancient Egyptians that distinguishes it from the neighboring civilizations around the Mediterranean is that a consistent narrative of their mythology is entirely absent. We have no counterpart to Hesiod's *Theogony* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from ancient Egypt, no doubt stemming from the deep antiquity within which the civilization of study represents as well as the plethora of native tribes and various groups of people which were representative of this time in prehistory in the Nile River delta region (and one of the primary reasons why the people were so hard to consolidate under one rulership no doubt, a hallmark of Dynastic Egypt).

This is both a blessing and a curse as while we get have glimpses of a wide variety of ancient myths and gods that were prevalent during the Early dynastic period, no doubt reflecting stories from Pre-Dynastic Egypt, which give us a fairly broad perspective on the *mythos* of this ancient civilization, we do not have a consolidated, canonical version of their mythology that can be directly contrasted with their neighboring civilizations – like the Hebrews, the Greeks, or the Persians (and to a lesser extent the Sumer-Babylonians/Assyrians), all of which – given at a much later time in history - compiled more structured and formalized versions of their theological traditions.

To find out about Egyptian *mythos* then, with a particular emphasis on creation narratives which at their core form the basis of their theo-philosophical belief systems, one must parse through the ancient Egyptian texts and inscriptions themselves. A written narrative that consists mainly

of hieroglyphic writings, the earliest form of Egyptian writing, found written on the walls of various burial sites and tombs (and later on papyrus in the latter part of the 2nd and first millennium BCE), that describe various hymns, magical and funeral and rituals that were meant to serve as guideposts and protection for the passage of the living into the realm of the dead. We then can combine these direct source materials with (much later) writings and references to Egyptian religion, culture and civilization from the Greek historians and philosophers from the latter half of the first millennium BCE - most notably the likes of Herodotus (c. 484 – c. 425 BCE), Plutarch (c. 46 – 120 CE), Diogenes Laertius (c 3rd century CE), all of whom speak to a long standing and deep cultural exchange between the peoples of the Nile River delta and their neighbors in the Mediterranean.

The Egyptian civilization formed primarily around the shared experience of the Nile River, with its annual cycles of flooding and recession upon which the entire society depended upon for nourishment and survival. Ancient Egypt was divided between Lower (the northern part) and Upper (the southern part), so called as the Nile flows from South to North, one of in fact the few great rivers in the world to flow in this direction. The two kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt were united around the third millennium BCE, but throughout the dynastic period each region maintained some level of autonomy. The vast and various mythological tradition of the ancient Egyptians reflected this hodge-podge relationship of its peoples and their collective and common experience with the ebb and flow, flooding and recession, of the great river Nile which supported the entire kingdom of Egypt throughout its history, into modern times in fact. Much of their mythology and its underlying belief system in turn, stemmed from and revolved around, the natural and annual cyclical pattern of the flooding of the Nile, governed by the seasons and most prominently by the great disk of the Sun in the sky.¹⁰⁰

Ra, the Sun god or disc of the Sun, played a prominent role in Egyptian *mythos* and was one of the most important deities, in various forms and through various epithets and associations, throughout Dynastic Egypt. He was typically portrayed as a man with the head of a hawk or a falcon, and was believed to be the source and sustenance of all life. The governance of Day and Night was supposed overseen by him as he traveled across the Sky, in a boat (think Nile River boat travel) during the Day and then through the Underworld, Duat, at night. To the ancient Egyptians, this *mythos* explained the great delineation of Day and Night which played such an important role in daily life in ancient Egypt and in all antiquity really.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ The Nile is only main river system that flows from south to north and its name is derived from the Greek "*Nelios*", meaning River Valley.

¹⁰¹ Note the similarities to the Greek god Apollo who was depicted as riding a chariot through the sky and who also symbolized the sun, light and knowledge (life).

The concept of the Underworld, and its relation to the sun god Ra as the creator and sustainer of life, was one of the distinguishing characteristics of Egyptian *mythos* in fact. This daily journey, battle really, of Ra through the Underworld as he battled the forces of darkness or evil in order to successfully make the journey back to the Sky and illuminate the earth again each day is one of the hallmarks of ancient Egyptian *mythos*. This journey of Ra mirrored the journey of the Soul, *Bâ*, into the Underworld at death. In the Middle Kingdom, it is Thoth and/or Osiris that becomes associated with this final, or last, *judgment* of the Soul to determine its ultimate fate, illustrating the role of the Underworld and *judgment* more generally in not just Egyptian *mythos*, but also with respect to *morality* and *ethics* in ancient Egyptian society – a motif that we see persist in Christian *mythos* as well in fact.

The primary focus of the Egyptian *mythos* then, and the intent of most of their rituals and religious ceremonies (consistent with all ancient civilizations really), was to both explain as well as ensure that the natural balance and harmony of nature was preserved. This natural order of the universe was symbolized by the goddess Ma'at, or simply *Ma'at*, who personified the notion of *truth, justice, order, balance* and *harmony* in this world and the next. She was not only the architect of the ordered universe out of its initial watery and chaotic abysmal state, but also the penultimate judge of souls upon death to determine their fate, as illustrated in the famed *Weighing of the heart* ceremony or ritual where the Soul (represented by the heart (again *Bâ*) is weighed against the feather of Ma'at, an image which is so prominently illustrated in the *Book of the Dead*.¹⁰²

Ma'at then came to represent in an abstract sense, *truth, balance, order, law, morality, and justice*, principles that sat at the very core of ancient Egyptian society which were in turn reflected in their *mythos* which ultimately held that the Soul was immortal and persisted beyond death, a belief that we find fundamental to almost all ancient *mythos, ethics* and *morality* throughout Eurasia in antiquity in fact. *Ma'at* not only ensure balance and harmony in the sphere of man, but she also ensured balance and harmony in the sphere of the heavens as well, regulating the motion of the stars and the seasons, as well as the actions of the rest of the Egyptian pantheon. In almost all Egyptian *cosmogony*, it is *Ma'at* who established order in the universe when the Earth and humans were created. In a somewhat later development, *Ma'at* was paired with a masculine counterpart Thoth that shared similar attributes.

Thoth was the Egyptian god of *wisdom*, that during the Ptolemaic Period came to be directly associated with the Greek god Hermes who in Hellenic *mythos* of course was believed to be the

¹⁰² See Wikipedia contributors, 'Ma'at', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 18 June 2016, 05:43 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ma'at&oldid=725837786>> [accessed 21 August 2016]. The notion of *Ma'at* is quite similar in fact to the Hellenic concept of *Logos*), at least as a more primitive personified form and arguably is the source from which this all important Hellenic philosophical principle originates from.

founder and upholder of all knowledge (writing, magic, fire, etc.), the synthesis of which arose the characteristically Hellenic-Egyptian tradition of Hermeticism.

After her role in creation and continuously preventing the universe from returning to chaos, her primary role in Egyptian mythology dealt with the weighing of souls, or judgment, that took place in the underworld upon death, the underworld of the Egyptians akin to the Hades of the Greeks. It was the feather of *Ma'at*, representing righteousness or justice, that was the measure that determined whether or not a Soul (considered to reside in the heart) of the departed would reach the paradise of afterlife successfully. Pharaohs were often depicted with the emblems of *Ma'at* to emphasize their role in upholding the laws of the Creator. After the rise of Ra in the Egyptian pantheon, a somewhat later development, *Ma'at* and Thoth were sometimes depicted together as consorts to Ra. *Ma'at*, to the ancient Egyptian represented the fixed, eternal order of the universe, both in the cosmos and in human society.

With respect to their creation *mythos*, or *theogony* specifically, given the age and variety of inhabitants and peoples of the Nile River delta in antiquity we find are several different theogonic narratives from Dynastic Egypt, each having its source from a different geographical or metropolitan region, and each reflecting a somewhat different perspective on the origin of the universe and the generations, and primary roles, of the gods that came from out of the primordial *chaos*, or *watery abyss*, from which the material universe emerged.¹⁰³

The narrative geographically centered in Hermopolis (or Khmun in ancient Egyptian which means “town of eight”) was predominant in Old Kingdom Egypt and is typically referred to as the Ogdoad, or great Eight. In this narrative, there exist eight primordial characteristics of the universe prior to its formation into a creative entity and before the gods come to exist. These four sets of male and female counterparts representing watery abyss itself (Nu & Naunet), eternity or limitlessness (Huh & Hauhet), darkness (Kuk & Kauket) and air (Amun & Amaunet).

The more classic, or orthodox creation myth from ancient Egypt is particularly prominent in the *Pyramid Texts* and describes the manifestation of Atum as the first deity upon which the world is created. Atum, again closely associated with the Sun as the creative force of the universe, is depicted as emerging, out of these primordial waters – “Nu” or “Nun” - after which the pantheon of gods and their respective elemental characteristics of creation are established. Centered around Heliopolis, the Greek name for the ancient city calling out its close association with the

¹⁰³ E.J. Michael Witzel speaks to four ancient Egyptian cosmogonic traditions from Heliopolis, Memphis, Thermopolis and Thebes. The Heliopolis version he refers to as the most “orthodox”, dating from the 5th dynasty or the middle of the third millennium BCE. See also Wikipedia contributors, 'Ancient Egyptian creation myths', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 4 July 2016, 18:40 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ancient_Egyptian_creation_myths&oldid=728334663.

worship of the Sun, we find Atum as representing the deified personification of the great creative force from which all the lesser gods are created. In a fairly loose English rendering of a hymn as it was sung in around 400 BCE in Thebes we find:

At the moment of creation, Atum spoke: I alone am the creator. When I came into being, all life began to develop. When the almighty speaks, all else comes to life. There were no heavens and no earth, there was no dry land and there no reptiles on the land...

When I first began to create, when I alone was planning and designing many creatures, I had not sneezed Shu the wind, I had not spat Tefnut the rain, there was not a single living creature. I planned many living creatures; all were in my heart, and their children and grandchildren....

Then I copulated with my own fist. I masturbated with my own hand. I ejaculated into my own mouth. I sneezed to create Shu the wind, I spat to create Tefnut the rain. Old Man Nun the sea reared them; Eye the Overseer looked after them...

In the beginning I was alone, then there were three more. I dawned over the land of Egypt. Shu the wind and Tefnut the rain played on Nun the sea...

With tears from my Eye, I wept and human beings appeared... I created the reptiles and their companions. Shu and Tefnut gave birth to Geb the earth and Nut the sky. Geb and Nut gave birth to Osiris and Isis, to Seth and Nephthys. Osiris and Isis gave birth to Horus. One was born right after the another. These nine [ennead] gave birth to all the multitude of the land.¹⁰⁴

This tradition is sometimes referred to as the Ennead, or great Nine, as Atum begets or gives birth to (or seeds is perhaps the more accurate term) the eight lesser gods – the first pair being Shu (wind/air) and Tefnut (moisture/rain), and the next pair is Geb (earth) and Nut (sky), which in turn give birth to Osiris (overseer of the land of the dead) and Isis (goddess of life and fertility) and then finally Set (god of disorder, or storm) and Nephthys (goddess of order, literally “keeper of the house”), the last four of which provide governance and order to the universal creation.

While this is a fairly late rendition of a much older (Old Kingdom) mythological narrative, we still see the older rendition of the creation of the gods through the self-copulation of the original and primordial god, in this case Atum and the existence of the primordial abyss, Nun and his companion here represented by the “Eye” which preside over the initial generation of gods. Perhaps a later addition to the tale is the association of the word or speech to creation as we can see from the first verse quoted above. But nonetheless here we see the great Eight – the Ogdoad

¹⁰⁴ *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*. Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin. 3rd edition published by Paulist Press, NY/NJ 2006 pgs. 8-9.

– is preserved here in male/female pairs, the sum total of which provide *balance* and *harmony* to the universe and preside over mankind and in particular the land of Egypt.

This Ennead *mythos* also co-existed or ran parallel with another mythological tradition centered in Memphis which tells the tale of the god Ptah and the universal creation emanating from his heart and mind (the heart being the seat of the Egyptian Soul, i.e. again *Bâ*) to his speech, or spoken word, where after the world and all its gods are created. From a quotation from an inscription in the tomb of the famed King Tutankhamun, we find the following inscription which is reflective of the ancient Egyptian cosmogonic tradition which centered around Ptah, from whose mouth the universe and all of its gods and creatures sprung forth.

The Lord of All, after having come into being, says: I am who came into being as Khepri ("the becoming one"). When I came into being, the beings became into being, all the beings came into being after I became. Numerous are those who became, who came out of my mouth, before heaven existed, nor earth came into being... I being in weariness was bound to them in the Watery Abyss [Nu]. I found no place to stand. I thought in my heart, I Planned myself, I made all forms being alone, before I ejected Shu, before I spat out Tefnut¹⁰⁵.

Here we see reference to this primordial abyss, represented by water that had both male and female attributes, coming before the generation of the fundamental elements (the gods) of the sky/air and water/moisture. We can also see here perhaps the beginnings of some of the later Hellenic philosophical themes surrounding the formation of the material world from *ideas*, or *forms*, or more generally *Logos*.

What captivates us about ancient Egypt, and is reflected in the text that ancient Egypt is perhaps best known for, *The Book of the Dead*, is their graphic and symbolic imagery that they created that is associated with death. While this book of myths and stories that was typically read aloud, at least portions, during the burial ceremonies of the upper class, priests and especially – in ornate fashion no doubt – to the pharaohs themselves. The *Book* has come to more or less be identified with the rituals surrounding death in ancient Egypt, and one of its most prominent

¹⁰⁵ Quoted from A Piankoff's *The Shrines of Tut-ankh-amon*, excerpt from *The Origins of the World's Mythologies*, E. J. Michael Witzel 2012; pg. 113/114. Note the translation from hieroglyphs to English is a wholly different exercise of the translation from Greek or certainly Latin to English where grammar (subject and object and verb transitions) as well as direct word etymology is absent.

features clearly reflects a strong sense of *justice* and social order, quite reminiscent of the notion judgment in Christianity in fact.

The *Book of the Dead* however should not be taken out of context within the overall social scheme of daily life to an ancient Egyptian. For this book of mythology as it were, survives because it was inscribed on the tombs of the dead and in the associated inscriptions found with dead rulers and aristocrats. The underlying *mythos* however, went beyond just death and eternal justice and reflected a broader social appeal, with depictions of various scenes and acts of daily, or “normal” life, reflecting a fairly advanced system of writing that the early Egyptians from the Old Kingdom did not have access to (from which the *Pyramid Texts* are from).

By the time society around the Mediterranean had advanced to support such grand epic mythological tales that have captivated our collective imaginations for so many centuries, Egypt had already come under strong Greek, Hellenic, influence (and then Roman shortly thereafter), and as such the *mythos* we see in the *Book of the Dead* carries with it distinctive Hellenic undertones, or overtones as the case may be. Of course, by the Ptolemaic Period in the last few centuries of the first millennium BCE, the *mythos* between the ancient Egyptians and the ancient Hellenes had almost completely assimilated, with deities from either tradition having virtual equivalents in the other – with Hermes and Thoth being perhaps the most prominent and notable of examples.

Depending upon the power center of ancient Egypt, there were slight variations of this creation *mythos*, each of which was centered around a specific metropolitan center off of the Nile which held prominence during the pharaoh’s rule at that time, and each of which ultimately represented the source, and lineage, of his power. Ancient Egypt was made up of Upper Egypt in the South, where ancient Thebes was located, and Lower Egypt to the North where Memphis was located. The prominence of the river, i.e. *water*, to *life* in ancient Egypt no doubt is integrally linked to the role that the water plays in its creation *mythos*, i.e. its *cosmogony*, manifest as the primal pairing of Nu and Naunet.

The main variants of the creation *mythos*, by city (using their Greek names) were:

- *Hermopolis*: the home of the Ogdoad or “Eight”,
- *Heliopolis*: literally the “city of the Sun” (Helios is the god the Sun in Greek/Hellenic *mythos*) where Atum, closely associated with Ra as the sun disc, was the leader of the pantheon which in this variant was nine primary deities, i.e. the Ennead,
- *Memphis*: co-existent with the *mythos* of Heliopolis except in this variant the universe is created through Ptah, the great craftsman god who, like Plato’s *Demiurge*, shaped the world through his *speech* or *thought* or *mind*, and lastly

- *Thebes*: where Amun was not just a key member of the Ogdoad, or great Eight, but was the force behind all of the other deities and the universe itself.

But from the tombs of the pharaohs, and the written record that accompanied these tombs inscribed on their walls and entranceways, one can see a glimpse of the of the creation *mythos*, *cosmogony*, of the ancient Egyptians, which although varied from region to region throughout ancient Egypt, nonetheless still had some very consistent themes throughout, like for example the establishment of *universal order*, Ma'at (the child of Thoth, the god of the moon, and Ra, the sun god) from the watery, chaotic abyss of *Nu* (or Nun) and his consort Naunet. From these primary deities, or forces, the universe unfolds, with – like the other creation narratives from Eurasian antiquity in fact – the various universal elements being represented by deities which unfold as part of the theogonic sequence or narrative as it were - Earth (Geb), Sun (Ra/Khepri), Moon (Thoth/ Khonsu), Rain/Water (Tefnut), Wind/Air (Amun/Shu), Sky/Heavens (Horus/Nut), and then the last pairing of Isis and Osiris representing Life/Fertility and Death/Destruction respectively.

It is from the watery abyss, great chasm or void of creation upon which *order* unfolds, personified in Egyptian *mythos* as the goddess Ma'at who typically is depicted wearing an ostrich feather in her headdress symbolizing *truth* and *justice*, and who sits in opposition to Isfet - the god of chaos, disorder and evil. It is with Ma'at upon which mankind and civilization depends for their proper functioning and balance, encompassing not only the *cosmic* principle of *order* and *law*, but also the *law* and *order* of society at large, as well as the normal functioning of the forces of nature. It is *Ma'at* that shapes the world into its different, ordered creative aspects and which provides the framework within which the other deities are first created and then sustained and balanced to keep the universe together so to speak, and prevent it from falling into chaos.

So *Ma'at* was a key component of the theo-philosophy, the belief system, underlying ancient Egyptian society and civilization, a notion that helped bind together its peoples along the Nile River valley and helping establish *order*, *justice* and *harmony* not just in the sky and heavens, but also in the sphere of human affairs as well as reflected in the notion of justice or *virtue*, aspects of which carried the Soul from this world to the next. Ancient Egyptian society was structured to reflect this underlying mythology and belief system, or perhaps better put – the *mythos* of the ancient Egyptians reflected their way of life and underlying beliefs. These concepts and symbols, personified by the various gods and goddesses and as spoken of in various creation and other myths and takes that explained the natural order of things, its underlying cyclical nature and the fundamental relationship of life and death so eloquently represented in the daily struggle of Ra from the forces of darkness to which life must emerge each day , was ultimately reflected in their

worship of the pharaoh as a manifestation of the divine, and in their focus on ritual and sacrifice to the gods to retain this order and balance in their world.

From early Dynastic Egypt as reflected in the *Pyramid Texts* and *Coffin Texts*, and then later in the New Kingdom as reflected in *Book of the Dead*, we see a prominence of the notion of the importance of the protection and preservation of the established order of the universe, or *Ma'at*, that existed in eternal conflict with evil, or darkness, typically drawn as a serpent or snake in the earliest texts, and then later coming to be referred to as *Isfet*, or *Isfet*. By the VIIIth dynasty onward, this serpent which represented the forces of darkness and evil became personified as the god Apep, who became a prominent figure in the New Kingdom *mythos*, being depicted in a daily epic struggle with the sun god Ra - who represented the forces of light and good - which Ra had to overcome as the Sun passed down through the horizon into the underworld, the place where Apep lie in waiting, in order that the Sun to rise again the following day. Apep was eventually replaced by Set in later Egyptian mythological tradition who came to represent the god of the underworld, or the Hades of the Greek tradition.

We see even in a *Coffin Texts* inscription specific reference to the requirement of the dead being cleansed of Isfet in order to be reborn in the netherworld, or Duat, speaking to the fundamental and very old ancient Egyptian notion of the universe being a battleground of the forces of good and evil, light and darkness, both at the cosmic level and at the spiritual or individual level.¹⁰⁶ These very same themes can also be found in the Zoroastrian tradition of the Indo-Iranian/Persian peoples to the East where Ahura Mazda and his band of angels are in constant struggle with Angra Mainyu and his band of demons (*devas*) who represent falsehood, darkness and evil, as well as of course in Christianity, where God and his counterpart the fallen angel Satan are also portrayed as opposing and dueling forces of the world. Another interesting Christian parallel to the Egyptian Isfet can be found in the Judeo-Christian Garden of Eden story where it is the serpent who tricks Adam and Eve into eating from the Tree of Life, plunging mankind out of the Garden and into the mortal world of endless toil, death and suffering.

In some sense, this shifting or changing of mythological emphasis was consistent of the ancient civilizations of the time, before true empires or states ruled whole regions where religious or mythological histories were more standardized or systematized. But regardless of the variety of creation myths that existed throughout ancient Egypt, they all shared a common component; that is the emergence of the world from a primordial *watery abyss* (referred to as Nu or Nunet in its male and female aspects respectively), quite consistent with what we find in the Hellenic mythological narrative as well as the Hebrew (Jewish) narrative from *Genesis*.

¹⁰⁶ *Coffin Texts* 335a, reference from Rabinovich, Yakov. *Isle of Fire: A Tour of the Egyptian Further World*. Invisible Books, 2007 from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isfet_\(Egyptian_mythology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isfet_(Egyptian_mythology)).

Regardless of these variations however, in all of the different cosmogonies a consistent undercurrent of the act of creation from the watery abyss (Nu or Nun) and the establishment of order, or *Ma'at*, can be found, establishing from it the foundations of the physical earth, sky, seasons and basic elements, along with the foundations of civilization itself. The role of the ruler of Egypt in fact was the keeping of this order, the shepherd of *Ma'at* in the human world as it were, and he (or she) was expected to establish and protect this divine order upon the people in his dominion and throughout the Kingdom of Egypt. In other words, the pharaoh's role was to interpret and reflect, and to protect and establish, the cosmic order as indicated in the underlying cosmological myth, to the social order - maintaining life and society at large by ensuring that the gods were pleased and sustained with offerings and rituals, and the king's power originated from his reflection of this cosmic, divine principal and therefore was upheld and respected by the population at large

But despite the different creation myth variants and different versions of the Egyptian pantheon that can be found throughout Dynastic Egypt as the capital shifted between Memphis, Thebes, Heliopolis, and then later in Hellenic Alexandria, there was always present this firm belief in the importance of order. *Ma'at*, in the world, and its epic struggle with chaos and evil, *Isfet* or Apep, that defined the universe as well as the internal world of the spirit. We see these same themes and notion of eternal struggle not only with Zoroastrianism and Christianity, but also with the Greeks as well, reflected in the epic battle between Zeus and the Titans in the *Theogony*, where after the Titans were forever bound and chained within Tartarus, the realm of the dead overseen by the Greek god of the underworld Hades, corresponding almost precisely to the Egyptian netherworld Duat and its presider Apep.

The *Enûma Eliš*: Sumer- Babylonian Creation *Mythos*

Like all ancient mythological traditions, in order to have a contextual understanding of ancient myth and the culture within which it evolved, one must look at the historical and archeological record, along with the extant textual and writing material, most of which comes down to us in fragmentary form. Understanding the context within which a text or its fragments is found, from an archeological perspective, gives us a better understanding as to the role of the text, its purpose, and what type of variants or textual/manuscript tradition which the writing can be comprehended and best understood. This is really the only method that can be used to attain a proper understanding of ancient “literature”, especially when analyzing it in a translated/transliterated form. This allows us to, at least as much as possible, to get a sense as to the cultural and sociological milieu surrounding the text and grasp as much as possible the history and the belief systems of the author.

Archeologists have found cuneiform tablets from as early back as 3400 BC, roughly corresponding to the advent of civilization in Ancient Egypt, and the last known cuneiform tablet is from the latter part of the first century CE. So this dead language, or script, was actually in use for around 4000 years and during that time was adapted to support the inscription of a variety of spoken languages, ranging from Akkadian¹⁰⁷ and Hittite tongues, to of course the better known Sumerian. It is also a commonly held belief that cuneiform inspired several other alphabet systems that followed it, the Ugaritic and Old Persian alphabets for example. Cuneiform writing was gradually replaced by the Phoenician alphabet however, a precursor to the Greek alphabet system¹⁰⁸, and by the 2nd century CE, the script had become all but extinct.

Cuneiform was represented by *wedge shaped* markings, referring to the method and look of the markings as they were born out on the clay tablets that they were carved on, by stylus or pens of sorts which facilitated the script on the clay. One of the reasons why so much of this writing has survived is the instrument that it was written on, i.e. the clay tablets. A much more lasting and persistent archeological artifact than say papyrus, which was used by the Egyptians, or certainly silk which was commonly thought to have been used by the ancient Chinese. The pen that was used to craft the characters, looked something like a chopstick with a sharp edge at the end to

¹⁰⁷ Akkadian (aka Assyro-Babylonian) is an extinct Semitic language that was spoken in ancient Mesopotamia. The earliest attested Semitic language, it was captured and inscribed using the cuneiform writing system and is believed to have derived from an ancient, now lost, Sumerian language. The name of the language is derived from the city of Akkad, a major center of Mesopotamian civilization.

¹⁰⁸ See Wikipedia contributors, 'History of the Greek alphabet', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 17 July 2016, 09:00 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=History_of_the_Greek_alphabet&oldid=730184436> [accessed 22 August 2016]

carve the characters and symbols onto the clay. The wedge-shaped characters are where the name of the ancient script got its name in fact, wedge in Latin was *cuneus*.



Figure 6: Example of cuneiform script writing from the Achaemenid Empire (c 5th century BCE).¹⁰⁹

The cuneiform script, was made up of a combination of *logograms* or *ideograms*, similar in kind to hieroglyphs in their more mature, Old and Middle Kingdom eras of ancient Egypt as well as similar to Old Chinese characters as they evolved in classical Chinese antiquity. The characters or symbols are first and foremost picture based, betraying their origins as symbolic figures no doubt, and as the script developed they came to represent whole words or *ideas*. Phonetic characters, again like the more evolved form of hieroglyphs and ancient Chinese writing systems, were added to facilitate the representation of words or sounds in spoken languages that the respective writing systems were used to codify. Alphabet systems like those of the ancient Phoenicians and Greeks were later developments. With these building blocks, ancient Sumerians and Babylonians were able to express themselves in broad array of subjects: from mythology to personal narratives, to legal texts, and scientific works, and even correspondence and letters of sorts.

The *Enûma Eliš* is the best known and most commonly referred to text that represents this creation mythological narrative from the ancient Sumer-Babylonian people, a myth that gets its

¹⁰⁹ Inscription of Xerxes, Van, Turkey It is a trilingual inscription, written in Old Persian, Babylonian and Elamite (from left to right). From Wikipedia contributors, 'History of the Greek alphabet', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 17 July 2016, 09:00 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=History_of_the_Greek_alphabet&oldid=730184436> [accessed 22 August 2016].

name after the first two words of the first clay tablet. The text exists in various copies from ancient Babylon and Assyria and is believed to have been composed in the Bronze Age, roughly 18th to 16th centuries BCE, roughly corresponding to the early Assyrian Empire which is believed to have existed as an independent kingdom in the Mesopotamian region starting from roughly the middle of the third millennium BCE until it collapsed in the middle of the first millennium BCE. It is during this time period that the myth and tablets are believed to have been created and transcribed. Unlike the Egyptian cultural remnants which primarily come from burial formations – Coffins and Pyramids (hence the name of the primary textual sources of ancient Old Kingdom Egypt, i.e. the *Pyramid Texts* and *Coffin Texts*), from ancient Sumerian-Babylonian civilization, a culture and people that evolved around the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, there exist several versions of almost complete versions of their creation myths.

The complete story was recorded on clay tablets and is around one thousand lines. It was recorded in the Old Babylonian, or Akkadian language. The text and the verses therein were associated with the Babylonian New Year festival, so there was a ritual use for the material as well as socio-political (Marduk being a Babylonian deity in origin), hence the various tablet findings that survive that give us a full textual tradition, at least as full as can be expected from that time period in antiquity. From this perspective, we clearly see strong parallels to the Egyptian cosmological narratives which were drawn up and affiliated with the reigns of various Egyptian kings throughout its long history, associated with various political capitals and temples of worship which existed therein as well as parallels with *Old Testament* stories, in particular the stories of creation and the Great Flood which are narrated in the first five books of the *Old Testament*, i.e. the *Five Books of Moses*.

The *Enûma Eliš* myth is the primary source of creation mythology of the ancient Sumer-Babylonians and represents a fairly mature rendering of creation mythology as well as reflecting a fairly consolidated socio-political structure within which the myth, and its associated rituals and rites within which it was recited, are believed to have been performed. Although a work of mythology and theological significant no doubt, the text and the context within which it was preserved shows a strong political influence as well, as it was clearly written (and copied) for the purpose of justifying the supremacy of the Babylonian God Marduk above all other Mesopotamian gods, no doubt to consolidate and affiliate the ruler/king of the Assyrian Empire to this ancient deity.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ All of the myth has survived except for the majority of the last chapter, Tablet V, which has yet to be discovered. Aside from this lost portion however, the text is almost complete. For a good translation of the text with notes see <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/blc/blc07.htm>. Also see Wikipedia contributors, 'Enûma Eliš', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 5 August 2016, 15:29 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=En%C3%BBma_Eli%C5%A1&oldid=733127460> [accessed 22 August 2016].

The *Enûma Eliš*, or *Enuma Elish*, loosely translated into English as something like “when on high”, a title given to it from the first few words of the text as was a common tradition in antiquity, begins with the following passage which describes the creation of the universe and the establishment of the structural elements and deities that they represented therein:

*When in the height heaven was not named,
And the earth beneath did not yet bear a name,
And the primeval Apsû, who begat them,
And chaos, Tiamat, the mother of them both
Their waters were mingled together,
And no field was formed, no marsh was to be seen;
When of the gods none had been called into being,
And none bore a name, and no destinies were ordained;
Then were created the gods in the midst of heaven,
Lahmu and Lahamu were called into being...
Ages increased,...
Then Ansar and Kisar were created, and over them....
Long were the days, then there came forth....
Anu, their son,...
Ansar and Anu...
And the god Anu...
Nudimmud, whom his fathers, his begetters.....
Abounding in all wisdom,...'
He was exceeding strong...
He had no rival -
Thus were established and were... the great gods.¹¹¹*

In the beginning, we have the existence of a primordial *watery abyss*, of which two basic male and female correspondent and coexistent deified principals are called out – Apsû and Tiamat respectively. The first representing the ordered or structured aspect, the seed, and the latter representing the more chaotic and destructive (female) aspect. These two primary entities or forces become the source from which all the other major gods and goddesses emanate, and from which the earth, sky, sun, moon and stars are created, again similar to the narrative from the other contemporary mythologies we find in the Mediterranean.

¹¹¹ *ENUMA ELISH, THE EPIC OF CREATION*. L.W. King Translator, from *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, London 1902. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/enuma.htm>

This initial primordial substance, described as a “watery abyss” and “chaotic” in the Sumer-Babylonian *mythos*, or that which lacks order and justice in the various creation mythologies in the Mediterranean region in antiquity, starts as initially “disordered” and ungerminated. Then via the act, or in some traditions via the spoken word or thought, of the first principal or being/deity the ordered cosmos starts to unfold and the first generation of gods representing the basic forces of nature is born. At the very beginning of the story of creation then, we see the existence of two primordial forces – one male and one female - from which the universe and the deities are begotten. You have this unformulated ocean like substance deity who bears all pantheon of gods and goddesses, Tiamat, a female goddess associated with the ocean or salt water, and then the progenitor male deity, Apsû¹¹², Akkadian the god who presides over fresh water, which was believed by the ancient Sumer-Babylonians, not surprisingly, to represent the spring and source of life.

These respective primordial male and female gods or entities then exist prior to, and must in fact come together, before the sky and earth, the material and heavenly realms, can come into existence. Then Lahmu and Lahamu are created (“slime” or “mud” and “silt” or “salt”, male and female respectively), alluding to the establishment of the primary elements of creation upon which the universe and the later deities in the Sumer-Babylonian pantheon can come forth. Anshar and Kishar are then created, “heaven” (male) and the “whole earth” (male) or perhaps better understood as “material universe”. Then comes Anu, a male deity representing the sky (as distinct from ‘heaven’, represented by his father Anshar) and then Nudimmud, or the “image fashioner” come into being. Thus is established the Sumer-Babylonian pantheon of gods who preside over creation before the lesser gods are born, of which of course Marduk plays a central role.¹¹³

The *Enûma Eliš* then relays in graphic detail the story of the struggle between the begetter gods of Apsû and Tiamat and their offspring, a struggle which culminates in the destruction of the powers and followers of Tiamat - led by her offspring Kingu – which are ultimately defeated by Marduk, the son of Ea (Enki) and Damkina, the great Mother goddess of Sumer-Babylonian *mythos*.

*Then advanced Tiamat and Marduk, the counselor of the gods;
To the fight they came on, to the battle they drew nigh.
The lord spread out his net and caught her,*

¹¹²A more literal etymological translation of “Apsû” being something like “knowledge of the deep” - *as/ab*=‘ocean’ *zu*=‘to know’ or ‘deep’.

¹¹³ See http://faculty.gvsu.edu/websterm/enuma_elish.html for a good overview of the deities and their representative figures or forces.

*And the evil wind that was behind him he let loose in her face.
 As Tiamat opened her mouth to its full extent,
 He drove in the evil wind, while as yet she had not shut her lips.
 The terrible winds filled her belly,
 And her courage was taken from her, and her mouth she opened wide.
 He seized the spear and burst her belly,
 He severed her inward parts, he pierced her heart.
 He overcame her and cut off her life;
 He cast down her body and stood upon it.
 When he had slain Tiamat, the leader,
 Her might was broken, her host was scattered.
 And the gods her helpers, who marched by her side,
 Trembled, and were afraid, and turned back.
 They took to flight to save their lives;
 But they were surrounded, so that they could not escape.
 He took them captive, he broke their weapons;
 In the net they were caught and in the snare they sat down.
 The ... of the world they filled with cries of grief.
 They received punishment from him, they were held in bondage.
 And on the eleven creatures which she had filled with the power of striking terror,
 Upon the troop of devils, who marched at her...,
 He brought affliction, their strength he...;
 Them and their opposition he trampled under his feet.
 Moreover, Kingu, who had been exalted over them,
 He conquered, and with the god Dug-ga he counted him.
 He took from him the Tablets of Destiny that were not rightly his,
 He sealed them with a seal and in his own breast he laid them.¹¹⁴*

After a rebellion and betrayal in the midst of the primordial gods, the first generation of gods and goddesses and their offspring, led by Tiamat and her son Kingu, Marduk assumes dominion over the world of immortal gods. The story is not only reminiscent of the battle between Zeus and the Titans, also the progeny of the first generation of gods which plays such a prominent role in the *Theogony* of Hesiod, but also the battle fought between Osiris and Set from which Horus - the Egyptian counterpart to the Sumer-Babylonian Marduk and the Greek Zeus - establishes himself as the ruler of the pantheon from ancient Egypt.

Much like *Ma'at* of the Egyptians, and the Greek Hermes, Marduk is accredited not only with the establishment of order and justice in the realm of the divine, but also with the establishment of the final order of the material universe and the world of man – creating the stars in the heavens,

¹¹⁴ *ENUMA ELISH THE EPIC OF CREATION* L.W. King Translator. From *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, London 1902. End of Fourth Tablet. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/enuma.htm>.

the zodiac and the precessions of the seasons, as well as the calendar to measure time which included in the Sumer-Babylonian tradition the 12 months of the year, and the Sun and Moon to govern time.

*He (Marduk) made the stations for the great gods;
The stars, their images, as the stars of the Zodiac, he fixed.
He ordained the year and into sections he divided it;
For the twelve months he fixed three stars.
After he had ... the days of the year ... images,
He founded the station of Nibir [the planet Jupiter] to determine their bounds;
That none might err or go astray,
He set the station of Bel and Ea along with him.
He opened great gates on both sides,
He made strong the bolt on the left and on the right.
In the midst thereof he fixed the zenith;
The Moon-god he caused to shine forth, the night he entrusted to him.
He appointed him, a being of the night, to determine the days;
Every month without ceasing with the crown he covered him, saying:
"At the beginning of the month, when thou shinest upon the land,
Thou commandest the horns to determine six days,
And on the seventh day to divide the crown..¹¹⁵*

So while the *theogony* related in the *Enûma Eliš* represents a distinctive tale and has very specific Sumer-Babylonian characteristics, we nonetheless find very common motifs therein which align Sumer-Babylonian *mythos*, as we see it in the *Enûma Eliš*, with other creation *mythos* in antiquity, especially from in and around the Mediterranean - most notably the Hebrew narrative we find in *Genesis*, Hellenic *theogony* in Hesiod's rendition of world creation, as well as the creation *mythos* we find in ancient Egypt as well.

This universal order as the ancients understood it was reflected, and anthropomorphized, in this initial pantheon of gods that were created as part of the establishment of the cosmos at the beginning of Time, with the most primordial of beings coming forth first and then the lesser, or more shaped or well-formed aspects of creation coming afterwards, with ultimately all of the different aspects of nature – Earth, Air, Water, Sky, Sun, Moon, etc. – being brought forth as it were and then ultimately a king or ruler of the gods being crowned at the end. Mankind, the “prototypical man” as it were, is typically shaped or crafted through clay or by some other means at the end of these theogonies, such as we see in *Genesis* for example with Adam. These

¹¹⁵ *ENUMA ELISH THE EPIC OF CREATION* L.W. King Translator. From *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, London 1902. First verses of Fifth Tablet. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/enuma.htm>.

theogonies - or *cosmogonies* as we refer to them sometimes which carries with it more philosophical, or metaphysical connotations - establish not only the socio and cultural specific narrative (what we have come to understand and refer to as “myth”) as to how the world came into being, but also the basic, and fundamentally divine, structure of their world through which not only the cycle of Time is established as it is measured by Day, Night, the Moon and Stars, but also the basic theological framework and deities who could, and most certainly should, be worshipped in their various forms and specific attributes via various rites and rituals so that their world could be preserved and maintained.

These creation tales, i.e. our *mythos* - and again this is common throughout antiquity in the cultures and civilizations through Eurasia, Sumer-Babylon being no exception - typically end in the overthrow of some vicious tyrant god by a benevolent child of the second or third generation deities who establishes order and justice throughout the world of immortals, the beings who are co-emergent with creation itself and who dwell in the Heavens amidst the Stars and in the Sky. This leader of the gods then, the Sumer-Babylonian Marduk or the Hellenic Zeus serve as prime examples, not only establishes and keeps order in the Heavens, but also is the divine being who is responsible for, and whose worship and fealty in turn provides the basis for harmony and balance, and preservation really, in the world of man as well – to keep the society safe and flourishing and to protect it from the onslaught of neighbors or attack which was invariably a concern for almost all ancient peoples in one form or another. The king or ruler of each of these ancient societies usually claimed his power and legitimacy through this leader of the divine immortal pantheon of gods, either through direct descent or through some other means of divine heritage, aligning and legitimizing their rule with the universal cosmic order as it were, providing the basis for the divinity of these rulers and kings as well, who in many cases were also worshipped as gods, the Egyptian pharaohs perhaps being the best example.

The *mythos* of the Sumer-Babylonian civilization that centered around the Tigris-Euphrates Valley was no different, with primordial the Apsû and Tiamat providing the basis from which the universe comes into being, corresponding more or less with the Nu and Naunet of the Egyptians and from which Marduk comes forth as the ultimate leader of the gods who through various acts of miraculous heroism comes to be king of the gods and as such ultimately responsible for the well-being of the Sumer-Babylonian people who were in his charge so to speak. This creation narrative that we find in the *Enûma Eliš*, is essentially the same in structure and form that we find in the Hellenic rendition as told by Hesiod, as well as the Indian/Hindu rendition as well as we find in the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas*, with a few local variations of course.

We also find in the Sumer-Babylonian tradition the creation of anthropomorphic deities, the second generation of gods, which establish and keep order and justice in the universe, a concept that we see in virtually all of the *mythos* from antiquity throughout Eurasia in fact. Furthermore,

in each of these ancient creation narratives with again the Sumer-Babylonia tradition being no exception, these anthropomorphic deities emerge out of a watery and abysmal chaotic void or abyss, through which ultimately the universe is shaped and ordered, with these deities being co-emergent with it and at the same time responsible for its preservation as well. One can also clearly see a consistent socio-political purpose behind the creation myths of the Egyptians and Sumerians, the need to establish the preeminence of the one ruler of society as manifest in one chieftain or ruler whose authority is established via the primary deity of the people. Ancient cultures were certainly marked by a priesthood class that was legitimized by the ruler of the people which in turn rested upon the common mythology from which authority was established and divined – hence the worship of these ancient kings and pharaohs as divine.

It's fair to say that both the ancient Egyptian and Sumer-Babylonian mythological traditions – and to a lesser extent the mythology of the Hebrews - speak of and hold great reverence for the deity or principal who establishes and maintains order in the world, for which the king or leader of the respective peoples is held ultimately responsible and from which their authority is established. The Greco-Roman and Hebrew mythological traditions as reflected in the works of Hesiod, Ovid and Moses, all which evolved in the roughly the same geographic region, were clearly influenced by their Sumer-Babylonian and Egyptian predecessors and carried very similar narratives and motifs albeit in different terms with different deities and in different languages (both spoken and written).

One of the most prominent features of ancient society is the connection between the ruling class (kings and priests) and the respective *mythos* of said society - what scholars refer to as “civilization”. In these ancient socio-political structures, again these civilizations, socio-political structures that were defined more or less by their language and their “culture”, there exists a very strong correlation, a dependence really, between the authority of the ruling class – kings, aristocrats and priests – and their respective *mythos*. For it is through the myths themselves, and their associative rituals, rites and festivals which were intimately and intrinsically tied to said myths, that not only bound the people together – provided the cultural foundations as it were – but also provided the legitimacy of the ruling class.

For the ruling class, the pharaohs and emperors were considered to be of divine heritage, tracing their lineage back through the *mythos* to the presider over the universe himself, i.e. God, or Marduk in the case of the Sumer-Babylonians. In the cosmic, universal sphere, it was God who held dominion, who through his power provided order and support, and balance and harmony (as juxtaposed from the primordial chaos from which the ordered universe emerged), to the previously disordered and chaotic universe. In the human sphere, reflected in the socio-political structures of these ancient societies, it was the king or emperor that provided order, balance and harmony for their respective people, using the powers that had been granted to him from his (or

her) lineage, from the gods themselves, through the rites and rituals presided over by the priests, the messengers of the divine.

It is this picture that essentially describes the relationship between the ruling class and the divine for almost all of the ancient civilizations that we see emerge in and around the Mediterranean, and to the East in Asia Minor and Persia, in antiquity from the 4th to the 1st millennia BCE, up until the Christian Era really – where power and political authority in particular was understood, legitimized and justified through the lens of the respective cultural *mythos* of said civilization, an intellectual framework which, in today's terminology, provided the underlying *theological* framework of said (ancient) culture. And certainly the Sumer-Babylonians, whose *mythos*, and *cosmogony*, is captured so eloquently in the epic tale we know as the *Enûma Eliš*, we can see a very good example of this, where the *cosmogony* dovetails into the foundation of society quite clearly, providing the shared *mythos* to support the Sumer-Babylonian civilization itself.

Ancient Persian *Theology*: Zarathustra and the *Avesta*

In the 2nd and first millennium BCE, some 1500 years before Christianity and the Roman Empire spread throughout the Mediterranean and Middle East, we see evidence of the prevalence of a faith that has come to be known as Zoroastrianism, a term which is a Greek transliteration of the name of the prophet to which the tradition is attributed in antiquity, i.e. he who is most commonly known today as Zarathustra but who was called Zoroaster in the (English transliteration of) Greek or *Zartosht* in the native Persian.¹¹⁶ Zarathustra is to the ancient Persians what Moses is to the ancient Hebrews, the founder and expositor of divine revelations which provide the basis of their respective theological traditions, the foundations of their respective *mythos*.

What we know of Zarathustra primarily comes from the *Gathas*, 17 hymns of poetic verse written in Old Avestan which are attributed to him. In Zoroastrianism, not only do we find very strong corollaries to Judeo-Christian themes and motifs, but also strong similarities to Hellenic *theology* and philosophy, along with many similarities to the Indo-Aryan tradition as reflected in the *Vedas* written in Sanskrit just to the east of ancient Persia which of course provide the basis for Hinduism and in turn Buddhism.

The earliest evidence of Zoroastrianism from the historical and archeological records can be found in not only the extant writings and inscriptions from the ancient Persians, but also from the ancient Greeks as well, which clearly had close ties with their Persians to the East (hostile or otherwise) and can be seen as indirect sources of the nature of the Persian people and their underlying faith, which by the time of the Achaemenid Empire (c. 550-330 BCE) had become the state religion more or less.

We see references to the grace and protection of Ahura Mazda, the one and true God of the Zoroastrian faith, by several of the extant inscriptions from Kings of the ancient Persian/Achaemenid Empire, an empire whose influence held sway over much of the Middle and Near East from the middle of the 6th century BCE to the latter part of the 4th century BCE. References to Ahura Mazda are found from inscriptions from the era of Darius the Great (c. 550-486 BCE)¹¹⁷, the infamous Xerxes who succeeded Darius (519-465 BCE), and then even in from the 11th king of the Achaemenid Empire Artaxerxes III (c 425-338 BCE). We also see references

¹¹⁶ Zoroaster: *Zōroastrēs*, or *Ζωροάστρης*, in the Greek.

¹¹⁷ Within the Behistun Inscription which was carved in stone on a mountain side in Western Iran. This inscription was written in three forms of cuneiform script - Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian (a later form of Akkadian), providing a very sound view of comparison of these three ancient languages as well as of course providing for a solid example of the cuneiform script which it was written in, effectively serving the same purpose as the famed Rosetta Stone in Egypt to the Iranian cuneiform script in the Near East.

to the Zoroastrian faith in the ancient Greek historical literature, starting with references to the Persian peoples and customs in Herodotus's *Histories* (c. 484-425 BCE), an excerpt from the writings of Alcibiades written sometime after 374 BCE, a citation from Theopompus (c. 380–315 BCE), and even a reference to the Zoroastrian faith and its parallels to the Greek pantheon by Aristotle in his first book of *On Philosophy*.¹¹⁸

All of these references point to the existence and prevalence of the worship of a god the Persians called Ahura Mazda, which we sometimes find referred to in its transliterary form the ancient Persian Pahlavi script as Ohrmazd, throughout the area of Persian (Iranian) influence from the 6th century BCE onwards. This deity was associated to the Zeus of the Greeks ("Horomazes" or "Oromasdes" in the direct Latin transliteration of the Greek), whose evil counterpart Anra Mainyu, or Ahriman in the older Pahlavi script and Areimanus in Greek. Aristotle equates Areimanus with Hades, and speaks to the existence of a prophet that the Greeks called Zoroaster from which the faith emerged or at least was inspired, and whose faith was taught and practiced by a priestly class that the Greeks referred to as the *Magi*, a word that came to be associated with astrology and magic in general (from which the English word "magic" derives), and whose usage can be found even in the *New Testament* associated with the birth of Jesus.

The written tradition surrounding Zarathustra, at least the documents that survive down to us, are not compiled until the middle of the first millennium BCE or so, and came down to us through a fairly circuitous and perilous journey that has unfortunately left most of the literature buried in the tombs of history. What does survive has been passed down through several different transcription efforts across many centuries leaving us today with copies of manuscripts that were most likely originally written down in the 4th or 5th centuries CE, while the manuscripts themselves which we have access to are from no earlier than the 14th century CE. Only the material written in the Avestan script, a derivative of Pahlavi designed specifically to transcribe the Avestan language, is considered part of the *Avesta* proper, and of that literature some is written in Old Avestan or "Gathic", taking its name from the *Gathas* which form the core part of the *Yasna*, the name given to the primary liturgical or canonical collection of Avestan texts which are recited during Zoroastrian worship and ritual, i.e. referred to general as *Yasna*. The *Gathas* are the only part of the *Avesta* that is attributed directly to Zarathustra himself, and the rest of the *Yasna* are written in what is called Younger Avestan, a later derivative of the Old Avestan language.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ See *Zoroastrianism* by Mary Boyce, University of Chicago Press 1984 pgs. 104-108 for a complete list of the inscriptions and the associated translated text, and the work in general as an invaluable resource for the Zoroastrian faith and liturgy as a whole.

¹¹⁹ Compare the words *Ahura Mazda* and *Anra Mainyu* which are Roman renditions of the Younger Avestan tongue with *Ohrmazd* and *Ahriman* which are renderings of the Old, Gathic, Avestan.

The Zoroastrian faith, again akin to the Hindus and probably reflective of many of the lost religious practices and rituals by priests and *shamans* from antiquity, was characterized by the belief that precise pronunciation and annunciation and ordering of words and hymns, as well the practice of accompanying ritualistic specificities, was required in the practice of Zoroastrian ritual, deviation from which would leave the rituals bereft of potency. These rituals were designed to produce higher states of consciousness, to commune with the divine spirit in some form or another, as clearly indicated by the association of specific hymns (*yajña* in Sanskrit and *yasna* in Avestan) with specific Gods or Goddesses. Couple this with the importance of adherence to the *exact* pronunciation and wording of the hymns themselves, along with the following of the *exact* steps of a given ritual and/or prayer which may involve some sort of food or animal type of offering (soma for example) and what you have is that throughout Ancient Greece and the and all the way to the Far East was a common practice of ritual that were designed to yield a specific state of consciousness.

Ceremony was probably the best English word to translate this idea, except this don't imply the clear objective of communion with the divine which seemed to be so very evident in these ancient traditions, traditions which not only had detailed rituals which were described, canonized and passed down via oral tradition over the course of many centuries, millennia in fact, but also had detailed cosmologies which outlined the specific context within which the specific aspect of the divine which was the object of these rituals was to be viewed in the total cosmic order of the universe, an order to which the individual participant, mankind itself even, was being identified with in the act of ritual itself.

In this context then, perhaps our understanding of the Greek poetic tradition, which was steeped in this idea of *ymnos*, was inadequate or incomplete to some degree. Perhaps the Greek poetic tradition, the very same one that the Socratic philosophical tradition as well as the intellectual tradition represented by the Sophists sat in contrast to and to some extent rose up against, was in antiquity steeped in ritual and chanting and the production of hypnotic/ecstatic type states by the following of the rituals and practices that were very similar to those described in the *Rigvéda* and the *Avesta*. Perhaps this is a better description of some of the practices of the so-called *mystery cults* that are purported to have existed in ancient Greece - of which Orphism was one prominent example but also the cult of Dionysus was another.

While this is speculation to some degree no doubt, if the connection between these ancient practices is established and presumed given the shared and common ancestry of the writing systems themselves that the respective civilizations used and the common term or word that they used for such an important socio-theological practice, one could perhaps glean greater understanding of what might have been taking place in these ancient Greek *mystery cults* which were shunned by the Greek philosophers and their successors in the Mediterranean by looking

at the (more archaic and better preserved) rituals that were practiced to the East. In other words, extrapolating from what we know about the underlying practices and purpose of the Vedic (now Hindu) ritualistic practices that have survived down to us today, as well as the corresponding rituals in the Zoroastrian tradition which also still survive, each of which is ultimately designed for communion with the divine, or some specific aspect of the divine, and underpinned by a particular practice of *yajña* or *yasna*, we can perhaps gain a better understanding of what was taking place in these ancient Greek *mystery cult* traditions which predate the invention and prevalence of writing in the geographic regions within which these rituals were practiced.

Accounts of modern scholars date the contents of the *Avesta* as indicative of hunter/gatherer and nomadic societies that are consistent with archaeological findings in Near East at the turn of the first millennium BCE, centuries before the Persian Imperial period and at least a thousand years before the language was written down. The oldest portion of the *Avesta* is the *Gathas*, which are ascribed as divine revelations of the prophet Zarathustra himself, in much the same way as the *Pentateuch* is ascribed to Moses. The *Gathas* describe a society of consisting of priests and herdsmen/farmers, a nomadic culture with tribal structures organized at most as small kingdoms. This contrasts sharply with the view of Zoroaster having lived in an empire, at which time society is attested to have had a tripartite structure with the addition of a solidier and warring class to the priests and nomad/farmers, providing evidence for the origins the Zoroastrian scriptures dating back into the 2nd millennium BCE prior to the imperial age of the Persians despite this society having the first known reference to Zoroastrian faith.

What we know about Zarathustra himself is known through the Zoroastrian texts themselves and through no other source other than brief references by later historians. What we can gather from these texts is Zarathustra, if he actually existed, was in all likelihood born in Northeast Iran or Southwest Afghanistan into a Bronze Age culture marked with polytheistic religious beliefs as were common in those ancient times, a culture that included rituals of animal sacrifice and the use of hallucinogenics for spiritual awakening, the latter practice of which could be considered similar in many respect to shamanic rituals of the Native American populations of more modern times which we may be more familiar (*shamanism*), and is the same type of pre-urban, hunter-gatherer societies and practices that are described in the earliest parts of the *Vedas*, texts which are identified with the Indus Valley region which is just East of ancient Persia (modern Iran).

What is clear from the ancient texts is that Zarathustra to some extent rejected the religion of the Bronze Age Iranians with their many gods and oppressive class structure, marking a fairly significant divergence from the standard practices and social structure of his time and providing the foundations of perhaps the first truly monotheistic faith, unifying the various notions of divinity found within this pantheistic tradition into one all-encompassing deity or principle which

came to be known as Ahura Mazda, or Ohrmazd in Old Avestan . So although a precise date of the founding of Zoroastrianism and its original prophet Zarathustra is uncertain, as well as of course is whether or not he actually existed as an historical figure, Old Avestan's close ties with Vedic Sanskrit combined with the life and times that are described within the oldest Zoroastrian liturgy mapped with archeological evidence put the date of the origins of the oldest parts of the *Avesta* somewhere between 1500-1100 BCE.

Other notable Zoroastrian texts which were written from the 9th to the 12th centuries CE in Middle Persian written in Pahlavi are the *Dēnkard* or "Acts of Religion" which is a compendium of Zoroastrian beliefs and customs including an historical narrative of the *Avesta* itself, the *Bundahishn* or "Primordial Creation" which contains a detailed account of Zoroastrian *cosmogony*, the *Mainog-i-Khirad* or "Spirit of Wisdom", a religious conference on questions of faith, and the *Arda Viraf Namak* ("Book of Arda Viraf"), which is especially important for its views on death, salvation and life in the hereafter. Each of these texts albeit written after the advent and widespread adoption of Christianity and Islam, still preserve much of the still existent and practicing lore of Zoroastrianism, small pockets of which again still exist today.

The *Avesta* and associated Zoroastrian literature speak of the belief in a single creator god from which the entire universe originates, Ohrmhzd or Ohrmazd or Ahura Mazda in Younger Avestan. Ahura Mazda is described as the highest deity of worship and is the first and most frequently invoked deity in the *Yasna*. Ahura Mazda is an omniscient and omnipotent benevolent god, who is viewed in the early Avestan tradition as the antithesis as well as the liberating principle set in contrast to evil who is represented by Anra Mainyu, or Ahriman in Gathic Avestan. The word *ahura* means "light" (related to the Vedic Sanskrit *asura*) and *mazda* means *wisdom*, thus Ahura Mazda is the lord of light and wisdom and he is considered to be the upholder of *Aša* or *Arta*, which corresponds to the Sanskrit *Ṛta* which signifies the underlying order of the universe and society within it, or simply *truth*. This same principle finds its equivalent to the Egyptians as *Ma'at* and to the Greeks as *Nómos*.¹²⁰

The creation mythology/*cosmogony* as well as many core belief systems of the Zoroastrian faith as outlined in the *Bundahishn* contain many Christian themes and parallels, and for this reason is looked on as, along with Judaism and Neo-Platonism, as one of the primary theological sources from which Christianity, and clearly Judaism, drew. In the Zoroastrian *mythos*, the universe

¹²⁰ The Sanskrit word *Ṛta* is derived from the root verb *ṛ-* "to go", "move", "rise", "tend upwards", and the derivative noun *ṛtam* is defined as "fixed" or "order" or "rule". Within the more specific theological context of the *Vedas*, the *Rigvéda* in particular, where many references to *Ṛta* can be found, it signifies means "divine law", "truth" or "cosmic order". See Wikipedia contributors, 'Rta', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 20 September 2016, 12:34 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%E1%B9%9A&oldid=740337297>> [accessed 20 September 2016].

consists of opposing forces of light and darkness, good and evil, represented by Ohrmazd and Ahriman respectively, and in the beginning the two were separated by a Void, or Ether.

1. *It is thus manifest, [in the good Religion]: Ohrmazd was, forever, at the highest, in the Light, [for infinite time,] owing to omniscience and goodness.*
2. *The Light is the place and location of Ohrmazd; there is someone who calls it 'Endless Light'; and the omniscience and goodness are, forever, of Ohrmazd; there is someone who calls them 'Revelation'; Revelation has the interpretation of both these; one, that of the eternal, of Infinite Time; just as were Ohrmazd, Space, Revelation, and Time of Ohrmazd; --.*
3. *Ahriman was, at the abysmal station, in darkness, owing to after wit and destructive desire.*
4. *His destructive desire is raw; and that darkness is his location; there is someone who calls it 'Endless Darkness'.*
5. *Between them was Void, - there are some who call it 'Ether', wherein was their joining.*
6. *They both have finiteness and infinity. 7. For, the utmost height is that which one calls 'Endless Light', - [that is, it is 'not limited';] and the abysmal station is the 'Endless Darkness', [and that is infinity. 8. And owing to boundary, both are finite,] -- that is, between them is a Void, and they are not connected with each other.¹²¹*

From Ohrmazd and Ahriman are created the first generation of gods, 6 “Amahraspands” or angels, as well as their 6 evil counterparts, or the forces of darkness which are called *Dews* or demons. From Ohrmazd, or the eternal Light, come forth the basic building blocks of the universe, 7 in total, all created to sustain mankind. Initially comes forth Sky, then Water, then Earth, then Tree (Plants), then Animals (with particular emphasis on the bull or cattle), then Mankind (or primordial man called Gayomard, the Persian equivalent to Adam), and then lastly Fire which was created to assist mankind.

Many of these same themes - principles of the battle between good and evil, the association of God with Light and its battle with the powers of darkness (Ahriman), the existence of angels and demons which preside over the world of mankind, the primordial man in Gayomard, are found in Christianity as well. Also of note is that in the *Younger Avesta*, three divinities of the Zoroastrian pantheon are repeatedly identified as *ahuric*, meaning that each act together collectively to both represent and protect *Aša*, or the world order and divine truth which governs the universe. These three deities are later referred to as the *Ahuric triad* - namely Ahura Mazda, Mithra and Burz – to which similarities with the Christian Holy Trinity have been drawn by later scholars looking to connect Christian theology with Zoroastrianism. In the words of Mary Boyce,

¹²¹ <http://www.avesta.org/mp/grb1.htm>.

one of the most renowned Zoroastrian scholars and former Professor Emeritus of Iranian Studies at the University of London:

*Zoroaster was thus the first to teach the doctrines of an individual judgment, Heaven and Hell, the future resurrection of the body, the general Last Judgment, and life everlasting for the reunited soul and body. These doctrines were to become familiar articles of faith to much of mankind, through borrowings by Judaism, Christianity and Islam; yet it is in Zoroastrianism itself that they have their fullest logical coherence....*¹²²

The existence of some of these precursor Christian ideas and concepts, along with the notion of Last Judgment, have led some scholars to draw a line directly connecting the Zoroastrian tradition with later Christian *theology* and although a direct correlation is hard to establish, some pattern and cultural, really theological, borrowing between the two faiths is virtually impossible to rule out.

Very little is known about the spread of Zoroastrianism between the time when it is believed Zarathustra actually lived sometime in the 2nd millennium BCE and the time of the advent of the Persian or Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus the Great in the 6th century BCE where it is clear from the archeological record that Zoroastrianism was adopted by at least the Kings of the Achaemenid Empire¹²³, other than it clearly gained prominence in the Near East, the Greeks were exposed to it and surely were influenced by it to at least some degree, and clearly it left its mark on Judaism to at least some extent and then later Christianity, either independently or via Jewish lore as evidenced by the reference to *Magi* in the *New Testament* as well as the clear Zoroastrian themes that can be seen in not only the Judeo-Christian creation *mythos* but also in later Christian developments of the notion of Last Judgment as well as perhaps even the concept of the Holy Trinity. It is fairly certain however that the Persians were exposed to some form of Judaism and vice versa however as evidenced by the *Old Testament* scripture that speak to the Jews being conquered by the Babylonians and their temple being destroyed (c 586 BCE) marking the period of Jewish exile, and then the return to their homeland and the rebuilding of their temple under the auspices of the Persian King Cyrus in 536 BCE¹²⁴. So clearly the Jews and Zoroastrian/Persians had direct contact during this time period, and it's not too large of a leap of faith to presume that some of their religious and mythological dogma was blended and coalesced between the two religious systems.

¹²² Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrianism*, University of Chicago Press, 1984.

¹²³ For a more in depth look at the role of Ahura Mazda in the reign of the Persian Empire kings see "The Achaemenid Kings and the Worship of Ahura Mazda: Proto-Zoroastrianism in the Persian Empire" by Avram R. Shannon; *Studia Antiqua* 5.2, Fall 2007.

¹²⁴ See Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity at <http://www.pyracantha.com/Z/zjc3.html>.

By some scholars it is held that Zoroastrianism in some form or other was the state religion of the Persians during the Achaemenid Empire until the end of the 4th century BCE although this claim is debatable. However given the references to Zoroastrianism and the *Magi* in the Greek literature contemporaneous to the Achaemenid Empire, as well as references from the much later *Dēnkard* which references various efforts to consolidate and document Zoroastrian faith and customs, it was probably not far-fetched then to draw parallels between the adoption of Zoroastrianism by the Persians to facilitate the consolidation of their empire in much the same way that Judaism, Christianity and later Islam was used to consolidate and unite their respective societies/boundaries of power.

Classic Hellenic *Theogony*: *Chaos*, *Chronos* and *Eros*

One of the nice things that you found as you studied more advanced civilizations, as you got further into the first millennium BCE, you had better material and source texts to work with. You no longer had to rely on texts and tablets that described ancient rituals for specific temples, or documents or inscriptions associated with royal burial grounds, you actually had books or treatises that were authored and compiled by a single individual that had coherent narratives and compiled and consolidated all the various traditions that might be represented throughout that particular culture. One of the other nice things as you moved into the study of the civilizations of the Greeks and the Romans is you started to see pretty good one to one representations of their words into modern day English given its more direct relationship to the Latin.

Prior to looking at the mythological creation narratives that were prevalent in classical Greece, it's worth pointing out some of the terminology that we use today that originated with the Greek language, the Greek poets and philosophers, that has come down to us in English, through the Latin translations, that we use to describe these intellectual traditions. The words *theogony* and *cosmogony* specifically actually both come from their Greek counterparts which in English have very similar meanings but in the Greek have different definitions, definitions that are symbolic of the intellectual tradition which each in turn belonged. *Theogony*, or *thæogonía* (θεογονία) means the study of the origin and genealogy of the gods whereas *cosmogony*, or *kozmogonía* (κοσμογονία) denotes the study of the origins of the universe, the latter term coming into use as the philosophical tradition arose, *kosmos* first being attributed to Pythagoras in fact circa 5th century BCE. *Theogony* signifying, as in the case with Hesiod for example, the mythological narrative that described the creation of the gods of the pantheon and their successors.

While thæogonía (theogony; Gr. θεογονία) is the origin and genealogy of the Gods, kozmogonía (cosmogony; Gr. κοσμογονία) is the origin of the universe. In Hellenic polytheistic religion, these two terms are closely related and cannot actually be entirely separated, for the phenomenal universe is itself divine and the personal deities are intimately connected with its origin and both emerge simultaneously.

The etymology of thæogonía is Θεοί (Gods) + γέννα (birth), hence, the birth or origin of the Gods. The etymology of kozmogonía is κόσμος (order, to put in order) + γέννα (birth); the word κόσμος only later came to mean the entire universe, but its original meaning has some bearing on how we understand our world, as the view of Orphismós sees the birth or origin of the

kósmos (cosmos; Gr. κόσμος) as having a form and order, what Pythagóras (Gr. Πυθαγόρας) called *diakózmisis* (diakosmesis; Gr. διακόσμησις), the orderly arrangement of the universe.¹²⁵

Having clarified this subtle but important distinction, in particular as we look at this time period of ancient Greece where philosophy begins to take precedence over mythology – *Logos* over *mythos* – the analysis and study of the theogonies of Hesiod and the one attributed to the pseudo-historical figure of Orpheus actually shed much light on the transition, or at least the precursors to the transition which start with Pythagoras and Plato and come to a more solid, rational, foundation with Aristotle. To the Greeks, and in particular the tradition associated with Hesiod, it is *Chaos* that was the *arche*, or underlying origin, of the universe. *Arche* means 'beginning', 'origin' or 'first cause' and 'power' in Greek. It can also denote 'ultimate underlying substance' or 'ultimate indemonstrable principle' at least as seen in the context of Greek *cosmogony* in general. Later philosophers such as Aristotle expanded upon the meaning of *arche* as the element or principle of a thing, which although indemonstrable and intangible in and of itself, provides the conditions of the possibility of the existence of such a thing.¹²⁶

In the Greco-Roman tradition, particularly in the works of the Neo-Platonists and other historians of philosophy from Cicero to Diogenes Laertius to Plutarch and others, it was the *first principles* of things that were the topic of the early Greek classical authors such as Hesiod and in turn Orpheus, who was the attributed author of various hymns and poems devoted to the gods that spoke of an alternative *theogony*, through which later philosophers viewed and interpreted these *first principles* and through which these later authors juxtaposed and defended the Hellenic philosophical tradition in the face of impending Christianity which took over the theological beliefs of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern peoples a few centuries after the birth of Christianity and its adoption by the Roman Empire by Constantine.

In modern times, the *arche* is the root of the term used by Carl Jung to describe the underlying psychological themes he found present in individual's unconscious mind through his psychological practices. To Jung these basic symbols and images that he found present in the modern mind bore striking similarity to primitive mythological motifs, motifs that are found in virtually all of the mythological traditions that we are studying and analyzing within the context of this work. Jung called these symbols *archetypes*, the commonality of which across many of his patients he used as the rationalization for the existence of what he called the *collective*

¹²⁵ <http://www.hellenicgods.org/orphiccosmogonyandtheogony>.

¹²⁶ *Arche*, ἀρχή in Greek while originally denoted "beginning", "origin", or "source" came to represent the notion of *first principle* in the Hellenic philosophical tradition, in particular first attributed to the Pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander and then was also used within the context of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to denote a principle of knowledge (ἀρχαί). See Wikipedia contributors, 'Arche', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 18 December 2016, 18:40 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Arche&oldid=755542275>> [accessed 18 December 2016].

unconscious, the same principle which Joseph Campbell indirectly leveraged to explain the commonality of mythical themes and stories across all pre-civilized man across the globe – as presented in his *Hero with a Thousand Faces* for example. In essence, this notion of *arche* to the Greeks represented the establishment of the basic universal building blocks, the *first principles* of abstract thought and *ideas*, upon which was superimposed Greek *theogony* as it was formulated in order to establish a more rational basis upon which the cosmological world order was maintained and was to be understood. This transition is typically referred to in the academic literature as *Logos* over *mythos* but we can view it here within the context of *theogony* to *cosmogony*.

The orthodox version of creation mythology from classical Greece is from a poetic work attributed to Hesiod called the *Theogony*. Compilation of the text is dated to somewhere between the 8th and 6th centuries BCE, somewhat contemporaneous to Homer, and representative of the height of literature to the Greeks even by the classical philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle among others that followed in their footsteps. The *Theogony*, or again literally “the birth of the gods”, describes the origins and genealogies of the gods of the ancient Greek pantheon. Hesiod markedly begins his work with an attribute to the divine Muses, the great daughters of Zeus who in the Hellenic world were the masters of mystery and the keepers of the *divine mysteries* through which any true knowledge or truth could be known. It is through the Muses themselves that Hesiod relates his tale, speaking directly to their source through which his tale, his *Theogony*, is related and written.

(Il. 1-25) From the Heliconian Muses let us begin to sing, who hold the great and holy mount of Helicon, and dance on soft feet about the deep-blue spring and the altar of the almighty son of Cronos, and, when they have washed their tender bodies in Permessus or in the Horse's Spring or Olmeius, make their fair, lovely dances upon highest Helicon and move with vigorous feet. Thence they arise and go abroad by night, veiled in thick mist, and utter their song with lovely voice, praising Zeus the aegis- holder and queenly Hera of Argos who walks on golden sandals and the daughter of Zeus the aegis-holder bright-eyed Athene, and Phoebus Apollo, and Artemis who delights in arrows, and Poseidon the earth-holder who shakes the earth, and reverend Themis and quick-glancing (1) Aphrodite, and Hebe with the crown of gold, and fair Dione, Leto, Iapetus, and Cronos the crafty counsellor, Eos and great Helius and bright Selene, Earth too, and great Oceanus, and dark Night, and the holy race of all the other deathless ones that are for ever. And one day they taught Hesiod glorious song while he was shepherding his lambs under holy Helicon, and this word first the goddesses said to me -- the Muses of Olympus, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis:

(Il. 26-28) 'Shepherds of the wilderness, wretched things of shame, mere bellies, we know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we will, to utter true things.'

(Il. 29-35) So said the ready-voiced daughters of great Zeus, and they plucked and gave me a rod, a shoot of sturdy laurel, a marvellous thing, and breathed into me a divine voice to celebrate things that shall be and things there were aforetime; and they bade me sing of the race of the blessed gods that are eternally, but ever to sing of themselves both first and last. But why all this about oak or stone? (2)¹²⁷

We see here not just the invocation to the Muses, in fact the allusion to the very source of the material being the Muses themselves who speak through Hesiod, but also the purpose of the work as explaining the existence of the Greek gods and goddesses that we know all too well even from modern renditions of Greek mythology - reference to Zeus and Hera, Apollo and Athena, Poseidon and Aphrodite, and even *Chronos*, the older parent of the Greek pantheon who is to play such an important role in the Theogonic tale that Hesiod is to tell.

A few verses later Hesiod provides us with his account of the first initial principles or gods from which the pantheon emerges from, the initial cosmological account of creation as it were. The reference to the first beings that were ever created from which the pantheon of Greek gods originated and from which his story of rulership, succession, betrayal and the ultimate establishment of order is unfolded. In Hesiod's account of the creation of the universe, the initial state of the universe is *Chaos*, or *Khaos* in the Greek, and from this initial state of disorder, from which the word still carries the same meaning even in modern English today, the universe comes to life and order begins to manifest.

Verily at the first Chaos came to be, but next wide-bosomed Earth, the ever-sure foundations of all the deathless ones who hold the peaks of snowy Olympus, and dim Tartarus in the depth of the wide-pathed Earth, and Eros (Love), fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them. From Chaos came forth Erebus and black Night; but of Night were born Aether and Day, whom she conceived and bare from union in love with Erebus. And Earth first bare starry Heaven, equal to herself, to cover her on every side, and to be an ever-sure abiding-place for the blessed gods. And she brought forth long Hills, graceful haunts of the goddess-Nymphs who dwell amongst the glens of the hills. She bare also the fruitless deep with his raging swell, Pontus, without sweet union of love. But afterwards she lay with Heaven and bare deep-swirling Oceanus, Coeus and Crius and Hyperion and Iapetus, Theia and Rhea, Themis and Mnemosyne and gold-crowned Phoebe and lovely Tethys. After them was born Cronos the wily, youngest and most terrible of her children, and he hated his lusty sire.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ The *Theogony of Hesiod*. Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, 1914. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm>

¹²⁸ <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm> (Il. 116-138).

So here in the work of Hesiod lie the beginnings of some of the basic principles, or framework at least, from the transition from *theogony* to *cosmogony*, the primordial *arche* as it were upon which the Greek pantheon emerges. We are presented at the beginning of the genealogy with the notion of *Chaos*, or disorder as the term is still used today, that represents the primordial substance that forms the basis of all creation. In Hesiod's account *Chaos* is a pseudo-anthropomorphic being, a being that although not anthropomorphic per se, i.e. it is without gender or form, and yet it is the primordial substance from which the primary first generation deities and their offspring come forth from. According to Hesiod out of *Chaos* emerge Gaia (Earth) and Tartarus – Mother Earth and the Underworld respectively, the great pillars of the world of being inhabited by human souls. And then, perhaps surprisingly, in this tradition *Eros*, or Love, is a primary force which then acts to create the rest of the first generation of gods and goddesses and from which the realms of Heaven and Earth and all the basic natural principles and their anthropomorphic counterparts are created and established.

Next in Hesiod's *Theogony*, also out of *Chaos* came Erebus¹²⁹, representing darkness or shadow, as well as Nyx, or the Greek's personification of Night. Erebus and Nyx then reproduced to form Aether, and Hemera (day). Then came Gaia who gave birth to Uranus (sky/heaven), and Ourea (mountains) and Pontus (sea). Uranus then fertilized Gaia and from this union the great Titans are born and the next generation of gods are born, the greatest of which is *Chronos* and from which the tale of the next generation of gods and the overthrow of *Chaos* by *Chronos*, order is established chaos as it were, is told. These characters, these entities, represented the first and foremost parts of creation that sprung forth from the "void", the first generation of gods for the Greeks. Although the principles or deities themselves were different, there were some parallels to the genealogy of the Egyptians and Mesopotamian story lines albeit the ordering and gods themselves were different for each of the civilizations, perhaps indicative of the different aspects of each of the respective cultures. Here we can find in this subsequent generation of gods, much like the Egyptian creation mythology, the generation and establishment of the world order, the pieces of the puzzle were laid down as it were, creating the foundations upon which mankind could emerge and flourish.

Hesiod then goes on to tell the tale of the overthrow of the evil ruler *Chaos* by *Chronos*, the greatest of the first generation of gods at the behest of his mother Gaia, Mother Earth. Herein we find the great mythical narrative of the manifestation and establishment of *order upon chaos*, a tale that is gruesome and graphic no doubt in its details, and speaks to a consistent tradition of

¹²⁹ Erebus , or Erebus, is translated into English roughly as "deep darkness, or shadow". Erebus is also referred to as a region of the Underworld where the dead had to pass immediately after dying, and is sometimes used interchangeably with Tartarus.

castration of the *first principles* of creation upon which the second generation of order is established.

(Il. 167-169) So she said; but fear seized them all, and none of them uttered a word. But great Cronos the wily took courage and answered his dear mother:

(Il. 170-172) 'Mother, I will undertake to do this deed, for I reverence not our father of evil name, for he first thought of doing shameful things.'

(Il. 173-175) So he said: and vast Earth rejoiced greatly in spirit, and set and hid him in an ambush, and put in his hands a jagged sickle, and revealed to him the whole plot.

(Il. 176-206) And Heaven came, bringing on night and longing for love, and he lay about Earth spreading himself full upon her (7).

Then the son from his ambush stretched forth his left hand and in his right took the great long sickle with jagged teeth, and swiftly lopped off his own father's members and cast them away to fall behind him. And not vainly did they fall from his hand; for all the bloody drops that gushed forth Earth received, and as the seasons moved round she bare the strong Erinyes and the great Giants with gleaming armour, holding long spears in their hands and the Nymphs whom they call Meliae (8) all over the boundless earth. And so soon as he had cut off the members with flint and cast them from the land into the surging sea, they were swept away over the main a long time: and a white foam spread around them from the immortal flesh, and in it there grew a maiden. First she drew near holy Cythera, and from there, afterwards, she came to sea-girt Cyprus, and came forth an awful and lovely goddess, and grass grew up about her beneath her shapely feet. Her gods and men call Aphrodite, and the foam-born goddess and rich-crowned Cytherea, because she grew amid the foam, and Cytherea because she reached Cythera, and Cyprogenes because she was born in billowy Cyprus, and Philommedes (9) because sprang from the members. And with her went Eros, and comely Desire followed her at her birth at the first and as she went into the assembly of the gods. This honour she has from the beginning, and this is the portion allotted to her amongst men and undying gods, -- the whisperings of maidens and smiles and deceits with sweet delight and love and graciousness.¹³⁰

From the seed of the of *Chaos* then, intermingled and spread about across the earth and sea and land, the other great first primordial creative principles of the first generation of gods, the second generation of deities comes forth as *Chronos* takes the reins of power from his father and bears children with Rhea, his sister. But the graphic tale of deceit and disorder continues though, and with this next generation of gods we finally come to the great Zeus, the god of Thunder and

¹³⁰ *The Theogony of Hesiod*. Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, 1914. Book II verses 167-206. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm>

Lightning who finally restores balance and order not only to the immortals but to the world of man as well.

As the tale is told *Chronos* knew he was to be overthrown by one of his seed and therefore after Rhea bore each child, *Chronos* swallowed them whole to ensure that his reign would last forever. But Rhea outwitted her spouse and when Zeus was born she hid him from his father in a deep and secret cave, replacing him with a stone and outwitting him in order to fulfill the prophecy and no doubt so that her children could be reborn and live. In a story that bears much resemblance to the pantheonic struggles so well documented in Egypt between Osiris and Set, who is overthrown by the progeny of Isis and Osiris, namely Horus), Hesiod tells us that *Chronos* is convinced by Gaia to overthrow his father Uranus and claim authority over the gods. He did this successfully (in particularly gruesome fashion as it were) and then wedded his sister Rhea after which Rhea and *Chronos* in turn birthed Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus, finishing the major Olympiad as it were. After a long struggle steeped in myth and graphic tales of mischief and brutality, Zeus ends up taking over Olympus and control over the Greek pantheon from Cronos.

(Il. 453-491) But Rhea was subject in love to Cronos and bare splendid children, Hestia (18), Demeter, and gold-shod Hera and strong Hades, pitiless in heart, who dwells under the earth, and the loud-crashing Earth-Shaker, and wise Zeus, father of gods and men, by whose thunder the wide earth is shaken. These great Cronos swallowed as each came forth from the womb to his mother's knees with this intent, that no other of the proud sons of Heaven should hold the kingly office amongst the deathless gods. For he learned from Earth and starry Heaven that he was destined to be overcome by his own son, strong though he was, through the contriving of great Zeus (19). Therefore he kept no blind outlook, but watched and swallowed down his children: and unceasing grief seized Rhea. But when she was about to bear Zeus, the father of gods and men, then she besought her own dear parents, Earth and starry Heaven, to devise some plan with her that the birth of her dear child might be concealed, and that retribution might overtake great, crafty Cronos for his own father and also for the children whom he had swallowed down. And they readily heard and obeyed their dear daughter, and told her all that was destined to happen touching Cronos the king and his stout-hearted son. So they sent her to Lyctus, to the rich land of Crete, when she was ready to bear great Zeus, the youngest of her children. Him did vast Earth receive from Rhea in wide Crete to nourish and to bring up. Thither came Earth carrying him swiftly through the black night to Lyctus first, and took him in her arms and hid him in a remote cave beneath the secret places of the holy earth on thick-wooded Mount Aegaeum; but to the mightily ruling son of Heaven, the earlier king of the gods, she gave a great stone wrapped in swaddling clothes. Then he took it in his hands and thrust it down into his belly: wretch! he knew not in his heart that in place of the stone his son

*was left behind, unconquered and untroubled, and that he was soon to overcome him by force and might and drive him from his honours, himself to reign over the deathless gods.*¹³¹

Zeus then revives his brothers and sisters that his father has swallowed and takes over the rulership of heaven, defeating and killing his father like his father had done before him, and establishing balance and harmony in the heavens and on earth.

*(ll. 492-506) After that, the strength and glorious limbs of the prince increased quickly, and as the years rolled on, great Cronos the wily was beguiled by the deep suggestions of Earth, and brought up again his offspring, vanquished by the arts and might of his own son, and he vomited up first the stone which he had swallowed last. And Zeus set it fast in the wide-pathed earth at goodly Pytho under the glens of Parnassus, to be a sign thenceforth and a marvel to mortal men (20). And he set free from their deadly bonds the brothers of his father, sons of Heaven whom his father in his foolishness had bound. And they remembered to be grateful to him for his kindness, and gave him thunder and the glowing thunderbolt and lightening: for before that, huge Earth had hidden these. In them he trusts and rules over mortals and immortals.*¹³²

Compare this tale with perhaps one of the most popular and ubiquitous myths in ancient Egypt, the story of Osiris and Set, a story that is very much akin to the battle between Zeus and the Titans. As the story is told on a variety of Egyptian inscriptions and textual fragments, the earliest dating from Old Kingdom Egypt on the *Pyramid Texts* (late third millennium BCE), Osiris is the first leader of the Egyptian pantheon and Egypt, who is overthrown and killed through a nefarious and graphic plot by his brother Set to take over the throne who cuts him to pieces and places him in a box in the sea. Isis however, through her love and devotion to her husband/brother Osiris goes on a long and arduous journey across the lands to gather up the pieces of Osiris's body and then through great magic bring him back to life. She then posthumously bears a child with him, Horus, who then avenges his father's murder, kills Set and takes over the (rightful) rule of Egypt. Osiris after he is pieced together presides over the underworld to look after the living as they passed into the land of the dead, while Isis remains the goddess who presides over and looks

¹³¹ The *Theogony of Hesiod*. Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, 1914. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm>

¹³² The *Theogony of Hesiod*. Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, 1914. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm>

after the living (the Greek Demeter) and Horus remains the presider over the pantheon and (united) Egypt.¹³³

This great mythical tale that Hesiod spins for us, from the direct inspiration of the Muses which are so closely associated not only with the *lyric poetic* tradition of classical Greece but also the *mystery cults* of the Greeks as well, bears much resemblance to the mythical narratives to the East and West of ancient Greece, each of which tell the tale of a first generations of gods or *first principles* that are born out of *Chaos*, a *watery abyss*, from which emerge Heaven, Earth, Sea and Sky. And then from this initial creation, the great Mother Earth (Gaia) produces the next generation of gods with the greatest of her siblings, *Chronos*, or Time (order, i.e. the *Ma'at* of the Egyptians), hence forth establishing order from the initial chaotic abyss. And then the next generation of gods is brought forth and there is another (symbolic) overthrow of the reign of the gods and goddesses to a second generation, where Zeus, the god of thunder and lightning, takes the throne from his father after an epic battle between the older generation of gods (the Titans) and the new generation born of Earth.

Interestingly, the attributes of Thunder and Lightning which are so closely associated with the Greek god Zeus, the head of the Olympic pantheon as it were, are also closely associated with the Sumer-Babylonian god Marduk, who as we learn from the Sumer-Babylonian *theogony* of the *Enûma Eliš* also comes to power via the overthrow of the second generation of gods ruled by Tiamat through another epic battle of the forces of good (represented by Marduk) and the forces of evil as represented by Tiamat. Even more interesting perhaps are the parallels that can be drawn between Zeus and Marduk of the Greek and Sumer-Babylonian pantheons respectively to the role of Thunder and Lightning as a fundamental creative principle, a cornerstone of the cyclical process of universe creation as it were, in the *mythos* of the ancient Chinese as depicted in the notion of *Zhèn* (Thunder) as one of the eight primary trigrams, i.e. *bāguà*, of both the Earlier Heaven and Later Heaven sequences of *bāguà* from the *Yijing*.

¹³³ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Osiris myth', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 23 April 2016, 00:58 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Osiris_myth&oldid=716659950> [accessed 29 August 2016].

Orphic *Theogony*: Thanes and the Great Cosmic Egg

While Hesiod's *Theogony* remains the standard, orthodox version of *theogony* (i.e. the story of the origin and genealogy of the gods) to the ancient Greeks, there exists an alternate tradition attributed to pseudo-historical and somewhat mythical figure of Orpheus, a character whose life is shrouded in mystery and tales of great heroic journeys. According to some legends and tales surrounding his life he is the son of the Muse Calliope and the god Apollo, the patron deity of the city of Delphi where the famed temple of the Oracle at Delphi was kept. Orpheus was a famed poet of the lyre who supposedly gained his lyre from a chance meeting with Apollo in the forest one day in his youth, Apollo having been greatly charmed by the boy's voice. It was there supposedly that Apollo initiated him into the great "mysteries" to which many of the practices and rites of the esoteric "mystery cults" of ancient Greece were associated.

While it's fairly well established that the Greeks borrowed extensively from their neighbors, at least with respect to their theological or religious beliefs, it is interesting to look at the account of the first and foremost ancient Greek historian in this regard. To this end Herodotus in fact actually points to a very direct relationship, and ultimate source, of at least some of the Greek pantheon directly from Egypt. From his *Histories*, we find a passage that speaks directly to the type of theological synthesis and adoption that occurred in the Mediterranean, at least for the Greeks in particular in this context, where he places much emphasis on the origins of much of their *mythos*, their gods and related tales and stories, from both the Egyptians as well as the Pelasgians, the latter term being used to denote the precursor Hellenic populations that lived in the area of ancient Greece in the time before the Trojan War or so, circa 1200 or 1300 BCE:

Moreover the naming of almost all the gods has come to Hellas from Egypt: for that it has come from the Barbarians I find by inquiry is true, and I am of opinion that most probably it has come from Egypt, because, except in the case of Poseidon and the Dioscuri (in accordance with that which I have said before), and also of Hera and Hestia and Themis and the Charites and Nereids, the Egyptians have had the names of all the other gods in their country for all time. What I say here is that which the Egyptians think themselves: but as for the gods whose names they profess that they do not know, these I think received their naming from the Pelasgians, except Poseidon; but about this god the Hellenes learnt from the Libyans, for no people except the Libyans have had the name of Poseidon from the first and have paid honour to this god always. Nor, it may be added, have the Egyptians any custom of worshipping heroes.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Excerpt from *THE HISTORY OF HERODOTUS*, translated into English by G. C. MACAULAY, M.A. from an edition dated 1890, published by MacMillan and Co., London and New York. Volume I Book II, verses 50-53.

From Herodotus's perspective then, there was clearly some cultural borrowing that had taken place between the Greek and Egyptian cultures, as well as from their predecessors as well as one might imagine, that clearly grew more integrated and synthesized as time passed and the Greek and Egyptian (and Later Roman and Byzantine) cultures became more closely tied and interwoven.

Over the centuries, particularly in the last half of the first millennium BCE into the Common Era when Egypt came under Greek and then Roman rule, its *mythos* and pantheon become merged and synthesized with their Greek and Roman counterparts, perhaps best exemplified in the Greco-Egyptian god who came to be known in the Roman era and into the Middle Ages as Hermes Trismegistus, a pseudo-mythical figure to whom the fairly popular and inherently mystical and esoteric doctrine of Hermeticism was attributed to - a characteristically Greco-Egyptian figure/deity who emerged in Ptolemaic Egypt as a synthesis of the traditions surrounding the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth.

In the historical account of prehistorical antiquity in the Mediterranean by Herodotus in fact, Dionysus is associated with Osiris, who is killed by Seth and cut to pieces but is brought back to life by his mother Isis, who is identified with the Greek goddess Demeter. Interestingly he does not refer to Dionysus by name but at the same time alludes to the fact that it would not be right to call out the name of the god in question, giving us some insight into the veil of secrecy surrounding the cult of Dionysus in ancient Greece, a cult that had very close ties to the traditions surrounding the life the pseudo-historical/mythical figure Orpheus¹³⁵ Notably however, Orpheus is not mentioned by Hesiod or Homer, speaking no doubt to an alternative, parallel, and perhaps much older, more *mystical* or *shamanistic*, tradition from prehistorical times.

Orpheus is perhaps best known for his lyrical voice and the poetry which bears his name, i.e. the *Rhapsodies*, a voice and music was known to tame even the most savage of beasts. He is perhaps best known not only for his role in the tale of the Golden Fleece as the poet who tames the Sirens on their epic journey, but also his great love for the nymph Eurydice for whom he travels to the realm of the dead to save, only to have her lost forever when he turns his head to look back to her to make sure she is following him.¹³⁶

With respect to the life of Orpheus, what we know comes to us down as legend and tales of old that speak of a child who is singing in the forests one day in Thrace who is found by Apollo who

¹³⁵ See the paper *Dionysus and Heracles in Scythia* by George Hinge 2003, a transcription of which can be found at http://herodot.glossa.dk/orph.html#_ftn3.

¹³⁶ Parallels to the story of Orpheus looking back upon his love as they leave the land of Hades can be drawn to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah where the city of Sodom is destroyed by the Lord for its wickedness but Lot's wife looked back at the destruction of the city and was reduced to a pillar of salt. *Genesis* 19.

is charmed by his sweet voice. As the legend goes, Orpheus was taught music (the lyre) by Apollo himself and was ultimately initiated into the “cult of the mysteries”, or divine knowledge, by him. After a life of singing and divine inspiration, he fell in love and married the nymph Eurydice, who was his ceaseless companion and close confidante. She, after being pursued through the woods by the god Aristaios, a deity also associated with Dionysus and Zeus, was killed by a poisonous snake and killed. Orpheus was grief stricken, and with the assistance of the gods who empathized with his plight, travelled to the underworld to try and save his beloved. He journeyed through the land of the dead and reached the throne of Pluto (Hades) and Persephone and begged them to let Eurydice live again.

Again his true love and plight was empathized with and they granted his wish, but under one condition. He was not to look back at his beloved until they had completely left the realm of the dead, a test of faith as it were. Orpheus, in one of the great tragedies of Greek *mythos*, looks back to be sure his beloved is behind him before leaving the land of the dead and so she is lost to him forever. Orpheus is then said to have wandered the woods by himself and only sang to men after that, singing always about his lost love for Eurydice. There are different tales of his death but one story has him slain by Thracian women, (Mainádæs), women associated with the cult of Dionysus again, for luring their men away with his sweet music. Orpheus is also associated with the myth of Jason and the Argonauts (the Golden Fleece) and is said to have saved the crew from the deadly Sirens on their journey with the charm of his music.

The religious practices and rites surrounding Orphism are closely associated with the life and legend of the mythical figure Dionysus, or Dionysus Bacchius or Zagreus as he was sometimes referred to. Dionysus in mythical lore was the son of Zeus and Persephone, or sometimes Demeter or Semele depending upon the mythical variant. As the legend goes he was murdered as a small child at the behest of Zeus’s jealous wife Hera. His heart however was saved by Athena before he could be killed forever, and through this act of kindness and empathy he is born again. This notion of rebirth and salvation was a main theme surrounding the worship of Dionysus and most certainly echoes themes we find much later in the life and teaching of Jesus.

The god, or cult, of Dionysus in ancient Greece - and through Roman times as well where he was worshipped as Bacchus - is closely associated with death and rebirth and divine ecstasy, which in turn was closely associated with wine, which in turn was associated with fertility and the spring, again rebirth. Hence his, and less directly Orpheus’s, association with not only Persephone, the goddess of the underworld (death and rebirth), but also the goddess of the harvest and the spring, Demeter. The close affiliation to the “divine mysteries”, to which the worship of Dionysus is closely associated with in antiquity, and to which Orphism in turn is also closely associated with, is evidenced by the many parallels and intertwined myths surrounding the two figures –

Orpheus's trip to the underworld and back to save his love Eurydice and Dionysus journey to the underworld to save his mother Semele for example.

What we know of the life of Orpheus as a historical figure, if in fact he did exist as an actual historical figure, is not much. However, he is closely associated with the region of Thrace, both from stories around his birth and death, a region which lies just to the North of classical Greece and the Near East, lying in modern day Bulgaria which would explain why the stories and poems of his life were not integrated into classical Greece mythology until after Homer and Hesiod. In many respects, one can look at the historical figure of Orpheus just as one looks at the historicity of the Hebrew Moses. In fact, the two traditions surrounding these two "prophets", if we may call them that, come from basically the same period in ancient history albeit from two different, but closely related, regions. Moses from ancient Palestine/Middle East and Orpheus from Thrace/Greece/Near East.

Little is known about the life of this pseudo-mythical figure other than it believed by modern and ancient scholars alike that he was in fact an historical figure, the notable exception being Aristotle, who – depending upon how you interpret the quotations from later authors from whom Aristotle's opinion is summarized - doubted not only his existence but also his authorship of the poems, the *Rhapsodies*, that bear his name. Aristotle however, given his reputation as a scholar and the access he must have had to historical records and accounts from Greek antiquity is worth mentioning as a skeptic but having said that he was skeptical of the old mythical tradition from antiquity in general so perhaps it is not surprising.

According to later authors who are by all accounts are likely quoting from the same passages in Aristotle's lost work *De Philosophia*, it seems likely that Aristotle believed at least that the compilation of hymns that bear the name of Orpheus was done by an Onomakritos, a scribe and counselor from the court of Pesistratos from the late 6th and early 5th centuries BCE who ruled Athens from 561 to 527 BCE. As the story is related by Herodotus (who does not mention Orpheus specifically but indirectly as it related to the poems of the Muses) he tells us, consistent with Aristotle in fact (or perhaps Aristotle's reference is from Herodotus) that these poems of the Muses (*Musaïos*) were actually the works of Onomakritos, who inserted his own "forgeries" into the poems themselves and was therefore banished from Athens by the son of Pesistratos, Hipparchos. After the family of Pesistratos was banished to Persia, Herodotus tells us that is by

using the works Onomakritos that the great Persian king Xerxes I was convinced to lead an invasion into Greece.¹³⁷

The earliest literary reference to Orpheus in the historical record is a two-word fragment of the sixth-century BC poet Ibycus who simply refers to Orpheus as “the famous Orpheus”. We also however find references and attestations to not only Orpheus himself but also the traditions surrounding the *mystery cults* or aspects of worship and initiation which were such an integral part of the tradition surrounding Orpheus from Herodotus as well as the tragic Greek playwright Euripides (*The Bacchae*), as well as Plato among others. Plato in particular in one quotation from the *Apology* places Orpheus in the same category as Hesiod and Homer, as well as the Muses themselves, as having knowledge of divine mysteries as well as being objects of reverence.¹³⁸ Having said that, with respect to what can be known about the historical figure of Orpheus if he did indeed exist, it is perhaps worth quoting a modern day scholar (and arguably a modern day “devotee”) on the subject, whose words sum up the situation quite nicely:

This alone may be depended on, from general assent, that there formerly lived a person named Orpheus, whose father was Æagrus, who lived in Thrace, and who was the son of a king, who was the founder of theology, among the Greeks; the institutor of their life and morals; the first of prophets, and the prince of poets; himself the offspring of a Muse; who taught the Greeks their sacred rites and mysteries, and from whose wisdom, as from a perpetual and abundant fountain, the divine muse of Homer, and the philosophy of Pythagoras, and Plato, flowed; and, lastly, who by the melody of his lyre, drew rocks, woods, and wild beasts, stopped the rivers in their course, and ever, moved the inexorable king of hell; as every page, and all the writings of antiquity sufficiently evince. Since thus much then may be collected from universal testimony, let us, pursue the matter a little farther, by investigating more accurately the history of the original Orpheus; with that of the great men who have, at different periods, flourished under this venerable name.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ See Pausanias. *Pausanias Description of Greece* with an English Translation by W.H.S. Jones, Litt.D., and H.A. Ormerod, M.A., in 4 Volumes. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1918. Paus. 1.22.7 and Herodotus *Histories* Book VII Chapter 6 from *Herodotus*, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920 at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0160%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D22%3Asection%3D7> and <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126:book=7:chapter=6&highlight=onomacritus> respectively for references to the account of Onomakritos in the court of Peisistratos and See *Orpheus and Greek Religion* by W. K. C. Guthrie, Princeton University Press 1993, pages 13-14 for the story of Onomakritos in Herodotus and pgs. 57-59 for his analysis and conclusions regarding the beliefs of Aristotle regarding Orpheus as interpreted from the excerpts of the (much later) Greco-Roman authors.

¹³⁸ While Aristotle reflects a more skeptic view of the Orphic tradition as well as the historicity of its founder, Orpheus, we find from Plato's *Apology* the following quotation speaking to the high regard at least Plato had for the pseudo-mythical figure. “Or again, what would any of you give to meet with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer?” Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. *Apology*, verse 41a from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DApol.%3Asection%3D41a>

¹³⁹ The *Hymns of Orpheus*, translation and Introduction by Thomas Taylor, 1792. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hoo/>.

Leaving aside the obvious questionable attribution of the inspiration and source of the works of Homer, Pythagoras and Plato being from Orpheus himself, this quite eloquent view of the figure of Orpheus does represent the view of the “inner circle” of Orphic believers in antiquity however, reflecting not only the great influence that his life and works were believed to have had, but also the “secret” nature of the *mystery cults* and rites that were so closely associated to the figure himself. What we do however know for certain is that there existed a *theology* and *mystery cult* tradition surrounding the pseudo-mythical figure of Orpheus that was very influential on the development of not just *theogony* but also in turn philosophy in classical Greece.

An interesting etymological clue into the attributes and characteristics of the rites and rituals associated with the so-called “Orphic” traditions is the word *katharos* or *katharoi* which was used by many ancient authors to describe those who were associated with these practices and communities. The Greek word *katharos* (καθαρός), from which of course comes our English word “catharsis”, means literally in the Greek “pure” or “unmixed”, intimating a sense of unity and experiential “oneness” with the divine which was undoubtedly the goal of not only the belief system surrounding the tradition itself but also undoubtedly the objective of the secret rites and rituals of the Orphic communities which drew their inspiration from Orpheus.¹⁴⁰

Etymological parallels for the Greek *katharoi* and the root term of the name of perhaps the oldest and most well-known Upanishad, the *Katha Upanishad*” a teaching related from the lord of death himself, Yama, to the pupil Nachiketa who in his devotion travels to the realm of death to learn the teachings of the great mysteries of the universe perhaps belie some glimpse into what the Orphic belief systems truly were, behind the myth and poetry which survives in his name. The parallels here between the material of the *Katha Upanishad* and the Orphic tradition surrounding death, the underworld, and in turn rebirth (as would be required from returning from the realm of the dead) no doubt point to a closer connection between the ancient rites and practices of these seemingly geographically disconnected peoples than is typically alluded to in the modern academic scholarship, relationships that could perhaps give us a better understanding of the rites, rituals and beliefs of both theological belief systems in antiquity.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ *Catharsis* in modern English parlance means something along the lines of “the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions” but carries with it religious or theological “cleansing” or “purification” connotations, just as it did to the ancient Greeks. We find for example the Greek word *katharos* mentioned in the *New Testament* 22 times, speaking to its continued usage as a word that is closely identified with religious “believers” in early Christianity. See <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/katharos.html> for a listing of the references of the Greek word in the *Bible*.

¹⁴¹ See the chapter on “Orpheus, The *Katha Upanishad*, and the Secret Way Beyond Death” from *The View from Delphi Rhapsodies on Hellenic Wisdom & An Ecstatic Appreciation of Western History* by Frank Marrero, Enelysios. At http://www.frankmarrero.com/ViewfromDelphi/Orpheus,_The_Katha_Upanishad,_and_the_Secret_Way_Beyond_Death.html.

While we have no historical account of the actual rites, rituals and practices of these so-called “mystery cults” in ancient Greece, we do know however that the communities existed and that their practices and beliefs were kept as closely guarded secrets - again most likely due to how shrouded in mystery they were and how sacrilegious it was thought of to mention such things¹⁴². We do know however that these communities existed and were revered in classical Hellenic antiquity, and that they were associated with experiences of divine ecstasy and song, and of course the drinking of wine and altered states of consciousness to which of course Dionysus himself was very much associated with as the deity through which divine ecstasy could be experienced.

Our primary textual evidence of the theo-philosophical tradition surrounding Orpheus is from not only from the hymns which bear his name which survive for the most part intact, having in all likelihood been compiled in the last few centuries BCE, but also from references to the practices and rites surrounding Orphism in Herodotus as well as Plato and Aristotle (despite the latter’s noted skepticism regarding Orpheus as an historical figure) and prominently in the more recently discovered by the *Derveni Papyrus*. All of these point to a tradition that was not only widely known and practiced in classical Greece, but also one that was on par, albeit independent, from the Homeric and Hesiodic poetic/historical traditions which represented more “orthodox” Hellenic theological and mythological beliefs. Notably however, Orpheus is not mentioned in either the works of Homer or Hesiod, speaking to an independent theological tradition, at least in the first few centuries of the first millennium BCE after which it was clearly integrated and synthesized into Hellenic mythological and cultural lore.

The *Derveni Papyrus* was discovered in 1962 and is believed to have been compiled in the 5th century BCE. While it’s a fairly damaged papyrus scroll, the bulk of the text has been recovered after much painstaking research and it consists of a running commentary on Orphic *theogony*, giving us insight and corroborating evidence of Orphic *theogony* proper, but also of a fairly early tradition of theo-philosophical interpretations of theogony in general, this one most likely coming from a school associated with Anaxagoras given the prominent role of Mind throughout the text.

The papyrus was discovered in a burial site from the 3rd century BCE around the time of the reign of Phillip II of Macedon around the area of Thrace/Macedon, a region closely associated with the stories surrounding the life of Orpheus. This archaeological find allows us to date Orphic theogonical and cosmological narratives more or less, and in turn the beliefs and practices associated with the tradition to at least the time of classical Greece. This material and belief systems reflected in the papyrus however, are undoubtedly representative of a theological and

¹⁴² For an interesting account of a veiled reference to the cult of Dionysus, and therefore early Orphic practices, by Herodotus, see <http://herodot.glossa.dk/orph.html>, section 2 *Orphic mythology and Herodotus’ vow of silence*

mystical tradition that is of much deeper antiquity, a tradition which bears many similarities and resemblances to what we know of ritual and theological traditions of Egypt, as well as those spoken of in the earliest *Vedas* and the *Avesta*, and one which was clearly of interest to the early Greek philosophers.¹⁴³

Orpheus was believed to be the founder and prophet of the “Orphic mysteries”, as well as credited with the authorship of the so called *Orphic hymns*, a somewhat late Hellenic compilation of poems addressed to the various gods and goddesses that were pre-eminent in the Orphic *theogony*, a somewhat alternative representation of the divine order of the universe than presented by Hesiod. The Orphic hymns include poems and commemorations to the gods and goddesses of Night, Heaven, Fire, and unique to the Orphic mythological tradition to the protogenital human, or Protogonus (Phanes). Within this poetic compilation we also find verses dedicated to major *naturalistic* concepts that played an important role in early Hellenic philosophy such as Law, Justice, Equity, Health, etc. no doubt speaking to the interplay and interchangeability of the gods and goddesses in Greek mythology and the principals or *ideas* which they represented.¹⁴⁴

Regardless of whether or not he existed as an actual person in history however, the life of Orpheus is not only very closely embedded in and related to classical Greek *mythos*, but also very closely associated with the so called “mystery cults” of ancient Greece. These cults were closely affiliated with the with rites of initiation and rituals and the worship of Dionysus, worshipped as the “savior” of mankind through which the mysteries of divine union could be realized. While these practices were shrouded in mystery and closely guarded within the “Orphic” community as it were, the *Derveni Papyrus* in particular reveals some insights into how these mythological narratives were interpreted by those within the tradition itself, a tradition which the author of the *Derveni Papyrus* was clearly intimately familiar.

Given Orpheus’s close connection with *mystery cults* and divine ecstasy which was closely aligned to the cults of Dionysus (not just in classical Greece but also in Roman times under the name of Bacchus) by studying Orphic *theogony* we can get a glimpse perhaps into a more archaic and alternative theological and shamanic tradition than the more structured and literary version presented by Hesiod. For the Orphic *theogony* by definition carries not just a much more *esoteric*

¹⁴³ The analysis of the *Derveni Papyrus* text is fascinating and revealing into not only Orphic beliefs from the period of classical Greece but also an early commentary on *mystery cult* mythological and esoteric beliefs in and of themselves. See *The Derveni Papyrus: Cosmogony, Theology and Interpretation* by Gábor Betegh. Cambridge University Press 2004 for a very detailed overview of the archeological find, a translation of the scroll (what can be recovered), a good summary of the analysis of the conclusions that can be drawn from the text itself as well as a reconstructed (Orphic) *theogony* which is embedded in the scroll. Why it was buried with what appears to be a great and well-respected warrior and aristocrat remains a mystery.

¹⁴⁴ For a complete translation of the ancient text/fragments, see *Hymns of Orpheus*, translated by Thomas Taylor, 1792. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hoo/>.

and *secret* meaning, but one which perhaps points to much more ancient origins given its close affiliation with ancient rites and rituals and initiation, very much reminiscent to the practices and rituals that are laid out in more detail in the *Avesta* and *Vedas* assuredly.

The Neo-Platonic authors, in their quest to provide the teachings of Plato on par with Christianity and who lean on Orphic *theogony* and myth to bolster their case as it were, also provide us with an important allegorical interpretation of the *theogony* itself from antiquity, from schools of philosophy that had greater access to Orphic thought and texts than we do in modern times. While of course they view these Orphic hymns and *theogonic* accounts through the lens of the One, the Intellect and the Soul -the classic tripartite principles within which Plato's doctrines were interpreted in the Neo-Platonic tradition in later antiquity.

In Proclus commentary on the *Timaeus*, we find many references to Orpheus and the *theogonical* account of creation that is attributed to him. In this (fairly lengthy) passage in particular, a clear alignment between Phanes in the Orphic *theogony* and the *Demiurge* of Plato's *Timaeus* is drawn, as well as an allegorical interpretation of the *theogony* itself – Jupiter/Jove in this translation being the Romanized names for Zeus:

Existing, therefore, as the producer of intellect, he very properly has an intellectual order. Hence also he is said by Plato to be both maker and father, and neither father alone, nor maker alone, nor again father and maker. For the extremes indeed, are father and maker; the former possessing the summit of intelligibles, and being prior to the royal series [i.e. to Phanes, Night, Heaven, Saturn, Jupiter, and Bacchus]; but the latter possessing the end of the [intellectual] order. And the former being the monad of paternal deity; but the latter being allotted a producing power in the universe. Between both these, however, are father and at the same time maker, and maker and at the same time father. For each of these is not the same; but in one order the paternal, and in another the effective has dominion.

The paternal, however, is more excellent than the effective. Hence in the media, though both are in each, yet the former is more father than maker. For it is the boundary of the paternal depth, and the fountain of intellectual. But the second is more maker than father. For it is the monad, of total fabrication. Hence I think the former is called Metis, but the latter Metietes. And the former indeed is seen, but the latter sees. The former also is absorbed, but the latter is replete with the power of the former. And what the former is in intelligibles, that the latter is in intellectuals. For the former is the boundary of the intelligible, but the latter of the intellectual Gods.

*Concerning the former likewise, Orpheus says, "In a dark cavern these the father made". But concerning the latter Plato says, "Of whom I am the Demiurgus and father of works. " In the *Politicus* likewise, he makes mention of the doctrine of the Demiurgus and father; because with the former [i.e. with Phanes] the paternal is more predominant, but with the latter [i.e. with Jupiter]*

the demiurgic. Each of the Gods however is denominated from his peculiarity, though each is comprehensive of all things. And he indeed who is alone maker, is the cause of mundane natures. He who is maker and father, is the cause of supermundane and mundane natures. He who is father and maker, is the cause of intellectual, supermundane, and mundane natures. But he who is alone father, is the cause of intelligibles, of intellectuals, of supermundane and mundane natures. Plato, therefore, admitting a Demiurgus of this kind, suffers him to be ineffable and without a name, as having an arrangement prior to wholes in the portion of The Good. For in every order of the Gods, there is that which is analogous to The One. Such therefore is the monad in each world.

But Orpheus gives a name to the Demiurgus, in consequence of being moved [i.e. inspired] from thence; whom Plato himself likewise elsewhere follows. For the Jupiter with him, who is prior to the three sons of Saturn, is the Demiurgus of wholes. After the absorption therefore of Phanes, the ideas of all things shone forth in him, as the theologist says:

*Hence with the universe great Jove contains,
Extended aether, heav'n's exalted plains;
The barren restless deep, and earth renown'd,
Ocean immense, and Tartarus profound;
Fountains and rivers, and the boundless main,
With all that nature's ample realms contain;
And Gods and Goddesses of each degree;
All that is past, and all that e'er shall be,
Occultly, and in fair connection lies,
In Jove's wide belly, ruler of the skies.*

Jupiter however, being full of ideas, through these comprehends in himself wholes: which the theologist also indicating adds:

*Jove is the first, and last, high-thundering king,
Middle and head, from Jove all beings spring.
Jove the foundation of the earth contains,
And the deep splendour of the starry plains.
Jove is a king by no restraint confin'd,
And all things flow from Jove's prolific mind.
One mighty principle which never fails,
One power, one daemon, over all prevails.
For in Jove's royal body all things lie,
Fire, night and day, earth, water, and the sky. [Orph. fr. 123]*

Jupiter therefore, comprehending in himself wholes, produces in conjunction with Night all things monadically and intellectually, according to her oracles, and likewise all mundane natures, Gods, and the parts of the universe. Night therefore says to him asking, how all things will be a certain one, and yet each be separate and apart from the rest:

*All things receive inclosed on ev'ry side,
In aether's wide ineffable embrace:*

*Then in the midst of aether place the heav'n;
 In which let earth of infinite extent,
 The sea, and stars, the crown of heav'n, be fixt.
 But after she has laid down rules respecting all other productions, she adds:
 And when your power around the whole has spread
 A strong coercive bond, a golden chain
 Suspend from aether.*

This bond which is derived from nature, soul and intellect, being perfectly strong and indissoluble. For Plato also says, that animals were generated, bound with animated bonds. Orpheus, likewise, Homerically calls the divine orders which are above the world, a golden chain; which Plato emulating says, "That the Demiurgus placing intellect in soul, but soul in body, fabricated the universe;" and that he gave subsistence to the junior Gods, through whom also he adorns the parts of the universe. If therefore, it is Jupiter who possesses the one power, who absorbs Phanes, in whom the intelligible causes of wholes first subsist, who produces all things, according to the counsels of Night, and who gives authority both to the other Gods, and to the three sons of Saturn, he is the one and whole Demiurgus of all the world, and has the fifth order among the kings, [i.e. among the Gods of the royal series,] as it is divinely demonstrated by our preceptor in his Orphic Conferences. Jupiter likewise, is coordinate with Heaven and Phanes, and on this account he is both maker and father, and each of these totally.¹⁴⁵

In this passage from Proclus we see virtual the full account of Orphic *theogony* laid out within a Platonic, *Demiurgic* perspective. Jupiter/Jove (Zeus) is explained as the *One*, the ultimate Monad, who is "named" by Orpheus, who swallows Phanes and conquers his father with the counsel of Night (Nyx) to become the fifth ruler over the dominion of immortals in the series of 6 that the Orphic *theogony* is known for:¹⁴⁶

1. first Phanes/Protogonus from the *cosmic egg* (aka Dionysus, Eros),
2. then Night (Nyx), the daughter/lover of Phanes from which Ouranos and Gaia (Heaven and Earth) come forth,
3. Ouranos taking over the reins from his father as the third ruler of the immortals,
4. then *Chronos* who overthrows his father in gruesome fashion, castrating him and casting his seed into the sea from which Aphrodite is born.

¹⁴⁵ THE COMMENTARIES OF PROCLUS ON THE TIMAEUS OF PLATO. Book II, pages 261-265. Translated from the Greek by Thomas Taylor. London 1820. From http://www.masseiana.org/proclus_timaeus.htm#BOOK_II_.

¹⁴⁶ "But with the sixth generation," says Orpheus, "cease the rhythmic song." It seems that our discussion, too, is likely to cease with the sixth decision.". *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9 translated by Harold N. Fowler. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1925. Plat. *Philebus* 66c. From <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0174%3Atext%3DPhileb.%3Asection%3D66c>

5. Then *Chronos* and his sister/wife Rhea (aka Demeter) bear the final generation of the gods, of which Zeus, assisted by Night, overthrows his father in similar gruesome fashion after *Chronos* had tried to kill all his children having known by prophecy that one was to overthrow him. After overthrowing *Chronos*, Zeus imbibes and swallows Phanes and takes over the reign of the heaven and earth.
6. The last of the six Orphic generation of gods is Dionysus, who is worshipped by the followers of Orpheus and is considered by them to be the king of all *mystery cults* and rights. Dionysus is born of the seed of Zeus and Persephone, his daughter, and Rhea (Demeter) is jealous and has him killed and dismembered with the assistance of the Titans, the great first generation of immortals. Zeus conquers them, and with the assistance of Athena who saves Dionysus's heart, he is reborn.

It is from this full account of Orphic *theogony* from which the epithet of Dionysus being "thrice born" originates – once as Phanes, once as Dionysus himself and then again reborn after being dismembered by the Titans through the grace of Athena who saved his heart.

One of the other key sources of at least the initial part of this lost *Orphic Theogony* is from excerpts of a work on *first principles* (*De principiis*) from Damaskios (or Damascius, c. 458-538 CE), who was the last head of the Academy in Athens and is considered to be the last of the Neo-Platonists. He is known to have studied extensively in Alexandria in his youth before taking over the leadership of the Academy in Athens in the latter part of the 6th century CE, before being exiled to Persia (c. 530 CE) after persecution by the Roman/Byzantine Emperor Justinian I after which the thousand-year-old philosophical institution of the Academy founded by Plato was officially shut down.

Damaskios wrote commentaries on the *dialogues* and teachings of Plato as well as the work on the *Difficulties and Solutions of First Principles* (*De principiis*) from which we gather not only important corroborating evidence for Orphic *theogony*, but also important information regarding some of the alternative Orphic theogonic accounts from Hellenic antiquity which fell under the more broad heading of "Orphism" but were not part of the Orphic *Rhapsodic Theogony* proper. There are three accounts which he describes in various levels of detail, all of which he refers to as Orphic, and all of which differ in many key respects to the orthodox version narrated by Hesiod.

The first and foremost of these he speaks to is from the *Rhapsodies*, the second is from an account he attributes to Hieronymus and/or Hellanicus and the third is from the Peripatetic philosopher who was a student of Aristotle's, Eudemus (of Rhodes). He provides these accounts, as well as an account of the *Chaldean Oracles*, within the context of the "allegorical" interpretation of these various "pagan" mythical traditions and their consistent perspective on *theogony* and *cosmogony* with respect to Neo-Platonic philosophy, again all in the name of

defending Neo-Platonism from the impending onslaught and persecution of alternative theological belief systems by the Christian Church and the Roman/Byzantine Empires which at the time was rapidly spreading throughout the Mediterranean.¹⁴⁷

Damaskios describes the Rhapsodic account with *Chronos* (Time) as the initial primordial being/concept/material from which Aither and Chasma (*Chaos*) are born. In this account, *Chronos* then embeds/places an *cosmic egg* (also referred to as a white tunic or cloud) within Aither, from which the primordial first immortal being Phanes (Protogonus) emerges as the first king of the gods. Phanes is described as a great winged hermaphroditic creature with four heads – that of a ram, a bull, a serpent and a lion. In this account Phanes is also called Metis, who although is typically described as one of the Titans, i.e. a second-generation god, but in this context probably connotes the more root etymological meaning of the Greek word *μητις*, meaning “wisdom”, “skill” or “craft”.¹⁴⁸

In Damaskios’s account of the Orphic *theogony* of Hieronymus/Hellanicus, the first primordial substance is a watery, *chaotic abyss* from which matter and earth are formed, and from which a great winged serpent is born which had the head of a bull and a lion and in the middle the face of a god. This account refers to this great being as “Unageing Time” and “Heracles”, who is united with Ananke (from the Greek word *Ἀνάγκη* meaning “force”, “constraint”, “necessity”), as well as Adrastea (aka Amalthea) - the latter of whom is put in charge of the protection of Zeus from his father *Chronos* in a secret cave beyond *Chronos*’s watchful by Rhea, the mother of Zeus and wife of *Chronos*. From this great creature, Aither, *Chaos* and Erebus (darkness/shadow) are born, as well as the great *cosmic egg*, a mythological motif that we find in the ancient Egyptian, Indo-Aryan and (albeit a little later in the historical record) from the Far East as well in the myth of Pángǔ.

The last version that Damaskios relates within the Orphic milieu is the one of Eudemus and while it is only a small passage, it is worth mentioning because a) Eudemus is a well renowned student of Aristotle from the 4th century BCE so is a fairly early and presumably reliable source, and b)

¹⁴⁷ For a detailed account of the various sources and textual material around Orphic Theogony from antiquity, a very good detailed overview can be found in *The Derveni Papyrus: Cosmogony, Theology and Interpretation* by Gábor Betegh. Cambridge University Press 2004. Pages 140-153.

¹⁴⁸ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Metis (mythology)', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 27 August 2016, 12:10 UTC, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Metis_\(mythology\)&oldid=736426961](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Metis_(mythology)&oldid=736426961)> [accessed 5 September 2016]. Also of note is that Phanes is called “Erikepaïos” in this account by Damaskios as well, and in other Orphic Theogonic traditions Phanes is associated with *Eros*, Zeus, as well as Dionysus, the latter term being the derivation of Dionysus’s epithet of “thrice born”, as is illustrated in the later genealogy and mythology of the gods of which Dionysus plays such an important role in Orphic circles after being the progeny of Zeus, then murdered by the Titans and subsequently brought back to life. Erikepaïos interestingly is a Greek word specific to the Orphic tradition which is of unknown origin but speculated by some to have near-eastern, or even Hebrew roots – see Wikipedia contributors, 'Erikepaïos', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 26 November 2013, 04:01 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Erikepaïos&oldid=583337485>> [accessed 5 September 2016].

because Damaskios tells us that in Eudemus's Orphic theogony account Night (Nyx) is the first primordial deity/principle, following the classical Homeric tradition¹⁴⁹.

This fairly late (again Damaskios writes in the 6th century CE) summary of Orphic *theogony* then gives us some sense as to the inherent uncertainties and difficulties in trying to reconstruct Orphic *theogony*, if there ever was such a thing. Although even to the Neo-Platonists apparently, the *Rhapsodies* attributed to Orpheus, whether or not they were authored by him or not, were considered to be the primary source of Orphic *mythos*. But it is also notable that even far after classical Hellenic antiquity within which the tradition of "Orphism" was no doubt alive and well, there still was some uncertainty surrounding the tradition as a whole and what was to be ascribed truly "Orphic". The *Orphic Theogony* as it were is not being fully extant in any complete account by any ancient author, clearly leaves some for interpretation as to the specific theological genealogy therein, the classical Greek authors (mid to late first millennium BCE) making only vague and indirect references to the secret rites and rituals which were practiced by Orphic communities such as rites of initiation and "cleansing" (*katharoi*), which the Orphic initiates had to pass through to be "born again".

While we don't have a fully extant version of the *theogony* of Orpheus (if there ever was one) it is possible to piece together the main story line and characters/mythemes from these sources and others, and in particular how it differs from the tradition of Hesiod. The details come primarily from the testimonies of later authors – mainly Neo-Platonists - and from the many poems to the gods and archaic natural principles that have survived that carry his name that were compiled towards the very end of the first millennium BCE and which are attributed to Orpheus himself which are most likely the same Orphic hymns alluded to by Aristotle.

This *Orphic Theogony*, embedded within the poetry attributed to Orpheus referred to by some as the *Orphic Rhapsodies* does provide some significant and important differences from the *theogony* of Hesiod, differences that reveal not only the existence of alternate theogonies from Hellenic antiquity other than the "orthodox" account given by Hesiod, but also reveal the external theological and cultural influences on Greek mythological narratives from Egypt and the Near East in particular.

So from these fragments and allusions by later authors, corroborated by the information we can glean from the *Derveni Papyrus* and the Orphic poems which are extant, we can not only piece together the mythological and cosmological narrative associated with "Orphism", the so-called *Rhapsodic Theogony*, but also we can see not only the unique characteristics of the Orphic

¹⁴⁹ These three accounts of Damaskios are drawn out in much further detail in *The Derveni Papyrus: Cosmogony, Theology and Interpretation* by Gábor Betegh. Cambridge University Press 2004. See the chapter on the different versions of Orphic *theogony*, pages 140-146.

theogony as well as its interpretation as seen through the eyes of the first philosophers, or at least the Neo-Platonic philosophers.

When one looks at the early creation myths, i.e. *mythos*, of the Indo-Aryans¹⁵¹, what we today call Hinduism, one is confronted with the fact that their early mythology was not so clearly codified or synthesized as its sister cultures in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and certainly not as well codified and standardized as the mythology and *cosmogony* of the Greeks and Romans. One's initial reaction to this fact from a Western point of view is that it is somewhat odd, especially given that the extant Sanskrit literature from antiquity is fairly extensive. However, it's important to keep in mind that the creation *mythos* of the Hindus, and mythology and legend in general, was and is a very important facet of Hindu *theology*. The *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Mahābhārata* for example, two of the greatest epics of antiquity that rival the works of Homer and Hesiod from the Western tradition, are still widely read and greatly influence Indian society even today.

Indo-Aryan creation stories however, Hindu *theogony* as it were, can be found in some of the ancient Sanskrit works, and while these narratives do not represent the core of the *theology* of the Hindus, like *Genesis* to the Judeo-Christian tradition or Hesiod's *Theogony* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to the Greco-Romans, Hindu mythology and theology, theo-philosophy, does in fact rest on these cosmological narratives just as the other major theological traditions from Eurasian antiquity. We can find allusions and references to this creation *mythos* of the Indo-Aryans, the ancestors of the modern Hindus, in several of the works from antiquity that are still extant and in wide circulation even today – namely the *Rigvéda*, *The Laws of Manu* and the *Purāṇas*. While each of these works serves a different purpose, spanning from theology to mythology to socio-political philosophy, how the world was created and what its basic underlying principles are, were of utmost importance to the compilers and authors of these ancient traditions.

This view of *theogony* as an ancillary aspect of theo-philosophical thought is characteristically “Eastern”, distinctive to Vedic/Hindu literary tradition as well as the ancient Chinese literary

¹⁵⁰ *Puruṣa*, or sometimes *Purusa* (Sanskrit: पुरुष), can be translated as “Cosmic Being” which is one of the epithets of *Brahman*, the Vedic anthropomorphic being who creates the universe, analogous to Plato's *Demiurge* and the Yahweh of the Hebrews. *Hiraṇyagarbha* (Sanskrit: हिरण्यगर्भ) is another epithet of *Brahman* found in the *Vedas* which means literally “golden womb” or “golden egg”.

¹⁵¹ Indo-Aryan is a philological (study of the development of language) term that we use here to describe the civilization that sprung forth in antiquity on the Indian subcontinent, the ancestors of the people of modern day India basically. Technically the word means people that speak Indo-Aryan, a theoretical language construct that belongs to the Indo-Iranian language family which is the largest language family (i.e. having the most variants and being the most widely spoken) of the Indo-European family of languages. The Indo-European language family also contains Greek and Latin, the precursors to modern European languages and while these languages are not directly related to Sanskrit they are in the same language family and they share many of the same root words as well as share similar language structures. Indo-European languages are spoken today in most of Europe and parts of Western, Central and South Asia and include English, Spanish, French, Hindi, Bengali, Portuguese, Russian and Punjabi among others.

tradition, and is juxtaposed with what we are used to seeing in the West – like for example what we see in the Greco-Roman tradition where we find mythological lore encapsulated in single (poetic) work like that of Hesiod’s *Theogony* or Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*), as well as what we find in the Judeo-Christian (and by inheritance the Islamic) theological tradition where the story of creation as told by Moses in *Genesis* is held in such high regard.

When trying to understand the meaning and later interpretations of some of these ancient Vedic texts however, texts which included not just philosophical material but mythological material and details on ritual and sacrifice as well, it is critical to have some sense of context – culturally and socio-politically – to try and comprehend the true meaning and import of these creation narratives and how they influenced the development of this rich and lasting philosophical tradition that is the legacy of the Indo-Aryan – namely Vedānta and Yoga which are the primary theo-philosophical systems underlying Hinduism.

The civilization from which Hinduism emerged is traditionally associated with the Indus Valley region, a river system from which an ancient culture could grow crops and thrive, a similar relationship to the Sumerians and their Tigris-Euphrates, the Egyptians and their Nile and the ancient Chinese and the Yellow River. This relationship with water and its fundamental existence and prerequisite feature for the source of life is reflected throughout the *Vedas*, and in the *Rigvéda* in particular, and is a marked characteristic of their *cosmogony* and creation *mythos* as is true of all of these ancient civilizations.

This ancient Indus Valley civilization spread and flourished in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent from c. 3300 to 1300 BCE, roughly aligning with the peak of ancient Egyptian civilization. The *Rigvéda* is one of the primary source texts that provide us insight into the life and culture of the people of the ancient Indus Valley and is one of the oldest extant texts in the Indo-European language family. It is thought to have been composed somewhere in the middle of the second millennium BCE, give or take a few centuries, while it – like all ancient texts – clearly reflects traditions and belief systems that date back much further in antiquity.

The ancient Indo-Aryan civilization was distinct from other ancient civilizations in that very early on in the civilization, society was divided to ensure separation between theology (religion) and social authority or royalty to a large extent, a social stratification system based upon birth and “caste” which persisted up until modern times actually. Within the caste system the knowledge of the Vedas which effectively represented their religious beliefs, was kept by the Brahmins, a distinct social class from the Kshatriyas or warrior (ruling) class. This social stratification while from modern eyes may look unjust or unfair, from an ancient history perspective it allowed for a persistent and well documented theological doctrine to be compiled and preserved for millennia, systems of belief and rites and rituals that are documented in the *Vedas*.

So while the Brahmins historically performed a socio-political function, as was true for most priestly classes in antiquity (the *Magi* of the Persians or the Egyptian priests for example), they were also responsible for - after proper training and tutelage – the preservation of the arts and knowledge of the *Vedas*, i.e. for performing the sacred rituals, rites and practices of the ancient Indo-Aryan society and for safeguarding the highest and penultimate teaching of the *Vedas*, i.e. the nature of the individual Soul, or *Ātman*, and its relationship to the Cosmic Soul, or *Brahman*, the transcendent and all pervasive God of the Hindus.

When looking at the historical records of these ancient peoples for their creation myths of the Hindus, the precursors to Vedānta¹⁵² as it were, one fact that must be contended with is that their creation mythology is not so clearly codified and elucidated as its sister cultures in Mesopotamia, Greece and Egypt to the West. While at first glance this seems somewhat odd given that the extant Sanskrit literature from deep antiquity of this ancient civilization is fairly extensive, but upon closer inspection it becomes clear that the intent of the early transcribers and compilers of the *Vedas* and early mythological literature were more concerned about the narratives and metaphysical principles surrounding the attainment of the highest form of knowledge, knowledge of *Brahman*, from which their later notions of personal liberation, or *mokṣa*, were ultimately based.¹⁵³

One of the unique contributions of the Indo-Aryans is the conservation and preservation of the specificities of a great deal of their ancient sacrificial rites, hymns and mythology in textual form, i.e. the *Vedas*. The only corresponding set of texts and scripture that rivals it in terms of age is the *Avesta* of the Indo-Iranians (Persians) to the West, which although shares many similar linguistic and cultural themes that are found in the Vedic Sanskrit lore, does not have the same unbroken and longstanding continuing tradition of preservation and interpretation into the modern era as do the *Vedas*. So with the *Vedas* then we have a direct window into the world of the Asian & European pre-history like no other literary tradition in fact.

Like the *Avesta* to the West, the authors of the *Vedas* were focused primarily on documenting and capturing the ancient rituals and rites of their ancestors, and the knowledge therein, rather than establishing the divine authority of the king or ruling class, or the supreme divinity of a specific culture or geopolitical center, as was the case in the Mediterranean cultures in antiquity for example. These rites and rituals which are described in the *Vedas*, and are still practiced today, are called *yajña* in Sanskrit, which means “sacrifice”, “devotion”, or “worship” and is classically associated with oblations or offerings, as well as in many cases sacred fire and the

¹⁵² Vedānta: literally “end of the *Vedas*”.

¹⁵³ *mokṣa* sometimes translated as *Moksha*, which is a key Sanskrit term in Indian philosophy which refers to the Soul’s (*jiva*’s) “emancipation”, “liberation”, or “release”, in the classic *soteriological* sense, from *saṃsāra*, which is the Sanskrit for “wandering” or “world” and in this context denotes the unending cycle of death and rebirth.

recitation of *mantras* (in Sanskrit). But also, and somewhat unique to the Indo-Aryans, the meaning behind the rituals are also described in allegorical and mythical narratives known as the *Upanishads*, the philosophical portion of the *Vedas* which describes the nature of *Ātman* and *Brahman*, and the means by which ultimate Truth can be realized.

Their beliefs in the creation of the universe though, their *cosmogony* (or *cosmogony*), is not entirely absent from their ancient literature, but it is however somewhat scattered throughout a few different texts and compilations rather than combined in a single work like the *Theogony* of Hesiod, the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid or even the *Enûma Eliš* of the ancient Sumer-Babylonians. Traces of these mythological narratives can be found most notably in the *Rigvéda*, the oldest of the Vedic texts written in Vedic Sanskrit, and in the *Purāṇas*, a somewhat later composition, and then in the *Laws of Manu* as well which has a passage that deals with cosmogony specifically.

The Eastern philosophical tradition - and in this context we mean the Indo-Aryan as well as the Far Eastern (Chinese) – is very consistent from the earliest written records with respect to its emphasis on basic, classical philosophical questions in tandem to its emphasis on faith and theology. No doubt the Vedic/Hindu *theological* tradition in antiquity had its pantheon of gods and goddesses which were formed out of the primordial chaos/ether from which the material universe emanates, just as the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions espoused in fact, but the philosophical and mystical strain of thought, the unknowable nature of the Creator as it were, is embedded at the very root of the Eastern theo-philosophical traditions and was not subsumed by the grandiose anthropomorphic creationist tenets and dogmatic scriptural reliance that is so characteristic of the Judeo-Christian (and Islamic) religions of the West.

In Daoism Hinduism, and Buddhism, we see a much more theo-philosophic flavor from the very beginning of the textual record than we do in the theologies that develop in the Mediterranean that we are so familiar with today. We can see this distinct and enduring philosophical bent of the Indo-Aryan people from some of the earliest passages we find about universal creation, *cosmogony*, from the *Rigvéda* in particular, which codifies stories, remnants and artifacts of the ritualistic, mythological and philosophical belief systems of the Indo-Aryan peoples from pre-historic times from which the Hindu religion as it we know it today eventually emerges.¹⁵⁴

The *Rigvéda* is transcribed in Sanskrit verse, so there is a meter and a poetry to it that can only truly be appreciated when it is heard, typically when it is chanted as it is still done today. These

¹⁵⁴ Buddhism is an offshoot of the Vedic tradition in fact. The teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama, aka Buddha, were very much a reaction to the orthodox exclusivity of the Brahmin Vedic tradition in much the same way that the teachings of Christ were a reaction to Jewish orthodox rabbinical theology and culture.

verses, the text, is believed to be divinely inspired and to have co-existed with creation itself, and thereby lies at the heart of not just Vedānta but Hinduism proper as well. This belief in the co-existence of scripture with universal creation, or at least divine inspiration, is something that the Hindus share with their Judeo-Christian (and Islamic) brethren to the West.

In the *Rigvéda*, the creation of the universe is said to have emerged from a single, undivided fundamental cosmic principle that was akin to water, *āpas*, or “cosmic water” which derives from the root Vedic Sanskrit word for water.¹⁵⁵ The first sentient being who emerged from this cosmic water from which all the major gods, earth, heavens, underworld, etc. emerged was Puruṣa, or Tvastr. From this primordial cosmic being then came the gods of the Sky and Earth, and then from this triad all the lesser gods came into existence.

*There was neither “being” [sat] nor “non-being” [asat] then, nor intermediate space, nor heaven beyond it. What turned around? Where? In whose protection? Was there water? --- Only a deep abyss. ...Darkness was hidden by darkness, in the beginning. A featureless salty ocean was all this (universe). A germ, covered by emptiness, was born through the power of heat as the One.*¹⁵⁶

Note the parallels here to the traditions to the west (the Sumer-Babylonian *mythos* from the *Enûma Eliš* and Egyptian *mythos* for example) which have the original formation of the universe, the *cosmos*, also germinating from this notion of salt water, or *watery chaos*, the primordial unordered basis for the universe in all its parts. We also see here the reference to the lack of light, “darkness within darkness”, reminiscent of the *Genesis* creation story of the creation of light as one of the *first principle* acts of creation.

However what probably stands out the most here, and is characteristic of the Vedic tradition as a whole (and one of the reasons why the early mythological narratives are not captured in the *Vedas* in fact) is that even when the author speaks of the creation of the universe, it is primarily doing so to point out that the initial state is fundamentally “unknowable”, a *skeptical* bent that is not only akin to Plato’s *forms* upon which the material universe is manifest and through which any knowledge or truth can be found, but also setting the stage for the core philosophical, and scientific in many respects, bent for Upanishadic philosophy, which are primarily concerned with the nature, and ultimate knowledge and understanding, of *Brahman* and *Ātman* as basic theological philosophical concepts. As such we see the importance of *self-realization* over *understanding*

¹⁵⁵ *Ap* (*áp-*) is the Vedic Sanskrit term for “water”, in Classical Sanskrit occurring only in the plural, *āpas*.

¹⁵⁶ *Rigvéda* 10. 129. Translation from *The Origins of the World’s Mythologies*, by E.J. Michael Witzel. Oxford University Press, 2012.

right from the very start of the Indo-Aryan theo-philosophical tradition, relegating the world of myth to a more secondary role than it plays the early civilizations to the West.¹⁵⁷

Another passage from *Rigvéda* which reflects this basic undercurrent of *skepticism* can be found from the *Nasadiya Sukta* (after the phrase *ná ása* “not the non-existent”), one of the most oft quoted and famous verses from the Indo-Aryan Vedic literature:

1. *THEN was not non-existent nor existent: there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it. What covered in, and where? and what gave shelter? Was water there, unfathomed depth of water?*

2 *Death was not then, nor was there aught immortal: no sign was there, the day's and night's divider. That One Thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature: apart from it was nothing whatsoever.*

3 *Darkness there was: at first concealed in darkness this All was indiscriminated chaos. All that existed then was void and form less: by the great power of Warmth was born that Unit.*

4 *Thereafter rose Desire in the beginning, Desire, the primal seed and germ of Spirit. Sages who searched with their heart's thought discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent.*

5 *Transversely was their severing line extended: what was above it then, and what below it? There were begetters, there were mighty forces, free action here and energy up yonder*

6 *Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation? The Gods are later than this world's production. Who knows then whence it first came into being?*

7 *He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it, Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not.*¹⁵⁸

Here we have, in the English translation/transliteration of course, one of the earliest perspectives on universal creation that has ever been written. While *Old Testament Genesis* creation mythology, which bears many similarities to Sumer-Babylonian *mythos* as has been well documented, is a first millennium BCE creation more or less, the *Rigvéda* verses and text have been dated to a period of time in ancient history some millennium or so earlier, to mid or late

¹⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that this is also a characteristic of the early theo-philosophical traditions in the Far East as well, where the underlying creation mythology of the ancient peoples has to be gleaned from and parsed through much later compilations by later historians and poets rather than from the earliest extant texts which were more concerned, at least in ancient China, with capturing historical records, *divination* practices and philosophy proper – in particular socio-political philosophy.

¹⁵⁸ From the 129th hymn of the 10th Mandala of the *Rig-Véda*. Griffith 1896: Hymn CXXIX. *Creation*. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/Rigvéda/rv10129.htm>

second millennium BCE and clearly originates from a *lyric oral tradition* that reaches much further back into antiquity.

What we see in this verse of the *Rigvéda* from purely mythical perspective is very similar in some respects to what we see in ancient Egyptian and Sumer-Babylonian cultures, the origin of the universe stemming from a fundamental, non-differentiated and chaotic cosmic principle – in this case somewhat questioningly identified with water.¹⁵⁹ We also see anthropomorphic elements here as well, albeit from a very agnostic perspective. We can however see the validation of the existence of gods and goddesses, they are not denied, but they are a secondary ontological principle to that which forms the basis of creation – the one who breathes life into the universe.

But what is so distinctive of this passage, and the Eastern tradition as a whole, is the direct reference to the unknowable nature of the universe, laying the epistemological and philosophical groundwork to the long standing and rich philosophical tradition of the Indo-Aryan peoples from which Buddhism and Vedānta eventually emerge. This passage clearly indicates that this epistemological bent which is such a marked characteristic of the Eastern philosophical traditions reaches deep into antiquity.

What's also interesting about this verse in the *Rigvéda*, is that despite sharing many common cosmological motifs with its Western counterparts— order from chaos, primordial waters, desire (*Eros*) sowing the seed of creation – it also contains many of the core, underpinning philosophical elements that distinguish Vedānta from other theological traditions, not just in antiquity but into modern times as well. The unknowable nature of creation and the Creator (Brahmā), the role of breath or life force in the creative process (*prāṇa*), the process of defining the unknowable by what it is *not* (versus what it is) which is another unique characteristic of the Eastern philosophical traditions and still can be found in some of the Buddhist, Vedic and Daoist philosophical schools even today. Many of these seeds are sown here in this passage of the *Rigvéda* and it is for this reason no doubt that this passage is so often quoted Vedic sages and scholars alike.

The author continues in the next verse, harkening back to the *rishis* (*rsis* in the transliteration by Griffith and *Ṛṣi* in Sanskrit), the great sages of old who “divined” the *Vedas*.

1. *THE sacrifice drawn out with threads on every side, stretched by a hundred sacred ministers and one,—This do these Fathers weave who hitherward are come: they sit beside the warp and cry, Weave forth, weave back.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ap* (*āp-*) is the Vedic Sanskrit word for “water”, in Classical Sanskrit occurring only in the plural, *āpas*.

*2 The Man extends it and the Man unbinds it: even to this vault of heaven hath he outspun, it.
These pegs are fastened to the seat of worship: they made the Sāma-hymns their weaving shuttles.*

*3 What were the rule, the order and the model? What were the wooden fender and the butter?
What were the hymn, the chant, the recitation, when to the God all Deities paid worship?*

*4 Closely was Gāyatrī conjoined with Agni, and closely Savitar combined with Usnih. Brilliant with
Ukthas, Soma joined Anustup: Bṛhaspati's voice by Brhati was aided.*

*5 Virāj adhered to Varuṇa and Mitra: here Triṣṭup day by day was Indra's portion. Jagatī entered all
the Gods together: so by this knowledge men were raised to Ṛṣis.*

*6 So by this knowledge men were raised to Ṛṣis, when ancient sacrifice sprang up, our Fathers. With
the mind's eye I think that I behold them who first performed this sacrificial worship.*

*7 They who were versed in ritual and metre, in hymns and rules, were the Seven Godlike Ṛṣis.
Viewing the path of those of old, the sages have taken up the reins like chariot-drivers.¹⁶⁰*

Here we see the same skeptical nature of these unanswerable questions given the deep antiquity that the author of these sacred verses is reaching back into. But we also see here the elemental importance of the rituals themselves, the rites and verses spoken, oblations and sacrifices given which facilitate the knowledge of the mysteries of the universe to man, i.e. the creation of the *rishis*, the great Indo-Aryan sages from deep antiquity who came up with the rites and rituals to commune with the divine. The knowledge came from the union of all the primary deification principles through which true knowledge could be passed down to man and through which the message of the *Vedas* could be passed from the realm of the divine of their forefathers, i.e. the gods – Agni, Gayatri, Varuna, Indra etc. - down to their present day (and by present day we mean 43rd and 2nd millennium BCE) through preservation of the *Vedas* themselves and the knowledge therein.

While the hymns and verses surrounding Creation quoted above from the *Rigvéda* contain no doubt some of the seed philosophical elements that were later to evolve into the Upanishadic texts, the more esoteric and philosophical portion of the *Vedas*, there is another passage from the same collection of *Rigvéda* hymns to Puruṣa, the great “Cosmic Being” of the universe to which the Indo-Aryans looked upon as the divine manifestation of the creative principle of the

¹⁶⁰ *Rig Véda*, translated. by Ralph T.H. Griffith, [1896]. Hymn CXXX. “Creation”. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/Rigvéda/rv10130.htm>

cosmos. In it we find more what we might consider more classically orthodox ancient mythological motifs.

It is from Hymn 10.90 of the *Rigvéda*, believed to be a somewhat later addition to the corpus (end of second millennium BCE) and is dedicated to Puruṣa, or the “Cosmic Being” from which the universe is formed. He is the *Demiurge* of the Hellenic philosophical tradition, and the Yahweh of the Hebrews but the language and allegories used to describe the creative process take on a much more ancient, perhaps even Paleolithic anthropomorphic tone.

*1. A THOUSAND heads hath Puruṣa, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet.
On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide.*

*2 This Puruṣa is all that yet hath been and all that is to be;
The Lord of Immortality which waxes greater still by food.*

*3 So mighty is his greatness; yea, greater than this is Puruṣa.
All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life in heaven.*

*4 With three-fourths Puruṣa went up: one-fourth of him again was here.
Thence he strode out to every side over what cats not and what cats.*

*5 From him Virāj was born; again Puruṣa from Virāj was born.
As soon as he was born he spread eastward and westward o’er the earth.*

*6 When Gods prepared the sacrifice with Puruṣa as their offering,
Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn; summer was the wood.*

*7 They balmed as victim on the grass Puruṣa born in earliest time.
With him the Deities and all Sādhyas and Ṛṣis sacrificed.*

*8 From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat was gathered up.
He formed the creatures of-the air, and animals both wild and tame.*

*9 From that great general sacrifice Ṛcas and Sāma-hymns were born:
Therefrom were spells and charms produced; the Yajus had its birth from it.*

*10 From it were horses born, from it all cattle with two rows of teeth:
From it were generated kine, from it the goats and sheep were born.*

*11 When they divided Puruṣa how many portions did they make?
What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?*

*12 The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rājanya made.
His thighs became the Vaiśya, from his feet the Śūdra was produced.*

*13 The Moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eye the Sun had birth;
Indra and Agni from his mouth were born, and Vāyu from his breath.*

*14 Forth from his navel came mid-air the sky was fashioned from his head
Earth from his feet, and from his car the regions. Thus they formed the worlds.*

*15 Seven fencing-sticks had he, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared,
When the Gods, offering sacrifice, bound, as their victim, Puruṣa.*

*16 Gods, sacrificing, sacrificed the victim these were the earliest holy ordinances.
The Mighty Ones attained the height of heaven, there where the Sādhyas, Gods of old, are
dwelling.¹⁶¹*

Here we see many of the basic, core elements of ancient creation mythology that we are familiar with in the West – the creation of the seasons, animals, the genealogy of the principle gods of the old Hindu pantheon coming forth from this Protogenital being (Puruṣa), born out of the various parts of his body as it were – speaking to his every present and coexistent nature within all the deities and their creations despite him being perceived as an independent creator as well. We also see the creation of the astral and celestial elements such as the Earth, Sun and Moon and Sky, as well as the emergence of the first pantheon of Gods such as Indra, Vāyu and Agni, all elements that are found in creation mythology throughout antiquity (the Greeks, the Romans, etc.).

We also see a connection drawn from the creation *cosmogony* to societal and theological structure, i.e. the caste system which was such a key component of the Indo-Aryan peoples for much of their history¹⁶², and the connection between hymn and scripture and the godhead himself, i.e. the *Vedas* being spoken of here as coming forth from Puruṣa himself. But implied in this passage is the critical importance of the sacrificial elements in the *Vedas* themselves as the catalyst for the creative process. While one might expect that this was true in all ancient cultures – for example we similar practices and beliefs in the worship of Shàngdì to the Far East which follows similar patterns and theological beliefs about the importance of following the rituals and *mantras* precisely otherwise they lose their potency – we see a direct reference to their

¹⁶¹ *Rig Véda*, translated by Ralph T.H. Griffith. 1896. Hymn XC. “Puruṣa”. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/Rigvéda/rv10090.htm>.

¹⁶² Thought to be a later addition to the verses to provide Vedic authority for the class structure and stratification of society based upon heredity – i.e. the caste system.

importance not only in the worlds of men but also in the realm of the immortals through which the universe was manifest.

Furthermore, this ancient primordial pseudo-anthropological epithet of the creator god, *Puruṣa* came to represent one of the two primary elements of the main *dualistic* branches of later Vedic philosophy – namely *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga*, which both hold that the universal order is established and maintained by the two primordial male and female interactive forces. Both of these systems hold universal creation to be the constant creative and destructive process of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, a cosmic dance between the active and passive, creative and receptive forces that are in constant struggle with each other for balance and harmony – very much akin to the *Yīn* and *Yáng* principles that permeate much of ancient Chinese philosophy which comes to play such an important role in later Daoist philosophy.

So again, we see the roots of the core Vedic and Hindu philosophical elements in the very earliest cosmological narratives of the *Rigvéda*, speaking not only to strength and persistence of the lineage within which it has been preserved, but also strong influence and connection of the ancient mythological narratives and underlying skepticism to the philosophical systems that emerge in later Indo-Aryan antiquity.

The Purāṇas on the other hand are believed to have been compiled many centuries later than the *Vedas*, and represent an attempt to consolidate and organize the belief systems of the “Hindus”, the descendants and torch bearers of the Vedic tradition and heritage. There are 17 or 18 “canonical” *Purāṇas*, and overall they contain almost a complete narrative of Hindu/Indo-Aryan history from cosmic creation, the generation and history of the gods and various deities (*Sūryas*, beings of light), the genealogies and legends of the demigods (*Asūryas*, beings without light), and various stories and legends of various heroes, kings and rulers that contributed to the creation and establishment of the Hindu civilization.

While the *Purāṇas* are considered to be “sectarian”, in the sense that they do not ascribe to any specific form of worship or establish the supremacy of a specific god or deity, they do reflect ancient forms of worship and adulation for the major Hindu gods from antiquity – namely *Viṣṇu*, *Śiva* and *Devi* among others. In this respect the *Purāṇas* can be viewed as analogous to the works of *Hesiod*, *Homer*, and *Ovid* to the West, not only with respect to the form or prose within which they were written, but also the content and purpose of the work itself which was intended to capture in written form the ancient myths and tales of the ancient deities of the Indo-Aryans, thereby solidifying and codifying the civilization of ancient India, or the people which have come to be known as *Hindus*.

Authorship of the *Purāṇas* is attributed to Vyasa, the supposed author of the *Mahābhārata* epic as well, and from the *Bhagavata Purāṇa*, one of the eighteen major *Purāṇas* devoted primarily to the worship of Krishna as the incarnation of Viṣṇu, we find another reference to the primordial watery chaos from which the universe or cosmos emerges as well:

After separating the different universes, the gigantic universal form of the Lord, which came out of the causal ocean, the place of appearance for the first puruṣa-avatāra, entered into each of the separate universes, desiring to lie on the created transcendental water.¹⁶³

The *Purāṇas* also describe in detail the Hindu concept of the cyclical nature of time and order of the known universe, and take a more expansive view of the notion of time as compared to the mythologies and cosmologies of the Sumerians, Egyptians, and most certainly the Greeks and Romans. As described in the *Purāṇas*, the Hindu concept of time, and in turn their concept of creation mythology in general, is personified in the figure Brahmā, who is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. Brahmā in this context is considered to have been created by Īśvara, and not necessarily equivalent to the Hindu conception of God necessarily although the distinction is subtle and depends upon context. In the Hindu *cosmogony*, a universe endures for about 4,320,000,000 years, or one day of Brahmā, and is then destroyed by fire or water elements back into the source. After the dissolution of the universe, Brahmā is said to rest for a day and then the cycle repeats itself all over again.

So the Hindu creation mythology ascribes the source of the universe to Brahmā, a layer of anthropomorphic abstraction between *Brahman* and the world of gods and men, who sits atop of the creation and destruction of this known universe, and that in turn each known universe has its own creation, preservation and destruction process and this process repeats itself ad infinitum through the ages. We also find a very detailed account of creation in a very influential socio-political work from India called *The Laws of Manu* - aka *Manusmṛiti* - a work reflecting the latter part of the 2nd millennium BCE to the middle of the first millennium BCE (roughly running parallel with the transcription of the early *Upanishads*) dealing with social and cultural issues – laws, practices, customs, etc. - rather than ritual or mythical traditions as were codified in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. In it Manu, the mythical Adam of the Indo-Aryans, lays out the social philosophical principles and practices to a group of great sages (*rishis*), providing the guiding principles that were to underpin the governing of Indo-Aryan society for millennia.

¹⁶³ *Bhagavata Purāṇa* 2.10.10

Although not considered part of the orthodox Vedic scriptural tradition per se, the text is nonetheless extremely influential in the development of Indo-Aryan civilization, and Indian history in particular, as it lays the groundwork for the operation and management of a healthy society. The work may be looked at in contrast, or similar to Plato's *Republic* or Aristotle's *Politics* although it contains a much more practical, or perhaps more aptly put Judaic-Christian (and Islamic) bent, as it deals with laws and the proper functioning of society in a very concrete way whereas the Greek philosophers dealt much more in the abstract.

The text deals primarily with what is referred to in the Indian philosophical tradition as *dharma*, a fairly deep and profound term which can be loosely translated as righteousness, path, or way but is a sophisticated and profound term that implies righteous and aligned living and is tightly *interwoven* into social considerations, i.e. one's station in life. It is a concept which is found in the *Bhagavad Gītā* as well and spans not just the Indian philosophical tradition but Buddhism too, speaking to its age, as well as its importance in the Eastern philosophical milieu in general. But despite being a guidebook to good living and proper management of civilization as it were, the *Laws of Manu* contains a very well-constructed and detailed creation story (two variants actually) at its very beginning as well, its author feeling compelled no doubt to establish the basic underpinnings of not just the Indo-Aryan society, but of the universe at large, helping the great seers of old to who he was speaking connect the dots through creation itself to the emergence of advanced society. Although a fairly lengthy passage, it is worth quoting (mostly) in full so the reader can gain a full appreciation of the depth of the story and its striking parallels with other ancient creation cosmological narratives.

There was this world – pitch dark, indiscernible, without distinguishing marks, unthinkable, incomprehensible, in a kind of deep sleep all over. Then the Self-existent Lord appeared – the Unmanifest manifesting this world beginning with the elements, projecting his might, and dispelling the darkness. That One – who is beyond the range of the senses; who cannot be grasped; who is subtle, unmanifest, and eternal; who contains all beings; and who transcends thought – it is he who shone forth on his own.

As he focused his thought with the desire of bringing forth diverse creatures from his own body, it was the waters that he first brought forth; and into them he poured forth his semen. That became a golden egg, as bright as the sun; and in it he himself took birth as Brahmā, the grandfather of all the worlds.

...

After residing in the egg for a full year, the Lord on his own split the egg in two by brooding on his own body. From these two halves, he formed the sky and the earth, and between them the mid-space, the eight directions, and the eternal place of the waters.

From his body, moreover, he drew out the mind having the nature of both the existent and the non-existent; and from the mind, the ego – producer of self-awareness and ruler – as also the great self, all things composed of the three attributes [the three gunas, or qualities; i.e. sattva, rajas and tamas] and gradually the five sensory organs that grasp the sense objects. By merging the subtle parts of these six possessing boundless might into particles of his own body, moreover, he formed all beings. Because the six parts of his physical frame became attached to these beings, the wise called his physical frame “body”. The great elements¹⁶⁴ enter it accompanied by their activities, as also the mind, the imperishable producer of all beings, accompanied by its subtle particles.

From the subtle particles of the physical frames of the seven males of great might, this world comes into being, the perishable from the imperishable. Of these, each succeeding element acquires the quality specific to each preceding. Thus, each element, tradition tells us, possesses the same number of qualities as the number of its position in the series. In the beginning through the words of the Veda alone, he fashioned for all of them specific names and activities, as also specific stations.

The Lord brought forth the group of gods who are endowed with breath and whose nature it is to act, the subtle group of Sadhyas, and the eternal sacrifice. From fire, wind, and sun, he squeezed out the eternal triple Veda characterized by the Rig verses, the Yajus formulas, and the Saman chants, for the purpose of carrying out the sacrifice. Time, divisions of time, constellations, planets, rivers, oceans, mountains, flat and rough terrain, austerity, speech, sexual pleasure, desire, and anger – he brought forth this creation in his wish to bring forth these creatures.

To establish distinctions among activities, moreover, he distinguished the Right (dharma) from the Wrong (adharma) and afflicted these creatures with the pairs of opposites such as pleasure and pain. Together with the perishable atomic particles of the five elements given in tradition, this whole world comes into being in an orderly sequence. As they are brought forth again and again, each creature follows on its own the very activity assigned to it in the beginning by the Lord. Violence or non-violence, gentleness or cruelty, righteousness (dharma) or unrighteousness (adharma), truthfulness or untruthfulness – whichever he assigned to each at the time of creation, it stuck automatically to that creature. As the change of seasons each season automatically adopts its own distinctive marks, so do embodied beings adopt their own distinctive acts.

For the growth of these worlds, moreover, he produced from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet, the Brahmin, the Ksatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra.¹⁶⁵

Here we see a much more comprehensive and elaborate creation story relative to its parallel verses in the Vedas, and the integration of a much more sophisticated philosophical system, but yet at the same time shows clear signs of strong Vedic (*Rigvéda*) influence. We see the

¹⁶⁴ “Elements” here, and below, referring to the five classic elements of the universe from the Indian philosophical perspective which diverged somewhat from the classic earth, air, water, fire that we are accustomed to seeing (*alchemy* for example) in the West. We have ether, wind, light, water, and earth, each created one from the other at the beginning of the universe, emanating from the mind of the creator when he awakens from his deep sleep. The process of creation of these elements, and their associated characteristics, is delineated in passage 1.75-8 of Laws of Manu and is alluded to here – “in a series”.

¹⁶⁵ Olivelle, 2005: pgs. 87-88

emergence of an ordered world from a primordial chaotic universe through the will and power of an anthropomorphic grand deity, the universe itself being a manifestation of his physical form and creation occurring by his will/seed across the primordial waters.

We also see the inclusion of the analogy of the “*cosmic egg*” from which came forth the sky and the earth, a metaphor which can be found in various *Brāhmaṇas*, and in the *Chāndogyo Upanishad* (3.19), one of the earliest of the *Upanishads* from the early part of the first millennium BCE. In the *Chāndogyo Upanishad*, the *cosmic egg* splits into golden and silver parts and from which the sky and earth germinate respectively. A reference to this same “golden egg” can also be found in *Rigvéda* verse as well (10.121), where the Sanskrit word *Hiraṇyagarbha*¹⁶⁶, literally the “golden womb” or “golden egg”, is used as an epithet of the Creator, or Brahmā¹⁶⁷.

We furthermore see in this rendition of creation and the emergence of the gods, the *Vedas* themselves and the rituals which they describe and encode, the core elements of the universe (ether, wind, light, water, earth), the celestial elements of the universe, time itself, etc. all emerging from this great creation process, as do the creation of all living beings and creatures on earth. Parallels here can be drawn directly with the order of creation in *Genesis* for example, while the segmentation into 7 days isn’t found but the basic natural universal creation narrative follows a very similar line.

Finally at the end, and consistent with the purpose of the treatise as a whole, with some antecedents found in the *Vedas* themselves, we have a final attestation of the establishment of right (*dharma*) from wrong (*adharma*), as well as the basic social structure, as the final piece of creation and the establishment of order, leading quote nicely into the text itself which now sits on the foundation of universal order, from which the social order arises.

So what we see in the Vedic-Hindu creation *mythos* then, and what distinguishes it from the Judeo-Christian tradition (again within which we place Islam) is a strong philosophical and analytical bent that goes back to the roots of the very scriptural tradition itself. This unbroken tradition, which starts with the pre-historical Indo-Aryans as reflected in the *Vedas*, and then passes through the Upanishadic phase which further codifies and elaborates on the philosophical and ritualistic tradition that we find in the *Vedas* and then moves to a more classic Western epic poetry phase which involves the pre-eminence of gods and heroes – the *Mahābhārata*, *Ramayana* and *Purāṇas* – includes not just what we would consider to be the classic theological

¹⁶⁶ *Rig Véda*, translated by Ralph T.H. Griffith. 1896. CXXI “Ka”. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/Rigvéda/rv10090.htm>.

¹⁶⁷ See Witzel, *The Origins of the World’s Mythologies* 2012 pgs. 121-124 for a comprehensive look at the *cosmic egg* analogy in world myth.

components of a religion in today's modern parlance – the classic creation story/myth - but also an underlying thread of philosophy and *esotericism* which were altogether abandoned from the Judeo-Christian narrative as it looked to focus more not on incorporating various streams of thought and schools of (philosophical) belief but on excluding as many different interpretations and traditions as possible so as to avoid any shadow of doubt with respect to how God was to be viewed and how his creation was to be perceived and even how one was to live their life in concordance with the laws of the Church.

So the Hindu creation *mythos* ascribes the source of the universe to Brahmā, a layer of anthropomorphic abstraction between the world of gods and men, who sits atop of the creation and destruction of this known universe, and that in turn each known universe has its own creation, preservation and destruction process and this process repeats itself ad infinitum through the ages. The Brahmā of the Hindus is equivalent theologically to the Judeo-Christian God, and is also akin to the Shàngdì of the Chinese and the Greek conception of Zeus.

With the Indo-Aryan tradition then, we find belief in a single unified Creator God, Brahmā, coupled with a robust philosophical tradition - Vedānta - from which the social and ethical structure of society evolves from and sits upon - as exemplified with Manu's Laws and ethical precepts. We also have a rich mythical poetic narrative, that is coupled with and compliments this deep philosophical system of thought no doubt capturing the imagination of Hindu's from time immemorial. The *cosmogony* embedded in the various scriptural texts, some of which we have looked at in detail here, captures the essence and order of universal creation, from the creation of the stars and heavens. Sun and moon, the great gods, the establishment of the ancient rituals themselves and the rituals and rites surrounding them that are captured in the *Vedas*, down to the world of beasts and men the establishment of different classes of society.

Complementary to this creation *mythos*, and the true legacy of the Hindus and Indo-Aryan culture one might argue, is that the experience of the divine was a personal experience and was not the domain of any religious or political bureaucracy. And this system of belief, this religion, held that there were many paths to divine illumination, and that each individual was free to choose the path, and the gods to worship, based upon their own preferences and desires. This was the unique contribution of the Hindu faith, and what still characterizes the society of India today where all religious faiths and paths are equally respected and integrated into the overall society.

Before the evolution of the more esoteric and all-encompassing principle of Heaven (*Tiān*) which we find so prevalent in classical Chinese philosophical circles after the advent of the Zhou Dynasty, the primary divine entity that is worshipped and looked to as the source of universal order is called Shàngdì, which of course gets its name from the dynastic period of China within which it plays such a prominent theological role.

The Traditional Chinese word for Shàngdì is “上帝” - the first character 上, or *shàng* meaning "high", "highest", "first", or "primordial", and the second character “帝”, *dì* meaning “ruler” or “emperor”. “帝”, or again *dì*, is also used as an epithet to the famed Yellow Emperor as well, referred to as “Huangdi” or (黃帝). Huangdi is the first of the Five Emperors of pre-Xia Dynastic China who is credited with many of early advancements of Chinese civilization and from which the history of Chinese civilization really begins - at least according to Sīmǎ Qiān (c.145 or 135– 86 BC), the author of the *Records of the Grand Historian* (太史公書), or *Shiji* (史記)¹⁶⁸. From the first chapter and verse of the *Shiji* we find for example:

*Huangdi (Yellow emperor) was the son of Shaodian. His surname was Gongsun, and his prename Xuanyuan. Born a genius he could speak when a baby, as a boy he was quick and smart, as a youth simple and earnest, and when grown up intelligent.*¹⁶⁹

Huangdi to the Chinese can be looked upon as somewhat analogous to the role that King Menes plays to the Egyptians, the famed first pharaoh from prehistoric Egypt who is credited with having united Lower and Upper Egypt for the first time and from which the period of Dynastic Egyptian history begins. Furthermore, Huangdi in a slightly different form, 皇帝, is the formal title used throughout Chinese history to denote the emperor of China, speaking to the age of (continuous) Chinese civilization, one of the oldest on the planet no doubt, as well as to the reverence and respect China has always had for its history.

We see ample evidence in the archeological and textual record of sacrificial worship of Shàngdì during the Shāng Dynasty (c. 1750 BCE–c. 1027 BCE), hence the name of the deity, i.e. the “High God of the Shang”. The *Book of Documents*, or *Shujing* for example makes reference to offerings

¹⁶⁸ The *Shiji* is written toward the end of the first millennium BCE in the Han Dynasty and is one of the definitive works of literature from Chinese antiquity. Akin to the *Histories* of Herodotus in many respects.

¹⁶⁹ *Records of the Grand Historian* by Sīmǎ Qiān. Partial translation adapted from Herbert J. Allen's "Ssūma Ch'ien's Historical Records" (Royal Asiatic Society, 1894). Verse 1 from Chapter 1, “Annals of the Five Emperors”. From Chinese Text Project at <http://ctext.org/shiji/wu-di-ben-ji>.

and sacrifices to Shàngdì by the Emperor Shun, the predecessor of Yu the Great who was the founder of the Xia Dynasty (c. 2070 BC–c. 1600 BC). While dating these historical figures from Predynastic China is difficult if not impossible, according to the ancient Chinese historians the Xia Dynastic era is roughly from the turn of the 2nd millennium BCE to 1700/1600 BCE or so after which the Shāng Dynasty comes to power, placing the worship of Shàngdì well into the 3rd millennium BCE give or take, if not (and most likely if) from a much earlier form of sacrificial worship in prehistoric China.

What we know about the Shāng Dynasty period in China's history comes from various archeological sites in Northeastern China as well as historical texts written in the classical period (5th through 2nd centuries BCE) that speak to the traditions in deep Chinese pre-history as well as the lineage of rulers and kingdoms, all the way back to the pseudo-mythical legendary times of Fu Xi and the Yellow Emperor that are documented in *Book of Documents*, or *Shujing*, as well as from the *Records of the Grand Historian*, or *Shiji*, which was written by Sīmǎ Qiān (c. 145/135 – 86 BCE) during the Han Dynasty.



Figure 7: Principal sites of prehistoric and Shang China.¹⁷⁰

From these sources, we are told how the Shāng Dynasty succeeded the legendary Xia Dynasty which was established by the legendary Yu the Great (*Dà Yǔ*), the tamer of the Great Flood. These empires were based primarily in the North-Eastern part of China, by the Yangtze and Yellow river, but their influence spread much further throughout what we today know as China and eventually, with the establishment of the Zhou Dynasty, came to hold sway over most of what we consider modern China today.

These people of the pre-Zhou Dynastic period lived in complex societies, made up of large towns where they domesticated animals, mastered the arts of agriculture and irrigation, as well as crafted various artifacts in Bronze, hence the term “Bronze Age” used to describe this time in China’s history. They also mastered the art of jade carvings and we know that jade was an important luxury and jewelry item of the upper and middle classes and was used for ornamental weapons as well.

¹⁷⁰ Adapted from A. Herrmann, *An Historical Atlas of China* (1966); Aldine Publishing Company. From online Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shang-dynasty>

The people of pre-historic China also had a highly developed lunar calendar system (the word for Moon and Month were the same) which was used to know when to plant crops, when to harvest, when the annual flooding of the rivers in the kingdom would occur, etc. We also see the first evidence of writing in this era of China's history, first as inscriptions on tortoise shells and on ox bones, and then later on Bronze inscriptions, from which the terms "Oracle Bone script" and "Bronze script" originate that are used to describe the earliest forms of Chinese writing. While it is believed that inscriptions were also made on bamboo or silk strips at this time in Chinese history, consistent with later time periods in Chinese antiquity, we do not have any evidence of such, probably due to the perishable nature of these types of artifacts. It is clear that the forms of writing we see on the bones and bronze from this period is fairly mature however, and it can be safely assumed that writing developed in China at least in the third millennium BCE if not earlier, putting the development of Chinese writing systems historically in line with the cuneiform of the Sumer-Babylonian and Akkadian peoples in the Near East as well as the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians in North Africa.

From the archeological, written and inscription evidence, we can surmise the ancient Chinese of the Xia and Shang dynastic periods as living in fairly complex social structures which included a pseudo scribal class of shamanic priests whose functions included among others *divination* and healing as well as basic advisory roles to the ruling classes. At the top of the social structure sat a supreme ruler, or Emperor. These people not only had complex burial structures with vast and expensive artifacts left with the deceased, but also consulted the "spirits" in a form of ancestral worship on various important topics or before making important political or social decisions, speaking to the divine reverence which the ancient Chinese had for their either direct, or ancient ancestors whom they believed had divine origins similar to many of the ancient prehistorical cultures throughout the world.

Ancestral worship in some form or another was kept alive at least through the Han Dynasty period (206 BCE to 220 CE) and is prominently reflected in the philosophy of Confucius (551-479 BCE) which played such a foundational role in the development of Chinese thought in the latter half of the first millennium BCE. It is within this context of ancestral worship which plays such a strong role in the *theology* of the prehistoric Chinese, that we must view the worship of Shàngdì, a tradition which was to later transform into the more theo-philosophical notion of Heaven, *Tiān*, in the Zhou Dynasty period that has persisted throughout much of China's history. While the rituals surrounding the worship of ancestors as well as Shàngdì, the first and foremost of the deities of the Shàng, was associated with animal, and in some cases human, sacrifice. The latter

practice was for the most part abandoned by the Zhou rulers but animal sacrifices to Shàngdì to promote a good harvest persisted up until modern times.¹⁷¹

Worship of Heaven (Shàngdì and later *Tiān*) throughout China's long history included the erection of shrines and the offering of prayers, and in the Shāng Dynasty and earlier, the use of sacrifices as a form of worship. In fact, the last and greatest of these houses of worship was erected as recently as the 14th century CE, the so-called "Temple of Heaven" in Beijing. The connection of Shàngdì to imperial rule and the seat of power, akin to the Ancient Egyptian Pharaohs in many respects, was prevalent even after Confucianism, Daoism, and then much later Buddhism took root in China in the latter part of the first millennium BCE, as evidenced by the rulers of China continuing to perform the annual bull sacrifice, a beast with very ancient roots in mythology, in honor of Shàngdì even into modern times. *Tiān* then later plays a pivotal role in classical Chinese philosophy, a tradition that is consolidated and documented under the name of Confucius in the late Zhou, Qin and Han Dynasty periods (latter half of the first millennium BCE basically). Emperors even into modern times are considered to be rulers over everything under heaven, or "sons of heaven" *Tianzi* (天下).¹⁷²

In the archeological and textual records from pre-historic China, from Oracle bone inscriptions as early as the Shāng Dynasty in the 2nd millennium BCE, Shàngdì is presented as the ruler of Heaven and Earth and the greatest and most respected of all of the deities. He was believed to preside over the spirit world as well, i.e. *shén*, and it was to Shàngdì that the emperors paid homage and sacrificed to for success in battle, a good harvest, or was appealed to for advice through various *divination* practices – from which the tradition surrounding the *Yijing* no doubt emerged.

One of the unique characteristics of the ancient literary tradition of the Chinese is its lack of a classic *theogony* in the Western sense of the term. Yes there are records, fairly consistent accounts in fact, of the universe, the cosmos, coming into being from which Heaven and Earth are formed and from which the natural elements themselves spring forth. It is to this basic, what can only be termed *naturalist* principles that the ancient Chinese turned to in order to create the structure of their society, their system of *ethics*, and the basis upon which the sovereign of China was to be established.

¹⁷¹ Bull or Ox sacrifices were made at the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, constructed in the 15th century, were performed up until the Ming and Qing dynasty period, i.e. the 14th to early 20th century. The height of such ceremonial worship was performed by the Emperor during the winter solstice, where precise rituals and observances had to be followed to ensure a good harvest.

¹⁷² See Wikipedia contributors, 'Shàngdì', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 31 August 2016, 07:31 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Shàngdì&oldid=737016165>> [accessed 6 September 2016].

Most of the records we have in fact are works that are either sponsored by, created by, or at the very least approved by the various states that governed what we have come to know as ancient imperial China. Within these records, as well as within various poetic and other philosophic works, there are allusions to what we might want to call mythical characters, the likes of Fu Xi or Yu the Great for example, but these figures – while retaining some pseudo-divine qualities, and who at the same time are in many cases associated with the descent from gods or deities – are not immortal beings per se but mortal beings with divine characteristics who are held up as models of leadership and founders of Chinese civilization.

We know that in Chinese antiquity, say in the pre-Shang era or Bronze Age China, we have a pantheon of sorts that does exist, for these are the very figures from which these pseudo-historical figures are supposedly descendant from. And we also have ample evidence for the worship of the great sky god Shàngdì, to whom various sacrifices were made and who was viewed – at least from the philological evidence – as a great, anthropomorphic being. What's missing however, at least from the written records that have survived, is the connection between this class of immortals or gods, and the creation of the cosmos. How did these gods come into being? How were they formed? Which was descended from which? Were there multiple generations of gods? Did one generation overthrow the next?

What we do have however, is a fairly extensive historical record that reaches back into pre-historical China that connects to these pseudo-historical figures however. It's just that there is this glaring missing layer as it were if we are to hold the theogonical accounts of the West as seen in the ancient Egyptian, Greek, Sumer-Babylonian civilizations all of which had theogonies that reached back from the present ruler all the way back to the great immortal beings that created the world. While the preeminence of creation myth in the classic Western sense is absent from the written records of the first millennium BCE in ancient China we do have reference to a primordial substance from which the universe, the cosmos, emerges that has anthropomorphic qualities from some of the literature in the first few centuries CE, specifically from two works attributed to author Xu Zheng (or Hsu Cheng), an Eastern Wu official from the third century CE¹⁷³.

The first passage which survives in fragmentary form from a work called *Sanwu liji*, or *Historical Records of the Three Sovereign Divinities and the Five Gods*, speaks to a first born semi divine figure named Pángǔ (盤古), or simply Pángǔ which means literally “coiled antiquity”, who is born

¹⁷³ Wu, or Eastern Wu or Southern Wu, was one of the three major states prevalent in the Three Kingdoms period (220-280 CE) of Chinese antiquity in the 3rd century CE that held influence over a large part of what is today Eastern China. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Eastern Wu', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 19 August 2016, 05:26 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Eastern_Wu&oldid=735198368> [accessed 14 September 2016]

from a *cosmic egg* that emerges from a primordial abyss, or Hùndùn, or simply Hundun (混沌), from which Heaven and Earth, the two great pillars of all classic Chinese *mythos*, come forth.

*Heaven and earth were in chaos like a chicken's egg, and P'an Ku was born in the middle of it. In eighteen thousand years Heaven and earth opened and unfolded. The limpid that was Yáng became the heavens, the turbid that was Yīn became the earth. P'an Ku lived within them, and in one day he went through nine transformations, becoming more divine than Heaven and wiser than earth. Each day the heavens rose ten feet higher, each day the earth grew ten feet thicker, and each day P'an Ku grew ten feet taller. And so it was that in eighteen thousand years the heavens reached their fullest height, earth reached its lowest depth, and P'an Ku became fully grown. Afterward, there were the Three Sovereign Divinities. Numbers began with one, were established with three, perfected by five, multiplied with seven, and fixed with nine. That is why Heaven is ninety thousand leagues from earth.*¹⁷⁴

In this passage, we see this primordial chaos to *cosmic egg* motif, which of course we find in many of the other ancient Eurasian cultural *mythos* to the West (e.g. Egypt, India, and Greece/Orphic *mythos*) integrated into the classical historical records of the birth of Chinese civilization which is believed to have begun with the Three Sovereigns - of which Fu Xi is typically the first. We also see here interestingly the role of numbers, i.e. the odd numbers 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 which play such an integral role in the early Chinese theo-philosophical tradition of the *Yijing*, also called out as one of the first primordial elements of creation that is established at the very beginning of Chinese civilization.

The second passage comes from the *Wuyun linian ji*, or *A Chronicle of the Five Cycles of Time*, which is also attributed to Xu Zheng and also only survives in fragmentary form. This version details the transformation of the first born Pángǔ directly into universal creation, very much reminiscent of the *Rigvéda* hymn to Puruṣa which describes a very similar process.

When the firstborn, P'an Ku, was approaching death, his body was transformed. His breath became the wind and clouds; his voice became peals of thunder. His left eye became the sun; his right eye became the moon. His four limbs and five extremities became the four cardinal points and the five peaks. His blood and semen became water and rivers. His muscles and veins became the earth's arteries; his flesh became fields and land. His hair and beard became the stars; his bodily hair became plants and trees. His teeth and bones became metal and rock; his vital marrow became

¹⁷⁴ From the *Sanwu liji*, or *Historical Records of the Three Sovereign Divinities and the Five Gods*, by Xu Zheng. Translation by Anne Birrell from *Chinese Mythology. An Introduction*. Johns Hopkins University Press 1993. Pages 32-33.

*pearls and jade. His sweat and bodily fluids became streaming rain. All the mites on his body were touched by the wind and evolved into the black-haired people.*¹⁷⁵

While both these sources come from fairly late in the historical record, again from the 3rd century CE, they do in all likelihood reflect an older mythological tradition which must have persisted in parts of ancient China, one that found a voice in the Eastern Wu. It very possible that this more archaic tradition was perhaps ignored - or even perhaps destroyed by the classical Chinese dynastic rulers, for example in the Burning of the Books at the beginning of the Qin Dynasty – who adopted a much more cerebral and intellectual approach toward cosmic creation.

From the *Dao De Jing* for example, a text which we know goes back at least to the 4th century BCE, we see a more classic approach to *cosmogony* which looks at universal creation in terms of applicability toward *ethics* and *virtue*, one of the hallmarks of Daoist philosophy, but Confucian thought as well which dominates the intellectual landscape of the Imperial Dynastic period of Ancient China in the first millennium BCE.

*The Dao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things. All things leave behind them the Obscurity (out of which they have come), and go forward to embrace the Brightness (into which they have emerged), while they are harmonised by the Breath of Vacancy. What men dislike is to be orphans, to have little virtue, to be as carriages without naves; and yet these are the designations which kings and princes use for themselves. So it is that some things are increased by being diminished, and others are diminished by being increased. What other men (thus) teach, I also teach. The violent and strong do not die their natural death. I will make this the basis of my teaching.*¹⁷⁶

Numerology - the *One* the *Two* and the *Three* - are also again here called out as basic cosmic principles which come forth from the *Dao*, the all-embracing term which refers to not just the cosmic world order but also looked upon as the hallmark of “right” living, or the *Way of Virtue* which is typically how *Dao De Jing* is transliterated into English. But this *cosmogony*, if we can even call it that, is called out as a benchmark upon which “the way” is to be understood, not as creation *mythos* in and of itself.

Insight into ancient Daoist *cosmogony* beyond what limited traces that can be found in the *Dao De Jing* were discovered in 1993 on a cache of bamboo slips in a tomb dated to the Warring States

¹⁷⁵ From the *Wuyun linian ji*, or *A Chronicle of the Five Cycles of Time* by Xu Zheng. Translation by Anne Birrell from *Chinese Mythology. An Introduction*. Johns Hopkins University Press 1993. Page 33.

¹⁷⁶ *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-tzu. Translation by James Legge. Sacred Books of the East, Vol 39. 1891. Verse 42. From Chinese Text Project at <http://ctext.org/dao-de-jing>.

period (475-221 BCE) found in central China, just north of the former capital of the State of Chu of the Zhou Dynasty era. The texts, known collectively as the “Guodian Chu Slips”¹⁷⁷ included a work entitled *Tàiyī Shēngshuǐ* (太一生水), literally translated as *The Great One Gave Birth to Water* which was found along with other classic ancient works which included a copy of the *Dao De Jing*, the *Book of Rites (Liji)* as well as content from the *Book of Documents (Shujing)*.

*The Great One Gave Birth to Water,
Water returned and assisted “Taiyi”,
in this way developing heaven.
Heaven returned and assisted “Taiyi”,
in this way developing the earth.
Heaven and earth [repeatedly each other assisting],
in this way developing (the “Spiritual” and the “Numinous”)
“above and below”.
“above and below” repeatedly each other assisting,
in this way developing Yīn and Yáng.
Yīn and Yáng repeatedly each other assisting,
in this way developing the four seasons.
The four seasons repeatedly each other assisting,
in this way developing cold and hot.
Cold and hot repeatedly each other assisting,
in this way developing moist and dry.
Moist and dry repeatedly each other assisting,
they developed the (circle of) the year, and the process came to an end.*

*Therefore, the year
was produced by moisture and dryness;
moisture and dryness
were produced by cold and hot.
Cold and hot
and the four seasons
were produced by Yīn and Yáng.
Yīn and Yáng
were produced by above and below.
Above and below:
were produced by heaven and earth.
Heaven and earth
were produced by the Great One.¹⁷⁸*

¹⁷⁷ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Guodian Chu Slips', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 1 December 2015, 01:03 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Guodian_Chru_Slips&oldid=693198315> [accessed 14 September 2016].

¹⁷⁸ *Tàiyī Shēngshuǐ, The Great One Gave Birth to Water*. Bamboo slips 1-8. Translation after *Lao Tzu's Te-Tao Ching. A Translation of the Startling New Documents Found at Guodian* by Robert G. Henricks, Columbia University press 2000, pgs. 123-129 and *Dao*

The text fits nicely into the ancient Daoist tradition. as it describes the *Dao*, i.e. the “Way” (道), to be followed in a fashion that is most consistent with the Lǎozǐ’s *Dao De Jing*. But in this work, we find a more detailed cosmogonic picture where the “Great One” (大), which clearly has anthropomorphic connotations, “gives birth to” water (水), from which Heaven and Earth emerge, from which above and below and *Yīn* and *Yáng* emerge. *Yīn* and *Yáng* gives rise to the four seasons, which give rise to cold and hot and moist and dry, illustrating the quite naturalistic worldview of the ancient Chinese, one which consists of an ongoing generative process of opposing forces which at their elemental level are termed *Yīn* and *Yáng*.

Another perplexing and somewhat unique attribute of cosmogonical works from ancient China – with the myth of Pángǔ being a notable exception which again comes fairly late in the historical record - is their inherent *skepticism*, their disbelief as it were, in the simple narrative of the world being created by a god or gods, and their description of it in poetic and questioning literary prose.

One of the best examples of this tradition, which is very reminiscent of what we find in the *Rigvéda* CXXIX - “Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows it not.”¹⁷⁹ – is a work called *Heavenly Questions*, or *Tiānwèn* (天問) that we find in a collection of classical Chinese poetry from the state of Chu called the *Chu Ci*, or *Songs of Chu*, which are attributed to two Warring States Period (c. late 3rd century BCE) authors and poets named Qu Yuan and Song Yu, the former of which is attributed the *Heavenly Questions*. The Chu state lies at the southernmost border of classical ancient Chinese culture and although was a part of the Shang and Zhou Dynasties still retained significant distinct cultural traits, some of which are manifest in the style, language and content of the *Chu Ci*.

De Jing. A Philosophical Translation by Roger T Ames & David L. Hall. Random House Publishing Group 2010, pgs. 225-231. Text from http://www.tao-te-king.org/taiyi_shengshui.htm.

¹⁷⁹*Rig Véda* CXXIX. “Creation”. Translation by T.H. Griffith, 1896. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/Rigvéda/rv10129.htm>.



Figure 8: State of Chu circa 3rd century BCE¹⁸⁰

According to legend, Qu Yuan compiled the *Heavenly Questions* after his exile from the court of Chu and subsequent wanderings, having being inspired - or perhaps better put perplexed, bewildered and perhaps transfixed – by the paintings and illustrations he found on the walls of ancient temples and caves.¹⁸¹ The text is an archaic language, cryptic almost and is very similar to a passage we find (and by we I mean David Hawkes) in the *Zhuangzi*, one of the foundational texts of Daoism along with the *Dao De Jing* which dates from around the same period, i.e. circa 3rd century BCE.

How (ceaselessly) heaven revolves! How (constantly) earth abides at rest! And do the sun and moon contend about their (respective) places? Who presides over and directs these (things)? Who binds and connects them together? Who is it that, without trouble or exertion on his part, causes and maintains them? Is it, perhaps, that there is some secret spring, in consequence of which they

¹⁸⁰ From Wikipedia contributors, 'Chu (state)', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 9 September 2016, 01:26 UTC, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chu_\(state\)&oldid=738451471](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chu_(state)&oldid=738451471)> [accessed 15 September 2016].

¹⁸¹ *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology of Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets*. Translated and Introduction by David Hawkes. Penguin Books, 1985. Pgs. 122-126.

cannot be but as they are? Or is it, perhaps, that they move and turn as they do, and cannot stop of themselves? (Then) how the clouds become rain! And how the rain again forms the clouds! Who diffuses them so abundantly? Who is it that, without trouble or exertion on his part, produces this elemental enjoyment, and seems to stimulate it? The winds rise in the north; one blows to the west, and another to the east; while some rise upwards, uncertain in their direction. By whose breathing are they produced? Who is it that, without any trouble and exertion of his own, effects all their undulations? I venture to ask their cause..¹⁸²

Even in translation the *lyric poetic* element of this passage come through. There is a mysterious inclination toward what I'll call *skepticism*, again reminiscent of some of the passages in the *Rigvéda* as well as Platonic doctrine as a whole. While we see a faint allusion toward the existence of a supreme anthropomorphic deity here, the context is more of an analogy or metaphor than a reference to the absolute belief in, in contrast to the ceremonial and hymnal worship texts which we find also in the *Vedas* and in the Hellenic-Orphic traditions for example. And yet the lyric poetic elements are inherent in the language nonetheless.

Heavenly Questions falls in the same category of the espousal of the grand universal mystery, a fundamental *skepticism* about the potential for knowledge of its creator, as well as the potential for knowledge about the general mythical and pre-historical tradition of the Chu, to which the poem contains a myriad of references to, many myths and legends of which have been lost in the sands of time.

Tis said:

At the beginning of remote antiquity, Who was there to transmit the tale? When above and below had not yet taken shape, By what means could they be examined?

When darkness and light were obscured, Who could fathom them? When primal matter was the only form, How could it be recognized?

Brightness became bright and darkness dark; What has caused them to be like this? Yīn and Yáng commingle; What was basic, what transformed?

Round heaven with its nine layers, Who managed and measured it? What sort of achievement was this? Who was the first to make it?

How was the Cord tied to the Hub? How was the Heavenly Pole added to them? What did the Eight Pillars hold up? Why was there a gap in the southeast?

The borders of the ninefold heavens — Where do they stretch: where do they join? Many are their corners and angles — Who knows their number?

Upon what are the heavens folded? Where are the twelve stages divided? How are the sun and moon attached? How are the constellations arrayed?

¹⁸² From *The Texts of Taoism*, translated by James Legge. Part I of II. Sacred Books of the East, Volume 39. 1891. *Zhuangzi* by Master Zhuang (aka Zhuangzi). Chapter 14, "The Revolution of Heaven" (天運). Chinese Text Project. From <http://ctext.org/zhuangzi/revolution-of-heaven>.

*The sun emerges from the morning vale, It comes to rest on the crepuscular horizon. From dawn
until dusk, How many miles does it travel?
What virtue hath the moon, That it dies and then is reborn again? What benefit is there To harbor a
bunny in its belly?
The goddess of Nü Qì had no mate; How did she get nine sons? Where does the god Bo Qiang dwell?
Where does the benign wind breathe?
What closes and brings darkness? What opens and brings light? Before the Horn rises in the east,
Where does the numinous sunlight hide?¹⁸³*

Leaving aside the vague mythical references in this passage which are a characteristic element of the work and surround much of the text with ambiguity and obscurity, we find the same not only skeptical cosmogonical bent that we see in the passage from the *Zhuangzi* quoted above, but also reference to the coalition and comingling of opposing forces which sit at the very heart of universal creation in the ancient Chinese *mythos* which manifests in the content and formation of the *Yijing*, with its broken and solid lines which represent *Yin*, dark or shady, and *Yang*, sunny or bright, respectively – which are architected by the mythical cultural figure Fu Xi to reflect the universal order of Heaven and Earth, i.e. the natural world or *cosmos*, through which the will of Fate itself can be revealed.

Further insight into Daoist *cosmogony*, if we can use that term here broadly, can be found from a set of silk texts excavated in the Southeastern China in the 1970s that dates to around the same time period and region, i.e. the state of Chu, circa 4th century BCE, as the *Chu Ci*. The set of manuscripts is referred to collectively as the Mawangdui Silk Texts, or *Mǎwángduī Bóshū*, and includes works on topics ranging from philosophy, history, military strategy, medicine, rituals, music, astrology and mathematics.

From an ancient Chinese theo-philosophical perspective the finding is unique because it contains material that is attributed to the Yellow Emperor directly, the first and foremost of the semi divine Chinese emperors, the so-called Five Emperors, to which the beginning of Chinese civilization was attributed. The material attributed to the Yellow Emperor from these texts, while bearing many similarities to classically Daoist philosophy, does also however bear some unique characteristics relative to the classic Daoist tradition as well.¹⁸⁴

The set of manuscripts also contains two copies of the *Dao De Jing*, which not only contain some semantic and linguistic variations, but were also written in two different Chinese character sets, speaking to the various manuscript traditions of the *Dao De Jing* which existed in Chinese

¹⁸³ *Heavenly Questions*. From <http://bs.dayabook.com/poetry/chu-ci-songs-of-the-south/heavenly-questions#TOC-->.

¹⁸⁴ See *The Silk Manuscripts on Taoism* by Jan Yün-hua. Published by Brill. *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 63, Livr. 1 (1977), pp. 70-75.

antiquity. The find includes also includes the earliest known copy of the *Yijing*, as well as a short but important treatise that speaks to Daoist *cosmogony* specifically, i.e. the *Daoyuan* (道原), or *Dao's Origins*.

*At the beginning of eternal past,
all things penetrated and were identical with great vacuity.
Vacuous and identical with the One,
Rest at the One eternally.
Unsettled and confusing,
there was no distinction of dark and light.
Though Tao[Dao] is undifferentiated, it is autonomous: "It has no cause since ancient times", yet
"the ten thousand things[wànwù] are caused by it without any exception".
Tao[Dao] is great and universal on the one hand, but also formless and nameless.
It has no form since antiquity,
It penetrates extensively but nameless.
Because of this,
The superior Tao[Dao] is high but cannot be perceived,
Deep but cannot be fathomed,
Manifest but no one is able to name it,
Large but no one is able to describe its form.¹⁸⁵*

The last but certainly not least of the ancient texts from Chinese antiquity that speak to cosmogony, the formation of the cosmos and universal world order, comes from a compilation of works entitled *Huainanzi* - 淮南子 or "Writings of the Masters of Huainan" - that was compiled and edited by Liu An (c. 179-122 BCE) who was the prince of Huainan, a city in South Eastern China, who was an advisor in the court of his nephew, Emperor Wu of Han, the seventh Emperor of the Han Dynasty who ruled from 141-87 BCE.

The *Huainanzi* was a result of extensive intellectual debates and the compilation of various treatises and works by leading Daoist, Legalist, Confucianist and other scholars who were brought together to comprehensive philosophical and socio-political work that established the rational and intellectual foundations required for the perfect state, akin to Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics* except covering a much wider base of intellectual thought, and representing the collaboration and contributions of many scholars representing a variety of philosophical schools of thought rather than the work of a single individual.

¹⁸⁵ *The Silk Manuscripts on Taoism* by Jan Yün-hua. Published by Brill. *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 63, Livr. 1 (1977): pgs. 75-76.

As such while it's difficult to assign the content to a single philosophical school per se, the work covers a much more in depth look at all facets of theo-philosophical thought that underpin the ideal state relative to the works of Plato and Aristotle to the West. The *Huainanzi* for example, and relevant to our exploration of ancient Chinese cosmogony here, addresses rather explicitly universal creation as it was understood by the predominant Han Dynasty philosophic schools, and its relationship in turn to the ethical and moral precepts of the individual which were to be aligned with this balance of cosmic and earthly (*naturalistic*) principles, which in turn were to be applied to the socio-political sphere as well, an intellectual connection and relationship that is absent from Plato and Aristotle's works on the same subject.¹⁸⁶

Similar to Plato's *Republic* however, the overall purpose The *Huainanzi* is the exploration of the philosophical and intellectual foundations upon which the ideal state should be built, a state which should be governed by a ruler who is trained in such disciplines, very much akin to the notion Plato's Philosopher King. The work in general then was designed to serve as a handbook or guidebook of sorts for the ideal sovereign.

From the 3rd Chapter of The *Huainanzi*, a chapter devoted to what can be best termed ancient Chinese astrology given the title "Celestial Patterns" which describes in painstaking detail the realm of the Heavens which includes the stars, the zodiac, phases of the moon and sun, the four seasons, etc. with the underling purpose of describing the model which is to be followed in the subsequent Chapter, "Terrestrial Patterns", we find the following description of the formation of the universe which has some very unique characteristics relative to the other cosmogonic narratives that are extant from Chinese antiquity.

*When Heaven and Earth were yet unformed, all was
Ascending and flying,
Diving and delving.
Thus it was called the Grand Inception.
The Grand Inception produced the Nebulous Void.
The Nebulous Void produced space-time [yǔzhòu or cosmos];
space-time produced the original qì.
A boundary [divided] the original qì.
That which was pure and bright spread out to form Heaven;
That which was heavy and turbid congealed to form Earth.
It is easy for that which is pure and subtle to converge
But difficult for the heavy and turbid to congeal.
Therefore
Heaven was completed first;
Earth was fixed afterward.*

¹⁸⁶Albeit dealt with in separate but related treatises such as Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and Plato's *Timaeus*.

*The conjoined essences of Heaven and Earth produced Yīn and Yáng.
The supersessive essences of Yīn and Yáng caused the four seasons.
The scattered essences of the four seasons created the myriad things [wànwù].
The hot qì of accumulated Yáng produced fire; the essence of fiery qì became the sun.
The cold qì of accumulated Yīn produced water; the essence of watery qì became the moon.
The overflowing qì of the essences of the sun and the moon made the stars and planets.
To Heaven belong the sun, moon, stars and planets;
To Earth belong waters and floods, dust and soil.¹⁸⁷*

While we do find here some of the classic Daoist cosmogonic principles referenced – such as the basic division of the realms of Heaven and Earth, the establishment of the basic opposing forces of *Yīn* and *Yáng* from which emerge the four seasons and the *ten thousand things*, i.e. *wànwù*, we also find some intermediary steps in the universal creative process here that we do not find, at least not directly, in any of the other cosmogonic material from Chinese antiquity.

In particular, we see a reference to what is translated here as the “Grand Inception”, reference to a single creative event from which the “Nebulous Void” is created from which the cosmos itself in its material manifestation (*yǔzhòu*, or literally “cosmos” which the author here translates as “space-time”) comes forth. What is notably absent from this account is any anthropomorphic attributes that are assigned to any layer of this creative process, one of the unique attributes of classical Chinese philosophy from antiquity which this text clearly reflects.

But we also find here is perhaps our earliest introduction to the importance of the notion of *qì* (or alternatively in later Chinese literature transliterated as *ch’i*), which plays such a primary role in later, more evolved forms of Daoist philosophy. It is the primordial *qì* for example from which Heaven and Earth are formed, playing the same role as the *cosmic egg* in the Pángǔ mythical narrative and it is the coagulation of *qì* and *Yáng* which produce fire which in turn creates the sun and the coagulation of *qì* and *Yīn* which produce water from which the moon is created.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ *The Huainanzi. Liu An, King of Huainan. A guide to the theory and practice of Government in Early Han China.* Translated and Edited by John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer and Harold D. Roth. Columbia University Press, 2010. Chapter 3, “Celestial Patterns”, verse 3.1 pg. 48114-115.

¹⁸⁸ In early Oracle, Bronze and Seal script, *qì*, or *ch’i*, is depicted as “气” and is typically taken to denote “breath” or “air”. The term is typically transliterated into English as “vapor”, “breath”, or “air” but a more accurate translation would be “vital energy” or “life force”. Parallels to the Chinese notion of from a theo-philosophical perspective can be found in the notion of “*prāṇa*” in Vedic philosophy, or even in the notion of “*pneuma*”, or divine spirit, of the Stoics. *Qì* can also be seen akin to the Holy Spirit of Christianity or even on a lighter note as “the force” of the Star Wars trilogy which has captivated the modern psyche of the West. It is this very same energy or force for example that is leveraged and manipulated in the ancient Chinese medicinal practice of acupuncture which has become popular in the West as of late and has been used in China and throughout Southeast Asia for centuries. See Wikipedia contributors, ‘Qi’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 11 September 2016, 21:42 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Qi&oldid=738937126>> [accessed 16 September 2016].

Overall however, we find here in a fairly mature and influential theo-philosophical and socio-political work from the 2nd century BCE generally consistent ancient Chinese *cosmological* themes that lack an anthropomorphic emphasis and focus on the basic primordial principles which delineate Heaven and Earth, the very same principles which govern the universal order. It also describes the fundamental *dualism* which is so characteristic of Daoist philosophy, the interplay of the basic forces of *Yīn* (shady or dark) and *Yáng* (sunny or bright) from which the universal world order is not only established, but an understanding of which can lead to a balanced and harmonious life of *virtue*, i.e. the “Way” or *Dao*. This universal world, this *cosmogony* as it were, is looked upon in this tradition not only as an explanation of how the cosmos was created and is maintained, but also as the benchmark and set of guiding principles upon which the realm of man – both individually and collectively – should be aligned for happiness (Aristotle’s *eudaimonia*) but also looked to for the creation and establishment of the ideal state – i.e. the source of the principle of the “Mandate of Heaven”.

The final component of the last classically Western *theogonical* narrative that is seemingly absent from the Far Eastern tradition is this connection drawn between those that rule, and the divine. We see this quite clearly in the ancient Egyptian civilization, with the Sumer-Babylonians, and even although more implicitly than explicitly, with the Hellenic tradition, where each established the supremacy of a single godhead, a single deity, who was not only the leader of the respective “pantheon” of gods, but also from which authority and rule descended. With the ancient Egyptians this was more explicit, as the pharaoh was a direct descendant of, or claimed direct access to, the greatest ruler of the Egyptian gods – Amon-Ra for example. This was less explicit in the Hellenic tradition where all of the Theogonies more or less established the supremacy of Zeus over the “gods of old”, the belief in which united the people of Greece under one cultural and religious (theological) tradition. With the Sumer-Babylonians, and their ritualistic and ceremonious worship of Marduk that is evident in the tradition surrounding the *Enûma Eliš*, we see this link between those that rule and their relationship with the ruler of the gods clearly established. The Persians too, united under one god – Ahura Mazda, the supreme god of ancient Zoroastrian faith – to whom the kings pledged their allegiance and from whom they ultimately gained their source of power over the people that they governed.

But if we look closer for this connection between the originators of ancient Chinese civilization, from which imperial rule is established, and the connection to the divine – what we call the pantheon in the West which has no true counterpart to the ancient Chinese, we can find a similar pattern. Ancient Chinese civilization by all standard accounts, most of them categorized as historical narratives rather than mythical narratives (if the distinction makes any difference), start with the so called Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors. This is the age of the Yellow Emperor,

Huangdi, and the era of Fu Xi, the creator of the original trigrams from which the *Yijing* tradition springs, and from which Dynastic China begins its history – first with the Xia Dynasty, then with the Shang, followed by the Zhou and then into the Qin, Han and later dynasties the latter of which become part of the historical records rather than steeped in myth and tradition as the many of the legends surrounding the earlier dynasties are.

We find a good example of this connection between the pseudo-mythical originators of Chinese civilization from pre-history with the divine, or semi divine, from a fairly late commentary on the *Shiji*, or the *Records of the Grand Historian*, authored by Sima Zhen (or Ssuma Chêng) of the 7th century CE, an Introduction that (according to Herbert J. Allen, one of the earliest translators of this ancient Chinese classic into English from the very end of the 19th century) was typically included in most renditions of the *Shiji* as part of what one might call a “standard” Introduction. Sima Zhen’s commentary is known as the *Shiji Suoyin*, which means “Seeking the Obscure in the Grand Scribe’s Records”. In it, Sima Zhen outlines the account of the Three Sovereigns, the legendary originators of Chinese civilization which precedes the time of the Five Emperors (the first and foremost of these Five Emperors being the pseudo-divine Yellow Emperor, i.e. Huangdi) which is where the *Shiji* begins, filling in a gap in the “historical” record as it were.

*T’aihao (Great Brilliant), or P’aohsi [Fu Xi], of the surname Fêng (wind), superseding Suijên (fire producer), succeeded Heaven as King. His mother, named Huahsü, trod in the footprint of a giant at Thunder lake, and bore P’aohsi at Ch’êngchi. He had a serpent’s body, a man’s head, and the virtue of a sage. ‘Looking up he contemplated the forms exhibited in the heavens, and looking down he observed the patterns shown on the earth: he observed also around him the ornamental markings of the birds and beasts, and the different suitabilities of the soil. As to what was near he found things for consideration in his own person, and as to the remote in things in general. He first delineated the eight Trigrams [bāguà] in order to show fully the virtues of the gods, and to classify the qualities of the myriads of things [wànwù]. He worked out a system of recording by tablets in lieu of ‘knotted cords,’ and marriage rites were then first instituted, a pair of skins being given as wedding presents. ‘He made nets to teach men how to snare animals and to fish,’ and so he was called Fuhsi [Fu Xi] (hidden victim). He kept beasts for sacrificial purposes in his kitchen, and so he was called P’aohsi (kitchen victims). There being a dragon omen, he enrolled dragons among his officers, and they were styled dragon leaders. He made the thirty-five-stringed lute. Ruling under the influence of the element Wood, he directed his thoughts to the season of spring; thus the Book of Changes [Yijing] says ‘The god came forth from Orient brightness, and made (the year begin with) the first month of spring.’ This god was Great Brilliant. His capital was in Ch’ên. In the East he built a fêng monument on Mount T’ai. Having reigned eleven years he died. His posterity in the ‘Spring and Autumn’ period (721-480 B.C.) were Jênhsü, Hsüchü, and Ch’uanyü, who all, one after the other, bore the surname Fêng.*¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Ssuma Ch’iens’s *Historical Records* by Herbert J. Allen. Originally published in 1894 in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26 (2): 269-295. Text <http://www.sacred-texts.com/journals/jras/1894-10.htm>.

The reference here to P'aohsi (the Wade-Giles Romanized name of Paoxi in Pinyin) is another name for Fu Xi, the heroic figure from Chinese antiquity who is attributed with having created the original trigrams, the *bāguà*, according to the tradition surrounding the *Yijing* commentary, i.e. the *Ten Wings*, which was appended to the *Yijing* hexagrams in the latter part of the first millennium BCE. Chinese historians and mythologists have attributed many of the original components of ancient Chinese civilization – fishing, marital ceremonies, a system of writing, music and the like to Fu Xi and clearly Sima Zhen is following, and recording, this long-standing tradition. What's interesting and unique about this account however is that it speaks to this narrative of Fu Xi directly, attributes his descent from Heaven itself, and directly integrates him into the very fabric of ancient Chinese history. Also interestingly it describes him as having a serpent's body and a man's head, harkening back somewhat to the Neolithic figures of half man and half beast that were such a marked characteristic of the Egyptian pantheon for example.

Sima Zhen continues:

Nükua, also of the surname Fêng, had the body of a serpent, the head of a man, and the virtue of a holy man. He came to the throne in the room of Fuhsi, under the title Nühsi. He made no hand-drums, and only fashioned the reed organ; accordingly the Book of Changes [Yijing] does not refer to him, and he had no share in the revolutions of the five elements. Ntikua is said by one author to have also reigned under the influence of the element Wood. Now several generations after Fuhsi, the elements metal, wood, etc., came round in regular rotation, and Nükua being the first to attain special distinction on account of his great merits, and also as one of the three sovereigns, was hurriedly referred to as the 'wood king.' In his last year one of the princes named K'ung kung, whose duty it was to administer the criminal law, became violent and played the tyrant. He did not rule properly, for he sought by the element water to subdue that of wood. He also fought with Ch'uyung and was not victorious, when, falling into a rage, he butted with his head against the Incomplete mountain, and brought it down. The 'pillar of heaven' was broken and a corner of the earth was wanting. Nükua then fused five-coloured stones to repair heaven, cut off the feet of a tortoise to establish the four extremities of earth, collected the ashes of burnt reeds to stop the inundation, and so rescued the land of Chichow. After this the earth was at rest, the heaven made whole and the old things were unchanged. Nükua died, and Shênning began his reign.

The blazing god, Shênning, was of the Chiang family. His mother, named Nutêng, was Yukua's daughter and Shaotien's wife. Influenced by a sacred dragon, she brought forth the blazing god with a man's body and an ox's head. He grew up on the banks of the Chiang river, whence he derived his surname. As he ruled by the influence of the element fire, he was called 'blazing god,' and named his officers by the help of fire. "He cut down trees to make agricultural implements, bending timber into the shape of plough handles and spades, and taught the people the art of husbandry. As he was the first to give lessons in agriculture he was styled 'divine husbandman.' Then sacrifices were offered at the close of the year, and red thongs used for garlanding plants and trees. He was the first to taste the different herbs, and the first to make use of them for medicinal purposes. He also made the five-

stringed lute." He taught people how to hold mid-day markets, when they bartered their wares and retired, everyone having got what he wanted. He reduplicated the eight Trigrams, and thus obtained sixty-four symbols. He first of all had his capital at Ch'en, and then dwelt at Ch'üfou. After reigning 120 years he died, and was buried at Ch'angsha. Shênning originally came from Liehshan (burning mountain), so Tso (ch'iu ming) speaks of the son of the burning mountain called 'Pillar,' and also Lishan (whetstone mountain). The book of rites [Liji] says: this was the individual of the whetstone mount who was in possession of the empire. Shênning took for his consort the daughter of 'Rushing water,' named T'ingpa, who bore a son, the Emperor Ai (alas), who had a son, Emperor K'o (conqueror), who had a son, Emperor Yü-wang (elm net). There were altogether eight generations, lasting 530 years, after which Hsien-yüan arose. His descendants were Choufu, Kanhsü, Hsilu, Ch'ichi, I-hsiang, and Shenlu, who were all of the Chiang tribe, and princes, or else one of the presidents of the four mountains. Under the Chou dynasty a great prince, the chief of Shen, was a loyal minister of the king, and Hsülieh, of the Ch'i State, was the leader of the princes of the Middle Kingdom. Now the bounties conferred by the holy men were great and extensive, so their reigns were glorious and long, and their progeny numerous.

According to one author the three sovereigns were the sovereign of Heaven, the sovereign of Earth, and the sovereign of Man. From the beginning of creation the relations between prince and subject were carefully worked out, and as the accounts cannot be entirely rejected, they are appended hereto. When heaven and earth were first set up, there were twelve sovereigns of heaven, who lived in retirement, in a state of inaction, converts from the busy world, kings ruling under the influence of the element Wood. The period began with these 12 brothers Shêti, who reigned 18,000 years each. The 11 sovereigns of Earth, kings ruling under the influence of the element fire were 11 persons, from 'Bear's Ear' and 'Dragon gate' mountains, who also reigned 18,000 years each. The 9 sovereigns of Man, who rode in cloud chariots drawn by 6 winged creatures, came from 'Valley mouth,' and were 9 brothers, who each held sway over one of the 9 provinces, and built cities and towns. They reigned for 150 periods, that is for 45,600 years. After the sovereigns of Man came the Five dragons, Suijên, Tat'ing, Pohuang, Chung Yang, Chuan-hsü, Li-liu, Lilien, Hêhsü, Ts'unlu, Huntun, Haoying, Yuch'ao, Chujang, Kot'ien, Yink'ang, and Wu-huai, for these are the styles of the imperial dynasties after the age of the three sovereigns, but there being no record in the chronological lists, we cannot tell the names of the kings, the lengths of their reigns, or the localities of their capitals. In a poem of Han's it is stated that in ancient days over 10,000 persons erected fêng monuments on Mount T'ai, and hollowed out ground for altars on Liangfu. Confucius observes on this that he does not know all these persons, and Kuan Iwu says that 72 persons built fêng monuments on Mount T'ai, of whom he knew 12. Now the first of these was Wuhuai, but before Wuhuai, and after the sovereign of Heaven, the chronology covers such a vast period of time that one cannot enumerate all the emperors and kings. At any rate the old books are lost, and one cannot argue it out beforehand, yet we should never say that there were no such emperors or kings. So the 'Spring and Autumn' classic has it recorded that from the creation to the capture of the Lin (B.C. 481) 3,276,000 years, divided into ten epochs, have elapsed, or 370,600 years (according to some authors). The first epoch was called that of the 9 chiefs, the 2nd the Five dragons, the 3rd Shêti, the 4th Holo, the 5th Lient'ung, the 6th Hsüming, the 7th Hsiufei, the 8th Huit'i, the 9th Shênt'ung, and the 10th Liuchi.

*Now it was arranged in the time of Huangti that the Liuchi should be added to the other 9 epochs.
The above is inserted here by way of supplementing the record.¹⁹⁰*

While a fairly lengthy passage it's important and relevant here because firstly it illustrates how the ancient Chinese saw their history, as one that began in the age of the Three Sovereigns upon which the civilization itself was started, a time in history "lost from the records" but still remembered and passed down from generation in myths and legends, many of which are captured here. We have the divine heritage of these Three Sovereigns laid out, and their pseudo-mythical description as variants of man and beast, harkening not only back to the ancient Egyptian pantheon, but also to Upper Paleolithic shamanic practices in general which for the most part did not see the clear distinction between man and beast that we have today, and who believed, if we take evidence from the variety of cave art drawings found throughout Eurasia from this time period, in this pseudo-imaginary world where man and beast merged into these divine figures, these divine figures which became the gods of these ancient peoples and to which the Chinese looked to for the establishment of their civilization.

Another important distinction to of the ancient Chinese from its Western counterparts who look to solve the same problem – namely connect their historicity with divine heritage – is that Sima Zhen is documenting the record here, filling in part of the historical record that was left out by "The Grand Historian" Sīmǎ Qiān, he's not creating *lyrical poetry* that could be sung to audiences like Ovid or Homer, or documenting sacred *mantras* or phrases that have been handed down from divine authority to be used in ancient rites, rituals or sacrifices that were no doubt part of the practices of the ancient Persians and Indians as recorded in the *Avesta* and the *Vedas* respectively. This is a much more practical approach and style, and one that clearly serves a socio-political need as well as it establishes the lineage between the gods themselves and those that rule, which is effectively the same purpose of the ancient Egyptian *mythos*, and the *Enûma Eliš*, and even the *Five Books of Moses* at the end of the day. So while the classic *theogony*, or *cosmogony*, might be missing, the connection between the divine and the human still remains in the ancient Chinese tradition, just in a different form as it were.

The ancient Chinese had Shàngdì, no doubt, the great god of the Shàng people to whom the people worshipped and turned to for guidance and sacrificed to for success in battle, for good harvest, and the general well-being of their people. But the myths of the Shang people are lost, no doubt erased from the archeological and written records - what little there may have been in Bronze Age China - by the Zhou when they come to power and when Shàngdì was replaced by *Tiān*, i.e. Heaven, as the overarching theological principle to which the new ruling class looked to

¹⁹⁰ *Ssuma Ch'iens's Historical Records* by Herbert J. Allen. Originally published in 1894 in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26 (2): 269-295. Text <http://www.sacred-texts.com/journals/jras/1894-10.htm>

not only as their justification for rule itself, but also for guidance as a theological and philosophical principle upon which basic *ethics* and *morality*, as well as the structure of a well governed society, should be based. *Tiān* was not worshipped per se, at least not in the classic pre-historic sense with sacrifices and ritual, but nonetheless was the theo-philosophical foundation upon which the great philosophies of Classical Chinese antiquity are based, arguably some of the most profound and influential works of all of antiquity.

Roman Cosmogony: The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid

When trying to ascertain the belief systems of the ancients, and specifically as related to their views on *cosmogony* and *theogony*, one is apt to conclude that anything written by the Latin/Romans can add nothing to the historical record of value – outside of reflecting the beliefs of the Latin/Romans themselves whose culture is renowned to be primarily, at least from an intellectual and theological perspective, to be a simple borrowing and renaming of that of the Greeks who were their predecessors to the East and whose culture and peoples the Romans conquered and assimilated through various conquests from the 3rd century BCE until the classic “Fall” of the (Western) Roman Empire in 476 CE.

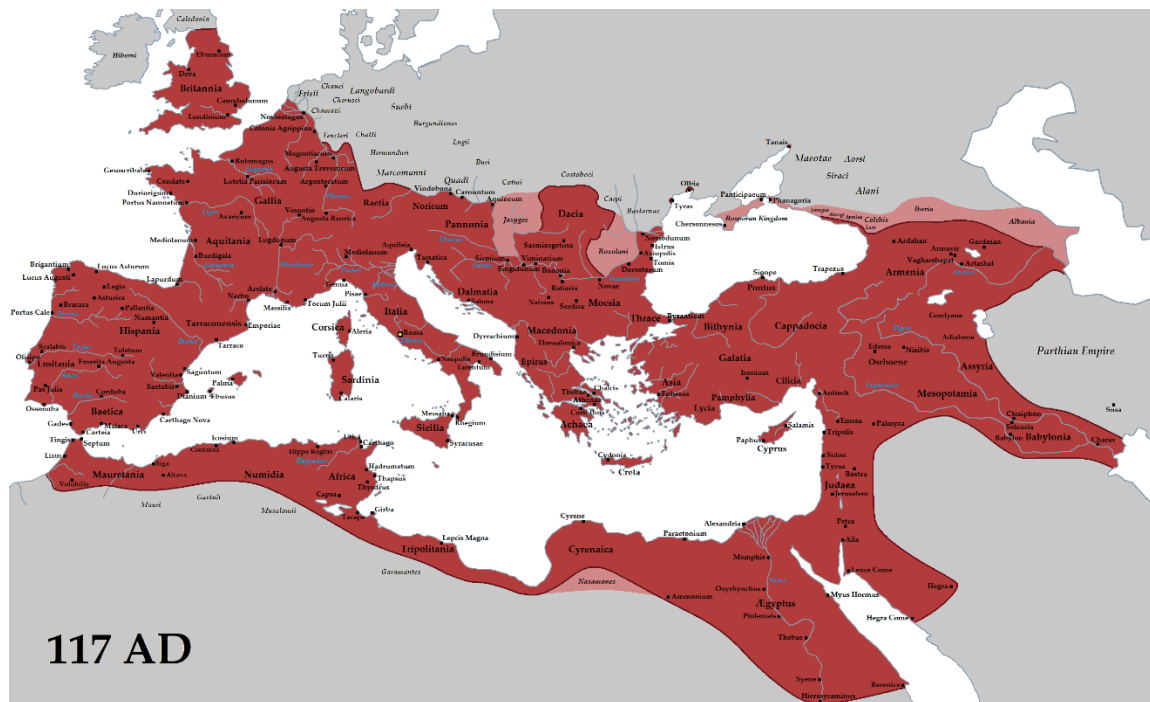


Figure 9: Roman Empire at its greatest extent under emperor Trajan, 117 CE.¹⁹¹

The Romans were a civilization that clearly borrowed from its predecessors in many respects, their geographic boundaries at their height spreading to the realm of the Persians to the Near

¹⁹¹ Image from Wikimedia commons from Wikipedia contributors, 'History of the Roman Empire', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 17 September 2016, 14:58 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=History_of_the_Roman_Empire&oldid=739865396> [accessed 17 September 2016].

East, the Egyptians to the South and of course the Greeks and Macedonians which were their neighbors in the Mediterranean. They clearly borrowed much of their culture and intellectual tradition, and underlying *mythos*, from the Greeks no doubt. For example, as most of us know almost all of the Roman gods have direct Greek counterparts – Zeus to Juno, Poseidon to Neptune, Aphrodite to Venus, etc. But they did however of course have their own form of expression and writing, i.e. Latin, which is the direct predecessor to our modern European languages and is the alphabet we still use in the West today so clearly their influence upon the West cannot be denied. Additionally, Roman culture did produce the likes of Cicero and Marcus Aurelius, each influential philosophers and intellectuals in their own right, so we can't altogether dismiss the Romans as conquerors, developers of state craft and military prowess necessarily either.

Even if we further presume that even if the Romans made some intellectual and philosophical contributions to Western thought, they produced no unique contributions to the domain of theology or mythology per se, collectively *mythos*, denying the heritage of say the Neo-Platonic tradition that although a product of the Roman/Byzantine empire nonetheless still evolves from a classically Hellenic, and Greek influence. We do however, know the Romans as being responsible for the widespread adoption of Christianity however, even if it is after centuries of brutal persecution initially until it's basically adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire at the end of the 4th century CE.¹⁹²

The problem with this fairly simplistic and perhaps even prejudicial view of the Romans is that when one actually reads their classic mythological narrative, i.e. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, at least from a theo-philosophical perspective, one comes to altogether different conclusion entirely. That is to say, the *Metamorphoses*, and the Latin/Roman *mythos* which it has come to represent, does contain some very unique elements to it that do add to the theo-philosophical tradition in antiquity. If nothing else, perhaps it can be said that this work is one of the most influential and lasting epic narratives that has ever been produced in the West, rivaling the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in terms of notoriety and lasting influence which in and of itself makes a case for it to be analyzed on par with some of the other ancient theogonies such as Hesiod's *Theogony* or the *Enûma Eliš* of the Sumer-Babylonians. Also, it's fair to say that even if there is no unique content or independent value of the work itself, it does however reflect the *mythos* of our direct cultural predecessor and in this respect alone is worthy of consideration and analysis.

¹⁹² In 313 CE, Emperor Constantine, aka Constantine the Great, issued along with his counterpart ruler to the East Licinius, the famed Edict of Milan, which decriminalized Christianity and effectively ended the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. It wasn't however until 380 CE with the Edict of Thessalonica, the so called *Cunctus populus*, i.e. "all the people", that all Roman subjects were ordered to profess faith and adherence to the Christian faith as professed and governed by the bishops of Rome and Alexandria respectively.

Ovid's' *Metamorphoses* then, if nothing else (and we will argue that it is much more) represents the pinnacle and synthesis of centuries of theo-philosophical and mythological narratives throughout the Mediterranean in antiquity. In other words, it is with Ovid that we find the most modern and developed interpretation of ancient myth as it was understood by the ancient peoples of the Mediterranean - peoples which included the Greeks, the Macedonians, the Sumer-Babylonians, the Egyptians and the Persians to name just a few of the major civilizations that came under Roman influence during the period of Roman Imperialism, a period which Ovid is born into and writes under.

Ovid, or Publius Ovidius Naso, was born in 43 BCE just to the East of Rome and died in exile on the coast of the Black Sea in 17/18 CE at the age of around 60. Ovid wrote his poetry, his earlier work having to do with the art of love, during the reign of Caesar Augustus, the founder of the Roman Empire and its first Emperor.¹⁹³ Augustus ruled over a vast kingdom in the area of the Mediterranean that covered almost all of modern Western Europe, North Africa and Egypt, classical Greece and Macedonia of course, as well as Near Eastern lands that were formerly under Persian rule. Augustus exiled Ovid to the Black Sea in 8 CE, just after the completion of his most famed work, the *Metamorphoses*, one of the richest and most expansive sources of Greek (and in turn Roman) mythology written in Latin in hexameter verse, the lingua franca so to speak of classic epic *lyric poetry* as had been established by the likes of Hesiod and Homer before him.

Ovid was well educated and of nobility, having been trained in the art of law and rhetoric in his youth. He was of enough noble and aristocratic birth for example to hold various minor legal and judicial public offices in Rome before resigning to pursue poetry as a young adult somewhere in his late teens or early twenties. He is known to have travelled extensively as well, visiting places throughout the Roman Empire such as Athens, the Near East/Asia Minor, as well as Sicily and it was no doubt through this knowledge, along with his teachings in the classics, from which he came to author his most ambitious and lasting work.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Augustus actually called himself *Princeps Civitatis*, or the "First Citizen of the State", and after coming into power he established the constitutional framework - based upon the Senate, executive magistrates and legislative assemblies - which became known as the "Principate". The reign of Augustus ushered in the *Pax Romana*, more than two centuries of relative peace throughout the Empire despite continuous battles fought for expansion on the Empire's frontiers. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Augustus', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 3 September 2016, 18:02 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Augustus&oldid=737568597>> [accessed 18 September 2016].

¹⁹⁴ Wikipedia contributors, 'Ovid', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 27 August 2016, 02:02 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ovid&oldid=736377368>> [accessed 17 September 2016]

The *Metamorphoses* contains 15 books and covers over 250 myths, starting with the creation of the world, the first few generations of gods and goddesses and then in turn covering many of the popular myths that we have come to associate with Greco-Roman civilization - Jason and the Argonauts, the myth of the Minotaur, the story of Daedalus and Icarus, the deeds of Hercules, etc. The work concludes with the history and mythology of the establishment of Rome, interwoven interestingly with material on Pythagorean philosophy, culminating with the reign and deification of Julius Caesar, establishing the work not just as a poetic narrative but as a historical narrative as well, connecting the mythological with the historical and political as most other ancient works of its kind. From this perspective the impetus of the work could be seen somewhat in the same light as the *Enûma Eliš* and some of the Egyptian cosmological narratives, establishing the connection of the ruling class, or Roman Emperor in this case, to the reign of the gods and the birth of the universe. Regardless there was something about Ovid's work that concerned Augustus, hence his exile which remained in effect till the end of his life.

Ovid starts with not only the full content and purpose of the work, but also with the basic cosmogonic narrative that has a more theo-philosophical bent than the classic theogonic works that we are accustomed to seeing from this era in antiquity. From the opening verse we find:

*Of bodies chang'd to various forms, I sing:
Ye Gods, from whom these miracles did spring,
Inspire my numbers with coelestial heat;
'Till I my long laborious work compleat:
And add perpetual tenour to my rhimes,
Deduc'd from Nature's birth, to Caesar's times.
Before the seas, and this terrestrial ball,
And Heav'n's high canopy, that covers all,
One was the face of Nature; if a face:
Rather a rude and indigested mass:
A lifeless lump, unfashion'd, and unfram'd,
Of jarring seeds; and justly Chaos nam'd.
No sun was lighted up, the world to view;
No moon did yet her blunted horns renew:
Nor yet was Earth suspended in the sky,
Nor pois'd, did on her own foundations lye:
Nor seas about the shores their arms had thrown;
But earth, and air, and water, were in one.
Thus air was void of light, and earth unstable,
And water's dark abyss unnavigable.
No certain form on any was imprest;
All were confus'd, and each disturb'd the rest.
For hot and cold were in one body fixt;*

*And soft with hard, and light with heavy mixt.*¹⁹⁵

We see clearly here the notion of order out of Chaos, emerging out of a watery abyss of sorts, consistent not only with Hesiod's account of creation which starts with Chaos, but also with the Egyptian and Sumer-Babylonian creation *mythos* which starts with this watery abyss from which the universe emerges. Ovid still nonetheless establishes the anthropomorphic basis for the creation of the various gods and goddesses - the theogonical narrative – which sets the stage for the various transformations and mythical accounts of the gods and heroes of the golden age of man that represent the main storyline of Ovid's epic history of the world up until the present, i.e. the reign of Augustus.

So while still have the immortal Chaos sitting at the pillar of creation, Time itself representing the “beginning” of the cosmos, we also have a much more “naturalist” creation *mythos* presented by Ovid, the universe emerging from the interplay and coalescence of opposing forces such as darkness and light, cold and heat, soft and hard that are reminiscent of the cosmogonic narratives of the Far East (i.e. China). What is also striking about this introduction, and is also very reminiscent of the theo-philosophical systems of the Far East, is its primary focus on change itself, i.e. metamorphosis, as the overarching theme of the work, the underlying philosophy and theme of the work as a whole as it were. Hence the title *Metamorphoses* and hence the inclusion toward the end of the work of the an explanation, and source, of this underlying philosophy which he attributes to Pythagoras.

Ovid then goes on to outline the basic building blocks, i.e. the elements, of creation – earth, air, fire and water – from which the Earth and Heavens and their various features are formed. The emphasis in this creation *mythos* shifts slightly from its predecessors from a focus on *theogony* - the creation of the generation of gods with their respective male and female attributes and counterparts and their ensuing conflict and quest for dominance - to the creation of the underlying fabric of the natural world out of these basic “natural” elements, betraying a more Hellenic theo-philosophical influence to his work which should not be altogether surprising given the intellectual context within which Ovid writes.

*But God, or Nature, while they thus contend,
To these intestine discords put an end:
Then earth from air, and seas from earth were driv'n,
And grosser air sunk from aethereal Heav'n.*

¹⁹⁵ *Metamorphoses* by Ovid. Translated into English verse under the direction of Sir Samuel Garth by John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, William Congreve and other eminent hands. Published in 1826. Book I, “Creation of the World” translated by John Dryden. From <http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.1.first.html>

*Thus disembroil'd, they take their proper place;
 The next of kin, contiguously embrace;
 And foes are sunder'd, by a larger space.
 The force of fire ascended first on high,
 And took its dwelling in the vaulted sky:
 Then air succeeds, in lightness next to fire;
 Whose atoms from unactive earth retire.
 Earth sinks beneath, and draws a num'rous throng
 Of pondrous, thick, unwieldy seeds along.
 About her coasts, unruly waters roar;
 And rising, on a ridge, insult the shore.
 Thus when the God, whatever God was he,
 Had form'd the whole, and made the parts agree,
 That no unequal portions might be found,
 He moulded Earth into a spacious round:
 Then with a breath, he gave the winds to blow;
 And bad the congregated waters flow.
 He adds the running springs, and standing lakes;
 And bounding banks for winding rivers makes.
 Some part, in Earth are swallow'd up, the most
 In ample oceans, disembogu'd, are lost.
 He shades the woods, the vallies he restrains
 With rocky mountains, and extends the plains.¹⁹⁶*

Outside of the flowing verse within which Ovid outlines this creation, it should strike the reader that while there remains a slight hint of skepticism about the notion of the existence of a Creator God ("*whatever God was he*"), akin to the "likely story" outlined in Plato's *Timaeus* which Ovid no doubt was intimately familiar with, this Creator (Plato's *Demiurge*) is nonetheless front and center in the role of forming and shaping the world. This synthesis of Hellenic *mythos* and philosophy is a unique characteristic of the work itself in fact, and in many respects foreshadows, and perhaps even plants some of the seeds, of the ensuing theo-philosophical revolution that is to take place quite soon thereafter, within the boundaries of the Roman Empire, stemming from the life and teachings of the Hebrew Jesus of Nazareth which over the next few centuries evolves into what we know today as Christianity.

Ovid continues his creation narrative with the final act of creation as it were, the creation of mankind, which contains many motifs and storylines that are reminiscent of the Hebrew creation

¹⁹⁶ *Metamorphoses* by Ovid. Translated into English verse under the direction of Sir Samuel Garth by John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, William Congreve and other eminent hands. Published in 1826. Book I, "Creation of the World" translated by John Dryden. From <http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.1.first.html>

story attributed to Moses (i.e. *Genesis*), as heaven is split and separated from the Earth, the various animals and beasts are created to fill the world, and mankind is formed as the last act of creation, bearing a special place in the halls of God's creation as a direct descendant of the Creator himself.

*Scarce had the Pow'r distinguish'd these, when streight
The stars, no longer overlaid with weight,
Exert their heads, from underneath the mass;
And upward shoot, and kindle as they pass,
And with diffusive light adorn their heav'nly place.
Then, every void of Nature to supply,
With forms of Gods he fills the vacant sky:
New herds of beasts he sends, the plains to share:
New colonies of birds, to people air:
And to their oozy beds, the finny fish repair.*

*A creature of a more exalted kind
Was wanting yet, and then was Man design'd:
Conscious of thought, of more capacious breast,
For empire form'd, and fit to rule the rest:
Whether with particles of heav'nly fire
The God of Nature did his soul inspire,
Or Earth, but new divided from the sky,
And, pliant, still retain'd th' aetherial energy:
Which wise Prometheus temper'd into paste,
And, mixt with living streams, the godlike image cast.*

*Thus, while the mute creation downward bend
Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,
Man looks aloft; and with erected eyes
Beholds his own hereditary skies.
From such rude principles our form began;
And earth was metamorphos'd into Man.* ¹⁹⁷

In analyzing Ovid's account of creation then, we can clearly see a variety of themes and motifs from various other creation narratives from the other civilizations which dominated the Mediterranean and Near East and pre-dated the period of Roman Imperial expansion and cultural

¹⁹⁷ *Metamorphoses* by Ovid. Translated into English verse under the direction of Sir Samuel Garth by John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, William Congreve and other eminent hands. Published in 1826. Book I, "Creation of the World" translated by John Dryden. From <http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.1.first.html>.

synthesis which Ovid's work clearly reflects. He integrates all of these old creation stories into the Hellenic theo-philosophical and mythological tradition, creating an altogether unique creation narrative.

For example while we see a reference, albeit not necessarily a direct account, of the battle between the second and first generation of gods which plays such a prominent role in the Egyptian, Hellenic and Sumer-Babylonian *mythos*, Ovid's account of this battle and the ultimate reign of Jupiter (Zeus) is de-emphasized, replaced by a more (Middle) Platonic narrative that still nonetheless retains the existence of the Greco-Roman pantheon from which not only much of his mythical narrative is based upon, but also in fact to which he eventually connects Julius Caesar and Augustus as divine descendants to in the closing Books of the work.

We also see here in Ovid's creation account mankind being called out as having a special place in "God's" creation, being formed out of Earth as it were, synthesizing no doubt the notion of Plato's *Demiurge* with the Hebrew notion of the one true God, i.e. Yahweh. This account is followed by a fairly lengthy description of this so-called "Golden Age" of man, which eventually evolves into subsequent morally degenerative ages which cause the gods to destroy their greatest creation via a Great Flood.¹⁹⁸ This narrative is all very reminiscent of the creation narrative in *Genesis*, where the Golden Age of Ovid corresponds to the creation of primordial man and woman in the Garden of Eden where death and suffering is not known to them. In this well-known account of their expulsion from the Garden, Adam is deceived by his woman partner, via the snake, to eat the "forbidden fruit" which angers Yahweh and gets them expelled from the Garden, and leads to Yahweh's "curse" of man, due to his "original sin", such that he must now toil the earth for sustenance and the woman must go through the pain of child bearing to rear children.¹⁹⁹ Further along in this mythical-historical narrative in *Genesis*, Yahweh becomes disappointed with man given his moral and ethical degeneration, and just as in Ovid's narrative, destroys all mankind via a Great Flood, saving only Noah due to his righteousness.²⁰⁰ This Great Flood narrative with the destruction of all mankind and their subsequent regeneration as it were through the sole survivor of a single moral and righteous being selected by the gods, of course can also be found in the great ancient Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* as well, a tale which can be traced as far back in antiquity to the end of the second millennium BCE²⁰¹.

¹⁹⁸ For Ovid's narrative of the Flood see Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, translated by Anthony S. Kline. 2000. Book I, verses 244-437. (<http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Metamorph.htm#488381093>).

¹⁹⁹ *Genesis* 2:4-3:24. See King James Version at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+2%3A4-3%3A24&version=KJV>.

²⁰⁰ *Genesis* 6:9-9:17. See King James Version at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%206:9-9:17>.

²⁰¹ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Gilgamesh flood myth', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 13 September 2016, 02:32 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gilgamesh_flood_myth&oldid=739153725> [accessed 24 September 2016].

While the works of Hesiod and Manu pre-date Ovid's work by centuries if not more, they do speak to the far reaching intellectual and mythical lore that Ovid clearly had access to, and ultimately synthesizes, into his work. It also perhaps speaks to the synthesis of Greco-Roman, or perhaps in a broader sense Mediterranean *mythos*, into the Hindu mythological tradition – or of course perhaps the existence of a mythological tradition that pre-dates all these civilizations from which they all draw from as their source.

Furthermore, parallels have also been drawn between the Tree of Life which was planted in the center of the Garden of Eden and from which Adam and Eve ate from, and a tree motif that is found throughout ancient Mesopotamia and the Near East dating as far back as the 4th and 3rd millenniums BCE. This ancient Mesopotamian tree, the so called "Assyrian Tree of Life", which although is not alluded or referred to in any of the written transcriptions or writings from ancient Mesopotamia, clearly has religious and mystical connotations given the context within which it has been found from an archeological perspective. One scholar has gone so far as to directly correlate this Assyrian tree motif, which plays such a prominent role in the *Genesis* Adam and Eve story, to the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, which of course represents the essence of the Jewish mystical tradition.²⁰²

²⁰² For parallels between the Assyrian Tree of Life and the Jewish Kabbalistic Tree of Life, i.e. the Safirotic Tree of Life see *THE ASSYRIAN TREE OF LIFE: TRACING THE ORIGINS OF JEWISH MONOTHEISM AND GREEK PHILOSOPHY* by Simo Parpola. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol 52, No. 3 (Jul 1993), pp. 161-208. Published by the University of Chicago Press.



Figure 10: Depiction of Assyrian Tree of Life²⁰³

All of this of course shows the clear corollaries and heavy cultural borrowing of many of the themes we find in Ovid's creation narrative, which stems mostly of course from his Greek predecessor Hesiod, but also the connections between Ovid's creation account and the Hebrew narrative in *Genesis* which contain Mesopotamian and Sumer-Babylonian themes and story lines which pre-date *Genesis* by centuries.

And lastly but certainly not least of all, the focus of Ovid's work on *change* itself, i.e. *Metamorphoses*, and the parallels that can be drawn to the early Pre-Socratic philosophers such as Heraclitus and of course Pythagoras to which Ovid alludes to specifically as the source of his philosophy, can also be found as the basis for almost all of Chinese philosophy as reflected in the Chinese *Classic of Changes*, i.e. the *Yijing*, a work whose origins can be traced as far back as second millennium BCE China in the Far East. This interesting parallel begs some serious questions with respect to how old some of these basic philosophical principles are, i.e. the notion of change and *impermanence* as the essence of reality, and how is it that two cultures separated by thousands of miles with no known trade or cultural exchange until the 2nd or 3rd centuries CE could have adopted such similar theo-philosophical systems of belief.

²⁰³ From Helmet of the Urartu king Sarduri II, circa 8th century BCE. Image from Wikimedia commons at Wikipedia contributors, 'Art of Urartu', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 11 March 2016, 15:11 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Art_of_Urartu&oldid=709543824> [accessed 24 September 2016].

These mythological narratives clearly reached back at some level or another into the pre-civilization times of the societies within which they emerged, there was clearly not only similarities between the accounts, but also clearly some “borrowing” of the narratives between and among the various civilizations which thrived during this time period in human and social evolution. They all for the most part share this common theme of the world emerging from a watery chaos, some of which (Orphic, Indo-Aryan and later Chinese myths for example) also contain the fairly distinctive metaphor of the world emerging from a great *cosmic egg* from which the realms of Heaven and Earth emerge, and then from this cosmic soup, or egg as the case may be, the basic elements or components of the material universe are created – Earth, Sky, Stars, Water, Heaven, etc. –providing the foundations upon which mankind and civilization itself could spring forth and flourish.

Leaving aside the fairly distinctive characteristics of the *cosmogonic* accounts of the ancient Chinese, there are clearly subtle and distinctive aspects of these creation narratives from the Mediterranean and Near East that reflect the various different belief systems and socio-political environments of these various cultures within which these theogonic accounts were created and established, and then preserved via various forms of writing – most of which were religious and political in nature, the distinction between the two social constructs being much less clear in antiquity than it is today. In the Egyptian, Sumer-Babylonian, Greek and Roman theogonies, for example, there clearly existed reference points and patterns of the use of *mythos* to establish a clear line of authority to the existing rulers, and in the *Enûma Eliš*, as well as Hesiod’s *Theogony* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, we find the first generation of gods emerging out of this watery abyss, this chaotic primordial soup as it were, followed by the ensuing conflict among the generation of gods from which ultimate power is bestowed upon the great god of the respective civilization – Jupiter to the Romans, Zeus to the Greeks, Marduk to the Sumer-Babylonians and Amon-Ra, Ptah or Atum to the Egyptians depending upon the variant of the *mythos*.

Although this generational *theogony* from which the cosmos and then ultimately man is born is absent from the Far East accounts, namely from India and China, in China at least there is a link that is established from the founders and rulers of the various Chinese Dynasties in antiquity to the deities that presided over the universe, even if in the later tradition it stemmed from the more theo-philosophical notion of Heaven (*Tiān*) rather than directly to an anthropomorphic generation of deities that is so characteristic of the creation *mythos* from the Mediterranean and Near East in antiquity. What is clear however, is that these creation narratives that we find evidence of from the 2nd and 1st millennium BCE, is that there are many similar concepts and ideas that are put forth, and the narratives themselves also serve similar purposes, throughout

virtually all of the civilizations that we have looked at in Eurasia that we have looked at - the connection of the king or ruler to the pantheon that emerges from the watery chaos from which the cosmos is created either through heredity directly or through the more conceptual framework presented by the ancient Chinese via the Mandate of Heaven. Even the Indo-Aryans established a social stratification of society that it linked back to their theogonic and cosmogonic narratives, even if they were part of a later stratification of myth (from *the Laws of Manu* for example).

The civilization from which Hinduism emerges for example, the successor civilization of the ancient Indo-Aryan peoples who settled in and ruled over what is today India, is historically associated with the Indus Valley, a river system from which an ancient culture could grow crops and thrive, no doubt a very similar relationship to the Sumer-Babylonians who settled in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, the Egyptians who had such a close relationship to the Nile, and the various ancient Chinese people who had a similar close tie to the Yellow River which is closely associated with the dawn of their civilization. Clearly this close relationship to each of these respective peoples and their reliance on water for sustenance, for life, was clearly a driving factor for water being the main primordial substance from which the universe emerges in almost all of these creation narratives. The authors of the of the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas* held such beliefs as reflected in the “cosmic waters” (*āpas* in Sanskrit) as the source of universal creation, just as the Egyptians had their concept of *nu* and the Ancient Sumerians had their *Apsû* - each signifying basically the same principle and each having direct etymological associations with water in some form or another.

In each of these ancient civilizations and cultures, their respective river system was the source of their crops and where they bathed and drank, just as the peoples around these river systems do today. These river systems are the very source of life, river systems that if they dried out the civilizations themselves would perish, no doubt the reason why they held the notion of water almost directly akin to life itself. In turn, the seasonal floods which no doubt framed their entire existence and relationship with the natural world, framed their idea of the passage of time and overall sense of order – both on earth and in the heavens which was used to track the seasons and passage of time itself. Therefore, it should be no surprise that we see the basic principle of water and the notion of order as it relates to the seasons and the motion of the heavens reflected in all of these ancient cosmogonic narratives. That’s not to say that there was not a borrowing or sharing of these mythological motifs that occurred between these ancient peoples – as we know there was at least throughout the Mediterranean and Near East – but then again it should come as no surprise as to how these cosmogonic narratives came to take their original shape to begin with, even if they all stemmed from the same narrative source sometime deep in pre-history.

We also find parallels with the so-called Ages of Man, as reflected perhaps in its most mature form in Ovid's account which outlines Four Ages - Golden, Silver, Bronze and Iron - of more fierce and warlike Bronze Age which was followed by the period of the Great Flood and the subsequent re-incarnation of man in the 4th and final Iron Age which represents the current age of man. We also find a very similar thematic outline of the evolution of mankind from Hesiod's *Works and Days* which outlines five ages - Golden, Silver, Bronze, Heroic and ten Iron - closely aligning to Ovid's account and in all likelihood from which he drew his inspiration. We also find a similar account of the Ages of Man from the *Laws of Manu* (*Manusmriti*) albeit using different terminology and residing within a very different theological context. In Manu's account, he provides a very similar description of the "downfall" of man from an era of truth and righteousness (the Kṛta Age) down through three more ages of man to the current age of relative relatively less righteousness and moral and ethical fortitude (the present era or Kālī Age, aka Kālī Yuga).

A similar account of the Ages of Man can be found in the *Purāṇas* as well, another Indo-Aryan/Hindu mythical work believed to have been composed between the 2nd and 10th centuries CE. All of which of course bear very strong similarities to the accounts of the so-called "fall of man" by Hesiod as well as Ovid, an allegorical version of which can be found in the proverbial "fall of man" from the Garden in Judeo-Christian *mythos* as preserved in *Genesis*.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, we see the Great Flood play a significant role in most of these traditions as it relates specifically to the so-called "fall of man", a narrative we find not only in the familiar account in *Genesis* but also in Ovid's account of the history of man and in Sumer-Babylonian *mythos* in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* which is perhaps the source of most of the subsequent narratives, or consistent with our *Laurasian hypothesis* it is from an earlier source than all of these that these similar narratives find themselves rooted in all of the *mythos* of all these ancient peoples spread across such a wide geography (Eurasia) and expanse of time.

We can find other striking parallels between the ancient Persians and Indo-Aryans *mythos* specifically, not only linguistically and philologically, but also in terms of customs and rituals as reflected in their respective extant theological works from the earliest historical records we have the respective civilizations. Speaking to a very close shared heritage no doubt, linguistically identified as the Proto-Indo-Europeans from which the Indo-Iranians and the Indo-Aryans are descended. Similar to the Vedic tradition as we understand it from antiquity from the material from the oldest of the *Vedas*, i.e. the rituals and hymns recorded in the *Rigvéda*, the practice of ritual and the recitation of verses from the *Gathas* and *Yasna* clearly represents the core part of what we have come to understand as the oldest layer of the Zoroastrian faith – similarities

²⁰⁴ *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*. By Patrick Olivelle. Oxford University Press 2005. Chapter 1 verses 68-85, pgs. 90-91.

between the Indo-Aryans and the Indo-Iranians as we understand them through the *Vedas* and the *Gathas* and *Yasna* abound.

Given that both of these traditions are still actively practiced, i.e. the rituals and verses and ceremonies described in the respective scripture – the *Avesta* of the Indo-Iranians which founded Persia civilization and the *Vedas* of the Indo-Aryans - we still know how some of the language documented in these ancient texts is actually pronounced, revealing striking similarities not only linguistically (*philology*) but also in terms of the overall content and purpose of the ceremonies themselves.²⁰⁵ Gathic, or Old Avestan shares many common characteristics and similarities to Vedic Sanskrit, the writing of the most archaic of the Vedas, the *Rigvéda*, whose composition is also dated to the latter part of the second millennium BCE. Not only do the two languages share many of the same words and terms, but the hymns and rituals which are described in the two texts share many of the same attributes and patterns, speaking to a very close relationship between the two peoples that was captured by the authors and preservers of these ancient theological traditions, the contents of which – in the *Avesta* and the *Vedas* - describe rituals and prayers that were most certainly practiced in the early part of the second millennium BCE by these respective peoples if not even earlier.

The oldest written representations of these two ancient languages survive down to us under two different writing systems, the Vedic Sanskrit surviving in its oldest form in Brāhmī script which was used from the 3rd century BCE to the 5th century CE in South and Central Asia (and also stems from the Phoenician alphabetic system), and the *Avesta* in Avestan which was used from around 400–1000 CE and as already noted was specifically designed for the purpose of codifying Zoroastrian lore and practice. Given the common heritage and lineage of the different scripts which capture these ancient tongues, linguists and philologists can identify phonetic patterns and word pronunciation similarities between the two languages even though neither of which is spoken today, providing more evidence of the close association and cultural and linguistic exchange between these two civilizations reaching back into prehistoric (pre 2nd millennium BCE) times.

From a socio-cultural and even theological perspective, this linguistic relationship, both in terms of forms of writing and in terms of speech, effectively gives us two-dimensional window into the theological or religious world of the Near and Far East (modern day Iran and India) in the second

²⁰⁵ While Zoroastrianism is not nearly as popular or widespread as Judaism or Hinduism, it still nonetheless is still practiced in some small pockets of the world, particular in the Near East from which it originated, and therefore we still retain a window into the theological beliefs and practices of these ancient peoples, as well again their original language, as we do the ancient Hebrews and Vedic priests (Brahmins) through their worship, rituals, and belief systems which are still practiced today as well.

millennium BCE which is the date typically associated with the Avestan and Vedic Sanskrit languages (not the texts but the languages themselves).²⁰⁶

In Zoroastrianism, again as is true with the Hindus as well, pronunciation of words and the practice of specific rituals is an important part of their worship and this is reflected in the fact that they, albeit not until the first few centuries CE, created of a specific script designed just for this purpose - namely Avestan. Avestan is written language that is a derivative of the more popular and pervasive Pahlavi script which was used by the Persians in antiquity to encode a variety of Middle Iranian Languages from around their empire. Pahlavi is derived from a more archaic Aramaic script, which in turn was derived from the same Phoenician alphabet, the very same alphabet from which ancient Greek, ancient Hebrew, and ancient Brāhmī script (a derivation of which was used to transcribe Sanskrit) was derived from, speaking to not only of course the common origins of all of the alphabetic writing systems used by these ancient peoples, but also clearly evidence of some element of cultural exchange that must have existed at some point in ancient history between these various peoples and cultures which spread and took root from as far East as Greece and the Middle East, to Persia and the Near East (the home of the *Avesta*) all the way to the Indus Valley region, the home of the *Vedas*.

Also of interest is that the Greek word for hymn or song, *ymnos*, which was clearly very prevalent and important in the ancient Hellenic world as illustrated in the widespread and well documented traditions of Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus, means almost the same thing as its linguistic counterpart to the East – *yasna* to the Indo-Iranians and *yajña* to the Indo-Aryans. In the Greek tradition however, the connotation of the word is somewhat devoid of the of the notion of ritual or sacrifice, perhaps because the sacrificial aspect of the hymns themselves was dropped by the Greeks, at least outside of the *mystery cult* traditions of which we know little about given the veil of secrecy within which these practices were shielded. One could argue that the Greek word for hymn or song, *ymnos*, which represented such an integral part of the ritualistic and theological tradition even in Greece – as reflected in the prevalence and importance of the hymns of Hesiod and Homer in the Hellenic philosophical and cultural tradition - could be and probably was a direct derivative from these two relatively more ancient religious systems to the East. This is perhaps evidence of much closer ties of these cultures from a religious and theological perspective. It is perhaps not that far-fetched to conclude that this very similar word or term that found its way into the languages of these geographically dispersed civilizations in antiquity -

²⁰⁶ Compare the Avestan word *yasna* which has a direct correlate in Sanskrit *yajña* for example, both of which denote a sacred, ritualized practice of chanting or hymns (associated with *mantra* in the Vedic tradition) that in many cases also involved some form of animal sacrifice or some other oblation in their respective religious traditions (like *soma* juice for example), and both terms form a core part of the respective traditions, so much so in the Zoroastrian tradition that a core part of the Avestan literature bears its name, i.e. the *Yasna*. Also, the Sanskrit word *soma*, used to describe a plant or drink substance which constitutes an integral part of many of the rituals described in the *Rigvéda* has a direct counterpart in the Avestan language, i.e. *haoma*. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soma>.

from Greece/Ionia in the Mediterranean and Near East to the Persian/Iranians in Asia Minor to the Indo-Aryans/Hindus of modern day India – that carried such cultural and theological import is evidence of perhaps more cultural exchange and intellectual communication between these cultures in the 3rd and 2nd millenniums BCE than historians, academics and classicists typically presume.

What is certainly unique to the Greek/Hellenic tradition however, i.e. Hellenic *mythos*, was that they more than any other ancient civilization were obsessed with the idea that the universe could be, and should be, placed upon *rational* grounds wherever possible. It was this idea, one of the hallmarks of the ancient Hellenes, or “Classical Greece” as it is typically referred to, that contributed toward the birth of *reason* which becomes one of the hallmarks in turn of Western civilization as a whole – what came to known from a philosophical perspective, perhaps most pronounced in the Stoic tradition which in turn provided the basis for Judeo-Christian *theology*, as *Logos*. *Reason*, or again *Logos*, was the metaphysical lever as it were, that was used to support the characteristically Hellenic pivot away from the more ancient and pre-historic *theogonic* and *cosmogonic* narratives - i.e. again *mythos* - that had persisted for thousands of years prior to the advent of philosophy. While the Hellenes no doubt held fast to the mythological traditions and worship of the respective gods therein as espoused and put forth in the lasting works of Hesiod and Homer for example even during the height of philosophical influence in the Hellenic world, they still nonetheless, again characteristically, provided the socio-political environment within which the Hellenic philosophical tradition could flourish more or less despite its generally unfavorable position toward the political establishment as it were. The underlying friction of the two traditions – the philosophers on the one hand and the political establishment or authority on the other - from a socio-political perspective is illustrated for example in the execution of Socrates by the Athenians, a conviction that was handed down by the Athenian council toward Socrates because of allegations against him related to impiety as well as corrupting the youth no less.²⁰⁷

It is perhaps no accident then, that Socrates plays such a pivotal role in the establishment of the philosophical tradition in ancient Greece, in the Hellenic world throughout the Mediterranean, that was to have such a long standing and powerful imprint on Western philosophy and *theology* as it evolves into its present day *monotheistic* variants in Christianity, Judaism and Islam most notably. This *reason* was referred to within the Hellenic philosophical tradition originally as *wisdom*, i.e. *sophia*, which sits quite literally at its very heart in the root of the word that was used to describe the tradition itself - - i.e. “*philo*” + “*sophia*”, or “lover of wisdom”, i.e.

²⁰⁷ The death of Socrates is the subject of Plato’s *Apology*.

philosophia – a name which according to tradition is attributed to by Pythagoras himself, a sage from Hellenic antiquity that is considered by many (author included) to in many respects be the father of the Hellenic philosophical. In other words, it was the Hellenic philosophical tradition more so than any other in the ancient Mediterranean world perhaps, that characterized this separation between *theology* as it was conceived in antiquity as *mythos*, and authority and power.²⁰⁸

The Hellenes from the ancient Mediterranean no doubt were the first to establish the supremacy of *reason* and *logic*, verifiable truth, over “myth”, a belief system that had carried mankind through the darkness of pre-history for thousands of years. In the Hellenic philosophical tradition, these ancient belief systems were not discounted altogether, but they were nonetheless held to be less *true*, less *real* as it were than philosophy proper (*philosophia*), which again was founded upon the principles of *reason* and *logic*, the latter of which was a new discipline entirely that emerged in the Mediterranean as well as the Indian subcontinent at around the same time as writing and advanced civilization as far as we can tell. This is what Plato and Aristotle in particular took care to distinguish from eternally verifiable or rationally deduced truths as it were, what they called out as “opinion” or “belief” which was defined in contrast to, and was considered to be epistemologically less significant than, *wisdom*, again *sophia*, which was based upon *reason*, the new found god of the Hellenes you might say.

Much of the *mythos* of these ancient peoples, the rituals and the priesthood, was intended to bifurcate society into those that *knew* god, and those that didn’t. And this established order or authority of the one class of people over the other. Even with the Greeks, the priesthoods had power and represented established authority to some extent, although with the advent of their democracy, which to some extent grew hand in hand with their philosophy and the evolution of their world view, they moved away from this old guard of authority which had its source in the priesthood and worship of the gods. Most certainly with the Sumer-Babylonians and the Egyptians this connection was there as the leadership relied on the authority of these priests to maintain their power. And it was the people’s belief in the existence of the gods, and the priests’ direct communion or connection with these deities, that kept the peace as it were and established the norms and various stratifications and classifications of the society, in particular firmly delineating those who held power and those that did not.

²⁰⁸ It should be pointed out however, that while the ancient Chinese did in fact foster a similar separation between authority and philosophy, the two disciplines if we can call them that were not quite so separated as they were in ancient Greece – the scribes and philosophers of ancient China were for the most part connected to and served the courts of the various rulers and dynastic courts so while they were free to pursue knowledge and study the “Classics” as it were, they still had to do so with the blessing, and purposeful alignment, with the rulers of the people.

This subtle distinction, what you might call the very first example of the separation between “church and state” (which although doesn’t precisely describe the actual situation is the best modern analogy perhaps that can be found), the break from political authority resting on divine authority, *theology* and/or *mythos*, turned out to be one of the most important, significant and lasting contributions of the Hellenes to Western civilization. One that came at the blood of Socrates no less and one that marked a significant break and divergence from pre-historic society which was founded on these principles more or less. For it was this separation of *mythos* from politics or royalty, attributing the mythological account to divine inspiration as it were, perhaps the hallmark of Hellenic philosophy, that laid the foundation for the creation of philosophical traditions that formed the basis of *academia* as we understand it today, and then much later in the post Enlightenment Era, Science.

But at the same time the parallels between all of these ancient mythological narratives from the Mediterranean and Near East, all beginning more or less their creation narratives of the emergence of *order* from *chaos*, all of these ancient civilizations nonetheless were no doubt compelled to answer these basic questions – Who are we and from whence we came? The emergence of universal order, i.e. the *kosmos*, out of chaos and the “watery abyss”, which provided for the ground and basis for the creation of mankind and in turn civilization as we understand it most clearly after writing is developed and we start to have direct intellectual evidence, breadcrumbs as it were, from the minds of these first philosophers from Eurasian antiquity, and then – through the use of language itself as a tool for advanced abstract thought, thought which could persist from generation to generation, that could be transformed and evolve through the generations as the teachings were passed down from teacher to student, transformed over time into advanced systems philosophy, intellectual systems and paradigms that that did not have to be encapsulated in myth so that it could be supported by *oral transmission* techniques, the technological advancement that has served mankind for thousands of years, millennia even, before the invention of writing and the alphabet - in turn the question of how society as a whole should be structured, based upon *reason* rather than monarchical decree or social stratification that had been in place for the preceding generations, political philosophy or what in the Hellenic and Western tradition comes to be called *practical philosophy*, was then also addressed.

These shared characteristics and challenges in fact we find covered and explored in the very first philosophical works that we see throughout antiquity across all of Eurasia – from the Mediterranean to the Near East and Persia to the Indian subcontinent and the Indo-Aryans and Hindus to the Far East and China. They all struggled with the same questions and problems more or less, and they all pivoted from *mythos* to philosophy. Each culture and society, each philosophical tradition as it were, might have all come up with slightly different answers - each tailored to their own nuanced and distinctive cultures and histories - but they all addressed the

fundamental problem of rationalizing *cosmogony* and *theogony* more or less, as well as establishing the (rational and moral) basis for socio-political order.

As further evidence of our *Laurasian hypothesis*, we also find across many of these ancient *mythos* from across Eurasia the motif of the *cosmic egg* from which Heaven and Earth are formed and the universal order, i.e. the *cosmos*, is established. In the Orphic tradition for example, a tradition which in many ways was the hallmark of Hellenic *theogony* (outside of the lyric poetical tradition established by Hesiod at least) we see the protogenital anthropomorphic man or figure, i.e. Phanes or Protogonus come forth from this *cosmic egg*:

*O Mighty first-begotten, hear my pray'r, [1](#)
Two-fold, egg-born, and wand'ring thro' the air,
Bull-roarer, glorying in thy golden wings, [3](#)
From whom the race of Gods and mortals springs.
Ericapæus, celebrated pow'r,
Ineffable, occult, all shining flow'r.
From eyes obscure thou wip'st the gloom of night,
All-spreading splendour, pure and holy light
Hence Phanes call'd, the glory of the sky,
On waving pinions thro' the world you fly.
Priapus, dark-ey'd splendour, thee I sing,
Genial, all-prudent, ever-blessed king,
With joyful aspect on our rights divine
And holy sacrifice propitious shine.²⁰⁹*

The protogenital deity Phanes, aka Protogonus, in the Orphic *theogony* narrative, illustrated in the above passage from the *Hymns of Orpheus*, is the first and foremost of the immortal beings who emerges, self-created, from the great *cosmic egg* from which the universe is born and from which Heavens and Earth are created. Phanes here is depicted as this great mythological winged creature who has the attributes of both man and beast, depicted in some accounts as having 4 eyes, four horns, and the body of a serpent, a bull, a lion, and a ram. It is from this first great primordial being, both male and female, who emerges from the great *cosmic egg* of creation, that the universe begins to unfold and the initial generation of gods springs, i.e. *theogony*.

We see essentially the same narrative across all of these ancient civilizations that as far as we know, at least from the archeological and written records, had no significant cultural contact with

²⁰⁹ *Hymns of Orpheus*. Translated by Thomas Taylor. 1792. To Protogonus, or the First Born. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hoo/hoo10.htm>.

each other – at least not this far back in history (the Egyptian and Mediterranean cultures being the exception here of course). We see an almost direct mythic parallel for example to the Orphic *cosmogony* surrounding the protogenital man, Pángǔ from ancient Chinese *mythos*, who emerges from a *cosmic egg* after a great deluge of sorts (i.e. Great Flood) which destroys mankind, and then establishes universal order through *Yīn-Yáng*, the primordial *first principles* as it were, after which the natural world and civilization emerges, born again as it were out of the great *cosmic egg*. We see virtually the same *cosmic egg* based *theogony* in ancient Egypt as well, in the tradition surrounding Hermopolis that establishes creation from and out of the Ogdoad, or Great Eight, which also emerges out of a *cosmic egg*, the first primordial deity being the god of the Sun, Ra, in that account.

Furthermore, we see striking similarities in the *cosmogonical* narrative in the Indo-Aryan tradition as well, as we see it preserved in the *Rigvéda*, wherein an epithet of *Prajāpati*, the creator of the universe in many of the Vedic hymns, is *Hiraṇyagarbha*, which means literally “golden egg” or “golden womb”. The same motif can be found in the famed *Laws of Manu*, i.e. *Manusmṛiti* which provides much of the moral and socio-political foundations of modern Hindu society, akin to Plat’s *Republic* in a way. The *Laws of Manu* contains in its introductory chapter a cosmogonic and theogonic narrative, establishing the basis of the moral and ethical precepts, and again socio-political framework, for what is the core of the text. Here the tale of the Ages of Man, the Great Flood and emergence of the cosmos out of a great *cosmic egg* are also prevalent.²¹⁰

There was also the common theme of a pantheon of deities that emerge through a *theogony* that is rooted in the *cosmogony* as it were, each of whom represented one of the basic natural principles – again Earth, Air, Water, Fire, Sky, Moon, Sun, etc. - which all of these ancient peoples were subject to within the context of Nature itself, and all of whom became manifest in these *theogonies* and were worshipped in order that their duties, and the cosmological order really, be kept in balance. These very same deities, these basic primitive forces which were layered into these very same *theogonic* and *cosmogonic* narratives, not only created the universe with their divine powers, but they effectively represented these various aspects of the universe, Nature, as well. This common theogonic narrative we see co-emergent with civilization itself in Eurasian antiquity in fact, a hallmark of the very beginning of each of these respective great civilizations – the Egyptians, the Hellenes, the Romans, the Indians, etc. – a narrative, collectively *mythos*, that provides not just an explanation as to how the world, and mankind, came into existence, but also

²¹⁰For a brief summary of the *cosmic egg* motif in theological accounts of creation see Wikipedia contributors, 'World egg', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 4 July 2016, 18:55 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=World_egg&oldid=728337753> [accessed 5 September 2016]. E. J. Michael Witzel also offers an account of the *cosmic egg* motif across a wider variety of civilizations in antiquity and throughout the world in his *The Origins of the Worlds Mythologies* (Oxford University Press 2012), pgs. 121-124.

providing the *moral* and *ethical* basis, with the notions of order and balance, for society which according to the ancients at least should reflect the harmony and order of the cosmos.²¹¹

These gods were different for each of the ancient civilizations, and they were created in different orders and had different relationships with each other, no doubt reflecting the different underlying importance of the principles which they represented for each of the respective societies. But these deities were a key part of the establishment of the world order nonetheless. Or perhaps better put mankind was made in the *likeness* of these deities, albeit mortal. So while these deities Gods were immortalized, they were also anthropomorphized as well, for that was the only metaphysical construct, or at least the easiest to explain and understand, that resonated with these ancient peoples. And because these immortals had human characteristics, they therefore had human attributes, wants and needs as well, needs that had to be provided by those that worshipped them. This effectively describes the relationship between the peoples of pre-historical Eurasia, from the Upper Paleolithic to the Bronze Age, and their gods which we look upon from our modern, monotheistic lens – as did the Greeks as well – as pagan and barbaric religious practices.

There is no doubt that each of these ancient civilizations had an inherent need or desire to understand how order and in turn mankind emerged from the grand mystery of the universe, from nothingness or the eternal void. Clearly all of these ancient civilizations had a yearning to understand or formulate some sort of coherent story line that explained how the world was born and how mankind came to be, and how this understanding was to be leveraged and used to support the development of advanced societies, societies that were in fact bound by their *mythos* and its associated *cosmogony* and *theogony* – the worship of these gods that formed the basis of creation and sustained and supported the stability and order of Nature so that their society and civilization, and ultimately their own life, could prosper. As it turns out, at least in the Mediterranean and Near East, it is clear that each of these ancient civilizations shared many of the same ideas, concepts and notions, i.e. *mythos*, as to how the universal order was established as well as how it was to be properly maintained. Whether this was a result of cultural and theological diffusion, i.e. borrowing, or because they all started with a very similar story line that evolved in different times and places for different peoples is hard to say, but the extent of the commonalities as well as the specificities of the commonalities themselves certainly indicates that a shared origins hypothesis, as we have proposed (following Witzel) in what we are calling the *Laurasian hypothesis* certainly looks like the best possible explanation – given what we now know about ancient *human migration* via the study of the human genome and the continued lack

²¹¹ The ancient Chinese are perhaps the only exception to this basic *theogonic* narrative that is so characteristic of ancient civilization and *cosmogony*. We say perhaps here because it is possible that these ancient deities, and potentially a surrounding *theogony* and *mythos*, were worshipped in the Shāng Dynasty era in the second millennium BCE but as of now the evidence is lacking - archaeological, written or otherwise.

of archeological, written or other evidence that suggests any direct cultural exchange between these ancient civilizations that were geographically so dispersed throughout Eurasia.

Part II: On Ancient Philosophy (*Logos*)

From the Far East: The Translation Challenge

We see the first evidence of Chinese writing, *pictograms* or *logograms* on bronze and bone artifacts from the last years of the Xia Dynasty (2070 – 1600 BCE), almost four thousand years ago. This writing system, the foundations of which became the what we now refer to as Chinese “characters”, were highly symbolic and hieroglyphic in nature, appearing in the archeological records on Bronze castings, tortoise shells, and cattle bones, the latter of which were primarily used for *divination* purposes. Inscription on Bronze castings (金文, literally “text on metal” or “text on gold”) typically represented a clan or family membership as well as socio-political status. This ancient form of writing is referred to sometimes in the academic literature as Oracle Bone Script, or Shell script (甲骨文, literally “text, “文” on shells, “甲” and bones, “骨”) a form of writing which was used up until the early Western Zhou Dynasty (1046 – 771 BCE).²¹²

The successor to these forms of writing were Seal script (篆書, literally “decorative engraving script”) which in turn evolved into Clerical script during the Warring States period (c. 475 – 221 BCE) and Qin Dynasty (221 – 206 BCE) periods of Chinese antiquity.²¹³ It is during the short reign of the Qin Dynasty that (most of) what we consider to be modern China was unified post Warring States period and in turn standard forms of writing and literature were established.²¹⁴ Most of the classic literature we have from China antiquity was compiled in the first millennium BCE and written on bamboo or silk in a written language that has come to be known as Classical Chinese²¹⁵, also known as “Literary Chinese”, a written form of the Old Chinese language which was used for almost all formal writing in China up until the early 20th century.²¹⁶

As Seal script emerged as the written standard, used primarily by an educated aristocratic class of scholars who were typically associated with the various courts of the ruling bodies, the foundational set of standard Chinese characters was established that were to be used for over two thousand years that would eventually evolve into a set of even more sophisticated

²¹² See <http://www.ink-treasures.com/history/calligraphy/chinese-calligraphy/calligraphy-scripts/bronze-inscriptions/>, <http://www.ink-treasures.com/history/calligraphy/chinese-calligraphy/calligraphy-scripts/oracle-bone-script-characters/>.

²¹³ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Seal script', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 25 September 2016, 17:21 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Seal_script&oldid=741141214> [accessed 25 September 2016] and Wikipedia contributors, 'Clerical script', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 8 August 2016, 13:06 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Clerical_script&oldid=733530270> [accessed 8 August 2016]

²¹⁴ While this unification came also with what is known as the great “Burning of Books” (213 BCE), it is believed that most of ancient Chinese literature was nonetheless preserved. Like any great destruction of literature and culture however, it’s never clear what was actually lost because we simply don’t know what we don’t know. Standard academic scholarship today believes that most of the “important” works from classical Chinese antiquity were preserved but again, it’s not clear what was actually lost other than the fact that we know that a large scale destruction of ancient, non “Qin”, literature did in fact occur.

²¹⁵ Referred to in Pinyin as *wényán wén*, meaning “literary language writing”.

²¹⁶ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Classical Chinese', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 27 June 2016, 08:32 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Classical_Chinese&oldid=727190919> [accessed 11 September 2016]

ideograms and morphemes which were capable of encapsulating and transcribing all of the various languages that were prevalent in China and the surrounding regions throughout its longstanding history. One of the distinguishing characteristics of ancient China in fact, given its vast regional territories and various peoples and cultures which inhabited what we today call “China” in antiquity, was the persistence of a single system of writing that could be used to encode and transcribe all of the various languages that were spoken throughout classically Chinese territories in antiquity, some of which were not even from the same (spoken) language family.

The modern Chinese character set includes over 50,000 characters, and has evolved to support the transcription of a wide array of modern spoken languages which include of course Chinese, but also include other Asian (spoken) languages such as Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese along with a host of other Chinese dialects like Mandarin. The writing system has of course grown increasingly complex to support these broad linguistic features over the centuries, millennia really, and given that it is not based upon an alphabetic system as we are accustomed to in the West, it is quite foreign to Westerners and is very difficult to learn. Specifically, and of particular relevance to this work which tries to ascertain and comprehend the meaning of ancient Chinese texts, the ancient Chinese forms of script can be very difficult to translate, really transliterate, given the very different nature of the symbols themselves as well as the unique nature of some of the characters and symbols that are only found in the ancient texts, the meaning of which can only (potentially) be understood by tracing, if possible, the etymology of the specific characters back through Oracle Bone and Bronze inscriptions.²¹⁷

At the same however, the unique nature of written Chinese also provides us with an almost unbroken lineage of *ideograms* and *logograms* that reach directly back into deep Chinese antiquity, something that cannot be said of the writing systems that survive in the West, the Indian subcontinent included. In some cases certain characters, words or phrases can be traced all the way back through modern Chinese characters through their Traditional Chinese counterparts, to their Clerical script representations, and sometimes even as far back as Seal script or even Bronze or Oracle bone inscriptions which represent the earliest forms of writing of the ancient Chinese.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ The Chinese system of writing also has the further advantage that the same word, phrase or meaning can be represented by the same Chinese character or set of characters and be read and understood by the speakers of various languages that the system of writing supports. In other words, the same word written in Chinese characters can be spoken in many different languages, while at the same time still be symbolized and represented by just one set of characters, i.e. one Chinese “word”.

²¹⁸ To even further complicate matters, given the gaps in the historical record, many of the symbols in the core part of the *Yijing* for example, do not necessarily have counterparts in the ancient language itself that we know of, at least none that have been discovered as of yet. So in other words, while the symbols which are associated with the various hexagrams in the *Yijing* are believed to be very old, there are very few if any counterpart symbols that are found in Oracle or Bronze script inscriptions that

The evolution of the Chinese character set as a device for documenting and transcribing spoken languages in the Far East (as juxtaposed with the more precise alphabetic systems of writing that were adopted by the West, the majority of which are believed to have derived from the Phoenician Alphabet) is not only an artifact of the longstanding and continuous evolution of the writing system itself, but also again reflects the underlying requirement of the written language to continuously support a wide variety of spoken languages by the various tribes, populations and civilizations that were incorporated into imperialistic China at various stages in its social and political development throughout its history - over the course of some five thousand years. This provides for a challenge in translating, again really transliterating, into modern Western European languages but also provides a unique window into the minds of the ancient Chinese peoples that used these archaic and more primitive forms of writing, and even to some extent provides a window into pre-historical, i.e. before the evolution of advanced systems of writing, mindset.

These unique features of written Chinese while leaves us with a very complex and notoriously difficult transliteration challenge into modern Western languages, nonetheless it can in some cases provide us with unique insights into what these symbols actually meant to the ancient Chinese authors who used them, i.e. what they actually might have “symbolized”. So although the ancient Chinese forms of writing are undoubtedly less specific than their counterparts to the West, and of course do not lend themselves to a simple direct translation in many cases, they do nonetheless - at least as far as the ancient classical texts are concerned – provide a platform for communicating a much more open and far-reaching set of ideas that in some cases reach as far back as pre-historical China. These characteristics are unique to the Chinese system of writing and while they provide again for some very interesting transliteration challenges, do again nonetheless in some cases yield greater insight into the ancient belief systems of the pre-historic peoples from which the classical Chinese civilization evolved from.²¹⁹

are extant that tell us what the origins of these symbols are or what they might have actually meant, beyond their association with the hexagram itself within the *Yijing*.

²¹⁹ As an example of how a Chinese character evolved from antiquity into Classical or Traditional Chinese, take for example the word “*rén*”, or 仁 in Traditional Chinese. Perhaps the best translation of this symbol or “word”, one which carries much significance within the Confucian philosophical milieu from which it emerged, is “benevolence”. But it can just as easily, and accurately, be transliterated as “humanity,” “humaneness,” “goodness,” or even “love”. If we look at the individual Chinese characters that make up the “word” though, i.e. understanding its etymology so to speak, we can come to an even better understanding of its true meaning, what the word. One interpretation for example of the origin of “仁” is that it is the character that represents “man” or “human being”, i.e. “人”, combined with that of the Chinese character for “two”, or “二”, i.e. denoting the proper way in which people should interact or behave toward each other. Also interestingly, the two words represented by “人” and “仁”, are actually pronounced the same in spoken Chinese, evidence for the permeation of Confucian thought throughout China where “man” and “humanity” have become virtually, if not linguistically, synonymous. This is a very good example of how the unique Chinese form of writing, while much more complex and harder to learn than the written alphabetic (Roman/Latin) languages we have become accustomed to in the West, can actually support a much deeper and sophisticated meaning to words and phrases than their Western counterparts. If we contrast this with the modern notion of “*virtue*” for example, a word that carries similar connotations and meaning to the Chinese word “*rén*”, we find that the word is derived directly from the Latin word

Adding to the complexities and subtleties of the translation of ancient Chinese forms of writing, most especially ancient Chinese into modern Western European languages that are based upon the Roman and Latin alphabet, we do not find anywhere near the same type of semantic clarity - punctuation, verb tense and sentence construction for example - that we have come to expect in our modern Western languages, or even in classical Latin or Greek. Furthermore, in many cases, again in particular in some of the classic Chinese philosophical literature, symbols, characters or words can have multiple meanings, many of which could be in play for a given sentence, passage or verse in a given context. While this gives the author a lot of power to convey ideas and thoughts with a minimal set of characters or words, it nonetheless makes the process of translating Chinese, especially Old Chinese in the Classic script, sometimes excruciating difficult where a specific set of characters, word or phrase can have, and may in fact be designed to have, many possible renderings or meanings.²²⁰

Furthermore, and reflective of the challenges that persist in the “Romanization” of Chinese terms and words from the Chinese alphabet into our own, there exist two different approaches to this problem, hence the continued need for, and proliferation of, different Romanization transliterations of Chinese words and terms into English even today that students of Chinese history and philosophy must familiarize themselves with in order to understand what Chinese word, phrase or text the (Western) author is actually referring to. The first method of Romanization of Chinese words that was standardized in the West, and perhaps even still the most widely found throughout the literature, is the “Wade-Giles” system. This system was created in the mid 19th century and therefore has been in use for some time and dominates most of the Western academic literature regarding the ancient Chinese up until the last few decades, where it has begun to be replaced by a more modernized version of Romanization called the “Pinyin” system. This system was created by the Chinese government in the 1950s and was adopted by the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) in 1982 and is generally used in almost all modern academic literature, at least in the last twenty years or so. One still finds references of terms using the old Wade-Giles form however, and in order to properly Wade

for man, or “*vir*”, and is the most common translation of the Greek (Aristotelean) notion of *arête*, which is sometimes translated as “excellence”, we not only have a direct modern English equivalent to which we can attach to the ancient Greek word, i.e. again *arête*, but given the very close relationship between the Roman/Latin cultures and the Greek, and the longstanding written translation tradition that exists from the Greek to the Latin and then from the Latin to modern Western European languages (and sometimes directly from the Greek to modern European languages), the “meaning” of the ancient word is much more clear to the Western mind, for in fact the intellectual and metaphysical worldview of the West is constructed upon these very intellectual and linguistic foundations as it were.

²²⁰ For a very comprehensive review of these difficulties see a very recent entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy written by Henry Rosemont Jr. “Translating and Interpreting Chinese Philosophy”, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/chinese-translate-interpret/>>.

through materials on ancient Chinese history and theo-philosophy, one must be familiar for the most part with Chinese terms in both systems of transliteration²²¹.

As a specific illustration of the challenges presented by the existence of two different methods of Romanization of Chinese words, take for example the name of the famous ancient philosopher Lǎozǐ (Pinyin), or alternatively in the more familiar Wade-Giles form, Lao-tzu. For most of the twentieth century, his famous work was transliterated into English using the old Wade-Giles form, i.e. the *Tao Te Ching* which is how the work is predominantly known to the Western reader. The title of the work however has now been replaced in almost all of the modern academic literature with the Pinyin Romanization form, i.e. the *Dao De Jing* or *Daodejing*. We confront the same issue with the Chinese classic the *I Ching* (Wade-Giles) versus the Pinyin form *Yijing* as another example. The former Romanization approaches represented by the Wade-Giles method, e.g. the *Tao Te Ching* and *I Ching*, in all likelihood represent terms that the reader is most familiar with, reflective of the fact that they are the more widely used terms even today outside of academic circles.

The student of ancient Chinese history and philosophy is therefore confronted with the very unique problem of having to familiarize themselves with both forms of Romanization as there are still many works that continue to be relevant in the study of ancient Chinese history and philosophy use the old Wade-Giles system, and these forms of Chinese words are again the most familiar to the Western reader as they have been used for the longest amount of time and are the most pervasive in the literature. Meanwhile again almost all modern academic (properly) use the Pinyin method of transliteration, sometimes not including the reference to the old Wade-Giles forms of the words or titles of the text. This for example makes it much more challenging to search and find digitally certain ancient Chinese words or texts in their Romanized form as compared with ancient Greek literature for example which have had standard Romanized forms for many centuries or of course ancient Roman/Latin words or names of text which require no form of Romanization at all. This is unique challenge that is presented to the student of the ancient Chinese intellectual and philosophical traditions and is a byproduct of the distinctive and altogether unique nature of their system of writing, language, and worldview in fact, relative to ours in the West.

As a further and more illustrative example of the translational difficulties and insights when dealing with specific passages and words from ancient Chinese texts, let's look at two translations from two different groups of scholars of the famed *Dao De Jing*, one of the earliest and most

²²¹ We have made every effort in this text to use the modern Pinyin Romanization formula for Chinese words or phrases but in some cases we use the old Wade-Giles terms as well, or at least in conjunction with, the Pinyin.

influential of the ancient Chinese philosophical texts attributed to Lǎozǐ, traditionally accepted to have been compiled sometime in the 6th century BCE and the foundational treatise of Daoist philosophy. We look at here specifically at verse/chapter 42 which is one of the most oft quoted and infamous of passages from the *Dao De Jing* dealing with *cosmogony*, or universal creation.

The first translation is from Robert G. Henricks, Professor Emeritus of Religion at Dartmouth who specializes in ancient Chinese philosophical research (Sinology) from 1989, some 15 years after the discovery of Mawangdui Silk Texts which included among other things newly discovered versions of the *Dao De Jing* which greatly expanded our understanding of the manuscript and textual tradition that surrounded this classic work. His translation is smooth and elegant and illustrates the poetic and *lyric* nature that was no doubt intended in the original text.

Like most texts from classical antiquity however, it was transcribed not only to capture and document the longstanding oral tradition from which it derived, but in fact, perhaps as byproduct of the transcription itself, established some of the core conceptual metaphysical and philosophical underpinnings, from a linguistic perspective, that have now come to form the basis of Daoist philosophy.²²²

*The Way gave birth to the One;
The One gave birth to the Two;
The Two gave birth to the Three;
And the Three gave birth to the ten thousand things [wànwù].
The ten thousand things carry Yīn on their backs and wrap their arms around Yáng.*

*Through the blending of ch’i [qì] they arrive at a state of harmony.
The things that are hated by the whole world
Are to be orphaned, widowed, and have no grain.
Yet kings and dukes take these as their names.
Thus with all things – some are increased by taking away;
While some are diminished by adding on.*

²²² The same can said of the *lyric poetic* traditions of the ancient Greeks attributed to Homer and Hesiod, the *Vedas* of the Indo-Aryans which was written in various forms of Brāhmī script (reflecting the ancient Sanskrit language), and the *Avesta* of the Indo-Iranians which was written in Avestan. All of these ancient texts reflect pre-historic oral traditions which were characterized by a *lyric form of poetry* as it were that was designed, at least with respect to the *Vedas* and parts of the *Avesta* at least, to be recited within the context of specific sacrificial and/or ceremonial worship and furthermore was intended to capture the precise pronunciation of specific words and verses which was required in order for the ceremonies to bear proper fruit. From a practical standpoint however, it is generally understood that it made it easier for the *oral tradition* to persist and be passed down from generation to generation if the language therein had a specific meter and/or cadence and rhythmic character, which in turn made the material much easier to memorize – an important characteristic of the transmission of these ancient texts before writing systems were even invented. This is why while academics and ancient historians typically date these ancient texts around the time when we believe and/or know they were compiled, i.e. actually written down, it’s also clear that the “content” of the texts, as well as many of the actual verses and passages that we find in the texts themselves, can be traced much further back in time – hence the wide range of dates typically attributed to ancient texts in the scholarly and academic literature.

*Therefore, what other men teach,
I will also consider and then teach to others.
Thus, "The strong and violent do not come to a natural end."
I will take this as the father of my studies.²²³*

The next translation we review as a point of comparison comes from Roger T. Ames, Professor of Chinese Philosophy from the University of Hawaii and editor of the journal *Philosophy East and West* along with David L. Hall Professor of Philosophy from the University of Texas El Paso. Their translation was published in 2003 after a further discovery of "Bamboo texts" known as the Guodian Chu Slips in 1993 which included among other things an even older version of the *Dao De Jing* than had been previously known that contains some significant departure from the "standard", "received" version of the text, shedding light on the textual transmission of ancient Chinese works in general and speaking specifically to the various versions of the *Dao De Jing* that must have been in circulation in the first few centuries after the text was initially transcribed.

The Guodian Chu Slip versions of the *Dao De Jing* include some differences not only in some characters that were used relative to the more standard, orthodox version, but also even a different chapter ordering than the "received" versions of the texts.²²⁴

*Way-making (dao) gives rise to continuity,
Continuity gives rise to difference,
Difference gives rise to plurality,
And plurality gives rise to the manifold of everything that is happening (wànwù).*

*Everything carries Yin on its shoulders and Yang in its arms
And blends these vital energies (qi) together to make them harmonious (he).*

*There is nothing in the world disliked more
Than the thought of being friendless, unworthy, and inept,
And yet kings and dukes use just such terms to refer to themselves.*

²²³ Lao-Tzu *Te-Tao Ching*. A new Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Ma-wang-tui Texts. Translated, with an introduction and commentary, by Robert G. Henricks. Ballantine Books, 1989. [Referring to textual discoveries made in 1973 at Ma-wang-tui where two copies of the *Dao De Jing* were found that date back to the second century BCE, some five centuries older than other copies of the *Tao Te Ching* that were known at the time.]

²²⁴ The *Dao De Jing* text that was discovered in the Guodian province (Hubei province) was written in a form of ancient Seal script on bamboo slips, three sets of them actually, referred to in the literature sometimes as the *Guodian Dao De Jing* or simply the *Bamboo Slip Laozi* (slips A, B and C) and can be reliably dated to the late 4th or early 3rd century BCE, at the end of the Warring States Period (4475-221 BCE) basically, and representing a textual tradition that is two centuries earlier than previously known extant versions of the *Dao De Jing*. The Bamboo strips were excavated just outside the ancient capital of the ancient Chinese state of Chu, which is incidentally where Laozi is believed to have been from.

*For things, sometimes less is more,
And sometimes, more is less.*

*Thus, as for what other people are teaching,
I will think about what they have to say, and then teach it to others.*

*For example: "Those who are coercive and violent do not meet their natural end" –
I am going to take this statement as my precept.²²⁵*

Irrespective of the very interesting and *cosmological* and *metaphysical* content reflected in the above passage, what should immediately strike the reader is that if one were to read the two translations independent of each other, without knowing that they come from the same "textual tradition" surrounding the *Dao De Jing*, i.e. the same work basically, one could easily conclude that the translations were from two different works entirely. Interpreting what the passage *means* then, or the meaning that the ancient author is trying to convey, and how this passage fits into the philosophical tradition and milieu from whence it originated, and in turn comparing the underlying philosophical content with other extant ancient textual traditions, becomes a very difficult and complex problem indeed. A problem which is again unique to the study of ancient Chinese philosophy.

What that leaves us with, at least in the Western academic tradition with our reliance on, our dependence and assumption upon, "philosophy" as a written, coherent and logically sound belief system that explains the natural world and mankind's place within it, and that also has some sense of semantic clarity which permits some sense of definitional transference into modern English that allows to connect various ancient terms, words and ideas throughout the evolution of the philosophical tradition as a whole as well as into modern Western European philosophical parlance, is a bit of a conundrum really. What we want to do, what we're inclined to do in studying the Chinese philosophical tradition in antiquity, is to attempt to parse from the ancient texts a *cosmological*, *metaphysical* and ultimately theo-philosophical belief system that maps somehow onto modern *metaphysical* and *philosophical* conceptions, even if these conceptions have ancient theo-philosophical counterparts – i.e. analogous to what has been done with the Greco-Roman theo-philosophical traditions which given its straight lineage from Greek to Latin to English provides for greater insight into the underlying worldview, the underlying meaning as it were, of the ancient authors who wrote the definitive theo-philosophical works in question. This is a task of a very different order when studying the ancient philosophical works of the Chinese however.

²²⁵ A *Philosophical Translation Dao De Jing* "Making Life Significant". 'Featuring the Recently Discovered Bamboo Texts. Translated and with commentary by Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall.' Ballantine Book, 2003.

Given the predominance of so many disparate and competing cultures and societies that existed from say 4000 BCE to 500 CE in the geographic region that has come to be known as China today, the various languages, cultures and belief systems were synthesized, integrated and sometimes altogether destroyed or totally assimilated in various phases and by various dynastic cultures as they slowly consolidated the vast regions and territories which later came to be known as the Chinese Empire – first with the pre-historic Xia Dynasty established by the Yu the Great, then to the famed Shāng Dynasty, then on to the Zhou Dynasty which is when most of the Chinese Classics we know today were first written down, to the Qin Dynasty which consolidated the Chinese empire after the Warring States period, then into the Han Dynasty where Confucian philosophy was officially adopted by the state and the period of Chinese antiquity basically comes to an end. Each of these dynastic rulers drew more or less from the varying philosophical traditions to not only guide but in some sense legitimize their rule, i.e. the so-called Mandate of Heaven, and what evolved alongside this cultural expansion, synthesis, assimilation and expansion was their system of writing that had to be extraordinarily flexible, broad based and inclusive to encompass the various languages and ideologies which assimilated into classically “Chinese” culture.

Many languages were and continue to be spoken in China, and all of these languages needed to be codified, written, transcribed in a single written form, and yet the writing system still had to incorporate and assimilate the various textual and written traditions that harkened back to Bronze Age China – the beginnings of which are captured on first on tortoise shells and ox bones - Oracle Bone script and the slightly more advanced form of script found on Bronze artifacts referred to as Bronze script. This system then in turn became more advanced and is found in the archeological records on Bamboo and Silk and is commonly referred to as Seal script, which was then followed by the development of a more sophisticated and advanced (and in turn complex) system of writing called Clerical Script which forms the basis of Traditional Chinese which are still in use in China and many other countries in the East today.

The scriptural tradition (not scriptural with the sacred connotations we are used to in the West but scriptural in the sense that the ideas are written down) evolved alongside the culture and socio-political evolution right from the beginning, providing for a framework of continuous (written) linguistic heritage that is unique to the Far East. But at the same time it does not lend itself to the sort of logical and semantic precision that we are accustomed to seeing and leveraging when we analyze ancient Western philosophical works. This is a very unique and sometimes frustrating problem when studying the ancient Chinese theo-philosophical development, particularly when approaching the intellectual developments from a classical Western academic mindset. So while the spoken language family of the people of China typically falls in the Sino-Tibetan language family, part of the language tree that has many diverse siblings and offspring linguistically and phonetically speaking, the written language dates back to the

dawn of civilization in the Far East, and slowly incorporated various symbols from different sub-cultures over time as they were assimilated into Chinese culture as a whole, and therefore the Chinese were in fact almost forced to keep a more primitive linguistic structure, one which is quite foreign to the phonetically driven alphabet systems we are so used to working with in the West.

This unbroken linguistic and cultural lineage however, has supported and fundamentally reflects, a certain level of cultural open mindedness and inclusivity. The writing system had to be inclusive and far reaching in order to support the assimilation and consolidation of the various languages that were spoken in ancient China, and as a result, their system of writing had to incorporate certain symbols which reflected a certain, specific given meaning, more or less, and may or may not have a phonological counterpart (how that word sounds). In this system, semantic and ideological clarity is yielded for linguistic flexibility and this characteristic of the Chinese (written) language has both its strengths (in term of flexibility) and weaknesses (in terms of lack of clarity), depending upon one's perspective. This context and associated linguistic attributes must be taken into account when trying to understand the true meaning and import being conveyed by the ancient authors, authors whose works survive for the most part in some of the oldest forms of the Chinese language and were attempting to transcribe and capture living and breathing oral traditions that reached even further back into Chinese antiquity.

It is interesting to note that the view from the Far East with respect to how they interpret their original theo-philosophical works – like Lǎozǐ's *Dao De Jing* or the Confucian *Analects* for example – stands in fairly stark contrast to the more dogmatic interpretive theological tradition that is such a hallmark of the West - the Abrahamic religious traditions in particular with their strict interpretation of scripture and unwavering belief in the words of their respective prophets and their “divine” revelation. It is quite odd in fact that with our cultural history in the West that has virtually reinvented systems of writing every 700 years or so, that such credence and divinitive powers have been given to the various texts and words of the various prophets - i.e. the *Bible* or the *Qur'ān* for example - while a linguistic tradition like that of the Chinese that has essentially remained fairly constant over the course of millennia and has systematically absorbed symbols and phonemes from a broad range of peoples within its geographic borders, still remains quite flexible with respect to interpretation of, and fundamental weight applied to, the actual words and symbols that are used to convey the meaning of the ancient Chinese philosophers which provide the theo-philosophical basis of their culture even today.

The Chinese civilization is if not the, then certainly one of, the oldest persistent civilizations on the planet.²²⁶ Its roots go back to the early part of the second millennium BCE with the first dynastic empire, the Xia Dynasty (circa c. 2070 – c. 1600 BC) was established by Yu the Great in the Yellow River valley basin of northeastern China. The Xia Dynasty was succeeded by the Shāng Dynasty (circa 1600 BCE to 1046 BCE) and is contemporaneous with what modern historians call “Bronze Age China” given the proliferation of Bronze that is found in the archaeological record during this time. It is during the Shāng Dynasty period that we see the first evidence of writing in ancient China, on bone inscriptions and is from this time period that the worship of Shàngdì dominates the theological landscape. Some of the earliest elements of Chinese civilization can be found from the Shāng Dynasty era, both from the (limited) written and more extensive archeological evidence from this time period, along with the historical information we gather from later historians and literature that compiled later during the Zhou, Qin and Han Dynasties in the first millennium BCE

Much of what we know about the Shāng Dynasty comes from not only archeological records, which include some of the earliest written inscriptions we have from ancient China, i.e. Oracle bone inscriptions²²⁷, but also from ancient Chinese texts written in Classical Chinese, or “Literary Chinese” (文言文 or *wényán wén*, which means “literary language writing”), a written form of the Old Chinese language.²²⁸ These texts were compiled in the Zhou, Qin and Han dynastic periods of Chinese antiquity – latter part of the first millennium BCE - during which time much of the classic Chinese literature from antiquity took its present form and during the same time period more or less that “philosophy” emerged and was codified in both the Indian subcontinent as well as throughout the Mediterranean in the region of Hellenic influence.

²²⁶ India being the only comparable civilization from a durability standpoint although its history is not quite as continuous as the Chinese in the sense of regional, linguistic and cultural continuity dating as far back in antiquity.

²²⁷ Oracle bone inscriptions are Chinese character inscriptions on turtle shells or ox bones that were used for *divination*. It is believed that the inscriptions were made on the shell or bone, the shell or bone was put into a sacrificial fire, and then the priest/shaman or “diviner” would interpret the will of the gods, the will of heaven in this case (*Tiān*), based upon how the lines and symbols were drawn out of the fire. Despite the very specific religious and spiritual use of these characters, the symbols are abstract enough to indicate that the form of writing that they represent had been around for some time, many centuries if not millennia at least. See <http://www.chineseetymology.org>.

²²⁸ Classical Chinese was used for almost all forms of formal writing in China up until the early 20th century. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Classical Chinese', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 27 June 2016, 08:32 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Classical_Chinese&oldid=727190919> [accessed 9 September 2016]

Chinese Philosophical Development in Antiquity					
Dynastic and Imperial Development		Philosophical and Cultural Development			
Shang Dynasty (c. 1600-1050) Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046-256) Spring and Autumn Period (c. 770-475) Warring States Period (c. 475-221) Qin (Ch'in) Dynasty (221-206) Han Dynasty (c. 206 BCE -220 CE) Six Dynasties Period (220-589 CE) Song Dynasty (960-1279)		Chunqiu (Spring and Autumn Annals) Zhou Yi (Book of Documents) King Wen (Odes, Classic of Poetry) Duke of Zhou (Book of Rites) Shijing (Classic of Poetry) Li Ji (Book of Rites) Lao-Tzu (Laozi) Zhuangzi (Zhuang Zhou) Confucius Mozi Mencius I Ching (Yijing) Daozang (Daoist canon) Tao-Te-Ching (Daodejing) Buddhist Influence			
Linguistic Development		Old Chinese (spoken) pre-Classical (written) Classical Chinese (written) Middle Chinese (spoken) Literary Chinese (written) Traditional Chinese			
1500 BCE 1000 BCE 500 BCE 0 BCE 500 CE 1000 CE		Oracle Bone Script Bronze script Seal Script Clerical script Literary Chinese (written) Traditional Chinese			

Figure 11: Theo-Philosophical Development in Ancient China

The two most important historical texts from this period are the *Book of Documents*, or the *Shujing*), also called the *Classic of History* which is one of the *Five Classics* of ancient Chinese

literature as well as the *Records of the Grand Historian*, or *Shiji*, which was written by Sima Tan (c. 165 BCE – 110 BCE) and his son Sīmǎ Qiān²²⁹, both Han court astrologers at the turn of the second century BCE. The *Records of the Grand Historian* is a Herodotus *Histories* like text chronicling the history of China from the time of the pseudo-mythical Yellow Emperor, or Huangdi, to the Han Emperor Wu who was the reigning Emperor when the book was completed in 109 BCE.

From the material in these historical texts, and consistent with what we know about the Shāng Dynasty culture of ancient China from the archeological record, we see the importance of ritual and ceremony and the veneration of ancestors as important socio-theological constructs, hence the purpose behind the creation of such historical narratives to begin with which document the birth of Chinese civilization in the Yellow River basin and document the great deeds of their ancestors starting with Yu the Great (大禹 or Dà Yǔ, c. 2200 – 2101 BC), the tamer of the Great Flood who is the founder of the Xia Dynasty and renowned as a ruler of upstanding moral and ethical character, a *philosopher king* in the true sense of the term as espoused in Plato's *Republic*.

It's during this transition from the more archaic and prehistoric period of Shang dynastic influence - which was characterized theologically speaking by the worship of Shàngdì as the pre-eminent and all pervasive governor and presider over the universe and the affairs of men – to the influence of the somewhat more civilized and analytical culture that characterizes the Zhou Dynasty period of Chinese antiquity, that we see the introduction and ultimate replacement of the sacrificial worship of Shàngdì with the more theo-philosophical notion of “Heaven”, or *Tiān* (天) which is looked to as the benchmark of moral integrity as well as the ultimate authority upon which the governing class rests. We see this transition happening quite distinctly early in the Zhou Dynasty period as the early Zhou dynastic rulers appeal directly to the “Mandate of Heaven” to justify their overthrow of the Shāng Dynasty and establish themselves as rulers of the Chinese empire.

It is during the Zhou Dynasty period that we see the creation, evolution and proliferation of a multitude various different philosophical schools – the so called “Hundred Schools of Thought”, (諸子百家 *orzhūzǐ bǎijiā*) which flourished during what is referred to by modern Chinese historians as the Spring and Autumn period (c. beginning of the 8th to the end of the 5th century BCE) through the so called “Warring States period” which culminates in the consolidation of power amongst the warring states in ancient China by the founder of the Qin Dynasty in 221

²²⁹ Later generations of Chinese refer to Sīmǎ Qiān as the “Grand Historian” (Chinese: 太史公; Tàishǐ Gōng or tai-shih-kung) given his lasting and unique contributions to the history of Chinese in antiquity.

BCE.²³⁰ During this time the intellectual elite, or scribes, were employed by the various political factions to advise them on matters of state as well as compile theo-philosophical works that were intended to not only legitimize their authority but also to systematize and document various schools of theo-philosophical thought. From the *Shiji*, the *Records of the Grand Historian*, the six main competing theo-philosophical schools of this period were Confucianism, Legalism, Daoism, Mohism, School of *Yīn-Yáng*, and the School of Names (or Logicians).²³¹

Toward the end of the first millennium BCE, most of the ancient Chinese classics which we know today became standardized, and several were adopted as “official” literary documents of the Chinese state during the Western Han, or Former Han period (206 BCE – 9 CE) – namely the *Classic of Poetry (Shijing)*, the *Book of Documents (Shujing)*, the *Book of Rites (Liji)*, the *Book of Changes (Yijing)*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals (Chūnqiū)*, each of which became integrated into the core state sponsored academic curriculum and have been used up until modern times as not only history teaching texts but as moral and ethical guiding works as well.

At the same time, Confucianism is adopted by the Han Dynasty rulers as the official state ideology and therefore we begin to see a very strong influence of Confucian thought not only in the socio-political sphere, but also in ethical philosophy as well as theology and *divination* practices which were very closely connected as outlined in the *Yijing*. “Heaven” was seen not only on as guiding principle and ultimate authority upon which their theology was based, but also as the guiding principle upon which the emperors and ruling classes of ancient China were to base their decisions, and ultimately upon which their authority – as seen again through the Mandate of Heaven – rested upon. *Heaven*, as both a material and ever present physical construct as reflected in the heavens themselves, as well as a more ethereal and philosophical concept reflecting the underlying order and law of the universe which manifested in the material and socio-political spheres as well, was looked upon as the standard bearer for not only *ethics* and *morality* for individuals, but also as the guiding principle behind the governance of society and politics.

The Traditional Chinese character for *Tiān* is “天”, which can be traced back through Seal script, Bronze script and even as far back to Oracle bone inscriptions from pre-historic China from the second millennium BCE, is closely related to the Traditional Chinese character for “man”, or “person” (*rén*, “人”). Essentially the character for *Tiān* seems to have evolved from the glyph for

²³⁰ The “Warring States period” derives its name from the *Record of the Warring States* text, or *Zhan Guo Ce*, a work compiled early in the Han dynasty which documents the period of ancient Chinese history from the 5th to the 3rd centuries BCE which is marked by political strife and war between competing states and regions.

²³¹ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Hundred Schools of Thought', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 31 August 2016, 11:33 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hundred_Schools_of_Thought&oldid=737041169> [accessed 9 September 2016].

man, to which strokes were added to illustrate the magnificence and ultimate superiority of *Tiān* over all the other anthropomorphic deities as well as all mankind as well of course, ultimately evolving into the Traditional Chinese character “天”.

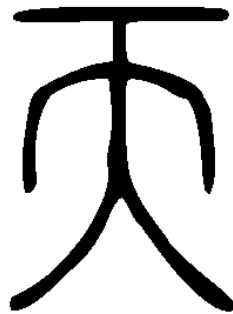


Figure 12: Chinese Seal script for *Tiān* 天, "heaven"²³²

The fact that the character for *Tiān* can be traced back through the archeological record to illustrate its relationship to the character for “man” betrays the anthropomorphic aspect of *Tiān*/Shàngdì which must have been predominant in pre Zhou Dynastic China.²³³ So while the anthropomorphic qualities of *Tiān* are smoothed over as it were by the time of the classical era of Chinese philosophical antiquity, i.e. when Confucian philosophy becomes the predominant tradition throughout ancient China, we can see the direct reference of the idea, the concept, of an all pervading anthropomorphic deity, i.e. Shàngdì, reaching at least as far back as the Shāng Dynasty (2nd millennium BCE).²³⁴

In the time of the Zhou Dynasty at the turn of the first millennium BCE, we see a transition and semantic equivalence that is established between Shàngdì and *Tiān*, or Heaven, which is also the word for “sky”. *Tiān* becomes one of the three pillars of the world order in classical Chinese philosophy – Heaven, Earth and Man. We see this transition take place, along with the evolution of Classical Chinese as a writing system, first in the Zhou Dynasty period and then maturing in the latter half of the first millennium BCE in the Warring States period, being firmly established in Chinese philosophical nomenclature by the beginning of the Han Dynasty in 202 BCE (Former or

²³² From Wikipedia contributors, 'Tiān', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 29 July 2016, 00:36 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tiān&oldid=732013599>> [accessed 6 September 2016].

²³³ See <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%E5%A4%A9>.

²³⁴ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Tiān', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 29 July 2016, 00:36 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tiān&oldid=732013599>> [accessed 6 September 2016].

Earlier Han) when most if not all of classical Chinese philosophical works were standardized and “canonized” so to speak.

We see the role of heaven played out in the socio-political sphere as well beginning with the Zhou Dynasty specifically which Confucius looked upon as a bygone age of *justice* and *virtue*. It’s in the transitional period between the Shang and Zhou dynasty that we find the first reference to the notion of the “Mandate of Heaven” which was used by the first dynastic rulers of the Zhou as justification for the overthrow the Shang dynastic rulers. This idea that the emperor of China gets his authority from Heaven which bestows a right to rule on a just ruler or “Son of Heaven”, i.e. *Tianzi*, is somewhat unique to the Chinese and has been leveraged by emperors in Chinese antiquity after the Zhou Dynasty to justify an overthrow of an emperor or a dynasty. Natural disasters, unrest or famine were for example generally considered to be signs that the rulers had lost the Mandate of Heaven and so the well-being of the ruled and the authority of the ruler were seen as tightly interconnected and interdependent upon each other.

One of the unique attributes of the Chinese philosophical tradition is its lack of focus on what we would call in the West *theological* concerns, i.e. issues related to how the universe was created (*cosmogony* or *theogony*) and what divine forces if any preside over it. While even in the philosophical works of Plato and Aristotle we find a rejection, or at least a lack of consideration, of mythology and the realm of the gods, in favor of underlying principles which drive creation which have a more “rational” foundation – i.e. Aristotle’s *prime mover* and Plato’s *Demiurge*. This is the classic *Logos* over *mythos* transition that takes place quite unique to the Mediterranean and is a marked characteristic of the Hellenic philosophers.

In the ancient Far East however, the region which eventually became what we know today as China, while we find an implicit theological principle in the idea of “Heaven” (*Tiān*), we do not see it dealt with specifically or directly in the works of the philosophers themselves like we do with Plato’s *Demiurge* or Aristotle’s *prime mover*. It is more of a fundamental backdrop of existence and divine “order”, which is looked upon as a benchmark, an example as it were, of *ethics* and *morality*, of social governance, and as a living “being” or “entity” which can be queried to assist in practical matters of state as reflected in the yarrow stalk *divination* rituals surrounding the *Yijing*. In other words, in the Far East the existence of an anthropomorphic god who creates and maintains the universal order is not analyzed or documented in the early theo-philosophical tradition as it were, it is simply presumed and looked to as a guiding principle for the life of the individual, and within the socio-political sphere of life.

In general, Heaven to the ancient Chinese takes on the form of what we in modern parlance would call a more *naturalist* view of divinity, in particular as the Chinese philosophical systems

evolve and are compiled and documented in the classical period of Chinese antiquity from the second half of the first millennium BCE onwards. Implicit in all the classical philosophical works from Chinese antiquity is a belief in the tri-partite universal order based upon the interworkings and relationships of the realm of Heaven (*Tiān* 天), the realm of Earth (*Dì* 地), and the realm of Man. It could be said that the whole of Chinese philosophy is meant to, and produced for, the establishment of harmony between these three interconnected yet distinct aspects of reality.

From the *Yijing*), the *Book of Changes*, one of if not the cornerstone Chinese philosophical text from antiquity, the core of which was written and used as a *divination* text from the late Shang and early Zhou periods, we find the predominance of the notion that the purpose of life, and in fact Fate itself, is best understood as the harmonization and balance of the forces of *change* (*yi*) as reflected through the understanding of the workings of material and spiritual universe which are *intellectually* and *metaphysically* delineated across three separate but related conceptual frameworks - those of Heaven, Man and Earth.

In the *Yijing*, and in the *bāguà* (eight trigrams), each of these respective world orders was represented by an individual broken line representing *Yīn* (receptive, dark, female) or a solid line representing *Yáng* (creative, light, male), which when brought together in the trigram arrangements (again eight of them, i.e. the *bāguà*) were read from the bottom up, with the bottom symbol representing the domain of Earth, the middle symbol the domain of Man, and top most symbol the domain of Heaven. These trigrams were combined together, two of them, to form the 64 hexagrams which constitute the core of the *Yijing*, where in the hexagram structure the bottom two lines represented the world of Earth, the middle two lines represented the world of Man, and the top two lines represented the world of Heaven, where each hexagram symbolized a specific state of *being*, or aspect of change (*yi*), which was to be interpreted given the current context of the consultation of the text, i.e. the *divination* process.²³⁵

From the *Great Commentary*, one of the most prominent of the *Ten Wings* treatises that expounds upon the underlying *metaphysics* and philosophy underlying the *Book of Changes*, we find the work described specifically as, “... *vast and far-ranging, and has everything complete within it. It contains the way of the heavens, the way of human beings, and the way of the earth*”.²³⁶

²³⁵ See *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, Wilhelm/Baynes. Princeton University Press 1977. 27th printing (1997). “Shuo Kua / Discussion of the Trigrams” chapter, page 264-265.

²³⁶ *Great Commentary* B8. Quotation from *The Great Commentary (Dazhuan) and Chinese natural cosmogony* by Roger T. Ames. Translation by Ames. Published March 2015 in the International Communication of Chinese Culture.

The Book of Changes contains the measure of heaven and earth; therefore it enables us to comprehend the tao of heaven and earth and its order.

Looking upward, we contemplate with its help the signs in the heavens; looking down, we examine the lines of the earth. Thus we come to know the circumstances of the dark and the light. Going back to the beginnings of things and pursuing them to the end, we come to know the lessons of birth and of death. The union seed and power produces all things; the escape of the soul brings about change. Through this we come to know the conditions of outgoing and returning spirits.

Since in this way man comes to resemble heaven and earth, he is not in conflict with them. His wisdom embraces all things, and his tao brings order into the whole world; therefore he does not err. He is active everywhere but does not let himself be carried away. He rejoices in heaven and has knowledge of fate, therefore he is care free. He is content with his circumstances and genuine in his kindness, therefore he can practice love.

In it are included the forms and scope of everything in the heavens and on earth, so that nothing escapes it. In it all things everywhere are completed, so that none is missing. Therefore by means of it we can penetrate the tao of day and night, and so understand it. Therefore the spirit is bound to no one place, not the Book of Changes to any one form.²³⁷

While these excerpts no doubt represent later interpretations of the significance of the text, at least later than when the text was initially drafted and used which goes at least as far back as the Zhou Dynasty (early first millennium BCE) and probably much earlier, we see implicit here the fundamental belief in the cosmological world order being broken into three disparate and yet at the same time interconnected aspects, i.e. the world order of Heaven, Earth and Man.

The totality of possible states of existence of these three aspects of the universal order, as well as the notion of change (*yi*) which was believed to be the elemental property of *existence, being* itself, is reflected in the 64 hexagrams underlying the *Yijing*, the proper understanding of which, when combined with the yarrow stalk *divination* process itself, would yield understanding of the true nature of a given situation through which a proper and optimal “decision” could be made which lended itself toward greater tranquility, harmony and balance rather than disharmony, chaos and confusion.

In the *Analects*, a Confucian text authored during the Warring States period (4th/3rd centuries BCE), we find references to Heaven spread throughout the text, not necessarily representing a core philosophical principle per se, but yet at the same time representing a fundamental force in

²³⁷ From *The I Ching or the Book of Changes* by Wilhelm/Baynes. Princeton University Press 1977. “Ta Chuan” / “The Great Treatise” chapter IV pgs. 293-296.

the universe, a force of good, that cannot be ignored and which needs to be properly understood in order to lead a moral and true life, the basis of which led to happiness and psychic and emotional harmony and balance.

*The Master said, "Without recognizing the ordinances of Heaven, it is impossible to be a superior man. Without an acquaintance with the rules of Propriety, it is impossible for the character to be established. Without knowing the force of words, it is impossible to know men."*²³⁸

The “ordinances of Heaven” here refer to the classic Confucian ideals of propriety and ritual (*li*) which harken back to early Zhou Dynasty rituals and customs to which Confucian philosophy looked upon as a period of *moral* and *ethical virtue*, in particular within the context of the Warring States period of Chinese antiquity. To Confucius, these ancient customs and rituals formed the fabric of a well-functioning society and were directly linked, integrally tied to, the proper balance and harmony of the world of Heaven and the world of Man.

Also from the *Analects* we find:

*The Master was put in fear in Kuang. He said, "After the death of King Wen, was not the cause of truth lodged here in me? If Heaven had wished to let this cause of truth perish, then I, a future mortal, should not have got such a relation to that cause. While Heaven does not let the cause of truth perish, what can the people of Kuang do to me?"*²³⁹

Heaven to Confucius also represents an ever-present force of nature that cannot be deceived, and one who guides people's lives and maintains a personal relationship with them, one who has instilled various qualities, like *virtue* for example, in Confucius himself, and even in some cases dolling out tasks for people to fulfill in order to teach them of *virtue* and *morality*, i.e. *ethics*. The order of the world according to Confucius is established and overseen by Heaven, it was the source of all *truth* and *knowledge*. Much of the notion of Heaven as established by Confucius in the *Analects* and other later Confucian philosophical works, of which the *Yijing* ultimately comes to be known as, lends itself to the sense of *naturalism* that the ancient Chinese theo-philosophical systems are known for.

Similarly, Mohism (or the “School of Mo”) which was one of the competing philosophical schools of Confucianism during the classical period, appealed to Heaven as the ultimate guiding post for

²³⁸ *Analects*, Chapter “Yáo Yue” verse 3. Translation by James Legge. From <http://ctext.org/analects/yáo-yue>.

²³⁹ *Analects*, Chapter “Zi Han” verse 5. Translation by James Legge. From <http://ctext.org/analects/zi-han>.

moral and *ethical* behavior, contrasting their system of *ethics* and governing to the ancestor worship and veneration that played such a prominent role in the Confucian teachings. Despite Mozi's more practical bent, the school attributed to him nonetheless still looked to Heaven as the guidepost to moral and ethical behavior.

Mohism, founded by Mozi (or Mo Tzu, c 470 BCE to 391 BCE), took root in ancient China around the same time as Confucianism in the second half of the first millennium BCE. While initially it clearly had some strong socio-political support particularly during the Warring States period, never got an imperial in later Chinese dynasties in particular after unification with the Qin Dynasty in the third century BCE.

Now, what does Heaven desire and what does it abominate? Heaven desires righteousness and abominates unrighteousness. Therefore, in leading the people in the world to engage in doing righteousness I should be doing what Heaven desires. When I do what Heaven desires, Heaven will also do what I desire. Now, what do I desire and what do I abominate? I desire blessings and emoluments, and abominate calamities and misfortunes. When I do not do what Heaven desires, neither will Heaven do what I desire. Then I should be leading the people into calamities and misfortunes. But how do we know Heaven desires righteousness and abominates unrighteousness? For, with righteousness the world lives and without it the world dies; with it the world becomes rich and without it the world becomes poor; with it the world becomes orderly and without it the world becomes chaotic. And if Heaven likes to have the world live and dislikes to have it die, likes to have it rich and dislikes to have it poor, and likes to have it orderly and dislikes to have it disorderly. Therefore we know Heaven desires righteousness and abominates unrighteousness.²⁴⁰

Here we see Heaven being represented as not only having a direct role in the proper harmonious functioning of the *cosmos* and natural, material world of nature, but also very specifically as applied to the affairs of men as the guiding principle to *morality* and *ethics*. While it might be a little farfetched to tie any anthropomorphic attributes to the Heaven which Mozi appeals to, we still find a very well developed theo-philosophical concept here which in some sense is presumed to have will and desire of its own, and reflects and embodies so to speak, a notion of fairness and justice much like the Platonic and Aristotelian sense of *virtue*, i.e. *arête*.

A more anthropomorphic sense of Heaven can be found in Mozi's work *Will of Heaven*, language which reflects again not only the source of *morality* and *ethics* in human behavior, but also the source of order, balance and harmony for the material universe as well, all of which come to form the core theo-philosophical construct in ancient Chinese theo-philosophy in all its forms.

²⁴⁰ Mozi, Chapter "Will of Heaven" 1.2. Translation by W.P. Mei. From <http://ctext.org/mozi/will-of-heaven-i>.

I know Heaven loves men dearly not without reason. Heaven ordered the sun, the moon, and the stars to enlighten and guide them. Heaven ordained the four seasons, Spring, Autumn, Winter, and Summer, to regulate them. Heaven sent down snow, frost, rain, and dew to grow the five grains and flax and silk that so the people could use and enjoy them. Heaven established the hills and rivers, ravines and valleys, and arranged many things to minister to man's good or bring him evil. He appointed the dukes and lords to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked, and to gather metal and wood, birds and beasts, and to engage in cultivating the five grains and flax and silk to provide for the people's food and clothing. This has been so from antiquity to the present.²⁴¹

Here we see the Mohist tradition look to Heaven and its semblance of *order*, even *justice*, as the proposed bedrock of their *moral* and *ethical* system. While it may be a stretch to call this some form of ancient *monotheism*, the parallels between this Heaven and the Yahweh of the Jews which Christianity and then Islam later adopted is somewhat striking. To this end the *Way (Dao)*, as reflected in the *Will of Heaven (Tianzhi, Tiān “Heaven” + zhi “Will”)*, and the importance of “right” and “correct” moral and ethical behavior in both everyday life as well in the sphere of governance as understood through the proper understanding of the notion of Heaven itself, become the dominant themes of early Chinese theo-philosophical.

Whether in early Daoist sources (the *dao* of Heaven) as reflected in the *Yijing*, or in the more ethical and moralistic schools represented by Confucian and Mohist doctrines as noted above, each of the schools rested their doctrines in no small measure on the fundamental belief that Heaven not only existed, but that it also operated according to a moral and ethical rule or law which should be emulated and followed by man, and the society at large, to promote peace and harmony. While this principle represents a significant evolution and deviation from the worship and ritual sacrifices offered to Shàngdì from the Shāng Dynasty that presumably was practiced in pre-historical China as well, the semantic equivalence which was tied to this ancient god of the sky and *Heaven* in the more abstract sense clearly share a common ancestry.

So this worldview of the tripartite order of Heaven, Earth and Man which is meant to operate in harmony and balance that the sages (*shamans* really from early Chinese pre-history) attempted to align in the individual and social fabric via the use of *divination* texts like the *Yijing* which in its original form is referred to as the *Zhou Yi* prior to the addition of the *Ten Wings* in the last half of the first millennium BCE. The system of belief that is encoded in the *Yijing* which became one of the Five Confucian Classics which underpinned all of ancient Chinese theo-philosophy, clearly

²⁴¹ Mozi, *Will of Heaven*, Chapter 27, Paragraph 6, ca. 5th Century BCE

reflected and evolved from a much older theological belief system that was based upon the worship of Shàngdì through elaborate rituals and sacrifice, practices which continued to persist in some form or another even up until the 20th century in China. The underlying philosophy and ritual of *divination* which was encoded in the structure and practices surrounding the *Yijing*, evolved and emerged out of this ancient worship of Shàngdì and was based upon the fundamental belief in the existence of Heaven as a guiding principle of balance, harmony, *ethics* and *virtue* in not just the sphere of Heaven, but the sphere of Earth and Man as well.

Parallels to this worship of a supreme god of the sky existed in the West in antiquity as well, in the cosmological and mythical traditions of the Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, and even Indo-Aryan peoples, each who worshipped their own versions of a sky god as one of the primary forces of nature that was established at the very beginning of the creation of the cosmos. No doubt this reverence for the “god” of the sky, a personification and system of worship for that mysterious realm of the heavens, reflected the beliefs of the ancient hunter-gather shamans and priests that held this realm, and the being that presided over it, as the supreme ruler and governor over the universe. The ordering and movement of the stars, sun and moon, and the underlying belief that these movements and events (eclipses, comets, full moons, passage of the seasons, movement of the sun and moon throughout the ecliptic, etc.) dictated and had a profound influence on human affairs, essentially what we refer to as astrology today, is consistent across all ancient civilizations. The ancients of course had a much closer relationship, and reliance on, the celestial sphere than that of “civilized” man. In some sense, like the Epicureans to the West it could be argued that Confucius held that the world of spirits and the gods, i.e. *shén*, was too difficult to comprehend and therefore the mind or intellect should be focused on more practical measures - like for example how best to live, behave and govern and which social norms could be established for the good of all society. But this “spirit” world, the world of the gods to the West, was encapsulated in the notion of Heaven from early Chinese theo-philosophy, not altogether denied existence, it simply took a back seat to what were considered more important and practical topics such as how to live and how to govern.

While there are clearly some differences in terms of the characteristics or properties of Shàngdì and its later formation into the more philosophical construct Heaven and the Judeo-Christian concept of God for example. The “Heaven” that we see in the classical Chinese texts is far removed from the sky and heaven god of the ancient Chinese pantheistic traditions, Shàngdì, from which it surely originated from, albeit even in this form falling short of the one and only one God of the Abrahamic religious systems.²⁴² The emphasis of the early Chinese theo-philosophy

²⁴² A distinction is drawn by some modern scholars between immanent transcendence (Shàngdì/*Tiān*) and external transcendence (Christian God), allowing for the recognition of the monotheistic strain of thought that is clearly manifest in Chinese antiquity while at the same time drawing a distinction between Western *monotheism* and its (much earlier and prehistoric) counterpart to the Far East. For more on *theology* in the Confucian tradition see the chapter *Confucian Theology*:

tradition however, much like the early Hellenic philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, is upon the importance of behavior, *ethics*, custom, and ritual as it related to the leading of a happy and balanced life as well as how to create a harmonious and just society.

Three Models in Religion Compass by Yong Huang. Blackwell Publishing 2007 pgs. 455-478 and Chapter 13 from the *Dao Companion to the Analects* entitled "Religious Thought and Practice in the Analects" by Erin M. Cline. Springer Netherlands 2014.

The *Metaphysics* of the *I Ching*: The Alignment of Heaven, Man and Earth

While the translational difficulties from Traditional Chinese into English are fairly well documented, even with the introduction of the Pinyin Romanization system of Chinese words in the middle of the twentieth century which is now predominantly used, it's with noting that with respect to a *numerological* and *arithmological* interpretation of the *Yijing* much of these translational difficulty is bypassed given the level of abstraction that is used for comparison.²⁴³ That is to say while the words and meanings of the commentary are definitely open to interpretation and multiple translations, transliteration and meanings, given the level of abstraction of the symbols themselves and their construction or architecture, we have an opportunity to be able to understand the symbols underlying the text, at least form a metaphysical point of view, independent of any translational difficulty to at least some extent.

While we look to and reference several translations of the *Ten Wings* as the source material for this analytical work in order to double (and sometimes triple) check the underlying meaning and interpretation of various passages which we use as evidence for the views and conclusions drawn herein, it is through an attempt at analyzing the underlying metaphysics of the text which gives us an opportunity to take us beyond a simple linguistic interpretation of the text itself to come to a better understanding of the ancient Chinese worldview which it represents, which in turn underlies all of Chinese philosophy more or less.

It is for this reason that this type of interpretative view is perhaps the only place to look to compare the two seemingly distinctive philosophical traditions, namely the Far Eastern/Ancient Chinese tradition as reflected in the *Yijing* and the and Classical Greek or Hellenic philosophical tradition as reflected in perhaps its earliest form as represented by Pythagorean philosophy. For while these two philosophical traditions are commonly understood as having developed completely independently of each other, the two traditions share remarkable similarities when it comes to *metaphysics*, and more specifically with respect to *numerological* and *arithmological* structure.

When we look to the Far East however, particularly to China and the systems of thought that originated in the Luohe River and Yellow River (Huáng Hé) valleys in the Upper Paleolithic and Bronze Age - 6th through 1st millennium BCE - we see strong evidence for a similar fascination and underlying belief in the cosmological world order being based not just on the interrelationship and interaction of basic forces of nature, but also upon basic numerical structure and form, and

²⁴³ For a detailed look at the translational challenges of Chinese language in antiquity into modern English please see *Philosophy in Antiquity: The Far East* by Juan Valdez. Lambert Publishing, 2016. Chapter entitled "Classical Chinese: The Translational Challenge", pages 22-32.

somewhat less so *geometry*, as put forth by their intellectual counterparts to the West. The Chinese did however create an altogether unique and distinct philosophical system however, what we call here *metaphysics* to borrow Aristotle's terminology, to represent the world order that shares some of the basic characteristics of early Hellenic philosophy. Along with some basic similarities however, it also carried with it significant unique characteristics and underlying assumptions which have significant implications for their worldview as a whole which distinguish it from the Western intellectual tradition that persist even to this day.

It is not too far-fetched to say that the tradition surrounding the *Yijing*, or *Classic of Changes*, (怡靜), contains within it the seed of virtually all Chinese philosophical thought. It is the earliest philosophical work that we have from Chinese antiquity undoubtedly, if we may even call it a philosophical work, for it most certainly was not perceived as such by its authors in its earliest form. It is first and foremost, and continues to be even today, a "*divination*" text, one of the oldest in existence in fact, and to this extent it was designed as a way to get a glimpse of Fate as it were, a manual or guidebook devised to determine the current state of affairs and how best to manipulate them to one's one advantage. The system however, again the underlying metaphysics, rests within a very specific and distinctively Chinese theo-philosophy which is perhaps best characterized by the belief that any given situation or experience can only be understood, or is best understood, through the triadic harmonic lens of the disparate and yet fundamentally interrelated worlds of Heaven, Earth and Man.

The *Yijing* accomplishes this by establishing a set of 64 signs or symbols, i.e. hexagrams, that account for all past, present and future events and situations, as well as a means for "divining", or selecting, the current state of affairs and their context within the system of signs (*guà*) which provide a map as it were of the entire set of possible circumstances which can exist. This set of symbols in their earliest form are referred to as the *Zhou Yi*, a text which dates at least as far back as Bronze Age China (mid to late 2nd millennium BCE, from the Zhou Dynasty period from which it gets its name), which then evolves into its present day form as the *Yijing* which then include and integrate the classically Confucian commentaries known as the *Ten Wings*, or *Yizhuan* (易傳) into the text.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴It is well established that the classic *Yijing* commentaries known as the *Ten Wings* or *Yizhuan* were added in the latter part of the first Millennium BCE by "Confucian" scholars. So while it is debatable whether or not the commentaries which actually authored by Confucius himself, and most scholars doubt this to be the case, it is safe to assume that the commentaries are "Confucian" in the sense that they reflect Confucian philosophy, and somewhat less so "Daoist". Virtually all major philosophical schools in Chinese antiquity - Confucian, Daoist, Yin-Yáng school, etc. – include the *Yijing* to a greater or lesser extent as part of their textual canon as it were.

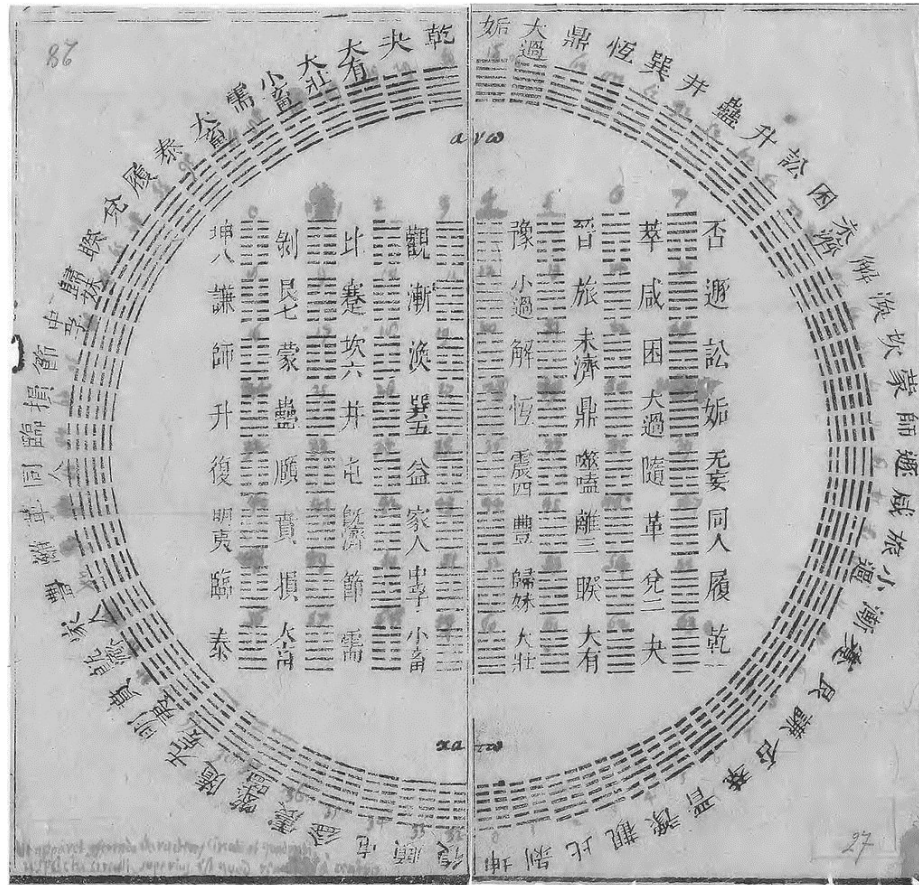


Figure 13: Leibniz Yijing diagram, 17th century²⁴⁵

While again the *Yijing* is not a philosophical work per se, it does have an implied or inferred *metaphysics*, and even *cosmogony*, that can be gleaned from the text even though it is not the primary focus of the text itself. It must be kept in mind however that a) the text clearly comes from deep antiquity and much of our understanding of its origins and creation is buried in myth and reflects a long standing oral tradition, and b) the only “direct” and earliest material that survives that describes its underlying philosophy and origins, its underlying *metaphysics*, was compiled in the latter part of the first millennium BCE, some thousand years or so at least after the primary portion of the text, the symbols and the *divination* process, was “invented”.

²⁴⁵ The diagram was sent to Leibniz from a French Jesuit priest named Joachim Bouvet. The Arabic numerals written on the diagram were added by Leibniz, showing his mapping of the ancient Chinese symbols to their binary numerical equivalents. From Wikimedia commons at Wikipedia contributors, 'Hexagram (I Ching)', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 12 July 2016, 10:14 UTC, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hexagram_\(I_Ching\)&oldid=729460755](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hexagram_(I_Ching)&oldid=729460755)> [accessed 12 July 2016].

As described in the *Ten Wings*, the *Yijing* was designed to be consulted as a *divination* tool through a complex ritual involving yarrow stalks²⁴⁶, or long reeds, through which the individual consulting the *Book of Changes* could better understand a specific question or problem which was “posed” to the text. The practice itself, which was ceremonial and ritualistic in nature, was intended to be overseen and guided by a trained priest or scholar who not only ensured that the proper rights and rituals were performed as part of the *divination* process, but also who was trained to “interpret” the symbol, or signs, that were “divined” as part of the “consultation” of the text. The sign or symbol that was ultimately constructed through the yarrow stalk *divination* process not only illustrated and illuminated the true nature of the given situation, or question, but also the context within which the situation was to be viewed within the overall universal set of circumstances which was believed to be fully “explained” by the set of 64 hexagrams.

Via the *divination* process, again historically performed with yarrow stalks but today sometimes performed in a slightly less complicated process using coins, a set of six broken (*Yīn*) and solid (*Yáng*) lines - *yáo* (or 爻) - are created which come together to denote one of the set of 64 symbols in the *Yijing*, each of which has its own specific interpretation and understanding within the text as a whole and representative again of the specific worldview and underlying theo-philosophy of the ancient Chinese which the text reflects. At the end of the process of *divination*, a sense of direction or movement (or lack thereof) is also established which is an important element in understanding the specific situation and whatever “advice” is given as a part of the interpretative process. So the notion of change, or movement – again *yì* - within the overall cosmic world order is an integral element of the interpretation of any given “consultation”, its universal context within the overall creative and destructive process of change within the realms of Heaven, Earth and Man as it were.

Each *guà* is meant to be read from the bottom to the top, where the bottom two lines reflect the state of Earth, the middle two those of Man and the top two those of Heaven. Again each line of an individual *guà* or hexagram is made up of either a broken (*Yīn*) or solid (*Yáng*) line, each of which represents one of the two primordial universal forces to the ancient Chinese - *Yīn* and *Yáng*, dark and light, female and male, passive and active, negative and positive respectively. The selected hexagram which is “divined” is interpreted to represent not only an explanation of the state of affairs as reflected by the individual and the question posed - where each line reflects the current state of affairs related to one of Heaven, Earth or Man - but also an element of

²⁴⁶ “These [yarrow stalks] are usually genuine *Achillea millefolium* stalks that have been cut and prepared for such purposes or any form of wooden rod or sticks which are plain, lacquered or varnished. When genuine *Achillea* is used, varieties local to the diviner are considered the best as they would contain *qì* [the underlying energy of which any living thing consists of] closer to and more in-tune with the diviner.” From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Ching_divination.

process or change (*yi*) to which the state of affairs is understood to be moving towards, as well as moving away from so to speak.

The *divination* process then, the final reading one might call it, includes not just the interpretation of the given symbol which “manifests” as a result of the yarrow stalk *divination* process, but also the notion of underlying change within the system of hexagrams itself which represented the entire cosmological worldview of the ancient Chinese. So the “situation” is understood to not just reflect a “snapshot” view at a given point in time, i.e. the time of the *divination* ritual, but also requires an understanding of the sense of “direction”, or “movement”, the propensity of the given situation to move towards. So the process of yarrow stalk *divination* combines the fixed underlying cosmological world order of the ancient Chinese²⁴⁷, which is reflected in the underlying order and creation of the 64 hexagrams themselves, combined with an element of “chance”, as the yarrow stalks are divided and parsed through by the practitioner who constructs the hexagram via the *divination* process – a process which in and of itself reflected the ancient theo-philosophical beliefs which were inherent in the text. That is to say, the text itself and the *divination* process are a symbolic whole, one cannot be removed from the other if one is trying to fully understand the meaning and purpose of the text.

The *Ten Wings* are believed to have been appended to the textual tradition surrounding the *Yijing* in and around the Han Dynasty period of classical Chinese antiquity (c. 206 BCE – 220 CE). However, it’s also clear that these commentaries contain material and “sayings” that reach at least as far back as the Zhou Dynasty period (c. 1046 – 256 BCE) if not much earlier. The tradition reflected in the *Ten Wings* is very much analogous to the oral tradition that sits behind the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas* for example, as they a much earlier oral tradition as well, as all traditions from all early civilizations in antiquity were first and foremost oral traditions, passed down from teacher to student over the course of generations, and then only later written down by scholars - after a) writing was invented, b) after it was deemed worthy and important to have the tradition codified or “captured” as it were by the written word, and c) typically sponsored by a particular ruling class or authority which had a vested interest in the respective tradition’s survival.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ As well as the present-day Chinese as the *Yijing* is consulted even to this day in many circles and is still actively studied and the “art” still actively practiced.

²⁴⁸ The latter fact in and of itself should always cause any later interpreters of a specific, “written” philosophical tradition a healthy dose of skepticism, for in any of the traditions that pass down to us from antiquity is very clear that much of the material, understanding or even entire schools of thought could have been systematically removed from the historical record, or simply by being ignored or deemed unimportant by keepers of the tradition. There is evidence of the former in the case of the ancient Chinese as much of the works of Chinese antiquity are supposed to have been lost in the great Burning of the Books in ancient China by the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty in 213 BCE. We also see for example in the Hellenic philosophical tradition reference to the *unwritten teachings* of Plato by Aristotle.

It's also worth noting that the existence and use of the *Yijing* as a *divination* manual in Chinese antiquity also ran parallel with the belief and worship of the a monotheistic God of sorts called Shàngdì, an element of ancient Chinese civilization that underlies the text and commentary, and also is reflected in the so-called "Mandate of Heaven" (*tiānmìng*, or 天命 which means "decree from heaven"), which the rulers of the Zhou Dynasty (c 1046 – 256 BCE) and later dynastic rulers looked to as justification for their authority over the people. So in other words Heaven in Chinese antiquity was not only used for *divination* purposes, as manifesting signs that could be read and understood through the *Yijing*, but also as a fundamental part of the underling theological belief system of the ancient Chinese.

Most modern scholars hold that given their similar content and "language", much of the material from the *Shuogua* and the *Dazhuan*, two of the most influential and philosophical of the commentaries on the *Yijing* that constitute distinct chapters of the *Ten Wings*, spring from not only a common oral traditional source, but that this source reaches back at least into Bronze Age China where we find the earliest evidence of the core of the *Yijing* in its earliest form. This implies of course that much of the tradition surrounding the hexagrams, and certainly much of the *cosmological* and *metaphysical* meanings underpinning the trigram (*bāguà*) upon which the entire text is based, have not been captured by the "received" tradition surrounding the text and its interpretation. Having said that, if looked at closely, and looked at in conjunction with the *Hetu* and *Luoshu* diagrams, some of this knowledge can be recovered.

Given the inherent difficulties in English translation/transliteration of the commentary and text compiled in the *Shuogua*, three different translations have been consulted to ensure that the interpretations and conclusions arrived at in this section stand on the most solid rational ground. The first and foremost is the latest translation by Richard Rutt initially published in 1996 which makes us of the important discoveries of the Mawangdui Silk Texts in the 1970s which contribute greatly to the textual and philosophical tradition surrounding the *Zhou Yi / Yijing* and its related commentaries. The second is the classic translation of the *Yijing* by Wilhelm and Baynes published in the middle of the twentieth century which although does not include the findings at Mawangdui, nonetheless includes very valuable commentaries on the *Ten Wings* themselves which elucidate the sometimes esoteric and hidden meanings within the verses. The third, which is primarily used an arbiter of sorts when the first two translations differ is the classic translation of the *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes* by James Legge which although published at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, nonetheless has been electronically and digitally published and has the added advantage of sitting alongside the Traditional Chinese characters, allowing for the direct analysis of the source language along with English transliterations which vary greatly.

In the *Dazhuan*, or “Great Commentary”, the invention of the *Yijing* is attributed to the pseudo-mythical/historical figure Fu Xi, a Chinese Prometheus of sorts who is also credited with the invention of fishing, hunting, cooking along with the invention of the initial eight trigrams, i.e. the *bāguà*, which provide the foundation of the 64 hexagrams which constitute the core part of the *Yijing*. It is said that he designed the system, or perhaps better put the system was *revealed* to him, based upon his observations of the natural world and the system and process of evolution and change reflected therein.

In high antiquity, when Fuxi ruled the world, he looked up and observed the figures in heaven, looked down and saw the model forms under heaven. He noted the appearances of birds and beasts and how they were adapted to their habitats, examined things in his own person near at hand, and things in general at a distance. Hence he devised the eight trigrams [bāguà] with power to communicate with spirits and classify the natures of myriad beings [wànwù].²⁴⁹

This is an interesting verse as it reflects, at least on a superficial basis, not only an understanding of some type of “natural selection” of sorts that underpins the animated world – the world of animals, birds, man, etc. – but also a hint that the world of man is a reflection of, or is created from, the model of Heaven, the *bāguà* ultimately being the instrument he devised to communicate with, or perhaps better put “align”, the natural world (Earth) with Man and Heaven to which life of forms of life, the so called *myriad of beings* or *ten thousand things* as it is sometimes translated - *wànwù* - were believed to be ultimately connected to.

From the opening passage of the *Dazhuan* (“Great Commentary” or “Great Treatise”), we find an alternative description of the core purpose and meaning of the *Yijing* presented, another view or perspective as it were.

Heaven is high, the earth is low; thus the Creative [Qíán] and the Receptive [Kūn] are determined. In correspondence with this difference between low and high, inferior and superior places are established. Movement and rest have their definitive laws; according to these, firm and yielding lines are differentiated. Events follow definitive trends, each according to its nature. Things are distinguished from one another in definitive classes. In this way good fortune and misfortune come

²⁴⁹ *The Book of Changes (Zhouyi)*. Translation and commentary by Richard Rutt. Routledge Publishing, 1996. From the *Ten Wings* section, *Great Commentary (Dazhuan)*, the Wing 6, *Dazhuan II*. Chapter II verse 1 pg. 421. A hint of Platonism can be found in this passage no doubt, as well as in the opening verses of the *Great Commentary* quoted above – for both verses speak to the model of the Earthly world being “modelled” or “informed” by the realm of heaven, reminiscent no doubt to Plato’s *theory of forms* where the material world can only be understood via the every existent and underlying “Form” through which true knowledge can be obtained.

*about. In the heavens phenomena take form; on earth shapes take form. In this way change and transformation become manifest.*²⁵⁰

We see here another description as to not only how the *Yijing* came to be structured, with Heaven on high or above, and Earth on low, or grounded, from which “inferior” and “superior” positions, or states of being (“definitive classes”), are established. This is used to explain again how it is that good fortune and/or misfortune comes about, reflecting the underlying process of change and transformation which manifests from the shape or design that is established in the heavens from which our materials, and spiritual, existence takes shape.

The next passage of the *Great Commentary* goes on to describe not just how it is that the eight trigrams, *bāguà*, upon which all of the hexagrams are formed, but also what each of them represents, marking the introduction of the idea of “arrangement” or “sequencing” of the *bāguà* which provides the metaphysical underpinnings of the entire text.

*Therefore the eight trigrams [bāguà] succeed one another by turns, as the firm and the yielding displace each other. Things are aroused by thunder and lightning; they are fertilized by wind and rain. Sun and moon follow their courses and its now hot, now cold.*²⁵¹

Here we see specific allusion to the structure of the underlying hexagram unit, as solid and broken lines, translated here as the “firm” (solid stroke) and the “yielding” (broken line stroke). We also see reference here to the underlying natural principles upon which the eight trigrams from which the 64 hexagrams are themselves constructed, are formulated. They are called out here in pairs; “thunder and lightning”, “wind and rain”, “sun and moon”, and “hot and cold”, not necessarily having a direct mapping to the classical *bāguà* symbols that we see in the Earlier Heaven or Later Heaven arrangements, but still nonetheless calling out, with the initial Heaven above and Earth below as laid out in the first verse, the process by which change and transformation occurs – via “thunder and lightning” which is fertilized by “wind and rain”, principles which are ultimately governed by the progression and movement of the sun and moon from the Heavens which ultimately determine the progression of seasons, here described as “hot and cold”.

²⁵⁰ *The I Ching: Or Book of Changes*. Translated from the Chinese into German by Richard Wilhelm and then to the English by Cary F. Baynes with a foreword by Carl Jung. Princeton University Press. Third Edition 1967. *Ta Chuan (Dazhuan) / The Great Treatise (Great Commentary)* Chapter I verse 1; pg. 280-281.

²⁵¹ *The I Ching: Or Book of Changes*. Translated from the Chinese into German by Richard Wilhelm and then to the English by Cary F. Baynes with a foreword by Carl Jung. Princeton University Press. Third Edition 1967. *Ta Chuan (Dazhuan) / The Great Treatise (Great Commentary)* Chapter I verses 1-3; pages 280-284.

From the first Book of the *Dazhuan* we also find the following, distinctively Confucian, description as to how the hexagrams are constructed:

Thus: Yi holds the Ultimate Limit[Tàijí]²⁵², whence spring the Two Primal Forces, Yáng and Yīn. The Two Forces generate four diagrams and the four diagrams generate eight trigrams [bāguà]. The eight trigrams define good and ill fortune; good and ill fortune determine the Great Task.²⁵³

Here we not only see a reference to the significance of the *bāguà* as the ultimate source of the 64 hexagrams and their construction, but also a description of the source and method as it were, by which the *bāguà* are created. *Yīn* and *Yáng*, the two primal forces, are unfolded from the ultimate source of all creation, or *Tàijí*, which are combined to form the “four diagrams” – *Greater Yáng* and *Lesser Yáng* (*Tai-Yáng* and *Shao-Yáng*) and *Lesser Yīn* and *Greater Yīn* (*Shao-yīn* and *Tai-yīn*) - which then are combined with *Yáng* and *Yīn* again to form the eight primary trigrams. The construction process is illustrated below.

²⁵² From Rutt’s comment on the translation of this word: “The Ultimate Limit. This is *Taiji*, the combination of primal *Yīn* and *Yáng*, later symbolized as a circle with two commas. The two commas are variously explained as one red for *Yáng* and one blue or black for *Yīn*, or one azure blue for *Yáng* and one orange-red for *Yīn*.” From Notes to the *Dazhuan*, page 432, note n. This is the elemental structure, and name/symbol, of the classic Daoist symbol *Yīn-Yáng* herein described in its original derivative form in antiquity.

²⁵³ *The Book of Changes (Zhouyi)*. Translation and commentary by Richard Rutt. Routledge Publishing, 1996. From the *Ten Wings* section, the *Dazhuan* or *Great Commentary*. *Dazhuan I*, Wing 5. Chapter IX verse 5 pg. 418.



Figure 14: Formation of the Bāguà²⁵⁴

In brief then, throughout the *Shuogua* and the *Dazhuan* we find reference to how the ancient Chinese believed the trigrams and in turn the hexagrams were created via the observation of nature and the cosmological worldview delineated by Heaven, Earth and Man, each of which has its own reflection or manifestation within a given trigram or a given hexagram. We also see the relevance and importance of *numerology* to the ancient Chinese, at least to the interpreters of the document in the second half of the first millennium BCE which is when the *Ten Wings* is believed to have been compiled and added to the *Zhou Yi* to make up the *Yijing* as we know it today. We also see a reference to the *One (Tàijí)* from which the Two (*Yīn* and *Yáng*) emerges from, as well as the notion of the *Dao* used throughout the commentaries which provide the theological basis as it were for the connection between the trigrams and hexagrams and the world which they are meant to represent, i.e. Heaven, Earth and Man. Also underpinning the work of course is the basic *Yīn-Yáng* philosophy, the fundamental *dualism* which permeates all of Chinese philosophy.

The *Yijing* is a *divination* manual, a tool to question Fate, and to understand the underlying process of movement, or change (*yi*), that is at the core of the ancient Chinese classic of the *Book of Changes* we must have some understanding of the basic principles at work which govern the worldview within which the text was formulated, the foundations of its construction as it were.

²⁵⁴ Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagua>.

It is with this understanding that we can begin to comprehend, if at all, the underlying *cosmogony*, *metaphysics* and *theology* which underlies all of Chinese philosophy.

The oldest commentaries related to the construction and metaphysics of the *Book of Changes* are believed to be the *Great Commentary*, or *Dazhuan*, which describes in some detail the history and construction of the *bāguà*, the eight primary trigrams which form the basis of the 64 hexagrams which constitute the *Yijing*.²⁵⁵ While this commentary does provide us with some clues surrounding the underlying order of the *bāguà* which speak to the underlying *theological* and *philosophical* views of the designers of the ancient text, it is from the *Shuogua*, or literally “explanation of the signs” that does allude somewhat more directly to, in albeit somewhat esoteric and cryptic language, several underlying orders and symmetries inherent in the *bāguà* which form the metaphysical and theological underpinnings of the text.

These underlying orders of the *bāguà*, literally “eight signs” or “eight symbols”, are typically referred to as “Sequences”, the most common of which are the “Earlier Heaven” which is attributed to the mythical figure Fu Xi, and the “Later Heaven” which is attributed to King Wen). However, “Sequence” implies a linear process and embeds a very prototypical Western outlook upon a fundamentally foreign belief system therefore is somewhat misleading. The distinctively Chinese principle of change, or *yi* (易), not only underlies the entire philosophical system embedded in the *Yijing*, but also underlies the “Sequences”, or what could more aptly be referred to as “Arrangements”, of the eight primary trigrams, each of which represent powers, elements, or even deities in the ancient Chinese worldview.

Any of these proposed arrangements however rest more on the idea of “transformation” of one symbol or state to another rather than a serialized process of movement between symbols within a geometric shape or planer space - in this case a circle made up of eight points, i.e. octagon which is how these “arrangements”, or “sequences”, are typically visualized. In other words, any representation of the eight primary forces of nature as represented by the eight primary trigrams from a Chinese perspective is a process which is better characterized by “derivation” and “transformation”, a process ultimately based upon the principle of *yi*, or “change”, rather than a process, or cycle, of changes which is typically how a westerner would characterize the system and would thereby interpret and understand the notion of “change” itself which is of course the core theme of the work – hence the title *Book of Changes*.

²⁵⁵ The *Dazhuan* is also referred to as the “*Great Commentary*” or “*Great Treatise*”, or *Xici zhuan* in Pinyin and is classically categorized as the 5th and 6th of the “*Ten Wings*”. A great deal of what we know of the manuscript tradition surrounding the *Dazhuan* comes from the silk manuscripts found at Mawangdui in 1973, i.e. the Mawangdui Silk Texts, texts that are dated from around the 2nd century BCE.

In the Earlier and Later Heaven Arrangements, each of the eight primary elements are formed from the combination of three broken or solid lines together (*Yīn* and *Yáng* respectively), each with its own symbolic, and (implied) numerical and ordered meaning. The sequence is then arranged in a circular, octagonal form – of which again there are primarily two: the “Earlier Heaven Arrangement” also known as the Fu Xi Sequence and the “Later Heaven Arrangement” also known as the King Wen Sequence.

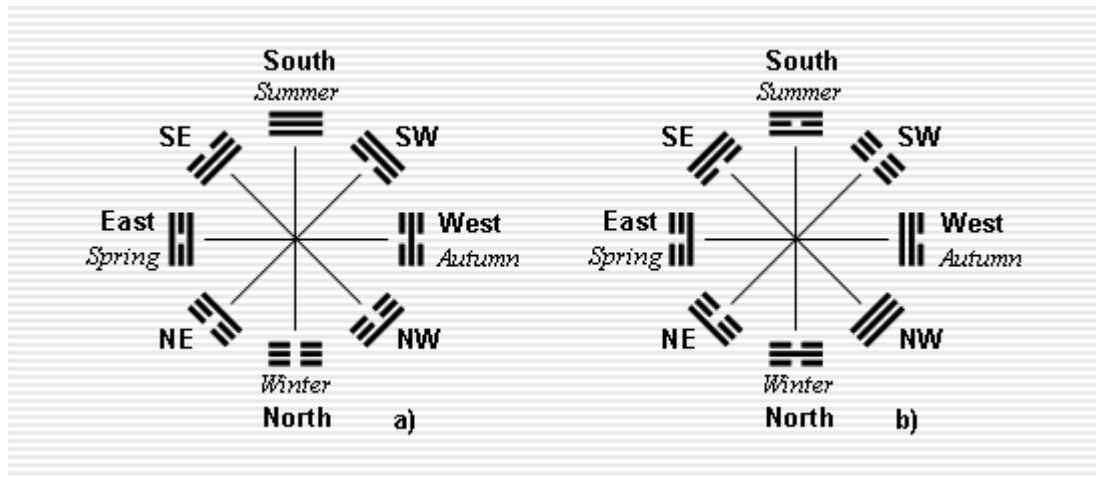


Figure 15: Earlier Heaven or Primal (a), and Later Heaven, or Inner World (b), trigram arrangements²⁵⁶

These specific arrangements lay out distinctive representations of how each of the basic eight principles of Chinese metaphysical and philosophical thought come together and interact in a cyclical process of change. As can be seen in the diagram above, a specific trigram, i.e. one of the *bāguà*, is represented as three lines (*yáo*), one each of either a broken (*Yīn*) or solid (*Yáng*) line (*yáo*), constructed one on top of the other, which is read from the bottom to the top.

Within each arrangement, or again sequence, each trigram represents one of the eight basic primordial forces of nature so to speak – i.e. *Qián* (Heaven), *Dùi* (Still Water/Lake), *Lí* (Fire), *Zhèn* (Thunder), *Xùn* (Wind), *Kǎn* (Water/Rain), *Gèn* (Mountain), and *Kūn* (Earth). For clarity, each of the symbols are illustrated below, along with their typical English translations and underlying basic primordial meanings, along with their Traditional Chinese symbols. Note the inverted pairs of trigrams for Heaven/Earth, Thunder/Wind, Mountain/Lake, and Water/Fire respectively.

²⁵⁶ From <http://www.i-ching.hu/chp00/chp1/introduction.htm>

乾 Qián	兌 Duì	離 Lí	震 Zhèn	巽 Xùn	坎 Kǎn	艮 Gèn	坤 Kūn
Heaven/Sky	Still Water/Lake	Fire	Thunder	Wind	(Moving) Water	Mountain	Earth
天 Tiān	澤(泽) Zé	火 Huǒ	雷 Léi	風(风) Fēng	水 Shuǐ	山 Shān	地 Dì
☰	☱	☲	☳	☴	☵	☶	☷
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Figure 16: 八卦 Bāguà — The eight trigrams in the Earlier Heaven established sequence²⁵⁷

It would be a mistake however to look at one of the classic arrangements independent of the other and as fully representative of a specific interpretative tradition surrounding *Yijing* formation and construction. As Wilhelm/Baynes points out, each of respective bāguà arrangements, i.e. the Later Heaven and Earlier Heaven “Sequences” (what he refers to somewhat more appropriately and meaningfully as the *Primal* and *Inner World* Arrangements respectively) should not to be viewed independent of each other necessarily, but more as complementary to each other as descriptive metaphysical aspects of the ancient Chinese worldview which underpins the *Yijing* and provides the theo-philosophical basis for its practical use as an oracular or *divination* tool.

To understand fully, one must always visualize the Inner-World Arrangement [Later Heaven Sequence] as transparent, with the Primal Arrangement [Earlier Heaven Sequence] shining through it. Thus when we come to the trigram Li [or Fire], which rests at the top/Southernmost point in the Later Heaven Sequence], we come at the same time upon the ruler Ch’i’ien [Qián], or Heaven, the symbol that rests at the top/Southern point of the Earlier Heaven Sequence], who governs with his face turned to the South.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Adapted from: Wikipedia contributors. "Bagua." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 29 Jul. 2016. Web. 10 Aug. 2016. Note that this sequence, read left to right is the classical “Earlier Heaven Sequence”, which is logically constructed from *Greater Yáng* + *Yáng* to *Lesser Yīn* + *Yīn*, from left to right.

²⁵⁸ *The I Ching: Or Book of Changes*. Translated from the Chinese into German by Richard Wilhelm and then to the English by Cary F. Baynes with a foreword by Carl Jung. Princeton University Press. Third Edition 1967. *Shuo Kua (Shuogua)* Chapter II verse 5 commentary; pg. 271

It is again from the *Shuogua* that we primarily have the reference to the trigram arrangements and their theo-philosophical significance for the *Yijing divination* tradition, the first of which is reference to the Earlier Heaven sequence which is attributed to Fu Xi, one which can be thought of as a fundamentally *dualistic* system, or one which has at its philosophical basis the notion of inverted pairs of metaphysical principles.

Heaven [Qián] and earth [Kūn] determine direction. The forces of mountain [Gèn] and lake [Dui] are united. Thunder [Zhèn] and wind [Xùn] arouse each other. Water [Kǎn] and fire [Li] do not combat each other. Thus are the eight trigrams [bāguà] intermingled [combined with each other].²⁵⁹

In the passage above from the *Shuogua*, each of the eight trigrams is matched with a counterpart symbol which “balances” or “comingles” with the its opposing force, the sum total of all matching or coupled forces representing the sum total of forces in an abstract sense which create and preserve realms of Heaven, Earth and Man, each of which is represented by one of the lines, again *yáo*, in each of the trigrams.

The eight trigrams here are presented in a “directional” based view, classically interpreted as Heaven [Qián] in the South (at the top of the diagram, Heaven being “above”) and Earth [Kūn] in the North (at the bottom of the diagram as the Earth is “below”). Heaven and Earth establish the basic “axis” upon and within which the set of eight primordial forces operate. The trigrams of Mountain [Gèn] and Lake [Dui], Thunder [Zhèn] and Wind [Xùn], and Water [Kǎn] and Fire [Li] are all related to each other as well and are understood as interactive and/or balancing forces which underlie the cosmological world order of Heaven, Earth, and Man.

In this passage we find the description of the eight primordial natural and universal principles “combining” or “intermingling” to establish the world order, a world order that includes and encompasses the realms of Heaven, Earth and Man, the great Triad within which the universe is understood by the ancient Chinese. In this group of pairings, one should recognize that set of symbols is the “inverse” of the other - so Mountain (Gèn) inverted in trigram form is Lake (Dui), Thunder (Zhèn) inverted becomes Wind (Xùn), Water (Kǎn) inverted becomes Fire (Li) and of course Earth (Kūn) inverted is Heaven (Qián). In other words, an important aspect of this arrangement is that each of the counterpart symbols, is the exact inverse of the trigram symbol

²⁵⁹ *The I Ching: Or Book of Changes*. Translated from the Chinese into German by Richard Wilhelm and then to the English by Cary F. Baynes with a foreword by Carl Jung. Princeton University Press. Third Edition 1967. *Shuo Kua (Shuogua)* Chapter II verse 1; pg. 265, with Rutt’s translation (*Zhou Yi, Book of Changes*, translated by Richard Rutt. “Shuogua” Chapter 1 verse 3 pg. 446) of the last sentence added for clarity, and to illustrate the variance between translations of the text.

of its partner, establishing the harmonious or balancing aspect of the pairs of trigram symbols with each of its partners.

In the fairly cryptic and easily misunderstood passage that follows in the *Shuogua*, the explanation of movement, or process, embedded within four sets of interrelated/comingled trigrams, along with its significance in understanding the rational basis for both the events of the past as well as the process by which seeds of future events unfold, is explained and further illustrated, effectively providing the rational basis for the *Yijing* text.

Heaven [Qián] and earth [Kūn] determine direction. The forces of mountain [Gèn] and lake [Dui] are united. Thunder [Zhèn] and wind [Xùn] arouse each other. Water [Kǎn] and Fire [Lí] do not combat each other. Thus are the eight trigrams intermingled. Counting that which is going into the past depends on the forward movement. Knowing that which is to come depends upon the backward movement. This is why the Book of Changes has backward moving numbers [Thus Yi reckons time in its coming and going].²⁶⁰

Here, the idea of movement between and among the four pairings of trigrams is explicitly referred to, quite paradoxically in fact, as the past depending upon “forward movement” and the future depending upon “backward movement”, hence the ability of the system of symbols to be able to divine the future as it were. The next verse describes the same set of pairings of basic trigram principles but in a different order, presumably indicating the “backward movement” which provides insight into future events, allowing the text to reveal “Fate” as it were.

Thunder [Zhèn] brings about movement, wind [Xùn] brings about dispersion, rain [Kǎn] brings about moisture, the sun [Lí] brings about warmth, Keeping Still [Gèn] brings about standstill, the Joyous [Dui] brings about pleasure, the Creative [Qián] brings about rulership, the Receptive [Kūn] brings about shelter.²⁶¹

This verse lays out the same combination and “intermingling” of forces and their respective cosmic symbolism in a different order and with different language which carries with it a subtle and nuanced perspective while still calling out the same underlying structure so to speak. It starts

²⁶⁰ *The I Ching: Or Book of Changes*. Translated from the Chinese into German by Richard Wilhelm and then to the English by Cary F. Baynes with a foreword by Carl Jung. Princeton University Press. Third Edition 1967. *Shuo Kua (Shuogua)* Chapter II verse 3; pgs. 265-267.

²⁶¹ *The I Ching: Or Book of Changes*. Translated from the Chinese into German by Richard Wilhelm and then to the English by Cary F. Baynes with a foreword by Carl Jung. Princeton University Press. Third Edition 1967. *Shuo Kua (Shuogua)* Chapter II verse 4; pgs. 265-267.

with Thunder [*Zhèn*] and then to Wind [*Xùn*], then onto Rain [*Xan*] and then Fire [*Li*]. Followed then by Mountain [*Gèn*] and Lake [*Duì*], and then finally ending with Heaven [*Qián*] and Earth [*Kūn*].

Wilhelm/Baynes notes in this passage that the first four principles of the *bāguà* – *Zhèn*, *Xùn*, *Kǎn* and *Li* – are referred to with their specific “images”, or primary symbols, while the last four *bāguà* are referred to by their “names” or primary attributes – Keeping Still [Mountain/*Gèn*], Joyous [Lake/*Duì*], the Creative [Heaven/*Qián*] and Receptive [Earth/*Kūn*]. His explanation as to why this is so is worth quoting:

*Here again the forces for which the eight primary trigrams stand are presented in terms of their effects in nature. The first four are referred to by their images, the last four by their names, because only the first four indicate in their images natural forces at work throughout time, while the last four point to the conditions that come about in the course of the year.*²⁶²

It is believed that it is from these passages that later interpreters of the *Yijing* formulate the Earlier (Fu Xi) Arrangement or conversely that the Earlier Heaven arrangement formation is most notably explained. The Earlier Heaven, or literally “Before-the-World”, arrangement²⁶³ is not explicitly laid out directly in any of the *Ten Wings* in fact, but it is inferred based upon knowledge of the pairings and the directional, global, design implied in the arrangement itself as explained in the passages above from the *Shuogua*.

The Fu Xi Sequence or “Arrangement” then has at the top, the Southern point of the compass, the guiding force of Heaven (*Qián*) and this marks the beginning of a cycle of creative force. The cycle of the creation of what the ancient Chinese referred to as the “myriad of things”, i.e. *wànwù*²⁶⁴, begins, if it must be said to have a beginning, and then movement stirs. Earth (or *Kūn*), is the opposing symbol to Heaven that sits at the bottom of the Earlier Heaven sequence, representing directional North. *Kūn* is represented by three broken (*Yīn*) lines and represented the utmost receptive or passive principle of the universe – the symbol for *Yīn* being a broken line and the word itself deriving from the word meaning “shady side of the mountain”, later coming to

²⁶² *The I Ching: Or Book of Changes*. Translated from the Chinese into German by Richard Wilhelm and then to the English by Cary F. Baynes with a foreword by Carl Jung. Princeton University Press. Third Edition 1967. *Shuo Kua* (*Shuogua*) Chapter II verses 4 explanation; pg. 267. It is worth pointing out that some scholars, Richard Rutt included, the author of *Zhou Yi, Book of Changes* which is used as a primary source of *Yijing* interpretation and meaning in this work, as outlined in his introduction to the *Shuogua* commentary, sees no such explicit reference to the Fu Xi or Earlier Heaven arrangement implied in any of the *Shuogua* passages. See *The Book of Changes (Zhouyi)*. Translation and commentary by Richard Rutt Routledge Publishing, 1996. From the *Ten Wings* section. Wing 8, *Shuogua* Introduction, pgs. 439-445.

²⁶³ What Wilhelm/Baynes refer to perhaps more fittingly as the “Primal” arrangement

²⁶⁴ *Wànwù* or literally *ten thousand things*; “萬物” in Traditional Chinese characters.

represent the passive, female and receptive principle of the universe in ancient Chinese philosophical *dualism*. In this arrangement, the symbol for Water (*Kǎn*) was placed in the West, and opposite to Water was Fire (*Li*) in the East.

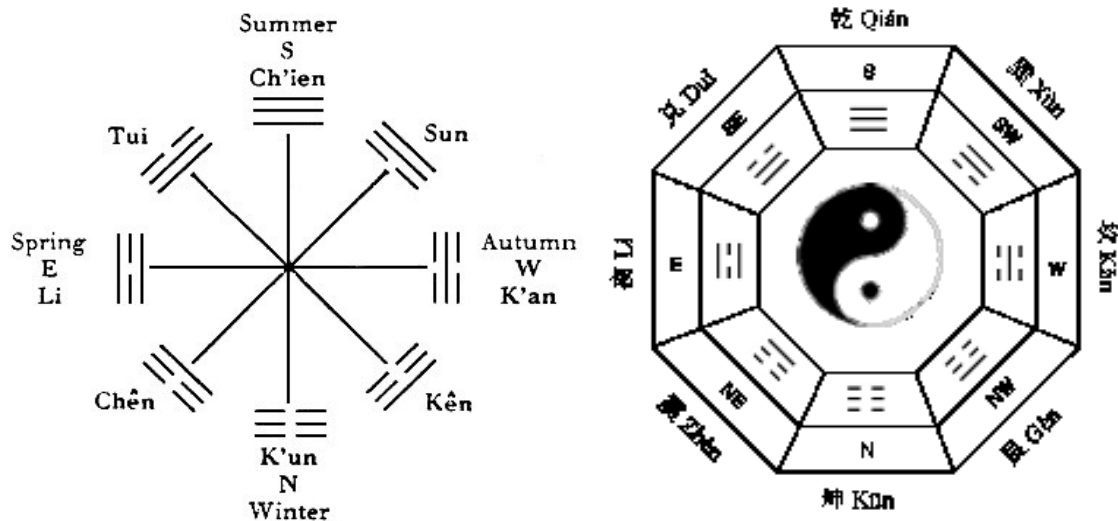


Figure 17: Earlier Heaven ("Before the World") Arrangement.²⁶⁵

Qián, *Kǎn*, *Kūn*, *Li* represent the four cardinal points in this arrangement, South, West, North and East respectively moving clockwise around the arrangement. These symbols, *bāguà*, also represent the four seasons starting with Summer at the top (Heaven), and then moving clockwise again first to Autumn, then Winter, and then finally Spring before the cycle begins again, embedding within the model not just directions but the annual seasonal cycle as well. To these were added the trigrams representing Lake (*Dui*) and Mountain (*Gèn*), Thunder (*Zhèn*) and Wind (*Xùn*), in the various positions around the sequence, again each representing the inverted trigram symbolic representation of its opposite on within the sequence.

It's important to emphasize that a key characteristic and fundamental aspect of this arrangement is that each of the *bāguà* sits across from, and thereby interacts and comingles with, it's "opposing" or "complementary" force of nature which is represented by each trigrams inversion, its counterpart as it were. It is from this arrangement in fact - the Earlier Heaven Sequence, aka the Fu Xi Sequence, that the famed and commonplace even in the West *Yīn-Yáng* and Daoist

²⁶⁵Left image from Wilhelm/Baynes pg. 266 and right image from <http://zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.com/2011/09/Yīn-Yáng-dualism-development-of-concept.html>.

symbol which illustrates the circular and cyclical interplay of the basic forces of darkness and light is handed down to us.²⁶⁶

In other words, embedded in the Earlier Heaven sequence is not only the outline and creation of the basic fundamental archetypical elements of the universe, all eight of them building off an initial binary system of broken and solid lines (2 cubed as it were), but also an ordered sequence of states of being, a process of change as it were, between all of the elemental states of being represented by the each of the individual trigrams.

The next verse of the *Shuogua* speaks to a different ordering of the *bāguà*, another way of looking at the interacting basic principles of the universe as it were, in what has come to be known as the Later Heaven Arrangement, or King Wen Sequence.

God comes forth in the sign of the Arousing [Zhèn]; he brings all things to completion in the sign of the Gentle [Xùn]; he causes creatures to perceive one another in the sign of the Clinging (light) [Lí]; he causes them to serve one another in the sign of the Receptive [Kūn]. He gives them joy in the sign of the Joyous [Dui]; he battles in the sign of the Creative [Qián]; he toils in the sign of the Abysmal [Kǎn]; he brings them to perfection in the sign of Keeping Still [Gèn].²⁶⁷

Here we have reference to a more cyclical view of the eight primary universal forces, in what Wilhelm/Baynes calls the “Inner World” relationship which in his view reflects the cyclical inner struggle of life as manifest and represented by the universal forces within our spiritual, or mental forms. This process begins with the arousing of energy which is symbolized by Thunder [Zhèn], which then completes itself, the creative process, in the sign of the Gentle [Xùn]. It is then followed by attachment, or “clinging” to that which we have created, symbolized by *Li*. These forces then “serve one another” in the sign of the Receptive [Earth or *Kūn*], and then become Joyous in the sign of the Lake [Dui]. We then battle, or struggle, with our creation and the associated clinging or attachment in the sign of the Creative [Heaven or *Qián*], after which we

²⁶⁶ This *Yin-Yáng* symbol which represents *Tàijí* (T'ai chi or 太極 in Traditional Chinese) means literally “great pole” but is often translated as “supreme ultimate”. The symbol is called the *Tàijítú*, 太極圖 in Traditional Chinese. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Taijitu', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 30 September 2016, 19:07 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Taijitu&oldid=741956767>> [accessed 30 September 2016].

²⁶⁷ *The I Ching: Or Book of Changes*. Translated from the Chinese into German by Richard Wilhelm and then to the English by Cary F. Baynes with a foreword by Carl Jung. Princeton University Press. Third Edition 1967. *Shuo Kua* (*Shuogua*) Chapter II verse 5 commentary; pg. 268

then toil, or labor to overcome, in the sign of the Abysmal [*Kǎn* or Water]. The cycle then comes to an end in a “balanced” or perfect state in the sign of the Keeping Still [*Gèn* or Mountain].

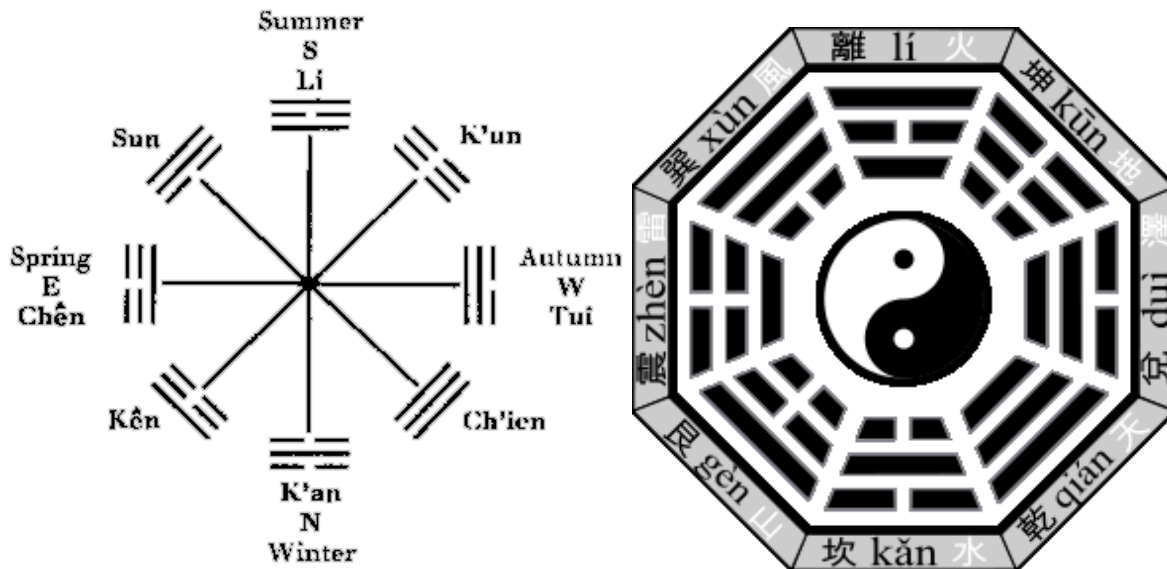


Figure 18: Later Heaven (King Wen), or “Inner World”, Arrangement of the Bāguà²⁶⁸

This arrangement is then further explained in the next passage from the *Shuogua*, with the four cardinal points as well as the movement of the four seasons explicitly called at as outer manifestations of the Inner World arrangement of *bāguà*.

All living things come forth in the sign of the Arousing [Zhèn]. The Arousing stands in the east. They come to completion in the sign of the Gentle [Xùn]. The Gentle stands in the southeast. Completion means that all creatures become pure and perfect. The Clinging [Li] is the brightness in which all creatures perceive one another. It is the trigram of the south. That the holy sages turned their faces to the south while they gave ear to the meaning of the universe means that in ruling they turned toward what is light. This they evidently took from this trigram. The Receptive [Kūn] means the earth. It takes care that all creatures are nourished. Therefore it said: “He causes them to serve one another in the sign of the Receptive.” The Joyous [Dui] is midautumn, which rejoices all creatures. Therefore it is said: “He gives them joy in the sign of the Joyous.” “He battles in the sign of the Creative.” The Creative [Qián] is the trigram of the northwest. It means that here the dark and the light arouse each other. The Abysmal [Kǎn] means water. It is the trigram of due north, the trigram of toil, to which all creatures are subject. Therefore it is said: “He toils in the sign of the Abysmal.

²⁶⁸ Image on the left from Wilhelm/Baynes pg. 269 and image on the right from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagua>

Keeping Still [Gèn] is the trigram of the northeast, where beginning and end of all creatures are completed. Therefore it is said: "He brings them to perfection in the sign of Keeping Still. ²⁶⁹

Here we see an explanation of the arrangement which describes the relationship between the inner world and the outer world, a perfect example of how the trigrams, the eight primordial forces of nature, relate to not just the world of Man, but the world of Earth as well which manifests, or is reflected, in the state of being of the individual. From the outer we have the inner and vice versa.

The cardinal points and seasons are overlaid on the arrangement here as well, reflecting the creative process which begins in the Spring, or East represented by the sign of the Arousing (*Zhèn*), culminates and blooms in our clinging to that which we have created, represented by the Summer (South/*Li*). Then the creative process culminates in the Joyous represented by Autumn (West of *Dui*), and then begins to decay in the Winter where we must labor in the Abysmal (North or *Kǎn*) and then come full circle again to the East after the cycle completes itself in the sign of Keeping Still, or perfection (*Gèn* or Mountain).

The two classical *bāguà* arrangements then, the Earlier Heaven and Later Heaven Arrangements or "Sequences", can be seen as reflecting not only the overall ancient Chinese cosmological world order in all its possible states, from beginning to end and back again, but also the sense of movement (*change* or *yi*) from one state to the next which reflects the belief of the ancient Chinese that the predominant metaphysical principle which underlies creation is not limited to the physical or material world necessarily, or even the spiritual world as represented by the individual Soul and its relationship to the natural world, but the process of constant *change* (*yi*) that permeates not just our own individual existence but the universal and material world within which we live as well and through which any complete understanding of *reality*, and Fate itself in fact, must be based.

In these complementary symbolic representation of the *cosmos*, if we can use that term to describe the system despite its inherent Western bias²⁷⁰, there is movement within and among

²⁶⁹ *ibid* pgs. 268-269

²⁷⁰ Interestingly what is missing from this cosmological worldview as reflected in the *Yijing*, if we may call it that, is any reference at all to what we in the West would classically consider *cosmogony*. *Cosmogony* in this sense being the description of the creation of the *cosmos* or how the world has come into being, a dominant metaphysical and theological principle in the West which underpinned not only philosophical thought in antiquity but also theological thought as it came to be understood and interpreted in the Judeo-Christian (and Islamic) traditions which looked to the creation mythology in the *Old Testament* as the explanation for the existence of the universe and mankind's place in it, originating of course primarily in the Greco-Roman conception of universal creation as described in its inherent creation *mythos*.

these *bāguà* and that movement has not just natural and psychic manifestations or levels of understanding, but also *numerological* as well as *geometrical* (directional) significance as well. As reflected and understood through the Earlier Heaven and Later Heaven Arrangements of the eight primordial forces of nature, the *myriad of creation* - the *ten thousand things* (*wànwù*) - are forever existent and constantly changing and fluctuating from states of balance to imbalance, from disharmony to harmony in a cosmic dance that has no beginning or end. This lack of finality this lack of boundary as it were from a *metaphysical* perspective, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Chinese philosophy when viewed from a Western perspective, a perspective that in virtually all its forms believes and perceives the universe (and the Soul really) as having a beginning and an end to it.

It is from these diagrams then that we can perhaps best understand the basic underlying principles of Chinese philosophy, ancient Chinese *metaphysics* as it were - as reflected in the *Yijing* and specifically in the underlying trigrams from which the text is believed to have been created from. These *bāguà* “arrangements”, when properly understood, not only illustrate how the ancient Chinese perceived the individual’s place within the tripartite cosmic and universal world order of Heaven, Earth and Man, but also the ethical and moral foundations of existence as seen through the lens of order, harmony and balance which constitute some of the fundamental tenets and precepts of Chinese philosophy in all its forms.

Upanishadic Philosophy: *Brahmavidyā* and the Soul

Orthodox Indian philosophy, the legacy of the Indo-Aryans, takes on a much different form than it does in the West, and in turn a much different form than it does in the Far East, despite the fact that the intellectual developments – if we can group them all collectively into the Western centric term *philosophy* which in and of itself is somewhat misleading of course – all take place at roughly the same time, from roughly the turn of the first millennium BCE to the 2nd or 3rd centuries BCE give or take. As part of this intellectual development in India in the first half of the first millennium BCE, the Upanishadic literature is compiled and included directly into the Vedic corpus.

The *Upanishads*, 108 of them in all in the orthodox tradition, despite being rooted in the ancient *mythos* of the Indo-Aryans, is an altogether different form than the older layer of Vedic literature which is more concerned with hymns to the gods, sacrificial and the like, albeit traces of these theo-philosophical beliefs can be found in the older strata of the *Vedas* themselves. The *Upanishads* however, are primarily concerned with more esoteric matters than the performance of rituals or sacrifices, and as such they form the foundation of all subsequent “orthodox” Indian philosophy.

One of the prevailing etymologies of the word *Upanishad* is that it is derived from the Sanskrit root *sad*, which means to ‘to loosen’ or ‘to attain’ (or even ‘to annihilate’), which is combined with the prefixes *upa* and *ni*, which denote ‘nearness’ or ‘sitting beside’ as well as ‘totality’. In this sense, the word Sanskrit word *Upanishad* can be thought of as referring to not only the process by means this ancient knowledge was passed down from antiquity, i.e. the sitting beside and learning from a teacher versed in the knowledge of *Brahman*, but also the wisdom of the teachings themselves which are embedded in the texts. *Upanishad* then in this context can be seen as a sort of veiled reference to the content of the Upanishadic literature itself, i.e. *Brahmavidyā*, or knowledge of *Brahman*, and *Atmavidyā*, or knowledge of Self, or *Ātman*.

One of the advantages we have when parsing through the (Primary) Upanishadic literature, some crafted in prose and some in verse, although we enter a distant realm of myth and allegory (as the *Upanishads* are rooted directly in the mythological and ancient sacrificial and ceremonial worship traditions that are so predominant in the *Vedas*), we nonetheless have the advantage of the familiarity with some of the basic Sanskrit terms that underpin Vedic philosophy that have already made it more or less into English vernacular. *Brahman* and *Ātman* for example, are for the most part terms that are familiar to the Western reader, just as Yahweh or Zeus are also familiar terms. This is due primarily to the efforts of many scholars in the late 19th and throughout the 20th century who introduced Vedānta, and its offshoot Buddhism, to the West, the most prominent of these figures are perhaps Max Müller, Swami Vivekananda and Swami

Nikhilananda, each of which made major contributions to the diffusion and familiarization of Eastern philosophy, and in particular Vedānta, to the West.

Translations of these ancient texts are still notoriously difficult however, and to come to a true understanding of the meaning behind many of the passages, it is necessary to consult several different translations as we do in the subsequent text, all the while not only trying to establish the foundational passages, or *sūtras*, that illustrate what we come to know as “Vedānta”, but also establishing parallel intellectual developments within the Hindu and Indo-Aryan theo-philosophical developments of the first millennium BCE that correspond quite closely to evolutions (revolutions really) that occurred in the area of Hellenic influence in the Mediterranean and the area of Chinese influence in the Far East.

To this end we have selected some passages from some of the most influential of the Primary *Upanishads* that not only reflect the core part of Vedic philosophical inquiry as it takes shape in the form of Vedānta in the first millennium CE, but illustrate its theo-philosophical integration and synthesis into the prevailing Vedic *mythos* which represents the heart of the Indo-Aryan theo-philosophical tradition in the first millennium BCE when most of the core *Upanishads* are believed to have been composed. This is one of the unique characteristics of Indian philosophy in fact, i.e. the unbroken lineage between the ancient *mythos* of the Indo-Aryans and their “philosophy” - as it is understood in its earliest forms through the Upanishadic literature - all embedded within the same corpus as it were, i.e. the *Vedas*.

The first passage is from the influential *Īśo Upanishad*, or *Isha Upanishad*, which is a brief set of *sūtras* or verses, 17 or 18 in all depending upon the recension of the text (there are two extant), and is found at the end of the *Samaveda*. It pertains to the nature of the Lord, or “*Isha*”²⁷¹, and so comes by its name.

1. *ALL this, whatsoever moves on earth, is to be hidden (clothed, enveloped) in the Lord [Isha].
When thou hast surrendered all this, then thou mayest enjoy; lust not after any man's possession.*
2. *Though a man may wish to live a hundred years, performing works, it will be thus with him; but not in any other way: work will thus not cling to a man.*
3. *There are the worlds of the Asuras (gods, or literally 'beings without light') covered with blind darkness. Those who have destroyed their Self (Ātman), go after death to those worlds.*

²⁷¹ *Isha* is the root as Īśvara, one of the epithets of the Lord of the Universe in Hinduism.

4. One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the gods [devas] reach not, for It progresses forever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In That the Master of Life [Mātariśvan] establishes the Waters [Āpas].

5. It stirs and it stirs not; it is far, and likewise near. It is inside of all this, and it is outside of all this.

6. And he who beholds all beings in the Self (Ātman), and the Self in all beings, he never turns away from it.

7. When to a man who understands, the Self has become all things, what sorrow, what trouble can there be to him who once beheld that unity?

8. It is He that has gone abroad – That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil. The Seer [kavi], the Thinker [manisi], the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal (eternity).

9. Into a blind darkness they enter who are devoted to Asambhuti (unmanifested Prakṛti); but into a greater darkness who on Sambhuti (manifested Prakṛti) are intent.

10. One thing, they say, is obtained from Sambhava; another, they say, from Asambhava. Thus we have heard from the wise who taught us this.

11. The man who knows Sambhuti (manifested Prakṛti) and Vinasa (destruction) simultaneously, He, by Vinasa (destruction) passing death, gains by Sambhuti (manifested Prakṛti) endless life..

12. Into a blind darkness they enter who worship only ignorance [avidyā]; but into a greater darkness they enter who worship of knowledge [vidyā].

13. One thing, they say, is obtained from knowledge [vidyā]; another, they say, from ignorance [avidyā]. Thus we have heard from the wise who taught us this.

14. He who knoweth both knowledge [vidyā] and ignorance [avidyā], overcomes death and obtains immortality.

15. The door of the Truth is covered by a golden disk. Open it, O Pūshan [Nourisher]! Remove it so that I who have been worshipping the Truth may behold it.

16. O Fosterer, O sole Seer, O Ordainer, O illumining Sun, O power of the Father of creatures, marshal thy rays, draw together thy light, the Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all, that Thee I behold. The Puruṣa there and there, He am I.

17. The Breath of things [Vāyu] is an immortal Life, but of this body ashes are the end. Om! O Will [kratu], remember, that which was done remember! O Will, remember, that which was done remember.

18. *Agni, lead us on to wealth (beatitude) by a good path, thou, O God, who knowest all things!
Keep far from us crooked evil, and we shall offer thee the fullest praise! (RV. I, 189, 1.).*²⁷²

While the language of the *Upanishads* in general are notoriously difficult to translate into modern English given the terminology and Sanskrit terms that are used, words that can only be understood in the context of the Vedic *mythos* within which it comes from and sits beside, the Upanishad still nonetheless is still representative of the emergence of “philosophical” inquiry, what can truly be known, that takes place toward the end of the Vedic period of Indo-Aryan history.

The text attempts to describe the nature of knowledge and its relationship to *Ātman*, or the Self as it is usually translated (Soul would probably be a better translation into classic Judeo-Christian nomenclature), all within the Vedic historical, ritualistic and theistic tradition to which it is ultimately a part of hence its inclusion in the *Vedas*.

Isha, or Lord, is appealed to in the first verse, from which the Upanishad again gets its name, and in this sense the Upanishad, although it is “philosophic” in nature (hence its categorization as one of the primary *Upanishads*) is nonetheless a theistic conception from start to finish, despite its appeal to knowledge of Self, i.e. the nature of Soul, as the source of immortality.

The 4th verse uses the term *Mātariśvan*, which although variously rendered into English really has no English counterpart. It can be understood in terms of a literal translation from the Sanskrit as “growing in the mother”, from the root for “mother”, or “*mātari*”, and “*śvi*”, or “to grow” or “swell”. The term is used in the *Rigvéda* an epithet for Agni, one of the prominent deities of Vedic and Purāṇic *mythos*, the fire deity who presides over the sacrificial fire (*yajña*) which is such an essential part of much of Vedic worship. In the *Atharvaveda* and later, the term is used as an epithet of Vāyu, the lord of the winds and in this context the word has the meaning of “air”, “wind”, or “breeze” which represents the divine breath, or life energy as denoted by the Indian theo-philosophical principle of *prāṇa* which plays such a prominent role in (later development of) Yogic philosophy. Vāyu is also referred to specifically in the 17th verse as well, as the embodiment of immortal life, as is Agni who is appealed to in the final verse as the embodiment of all knowledge.²⁷³

²⁷²Translation renderings from Max Müller, 1879 *The Upanishads, Part 1 (SBE01)*, “VĀGASANEYI-SAMHITĀ-UPANISHAD” at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe01/sbe01243.htm>, Swami Nikhilananda *The Upanishads*, Volume One. Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, 6th edition published in 2003. “Isa Upanishad”, pgs. 204 ff. and *Isha Upanishad*, Volume 17 The Complete Works of Śrī Aurobindo, Śrī Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 2003. Part One, pgs. 3 ff. *The texts of the White Yajurveda* by Ralph T. H. Griffith, 1899. Pgs. 305 ff. also consulted.

²⁷³ See Wikipedia contributors, ‘Mātariśvan’, *Wikipedia*, The Free Encyclopedia, 27 November 2015, 03:13 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=M%C4%81tari%C5%9Bvan&oldid=692626106>> [accessed 4 October 2016] and *Isha*

The 4th verse also makes reference to the “Waters”, or *āpas*, which in this sense is used to symbolize the material universe but nonetheless has specific connotations as one of the primordial elements of creation, akin to much of Eurasian *mythos* in fact where the beginning of the universe is characterized as a watery abyss, or chaos, from which order is established by the primordial deity or cosmic being who through *Eros*, love, or desire, creates the great *cosmic egg* (*Hiraṇyagarbha*) from which the Heaven and Earth and all of creation, and the first great pantheon of deities, emerge.²⁷⁴

Verses 9-11, which sit in direct contrast to verses 12-14, call out the delusion – again darkness – that comes from the worship of *Sambhuti*, or manifested existence, or the worship of its opposite, *Asumbhuti*, or unmanifested existence. These terms are replaced with their philosophic counterparts – knowledge (*vidyā*) and ignorance (*avidyā*, or lack of knowledge) - in verses 12-14, but the message in all 6 of these verses is essentially that by understanding the nature of existence and non-existence, the nature of knowledge and ignorance, death itself can be overcome.²⁷⁵

We also see in verses 16 and 17 reference to Pushan, the Vedic solar deity, who is appealed to as the preserver of livestock, the presider over marriage, and appealed to as the protector for journeys, seen in some references as the deity responsible for driving the sun across the sky, very much akin to the sun god Ra of Egyptian mythology in fact. This “golden disk”, which sits over or veils, Truth and knowledge is appealed to in the 5th verse as well. In Vedic *mythos*, the sun god is called *Sūrya*, and later comes to represent the “illuminated” deities who sit in contrast and opposition to *Asūryas*, or those beings which are not illuminated, and it is in this meaning that is called out specifically here, rather than the more literal deity of the Sun, who is nonetheless appealed to as Pushan.²⁷⁶

Upanishad, translation and commentary by Śrī Aurobindo. Volume 17, *The Complete Works of Śrī Aurobindo*. Published by Śrī Aurobindo Trust, 2003. Part 1, page 6 note 5.

²⁷⁴ Śrī Aurobindo also notes, “*But the Waters, otherwise called the seven streams or the seven fostering Cows, are the Vedic symbol for the seven cosmic principles and their activities, three inferior, the physical, vital and mental, four superior, the divine Truth, the divine Bliss, the divine Will and Consciousness, and the divine Being. On this conception also is founded the ancient idea of the seven worlds in each of which the seven principles are separately active by their various harmonies.*” See *Isha Upanishad*, translation and commentary by Śrī Aurobindo. Volume 17, *The Complete Works of Śrī Aurobindo*. Published by Śrī Aurobindo Trust, 2003. Part 1, page 6 note 6.

²⁷⁵ *Vidyā* is Sanskrit for “correct knowledge” or “clarity”, and comes from the same Indo-European root as the verb “to see”, which in Latin is *vidēre*.

²⁷⁶ See Hymn 1.115, CXV “*Sūrya*” of the *Rigvéda* where he is described as leading the Sun across the darkness of Night, led by a team of horses, again very reminiscent of the sun god Ra in Egyptian mythology as well as Helios in Hellenic *mythos*. See *Rigvéda*, translated by Ralph T.H. Griffith, 1896 at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/Rigvéda/rv01115.htm>. Also see Wikipedia contributors, ‘Pushan’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 1 October 2016, 08:29 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Pushan&oldid=742037923>> [accessed 3 October 2016], Wikipedia contributors, ‘Sūrya’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 3 October 2016, 07:27 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sūrya&oldid=742363016>> [accessed 4 October 2016], and *Isha Upanishad*,

Some of the language we find here in the *Īśo Upanishad*, as reflected in verses 4-6 for example, is a very classically “Eastern” philosophic technique, where the nature of *reality*, or *knowledge* in this case, is described via the use of very dense and seemingly contradictory language, via the description of what it is not for example versus what it is. Some of the same types of language, in verse, can be found in the early Daoist literature for example, or in the early Hellenic philosophic fragments attributed to Parmenides and even Heraclitus.

All of these works share the common theme of attempting to explore and describe the nature of reality - that which is, *to eon*, versus that which is not as described by Parmenides for example – in sharp and distinct verse, and all seem to share a similar attribute of describing such an abstract principle using metaphorical language, and in many cases language that that uses contrarian and opposing principles to try to convey meaning. This seems to be a wide ranging linguistic tool that is used throughout antiquity, almost always couched in harmonic verse, from which knowledge of *truth* or Ultimate Reality is conveyed to the reader, or in almost all cases from teacher to student which is how these messages were conveyed in pre-historic times, i.e. before these texts were written down in the middle of the first millennium BCE.

So despite the “philosophic” content of the Upanishad, and the reference to knowledge (*vidyā*) and its counterpart ignorance (*avidyā*), we nonetheless are confronted with a whole wealth of symbolism from Vedic *mythos* within which this *truth* can be ascertained, with the presumption of the basic immortality of the Soul (*Ātman*), knowledge of Self, being represented as not only the ultimate purpose behind the rituals and sacrifices which are outlined as the core content of the *Samaveda* corpus within which this Upanishad, but also the knowledge of which, true understanding in fact, death itself can be overcome. So Self, *Ātman*, and *knowledge* or *truth*, are held to be equivalent from an epistemological perspective here, and this is one of the all-pervading themes that tie together all of Upanishadic philosophy.

From the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, a set of 64 verses found embedded in the *Atharvaveda*, we find once again the attempt at the explanation of knowledge, *vidyā*, in this case delineating between lower and higher forms of knowledge, and the introduction of the concept of *Brahman*, which exists beyond the senses and material world and yet at the same time from which the material universe in all its names and forms emanate.²⁷⁷

translation and commentary by Srī Aurobindo. Volume 17, *The Complete Works of Srī Aurobindo*. Published by Srī Aurobindo Trust, 2003. Part 1, page 9 note 10.

²⁷⁷ *Muṇḍaka* in Sanskrit means “shaven” or “shorn”, like the trunk of a tree for example. While the etymology of the title of the work is disputed, scholars generally agree that it is so named because either a) the ‘shaven’ or true nature of Brahman is revealed

1. *Om. Brahmā, the Maker of the universe and the Preserver of the world, was the first among the devas. He told His eldest son Atharva the Knowledge of Brahman, the foundation of all knowledge.*
2. *Whatever Brahmā told Atharvan, that knowledge of Brahman Atharvan formerly told to Aṅgīr; he told it to Satyavāha Bhāradvāga, and Bhāradvāga told it in succession to Aṅgīras.*
3. *Saunaka, the great householder, approached Aṅgīras respectfully and asked: 'Sir, what is that through which, if it is known, everything else becomes known?'*
4. *He said to him: 'Two kinds of knowledge must be known, this is what all who know Brahman tell us, the higher and the lower knowledge.'*
5. *Of these two, the lower knowledge is the Rīgvēda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, Atharvaveda, Śikṣhā (phonetics), Kalpa (ceremonial), Vyākaraṇa (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Khandas (metre), Gyotisha (Astronomy); but the higher knowledge is that by which the Indestructible (Brahman) is apprehended.'*
6. *'That which cannot be perceived, which cannot be seized, which has no origin, which has no properties, which has neither ear nor eye, which has neither hands nor feet, which is eternal, diversely manifested, all-pervading, extremely subtle, and undecaying, which the intelligent cognized as the source of the Bhutas (all beings/things).'*
7. *'As the spider sends forth and draws in its thread, as plants grow on the earth, as from every man hairs spring forth on the head and the body, thus does everything arise here from the Indestructible.'*
8. *'Brahman expands by means of austerity [tapas], and from It food (material existence) is produced; from food are born Prāṇa, Mind [manas]; Truth [satya] and the worlds; and from work [karmasu] proceed the immortal results.'*
9. *'For him who knows all and understands everything, whose austerity [tapas] consists of knowledge – from Him, the Imperishable Brahman, are born Brahmā, name, form, and food (matter).'²⁷⁸*

in the Upanishad, or b) referring to the shaven head of the sannyasin, or Hindu monk, to which this particular Upanishad is supposedly geared towards, or c) both.

²⁷⁸ Translation from Max Müller, 1879 *The Upanishads, Part 2 (SBE15)*, "MUṆḌAKA-UPANISHAD" from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/sbe15016.htm> and Swami Nikhilananda *The Upanishads*, Volume One. Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, 6th edition published in 2003. "Muṇḍaka Upanishad", pgs. 261 ff. Swami Krishnananda's translation also consulted (verse 9) from http://www.swami-krishnananda.org/mundak/Muṇḍaka_Upanishad.pdf as well as S. Sitarama Sastri Muṇḍaka Upanishad translation published by V. C. Seshacharri 1905 in Madras at <http://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/Muṇḍaka-upanishad-Śaṅkara-bhashya#contents>. Also consulted Sanskrit and English translation and (Śrī Śaṅkara) commentary at Red Zambala, 2013 at <http://redzambala.com/upanishad/Muṇḍaka-upanishad-english-sanskrit.html>.

Here we find the exposition of knowledge as understood as knowledge of *Brahman*, which is conceived in the *Vedas* and in particular in the *Upanishads* as a whole as the Supreme or Ultimate Reality, the great Cosmic principle which underlies the entire universe, very much akin to Plato's *Demiurge* in fact. This *Upanishad* begins with the statement that this higher form of knowledge, *Brahmavidyā*, originates from Brahṁā himself at the beginning of the cosmic cycle, Brahṁā representing the anthropomorphic creator of the universe in Vedic *mythos*.²⁷⁹ In the *Vedas*, Brahṁā is associated with Prajāpati, literally "lord of people", who is viewed as the preserver and maintainer of human existence and the creation of life.

Brahman in this context as introduced in the first verse, and in fact throughout the Upanishadic literature, represents a significant departure from the focus on the anthropomorphic construction of the material universe embedded and narrated in mythological terms and metaphors, to a more metaphysical notion of the Cosmos denoting Ultimate Reality, Cosmic Mind, or *World Soul*, i.e. *Brahman* which of course etymologically is derived from the epithet of the great creator god of the *Vedas*, Brahṁā.

The "lower" forms of knowledge are delineated first, being represented not only as the ritual worship, sacrifices and rituals that are described in all of the four *Vedas*, but also what we would consider to be more "academic" forms of knowledge as well, described as the intellectual disciplines of the study of grammar, ceremonial worship, the etymology and meaning of words and texts (the study of language basically), meter and song (music and ceremonial worship), as well as even Astronomy. This set of "lower" knowledge is analogous to the philosophical discipline which emerges in the area of Hellenic influence to the West in fact, where the study of "philosophy" becomes synonymous with not just the study of the nature of the universe, i.e. that which is subject to change, but also – as the discipline of philosophy matures with the emergence of the Stoic and Epicurean schools for example - the study of language and rhetoric, physics and Astronomy, and mathematics as well, all grouped together as the "curriculum" as it were of the various philosophical schools as they mature in classical Greek antiquity.

But in verses 6 and 7, it is *Brahmavidyā*, knowledge of *Brahman*, that is called out as the higher form of knowledge, knowledge which is beyond the senses, is eternally manifest, is not subject to change (i.e. undecaying as it is translated here) and is the source of the material universe, i.e. everything that is subject to change. As described in the 8th verse, it is from *Brahman* that comes forth the basic material from which the universe is constructed - here translated as "food" but

²⁷⁹ In the *Purāṇas*, the more mature rendition of Hindu *mythos* that comes together after the Vedic period, a Trinity of gods emerge which are referred to as the "*Trimurti*" - or literally "three forms" in Sanskrit - of which Brahṁā represents the creative force from which the universe emanates at the beginning of a universal cycle, Viṣṇu then is represented as that aspect of God who preserves the universe during the cycle, and then Śiva is seen as the destructive (or transformative) force which brings the cycle to a close after which the cosmic cycle then begins again.

conceptually more akin to the later philosophical conception of the unmanifested material from which the universe is constructed, i.e. *Prakṛti* in Sāṃkhya philosophy – and from this basic material, these primordial elements, the cosmic breath or energy, i.e. *prāṇa*, is created which gives sentient life to the universe as well as mind, *manas*, which breathes intelligence, or order, into the universal creation, as well as Truth itself (*satya*), and all the “worlds” – the physical world as well as all of the spiritual or ethereal worlds which the deities inhabit as well.

Austerity here, the term *tapas* in Sanskrit, is called out specifically as the means by which this higher form of *knowledge*, i.e. *Brahman*, is ‘expanded’ or perhaps better put, comes to be understood. *Tapas* is a very loaded Hindu philosophical term which comes from the Sanskrit root *tap* (तप्) which means “to heat”, “to shine”, or “to burn”, alluding to the very ancient, and at the same time very common belief (common across virtually all Western Eurasian theo-philosophical systems in antiquity in fact) that the highest forms of knowledge, knowledge of the divine source of all, i.e. Ultimate Reality, come about through a process of “illumination”, or “burning” or “heating”, one which is driven by the basic material element of fire and a process by which the individual psyche (*Ātman* in the Vedic tradition) is transformed into higher states of understanding and cognition.

Hence the significance of Agni as one of the primordial deities in Vedic *mythos* and the presider over *yajña*, the core sacrificial rites which are to be performed over and using the sacred element of fire. In later philosophical conceptions, as understood through the lens of Vedānta as interpreted by Śrī Śaṅkara for example, *tapas* comes to be understood to relate directly to, and is typically translated as, “austerity” or “austerities”, representing the spiritual practices and abstentions which were associated with the monastic followers of Hinduism (and Buddhism). Here we see one of the etymological derivations of the title of the *Upanishad*, *Muṇḍaka*, which means literally “shaven”, which is believed to be a thinly veiled reference of the “shaven” head of the Hindu monk.

The *Kena Upanishad* is also part of the *Samaveda* corpus and consists of a combination of prose and poetic verse divided into four chapters, or *khandas*. The first two chapters are a dialogue between a teacher and student which starts off as the student querying the teacher as to the nature of the ultimate cause, or source of all things. The teacher then goes on to explain the nature of *Brahman*, from which all true *knowledge*, as well as material existence itself, emanates from. The last two chapters narrate the story of Brahmā appearing before Indra, Agni and Vāyu as a divine (female) spirit after they have just won their epic battle against the lesser gods (*devas*) in order to help them understand that it is through his will, or perhaps better put through the power vested in Brahmā alone, that their enemies were overcome.

The title of the Upanishad gets its name from the first word of the text, “*Kena*”, which loosely translated into English means something along the lines of “by what”, “by whom”, “whence”, “how”, or “from what cause”, reflecting not only the underlying topic of the work as an exposition of *Brahman* as the underlying cause of the material universe and all its inherent life and events, but also reflecting the skeptical epistemological thread that runs through most of Upanishadic philosophy. The work is one of the *Mukhya*, or Primary, *Upanishads* and it is also one of the most influential and most oft translated, the translation of the first two chapters, *khandas*, is presented below.²⁸⁰

1.1. The Student asks: 'At whose wish does the mind sent forth proceed on its errand? At whose command does the first breath [prāṇa] go forth? At whose wish do we utter this speech? What god (effulgent one) directs the eye, or the ear?'

1.2. The Teacher replies: 'It is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of speech, the (breath) of the prāṇa (breath), and the Eye of the eye. Knowing this, the wise, having relinquished all false identification of the Self [Ātman] with the senses, become immortal, when departed from this world.'

1.3/4. 'There goes neither the eye, nor speech, nor mind; we know It not: nor do we see how to teach one about It. Different It is from all that are known, and is beyond the unknown as well – thus we have heard from the ancient seers [rishis] who explained That to us.'

1.5. 'What cannot be expressed by speech, but by which speech is expressed, know that alone as Brahman and not this which people here worship.'

1.6. 'What none can comprehend with the mind, but by which, the sages say, the mind is comprehended, know that alone as Brahman and not this they worship here.'

1.7. 'What none can see with the eyes, but by which one can see, know that alone as Brahman and not this they worship here.'

1.8. 'What none can hear by the ears, but by which one can hear - know that alone as Brahman and not this they worship here.'

²⁸⁰ While the third chapter, or again *khanda*, is typically interpreted as an allegorical representation of the overcoming of the senses (devas) by the Soul by which knowledge of *Brahman* can be “realized” (for lack of a better term) the final *khanda* deals directly with the teaching of the nature of *Brahman* as well, although in this context the teaching is directed to the Indra, Agni and Vāyu, the great triad of deities in the *Vedas*, rather than to a mere mortal student, emphasizing the divine and imminent nature of the teachings, and of course of the nature of *Brahman* itself, as an primordial ontological metaphysical construct even when viewed from a divine perspective. That is to say, one of the points of the final chapter is to emphasize that knowledge of *Brahman*, and the results of the attainment of knowledge of *Brahman*, i.e. immortality, is the goal not just of mortal beings, but also of the so-called “immortals” as well.

I.9. 'What none can breathe by breath but by which we can breathe, know that alone as Brahman and not this they worship here.'

II.1. The Teacher says: 'Thou knowest indeed very little of Brahman's form, if thou thinkest, 'I know It well.' What thou knowest of this Brahman among the gods is also very little. Therefore the nature of Brahman is still to be ascertained by thee.'

At this, the disciple thought more deeply of Brahman within himself and realized It; then he came to the teacher and said, 'Now I think it has become known to me.'

II.2. The Student continues: 'I do not think I know It well, nor do I know that I know It not. He among us knows It truly who knows this - namely (viz.), that I know that I know It not.'

II.3. 'Brahman is truly comprehended by him who knows It is incomprehensible; he knows It not who thinks It is comprehended by him. It is unknown to those who know and known to those who do not know.'

II.4. 'Brahman becomes really known when It is realized in all states of consciousness. Through that knowledge man attains immortality. By the self man attains strength, by the Knowledge immortality.'

*II.5. 'If a man know It here, then there is truth; if he does not know this here, then there is great destruction. The wise having realized that Ātman in all beings become immortal, on departing from this world.'*²⁸¹

We see some common themes here from the last two passages, with the delineation of higher and lower forms of knowledge, even though they are not explicitly called out as such. The belief and exposition of the way of “immortality”, as attained by the attainment of the highest knowledge, knowledge of the Self (*Ātman*). But it is the knowledge of *Brahman* that is expounded upon here and perhaps has the greatest emphasis, and its relationship to comprehensibility itself. To paraphrase: “those who know It know it not, and those who do not know It in turn know it”. The language used to describe this knowledge, the skeptical epistemological bent that is reflected, are all core characteristics of Upanishadic philosophy.

We also see here the distinction drawn, again a common theme throughout much of the Upanishadic philosophy, between knowledge gained by the senses (lower form of knowledge)

²⁸¹ Translation primarily taken from Max Müller, 1879 *The Upanishads, Part 1 (SBE01)*, “KENA-UPANISHAD” from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe01/sbe01176.htm> and as well as the translation and commentary by Swami Sharvananda from his work *Kena-Upanishad*, published by the Ramakrishna Math, Madras 1920. Swami Nikhilananda's translation also consulted from *The Upanishads*, Volume One. Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, 6th edition published in 2003. “Kena Upanishad”, pgs. 2229 ff..

and that which rests behind the senses and allows them to “function”, or “perceive”, i.e. *Brahman* or the highest form of knowledge. This higher form is what yields immortality, another constant theme of the Upanishadic philosophical tradition. That the Soul (*Ātman*) not only exists, but that its true nature is not only undying and undecaying, i.e. immortal, but that it in turn is non-different from, and essentially united with, none other than the ever present imminent and all-pervading *Brahman* – the source of all and that which permeates and gives life to the entire cosmos.

The style of the language here is again worth noting. Even in the English translation the poetic verse comes through, which does not only serve utilitarian purposes as it makes the transmission of the text easier from teacher to student, but it also lends itself toward repetition and contemplation, thereby serving the ultimate purpose of bringing one closer to, and helping illuminate, the topic of Upanishad itself, namely the highest knowledge, that of *Brahman*, by means of death itself can be overcome. Also the contradictory and opposing terms and meanings are used throughout the first two *khandas*, a characteristic that is shared in much of the early theo-philosophical tradition not only in the *Upanishads*, but also in some of the early theo-philosophical texts from the Far East, in the Daoist texts in particular, and in some of the fragments we find from the Pre-Socratics as well, in the poem attributed to Parmenides for example.

Outside of the esoteric notions of *Brahman* and *Ātman* which are explored and eulogized in the more esoteric parts of Vedic scripture, there does also exist in the tradition a parallel notion of anthropomorphic deities consistent with the pantheon of gods that colored the mythology of the rest of the cultures from antiquity – the Greeks, Persians, Romans, Egyptians, etc. This concept of God, or *Īśvara*, is present in the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas* as well for example, and is common theme for post Vedic literature such as can be found in the *Purāṇas* for example. But this anthropomorphic being or metaphysical construct as it were, and the ceremonial worship and sacrifices to which it is associated, becomes a secondary principle in the Upanishads, a form of “lower” knowledge. So while not altogether rejected, as it is say in the theo-philosophical traditions of the ancient Chinese or in the classical Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, it is nonetheless granted a secondary position and is called out as an inferior form of knowledge relative to the notion of *Brahman*, one of the core metaphysical notions that is introduced and discussed at length in the Upanishadic philosophical tradition who/which is beyond the conception of the human mind and is most certainly beyond the language divined by humans to describe the world around them.

In the *Upanishads*, *Brahman* is the universal spirit that underlies all creation and *Ātman*, the Soul, is that which is universal and all pervasive in each of us individually and which is intimately

connected to Brahman and through contemplation of this unity death itself can be overcome. *Brahmavidyā* in turn is the knowledge of this ineffable and indivisible construct of *Brahman*. The concept of *Brahman* as espoused in the *Upanishads* is the belief in the ultimate unity of all things and creatures, animate and inanimate, and the belief in an indelible construct or consciousness which pervades the entire universe and which feeds and gives energy to our souls, or *Ātman*, as well as is the source of all animate and inanimate creatures, and from which the material universe, in all its forms, stems from and is supported and maintained by.

The core premise of the *Upanishads* then can be seen as the belief in not only the existence of the immortal Soul, i.e. *Ātman*, but also the indivisibility of the individual Soul and the Cosmic Soul, i.e. *Brahman*, coupled with the idea that each and every one of us, through the contemplation of the verses and meaning behind the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, what came to be known as the “end of the *Vedas*” or Vedānta, that this higher knowledge, *vidyā*, that which is permanent and non-changing and is beyond the world of sense perception which is subject to constant change, i.e. *impermanence* (which becomes an important philosophic construct in the Buddhist tradition for example), is the very source of immortality, the tree of life. And It can in turn, through *tapas* – the practice of “austerities”, contemplation and the leading of a virtuous life aligned with the teachings of the *Vedas*, in fact can be “realized” and is the very essence of the teaching of the Upanishadic philosophy in all its various forms throughout the Vedic corpus.

Buddhist Philosophy: Impermanence, Suffering and the “No-Self”

Running parallel to the maturation and evolution of Hellenic philosophy, to the East the Indo-Aryan people were going through a similar intellectual revolution from the prevalence of ritual and ceremonial worship of gods and goddesses embedded in their mythologically steeped traditions as preserved in their Hindu (Vedic) scripture, to a more speculative and metaphysical mode of inquiry into the nature of reality and existence and its relationship to change, *impermanence*, and the immortality of the Soul, or Self (*Ātman*) as it was referred to in the *Vedas*.

The aim of this inquiry, again just as it was in the West in the Hellenic philosophical tradition which was emerging at contemporaneously, was to explain not only the nature of reality, *Being*, or *existence*, but also mankind’s place in as well as expound upon the goal of life, i.e. happiness, *enlightenment*, *nirvana*, liberation, *mokṣa*, *eudaimonia* or whatever other term the specific theo-philosophical tradition chose to denote this idea. Unique to the Indo-Aryan philosophical tradition, which was also shared by Buddhism its close cousin, was that there existed a path to the ultimate liberation of the human Soul, by means of which death itself could be overcome. This belief system was not just steeped in the notion of *realization*, or absolute knowledge (*vidyā*), that which was spoken of by the great sages or seers of old, i.e. the *rishis*, but also was characterized and underpinned by a system of *metaphysics* within which the nature of the Soul could be understood, and through which the means by which the Soul could be ultimately liberated rested upon. This fundamentally intellectual development was driven not only by the analysis, commentary and interpretation of the more esoteric and philosophical aspects of the *Vedas*, or more specifically the *Upanishads*, but also by the teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama, the historical figure who is the founder of Buddhism.

Buddhism takes root in the Indian subcontinent toward the end of the 5th century BCE or so, originating in the northeast border between modern India and Nepal where Siddhārtha Gautama was born (and where he presumably taught as well) at around the same time that the first of the *Upanishads* were compiled. In modern academic literature, Buddhism is typically considered to be part of a broader philosophical movement that arose as an alternative to Vedic religion in the first half of the first millennium BCE in the Indian subcontinent called *Śramaṇa*. This movement included Jainism, as well as other *heterodox* - i.e. not adhering to the *Vedas* as authoritative scripture - theo-philosophical schools of thought.²⁸²

²⁸² *Śramaṇa* (*Samaṇa* in Pāli) is a Sanskrit word meaning “seeker”, or “one who performs acts of austerity”, or simple an “ascetic” and is used to refer to several Indian theo-philosophical intellectual developments that emerged in the first half of the first millennium BCE as distinct, and in opposition to, the more prevalent *orthodox* Vedic tradition which came to represent the basis of the Hindu faith, hence their categorization as *heterodox*. These intellectual theo-philosophical developments and schools of thought ran directly parallel, and are believed to have influenced, the philosophy of the *Upanishads*. Theo-philosophical

The rise and influence of Buddhism then must be seen within the context of a broader intellectual movement that arose on the outskirts of the ancient Indo-Aryan civilization which reflected a basic and fundamental dissatisfaction with Vedic philosophy, culture and tradition as a means to liberation. It represented almost a rebellion of sorts to the orthodox theological and religious dogma that was prevalent at the time which was encased within a very structured and elitist socio-political structure, i.e. *Varna*, which closely guarded theological study and knowledge by a specific class of society, i.e. the Brahmins, and which held that *mokṣa*, or immortality, was to be practiced only by the well trained and select few. Siddhārtha, after much trials and tribulation, and after following many different paths and teachings, concluded that the prevailing orthodox Vedic philosophical system as a means to liberation or happiness was fundamentally flawed and after his Awakening, came up with an alternative philosophy (and underlying metaphysics) which became the basis of Buddhism in all its different variants today.

The popularity and spread of Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent in the last half of the first millennium BCE, which spread all the way into the Far East and regions of Chinese cultural influence in the first few centuries of the Common Era and beyond, along with the establishment of Vedic philosophy as represented in the Upanishadic literature, is in many respects directly analogous theo-philosophical development in the Hellenic world which arose out of the prevailing mythological and theological based religious traditions from which our modern (Western) notion of *philosophy* itself was conceived. It can also be understood as analogous to the Christian revolution in the first few centuries of the Common Era as Jesus of Nazareth rejected the fundamental teachings of Judaism and proclaimed his new philosophy, i.e. the “Gospel”, for which he was ultimately crucified. The teachings of Jesus, who later became known as Christ or *Logos* personified, as interpreted and compiled by his followers who founded Christianity as we know it today, not only rejected the religion of the Hebrews (of which Jesus was of course a member), but also the so-called “pagan” religions that were prevalent in the Mediterranean at the time, proclaiming that not only was there one true God as the Hebrews had done before him, but that this God was accessible to, and was in fact indistinguishable from, the very inmost essence of all mankind.

But Christianity as well, in its formation in the after the death of Jesus and as the Church and its associated religious dogma became codified and canonized into the *Bible*, also integrated

traditions such as Jainism, Buddhism, as well as the lesser known traditions such as Ājīvika, Ajñāna and Cārvāka are all considered to be part of the *Śramaṇa* movement. Classical Indian philosophical conceptions such as *saṃsāra* and *mokṣa* are believed to have originated within these schools of thought, conceptions that were later integrated into some of the major Indian philosophical schools such as Yoga and Sāṃkhya. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Śramaṇa', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 18 September 2016, 02:20 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%C5%9Arama%E1%B9%87a&oldid=739942627>> [accessed 18 September 2016] as well as the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Buddha: Siderits, Mark, "Buddha", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/buddha/>>.

Hellenic theo-philosophy as well, this element of Christianity being specially emphasized by the early Christian Church Fathers. Just like Jesus then, Buddha rejected the religious traditions of his forefathers proposed not only an altogether different theo-philosophy, but also a fundamentally different worldview, i.e. metaphysics, as well as a completely different means and approach by which the ultimate goal of life could be reached, a goal which he defined as the cessation of suffering. Buddhism then was born out of Hinduism just as Christianity was born out of Judaism, and Buddha was a Hindu just as Jesus was a Jew.

After searching for keys to unlock the secret of human suffering in his many years of wandering after he left behind his family and kingdom, Buddha ultimately came to find that none of the teachings he encountered answered his questions satisfactorily, and therefore he rejected Vedic philosophy in all its variations and after his “Awakening”, came to understand and teach a practical handbook of sorts for all seekers of Truth and Knowledge, a much more simplified and practical philosophy, a way of life really, than was then offered by the more traditional *orthodox* Vedic philosophical schools.

The mythical narrative surrounding the birth, life and death of the Prince Siddhārtha is consistent with the narratives of most pre-historical heroic figures (Jesus, Hercules, etc.) and starts with stories of his immaculate conception into a ruling family in the foothills of the Himalayas in Northern India. It is said that upon his birth, which his mother did not survive, he was visited by a great sage who predicted that he would either be a great ruler of men or a great religious teacher and reformer (holy man). His early childhood and young adulthood was spent living the life of luxury within the confines of multiple palaces and exposed to all the pleasures that one might expect were accessible to a prince. It is said that his father, given the prophecy upon his birth of the potential for his son to be a great religious prophet and teacher, took great pains to shelter him from any outside influences that would expose him to the suffering and harsh realities of the world which in turn might lead to his renunciation of his birthright. It is said that he married and had a son and spent the first 29 years of his life in the sheltered and elaborate palace of his father where no desire of his was left unfulfilled.

In his late twenties, a story is told that one day he left the palace of his own volition to view his subjects and kingdom first hand, despite the misgivings and sheltering instincts of his father. On this journey outside the palace walls, he was exposed to his first examples of the great suffering of the world, seeing first an old man on the verge of death, then a diseased man in great suffering and pain, followed by the corpse of a dead man, and lastly by an ascetic monk who had renounced the world in the classic Vedic monastic tradition which was prevalent at the time. This experience is said to have completely transformed his view of the world and invoked feelings of tremendous and overwhelming compassion for the plight of his people, inspiring him to renounce his royal

pedigree, leave his wife and child, and begin to live the life of an itinerant wandering monk to search for truth and the meaning of life, which was from his perspective the source and possible secret to the end of suffering.

Prince Siddhārtha then spent the next several years following various forms of extreme Vedic asceticism and renunciation to try and find the true nature of existence and the path to illumination as prescribed by the teachings of the *Vedas*, with each successive path and teaching that he followed getting him no closer to the answers to the questions that he was seeking. It is then said that after practicing these extreme forms of renunciation and deprivation that led him close to the edge of death, he finally gave up these practices as fruitless and settled down under a Bodhi tree (believed to be in Bodh Gaya, India), and resolved to sit in contemplation until either the solution to the nature of suffering and its ultimate liberation was revealed to him or die in the process.



Figure 19: Great Buddha Statue, located in Bodh Gaya in Northeastern India.²⁸³

²⁸³ From Wikimedia commons, Wikipedia contributors, 'Bodh Gaya', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 8 October 2016, 17:50 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bodh_Gaya&oldid=743235279> [accessed 8 October 2016].

After supposedly sitting in deep *meditation* for some 49 days, being tempted during his practice by various demons and gods with all sorts of worldly temptations to lead him astray (think Jesus's 40 days and 40 nights in the desert having been tempted by Satan), at the age of 35 Siddhārtha Gautama achieved *enlightenment* and arose as the Buddha the name being derived from the root Sanskrit verb "to know", or *budh*, meaning "one who is awake", i.e. the Awakened One. The term *Buddha*, or *Buddha Nature*, has come to represent the eternal and ever-present nature of truth and existence which he came to embody after his *enlightenment* experience under the Bodhi tree.

Upon emerging from this deep and ultimately *transformative* experience, which was supposed marked by a great earthquake when his state of *enlightenment* was achieved and the *eternal truth* and *knowledge* of the nature of suffering and the path by which it could be overcome was revealed to him, Prince Siddhārtha *became* Buddha. Although initially reticent to teaching this new found knowledge to the rest of mankind, believing that everyone was too steeped in ignorance and worldliness to understand, comprehend and ultimately practice the eternal Truth which was revealed to him, it is said that he was convinced by one of the great Indian deities, Brahmā Sahampati, to at least try to teach for the good of mankind.

Thus began the teaching phase of his life from which the philosophical system of Buddhism as we know it today has been handed down to us. It is said that he traveled throughout India and taught his Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path, as well as instituted the practices of Buddhist monasticism, for some 45 years until his death sometime in the 5th or 4th centuries BCE. These teachings, sometimes referred to as his *Buddha Dharma*, or the Way of Buddha, represented a complete explanation and exposition of the laws of nature as they applied to the problem, and ultimate solution, of human suffering which was from his perspective the end goal of any theological or philosophical pursuit. He taught how the great cycle of birth, disease, decay and dying could be overcome by proper understanding, or knowledge of *reality*, or more precisely the shedding of ignorance of the existence of the Self and attachment to which to Buddha attributed the source of suffering.

The historical figure we know today as Buddha was raised on the northern Indian/Nepal border in the foothills of the Himalayas as a prince from an affluent ruling family, living and teaching somewhere between the end of the sixth and early part of the 4th centuries BCE but dated by most scholars to the 5th century BCE. What we know about the historical figure named Siddhārtha Gautama who later became known as the Buddha, is from a corpus of textual material

written that is handed down to us in in Pāli²⁸⁴, as well as somewhat later Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese transliterations of the Pāli texts. The *Tripitaka*, or *Pāli Canon*, which is term used for the orthodox and authoritative Buddhist texts, cover not only his teachings, but also include biographic material as well, the latter of which is interspersed with a variety of mythical accounts that established him as a pseudo-divine figure who was born to deliver his message for the good of mankind. *Tripitaka* (*Tipitaka* in Pāli), means literally “three baskets”, and while the earliest parts of the canon are believed to have been compiled or transcribed within a few centuries after Buddha died, the biographic material is believed to have been incorporated into the corpus in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE.

Siddhārtha Gautama, or the “Awakened One” as he was referred to by his followers, is one of the most prominent and influential theo-philosophical teachers from antiquity whose influence has spread over the centuries from the Indian subcontinent throughout most of Asia and now in modern times to the West. In many respects the *Pāli Canon* and teachings of the Buddha which are contained therein can be seen as analogous to the Four Gospels which contain various narratives of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and form the core part of the *New Testament* of the *Bible* which were written some decades after his death and were only later included as part of the Biblical canon.

According to most scholarly accounts, it is the *Pāli Canon* that represents the oldest authoritative Buddhist scripture. This strain of Buddhism that considers the *Pāli Canon* to be the authoritative Buddhist scripture is referred to as Theravada Buddhism²⁸⁵ as opposed to the slightly more possible and well known variant of Buddhism, at least in the West, called Mahayana Buddhism - of which the more widely known schools of Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism are representative for example - and relies on a different set of scriptures than the Theravada school referred to as the *Agamas* (“sacred work” or “scripture” in Sanskrit or Pāli), which are written in Classical Chinese and referred to as the *Chinese Buddhist Canon*, or *Dàzàngjīng* (大藏經).

Mahayana literally means “Great Vehicle” in Sanskrit and focuses more on the monastic aspects of Buddha’s teachings and emphasizes the, rules, rites and practices for those who wish to pursue *enlightenment* for the good of all sentient beings as Buddha himself did. These enlightened beings are called *bodhisattvas*, or “enlightened beings” in the Mahayana school and while the Mahayana school does not necessarily differ from the Theravada tradition (which precedes it historically) in terms of basic philosophical tenets and practices, it nonetheless developed a

²⁸⁴ Pāli is a Prakrit language native to the Indian subcontinent, believed to have originated in Northern India, and very closely related to Sanskrit, with most words existing in both languages with simple phonetic transliterations between the two. Pāli is a language in the Indo-European/Indo-Iranian language family whose main historical significance is that it is the language of one, if not the, main source of Buddhist scripture and philosophy.

²⁸⁵ The Pāli word *Theraveda* translates into the English loosely as “school of elderly monks”.

unique and relatively independent scriptural and philosophical tradition which codified and institutionalized specific doctrines, teachings and practices for the pursuit and attainment of *enlightenment*, what perhaps Buddhism in modern parlance is best known for.

Despite their differences in interpretation and practices, each adheres to the core basic teachings of Buddha as reflected in his Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, the latter of which outlines the true nature of reality and the causes of suffering and the former which outlines the intellectual and metaphysical basis for the basic precepts and practices which are to bring about the cessation of suffering and ultimately *enlightenment* and the end of the cycle of death and rebirth. While Buddhism does not lay out a philosophic doctrine per se, at least not in the classic Western sense of the term, nor does it lay out any systemic laws or beliefs as is characteristic of the Abrahamic religions, it does however lay out basic fundamental precepts about the nature of life and reality from which it establishes a path, the so called “Middle Way”, which is the means by which the bonds of attachment which ultimately lead to suffering can be broken for good, resting on the fundamental assertion that not only is *enlightenment* possible, but that there is a specific path which can be followed which will ultimately lead to *nirvana*, the term given to the cessation of suffering and the end of the Wheel of Dharma.

When analyzing the teachings of Buddhism, as reflected in the various textual sources which were compiled by his followers sometime after his death, we are left with very similar challenges and pitfalls when studying the philosophy of all of the great teachers in antiquity. While we can optimistically assume that his precise teachings and doctrines, words and phrases and terminology, were faithfully transcribed by his followers even if several generations of teacher and student transmission existed before any of the actual texts which codify his teachings were transcribed, we still nonetheless have to try and extract what he actually said and taught from the extant literature - for the texts were written in a variety of languages that a) in all likelihood do not reflect the actual language that he spoke, and b) we do know that he did not leave any written materials behind himself.

According to tradition, the transcription of the *Pāli Canon* is the result of the Third Buddhist Council that was convened at the behest of the pious Indian emperor Ashoka Maurya (304-232 BCE) who ruled much of the Indian subcontinent in the third century BCE. His intent for convening the council, much like the Christian councils that were convened in the 3rd century CE onward, was to standardize the teachings, texts and some philosophical elements of Buddha’s legacy from amongst the various factions that had sprung forth after Buddha’s death, leading to the existence of a variety of teachers and philosophic schools who disagreed on many aspects of the Buddha’s message and precepts.

As the tradition has it, the council lasted nine months and consisted of senior monastic representatives from all around the emperor’s kingdom who debated various aspects of Buddhist

doctrine, culminating in the canonization of the scripture, i.e. the establishment of the *Pāli Canon*, and formation of the foundational principles and practices of Theravada Buddhism. After the council, it is said that the emperor dispatched various monks who could recite the teachings by heart to nine different locations throughout the Near and Far East, laying the groundwork for the spread of Buddhist teachings and philosophy not just in the Indian subcontinent, but throughout the ancient world as far East to Burma and even as far West to Persia, Greece and Egypt.

The *Tripitaka* contain three major sections, (in Sanskrit) the *Sūtra Pitaka*, the *Vinaya Pitaka*, and the *Abhidharma Pitaka*. The *Sūtra Pitaka* is the oldest of the three parts of the canon and is said to have been recited by Ananda, Buddha's secretary at the First Council, a meeting of five hundred disciples of Buddha shortly after his death to compile his teachings. It is divided into five sections of sūtras which are grouped as *nikayas*, or "collections" - the *Digha Nikaya* or "Long Discourses", the *Majjhima Nikaya* or "Middle Discourses", *Samyutta Nikaya* or "Connected Discourses", the *Anguttara Nikaya* or "Numerical Discourses", and the *Khuddaka Nikaya* or "Minor Collection". Another disciple of Buddha named UPāli is said to have recited the *Vinaya* portion of the *Tripitaka* which deals mostly with rules governing monastic life, reflecting the strong undercurrent of renunciation and monasticism which was an integral part of Buddhism from its inception. The *Abhidharma* portion of the is the youngest material and reflects the Buddha's teachings regarding various deities in heaven during the final period of his *enlightenment* and deals with various philosophical and doctrinal issues which help elucidate the some of the more esoteric and obscure aspects of the scripture.

It is from the *Sūtra Pitaka* portion of the *Pāli Canon* that we ascertain the core of Buddhist doctrine as it was understood by his followers and is interpreted by the various schools and practitioners throughout the world today.

The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, the so-called Middle Way, for which Buddhism is perhaps most known for represent the very basic tenets of Buddhism in all its forms. Within this philosophical framework are included not only a unique perspective on the nature of reality itself which distinguish it from all other theo-philosophical traditions in antiquity, and in modern times, but also the basic guiding principles upon which a good and fulfilling life, and ultimately liberation and *enlightenment*, i.e. *nirvana*, or the cessation of suffering, can be achieved.

These core Buddhist tenets are primarily understood through a set of sūtras referred to as the *Dharmacakrapravartanasūtram*, or as it is sometimes translated, *The Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Dharma*. These teachings can be found in the *Sūtra Pitaka*, a section of *Pāli Canon*

which is believed to represent the earliest and most authoritative text of Buddhist philosophy. This teaching, akin to Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, is said to be delivered to five ascetic monks (*bhikkhus*) with whom he had practiced austerities with after he had renounced his royal heritage and who became his first followers.

As the story is told, upon approaching his former ascetic brethren, given that they recognized that he was no longer following their extreme ascetic ways being that he was fully clothed and well fed, his former friends were at first reluctant to receive him. However, after seeing him come closer, it was clear that he was a changed man, an enlightened and illumined being of sorts, and henceforth the monks sat and eagerly received his teachings.

Then the Realized One [Tathāgato], monks, in the first watch of the night agreed (to teach) by keeping silent, in the middle watch of the night he took delight in what was to be said, in the last watch of the night he addressed the auspicious group-of-five, (saying):

"There are these two extremes, monks, that one who has gone forth ought not to descend to, which is this: being joined and clinging to the pleasure in sense pleasures, which is low, vulgar, worldly, not very noble, not connected with the goal, not (helpful) for the spiritual life in the future, not leading to world-weariness, dispassion, cessation, deep knowledge, Complete Awakening, and Emancipation [nirvana]; and this, which is not the middle practice: devotion to self-mortification, which is painful, not connected with the goal, painful in this very life and in the future where it results in pain.

Not having approached either of these two extremes, monks, the Doctrine of the middle practice [Middle Way] is being taught by the Realized One, which is this: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right endeavor, right mindfulness, right concentration.

There are these Four Noble Truths, monks. Which four? Suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the practice leading to the cessation of suffering.

Herein, what is suffering? Birth is suffering also old age is suffering also sickness is suffering also death, being joined to what is not dear, being separated from what is dear, is suffering also not to obtain what one seeks for is suffering in brief. The five constituent parts (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment are suffering. This is said to be suffering.

Herein, what is the arising of suffering? It is that craving which leads to continuation in existence, which is connected with enjoyment and passion. This is said to be the arising of suffering.

Herein, what is the cessation of suffering? It is the complete fading away and cessation without remainder of the birth of that craving, which greatly enjoys this and that, and is connected with enjoyment and passion. This is [said to be] the cessation of suffering.

Herein, what is the practice leading to the cessation of suffering? It is the noble eightfold path [Noble Eightfold Path], which is this:

*right view [samyag-dṛṣṭiḥ],
right thought [samyak-saṃkalpaḥ],
right speech [samyag-vākrīḥ],
right action [samyak-karmāntaḥ],
right livelihood [samyag-ājīvaḥ],
right endeavor [samyag-vyāyāmaḥ],
right mindfulness [samyak-smṛtiḥ],
right concentration [samyak-samādhir-iti].²⁸⁶*

What we find here first and foremost in the initial part of his teaching is the fundamental belief that the basic problem of life, the one essential aspect of being to which all mankind is afflicted, is suffering. Furthermore, he outlines from the very start that his “revelation”, was not just that the nature of being or existence itself was essentially characterized by this notion of suffering (*duḥkha* in Sanskrit, or *dukkha* in Pāli)²⁸⁷, but that in fact he had “discovered” the source of this suffering, as well the specific practices and principles by which it could ultimately be eliminated, i.e. what he called the “cessation of suffering”, or release from the bonds of *saṃsāra* which can be viewed ontologically in contrast to *nirvana*. These principles and this path, again the so-called “Middle Way”, are referred to as the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

While The Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Noble Path represent the cornerstones of Buddha’s teachings, he also lays out a fairly sophisticated metaphysical framework upon which the intellectual foundations of his philosophy rests. Herein lies the philosophic portion of Buddhism, where he defines what he believes to be the true nature of “reality”, the fundamental characteristic of “being” and “existence” itself, which when properly understood, hold the key to the liberation from what is sometimes called the Wheel of Dharma.

At its core, Buddhist philosophy is based upon the notion that it is from a very basic and fundamental misconception and misunderstanding of the true nature of reality which is the

²⁸⁶ From *Dharmacakṛapavartanasūtram*, *The Discourse that Set the Dharma-Wheel Rolling*, edited and Translated by Anandajoti Bhikkhu, August 2009 pgs 9-10. According to the author this translation is from the Sanskrit text *Lalitavistara* (literally “An Elaboration of the Play [of the Buddha]”), one of the central texts of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism which begins with Buddha’s decision to leave Heaven, and then follows the narrative of his birth life and practices until his Awakening, culminating with this final discourse delivered to his former 5 ascetic monastics which become his first disciples and to which he delivers his sermon on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path, i.e. the *Dharmacakṛapavartanasūtra*. Note that while the text of the Sanskrit version is very close to the extant Pāli version of the Discourse, there are some variations albeit minor, speaking to the consistency of the transmission of the content of the discourse itself.

²⁸⁷ *Dukkha* is the opposite of the Pāli and Sanskrit word *sukha*, which meaning “happiness,” “comfort” or “ease”. See Wikipedia contributors, ‘Sukha’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 14 April 2016, 23:28 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sukha&oldid=715303916>> [accessed 14 April 2016].

cause, or source, of suffering in all its forms. It is fair to say then that Buddha's teaching is based upon a fully rational and logical system of cause and effect, marking a stark departure – at least from his point of view - from the faith based theo-philosophical systems which dominated the intellectual landscape in the Indian subcontinent in the middle of the first millennium BCE and placing his teachings squarely within the philosophical intellectual revolution that sprung forth throughout Eurasian antiquity at that time – parallel to the Hellenic philosophical tradition to the West and the ancient Chinese philosophical tradition to the East.

The source of suffering according to Buddha's teachings as interpreted and understood by his followers is based upon three basic "misconceptions", or falsehoods, upon which he not only establishes his "worldview", but also provide the rational foundation of his Four Noble Truths and in turn the Noble Eightfold Path, the basic practices and principles to be followed to end suffering once and for all. These misconceptions are referred to in the Buddhist tradition as the *three marks of existence*, or *tilakkhaṇa* in Pāli (*trilakṣaṇa* in Sanskrit). They are:

- 1) *Anicca* (*anitya* in Sanskrit), typically translated as "Impermanence"²⁸⁸,
- 2) *Dukkha* in Pāli, *duḥkha* in Sanskrit, which is typically translated as "suffering" but a more literal translation might be "unsatisfactoriness", and
- 3) *Anattā*, *anātman* in Sanskrit, which means literally "non-self", or more literally translated as the "lack of existence of self", or perhaps more aptly put as the "illusion" of self.²⁸⁹

It is from these three fundamental "misconceptions" from which our experience of suffering originates according to Buddha, and upon which the intellectual foundations of his Middle Path are based.

From the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, or "Minor Collection", section of the *Sūtra Pitaka* called the *Dhammapada*, or *Way of Dharma*", one of the cornerstone texts in all of Buddhist Scripture, we find the following description of these *three marks of existence* as they relate to the Noble Eightfold Path and Four Noble Truths²⁹⁰:

²⁸⁸ The Pāli word *anicca* is a compound word consisting of "a" meaning "non" or "lack of", and *nicca* meaning "constant, continuous, permanent", denoting that which is literally "not permanent" or "not lasting".

²⁸⁹ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Three marks of existence', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 6 October 2016, 10:04 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Three_marks_of_existence&oldid=742873817> [accessed 6 October 2016].

²⁹⁰ The Pāli word *Dhammapada* is a compound of two words, *dhamma*, which is equivalent to the Sanskrit word *dharma*, and *pada*. *Dhamma* is not only a key Buddhist philosophical term, but also an important word and concept in orthodox Indian philosophy as well. In the Buddhist tradition, it is sometimes used to denote Buddha's teachings as a whole, or alternatively it can mean simply "righteousness", or "way" or "path". *Pada* means "foot" in Pāli, and therefore in this context *Dhammapada* can be understood to denote the way of truth or righteousness. The word is certainly reminiscent of the elemental Chinese philosophic notion of *Dao*, which is also typically translated as "way" or "path". The *Dhammapada* consists of 423 verses and is

- 273.** *Of all the paths the Eightfold Path is the best; of all the truths the Four Noble Truths are the best; of all things passionlessness is the best: of men the Seeing One (the Buddha) is the best.*
- 274.** *This is the only path; there is none other for the purification of insight. Tread this path, and you will bewilder Mara.*
- 275.** *Walking upon this path you will make an end of suffering. Having discovered how to pull out the thorn of lust, I make known the path.*
- 276.** *You yourselves must strive; the Buddhas only point the way. Those meditative ones who tread the path are released from the bonds of Mara.*
- 277.** *"All conditioned things are impermanent" — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purification.*
- 278.** *"All conditioned things are unsatisfactory" — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purification.*
- 279.** *"All things are not-self" — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purification.*
- 280.** *The idler who does not exert himself when he should, who though young and strong is full of sloth, with a mind full of vain thoughts — such an indolent man does not find the path to wisdom.*
- 281.** *Let a man be watchful of speech, well controlled in mind, and not commit evil in bodily action. Let him purify these three courses of action, and win the path made known by the Great Sage.*
- 282.** *Wisdom springs from meditation; without meditation wisdom wanes. Having known these two paths of progress and decline, let a man so conduct himself that his wisdom may increase.²⁹¹*

The passage above come from the chapter called *Magga Vagga*, or *Maggavagga*, typically translated as “The Way” or “Path”, and while it most likely represents a compilation of sayings and teachings of Buddha that were only later organized under a single heading or chapter, it still nonetheless philosophically connects the Eightfold Noble Path, the Four Noble Truths, and the *tilakkhaṇa*, i.e. the *three marks of existence*, arguably the three most distinctive characteristics of Buddhist philosophy.

Here, *anicca* (change or *impermanence*), *dukkha* (*unsatisfactoriness*), and *anattā* (no-self) are described as points of contemplation which lead one along the “path of purification”, providing the rational basis as it were of the Four Noble Truths. That is to say, it is the confusion surrounding the notion of the existence of Self (in particular as it was understood in Vedic philosophy), the illusion of any sort of permanent existence, and the recognition that anything that is “conditioned” or *qualified* in any way can only ultimately lead to a lack of satisfaction at

classically organized into 26 separate chapters or headings, all of which contain sayings and teachings which are attributed to the Buddha himself. Many of the verses and passages in the *Dhammapada* can be found in other parts of the *Pāli Canon* as well, signifying their importance within the context of Buddhist teachings as a whole.

²⁹¹ *Dhammapadda*. Chapter XX, *Maggavagga*: “The Path”, pgs 273-289. Translated from the Pāli by Acharya Buddhakkhita, 1996. at <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.20.budd.html>.

some level, that form the backbone of ignorance from which the basic problem of human suffering originates from.

So these three elementary characteristics of *reality*, or again *being*, are presented as being necessary and critical to the “purification” process which underlies the means by which cessation of suffering can be achieved. It’s important to note that the intellectual system is entirely rational, and in this sense it not only marks a significant departure from the theo-philosophical systems that preceded it in the Indian subcontinent, but it also places Buddhism squarely within the context of *philosophy*, particularly as it was understood in classical antiquity as reflected of *Logos* over *mythos*, rather than Religion as it is most often times viewed.

These three complementary and interrelated *marks of existence* permeate Buddhist philosophy and reflect the fact that according to Buddha’s teaching, it is *ignorance*, or *lack of knowledge*, that is the source of basic predicament of man, and conversely that “knowledge”, or the *absence of ignorance*, is the source of *liberation, enlightenment* or *nirvana*. These elemental, and primarily psychic, *marks of existence* therefore constitute the intellectual basis upon which the Four Noble Truths are constructed, and through which as explained in this passage above, the bonds of Mara, the deity that personified desire and death which the Buddha directly encountered and overcame on his journey toward *enlightenment*, can be broken.

Impermanence is the cornerstone of these three principles really, as it is the common thread under which all three “illusions” or “misconceptions” can be understood. It is mankind’s lack of recognition of the true nature of *impermanence*, as it relates to existence itself, which represents the fundamental ignorance, again the lack of knowledge, which is at the very root of the of the problem of human suffering according to Buddha. It is the very core of the intellectual problem as it were, a problem which rests on the principles of reason and *causality*, and therefore represents the “thorn” which must be removed in order that this “chain of causality” which underlies the problem of suffering can be broken. *Impermanence* then, is the basic metaphysical and philosophical tenet upon which all Buddhist philosophy fundamentally rests, the contemplation and full *realization* of which – again knowledge or lack of ignorance surrounding the true nature of – becomes the essential component of the attainment of *nirvana*.

From the *Samyutta Nikaya* portion of the *Sūtra Pitaka*, we find further explanation of this notion of *impermanence, anicca*, and how it is directly associated to the principle of “non-self”, *anattā* or *anātman* .

The perceiving of impermanence, bhikkhus [monks], developed and frequently practiced, removes all sensual passion, removes all passion for material existence, removes all passion for becoming, removes all ignorance, removes and abolishes all conceit of "I am."

Just as in the autumn a farmer, plowing with a large plow, cuts through all the spreading rootlets as he plows; in the same way, bhikkhus, the perceiving of impermanence, developed and frequently practiced, removes all sensual passion... removes and abolishes all conceit of "I am." — SN 22.102²⁹²

The direct causal relationship between *impermanence* (*anicca*) and “suffering” (*dukkha*) is described as being caused by this illusion of self, this notion that “I am”, or that “I exist”, something that Buddha clearly saw as not only flawed, but totally based upon falsehoods and misconceptions surrounding the nature of reality. But in this sense Buddha’s teaching is not all that revolutionary. The idea that a misconception of the idea of self, or soul, or confusion surrounding the nature of existence was at the very heart of the philosophical revolution throughout the classical period of Eurasian antiquity. But this intellectual connection between these misconceptions, and the full acceptance of the rule of cause and effect in not just the domain of *philosophy* but also *theology*, or *metaphysics*, is surely one of the very unique and lasting contributions of Buddhist philosophy. Suffering then, is directly causally linked to *impermanence* itself, and once this is established and truly understood, it then becomes possible to eradicate it entirely.

"The body, bhikkhus [monks], is impermanent. What is impermanent, that is suffering. What is suffering, that is not-self. What is not-self [should be considered as] 'This is not mine,' 'I am not this,' 'This is not myself': in this manner it should be seen according to actuality with perfect wisdom.

"Feeling is impermanent... Perception... Mental activities... Consciousness is impermanent. What is impermanent, that is suffering. What is suffering, that is not-self. What is not-self, should be considered, 'This is not mine,' 'I am not this,' 'This is not myself': in this manner it should be seen according to actuality with perfect wisdom." — SN 22.15²⁹³

Here, *impermanence* and suffering are not only “causally” equated, but the attainment of perfect wisdom, the end goal of Buddhist philosophy from which one can liberate themselves from suffering, is described as the practice of, and full and complete recognition and understanding of, the lack of existence of this notion of “self”, i.e. *anattā*. It is this notion of “not-self” (in Sanskrit *anātman*) which in fact represents the major philosophical departure from the prevailing

²⁹² *Samyutta Nikaya*, 22.102. Translation by John D. Ireland 2006. From <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/ireland/wheel107.html#vagga-3>.

²⁹³ *Samyutta Nikaya*, 22.15. Translation by John D. Ireland 2006. From <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/ireland/wheel107.html#vagga-3>.

philosophical doctrines of the Vedic schools of philosophy which rest squarely not only on the existence of “self”, or *Ātman*, but also its indivisibility and ultimate unity with the Cosmic Self, or *Brahman*, the existence of which Buddha also denies.

So *impermanence* and confusion regarding the idea of one’s one existence, become the cornerstone elements of Buddhist philosophy, ideas which are born out of the Vedic philosophical tradition from which Buddha is exposed during his journeying and wandering days, but which represent an almost complete inversion of the system itself, a system which is based upon reason, *logic* and *causality* rather than ritual, scripture or blind faith.

The important and relevant rational and logical deduction here however with respect to the Buddhist doctrine of *impermanence* and its relationship to suffering, and in turn the existence of a path or way by which suffering can be eliminated, is that this idea of self-existence itself is fundamentally flawed, hence the importance of the notion of “not-self”, *anātman*, in the Buddhist philosophical tradition, which when fully comprehended and “realized”, can form the intellectual basis upon which suffering, *duḥkha*, itself can be completely, utterly, entirely and absolutely eliminated and bring about *nirvana*.

Buddhism as a belief system, a *philosophy* and/or way of life rather than a *theology* or a religion in the classic Western sense, does nonetheless depend upon some basic *soteriological*, i.e. salvation based²⁹⁴, assumptions which provide the underpinnings of the *soteriological* framework as it were. First, Buddhism at its core presumes that the basic problem of existence is not in fact god realization or the attainment of heaven after death or even immortality but the avoidance of suffering, i.e. *duḥkha*, and in this sense the system is aligned not only with the rest of Indian philosophy but also Indo-European philosophy in a broader sense.

Second, while it does not posit a specific system of *metaphysics* or *theological* framework, it does presume that *reality*, life or existence, while not completely rational and materialistic necessarily, in the Western philosophical sense of those terms, it does nonetheless rest on basic principles of *causality* (*karma*) and is in turn driven by a sense of “self”, be it illusory or not. To further illustrate the implications of this point, while from a Buddhist perspective the notion of Fate versus Free Will is not directly addressed, at least not by Buddha as we understand him through the extant material attributed to him, one can safely assume that Buddha presumes the existence of Free Will even if he denies the existence of the Soul (*anātman*) as inferred by the laying out of a specific path, i.e. the so-called Middle Way, in order for the goal, i.e. *nirvana*, to be reached and for suffering, a basic elementary quality of existence, to cease.

²⁹⁴ *Soteriology*, literally the “study of” “salvation”.

And lastly, while Buddha fails to weigh in on the basic underlying metaphysical structure of existence, from which any sort of *theology* would be based in fact (akin to Daoism in this respect), one can infer that reality, or existence, to Buddha is fundamentally *non-dual*, i.e. *monistic*. From this perspective, again which is not explicit in anything we have directly attributed to Buddha himself, *nirvana* can be seen as the partaking of, or final dissolution into, that state of *Being* (in the Platonic sense) from which the material universe, everything that changes and has form (including mental perceptions and fluctuations of mind, which are incorrectly attributed to a sense of “Self”) *Becoming* in the Platonic sense, has its origins.

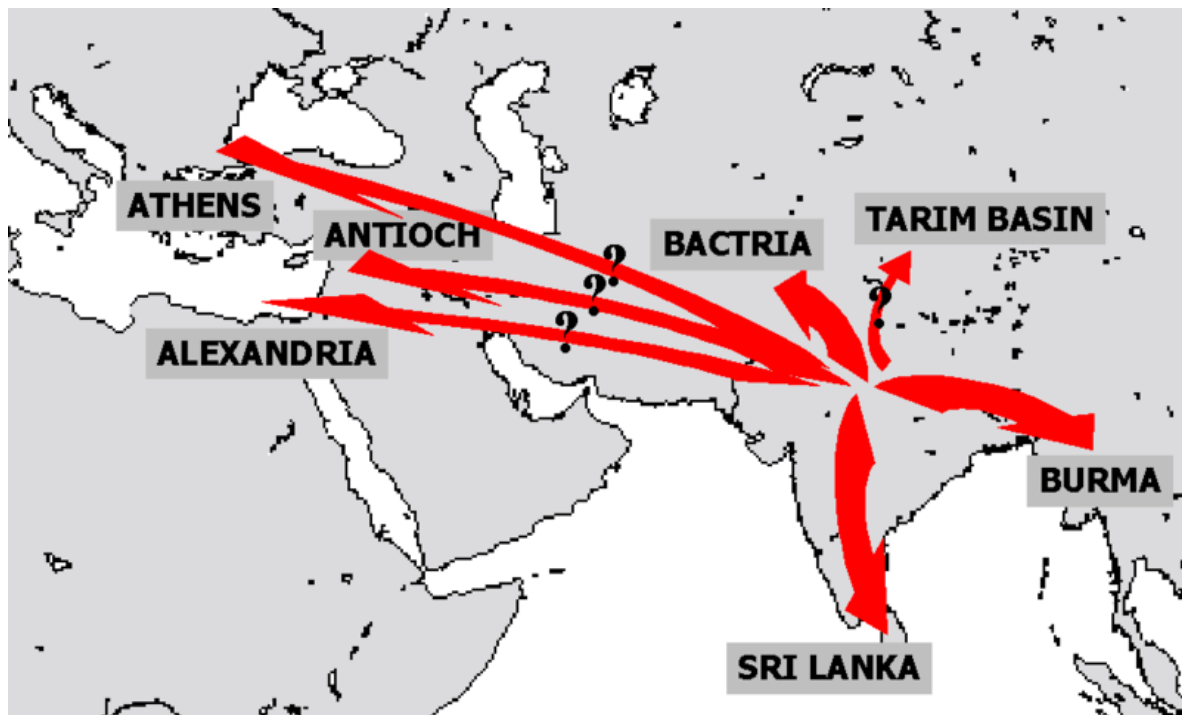


Figure 20: The spread of Buddhism at the time of emperor Ashoka (260–218 BCE).²⁹⁵

It is no wonder that Buddhism flourished in the Far East as from a philosophical standpoint it fits very neatly with the underlying Daoist and *Yīn-Yáng* belief systems, and complements Confucian thought as well. In the new socio-cultural context that was ancient China it's lack of metaphysical

²⁹⁵ Image from Wikipedia contributors, 'Buddhism', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 5 January 2017, 16:06 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Buddhism&oldid=758462396>> [accessed 5 January 2017]. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asoka_Kaart.png#/media/File:Asoka_Kaart.png.

or theological position can be looked upon as a strength rather than a weakness and no doubt facilitated its adoption as it moved outside of the Indian subcontinent.

Pythagoras: The Father of Hellenic Philosophy

Pythagoras, Thales of Miletus, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Xenophanes, Zeno, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Leucippus, and Democritus all made contributions to Pre-Socratic philosophical thought and were referenced by later philosophers and historians to some extent or another.

Although none of the complete works of Pre-Socratic philosophers survive today in full, we do have excerpts and references to their work that allude to who these philosophers were and to some extent what their metaphysical, theological, and philosophical premises and theses were. References to these Pre-Socratic philosophers, quotations as well as summaries of their belief system and philosophies comes from of course Aristotle and Plato, the Middle Platonist Plutarch, the (Epicurean) philosophical historian Diogenes Laertius, from early Judeo-Christian scholars such Philo Judaeus, Origen and Clement of Alexandria and from 3rd and 4th century CE Neo-Platonist authors such as Iamblichus, Porphyry and Simplicius.

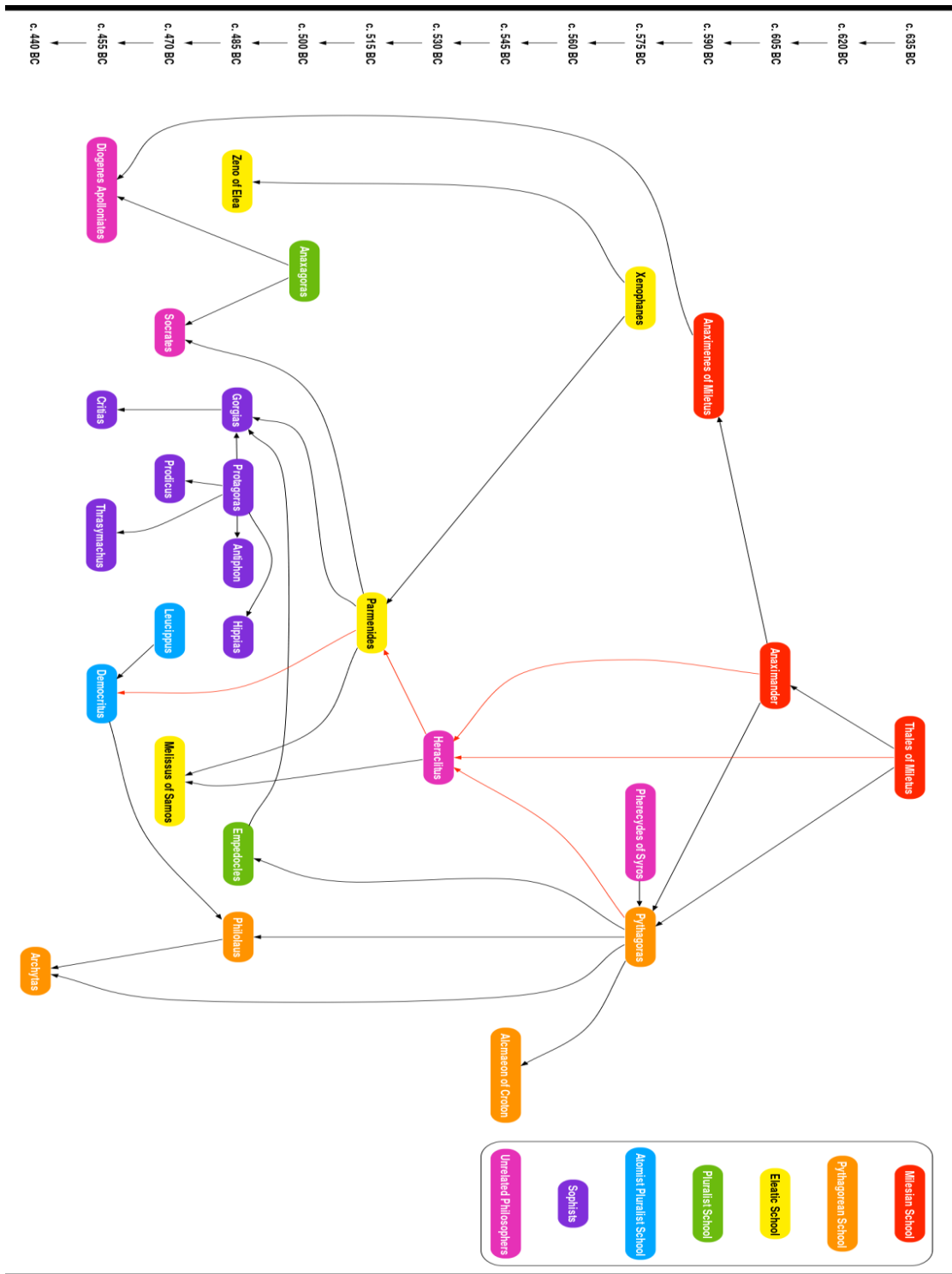


Figure 21: Pre-Socratic Philosophical development in the West²⁹⁶

It is clear from the works of Plato and Aristotle that they were influenced by these Pre-Socratic philosophers; even if only within the context of disagreeing with their fundamental tenets or conclusions, or illustrating the supremacy of their intellectual premises or beliefs with their predecessors, all of which generally fall under the category of Pre-Socratics. This can be seen for example in that many of the Pre-Socratic philosophers were characters and/or referenced in Plato's *dialogues* – Pythagoras and Parmenides for example. All of these Pre-Socratic philosophers, and Socrates himself if we are to believe the portrayal of him by Plato, shared the common principle of the rejection of the hitherto traditional mythological and Theogonical, i.e. divine, explanation of universal creation and order reality that permeated ancient thought, and to a great extent all of them attempted to answer such fundamental questions of the origin of the universe and the nature of reality in a more rational, reasonable fashion as contrasted by the traditions that came before them.

Of the Pre-Socratic philosophers, Pythagoras (c. 570 – c. 495 BCE) is undoubtedly the most influential and the most enigmatic. He is the first supposedly to have called himself a “philosopher”, literally “lover of wisdom”, and as such it is probably not too much of a stretch to call him the father of western philosophy, although many might argue against this depiction. Much of the modern academic literature surrounding Pythagoras, and the tradition which followed him as understood through his disciples, the sect that he founded, and his intellectual influence not only on other Pre-Socratic philosophers, but in the “Italian” philosophical tradition as it was defined in antiquity and looked upon as distinct from the “Ionian” philosophical tradition - as distinguished by Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius among other ancient authors - but also on the “Socratic” tradition as well as reflected on the works of Plato.²⁹⁷

Much of the modern academic literature surrounding Pythagoras focuses on what can truly be said to be “historically accurate” concerning his life and teachings. This is a somewhat tricky problem because a) it is widely held that he authored no works himself, b) it is believed that his teachings were to be kept secret by initiates and c) because the biographies of his life that have survived are from authors that lived and wrote centuries after his death, most notably those of the Epicurean philosophical historian Diogenes Laertius who flourished in the early 3rd century CE, and the Neo-Platonists Porphyry and Iamblichus who are also 3rd and 4th century CE authors,

²⁹⁶ Graphical relationship among the various Pre-Socratic philosophers and thinkers; red arrows indicate a relationship of opposition. From Wikipedia contributors, 'Pre-Socratic philosophy', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 11 July 2016, 04:45 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Pre-Socratic_philosophy&oldid=729281736> [accessed 22 September 2016].

²⁹⁷ According to Aristotle, Platonic philosophy is for the most part “aligned” with and consistent with the “Italian” schools which came before him. of which Pythagoras is the most eminent and influential figure of course. He also aligns Platonic philosophy with Heraclitus as well, specifically in reference to his doctrine of the whole sensible world being in a state of “flux” . See Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Book I .987a from *Aristotle. Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vols.17, 18, translated by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989.at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D1%3Asection%3D987a>

some 9 centuries at least after Pythagoras is supposedly to have lived and taught, circa 6th century BCE (570 – 501 BCE).²⁹⁸

By the time these biographies were written however, Pythagoras had evolved into a semi-divine figure of fairly eminent heroic stature so the stories surrounding his life and teachings weave myth and history into a single narrative, making it somewhat difficult to ascertain the “facts” regarding not just his biography but also his specific teachings, their origins, and their true import and influence on the subsequent Hellenic intellectual landscape. Diogenes Laertius in his most influential and lasting work *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* notably spends as much ink on the life and teachings of Pythagoras as he does on Plato and Aristotle, so if nothing else that should give the reader a good estimation on the relative import of this figure on the development of Hellenic philosophical tradition, at least as seen through the eyes of one of the most prominent Philosophical historians in Hellenic antiquity, a work which undoubtedly influenced our understanding of the early development of the Hellenic philosophical tradition as much if not more than any other work in the history of Western intellectual development. It should come as no surprise then that Pythagoras was and is still widely regarded as one of the most influential Hellenic philosophers in antiquity, and certainly is one of the most, if not the most, influential and widely studied of all of the Pre-Socratic philosophers.

Pythagoras was reportedly born on the island of Samos just off the coast of modern day Turkey in the Aegean Sea. This region of the Mediterranean at that time rested just on the Eastern Ionian border, and just on the Eastern borders of what was then the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire. To this extent, and this is true of the cities of Miletus and Ephesus as well, both of which were centers of intellectual thought in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE during the time of the Pre-Socratic philosophical movement if we may call it such, it is fairly reasonable to assume some sort of Near Eastern, i.e. Persian and Chaldean, as well as Egyptian influence on the philosophy of Pythagoras.²⁹⁹

While Aristotle supposedly wrote a treatise *On the Pythagoreans*, it is unfortunately no longer extant, so that leaves us with scant relatively contemporaneous sources to look to regarding what can be determined to be “historically accurate” regarding the life and teachings of this famous

²⁹⁸ While references to Pythagoras can be found in the extant works of both Plato and Aristotle, it can be argued that neither of them assign him specifically with the establishment philosophical significance per se. See Huffman, Carl, "Pythagoras", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/pythagoras/>>.

²⁹⁹ Miletus was the epicenter of the so-called Milesian School where Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes, all very prominent early Pre-Socratic philosophers heralded from, and Ephesus was the home of Heraclitus, the famed philosopher of flux and change which supposedly, according to Aristotle at least, heavily influenced the philosophic thought of Plato.

historical figure from antiquity. Both Herodotus (c. 484 – 425 BCE) as well as Plato (428 – 348 BCE) mention his “school” in passing, and Aristotle (367 – 347 BCE) does refer to a Pythagorean School or set of beliefs to which he was associated at somewhat greater length (more on this below), but even these authors write at least a century or two after Pythagoras died so we need to view their assertions and statements regarding what has come to be known as Pythagorean philosophy with a certain level of skepticism.³⁰⁰

However, what we can surmise definitively from the very early sources was that as an historical figure he did in fact exist, and that he was in fact the founder of a somewhat countercultural intellectual movement (again today what we would call a “sect” which involved some sort of secret initiations and various rights, beliefs and practices), and that he did consider himself to be a philosopher in the later Hellenic sense of the term, that he studied and travelled abroad throughout the Mediterranean and Near East prior to founding his “school” in southern Italy and that at the very least he was well known in antiquity, leaving the question of influence and how well respected he was within the later Hellenic philosophical community (if we may call it that) aside as evidenced for example by the criticism of Pythagoras in a quotation attributed to Heraclitus³⁰¹.

So it’s hard to discern fact from fiction as it were with respect to what Pythagoras actually taught versus what the subsequent philosophers that were influenced by him, his students, actually understood and interpreted his philosophy to be. Especially when you’re dealing with a figure that clearly cultivated a semi-divine status and had a religious following of sorts that lasted some several hundred years after his death. What is known is for certain is that he cultivated and promoted a way of life that was vegan, was a believer in the notion of *metempsychosis* - i.e. that the Soul lives on after death and passes into the bodies of other animate “things” such as plants or animals or even humans or deities depending upon its actions - and that his philosophical teachings were focused on numeric harmony and proportion, from which his association with the famed Pythagorean theory stems from even though he was not a mathematician per se.

All of the historical sources however are fairly consistent when speaking to the various “Oriental” influences on Pythagoras from a theo-philosophical perspective. It is widely held for example

³⁰⁰Herodotus says that the Pythagoreans agreed with the Egyptians in not allowing the dead to be buried in wool in his Histories Book II, verse 81. See *The History of Herodotus*, parallel English/Greek, tr. G. C. Macaulay, [1890], at [sacred-texts.com](http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hh/hh2080.htm) at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hh/hh2080.htm>. For the reference to the Pythagoreans in Plato’s *Republic* where Plato associates the Pythagoreans with a doctrine of universal harmony with respect to astronomical matters, see *Republic* 7.530d from *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 & 6 translated by Paul Shorey. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1969 at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D7%3Asection%3D530d>.

³⁰¹“Much learning does not teach one to have understanding, else it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and again Xenophanes and Hecataeus.” Quotation attributed to Heraclitus by Diogenes Laertius, Proclus and other ancient authors. See *Heraclitus of Ephesus*, translated by G.W.T. Patrick 1889 at <http://classicpersuasion.org/pw/heraclitus/herpate.htm>.

that he travelled and studied with various priests and mystics throughout the Mediterranean during his life. In particular it believed that he spent a good deal of time in Egypt, and is also believed to have been influenced and/or initiated by Chaldean and Persian priests, i.e. what the Greeks referred to as *Magi*. It is also believed by some later authors that he was exposed to the philosophy of the Hebrews as well which would not be altogether surprising given the geography and time period within which he lived and taught. Evidence for influence from as far East as India is lacking however, despite many efforts to prove otherwise and despite the fact that his beliefs in reincarnation (*metempsychosis*) have a very “Eastern” and classically Indian (Hindu) theological flavor.

Regardless however, Pythagoras for a variety of political and social reasons ended up after his studies and travels settling in Croton in Southern Italy where the bulk of his teachings and followers ensued, and where he eventually met his untimely death around 490 BCE, later being attributed as one of the founders of the so-called “Italian” philosophical school, at least as how Diogenes Laertius distinguished it specifically from the Ionian school as reflected by the teachings of Socrates and his followers to the East (the East of Italy at least).

It was in Persia to the East of Ionia during the time of Pythagoras and the Pre-Socratics that the *Magi* - the Greek designation for their priestly class during the Median, Achaemenid, Parthian and Sassanian periods of Iranian/Persian history - held such great influence over theological matters as well as presumably matters of state as well which was so often the case in antiquity. These priests, again *Magi*, were often referred to in the Greek literature in classical antiquity and had a reputation for being well schooled in the arts of *divination* (telling the future) as well as Astronomy³⁰². There is even a tale told by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* of a letter sent by Darius I, one of the rulers of the Achaemenid Empire, to Heraclitus asking him to join his court as a Greek emissary of sorts, an offer in which he declined apparently.³⁰³

While at times the Persians were the great adversaries of the Greeks in antiquity, as were at other times the Spartans and the Macedonians each who had their turns at imperial dominion of what later became the Roman Empire, this was the same civilization that had assimilated (really conquered) the Assyrian/Sumer-Babylonian peoples and the same people that adopted in one form or another what came to be known in Greek circles as Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism in this context was the form of the worship of great god Ahura Mazda, as understood from the teachings of the legendary Persian prophet Zarathustra, teachings that were captured in the *Avesta*, the dominant *theology* of the ancient Persians/Iranians from at least the time of the

³⁰² It is the term *Magi* in fact that is used to describe the “priests” who come to witness the birth of Jesus in the *Bible*.

³⁰³ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Diogenes Laertius. R.D. Hicks. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1972 (First published 1925).
Book IX, Chapter I. Verses 12-14. See
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0258%3Abook%3D9%3Achapter%3D1>.

Achaemenid Empire (c. 550 – 330 BCE) down to the time of the Sassanian Empire (224 – 651 CE), up until the overthrow of the Persian (Sassanian) Empire during the first half of the 6th century CE era when they were conquered by the Arabs/Muslims – so for almost 1000 years give or take.³⁰⁴

The earliest attested writings attributed to Pythagoras himself are the so-called *Golden Verses*, a set of aphorisms written in dactylic hexameter verse that are attested to have existed and been in wide circulation as early as the third century BCE, but only show up in the written records by Neo-Platonist authors and commentators in the 5th centuries CE. The aphorisms themselves bear a striking resemblance to a Zoroastrian tradition called *andarz*³⁰⁵, which follows a very similar mode of style as the *Golden Verses* where short sayings or proverbs are attributed to great rulers or teachers that facilitate the cultivation of religious or spiritual endeavors, providing further evidence of the connection between Pythagorean doctrine and Persian *theology*, i.e. the *Magi*.³⁰⁶

It is also widely held that much of Pythagoras's *numerological* and *arithmological* philosophy, the philosophy of *harmony* and *proportion* for which he was so well known, was derived from the Egyptians and/or the Chaldeans. For both the Chaldeans, which heralded from ancient Sumer and Babylon (aka Assyrian) as well as the Egyptians and Indo-Aryans in fact, had a long standing tradition and association with Astronomy, *mathematics*, and *geometry*, as well as a longstanding belief in the mystical and divine nature of number, *arithmology* and *geometry* in general - ideas which played an integral part in what we have come to understand as Pythagorean philosophy.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴ Affinities and similarities between the culture and theological beliefs in the *Avesta* literature and the *Vedas* of the Indo-Aryans is covered in detail in other sections of this work.

³⁰⁵ See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/andarz-precept-instruction-advice>.

³⁰⁶ For the full listing of 71 aphorisms, see Wikipedia contributors, 'The golden verses of Pythagoras', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 23 February 2016, 20:59 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_golden_verses_of_Pythagoras&oldid=706531167> [accessed 28 September 2016]

³⁰⁷ The opening passage to the famed Egyptian *Rhind Mathematical Papyrus* for example, a mathematical textbook which dates to the early part of the second millennium BCE more than 1000 years before Pythagoras was born, reads: "*Accurate reckoning. The entrance into the knowledge of all existing things and all obscure secrets.*". From the *Rhind Mathematical Papyrus*. Volume I. Free Translation and Commentary by Arnold Buffum Chace. Mathematical Association of America, Oberlin, Ohio. 1927. Page 49. The actual papyrus dates to around 1650 BCE and we are told is from a copy from an even older text dating from the 19th century BCE during the reign of Amenemhat II. It was written in hieratic script and is a mathematical textbook of sorts which contains teachings and formulas on not just basic arithmetic and *geometry*, but also calculation of volume and area, fairly sophisticated algebraic equations and solutions, and other advanced *geometry* and mathematical topics that was clearly produced as a teaching tool. The Indo-Aryans as well, at least with respect to *geometry* and basic *mathematics* and *algebra* as reflected in the *Sūlbasūtras*, a text related to the construction of altars related to Agni (fire) worship and altar construction dated from the early part of the first millennium BCE. For a deeper exploration of the connections between ancient Greek and Vedic *geometry* see "Greek and Vedic Geometry" by Frits Staal. Published in the Journal of Indian Philosophy in 1999 by Kluwer Academic Publishers. Vol. 27, No. 1/2, pg. 105.

The earliest reliable reference we have regarding Pythagorean philosophy is from Aristotle, in particular from Book I of *Metaphysics* where in typical Aristotelian fashion he outlines (and typically criticizes) previous philosophical belief systems and teachings prior to establishing his own system.

At the same time, however, and even earlier the so-called Pythagoreans applied themselves to mathematics, and were the first to develop this science; and through studying it they came to believe that its principles are the principles of everything. And since numbers are by nature first among these principles, and they fancied that they could detect in numbers, to a greater extent than in fire and earth and water, many analogues of what is and comes into being—such and such a property of number being justice, and such and such soul or mind, another opportunity, and similarly, more or less, with all the rest—and since they saw further that the properties and ratios of the musical scales are based on numbers, and since it seemed clear that all other things have their whole nature modelled upon numbers, and that numbers are the ultimate things in the whole physical universe, they assumed the elements of numbers to be the elements of everything, and the whole universe to be a proportion or number.

...

Well, it is obvious that these thinkers too consider number to be a first principle, both as the material of things and as constituting their properties and states. The elements of number, according to them, are the Even and the Odd. Of these the former is limited and the latter unlimited; Unity consists of both (since it is both odd and even); number is derived from Unity; and numbers, as we have said, compose the whole sensible universe. Others of this same school hold that there are ten principles, which they enunciate in a series of corresponding pairs: (1.) Limit and the Unlimited; (2.) Odd and Even; (3.) Unity and Plurality; (4.) Right and Left; (5.) Male and Female; (6.) Rest and Motion; (7.) Straight and Crooked; (8.) Light and Darkness; (9.) Good and Evil; (10.) Square and Oblong.³⁰⁸

Here we see many of the classical elements of Pythagorean philosophy laid out, albeit in a manner that is not altogether clear whether or not the belief systems were held and taught by Pythagoras himself, or were espoused by later interpreters and/or followers of his teachings. Regardless, these doctrines as Aristotle describes them come to be known as the fundamental attributes of Pythagorean philosophy as well as the founding principles upon which the “Italian” school, which Pythagoras is the founding member of, is based.

We have first and foremost the discipline of *mathematics* assigned to this school of thought, and through which they came to understand that *mathematics* - *number* and *arithmetic* and basic *geometry* – was basically the language of the universe, or the language through which the

³⁰⁸ Aristotle. *Metaphysics* Book I 985b 986b. Aristotle. *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vols.17, 18, translated by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989. From <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D1%3Asection%3D985b>

universal order, and moral and ethical order of the individual and society at large, could be best understood. The far reaching implications of this belief in the relationship between *number*, *mathematics*, *geometry* and the universal order on Western intellectual developments cannot be overstated. Furthermore, through this *mathematical* understanding of the cosmos, and in particular through their understanding of harmonic and music theory to which Pythagoras himself is closely associated, the Pythagoreans came to believe that harmony and proportionality, which in turn were based upon the relationships of the fundamental numbers between 1 and 10, could be used to describe the universe in its entirety – at least metaphysically and metaphorically speaking.

Furthermore, and this is perhaps where we start to shift more into Aristotle's interpretation of Pythagorean philosophy rather than perhaps his teachings, or the teachings of his followers, is the leap between the universal harmonic order based upon numbers and their inherent (mathematical and geometrical) relationships, to numbers as *first principles*, which for the most part is what Aristotle is trying to establish in the context of the work which he is speaking about Pythagorean philosophy, i.e. *metaphysics* or *first philosophy*. In this context then, Aristotle lists the ten fundamental opposing forces - Even and Odd, Darkness and Light, Good and Bad, Male and Female, etc. - each of which is ascribed a numerical value, and the sum total of which describe all of the elemental forces of the universe –i.e. again his *first principles*.

So we can see here, at least at some level, through the great analytical lens of Aristotle himself, the association of Pythagorean philosophy not only with *numerology* and *harmony* which is what it has classically come to be seen as predominantly focused on as universal and ontological *first principles*, or *arche*, but also – and somewhat less emphasized, or in fact altogether ignored, by later interpreters and expositors of Pythagorean philosophy is the belief in the universe or *cosmos* as an ordered structure of pairs of opposites, from which the underlying harmony and balance, i.e. proportion, of the cosmic world order can best be understood, or said another way how the underlying structure of the universe as we “experience” it can best be explained.

The description of Pythagorean doctrinal development by the Syrian Neo-Platonist Iamblichus is also worth mentioning as it is not only more consistent with more modern interpretations of Pythagorean intellectual developments, but it also explains to a certain extent why Aristotle refers to Pythagorean philosophy in the aggregate and avoids attributing the belief systems which have come to be understood as “Pythagorean”, even by the 4th century BCE, to Pythagoras himself. That is to say why Aristotle uses the language the words “so-called Pythagoreans” which is quite different than how he refers to the belief systems surrounding first principles of

Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Leucippus, Democritus, Xenophanes and Parmenides from the very same passage which are all described within the very same passage.³⁰⁹

In his work *Life of Pythagoras*, Iamblichus distinguishes between two different branches of Pythagorean thought - *akousmatikoi* and *mathematikoi*.³¹⁰ The former was in all likelihood the topic of analysis and discussion of the now lost works of Aristotle *On the Pythagoreans*, as well as the somewhat more contemporary (contemporary to Pythagoras) work by Anaximander of Miletus (c. 610 – 546 BCE) entitled *An Explanation of Pythagorean Symbola*. These works presumably described and analyzed not just the life of the famed figure Pythagoras himself but also presumably the sayings and aphorisms, i.e. *symbola*, which had been directly attributed to Pythagoras himself and which encapsulated his philosophical teachings.

These sayings or aphorisms, which dealt primarily with ethical and moral matters, as well as matters of theology and what later came to be known as “philosophy” (with respect to doctrines describing a way of life for example) in all likelihood were the original source of the later compilation of the *Golden Verses* which again we know circulated throughout the Hellenic intellectual community by at least the 3rd century BCE and which was attributed to Pythagoras himself. The followers of these *symbola* were, at least in later Neo-Platonic intellectual circles, distinguished from the Pythagorean *mathematikoi* as *akousmatika*, which according to Iamblichus at least had a musical element, a chanting aspect to them – hence the term. The other branch of Pythagorean thought, i.e. the *mathematikoi*, were in all likelihood the ones that had the most influence over Platonic philosophy, in particular the underlying *geometry* of universal order as described in the *Timaeus*.³¹¹

What is also interesting and somewhat baffling is that Ovid’s recollection and reverence for Pythagoras is almost entirely left out of the academic literature in terms of it actually truly reflecting Pythagorean philosophy, even though a) he explicitly outlines what he means by Pythagorean doctrine, and b) he sits some two centuries at least before the later Neo-Platonist authors of Porphyry and Iamblichus that are typically cited as the most reliable sources for Pythagorean life and teachings, and c) Ovid himself is known to have been well schooled in

³⁰⁹ Again see Aristotle Metaphysics 1.985a – 1.986b. Aristotle. Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vols.17, 18, translated by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989. From <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D1%3Asection%3D985a>

³¹⁰ *The Life of Pythagoras by Iamblichus*. Translated from the Greek by Thomas Taylor. Theosophical Publishing House, Hollywood, CA. 1918. Page 62-64.

³¹¹ For a detailed treatment of the source and nature of these *akousmatika*, as well as a description of the delineation between *akousmatikoi* and *mathematikoi* as described by the Neo-Platonist Iamblichus, see “The Pythagorean Akousmata and Early Pythagoreanism” by Johan C. Thom at https://www.academia.edu/15440495/The_Pythagorean_Akousmata_and_Early_Pythagoreanism

philosophy and was born and raised in the very same region (Southern Italy) where we know Pythagoras spent a great deal of his later life teaching and where he clearly exerted great influence.

Ovid spends a good deal of his final Book of *Metamorphoses* covering Pythagorean teachings in fact, told within the context of the story of the founding of Crotona by Numa Pompilius (753-673 BCE), Rome's legendary second king. Crotona is where Pythagoras founded his "school" and herein Ovid takes the opportunity to run through Pythagorean doctrine as it were, as he describes the founding of the city by Numa and just before he closes his work with the deification of Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus. After describing the vegan lifestyle, and the belief in the transmigration of souls (*metempsychosis*), both attributes of Pythagorean thought and doctrine that were and are widely held to be true, Ovid goes on to describe Pythagorean doctrine in more detail, aligning it squarely with his overarching theme for his work in fact, i.e. change or *metamorphosis* as the primary characteristic and qualification of existence.

*'Since I have embarked on the wide ocean, and given full sails to the wind, I say there is nothing in the whole universe that persists. Everything flows, and is formed as a fleeting image. Time itself, also, glides, in its continual motion, no differently than a river. For neither the river, nor the swift hour can stop: but as wave impels wave, and as the prior wave is chased by the coming wave, and chases the one before, so time flees equally, and, equally, follows, and is always new. For what was before is left behind: and what was not comes to be: and each moment is renewed.'*³¹²

This is not typically the philosophical teaching that is attributed to Pythagoras, Pythagoras the mystical mathematician who espoused the belief in the underlying harmony of number and ratio as reflections of the divine universal order, and although Ovid clearly has an axe to grind to try and closely align one of the greatest Italian philosophers of antiquity with the overarching theme of change which permeates his work, the philosophy that he lays out however is very reminiscent of the philosophy and metaphysics that underlie the cornerstone of Far Eastern (Chinese) philosophy, i.e. the *Yijing*.

Ovid goes on to describe how the elements themselves are subject to change – earth, air, water and fire – describing a process of transformation that bears even more striking similarity to *Yijing* metaphysics as its described in the *Ten Wings* and the various *bāguà* (trigram) arrangements.

³¹² Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, translated by Anthony S. Kline, 2000. Bk XV:176-198. "Pythagoras's Teachings: The Eternal Flux." From <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Metamorph15.htm>.

'Even the things we call elements do not persist. Apply your concentration, and I will teach the changes, they pass through. The everlasting universe contains four generative states of matter. Of these, two, earth and water, are heavy, and sink lower, under their own weight. The other two lack heaviness, and, if not held down, they seek height: that is air, and fire, purer than air. Though they are distinct in space, nevertheless they are all derived from one another, and resolve into one another. Earth, melting, is dilated to clear water: the moisture, rarified, changes to wind and air: then air, losing further weight, in the highest regions shines out as fire, the most rarified of all. Then they return, in reverse, revealing the same series of changes. Since fire, condenses, turns into denser air, and this to water, and water, contracted, solidifies as earth.

'Nothing keeps its own form, and Nature, the renewer of things, refreshes one shape from another. Believe me, nothing dies in the universe as a whole, but it varies and changes its aspect, and what we call 'being born' is a beginning to be, of something other, than what was before, and 'dying' is, likewise, ending a former state. Though, 'that' perhaps is transferred here, and 'this', there, the total sum is constant.³¹³

So while relatively contemporary interpretations of Pythagorean doctrine most certainly include a references to a certain lifestyle and diet, as well as initiation into a private sect that clearly represented some sort of religious and/or *mystery cult* type of movement, as well as an association with sacred mathematical and geometric symbolism and a universal order based upon the interaction of a finite set of opposing, basic elemental forces, we also find with Ovid in particular an association of Pythagorean teachings with basic elemental change, as well as an integration and assimilation of the teachings in general to the more archaic and pre-historic *mythos* of the Hellenic world to which Ovid's entire work rests in in fact.

What we find in Ovid's interpretation of Pythagorean teaching, is a more archaic form of *theology* as it were, and one that is hinged on the idea of change and flux being the primordial characteristic of existence, as well as – consistent with Aristotle's interpretation of Pythagorean philosophy in terms of *first principles* – the idea or notion that the universe is best understood as the interrelationships and intermixing of a basic set of opposing forces, forces which are aligned with number, proportion and harmonic balance. In total, in looking at the "philosophical" interpretation of Pythagorean *theology* and *cosmogony*, and combining it within the mythological and more pre-historic narrative provided by Ovid and his notion of change as being the primordial elemental property of *reality*, we are left with a worldview, a theo-philosophical system, that looks very similar to that which is represented by the *Classic of Changes*, i.e. the *Yijing*, from the Far East, a view and a comparison which is rarely made – if ever – and one which begs the question as to where and why these similarities exist between two of the primordial

³¹³ Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, translated by Anthony S. Kline, 2000. Bk XV:237-258. "Pythagoras's Teachings: The Elements" From <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Metamorph15.htm>.

philosophical systems that emerge from these geographically disparate and theoretically distinctive civilizations which we believe did not have any sort of cultural or social connection at this phase in their respective civilizational development.

The Legacy of Socrates: *Skepticism*, Knowledge and Reason

One of the best indications of the influence of Socrates on the development of Western philosophy, what the Hellenes, or Greeks, termed *philosophia*, his ideas being primarily represented by the writings of his best known pupil Plato, is the more modern delineation of philosophical systems into Pre-Socratic philosophy to the philosophical and metaphysical systems of belief that came after Plato, marked most notably by Aristotelianism and Neo-Platonism among other philosophical systems. In other words, in terms of the evolution of what the ancients termed “philosophy”, which provides the basis for all of the branches of knowledge that today we would categorize as Science, Biology, Ethics, Social Science or Political Philosophy, and even Psychology, current historians and scholars basically divide philosophical history into Pre-Socratic, Platonic, and Aristotelian, and then virtually everything that came after them as represented by the works of Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, and Newton among others.

Socrates (469 – 399 BCE) was born in Athens circa 470 BCE to a modest family but consistent with all Athenian males in the 5th century BCE however, he was given an education and taught to read and write, and was required to serve the city in various public and military faculties. Before his days as a wandering philosopher in Athens, Socrates is known to have served valiantly in the Athenian military, having fought bravely in several battles against the Spartans during the Peloponnesian War (431 – 404 BCE). It is said that in the battle of Potidaea (432 BCE) for example, he saved the life of the famed Athenian general Alcibiades, with whom he is said to have had a very close relationship with (and perhaps was even romantically involved with) and through which his association contributed to his being put to death by the Athenian state in 399 BCE.³¹⁴

Although Socrates (471 – 399 BCE) did not author any works himself, his teachings and many of the details surrounding his death do survive in the accounts and writings of his students, most notably Plato (428 – 348 BCE) of course, but also Xenophon (431 – 354 BCE), as well as in indirect accounts and references in the works of other semi contemporary Greek authors such as the

³¹⁴ Alcibiades was an enigmatic Athenian political and military figure toward the end of the 5th century BCE and at various stages, for a variety of political reasons, allied himself not only to Sparta, but also to Persia, the two greatest enemies of the Athenian democratic state. After the Athenians lost the war to Sparta in 404 BCE, the Spartans put the rulership of the city in the hands of a small group of Athenian citizens that were known to be loyal to Spartan interests, what came to be known as “The Thirty”, or the “Thirty Tyrants”, who mercilessly executed and confiscated the property of a number of aristocratic Athenians who were democratic sympathizers. The Thirty were overthrown by Athenian democratic supporters just one year later in 403 BCE by a group of Athenian democratic supporters from exile. Alcibiades however, given his known affiliations with Persia and Sparta, as well as his association with the defamation of the statues of Hermes in Sicily in 415 BCE as well as his implication in crimes against the Eleusinian mysteries, was no friend of the Athenian state by the time the era of Spartan influence came to an end. By the time of Socrates’s trial for “impiety” and the “corruption of the youth” in 399 BCE, his relationship with Alcibiades is believed to have contributed considerably to his demise. See Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Socrates. By James M. Ambury, King’s College. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/socrates/#H1>

Greek satirical playwright Aristophanes (445 – 385 BCE) ³¹⁵. Socrates life's end is marked by his execution by Greek authorities for, at least according to Plato, corrupting the minds of youth and challenging the legitimacy of the gods as well as the established authority of the aristocracy of Greek society of the day. Both Plato and Xenophon wrote works describing the last days of Socrates and the trial specifically, where Socrates attempts to defend his position as simply a seeker of *wisdom* and man of *virtue*, almost enticing his accusers to sentence him to death rather than banish him to some foreign land.³¹⁶

Socrates then personifies what we conceive of today as the prototypical classical philosopher, despite the contributions of the intellectuals and thinkers that came before him. However, what the ancients considered philosophy and what we consider philosophy today, and in turn *metaphysics* which was a term first used by Aristotle (meaning literally “after” or “beyond” indicating that *Metaphysics* should be studied after *Physics*), are conceptually similar but at the same time very different things. The ancient Greeks devised and understood the term *philosophy*, the first use of which is attested and attributed to Pythagoras, covered a much broader range of topics and branches of thought than the modern conception of the term.

Plato's works, in particular his earlier works, are written in a form of literary prose referred to as *Socratic dialogue*, named as such not only due to the fact that Socrates is a prominent character and voice of the philosophical tenets which Plato's puts forth, but also due to the fact that it is typically assumed, particularly with respect to his earlier *dialogues*, that the philosophical positions that he argues for are presumed to have originated with Socrates himself.³¹⁷ But outside of second hand accounts, we have no direct works from Socrates so for the most part we know of Socrates and his philosophical beliefs and metaphysics through the words of Plato. These are important backdrop and contextual items that must be kept in mind when looking at Plato's works and discerning what his “philosophy” truly was, and how much of it was his

³¹⁵ Socrates plays a significant role in Aristophanes *Clouds*, a satirical play of the sophist and philosophical traditions of late 5th century BC Athens. He is primarily depicted as a bit of a buffoon in the play, but if nothing else it reflects the broad cultural and socio-political impact that the philosophical and sophist traditions of his day, Socrates and Plato reflecting the most prominent schools, and therefore the easiest targets to be made light of.

³¹⁶ Plato was present at Socrates's final hearings of judgment, as we find in the *Apology*, which is Plato's account of the Socrates's defense which he lays out to his Athenian council members where he stands accused of “corrupting the youth and of not believing in the gods of the Athenian state”, a crime punishable by death apparently to which Socrates willingly accepts. His reasoning for the acceptance of this judgment is related in the *Crito* which is an account of a conversation between Socrates and Crito while Socrates awaits his death sentence in his cell which covers the topics of justice and injustice among other things.

³¹⁷ *Socratic dialogue* is not to be confused with *Socratic method*. The former refers to a style of prose that characterizes many of the philosophical works of both Plato and Xenophon, both of whom were students of Socrates. The latter refers to a (literary) method of argument that while also associated with the majority of Plato's works, refers to the specific rational method characterized by a group of individuals who cooperate to make, or refute as the case may be, specific hypotheses related to philosophical enquiry. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Socratic dialogue', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 12 September 2017, 01:19 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Socratic_dialogue&oldid=800196727> [accessed 31 October 2017] and Wikipedia contributors, 'Socratic method', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 19 October 2017, 21:38 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Socratic_method&oldid=806126861> [accessed 31 October 2017].

interpretation of Socrates and how much of it was his own workings and reformulations of the teachings which he presumably received from Socrates himself.

It must be kept in mind, when looking at and reviewing the authors of Plato and Xenophon in particular who both wrote what are considered to be direct accounts of the last days of Socrates, that the political backdrop was a time of war, a war that affected the entire Greek realm at the time. The Peloponnesian War was the great conflict between Athens and her empire and the Peloponnesian League led by Sparta at the end of the 5th century BC (431 to 401 BC), the termination of which marked the end of the golden age of Athens, after the loss of which was relegated to a secondary city-state in the classical antiquity.

This conflict raised many questions as to the nature of political systems in general to the great thinkers of the day, as Sparta's form of government differed in many respects to that of Athens, and given the war that had such a significant impact on all of Ancient Greece and its bordering city-states at the time, much of the philosophical works of Plato, as well as Aristotle in fact, analyzed the competing socio-political systems of the day and proffered up opinions, philosophical and otherwise, upon which system of government was the best. It was from this socio-political self-analysis and introspection, stemming from the great perils and destructive force of war, that democracy in its current form was forged.

Therefore, the role of the state, the exploration into the ideal form of government, and the role of the philosopher within the state, topics that would not be classically consider as philosophical inquiries today, are in fact the main themes that run through Plato's *Republic*, arguably one of his most lasting and prolific works. In this text, Plato explores the various forms of government prevalent in ancient Greek society and specifically delves not into the meaning of *justice* and *virtue (arête)*. He also, through the narrative of Socrates, explores the role of the philosopher in society, even going so far as to speak of the utopian form of government being one that is led by the "philosopher-king".³¹⁸

In a broader sense, *The Republic* portrays Socrates, along with other various members of the Athenian and foreign elite, discussing the meaning of *excellence* or *virtue*, i.e. *arête*, within a socio-political context, examining whether or not the *just* man is happier than the *unjust* man by comparing and contrasting existing regimes and political systems, as well as discussing the role of the philosopher in society. All of these themes must have crystallized in Plato's mind and life

³¹⁸ *The Republic* (Greek: Πολιτεία, *Politeia*) is a *Socratic dialogue* written by Plato around 380 BC concerning the definition of justice and the order and character of the just city-state and the just man. The work's date has been much debated but is generally accepted to have been authored sometime during the Peloponnesian War which took place between Athens and Sparta at the end of the 5th century BC (circa 431 to 404 BC). The *Republic* is arguably Plato's best-known work and has proven to be one of the most intellectually and historically influential works of philosophy and political theory in the history of Western civilization. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Republic_\(Plato\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Republic_(Plato)) for more detail.

after the death of his beloved teacher Socrates given the socio-political context within which he was put to death. Plato's concern with the ideal city-state, reflected in the title of the work that was given to it by later historians and compilers of his work on this topic, i.e. *Republic*, focused on the value and strengths and weaknesses of *democracy* as it existed in Athens, again an important topic of the day given the broad impact of the Peloponnesian War on the world of ancient Greece at the time and the competing forms of government each side of the conflict espoused.

Another example of the importance of the state in the early philosophical works of the ancient Greeks comes from Aristotle's *Politics*. Here Aristotle continues Plato's exploration into various forms of government and their pros and cons, looking specifically at the government of Sparta in one passage, describing it as some combination of monarchy, oligarchy and public assembly/senate of sorts, all of which were combined to balance power, in many respects similar to the balance of power as reflected in the House, the Senate and the office of the President in the United States today.

Some, indeed, say that the best constitution is a combination of all existing forms, and they praise the Lacedaemonian [Spartan] because it is made up of oligarchy, monarchy, and democracy, the king forming the monarchy, and the council of elders the oligarchy while the democratic element is represented by the Ephors; for the Ephors are selected from the people. Others, however, declare the Ephoralty to be a tyranny, and find the element of democracy in the common meals and in the habits of daily life. At Lacedaemon, for instance, the Ephors determine suits about contracts, which they distribute among themselves, while the elders are judges of homicide, and other causes are decided by other magistrates.³¹⁹

So government then, its role and purpose, as well as the role of the individual citizen, were clearly very important topics of the early Greek philosophers and you'd be hard pressed to believe that to at least some extent they influenced the development of various political systems in their day. But their most lasting contribution arguably was their devotion to the pursuit of knowledge and truth for their own sake, as opposed to the pursuit of knowledge to establish the legitimacy of authority and the ruling class which had been the pattern that had existed for centuries if not millennia before them, as well as their creation of institutions of learning from which this new field of study could be practiced and taught, passing its tenets down to later generations not only orally but through a written tradition for further enquiry and analysis by subsequent students, as reflected in the works of Plato and Aristotle which survive to this day.

³¹⁹ *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (London: Colonial Press, 1900).

While the philosophical doctrines of Socrates are believed to be reflected in Plato's earlier works and the philosophy of Plato himself are gleaned from his Middle and Late *dialogues*, the works of his most prolific student Aristotle explored topics and subjects which we today would consider fall under the category of Philosophy, but also covered topics such as *theology*, *ethics*, the underlying principles of *logic* and *reason (dialectic)*, as well as what we today would call *metaphysics*, or the study of the nature of *reality* and *knowledge* itself. All of these topics fell under what the ancients termed *philosophy*, what the Greeks termed *philosophia*, or more specifically what Aristotle referred to as *epistêmê*, which is typically translated as "sciences" but is the plural of the Greek word for "knowledge".

Plato was by far the most prominent of Socrates's disciples and was a prolific author, all of his writings however coming after the death of his mentor and therefore at best represent at least one generation removed of the actual life and times of the great martyr who as the story goes sacrificed his life in the name of truth and knowledge. Plato lived and wrote in the latter part of the 4th and early part of the third century BC (circa 424 to 327 BC), and in his later life founded the Academy of Athens, the first known institution of higher learning in the Western world that persisted until the beginning of the first century BCE, the same Academy from which Aristotle was schooled. Thirty-six *dialogues* have been ascribed to Plato, and they cover a range of topics such as love, *virtue*, *ethics*, and the role of the philosopher in society.

Plato however is named specifically in the *Apology* as being present at the day of Socrates's the trial however, as well as is called out in the *Phaedo* as being one of the close followers of Socrates who could not make it on the day of his execution because he was ill, so it is safe to say that a very close relationship existed – at least from Plato's perspective – between Plato and Socrates and that perhaps some of the depictions of Socrates by Plato in his *dialogues* are representative of first-hand accounts so to speak. However, taken as a whole though, what we know of Socrates - from whose example and teachings clearly greatly influenced Plato who in turn was the teacher of Aristotle, arguably two of the most influential Western philosophers of all time – as understood through the words of Plato at least, must be looked at least somewhat skeptically for it is surely through rose colored glasses, through the writings of Plato and Xenophanes in particular, that he historical figure of Socrates is known by the modern reader and scholar primarily.

While little is known of Plato's early life according it is believed that he was born to a wealthy aristocratic family in Greece on the island of Aegina just south of Athens toward the end of the 5th century BCE (428/427 BCE). As most aristocratic Athenian youth he was well educated and according to Diogenes Laertius he was instructed in the arts of grammar (reading and writing), music, painting and gymnastics and, not surprisingly, was a very good student. It is also held that he excelled as a wrestler and that he competed, and did well, in the Isthmian Games, one of the

Panhellenic Games of Ancient Greece that was held on off years of the famed Olympic Games.³²⁰ His introduction to philosophy supposedly started as a student of Cratylus, a student and follower of Heraclitus and was also a prominent figure, and title, of one of Plato's middle *dialogues*.³²¹

It is commonly assumed that the doctrines and philosophical positions that Plato puts forth in his *dialogues*, particular from his Middle and Late Period, represent his philosophical position more or less, and many of the characters and (alternative) points of view and positions that are explored in his *dialogues* represent at least to some degree the varying philosophical positions and views that were prevalent by the various teachers and intellectuals contemporaries or predecessors of the era within which Plato wrote. For example, Anaxagoras, Parmenides, and Cratylus. are all characters in his *dialogues* that are used as foils within his works to represent, and ultimately refute, their various philosophical tenets and systems of belief. Furthermore, it is believed that in almost all cases Plato's views and positions are presented through the character of Socrates, who is a prominent figure in virtually all of Plato's *dialogues* and is the voice through which Plato expresses his philosophical views, along with the arguments and reasons (*logos*) to back up his positions.

Plato's intention then, no doubt inspired by his teacher Socrates who was sentenced to death for "impiety", or questioning the reality of the old gods and traditions which were such an important part of the Greek culture and society, was not necessarily to reject the old traditions outright, but certainly to question them and place them within a more rational and coherent intellectual framework, a framework which still reflected an underlying belief and faith in the gods and *mythology* of pre-historic man, but attempted to distinguish between faith and knowledge (science), and provide more rational underpinnings for *morality* and *ethics* as a whole, and even systems of government to which we still owe him a great debt.

With respect to the modern interpretation of the evolution of Plato's philosophy, modern scholars typically divide Plato's works, his *dialogues* (so called due to the style of prose that Plato used throughout, a conversational like setting between two or more characters) into three categories - Early, Middle and Late. His Early *dialogues*, are presumed to reflect the teachings of

³²⁰ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Plato', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 30 October 2016, 18:35 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Plato&oldid=746975327>> [accessed 30 October 2016] and Wikipedia contributors, 'Early life of Plato', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 21 October 2016, 15:47 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Early_life_of_Plato&oldid=745516209> [accessed 21 October 2016].

³²¹ From Plato's *Cratylus*, 402a, "Heraclitus says, you know, that all things move and nothing remains still, and he likens the universe to the current of a river, saying that you cannot step twice into the same stream.". Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12 translated by Harold N. Fowler. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921. From <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0172%3Atext%3DCrat.%3Asection%3D402a>. Plato's affiliation and intellectual influence by Cratylus, and in turn the philosophy of Heraclitus, is referred to by Aristotle, see Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Book I .987a from *Aristotle*. *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vols.17, 18, translated by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989.at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D1%3Asection%3D987a>.

Socrates and primarily deal with *ethics, morality* and the leading of a “good” and virtuous life. These include the *Charmides, Crito, Euthydemus, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, and Protagoras*. His Middle *dialogues*, or *dialogues* from his “Middle period”, which are best represented by the *Phaedo, Cratylus, Symposium, Republic, and Phaedrus* are believed to represent Plato’s first foray into the exploration of his own philosophical doctrines, primarily constructed upon his *theory of forms*.³²²

His later works, representing the most mature state of his philosophy and the most elaborate and stylistic of language are the *Sophist, Statesman, the Timaeus, Critias, Philebus*, and what is believed to be his last work, *Laws*.³²³ It is in this Middle Period that we see Plato develop his predominantly *idealistic* views on the nature of reality, the ontological precedence of *ideas* over matter upon which his *theory of forms* ultimately rests, and upon which he posited the fundamental reality of *ethics* and *virtue* as eternally existent “things” in and of themselves, i.e. *forms*, and in turn the role of *dialectic* and reasoning (*logos*) in establishing their “reality”, reality in the sense that they were not subject to change. It is from the philosophical development as reflected in his works in this Middle Period that Plato establishes the rational ground for the eternal truths of *virtue, ethics* and ultimately the *Good*, and then in perhaps his most famous and influential work the *Republic* where he describes the importance of the role of philosophy and in turn the philosopher, i.e. he who pursued *wisdom*, i.e. *sophia*, for its own sake, on the structure of the ideal state.

All of Plato’s *dialogues* were exactly that, the documentation and exploration of various ideas and topics as *love, friendship, virtue, morality* etc., via conversation and argumentation between two or more characters where these various ideas, what came to represent Plato’s “philosophy” were approached and described from various intellectual points of view in order to arrive at some sense of *truth* or *essence* of the topic at hand. His *dialogues* are typically structured as conversations between two or more persons where basic hypothesis or theories are put forth and then in turn criticized followed by the related defense of said theories, with Socrates being the predominant figure in virtually all of his works. This form of reasoning, for which Plato is

³²² Plato’s *theory of forms* leverages and synthesizes two key terms that we find throughout Plato’s *dialogues*, *eidôs* and *idea* - *εἶδος* and *ἰδέα* respectively. *Eidôs* stems from the Indo-European root verb “to shine” and is the participle of the verb *eidenai*. We find it being used for example by Xenophanes to assert that “none have seen the truth of the gods”, *oude tis estai eidôs*. *Eidôs* therefore means something along the lines of “visible form” or “shape” but at the same time implies perception, or sight of some kind. It is sometimes translated as “species”, although it is much more appropriately translated as “form”, hence Plato’s *theory of forms*. *Idea* is from the Indo-European root verb “to see” and this is the very same root verb, i.e. “to see”, that we find in the Latin *vidēre* and the Sanskrit *vidyā*. See Wikipedia contributors, ‘*theory of forms*’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 31 December 2016, 20:27 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Theory_of_Forms&oldid=757634888> [accessed 31 December 2016].

³²³ *Laws*, again believed to be Plato’s last work, is his longest and is the only one that does not portray Socrates in the work at all. In it he explores the nature and source of laws in and of themselves. See Kraut, Richard, “Plato”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/plato/> for a review, classification and summary of Plato’s works and philosophy.

perhaps best known for, came to be known as *dialectic*, i.e. the exploration of theoretical and metaphysical concepts by the use of a narrative or dialogue between various (fictitious or historical) characters, where various philosophical principles.

The format that Plato uses throughout all of his works is one of the presentation of differing points of view of an argument by various characters in his *dialogues* in order to explore, and ultimately conclude, various philosophical points. The common thread throughout these *dialogues* is the supremacy of *reason*, the use of *logic* and argument (*dialectic*), to establish various points of view as well as basic philosophical and metaphysical positions, upon which what we know today as Platonic philosophy is presented to the modern reader. This unique characteristic of Plato's writings, the format within which he explores and presents his ideas, in and of itself had lasting effects on the development of Western thought, and teaching of philosophy in general, that lasted well throughout the middle ages, continuing to be used as the means of teaching to a greater or lesser extent as it evolved into its more modern form which came to be known as Scholasticism which was used as the teaching methodology for many of the earliest universities that cropped from the 11th century onwards up through the Enlightenment Era.

While Socrates plays a significant role in many of Plato's *dialogues*, and although it's not clear to what extent the narratives that Plato speaks of are historically accurate, Plato does make use of a variety of names, places and events in his *dialogues* attributed specifically to Socrates and others that lend his *dialogues* a sense of authenticity, be they historically accurate or not³²⁴. So although it is safe to assume that the life and teachings of Socrates formed much of the basis of many of the philosophical constructs that Plato covers in his extant work, particularly in his Early *dialogues*, just as in the analysis of any ancient literature or culture, the historical and political context within which the works were authored must be considered when trying to determine their import and message.

Taken as a whole however, given the philosophical and metaphysical nature of the topics Plato explores in his extant work, historical accuracy isn't necessarily an imperative for him. In other words, Plato is not attempting to provide any sort of historical narrative but attempting to lay out alternative points of view on a variety of topics to yield knowledge and truth regarding esoteric topics that had hitherto been unexplored. In other words, given the *purpose* of Plato's *dialogues* and extant work, the veracity of the individual beliefs of the persona in his *dialogues*, or even the accuracy of events which he describes, are of less importance and relevance than the

³²⁴ The exception to this would be Plato's *Apology* which by all accounts is Plato's attempt to describe the actual events of Socrates trial and Socrates's actual defense and to a lesser extent the *Crito* which is Plato's description of the final conversation between Crito and Socrates concerning justice where Crito attempts to convince Socrates, unsuccessfully, that he should flee his cell and Athens to avoid his impending execution.

topics which he discusses as well as the means by which he explores the topics – namely *dialectic* or *dialogue* form.

It can be argued however that Plato believed, and this view was inherited to a certain degree by Aristotle, that the most direct and powerful way to arrive at truth or the essence of an abstract topic was through dialogue or argument, and so almost of all of his writings were drafted in this form. From Plato's perspective, it was only through *dialectic*, through the bantering and discussion of varying points of view by several individuals, that the truth or wisdom of a certain topic could be revealed – if in fact the true nature of Truth on the topic at hand could indeed actually be established, hence the skeptic nature of many of the later interpreters of his work. This form of writing and exposition by Plato can be viewed as evidence of Plato's insistence that pure, absolute truth is unknowable, but can be explored or better understood by evaluating all sides of an issue or topic and using reason and *logic* to arrive at *understanding*, even if absolute truth is elusive.

But again, when trying to discern or determine "Plato's philosophy", or Platonism, in its early stages as it is sometimes referred to, it is important to remember that perhaps Plato's most lasting contribution to Western thought was not necessarily the philosophy that he presented, the one which he assume he learned from Socrates, but the means by which he presented and explored these philosophical principles – through dialogue and debate, i.e. *dialectic* – a method which was much more profound and lasting in and of itself than the doctrines and belief systems that we infer to be contained or found in Plato's works and a method which rested on the supremacy of *reason*, i.e. *logos*, and argument and *logic* to a great extent, over myth or blind faith. A constant theme in all of Plato's *dialogues* then is the method of teaching itself, a method which spoke to the power of the mental faculty of man more so than any of his predecessors, predecessors which had for the most part relied on poetry and mythology as tools of exposition and explanation (and to some extent even *mysticism* in the sense of direct *divine revelation* and the absence of *reason* or *logic* from which poetry can be seen to have derived) and the establishment of *truth*.³²⁵

³²⁵ It also relevant of course that this method of teaching, the philosophical system of "learning" that Plato is classically given credit for founding, led to the formulation of the first true academic center of learning itself, namely the Academy in Athens which Plato founded circa 387 BCE and persisted for some three centuries after his death, Aristotle of course having studied there for some twenty years before moving on and starting his own school the Lyceum. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platonic_Academy

Plato and the Allegory of the Cave: *Ideas, Being and Becoming*

The first systematic treatment of philosophy, and arguably the most influential, in the West can be found in works of Plato, in particular in his works the *Phaedo*, the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* which are by most accounts the most influential of Plato's works. Despite his unique approach to philosophy, both in terms of his writing style as well as content, Plato nonetheless did not evolve in a vacuum, influenced in no small measure by the "poets", Homer and Hesiod standing out of course given their vast influence on Hellenic culture and society overall. Also, from a philosophical perspective, we see clear traces of some of the philosophical tenets of some of the so-called "Pre-Socratics", Heraclitus and Pythagoras in particular. We also see traces and hints of the *mystery cults* as well, with Orphism standing out but Plato is clearly no stranger to the Eleusinian mysteries either.

Plato does not altogether dismiss the *mythic* and *mystic* traditions that were mainstays in Hellenic culture during classical Greece when Plato lived and wrote, and he most certainly does not entirely dismiss the relevance or existence of the gods per se upon which these traditions rested.³²⁶ He nonetheless however breaks free from these characteristically Hellenic "religions", if we use that term broadly, expanding upon some of the philosophical traditions that came before him and for the most part relegating myth and mystery to the poets and mystics. For with Plato, no doubt with his teacher Socrates as well, we see a dramatic shift away from the ancient wisdom that lay buried in myth and mystery, and a pivot toward *reason* and *logic* - *logos* and *dialectic* - as tools for determining the true nature of *reality* and *knowledge* – the domain of the *philosopher* - characteristics that in turn become trademarks of Hellenic philosophical tradition itself.

At the time that Plato started his philosophical endeavors, the Greek society and culture at large was imbued with a variety of *mystery cults* traditions such as the Orphism and the Cult of Dionysus which were both close cousins to the *mystery cult* traditions presided over by Egyptian priests with whom both Pythagoras and Plato are both to have believed to have studied with. Furthermore, Greek society at the time was heavily influenced by a lively mythic and poetic tradition (*hymnos*) as represented by the prevalence and popularity of the works of Homer, Hesiod and Orpheus which were shrouded in a world of mystery and tales of heroes from deep antiquity, journeys to the underworld (Hades), and epic battles of the gods from which the race of man ultimately descended. Plato was influenced by all of these sociological and theological forces and even if he didn't reject them outright (at least not in his published works), he

³²⁶ He actually refers to mystics, those initiated in the mysteries, as true philosophers in *Phaedo* 69c-69d.

attempted to place these ancient belief systems into a much richer intellectual framework from which philosophy, what we today call science, was from then on pursued as its own discipline.

One, if not the, central tenet of Plato's philosophy is the fundamental reality and ontological primacy of what came to be known as *forms* or *ideas*³²⁷, a theory which is introduced in the *Phaedo* as an argument for the immortality of the Soul and is explored in much more detail in the *Republic*, a dialogue whose central theme is the nature of justice and its relationship to *happiness*, the Greek *eudaimonia*, and its role in the construction and management of the ideal state.³²⁸ Plato's *idealism*, to use a more modern term to describe his *theory of forms*, not only provided the epistemological foundations of his philosophy as a whole, but also in turn provided the intellectual foundation of his *ethics* and socio-political philosophy which was based upon the necessity and value of *virtue* and *wisdom*, i.e. *sophia*, concepts which he held were realities in and of themselves which were the goals of philosophical inquiry, just as *justice* and *happiness* should be the goals of the state.³²⁹

Perhaps the most famous illustration of Plato's *idealism*, his *theory of forms*, and the role of the *Good* as the source of all things, the penultimate idea as it were, is summed up in the Allegory of the Cave from what is believed to be the most mature work of his middle period, namely the *Republic*.³³⁰ In this graphic metaphor, Socrates describes a group of people who have been chained to a wall in a cave for their whole lives, a chain which does not allow their heads to move and therefore they can only see what is directly in front of their field of vision. There is a fire behind them, which casts shadows upon images and forms that are moved behind the chained souls on the top of a wall, much like a puppet show casts characters across the field of a wooden stage.

"Next," said I, "compare our nature in respect of education and its lack to such an experience as this. Picture men dwelling in a sort of subterranean cavern with a long entrance open to the light on its entire width. Conceive them as having their legs and necks fettered from childhood, so that they remain in the same spot, able to look forward only, and prevented by the fetters from turning their heads. Picture further the light from a fire burning higher up and at a distance behind them, and between the fire and the prisoners and above them a road along which a low wall has been built, as

³²⁷ Forms: *eidōs* in Greek which can be translated as "essence", "type" or even "species" depending on the context but is typically translated as "form" in English and the related term he uses is *ἰδέα* or *idea*.

³²⁸ Both the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* are believed to have been written by Plato during his so-called Middle Period where he begins to create and establish the basic tenets of his own philosophy and the ontological supremacy of the reality of Forms and Ideas, from which his socio-political as well as ethical principles ultimately stem from and rest upon.

³²⁹ Plato's *idealism* is distinguished from the more *materialist* schools of thought as reflected by Democritus, Aristotle and Epicurus among others who held that that which is perceived by the senses held ontological superiority to concepts of the mind (or Soul), i.e. *ideas*.

³³⁰ Also sometimes referred to as the Analogy of the Cave, Plato's Cave, or the Parable of the Cave.

the exhibitors of puppet-shows have partitions before the men themselves, above which they show the puppets.” “All that I see,” he said. “See also, then, men carrying past the wall implements of all kinds that rise above the wall, and human images and shapes of animals as well, wrought in stone and wood and every material, some of these bearers presumably speaking and others silent.”³³¹

So the chained souls can see shadows in front of them, or *forms*, projected to the wall in front of them off of the fire that blazes behind them which they cannot see. Hence these people know only shadows and forms their whole lives, although they believe this to be the one and only reality for they know nothing else. Such is the source and nature of ignorance, for these people know not what they do not know, in much the same way as Heraclitus deemed his teachings to be misunderstood by most.

“Then in every way such prisoners would deem reality to be nothing else than the shadows of the artificial objects.” “Quite inevitably,” he said. “Consider, then, what would be the manner of the release and healing from these bonds and this folly if in the course of nature something of this sort should happen to them: When one was freed from his fetters and compelled to stand up suddenly and turn his head around and walk and to lift up his eyes to the light, and in doing all this felt pain and, because of the dazzle and glitter of the light, was unable to discern the objects whose shadows he formerly saw, what do you suppose would be his answer if someone told him that what he had seen before was all a cheat and an illusion, but that now, being nearer to reality and turned toward more real things, he saw more truly? And if also one should point out to him each of the passing objects and constrain him by questions to say what it is, do you not think that he would be at a loss and that he would regard what he formerly saw as more real than the things now pointed out to him?” “Far more real,” he said.³³²

Here Plato not only provides the analogy of *knowledge*, at least the first form of higher *knowledge* of Forms, *ideas*, in and of themselves as being the true nature, the source of the shadows and images that the chained prisoners see on the wall in front of them from the reflection of the fire, but also alludes to the difficult role of the philosopher who is trying to illustrate the true nature of reality to those who are bound in chains and can see only shadows and reflections of Truth – i.e. Forms and *ideas*.

³³¹ See Plato *Republic* Book 6, 514a-515a.- From Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 & 6 translated by Paul Shorey. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1969. See <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D7%3Asection%3D514a>.

³³² See Plato *Republic* Book 6, 515b-515d.- From Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 & 6 translated by Paul Shorey. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1969. See <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D7%3Asection%3D515b>.

"And if he were compelled to look at the light itself, would not that pain his eyes, and would he not turn away and flee to those things which he is able to discern and regard them as in very deed more clear and exact than the objects pointed out?" "It is so," he said. "And if," said I, "someone should drag him thence by force up the ascent which is rough and steep, and not let him go before he had drawn him out into the light of the sun, do you not think that he would find it painful to be so haled along, and would chafe at it, and when he came out into the light, that his eyes would be filled with its beams so that he would not be able to see even one of the things that we call real?" "Why, no, not immediately," he said. "Then there would be need of habituation, I take it, to enable him to see the things higher up. And at first he would most easily discern the shadows and, after that, the likenesses or reflections in water of men and other things, and later, the things themselves, and from these he would go on to contemplate the appearances in the heavens and heaven itself, more easily by night, looking at the light of the stars and the moon, than by day the sun and the sun's light." "Of course."³³³

If they are released from their intellectual "bondage", the veil of their ignorance removed, and they would were to leave the cave itself, and arrive outside and see the sun for the first time, the source of the light of the actual shapes and "things" which have their images and shadows reflected on the wall that they have seen their whole lives and thought to be "Truth" and "reality", they would for the very first time be "illuminated" so to speak, and they would finally be able to see things for what they truly are.

"And so, finally, I suppose, he would be able to look upon the sun itself and see its true nature, not by reflections in water or phantasms of it in an alien setting, but in and by itself in its own place." "Necessarily," he said. "And at this point he would infer and conclude that this it is that provides the seasons and the courses of the year and presides over all things in the visible region, and is in some sort the cause of all these things that they had seen."³³⁴

Here Plato alludes to the final source and true nature of everything that is mistaken for reality, i.e. the Sun or the *Good*, which represents the final goal, the endpoint as it were, of all intellectual and philosophical pursuit – to understand Truth and the source and nature of all that exists. The *Good* to Plato is the ultimate *idea*, the source of all Ideas and *forms*, and from which any conception of anything material is derived.

³³³ See Plato *Republic* Book 6, 515d-516b. From Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 & 6 translated by Paul Shorey. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1969. See <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D7%3Asection%3D515d>.

³³⁴ See Plato *Republic* Book 6, 516b-516c. From Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 & 6 translated by Paul Shorey. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1969. See <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D7%3Asection%3D515d>.

In this same passage, Socrates describes the perils of the philosopher who tries to show the true nature of reality to those who are bound in the cave and who live in ignorance, going so far as to suggest – as was the very case for Socrates himself in fact – that if he were to try and illustrate the true nature of reality to those who lived in ignorance not only would he be laughed at but that he also would in fact be killed (517a).



Figure 22: Depiction of Plato's Allegory of the Cave by Cornelis van Haarlem, 1604.³³⁵

The philosopher to Plato then is like a person who is freed from this cave, and is let out into the light of the *sun*, where he sees and realizes that everything that he has thought to be *real*, has only been a shadow of truth and reality. In its simplest interpretation, the Allegory of the Cave can be viewed as outlining and defining Plato's belief in the supremacy of forms or ideas over knowledge derived from sensory perception or the material world, i.e. his *theory of forms*.

³³⁵ Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4040982> from Wikipedia contributors, 'Allegory of the Cave', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2 November 2016, 10:40 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Allegory_of_the_Cave&oldid=747432955> [accessed 2 November 2016].

The first of his works that most scholars believe lays out the basic framework of Plato's primary philosophical tenets is *Phaedo*, a work which circulated in antiquity under the title of *On the Soul*. This work is believed to be one of the first works from his Middle Period, and although the narrative takes place on the day that Socrates is put to death, linking the dialogue with some of his earlier works which deal with the fate of Socrates and "Socratic" philosophy (as distinct from the Platonic philosophy), it nonetheless lays out the basic argument for not just the immortality of the Soul, but the ontological supremacy of the world of *intelligibles* - *forms* and *ideas* – over the visible or material world of "things" or "objects", i.e. that which is perceived by the senses. The dialogue takes place between several followers and friends of Socrates on the eve of his death, a quite dramatic scene and considered to be one of the best and greatest of the literary works produced by Plato. Phaedo is one of the characters of the dialogue and he is the narrator of the tale and is supposedly present on the day of Socrates death at the place of his imprisonment and therefore in a position to speak on a first-hand basis about the topics and conversations held just before Socrates is put to death.³³⁶

Naturally, the question of the nature of the death, whether or not there is anything that persists beyond death, and whether or not death itself should be feared, arises, initially posed as to whether or not it is just for one to take his own life. Plato, through Socrates, explains that philosophy is in fact, if anything the study of death and dying, the preparation for death as it were, and as such the philosopher should not fear death, but welcome it. Furthermore, Socrates explains that it is not right for one to kill himself for the Soul is owned by the gods as he puts it, and as such it would not be right to take it before its time- before "*god sends some necessity upon him, such as now come upon me*" as Socrates puts it³³⁷ - just as it would not be right to take something of someone's else possession without their permission. This view is challenged however, and it is in this context that Plato, again through Socrates, lays out his argument for the immortality of the Soul³³⁸, explaining his sentiment that "*I not only do not grieve, but I have great hopes that there is something in store for the dead, and, as has been said of old, something better*

³³⁶ There are enough details surrounding the account as to place at least some of it within the account of actual historical context, i.e. that some of the events and details described in the dialogue actually took place. Plato himself says that he was not present that day as he was not feeling well, but there are details presented with respect to the wife of Socrates being present, the reason why that particular day was chosen as the day which he was to be put to death, as well as some details surrounding the poison itself that was administered to him that warrant at least some of the account as historically valid.

³³⁷ *Phaedrus*, 62c. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D62c>

³³⁸ Soul in Greek (Ψυχή), transliterated *psychí* or *psuché*, etymology is most likely from *psuxō*, "to breathe, blow" representing the life force that animates life that was considering akin to breathing, much like *prāṇa*, or breath, in the Vedic/Indo-Aryan philosophical and later Vedantic and Yogic Indian philosophical traditions.

for the good than for the wicked."³³⁹ The argument rests on the belief that death itself is the separation of the Soul from the body, and that the philosopher is primarily concerned with the nature of the Soul, and things akin to it, as distinguished from things of the world which are associated with the mortal body and hence explaining why the philosopher is concerned more with the nature of death than the nature of life as it were. To Plato, it is this pursuit of *wisdom*, *sophia*, as an end in and of itself that ultimately defines the philosopher and separates him from the masses, and the means by which he can not only prepare himself for death but in turn understand that which persists beyond death. In this pursuit, the senses are not just relegated to secondary importance with respect to the attainment of *truth* or *wisdom*, but are to be shunned altogether as deceiving.

*For, if pure knowledge is impossible while the body is with us, one of two things must follow, either it cannot be acquired at all or only when we are dead; for then the soul will be by itself apart from the body, but not before. And while we live, we shall, I think, be nearest to knowledge when we avoid, so far as possible, intercourse and communion with the body, except what is absolutely necessary, and are not filled with its nature, but keep ourselves pure from it until God himself sets us free. And in this way, freeing ourselves from the foolishness of the body and being pure, we shall, I think, be with the pure and shall know of ourselves all that is pure, — and that is, perhaps, the truth. For it cannot be that the impure attain the pure. Such words as these, I think, Simmias, all who are rightly lovers of knowledge [philosophers] must say to each other and such must be their thoughts. Do you not agree?" "Most assuredly, Socrates."*³⁴⁰

This *idealist* conception of *knowledge* and *truth*, one which is based upon the distinction between the Soul and the body, and of course upon the belief that in fact the soul exists, is not only characteristic of Plato's philosophy throughout his works but in fact underpins it in almost all respects. The notion of purification, and the idea that the body itself and its wants and needs are "impure", is a notion which has parallels in the Orphic tradition and certainly in the Upanishadic philosophic tradition as well. To Plato, the senses are looked upon as deceiving to a certain extent, or at the least to be relevant to only a lower form of knowledge, one which is fundamentally not the pursuit of the lover of wisdom, *sophia*, i.e. the philosopher.

³³⁹ *Phaedrus*, 62c. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D63c>

³⁴⁰ *Phaedrus*, 66e-67b. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D66e>

What I mean is this: Have the sight and hearing of men any truth in them, or is it true, as the poets are always telling us, that we neither hear nor see anything accurately? And yet if these two physical senses are not accurate or exact, the rest are not likely to be, for they are inferior to these. Do you not think so?" "Certainly I do," he replied.

"Then," said he, "when does the soul attain to truth? For when it tries to consider anything in company with the body, it is evidently deceived by it." "True." "In thought, then, if at all, something of the realities becomes clear to it?" "Yes."³⁴¹

Plato goes on to describe in detail the process by which It is only through the use of pure *reason* (*logos*), in the realm beyond thought really – *ideas* and *forms* – as the only realm within which the highest *knowledge* can be attained, a realm which the Soul subsists in and of itself.

"But it thinks best when none of these things troubles it, neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor any pleasure, but it is, so far as possible, alone by itself, and takes leave of the body, and avoiding, so far as it can, all association or contact with the body, reaches out toward the reality." "That is true." "In this matter also, then, the soul of the philosopher greatly despises the body and avoids it and strives to be alone by itself?" "Evidently."

"Now how about such things as this, Simmias? Do we think there is such a thing as absolute justice, or not?" "We certainly think there is." "And absolute beauty and goodness." "Of course." "Well, did you ever see anything of that kind with your eyes?" "Certainly not," said he. "Or did you ever reach them with any of the bodily senses? I am speaking of all such things, as size, health, strength, and in short the essence or underlying quality of everything. Is their true nature contemplated by means of the body? Is it not rather the case that he who prepares himself most carefully to understand the true essence of each thing that he examines would come nearest to the knowledge of it?" "Certainly."

"Would not that man do this most perfectly who approaches each thing, so far as possible, with the reason alone, not introducing sight into his reasoning nor dragging in any of the other senses along with his thinking, but who employs pure, absolute reason in his attempt to search out the pure, absolute essence of things, and who removes himself, so far as possible, from eyes and ears, and, in a word, from his whole body, because he feels that its companionship disturbs the soul and hinders it from attaining truth and wisdom? Is not this the man, Simmias, if anyone, to attain to the knowledge of reality?" "That is true as true can be, Socrates," said Simmias."³⁴²

³⁴¹ *Phaedrus*, 62c-66a. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D65b>

³⁴² *Phaedrus*, 62c-66a. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D65b>

Here we see Plato describing the means by which this *wisdom* can be attained, if attainment is possible while one is “embodied”. Withdrawing within oneself, taking leave of the body, avoiding any contact or association with the body as much as possible, “reaching out toward reality” as he puts it. This process of what can perhaps best be described in this context of the “liberation” of the Soul from the body, or as Plato puts it a “*reaching out toward the reality*” smacks of *mysticism* and sounds a lot like *pratyahara*, withdrawal of senses, that is fundamental to Yoga.³⁴³

Plato further alludes to the specific human faculty by which the knowledge, again *wisdom*, in this case *phronēsis* which is a more practical variant of the more *mystic sophia*, can be obtained, i.e. through the use of pure reason, or *logos*. We find Plato further illustrating this theory of knowledge, i.e. his *epistemology*, well beyond what we would consider that which is bound by pure reason or *logic* from a modern Western intellectual conception however. Regardless, it most certainly sits above anything having to do with sense experience or any knowledge of the material world, in fact again this knowledge is supposed to be avoided by the true philosopher who wishes to attain wisdom, i.e. that which is deathless and therefore no fear of death itself.

A key part of Plato’s argument for the immortality of the Soul in *Phaedo* rests on, and starts with, an argument for the existence of life and death as different aspects of the same notion of concept which underlies the Soul - which he equates with life (animation, *animus* in the later Roman/Latin philosophical and theological tradition) - based upon what might be called the “doctrine of opposites”. That is to say that each opposing process or force is not just defined by its opposite but that its essence stems from, originates from, its opposing process. In other words, opposing processes are not just linked because they are “opposite” each other, i.e. representative of diametrically opposing processes, but in fact their existence depends upon the other and the existence of one is not just predicated, but in fact requires, the existence of the other. The examples he gives are sleeping and waking, increasing and decreasing, cooling and heating, and of course ultimately living to dying which is the context within which he uses this premise to again argue for the logical existence of the existence of the immortal Soul.

For if generation did not proceed from opposite to opposite and back again, going round, as it were in a circle, but always went forward in a straight line without turning back or curving, then, you

³⁴³ The supposed author of the *Yoga Sūtras* believed to have been written and compiled in around 400 CE.

know, in the end all things would have the same form and be acted upon in the same way and stop being generated at all."³⁴⁴

One finds this doctrine of opposites expressed by Heraclitus as well, a philosopher who is believed, at least according to Aristotle, to have greatly influenced Plato and certainly this argument in *Phaedo* seems to point squarely in that direction. In the words of Heraclitus, "*Living and dead are potentially the same thing, and so too waking and sleeping, and young and old; for the latter revert to the former, and the former in turn to the latter.*"³⁴⁵

It is from a rational deduction based upon this argument of the mutually interdependent reliance of opposing forces and states of being that Plato draws, via a *reductio ad absurdum* argument more or less, that life and death are in fact rationally dependent upon each other for their respective existence as concepts or ideas, i.e. mutually dependent states of being that ultimately depend upon each other for their very existence. He concludes therefore, that there must in fact precede some sort of life of the Soul before birth, and in turn some sort of life for the Soul after death.³⁴⁶

Once this is challenged, Plato (again through the voice of Socrates) goes on to argue for the primordial and absolute unchanging and eternal existence of *ideas* and *forms* as existing not just in and of themselves (a kind of *a priori* knowledge to use Kant's terminology) but also as representative of the highest form of knowledge itself, theorizing that learning is a form of "recollection" as it were, a notion that can be found throughout Plato's Early and Middle dialogues.

"Now if we had acquired that knowledge before we were born, and were born with it, we knew before we were born and at the moment of birth not only the equal and the greater and the less, but all such abstractions? For our present argument is no more concerned with the equal than with absolute beauty and the absolute good and the just and the holy, and, in short, with all those things which we stamp with the seal of absolute in our dialectic process of questions and answers; so that we must necessarily have acquired knowledge of all these before our birth." "That is true."

³⁴⁴ *Phaedrus*, 72b. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D72b>

³⁴⁵ Plato is believed to have studied under a student of Heraclitus, Cratylus, prior to studying with Socrates. Quote from Plutarch *Moralia; Consolation to Apollonius*. Loeb edition first published in 1928. With Greek text and the English translation by F. C. Babbitt. See http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Consolatio_ad_Apollonium*.html. For Heraclitus philosophy of opposites see Graham, Daniel W., "Heraclitus", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/heraclitus/>>.

³⁴⁶ This notion of the opposing forces and their primordial existence and interdependence as metaphysical as well as naturalistic concepts is also one of, if not the, founding principle upon which the metaphysics of the *Yijing* is based. See the chapter on *Yijing* metaphysics for details.

"And if after acquiring it we have not, in each case, forgotten it, we must always be born knowing these things, and must know them throughout our life; for to know is to have acquired knowledge and to have retained it without losing it, and the loss of knowledge is just what we mean when we speak of forgetting, is it not, Simmias?"³⁴⁷

The basic argument here is that in order for us to understand what "beauty", or "goodness", or "equality" is and what they mean, we must know it implicitly within the realm of knowledge and understanding where these *ideas* exist, i.e. we must "remember" them, recollect them, because the ideas themselves dwell in a realm beyond the physical or sensible world. That is to say these *ideas* are *a priori*, eternal notions or concepts and the only way we can truly understand or comprehend them is via the use of a "rational" faculty, through an instrument as it were, i.e. the Soul, that rests and dwells in the same *intelligible world* where these notions are resident. In other words, some element or part of us must be pre-existent to our birth in this material form, this body, in order for us to "remember" what these abstract constructs are and in order for us to "understand" what they truly mean or signify. Like can only know like as it is sometimes expressed.

Plato's *theory of forms* and his idea of *knowledge* or understanding, learning in fact, as *recollection*³⁴⁸, goes hand in hand with his *theory of forms*. These *forms* are described as the only unchanging, self-existent "things", ideas that can be grasped by *reason* alone (*logos*). These characteristics, in Plato's view, make *forms* and *ideas* the most real of "things", the truest of substances that have immanent and eternal existence, i.e. are not subject to change.

"Let us then," said he, "turn to what we were discussing before. [78d] Is the absolute essence, which we in our dialectic process of question and answer call true being, always the same or is it liable to change? Absolute equality, absolute beauty, any absolute existence, true being—do they ever admit of any change whatsoever? Or does each absolute essence, since it is uniform and exists by itself, remain the same and never in any way admit of any change?"³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ *Phaedrus*, 75c-75d. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D75c>

³⁴⁸ Plato's theory of knowledge as recollection is sometimes referred to as *anamnesis* in philosophical literature.

³⁴⁹ *Phaedrus*, 78c-78e. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Apage%3D78>

But this is not just an ethereal and abstract existence where these ideas dwell, but a real place as it were, a state of being, to which the mind, and Soul, of the philosopher is predisposed or attentive towards.

“But when the soul [79d] inquires alone by itself, it departs into the realm of the pure, the everlasting, the immortal and the changeless, and being akin to these it dwells always with them whenever it is by itself and is not hindered, and it has rest from its wanderings and remains always the same and unchanging with the changeless, since it is in communion therewith. And this state of the soul is called wisdom. Is it not so?”³⁵⁰

The changeless world of *forms* and *ideas* is not just the truest and realist of things, a much higher form of *knowledge*, truer form of knowledge given its unchanging and eternal nature, than the knowledge of the senses as governed by the body – the body being distinct from the Soul. The argument is made here not just for the existence of *forms* and *ideas*, but their equivalence with the Soul, their equivalent realm so to speak and the existence of a state of being which Plato refers to as “wisdom”, *phronēsis*, or “practical wisdom”, which is the ultimate goal and pursuit, the absolute end really, of philosophical pursuit.³⁵¹

As Socrates is prompted to explain further his reasoning as to why he has come to belief that the Soul lives beyond death and is in fact immortal, he narrates to his listeners upon the morning of his death the complete intellectual journey he went on to arrive at said conclusion, as to how he ended up concluding that the ineligible realm, the realm of *ideas* and *forms*, the realm guided by and explored through pure *reason* alone, represented the “most real” of phenomena, i.e. the highest form of *knowledge*. He does so by describing his foray and exploration into the realm of *natural philosophy*, what we have come to call Physics (through Aristotle’s terminology as it has been handed down in the Western intellectual tradition) and his ultimate rejection of this domain as the *final cause* or purpose of that which he considers the basis for reality, or experience. Even after being exposed to the philosophy of Anaxagoras, with whom the nature of Mind rested as the eternal principle which pervaded and formed the universe as we know it and experience it, Socrates could not conclude that anything pertaining to physical reality, any materialistic or

³⁵⁰ *Phaedrus*, 79c-79d. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Apage%3D79>

³⁵¹ For a discussion of the meaning and import of *phronēsis* in classic Hellenic philosophy and its relationship to various Buddhist and Vedic counterparts, see *The Shape of Ancient Thought* by Thomas McEvilley, published in 2002 by Allworth Press in New York, pg. 609.

empiricist framework, could facilitate or provide the true intellectual foundation for the “true cause” of the universe as know and experience it.³⁵²

As Socrates narrates this part of his argument in *Phaedo*, when he confronted this question about the “true” nature of existence, a question that could be formulated as something like: “what is the true cause and nature of the universe and the world as we know and understand it and what is it that underlies experience and makes it comprehensible and intelligible?”, the conclusion he came to was that the true cause and reason behind existence, the purpose or ultimate principles upon which existence itself rested, was in fact in the end the Forms and Ideas which existed behind and above the material physical world so to speak, and ultimately was the source of meaning and comprehension in any form to anything that we experience and anything that we would call “real”, or having existence in any way, shape or form. In this sense Socrates, as Plato portrays him, is an idealist in the purest sense of the term, and represents the very same conclusion that Descartes comes to some two thousand years later as expressed in his famous dictum, “*cogito ergo sum*”.

To Plato then, and in all likelihood this doctrine is Plato’s rather than Socrates’s, it is in the *intelligible realm* of *ideas* where truth and meaning and the ultimate cause and purpose of universal existence, can ultimately be found. As he expresses it, the only way anything comes into being is by “participating in its own proper essence”, Ideas and Forms define “being” in and of itself as it were. To come to this conclusion, he must reject physical and material causation as the defining principles of *reality* and instead rests his *metaphysics* upon the reality of *forms*, as expressed in the *Timaeus* as intellectual constructs which ultimately originate from the *Good* or the Best which he views as the pinnacle of all universal *intelligible* principles upon which all *forms* and *ideas* rest, and which represents the governing principle behind existence itself, its ultimate cause as it were. In the *Phaedo*, part of his argument for reaching this somewhat daring conclusion, the essence of his *idealism*, by likening the Soul to the realm of *forms* and the *Good* – like can only recognize and know like.

Toward the end of *Phaedo*, as his conclusions and arguments for the immortality of the Soul are challenged by the other interlocutors in the dialogue, Socrates argues that things that are of one principle or Form, one primal characteristic, cannot in fact at the same time consist of in any way its opposite principle or characteristic. As cold can never be hot, as good can never be bad, life can never be death, appealing to the reasoning of a doctrine of opposing principles again but this time not principles of mutually interdependent and opposing processes, but the mutually

³⁵² The full explanation of his conception of how the universe came into being is the topic of the *Timaeus*, more on this below.

exclusive nature of fundamental opposite “characteristics”, i.e. properties of a “thing”, “object” or “concept” in and of itself.

“Well, then, if one is added to one [101c] or if one is divided, you would avoid saying that the addition or the division is the cause of two? You would exclaim loudly that you know no other way by which anything can come into existence than by participating in the proper essence of each thing in which it participates, and therefore you accept no other cause of the existence of two than participation in duality, and things which are to be two must participate in duality, and whatever is to be one must participate in unity, and you would pay no attention to the divisions and additions and other such subtleties, leaving those for wiser men to explain.”³⁵³

In this way, something that is even can never be odd and something that is cold can never be hot, and therefore something that is alive - as the Soul is equated with, i.e. life itself – can never be dead. So he uses reason and *dialectic* here again to argue his case for the immortality of the Soul, that it is life itself and therefore cannot be or akin to in any way, shape or form death and therefore can never in fact die. That is to say that Soul is associated with and conceptually equivalent to life, and that it therefore cannot be associated with or have the property of its opposite characteristic, i.e. death, and therefore the Soul must be, by definition, eternally existence and forever “living” as it were.

Whether or not one agrees with the arguments and analogies that Plato uses to establish the reality of *forms* and the Immortality of the Soul in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, the method he uses to build his case as it were, his use of *dialectic* - discussion and dialogue rooted in reason and argument - to make his case, is innovative in and of itself and comes to represent in many respects the hallmark of the Hellenic philosophical tradition. Furthermore, the *idealism* inherent in his *theory of forms* establishes the primary beachhead in the Western philosophical tradition upon which really all subsequent philosophical, and theological, intellectual development takes place.

Perhaps Plato’s greatest contribution to Western philosophy is the *idealism* embedded in his *theory of forms*, which in essence breaks down existence itself as not only a physical world of inanimate and animate objects, but a theory of knowledge and understanding which is based upon the notion that a) the understanding of a thing is predicated upon the existence of a true

³⁵³ *Phaedrus*, 79c-79d. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Apage%3D79>.

form, or *idea* of a thing without which the understanding, or even the thing itself, could not truly “exist:; and b) that such *forms* or *ideas* existed eternally as intellectual constructs upon which our understanding of the world around us was based. It is from this premise and starting point that we must begin to try and grasp Plato’s perspective on not just reality and knowledge, but also ultimately his views on universal creation as well as his conception of the human Soul, all of which underpin not just his ethical philosophy but also his socio-political philosophy as reflected in the *Republic* and *Laws* most notably.

One of the primary themes that underlies all of Plato’s works, and can be especially seen in the *Timaeus* and *Phaedo* among other of his prominent works, is that the principles of reality or the known universe, and the very meaning of life and the pursuit of wisdom and understanding are not just worth exploring, but represent the very highest goal of life – the end of the philosopher. His means of exploration, and perhaps the most defining characteristic of the Hellenic philosophical tradition which he so greatly influenced, is the role of reason and argument in the form of dialogue, *logos* and *dialectic* respectively, in ascertaining these universal truths, even if absolute truth or certainty is not completely possible given the limits of human understanding. Whether or not he believed that absolute knowledge (*sophia*) was altogether possible or not is debatable and this is perhaps one of the great mysteries of Platonic philosophy as we try to understand it through the metaphors, analogies and arguments he presents and explores throughout his *dialogues*, the method and means of communication of these ideas and principles in fact lending itself to *skepticism* which was a hallmark of many of the philosophers which succeeded him at the Academy.

With respect to the nature of what can truly be known, from which any definition of *reality* can be drawn, Plato’s teachings as we understand them through his *dialogues* establish the first and foremost tradition of *skepticism* in Western – Indo-European really – thought. This tradition, which starts with Socrates and clearly influenced Plato significantly, establishes the grounds of *epistemology* – the study of knowledge (*epistêmê*)– which is reflected in the philosophical tradition which Plato leaves behind at the Academy which he founded in Athens circa 387 BCE. This tradition of *skepticism* represented the core intellectual stream of thought emanating from the Academy subsequent to Plato which provided the basis for other currents of more materialistic and empiricist philosophical schools such as Stoicism and Epicureanism which has a much more broad definition of knowledge, each playing a strong role in the development of Hellenic philosophy in the classical Greco-Roman period.

Plato’s teachings were founded upon the principle, again believed to have been a legacy of Socrates himself, that there were significant intellectual limits upon that which could be truly known given that knowledge itself was predicated on the *a priori* existence of Forms or Ideas without which any understanding or comprehension of the physical world of matter

comprehended by the senses is possible. For Plato considered knowledge itself to be a type of “recollection”, which was part of his argument for the immortality of the Soul, which was the “form” of the body, one of the primary themes of the *Phaedo*, a dialogue which circulated in antiquity under the title of *On the Soul*.

Probably the most comprehensive literary expression of Plato’s notion of *knowledge*, the distinction he draws between the *intelligible world* (higher form of *knowledge*) and the visible world (lower form) comes from the *Republic*, expressed in what has come to be known as the *analogy of the divided line*.

“Conceive then,” said I, “as we were saying, that there are these two entities, and that one of them is sovereign over the intelligible order and region and the other over the world of the eye-ball, not to say the sky-ball, but let that pass. You surely apprehend the two types, the visible and the intelligible.” “I do.”

“Represent them then, as it were, by a line divided into two unequal sections and cut each section again in the same ratio (the section, that is, of the visible and that of the intelligible order), and then as an expression of the ratio of their comparative clearness and obscurity you will have, as one of the sections of the visible world, images. By images I mean, first, shadows, and then reflections in water and on surfaces of dense, smooth and bright texture, and everything of that kind, if you apprehend.” “I do.” “As the second section assume that of which this is a likeness or an image, that is, the animals about us and all plants and the whole class of objects made by man.” “I so assume it,” he said. “Would you be willing to say,” said I, “that the division in respect of reality and truth or the opposite is expressed by the proportion: as is the opiniable to the knowable so is the likeness to that of which it is a likeness?” “I certainly would.”

*“Consider then again the way in which we are to make the division of the intelligible section.” “In what way?” “By the distinction that there is one section of it which the soul is compelled to investigate by treating as images the things imitated in the former division, and by means of assumptions from which it proceeds not up to a first principle but down to a conclusion, while there is another section in which it advances from its assumption to a beginning or principle that transcends assumption, and in which it makes no use of the images employed by the other section, relying on ideas only and progressing systematically through ideas.”*³⁵⁴

Here we have Plato’s fundamental distinction drawn, in the analogy of a “divided line”, the world of the visible, that which can be perceived by the senses, and the world of *intelligibles*, i.e. thoughts and ideas divided into two unequal portions of a line, the *intelligible* portion being given

³⁵⁴ Plato *Republic* Book 6, 509d - 510b. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 & 6 translated by Paul Shorey. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1969. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D6%3Asection%3D509d>

greater emphasis and therefore greater (relative) size than its counterpart that represents the visible world. Then each of these sections is divided again into two unequal portions of the same ratio relative to each other, with the larger proportion of each subsection is sized based upon its relative clarity from an intellectual standpoint.

The smaller of the two segments of the visible portion of the line, i.e. the visible world, is made up of first images – shadows, reflections and the like – which are less “real”, more “obscure”, than the “things” which they represent in and of themselves, i.e. that which makes up the larger portion of the visible world part of the line because the “things” themselves have more intellectual clarity or definition than the “images” or “shadows” of things.

Likewise, and analogously, the *intelligible world* is also divided into two unequal sections – of the same proportion. The first of which, the smaller subsection, consists of the treatment of the images of things, and via various assumptions and conclusions various ideas or “theories”, abstract conclusions are drawn, i.e. “bottom up” or “deductive” reasoning of sorts. The second section, the larger subsection of the *intelligible world* does not deal with things themselves, or even their images or representations but only deals with *ideas* in and of themselves and based upon pure intellectual reasoning – *dialectic* or *logos* – progresses from various assumptions or theses up to an ontological *first principle* or set of principles, i.e. bottom up *logic* or “inductive reasoning” of sorts.



Figure 23: Plato's Epistemological worldview, i.e. the Analogy Divided Line³⁵⁵

Plato then goes on to use this *analogy of the divided line* as a representation, and relative worth or value, of four different types of knowledge, essentially using the divided line to describe his epistemological worldview. Each section he describes as “affections of the Soul”, our perhaps better put, “capabilities” or “faculties” of the human mind. The largest section of the line represents the clearest, the least obscure, and the closest depiction of Truth or Reality and is representative of conclusions drawn by use of pure *reason (logos)*, the faculty of the mind which

³⁵⁵ AC represents knowledge of the material or “visible” world and CE represents knowledge of the “intelligible” world. Image From Wikipedia contributors, 'Analogy of the divided line', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 19 October 2016, 05:17 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Analogy_of_the_divided_line&oldid=745083560> [accessed 19 October 2016].

deals only with *ideas* in and of themselves and reaches conclusions from principles up to the greatest and highest principle, i.e. the *Good* (segment DE).

This type of *knowledge* is followed then by lesser knowledge which is arrived at by the faculty of *understanding*, which draws various conclusions based upon “thinking” about not just abstract ideas in and of themselves but also about things and images as well (segment CD). So although this type of thinking, like *geometry* for example, still deals with the *intelligible world* and therefore is of higher value than the “visible” realm of perception, is nonetheless of lesser value than conclusions drawn via pure reason and using pure ideas because this type of knowledge does deal with objects, even if they are simply images or representations of physical objects or things.

These two types of thinking that are categorized in the world of *intelligibles* are then followed by lower forms of knowledge which deal directly with objects of the visible world, the higher of which Plato refers to as “belief”, or “opinion” which deals with objects of the senses that exist within the world of visible world itself, what one might call the material world or the domain of physics (segment BC), and then the lowest form of knowledge which he describes as “conjecture” or “imagination” (segment AB) which deals with not things in and of themselves but their shapes or images and deals with the likeness of visible things.³⁵⁶

In this section of the *Republic*, which precedes his more graphic metaphor of his *theory of forms* as told in his Allegory of the Cave, albeit wrapped up in the middle of a socio-political work, does represent from a Western standpoint the one of the first prolific and well-articulated forays into the world of metaphysics, i.e. the exploration of the true nature of reality that underlies the world of the senses, and attempts to explain our place in this world and the illusory and shadowy nature of the objects of our perception independent of any religious or theological dogma. It also illustrates the prevalence of *geometry* and *mathematics* as a one of the primary means to which this reality can be understood, a marked characteristic of not just the Platonic philosophical tradition, but the Western philosophical tradition as a whole.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ See Plato *Republic* Book 6, 510c-511e.- From Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vols. 5 & 6 translated by Paul Shorey. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1969. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D6%3Asection%3D511e> and Wikipedia contributors, 'Analogy of the divided line', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 19 October 2016, 05:17 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Analogy_of_the_divided_line&oldid=745083560> [accessed 19 October 2016].

³⁵⁷ Taken one step further can be interpreted to mean that Plato is espousing a doctrine of the illusory nature of reality much like the Vedic tradition and its concept of *Maya*. But buried within his allegory is also his dim and morbid view of the role of the philosopher himself, who is tasked with trying to shed light upon the true nature of reality to those steeped in ignorance.

It is in the *Timaeus* however, one of the later and more mature works of Plato where he expounds upon his view on the nature of the divine, the source of the known universe (cosmological view), as well as the role of the Soul in nature. And although Plato, and Socrates as represented by Plato's earlier works, rejected the mythological and anthropomorphic *theology* that was prevalent in ancient Greece, Plato does not completely depart from the concept of a theological and divine or supra-natural creator of the known universe, at least as reflected in the words of *Timaeus* in the dialogue that bears his name.

In the *Timaeus*, Plato describes a “likely story” as to how the world was created, leveraging again reason (*logos*) and *dialectic*, and heavy use of analogy and metaphor, to describe the creation of the universe as a product of the intelligent design of a creator, his *Demiurge*.³⁵⁸ In many respects, the ideas and postulates of the *Timaeus* represent an expansion on Plato's *theory of forms* which he introduces in *Phaedo* and the *Republic* but follows its intellectual development into the idea of the *Good*, and its role in the creation of the cosmos (*kosmos*), the material universe within which we live. He starts again by drawing the distinction between the *intelligible* and *sensible* worlds, that which he calls *Being* and *Becoming*, two terms that have come to define Plato's *epistemology* as well as his *cosmogony*.

*Now first of all we must, in my judgment, make the following distinction. What is that which is Existent always [28a] and has no Becoming? And what is that which is Becoming always and never is Existent? Now the one of these is apprehensible by thought with the aid of reasoning, since it is ever uniformly existent; whereas the other is an object of opinion with the aid of unreasoning sensation, since it becomes and perishes and is never really existent.*³⁵⁹

Here again Plato makes a distinction between the physical, or visible, world which is subject to change, and the eternal and changeless world of *intelligibles*, the Intellect (*Nous*) which can only be apprehended by use of the *mind* and *reason*, i.e. is not perceivable by the senses directly and can be discerned in the realm of the mind or thought. He draws the basic distinction between that which is subject to change, the “visible” or “material” world (*Becoming*), and that which is

³⁵⁸ Plato's *Demiurge*, the so-called “Divine Craftsman” that he describes in the *Timaeus*, becomes one of the cornerstone theological principles in the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition and one which bleeds, and fits quite nicely, into the Judeo-Christian (and Islamic) anthropomorphic conception of God. The English *Demiurge* comes from the Latin *Demiurgus*, which stems from the Greek *Dēmiourgos* (δημιουργός), which means “craftsman” or “artisan” but of course morphed into the more theological notion of Creator within the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition itself. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Demiurge', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 18 December 2016, 18:44 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Demiurge&oldid=755542807>> [accessed 18 December 2016].

³⁵⁹ Plato *Timaeus*. 27a-28a. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9 translated by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1925. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0180%3Atext%3DTim.%3Apage%3D27>.

eternal and *changeless* (*Being*). Knowledge of the former, which falls under the category of the natural sciences which is the main thrust and emphasis of Aristotle's *reality*, or sphere of *knowledge*, is not rejected outright by Plato but is held subservient – due to its constant fluctuating and changing state – to the world of ideas and thought which is apprehended by intelligence (*Nous*) and *reason* (*Logos*) and which is changeless and eternal.

The realm of *Becoming* is always subjected to perishing at some level and therefore never truly “is”, or can be said to “exist” within the context of Plato's epistemological and ontological framework. It is conceived of by what he deems “opinion”, alluding to the fact that perception is subjective in nature and what one perceives or experiences is not necessarily the same experience or perception of someone else, or some other being for that matter. It is perceived via the senses, i.e. not by reason. Whereas the latter realm always “is”, *Being*, is changeless and eternal, and is conceived of, apprehended as it were, by reason, mind and intelligence alone. It is not subject to change and therefore according to Plato it truly can be said to actually “be”, or can be said to “exist” within Plato's epistemological framework, hence the term *Being* that he allots to it.

It is within this context of Plato's distinction between the world of *Being* and *Becoming*, as he describes it in the *Timaeus* here, that the connection between Plato and Parmenides is drawn. In many ancient philosophical circles, Heraclitus is said to be the mother of Plato's teachings where Parmenides is said to be his father and it is his later works, and again specifically in the *Timaeus*, that we see this distinction along the lines of *Being* and *Becoming* clearly drawn, representing the most mature form of Plato's intellectual conception of *knowledge*, i.e. what can be known, what philosophers call *epistemology*.

Parmenides (late 6th early 5th century BCE) is known for his one work, known by the title *On Nature*, written in hexameter verse which although does not survive in full, is believed to survive mostly in tact through quotations and excerpts of later philosophers and commentators, reflecting its significant influence on early Hellenic philosophical development. Most certainly Parmenides is one of the most influential of the “Pre-Socratics”, and it is through the interpretation of his philosophy through Plato really, that this determination is made. He is believed to have been born in Elea in Southern Italy and therefore is historically categorized as part of the “Italian” branch of early Hellenic philosophy - as per Diogenes Laertius, the same branch as Pythagoras who represents the first and earliest of this tradition and as distinguished from the Ionian branch within which Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, as well as the Cynics and Stoics, belong to.

In Parmenides's poem, he describes a pseudo allegorical journey up into the gates of Heaven driven by a golden chariot where he is initiated into eternal wisdom, i.e. the mysteries as it were, by the goddess of wisdom herself represented by the goddess Night, the very same goddess who

plays a critical role in the unfolding of the universe in the in the Orphic mythological tradition. [In later classical Greek mythology, she is personified as Athena, the goddess of wisdom and the daughter of Zeus, and it is no doubt she who most represents the notion of wisdom (i.e. *sophia*) as Plato perceives and describes it, in particular its illuminary nature from an intellectual perspective.]

In the excerpts that are extant from his poem *On Nature*, Parmenides distinguishes in very esoteric and almost mystical – and certainly cryptic – language that which is said to “be” or exist (*to eon*), or “true reality” (*alêtheia*), which he associates with thought and language and is wholly distinguishable from that which cannot in fact be said to exist in the same way, i.e. that which is not “real” and is wholly distinct from true reality (again *alêtheia*), due to its fluctuating and ever changing nature.

The thing that can be thought and that for the sake of which the thought exists is the same; for you cannot find thought without something that is, as to which it is uttered. And there is not, and never shall be, anything besides what is, since fate has chained it so as to be whole and immovable. Wherefore all these things are but names which mortals have given, believing them to be true—coming into being and passing away, being and not being, change of place and alteration of bright color. [R. P. 119].³⁶⁰

With Parmenides, as we know him again through the quotations and comments of philosophers from the classical Hellenic period and later, we find what is believed to be the source of Plato’s *epistemology* where, in Vedic terms, the world of “name and form” which is in a constant state of change and flux, which falls in the domain of what Plato terms “opinion”, is held to be an inferior form of knowledge than the realm of the changeless and eternally existent world of ideas thought, as discerned by pure reason (*logos*), i.e. “true reality” which Parmenides calls *alêtheia* and which Plato refers to as *Being*, again distinguished from that which is *Becoming*. This bifurcation and sublimation of the material world for the ethereal or rational world ultimately provides the basis for Plato’s *theory of forms* and is the basis upon which he builds not only his theory of knowledge but also his *cosmogony* as outlined in the *Timaeus*.

Furthermore, while Parmenides writes in hexameter verse, there is clearly a logical cohesion to his work, an argument or a case he is trying to make, to establish the grounds of being, in a classical philosophical sense, where he is attempting to justify and rationalize, and in turn provide the logical foundation for, his position of establishing that which “is” (*to eon*), or can be said to

³⁶⁰ *Early Greek Philosophy*, translation with notes and commentary by John Burnet. Chapter IV., Parmenides of Elea. 3rd editions (1920). London. From <http://www.classicpersuasion.org/pw/burnet/egp.htm?chapter=4>

exist due to its eternal and unchanging nature which in turn again is distinguished from, and held to be of higher intellectual and philosophical value than, that which is subject to change and ultimate dissolution, i.e. the objective and material world.³⁶¹

In this sense Parmenides work and philosophy that is represented therein is not only the forefather of Plato's *Being* and *Becoming* as laid out in the *Timaeus*, but also the forefather of the means by which this distinction is established, i.e. by *reason* and argument which Plato presents in dialogue form using *logic*, or *dialectic*, which can be viewed as a more mature and evolved form of (written) communication of ideas and *metaphysics* than that which is used by Parmenides who follows in the footsteps of the earlier mythic poets Homer and Hesiod.

Transitioning back to Plato's *cosmogony* and its relationship to the worlds of *Being* and *Becoming* respectively in the *Timaeus*, we find a description which is markedly anthropomorphic in conception and yet at the same time rests upon his basic metaphysical delineation of *reality* between *Being* and *Becoming* - i.e. that which is permanent, eternal and unchanging and comprehended by reason (*logos*) and thought or *ideas* (*eidôs*), versus the sensible realm which is subject to change and "opinion" and therefore is characterized by an implicit creative and destructive process.

Again, everything which becomes must of necessity become owing to some Cause; for without a cause it is impossible for anything to attain becoming. But when the artificer of any object, in forming its shape and quality, keeps his gaze fixed on that which is uniform, using a model of this kind, that object, executed in this way, must of necessity [28b] be beautiful; but whenever he gazes at that which has come into existence and uses a created model, the object thus executed is not beautiful.

Now the whole Heaven, or Cosmos, or if there is any other name which it specially prefers, by that let us call it, —so, be its name what it may, we must first investigate concerning it that primary question which has to be investigated at the outset in every case, —namely, whether it has existed always, having no beginning of generation, or whether it has come into existence, having begun from some beginning. It has come into existence; for it is visible and tangible and possessed of a body; and all such things are sensible, [28c] and things sensible, being apprehensible by opinion with the aid of sensation, come into existence, as we saw, and are generated.

³⁶¹ For a more detailed description of the philosophy of Parmenides and analysis of the existent fragments of his work *On Nature*, see "Parmenides of Elea: What Is Versus What is Not", by Juan Valdez 2016 at <https://snowconenyc.com/2016/09/30/parmenides-of-elea-what-is-versus-what-is-not> and Parmenides entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=parmenides>.

And that which has come into existence must necessarily, as we say, have come into existence by reason of some Cause. Now to discover the Maker and Father of this Universe were a task indeed; and having discovered Him, to declare Him unto all men were a thing impossible. However, let us return and inquire further concerning the Cosmos, —after which of the Models did its Architect construct it?³⁶²

Here we see not only the implicit *anthropomorphic*, or perhaps better put *anthrocentric*, view of universal creation, but also the fundamental assumption of *causality* which rests at the heart of what is perhaps best terms his “theological” cosmological conception. In other words, implicit in the existence of the universe as we know and perceive it, in fact implicit in the existence in anything, is some element of *causality* even if in this context he intends to mean “purpose” or “reason”, rather than a physical chain of causality which is how we have come to identify the meaning in the modern era of empirical science.³⁶³

Furthermore, he argues that the universe must have been “created” - i.e. has some sort of beginning in time and space as it were - because it exists within the sensible realm, the realm that is in and of itself defined by change, is apprehended by “opinion”, is subjectively perceived and is therefore – again by definition – in a constant state of flux which is bound by an implicit and eternally present creative and destructive process of *Becoming*.

[29a] Was it after that which is self-identical and uniform, or after that which has come into existence; Now if so be that this Cosmos is beautiful and its Constructor good, it is plain that he fixed his gaze on the Eternal; but if otherwise (which is an impious supposition), his gaze was on that which has come into existence. But it is clear to everyone that his gaze was on the Eternal; for the Cosmos is the fairest of all that has come into existence, and He the best of all the Causes. So having in this wise come into existence, it has been constructed after the pattern of that which is apprehensible by reason and thought and is self-identical. [29b]

Again, if these premises be granted, it is wholly necessary that this Cosmos should be a Copy of something. Now in regard to every matter it is most important to begin at the natural beginning.

³⁶² Plato *Timaeus*. 28a-28c. *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9 translated by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1925.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0180%3Atext%3DTim.%3Apage%3D28>.

³⁶³ It is in this context of Plato’s notion of *Being* and *Becoming*, and his fairly loose but at the same time all-pervading implicit assumption of *causality* or *purpose*, within which Aristotle establishes his metaphysical worldview which is based upon *substantial form* and *causality* – the *material*, *formal*, *efficient* and *final*- all of which looks to better define that which can be said to “exist”, his *being qua being*. Aristotle’s efficient and final causes represent Plato’s notion of “reason” or “purpose” which underlies existence whereas Aristotle’s *material* and *formal* causes represent the underlying principles for the material or sensible world. For more detail on Aristotle’s *theory of causality* and how it relates to his metaphysical worldview, see the chapter on Aristotle in this work and the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on “Aristotle on Causality” which can be found here: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-causality/>.

Accordingly, in dealing with a copy and its model, we must affirm that the accounts given will themselves be akin to the diverse objects which they serve to explain; those which deal with what is abiding and firm and discernible by the aid of thought will be abiding and unshakable; and in so far as it is possible and fitting for statements to be irrefutable and invincible, [29c] they must in no wise fall short thereof; whereas the accounts of that which is copied after the likeness of that Model, and is itself a likeness, will be analogous thereto and possess likelihood; for I as Being is to Becoming, so is Truth to Belief.

Wherefore, Socrates, if in our treatment of a great host of matters regarding the Gods and the generation of the Universe we prove unable to give accounts that are always in all respects self-consistent and perfectly exact, be not thou surprised; rather we should be content if we can furnish accounts that are inferior to none in likelihood, remembering that both I who speak [29d] and you who judge are but human creatures, so that it becomes us to accept the likely account of these matters and forbear to search beyond it. ³⁶⁴

In this passage, we find Plato, in the words of Timaeus in the dialogue, arguing that there must in fact exist a model upon which the cosmos (*kosmos*) is fashioned and that this model must be the “best” model, i.e. that which is eternal and changeless which he implies is the source of all things, i.e. the world of *Becoming*. This model is based upon the *Good*, the *form of forms*, an eternal and changeless *idea* which can only be apprehended – if it can be apprehended at all – by reason and thought and from which the world of *Becoming* is generated, or brought about from.

He equates the world of *Being* here to “true reality”, what he refers to as “Truth”, and the world of *Becoming* to the domain of “opinion” or “subjective belief”, lining up these two metaphysical principles which presumably derive from Parmenides squarely with his theory of *knowledge*. The former, the realm *Being* which is characterized by *reason*, *thought* and *ideas*, he considers to be the higher form of knowledge upon which the latter, the realm of *Becoming* which is forever changing and in a state of flux and is characterized by *opinion* and *subjective belief*, is molded from or shaped out of.

Plato then goes on, through the narrative of *Timaeus* in the dialogue, to describe in detail just how the divine craftsman, the *Demiurge*, establishes universal creation, what has come to be known as the “Cosmic Soul”, applying various rational, proportional, mathematical and geometrical (presumably of Pythagorean influence) constructs onto the primordial chaos out of which the four basic elements – earth, air, water and fire – as well as the heavens and earth and

³⁶⁴ Plato *Timaeus*. 29a-29d. *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9 translated by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1925.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0180%3Atext%3DTim.%3Apage%3D29>.

all living creatures therein came into existence. But this world of *Becoming*, and the creative process which he outlines therein, attempting as best he can to provide a logical and rational account of creation in again what he refers to as a “likely” account, resting on and alluding to the limits of human knowledge in and of itself in understanding the reason and ultimate cause and process by which the universe comes into being, nonetheless presumes the universe to be crafted upon the model of the *Good*, a benign creator as it were that provides the foundation for the Judeo-Christian worldview.

[30a] For God desired that, so far as possible, all things should be good and nothing evil; wherefore, when He took over all that was visible, seeing that it was not in a state of rest but in a state of discordant and disorderly motion, He brought it into order out of disorder, deeming that the former state is in all ways better than the latter. For Him who is most good it neither was nor is permissible to perform any action save what is most fair. As He reflected, therefore, He perceived that of such creatures as are by nature visible, [30b] none that is irrational will be fairer, comparing wholes with wholes, than the rational; and further, that reason cannot possibly belong to any apart from Soul. So because of this reflection He constructed reason within soul and soul within body as He fashioned the All, that so the work He was executing might be of its nature most fair and most good.

Thus, then, in accordance with the likely account, we must declare that this Cosmos has verily come into existence as a Living Creature endowed with soul and reason owing to the providence of God. [30c] This being established, we must declare that which comes next in order. In the semblance of which of the living Creatures did the Constructor of the cosmos construct it? We shall not deign to accept any of those which belong by nature to the category of “parts”; for nothing that resembles the imperfect would ever become fair. But we shall affirm that the Cosmos, more than aught else, resembles most closely that Living Creature of which all other living creatures, severally and generically, are portions. For that Living Creature embraces and contains within itself all the intelligible Living Creatures, just as this Universe contains us and all the other visible living creatures [30d] that have been fashioned. For since God desired to make it resemble most closely that intelligible Creature which is fairest of all and in all ways most perfect, He constructed it as a Living Creature, one and visible, containing within itself all the living creatures which are by nature akin to itself.³⁶⁵

We can see here that Plato sees the rational and ordered as of higher value than the chaotic and disordered, and he assigns the highest value to reason itself (again *logos*) which is attributed and ultimately equated with the divine or Cosmic Soul. Furthermore, Plato perceives the universe, in very much the same vein as the Stoic tradition which was very influential in the Greco-Roman

³⁶⁵ Plato *Timaeus*. 30a-30d. *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9 translated by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1925.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0180%3Atext%3DTim.%3Apage%3D30>

period and influenced early Christian *theology* (*pneuma*, the divine spirit), as a living, breathing entity which not only embodies, encapsulates as it were, all of the *kosmos* within it, but also is endowed with “Soul” and “reason”, just as the individual is at some extent. God here, the Cosmic Soul, is fashioned in the image of man as it were as opposed to the other way around as it is presented in the Judeo-Christian account of creation.

At the heart of Plato’s philosophy was the belief in the ontological primacy of the rational faculty of man, *reason*, along with the tools of the trade which reflected and were to be leveraged by this faculty - namely reason (*logos*), *dialectic*, *logic* and *mathematics* - as the means by which the fundamental truths of these ancient mystic traditions could be known or brought to light. He was the first to establish the connection between *cosmogony*, physics and *ethics* to a degree that had not been done before, a characteristic that became one of the primary characteristics of Hellenic and Roman philosophy and was even followed in the Scholastic tradition up until the end of the Middle Ages.

Plato also established a good deal of the semantic framework, in Greek, through which these esoteric, complex and interrelated topics could be discussed and explored, a development whose importance cannot be overstated. For before Plato, the language of philosophy was shrouded in myth, analogy, and metaphor, and after Plato all of the Greek philosophic schools and practitioners now at least had a working vocabulary through which philosophic ideas and concepts could be further explored and elucidated upon, even if the various schools disagreed with each other on a variety of issues.

Plato’s unique contribution to theological development in antiquity then can be viewed as placing the rational faculty of man as the primary tool through which any knowledge of the gods, or *reality* itself even, should be drawn. His reach extended well beyond the *theological* domain however, extending into areas that are known today as Psychology, Ethics, Political Philosophy, and most importantly perhaps the goal of life itself. Many of his lasting contributions to the philosophic, and later scientific, development in the West are not necessarily the conclusions that he drew or solutions he put forth, but the tools and institutions which he established for their pursuit.

It can be said definitively however that with Plato the supremacy of reason and rationality in the search for truth and meaning in life as well as the nature and origins of the universe is firmly established. To Plato the epistemological supremacy of the *intelligible realm*, the world of *Being*, over the sensible realm, or the world of *Becoming*, is the predominant characteristic of his *metaphysics*. The former of which is characterized by *forms* and *ideas* from which the material universe as we know it, and all living souls as well, are ultimately “fashioned” from, all modeled

and stemming from the belief that the Creator, if indeed he can be said to exist, must have fashioned things according to what is most *fair* and most *just*, i.e. the *Good* or Best.

Early Chinese Philosophy: The *Humanism* of Confucius

The classical period of ancient Chinese philosophy runs from about the 6th century BCE till the 2nd century BCE and is marked by the proliferation and flowering of many varying philosophical schools, an era in Chinese history referred to (by Chinese historians, sinologists) as the “hundred schools of thought”³⁶⁶. Interestingly this corresponds almost precisely to the proliferation and evolution of philosophy in the West in the Hellenic world as well with Platonism, Stoicism and Epicureanism taking root in the Mediterranean from the 5th and 4th century BCE onwards. This is sometimes referred to as the so-called “Axial Age” which is a period in antiquity from around the 8th to 3rd centuries BCE where rapid and innovative forms of intellectual development appeared simultaneously across Persia, India, China, and Greece.³⁶⁷

One of the hallmarks of the Chinese philosophical tradition in antiquity is the absence of a detailed semantic philosophical inquiry, at least how we think of philosophical inquiry in the West. More specifically, what is missing is what we in the Western intellectual tradition refer to as *epistemology*, or that which can be said to be *true* or *real*. This Platonic *idealism*, within which our entire framework of physics is in fact firmly placed and established, gave rise to the *metaphysics* in the classic Aristotelian sense and is one of the hallmarks of intellectual development in the West from which science as we know it was born.

Lǎozǐ, along with Confucius, are arguably the two greatest and most influential sages of Chinese antiquity. While the focus of ancient Chinese philosophy was different than that in the West and in classic Hellenic thought, the two schools diverged in emphasis and focus, and yet at the same time evolved together, much like Aristotle’s teachings did from Plato (Lǎozǐ and Confucius respectively).³⁶⁸ It is with the *Dao De Jing* and the other classic Daoist text from antiquity, the *Zhuangzi*, however that form the cornerstones of Daoist philosophical thought, with the *Yijing* being adopted somewhat later in the tradition as various commentaries were written on it with various mystical, esoteric and Daoist like interpretations.

³⁶⁶ *chu-tzu pai-chia* (Wade-Giles) or *zhūzǐ bǎijiā* (pinyin), literally “all philosophers hundred schools”.

³⁶⁷ Axial Age is a term defined by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers in the early 20th century Axial Age. (2015, November 16). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 12:43, November 17, 2015, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Axial_Age&oldid=690966753

³⁶⁸ While Western historians of antiquity like to make analogies between Confucius and Lǎozǐ to Plato and Aristotle, outside of the similar dating and far reaching influence of the respective philosophers and thinkers within their respective cultures the analogy starts to break down as you look in depth at the type of philosophy that they preach, as well as their method of teaching – both of which remain characteristics enigmatic to the respective traditions themselves.



Figure 24: Confucius and Lǎozǐ from a Western Han (202 BCE - 2 CE) fresco³⁶⁹

In ancient China, prior to Buddhist influence, we have two primary schools of thought that eventually dominate the intellectual and pseudo-theological landscape – the Confucianists on the one hand with its socio-political and ethical emphasis along with the Daoist tradition with its more esoteric leanings. While the latter school did not necessarily arise and evolve in contrast to the former, the two together do represent at some level the spectrum of philosophical world views that are distinctly Chinese and that have dominated Chinese thought since at least the Han Period in the 2nd century BCE.

Confucian philosophy is historically associated with Confucius (551 – 479 BCE) himself, as reflected most prominently in a work attributed to him called the *Analects* as well as with one of his prominent followers and interpreters Mencius (c. 372 – 289 BCE) who lived a few hundred years or so after Confucius during the Warring States Period (475 - 221 BCE). While Confucian philosophy is focused on *ethics*, rites and ceremonies, and generally speaking “moral behavior”,

³⁶⁹ A Western Han (202 BC - 9 AD) fresco depicting Confucius (and Lǎozǐ), from a tomb of Dongping County, Shandong province, China. From Wikipedia contributors, 'Confucius', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 21 October 2016, 05:52 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Confucius&oldid=745448605>> [accessed 21 October 2016].

the early Daoist philosophical tradition not only permeates the *divination* text the *Yijing*, with its emphasis on *Yīn* and *Yáng* as the primordial forces of nature, but is also prominently figured in one of the most influential texts in all of Chinese antiquity attributed to Lǎozǐ (605 – 531 BCE), referred to in the West as the *Way of Virtue* but in Chinese is called the *Dao De Jing*, along with as a text called the *Zhuangzi* whose authorship is attributed to a historical figure who bears the same name who flourished around the same time as Mencius in the 4th century BCE.

Confucius stands alongside Lǎozǐ as one of the great independent Chinese philosophers in antiquity, supposedly having consulted Lǎozǐ on some aspects of funeral rights and being impressed with his insight, or so the tradition holds. Confucius was from the state of Lu in Eastern China from which the Zhou Dynasty was born within which he served at least as some lower form of state official. The tradition that emerged in the wake of Confucius is much more ethically and socially focused than the tradition attributed to Lǎozǐ however, the latter being considered the author of one of, if not the, foundational text of Daoism, i.e. the *Dao De Jing*.

The tenets set forth in the *Analects* (a work attributed to Confucius but most likely transcribed sometime after his passing by his followers/students), as well as the philosophy handed down to in the texts attributed to his follower Mencius represent what we might call Chinese philosophy orthodoxy as it were given that these texts, along with other Classics (*Five Classics*, see below) became part of the core curriculum that was needed to pass state examinations for much of China's history, all of which were said to been commented upon by Confucius himself hence the close connection between the philosopher and the texts themselves as it were.

One of the main sources of material from this time is the *Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji)*, a work outlines the history and lives of influential people in Chinese history from the time of the mythical ruler the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi*) – 3rd millennium BCE or so - to Emperor Wu (156 BCE – 87 BCE), the contemporary ruler of the book's final author Sīmǎ Qiān. This is an extraordinary work that took several lifetimes to complete and rivals the work of Herodotus or Thucydides from the West in terms of breadth and scholarship. In it, we find a section of biographies which mark's the lives and histories of many of the most influential Chinese philosophers/philosophies from antiquity (akin to the infamous work of Plutarch *Parallel Lives* from the 1st century CE) which refers specifically to the existence and predominance of six philosophical schools at the time; namely Confucianism, Legalism, Daoism, Mohism, School of *Yīn-Yáng*, and the Logicians.

With the consolidation of the warring states by the Qin Dynasty (221 – 206 BCE) and then with the state of modern day China more or less formalized in the Former/Western Han Dynasties (206 BCE – 9CE), a standard curriculum of classical texts which covered culture, hymns, traditions, philosophy and *ethics* was developed for civil servants that was for the most part continuously used as the state core classical curriculum up until the 20th century. In 124 BCE, Emperor Wu of

the Han Dynasty founded an academy where civil servants were to be trained and from this point on Confucianism, as it was understood at the time with its specific moral and ethical bent, is effectively officially adopted by the state.

As part of this process however, there was a systemic destruction of ancient knowledge, the so-called “Burning of the Books” in 213 BCE by Qin Dynasty official decree. This event must be kept in mind whenever one tries to get a true reading of the various intellectual developments that occurred in deep Chinese antiquity. While the extent to which ancient philosophical works were destroyed and have been lost is debated and cannot be determined with certainty (we don’t know what we don’t know), it is probable however that many of the historical and ritualistic documents associated with other competing traditions and states did not survive this Book Burning and socio-political purge as it were. We do know that the Confucian intellectual tradition survives intact though because this becomes the state sponsored religion, if we may call it that. We also know that *divination* texts and manuals, as reflected in the tradition surrounding the *Zhou Yi* - which evolved into the *Book of Changes* or the *Yijing* as we know it today - survived as well, no doubt in no small measure due to their utilitarian and socio-political purpose to the ruling class, as well as philosophical import the text came to have with the Confucian tradition as classically “Confucian” commentaries were added to the *divination* text in the latter part of the first millennium BCE.

From this time on, in an almost unbroken tradition from the end of the 2nd century BCE all the way until 1905, examinations for public office included in their core curriculum a study of what is known as the *Five Classics*, (五經; *Wǔ Jīng*), a set of texts from China in antiquity that were selected by the Confucian (Ru) school as authoritative in matters of Rites, Ritual, History, Divination and in turn setting the standard for moral and ethical behavior for the individual and the state at large.³⁷⁰

³⁷⁰ While the term classic (“*jing*”, 經) is not directly attributed to any of the “Confucian” philosophers per say, we do see the term first adopted and explained in the Confucian tradition by Xunzi (Hsun Tzu, c. 310-220 BCE), a Confucian philosopher during the late Warring States period who expounded upon and fleshed out many of the basic ethic, political and logical precepts put forth by Confucius and his followers, the most influential of which was most certainly Mencius (372-289 BCE), the attributed author of a text that bears his name. As Xunzi describes the term classic, *jing*, the word comes from the word signifying the “lead thread” or “warp” when weaving, pointing to the notion of the classics being considered the “thread” or “main ideas” from which Chinese philosophy should be based. This notion of a word meaning more or less “thread” with the analogy to weaving to describe a canonical or spiritual work is also interestingly found not only in the Indian philosophical tradition where the term *sūtra*, meaning “thread”, is used to describe the main Vedic scriptural texts (*Brahmā Sūtras* for example) and even survives today in our traditional Western academic tradition – for the Latin “*textus*” is the perfect passive participle of the verb to weave, *texo*. See *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, by Micahel Nylan. Yale University Press 2001. Introduction pg. 11-12.

The *Five Classics* as put forth by the scholars and rulers in the Western Han, and still considered classics and are elements of study to this day are:³⁷¹

- *Shujing* or the *Book of Documents*: a collection of rhetorical prose covering the establishment of ancient Chinese civilization divided into four chapters, starting with semi-mythical reign of Yu the Great, followed by the Xia Dynasty material, then the Shāng Dynasty, and culminating in the Zhou Dynasty material representing the height, or golden age, of ancient Chinese civilization that much of Confucian *ethics* and *morality* looked upon as the standard.
- *Shijing* or *Book of Songs*: also known as the *Book of Odes*, or *Classic of Poetry*, consisting of over 300 ancient folk songs, hymns and ritual songs recited and associated with various rites, rituals and ceremonies dating from the 11th to the 7th century BCE.
- *Liji* or *Book of Rites*: collection of texts describing social norms, administration and ceremonial rites of the Zhou Dynasty. [The *Book of Rites*, along with the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli*) and *Book of Etiquette and Rites* (*Yili*) are together known as the “Three-Li” (*San Li*).]
- *Chūnqiū* or *Spring and Autumn Annals*: A historical record of the state of Lu, the native state of Confucius, covering the later part of the 8th century BCE to the first part of the fifth century BCE (772-481 BCE).
- *The Yijing* or *Book of Changes*: the last of the classics to be added to the list. A *divination* text dating from at least the Zhou Dynasty era in its original form referred to sometimes as the *Zhou Yi* consisting of 64 chapters or sections of *divination* symbols along with commentaries (*zhuan*) called the *shí yì*, or *Ten Wings*, which were appended in the latter half of the first millennium BCE and attributed to the Confucian scholars.

Confucius, or Master Kong as he is referred to in the Chinese texts, in fact belonged to a class of educators/preachers/priests referred to in Chinese as *Ru*, which loosely correspond to the Sophists of classical Greece or the Brahmin class of priests from ancient India who exchanged

³⁷¹ There is reference in some of the ancient literature of a sixth classic, a *Classic of Music* (*Yueh-ching* or *Yue-Jing*) but this work is either lost or its contents have been merged into one or more of the other of the Five Classics.

scholarship and priestly duties for a fee and/or worked as part of a state or administration.³⁷² So while the doctrines therein are usually termed “Confucian”, the word is the typical translation of the term *Rújiā* in the Chinese literary and philosophical tradition and denotes the idea of a “classicist” or “scholar” along with the specific teachings and texts attributed to the Confucius school itself. The ancient Chinese *Rújiā* could even be termed “priest”, not in the Christian sense but more in the Brahmanic sense in that they were responsible for ensuring the proper performance of rituals and presided over various important state and cultural ceremonies. The Brahmin priests of ancient India, and even into modern times, serve a very similar social function.

Understanding the heritage and social and historical context of Confucian philosophy requires an understanding of the background of the School of Ru, i.e. *Rújiā* that was assigned directly to the legacy of Confucius himself. A good description of the source of Confucian thought and its relationship to the so-called “School of Ru” can be found from ChinaKnowledge.de, an online Encyclopedia of Chinese History, Literature and Art.

Scholars of the early 20th century tried to find out the real origin of the Ru experts. Some identified them as a class of professionals of the Shāng Dynasty, some as experts in the state of Lu, the home state of Confucius. It is for sure that the term Ru only came up during the late Spring and Autumn period (770-5th cent. BCE). The Ru were specialists in rituals and music, with an extraordinary focus on funeral rites and ancestor veneration. These rituals were so complex that all courts of the various states, as well as members of the wealthy class, were in need of such experts. Such a professional knowledge continued playing an important part of Confucian teaching and was crucial for the establishment of Confucianism as a state doctrine during the Former Han period. Besides pure rituals (type, arrangement and number of sacrificial tools; music to be played; actions to be performed), etiquette played an important part in the teachings of the Ru. The term for rituals is lǐ 禮, that for etiquette yi 儀. The first character includes the radical "spiritual matters" (示) and an offering vessel (豊), the second character the radical "man" (亻) and the term "to make oneself beautiful" (義). The latter became one of the core concepts of Confucianism.³⁷³

We can see here a more clear connection drawn between this ancient priestly or scholarly class of individuals and teachings which were associated with the *Rújiā* and were an integral part of ancient Chinese society from which Confucius drew from and represented and from which many of the core tenets of “Confucian” thought originated from. The widespread use and adoption of the term *Confucianism* in the West as the translation for the Chinese word *Rújiā*, or School of Ru,

³⁷² See *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, by Micahel Nylan. Yale University Press 2001. Introduction pg. 3.

³⁷³ From www.chinaknowledge.de, CHINAKNOWLEDGE – a universal guide for China studies Home->Thought and Philosophy->Confucianism by Ulrich Theobald, July 2012 at <http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Classics/confucius.html>.

illustrates just how embedded the system of beliefs tied to the Confucian lineage is integrated into the Chinese culture and society at large.

For as mentioned above, in the Han Dynasty period study and indoctrination into the Confucian texts, which included the *Five Classics*, was officially adopted by the state as a way of integrating the disparate kingdoms of ancient China after centuries of warfare and strife. While Western scholars typically deem this school of thought put forth as the standard state curriculum in the Han Dynasty as “Confucian”, Confucius considered himself more of a mediator and a transmitter of ancient knowledge and wisdom rather than the creator of a distinct school of philosophy per se.

The most illustrative examples of the teachings of Confucius himself come from the *Analects*, a book of what might be best described as anecdotes, sayings and other various stories that are directly attributed to Confucius himself or his direct followers. The *Analects* is a compilation of sayings and teachings of Confucius and some of his main followers that is conveyed in a conversational or anecdotal style, with wide use of parable and analogy rather than dry philosophy or *metaphysics*. In this sense from a Western perspective we might not consider it to be a “philosophical” work per se, but is reflective of an oral tradition of sayings or wisdom that is akin to some of the Upanishadic treatises or.

The Master said: To study and at due times practice what one has studied, is this not a pleasure? When friends come from distant places, is this not joy? To remain unsoured when his talents are unrecognized, is this not a jūnzǐ [gentleman]?

Master You said: It is rare to find a person who is filial to his parents and respectful of his elders, yet who likes to oppose his ruling superior. And never has there been one who does not like opposing his ruler who has raised a rebellion. The jūnzǐ works on the root – once the root is planted, the dao is born. Filiality and respect for elders, are these not the roots of rén [humanity]?

*The Master said: Those of crafty words and ingratiating expression are rarely rén.*³⁷⁴

From the opening few passages of the book we find the introduction of many of the core concepts which were to become to define the *Rújiā* tradition; namely the ideas of *rén* and *jūnzǐ*, typically translated as “humaneness” and “gentlemen” respectively, as well as reference to the *dao* itself which permeated all of Chinese philosophical thought in antiquity, altogether establishing some

³⁷⁴ The *Analects of Confucius*. Book I, verses 1-3. Page 1. Translation and introduction by Robert Eno 2015. On Line teaching edition available at [http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Analects_of_Confucius_\(Eno-2015\).pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Analects_of_Confucius_(Eno-2015).pdf). Brackets are authors insertions.

of the key cornerstones to the ethical and socio-political philosophy that was to bear the name of Confucius throughout China's long and continuous cultural history.

Confucian philosophy focused primarily on the behavior and relationships of the individual within their familial and overall social context to establish harmony and balance first within the individual themselves, extending to the family unit, then in turn within the culture and society at large culminating in balance and harmony at the nation-state level which was the responsibility of the ruling class. The belief system did not reject the past, in fact it embraced it, and it also did not reject authority or leadership but integrated these aspects of society within a comprehensive ethical and socio-political intellectual framework rooted in the ancient Chinese worldview of the role of Heaven (*Tiān*) in the domain of human affairs as well as the principle of the *Dao*.

Some further excerpts from the *Analects* which illustrate the form of the prose as set within the oral tradition of teachings and sayings, at least in English translation, as well as the continued emphasis on righteousness (*yi*), behavior (*jūnzǐ*) ritual (*lǐ*) and respectfulness of others (*rén*) that is prevalent throughout the work:

1.13 Master You said: Trustworthiness is close to righteousness [yi]: one's words are tested true. Reverence is close to lǐ [ritual]: it keeps shame and disgrace at a distance. One who can accord with these and not depart from his father's way – such a one may truly be revered.

4.10 The Master said, The jūnzǐ's [gentleman] stance towards the world is this: there is nothing he insists on, nothing he refuses, he simply aligns himself beside right [yi].

8.2 The Master said, If one is reverent but without lǐ [ritual] one is burdened; if one is vigilant but without lǐ one is fearful; if one is valorous but without lǐ one causes chaos; if one is straightforward but without lǐ one causes affronts. When the jūnzǐ [gentleman] is devoted to his parents, the people rise up as rén [humane]; when he does not discard his old comrades, the people are not dishonest.

8.4 Master Zeng fell ill. Meng Jingzi called upon him. Master Zeng said, "When a bird is about to die, his call is mournful; when a man is about to die, his words are good. "There are three things a jūnzǐ [gentleman] cherishes in the dao. In attitude and bearing, keep far from arrogance; in facial expression, keep aligned close to faithfulness; in uttering words, keep far from coarse abrasiveness. "So far as minor matters of ritual [lǐ] implements are concerned, there are functionaries to take care of those."³⁷⁵

³⁷⁵ *The Analects of Confucius*. Excerpts from Chapter 1, 4 and 8 marked accordingly. Translation and introduction by Robert Eno 2015. On Line teaching addition available at [http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Analects_of_Confucius_\(Eno-2015\).pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Analects_of_Confucius_(Eno-2015).pdf). Brackets are authors additions.

We see here references to many of the key tenets and terminology that permeate Confucian philosophy as a belief system focused on the social and political good (*rén*), and the betterment of the individual through the proper performance of ritual (*lǐ*) and the proper understanding and display of cultural etiquette (*yì*), underscoring the respect for ancestors and tradition in general. A brief synopsis and description of these three key terms that are used throughout the *Analects* and are reflected consistently throughout what we consider to be Confucian thought are:

Rén (仁): a comprehensive ethical virtue: benevolence, humaneness, goodness,

Lǐ (禮): the ritual institutions of the Zhou, of which Confucius was a master practitioner. The range of behavior subject to the broad category denoted by this term ranges from political protocol to court ceremony, religious rite to village festival, daily etiquette to disciplines of personal conduct when alone, and

Yì (義): Right or Righteousness, often a complement to rén, denoting morally correct action choices, or the moral vision that allows one to make them.³⁷⁶

Throughout the *Analects* then we are presented with a set of teachings that do not reject the realm of the gods or spirits (*shén* 神), nor the Mandate of Heaven (*tiānmìng* 天命) or the role of Heaven in human affairs generally (*Tiān* 天) or even the *Dao* itself, but absorb them and encapsulate them as guiding principles for mankind via the reverence of traditions, beliefs, cultural rites and rituals that harkened back to a by gone era of what was considered to be “Golden Age” of Chinese civilization, the legendary period of ancient Chinese civilization marked by the early Zhou Dynasty.

The teachings put forth by Confucius as reflected in the *Analects* specifically were practical in almost all senses of the word as they did not deal with the nature of the universe, the realm of the gods or spirits, or any other topic that we might consider “religious” or “theological” or even “philosophical” in the Western sense of these terms, however Confucius was not an atheist by any stretch of the imagination either. Righteousness (*yì*), truth, justice, reverence, the importance of ritual (*lǐ*) and their integrated relationship to the *Dao* and Heaven (*Tiān*) are all key intellectual constructs underlying the teachings encapsulated in the Confucian *Analects*, one of the most influential of all the classic Chinese philosophical texts from antiquity.

³⁷⁶ Select list of key terms from *The Analects of Confucius*. Translation and introduction by Robert Eno 2015. On Line teaching addition available at [http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Analects_of_Confucius_\(Eno-2015\).pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Analects_of_Confucius_(Eno-2015).pdf).

Given the tone of the narrative in the *Analects*, one is tempted to look at Confucius as one might look at an old weathered and wise grandfather. One who is travelled and learned much in his years, is very well read and learned of ancient scripture, has held influence over state officials and forms of government, and is steeped in tradition and culture and to which the whole community clearly looked upon with respect and admiration – not for his wealth or power but for his wisdom and learnings. As you can see clearly here this is not a religious text in the way we would think of it in the Western theo-philosophical tradition and yet it can be (albeit loosely) seen as analogous to the *Old Testament* in the Judeo-Christian tradition as it represents the teaching of the founder of the school of thought – Confucius as the Chinese Moses as it were.

Relative to the emphasis on divine revelation in the West, as reflected in the traditions surrounding the *Bible* and the *Qur'ān* for example, the texts that make up the *Five Classics* to the Chinese reach much further back in antiquity, rivaling the age of not only the first Hellenic philosophers such as Parmenides, Heraclitus and Pythagoras, but also some of the later Upanishadic texts as well as the texts surrounding the tradition of Buddha. While the tradition surrounding Confucius shares many of the same characteristics of early Platonic thought in that it attempts to establish the rational basis for ethical behavior and socio-political order, the importance and role of chanting and hymns and ritual, etc. is altogether unique and in some sense bears many of the same similarities of the *Vedas* in the significance attached to ritual and ceremony.

While he did not found or start a school per se, certainly not in the Hellenic philosophical sense, it is clear that Confucius had a profound influence on many of the philosophers that came after him, whether they agreed with his teachings or not. This philosophical belief system, Confucianism, focused on what we would call in the West political or ethical philosophy, which was just a subset of the philosophical systems that were developing at around the same time in the Hellenic world (schools of Plato and Aristotle specifically), became the predominant worldview and belief systems in China, not just in antiquity but right up until the modern era in fact.

So while on the one hand Western scholars have to navigate through a very different linguistic and semantic landscape when trying to understand and map Chinese philosophical development in antiquity to its counterparts to the West, on the other hand in some sense we have a very early standardization of texts that reaches directly, and much further back, into Chinese antiquity than the scriptural tradition in the West.

Despite what conclusion one might draw on the “religiousness” of Confucianism, it is very fair to say that the Far East is Confucian, or Daoist as the case may be, just as we in the West could be best be described as Christian (or Jewish or Islamic as the case may be). And this is an important point. We tend to classify our counterparties in the East as Buddhist, Christian or Hindu but fail

to really give due to the classical Chinese theo-philosophical systems of thought – Confucian and Daoist – at least in common parlance outside of academic circles that are interested in such things.

The Lǎozǐ and Zhuangzi: Daoism and the Way of Virtue

As the Confucian school was referred to as *Rújiā*, the Daoist school was referred to as *Daojiā*, each called out as one of the six main philosophical schools during the Warring States period to the Early/Former Han. While a Daoist “canon” was not established until much later in Chinese history³⁷⁷, the core set of Daoist philosophical texts have always been the *Dao De Jing*, the *Zhuangzi*, and then somewhat later the *Yijing* - specifically the commentary thereof, i.e. the *Ten Wings* which integrates Daoist philosophy as well as the teachings of the *Rújiā*. The *Dao De Jing* is attributed to Lǎozǐ himself, a somewhat older contemporary of Confucius who tradition holds served later in life as a keeper of archival records for the court of Zhou.³⁷⁸

A good description of the essence of Daoism and the underlying ancient Chinese worldview from which it establishes its fundamental philosophical tenets can be found by the Sinologist Dr. Ulrich Theobald, MBA on his site devoted to ancient Chinese philosophy and literature www.chinaknowledge.de:

*The Way [Dao] is not only the metaphysical background of all things, but is the force by which the "ten thousand things" [wàn wù] came into being. The book Lǎozǐ says that the Dao produced the one (matter) [Tàijǐ], the one produced the two (Yīn and Yáng), the two produced the three (Heaven, Earth and Man), and the three produced the ten thousand things (Dao sheng yī, yī sheng èr, èr sheng sān, sān sheng wàn wù [wàn wù]). The dao is impartially included in all things that came into being, and its force and influence is extended to everywhere, without restriction. It has no shape and no extension, it is "void".*³⁷⁹

The specific verse he refers to is one of the most oft quotes and famous in the *Dao De Jing* and is from the middle of the text. It speaks to the *Dao* within the context of the creation of the material universe, the Chinese Daoist *cosmogony* as it were.

³⁷⁷ The classical Daoist canon called the *Daozang* was compiled around 400 CE and consists of around 400 or so texts, the *Dao De Jing* and *Zhuangzi* representing the core, fundamental works. For detail see Wikipedia contributors, 'Daozang', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2 September 2016, 09:21 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Daozang&oldid=737369842>> [accessed 2 September 2016].

³⁷⁸ What we know about the life of Lǎozǐ primarily comes from the *Records of the Grand Historian*, i.e. the *Shiji*, written in the later Former Han Dynasty years (3rd/2nd century BCE). In it, a story is narrated, that is also referred to in the *Zhuangzi* as well, that at one point Confucius met and consulted with Lǎozǐ on various ritual matters. While it's not clear whether or not this is a historical fact or a fable invented by later followers of Lǎozǐ to legitimize his teachings, the story nonetheless persists in ancient Chinese lore connecting the two great intellectual figures from Chinese antiquity. For detail see Chan, Alan, "Lǎozǐ", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/Lǎozǐ/>>. The Lǎozǐ story chapter, pgs. 2-3.

³⁷⁹ Chinese Thought and Philosophy: Philosophical Daoism. By Dr. Ulrich Theobald, MBA. From <http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Daoists/daoists.html>.

*The way (Dao); one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures.
The myriad creatures carry on their backs the Yin and embrace in their arms the Yang and are the
blending of the generative forces of the two.*³⁸⁰

All Daoist texts, commentaries, literature and schools adhere to these basic cosmological principles and underlying truths. While description of various means to achieving balance and harmony in one's personal life and in society at large may differ in various Daoist interpretative traditions, the Daoist theo-philosophical belief in the notion that all things emanate from and originate in the *Dao* is ultimately the unifying principle of the Daoist tradition.

The orthodox Daoist view as it were, or at least the single text that reflects Daoist basic principles more than any other, is undoubtedly the *Dao De Jing*, the classic Chinese text from the 6th century BCE that is on par with the Christian *Bible* in terms of circulation and influence, as well as in quality of prose. The *Dao De Jing* is written in Classical Chinese, an old script that dates back from the end of the Spring and Autumn period (8th to 5th century BCE) to the end of the Han Dynasty (late third century BCE) and is representative of the Old Chinese language.

Of course, any translation of this text into modern English like any of the Chinese texts from antiquity comes with interpretative and transliterative challenges. While within the text itself, in Classical Chinese at least, the ancient language and symbology remain intact, much of the symbology and style of the work, and the cultural references of course, do not survive through transmission like many of the Western classics do given that the underlying form of writing is in no way related to ours. Illustrating the various interpretations and style of some of the ancient Daoist writing, we can look at comparisons of various translations by sinologists of the opening line of the *Dao De Jing*, perhaps the most famous and oft quoted line in not just all of Daoism but perhaps even in all Eastern philosophy:

道可道非常道
Dao ke dao fei chang dao.

道 (in first, third, and sixth positions here) means “path”, “way”, “the way”, “to follow”, “to go down a path”. It also means “to speak”, “doctrines”.

可 functions like English modal “can” [or in this context, “is understood” or “can be comprehended”]

³⁸⁰ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching (Dao De Jing)*. Translation by D.C. Lau. Penguin Books, 1963. Chapter 42, verses 93 and 94. Pg. 103.

非 *a sign of negation; usually in the sense of “not the same as”.*

常 *“unvarying”, “constant”, “enduring”, “unchanging”.*

Literally, then, we have something like “The *dao* (道) that can be understood, is not the same as the unchanging, or eternal *Dao* (道)”. Below are six varying translations of the verse, all by reputable scholars whose translations of the *Dao De Jing* into English represent the most prominent and influential in the West.

1. *The Way that can be told of is not an Unvarying Way. (Waley n.d.: 141)*
2. *The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way. (Lau 1963: 57).*
3. *The Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. (Legge 1959: 95)*
4. *A Way that can be followed is not a constant Way. (Ivanhoe 2002: 1)*
5. *Way-making (dao) that can be put into words is not really way-making. (Ames and Hall 2003: 77)*
6. *As to a Dao—if it can be specified as a Dao It is not a permanent Dao. (Moeller 2007: 3)³⁸¹*

Clearly none of these translations are wrong, and no doubt the reader can “understands”, or “comprehend” the meaning of the original author when looking at the various translations alongside the Chinese characters themselves (courtesy of H. Rosemont’s Jr’s entry on the difficulty of translating ancient Chinese into English). The point being made here however is that unless one is intimately familiar with Old Chinese and the underlying Classical Chinese script that the text is written in, the best way to come to truly understand the meaning of the verse is by looking at and comparing the various translations available in English, each of which points to and around what Lǎozǐ actually is referring to by the symbol “道” which we translate into English using the Chinese word *Dao*. “Way” of course does not do the term justice, although perhaps it is the best alternative in modern English. But without knowledge and understanding of the term within the ancient Chinese philosophical context within which it is used, any single translation of the word, term or symbol, or the passages within which we find it used which provide our basis for understanding what it “meant” to the ancient Chinese, any single sentence or translation will be inadequate without at least one alternative.³⁸² The term however, permeates all of ancient Chinese theo-philosophical thought in the “classical” age of Chinese philosophy, intellectual

³⁸¹ Adapted from Rosemont Jr., Henry, “Translating and Interpreting Chinese Philosophy”, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/chinese-translate-interpret/>>. Brackets are authors insertions.

³⁸² For more on the translational difficulty and challenges of the classic Chinese texts into English given the *metaphysical* and theo-philosophical differences inherent in the respective “Far Eastern” and “Western” modes of thought in antiquity (or even Indo-European in a more generic sense), please see the Chapter in this work devoted to the topic.

developments which are effectively defined by the works of Confucius and Lǎozǐ which are believed to have been written around the middle of the first millennium BCE as “China” in the modern socio-political and cultural context is formulated empirically, geographically, culturally, linguistically and – most pertinent to this work – theo-philosophically.

Furthermore, when looking at the excerpt above, it should be clear that the lack of punctuation, and lack of semantic clarity that we are used to in the West, even in the ancient languages such as Greek, Sanskrit and of course Latin, yields not just alternate translations for the sentence but also a range of possible meanings, all of which no doubt is at least at some level “intended” by the original author. The language is encoded as it were, with various meanings, a characteristic that is true of much of the ancient Chinese literature, adding to its poetic appeal and distinguishing it markedly from the Indo-European literary tradition from which we have inherited the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the Hellenic philosophical tradition marked most influentially by Plato and Aristotle.

While my preference from the choices above is the translation of Lau, 1963, this author nonetheless prefers something along the lines of that which we started the discussion on the meaning on the passage above with - i.e. “*The dao that can be understood (or spoken of), is not the same as the unchanging, or eternal, Dao*”. Note the use of the lower case *dao* versus the capital *Dao* which is our way in English to distinguish between that which is material or *qualified* and that which is *immaterial* or *immanent* and *all-pervading*, in much the same way we would distinguish between “god” and “God”. The parallel and analogy between the two theo-philosophical constructs is quite strong in fact although the Western tradition focuses on this immortal being who is our Creator and Preserver while the Chinese focus more on how to live to align oneself with that which is the source of all creation, i.e. *wànwù*.

Regardless, the preferred translation reflects and underscores the *skeptical epistemological* bent of Daoist thought which not only distinguishes it from Confucianism, which is much more “practical” and “specific” as it deals with ritual, rites and ceremonies along with the ethical and moral precepts which follow it, but also from ancient Chinese *mythos*, which like all ancient mythological traditions is best understood as allegorical or metaphorical in nature.³⁸³ This skeptical epistemological stance aligns the Daoist tradition quite neatly within the Platonic (and Vedic) *skeptical* and *idealist* ontological and epistemological positions, with a strong parallel to the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition in fact which also is heavily focuses on the “path” of

³⁸³ Arguably ancient Chinese *mythos* was understood by the ancients as metaphorical and allegorical as well but that is a wholly different topic, one which for example is dealt with extensively in the Western theo-philosophical tradition, in particular by the early Christian apologists such as Philo Judaeus, Origen and Clement of Alexandria, as well as the Neo-Platonists as well, all whom looked to interpret ancient myth as “allegory” with its true meaning hidden as it were – what is referred to in the Hellenic philosophical tradition in particular as *allegoresis*.

virtue and happiness (*eudaimonia* and *arête*) within the cosmogonic and metaphysical boundaries established by the various schools of Hellenic philosophy.

Using the translation of James Legge, one of if not the first true Sinologist in the West from the late 20th century who translated many of the core ancient Chinese texts into English for the first time, and whose translations are still widely referred to and quoted today, the full first verse of the *Dao De Jing* is:

The Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name. (Conceived of as) having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; (conceived of as) having a name, it is the Mother of all things. Always without desire we must be found, If its deep mystery we would sound; But if desire always within us be, Its outer fringe is all that we shall see. Under these two aspects, it is really the same; but as development takes place, it receives the different names. Together we call them the Mystery. Where the Mystery is the deepest is the gate of all that is subtle and wonderful.³⁸⁴

So while there are clearly different ways of translating this pivotal Daoist verse, and Legge's approach to translation is perhaps more freeform and lyrical than literal or philosophical, what we can glean by looking at the translation of the verse above is that we do not have, in contrast again to the Confucian tradition (*Rújiā*), an emphasis on name, form, ritual, or etiquette, what is referred to in the academic literature sometimes as "social *dao*" or "normative *dao*", but a focus on the eternal and absolute *Dao*, which is fundamentally *not* that which can be named and described via language and yet at the same time is the source of things; Heaven and Earth and all the myriad of things that reside in it and make up the world of Man.

What we can also take away from this passage, is that the classic Daoist view of "reality" as represented by Lǎozǐ as the author in this pivotal work, is that despite the recognition of the firm reality and existence of what the Chinese refer to as the *ten thousand things* or *myriad of things* (*wànwù*), the true *Dao*, the eternal *Dao*, lacks definition and clarity in the intellectual or mental sense of "understanding" or "comprehension" in and of itself.

We are also presented in the very first verse of the very first Chapter of the *Dao De Jing* an almost stubborn reluctance toward semantic philosophical inquiry baked right into the very heart of the Daoist tradition, a core *skeptical* bent as it were that is reminiscent of the early Platonic school with its emphasis on the reality of *forms* or *ideas*, akin to the realm of *Dao* as it were, versus the

³⁸⁴ *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-tzu. Translated by J. Legge 1891. In the public domain, link: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/taote.htm>. For alternate translation with Traditional Chinese characters see Chinese Text Project, *Dao De Jing*, verse 1 at <http://ctext.org/dao-de-jing>.

“sensible” realm of name and form which has its almost direct corollary in the Daoist tradition as we see from the opening verse of the *Dao De Jing*.

We also see here, again very much akin to the Upanishadic and early Hellenic (aka Platonic) philosophical traditions, that “reality” as conceived of as the *Dao* is made up of two different aspects - one ethereal and incomprehensible, i.e. some form of supra-intellect as it were, and another form of knowledge that is related to the material world and which can be “understood” or “comprehended”. Lǎozǐ tells us that the two forms of *Dao* – *dao* and *Dao* respectively - are really two sides of the same coin as it were. One that has name and form, i.e. the *Dao* or the “Mother of all things” and another that is nameless and formless and is the source of all things, i.e. the eternal, ever present and changeless *Dao*.

This distinction between the “material” world of name and form as it were, and the ethereal or “supernatural” word has definite parallels between the two forms of knowledge that are called out in the Upanishadic and early Platonic works – a lower form of knowledge through which we perceive and understand the world of the senses, i.e. the material world, and an *intellectual* world of *ideas* and concepts which lead ultimately to the *Good* or “Best”, or in the Upanishadic tradition the highest form of *knowledge* which is the knowledge of the unity of *Ātman* and *Brahman*.³⁸⁵

We also see here in this very dense and loaded verse which opens the *Dao De Jing* an allusion to the role of *desire*, or *longing* (欲), which is called out as the fundamental element of the human condition which impedes our true understanding, our unification as it were, of the *Dao* (not *dao*). Again, the corollaries here to the Upanishadic and Platonic philosophical tenets and guidance of the rejection or “withdrawal” of the senses in order that the true nature of reality can be “experienced” are striking.

We still nonetheless in the *Dao De Jing* a socio-political thread of thought as well, shedding light on the purpose of the work not just as a means to self-illumination and guide to a way of life which is led by *virtue* and ultimately yields *happiness* (as reflected in its typical English title *The Way of Virtue*) but also clearly written for an intended audience of state officials as well, consistent in fact with the content of most of the other philosophical works of its time, and reflective of the fact that most of these ancient philosophical works survive down to us in a form

³⁸⁵ For more information on Plato’s *theory of knowledge* – the distinction he draws between the “sensible” realm and the intelligible realm - as well as the parallels to Upanishadic epistemological theory of “higher” and “lower” forms of *knowledge*, as well as the role of “withdrawal” of the senses for the perception and experience of this “higher” form of “experiential” *knowledge* – what the Platonic tradition refers to as *sophia*, or *wisdom*, and the *Upanishads* refer to as *Brahmavidyā*, or knowledge of *Brahman*, see the Chapter in this work on Plato *theory of forms and epistemology*.

that was crafted by scholars that were lined to, and no doubt supported by, various levels of state governance.

Favour and disgrace would seem equally to be feared; honour and great calamity, to be regarded as personal conditions (of the same kind). What is meant by speaking thus of favour and disgrace? Disgrace is being in a low position (after the enjoyment of favour). The getting that (favour) leads to the apprehension (of losing it), and the losing it leads to the fear of (still greater calamity) - this is what is meant by saying that favour and disgrace would seem equally to be feared. And what is meant by saying that honour and great calamity are to be (similarly) regarded as personal conditions? What makes me liable to great calamity is my having the body (which I call myself); if I had not the body, what great calamity could come to me? Therefore he who would administer the kingdom, honouring it as he honours his own person, may be employed to govern it, and he who would administer it with the love which he bears to his own person may be entrusted with it.³⁸⁶

In this passage, we see very “Confucian” undertones, speaking to the intended purpose of the ancient Chinese philosophical tradition as a whole being the tools by which one can lead a peaceful and harmonious life, and in turn lead to a peaceful and harmonious society. The belief in the underlying means by which this could occur, the “how” as it were, differ in the two traditions but the underlying purpose and intent, the “why”, is essentially the same.

From the *Zhuangzi*, the second cornerstone of Daoist thought from antiquity outside of the *Dao De Jing*, we find a focus on more anecdotes and stories to illustrate the Daoist position, and a further emphasis on the Way (*Dao*) as the one true path. The work is attributed to the figure of Zhuangzi himself (Master Zhuang) who lived in the late 4th century BCE, a century or two after Lǎozǐ and Confucius. Although like other texts of this tradition, the work is thought to have been codified and written down by his followers after his death in various phases but it no doubt reflects the teachings of an actual historical figure.

The work is classically divided into a set of “Inner Chapters”, which were thought to be reflective of the thought of Zhuangzi himself or his direct followers, and a set of “Outer Chapters” which are thought to be somewhat later additions to the text. While the work has been classified as “Daoist” it’s not altogether clear at the time of writing that Zhuangzi, or his followers, would have considered themselves as such, nor is it clear that the *Zhuangzi* text itself was directly connected from a lineage standpoint to the school of thought reflected in the *Dao De Jing*.

³⁸⁶ *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-tzu. Translated by J. Legge 1891. Verse 13 from <http://ctext.org/dao-de-jing>.

We do however see many of the same themes and philosophical and cosmological tenets in the *Zhuangzi* text that are present in the *Dao De Jing*, hence the very close association the work has had with the classic text of Lǎozǐ since antiquity. For example, the full cosmological view and intellectual foundations of the main positions of the school are illustrated in the following verse from one of the Outer Chapters entitled “Heaven and Earth”:

Notwithstanding the greatness of heaven and earth, their transforming power proceeds from one lathe; notwithstanding the number of the myriad things, the government of them is one and the same; notwithstanding the multitude of mankind, the lord of them is their (one) ruler. The ruler's (course) should proceed from the qualities (of the Dao) and be perfected by Heaven, when it is so, it is called 'Mysterious and Sublime.' The ancients ruled the world by doing nothing - simply by this attribute of Heaven.

If we look at their words in the light of the Dao, (we see that) the appellation for the ruler of the world was correctly assigned; if we look in the same light at the distinctions which they instituted, (we see that) the separation of ruler and ministers was right; if we look at the abilities which they called forth in the same light, (we see that the duties of) all the offices were well performed; and if we look generally in the same way at all things, (we see that) their response (to this rule) was complete. Therefore that which pervades (the action of) Heaven and Earth is (this one) attribute; that which operates in all things is (this one) course; that by which their superiors govern the people is the business (of the various departments); and that by which aptitude is given to ability is skill. The skill was manifested in all the (departments of) business; those departments were all administered in righteousness; the righteousness was (the outflow of) the natural virtue; the virtue was manifested according to the Dao; and the Dao was according to (the pattern of) Heaven.

*Hence it is said, 'The ancients who had the nourishment of the world wished for nothing and the world had enough; they did nothing and all things were transformed; their stillness was abysmal, and the people were all composed.' The Record says, 'When the one (Dao) pervades it, all business is completed. When the mind gets to be free from all aim, even the Spirits submit.'*³⁸⁷

From this passage we can see illustrated the conceptual worldview posited from Zhuangzi's point of view, a perfect state and socio-political harmony as it were that starts and ends with the eternal *Dao*, harkening back to a time period which the world of Heaven and Earth was in balance and harmony, echoing the sentiments of the Confucian tradition. We also see here the same socio-political narrative and purpose here put forth in the Confucian as well as the Mohist texts. But what we do not see here, consistent with the *Lǎozǐ* text, is any emphasis on the importance

³⁸⁷Zhuangzi. Translated by J. Legge 1891. From “Heaven and Earth” Chapter, verse 1. <http://ctext.org/zhuangzi/heaven-and-earth>.

of ancient rituals and rites or “etiquette”, but yet at the same time an intellectual reliance on the underlying presence of the eternal *Dao* as the source of balance and harmony for the individual as well as the society at large.

We also find here references to individual self-cultivation, or self-liberation, as the means by which this eternal *Dao* can be accessed, adhered to, by which not only personal peace and harmony can be achieved but also by which in turn socio-political balance and harmony can be achieved. This characteristic is unique to this text and is again aligned with and consistent with the *Lǎozǐ* philosophy where the emphasis is on self-awareness and liberation from desire such that the eternal *Dao* can be fully manifest.

This eternal *Dao* is also characterized as “doing nothing - simply by this attribute of Heaven”, pointing to the concept of *wu wei*, or non-action/non-doing, which is also elemental to the Daoist tradition. This is one of the fundamental Daoist precepts which falls out of the so-called *naturalism* that underlies the entire system of belief. The age-old ways of the Heavens and Earth are called upon and despite its lack of definitional properties, the natural order of things is perceived to occur without any direct action or involvement of the individual. Hence, we are left with the term *wu wei* to signify the mode of being that is in harmony with and aligned with the eternal *Dao*, no doubt contrasted quite clearly with the principles of action, ritual and etiquette that were so fundamental to the Confucian doctrines.

We see the same principle called out in the *Dao De Jing* as well, as illustrated in the passage below, illustrating one of the core concepts which tie the two works by Lǎozǐ and Zhuangzi into a single thread of thought that came to be called Daoism (*Daojiā*) by Han Dynasty, and later, scholars.

*Therefore the sage manages affairs without doing anything, and conveys his instructions without the use of speech. All things spring up, and there is not one which declines to show itself; they grow, and there is no claim made for their ownership; they go through their processes, and there is no expectation (of a reward for the results). The work is accomplished, and there is no resting in it (as an achievement). The work is done, but how no one can see; 'Tis this that makes the power not cease to be.*³⁸⁸

While the Chinese philosophical tradition is generally thought of as lacking epistemological pursuits, at least in a defined and emphasized sense that is so characteristic of the ancient philosophical systems in the West - intellectual exploration of the boundaries and extent to which

³⁸⁸ *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-tzu. Translated by J. Legge 1891. Verse 2 from <http://ctext.org/dao-de-jing>.

knowledge or truth is possible - we do start to see elements of *theories of knowledge* put forth in the *Zhuangzi*, at least tangentially, despite its fundamental *skeptical* bent again consistent with the *Dao De Jing*:

*There is a limit to our life, but to knowledge there is no limit. With what is limited to pursue after what is unlimited is a perilous thing; and when, knowing this, we still seek the increase of our knowledge, the peril cannot be averted.*³⁸⁹

And

*He who knows the part which the Heavenly (in him) plays, and knows (also) that which the Human (in him ought to) play, has reached the perfection (of knowledge). He who knows the part which the Heavenly plays (knows) that it is naturally born with him; he who knows the part which the Human ought to play (proceeds) with the knowledge which he possesses to nourish it in the direction of what he does not (yet) know: to complete one's natural term of years and not come to an untimely end in the middle of his course is the fullness of knowledge. Although it be so, there is an evil (attending this condition). Such knowledge still awaits the confirmation of it as correct; it does so because it is not yet determined. How do we know that what we call the Heavenly (in us) is not the Human? and that what we call the Human is not the Heavenly? There must be the True man, and then there is the True knowledge.*³⁹⁰

Both of these verses are from the Inner Chapters and reflect the undercurrent of *skepticism* that underlies all Daoist thought but also delineates again this distinction between lower and higher forms of *knowledge* – the knowledge of Man and Heaven respectively.

What is it that can be known really? What are the limits of *knowledge*? What are the pitfalls of the pursuit of *knowledge* for knowledge's sake? While these questions are asked, they are specifically not answered. Knowledge of the workings of Heaven and the workings of Man are spelled out as two distinct pursuits, but yet at the same time fundamentally related. Nonetheless, despite the lack of definition and semantic clarity that can be established around true *knowledge*, it is believed to exist and manifest as it were in the perfect Daoist sage.

Parallels can certainly be drawn here to the Hellenic philosophical tradition to the notion of *wisdom*, or *sophia*, which plays such a prominent role in Plato's *dialogues*, as well as in the Indian

³⁸⁹ *Zhuangzi*. Translated by J. Legge 1891. From "Nourishing the Lord of Life" Chapter, verse 1. <http://ctext.org/zhuangzi/nourishing-the-lord-of-life>.

³⁹⁰ *Zhuangzi*. Translated by J. Legge 1891. From "Great and Most Honoured Master" Chapter, verse 1. <http://ctext.org/zhuangzi/nourishing-the-lord-of-life>

philosophical tradition with the notion of *Brahmavidyā* which play such a prominent role in the *Upanishads*. In the Daoist tradition, this true *knowledge* comes from an understanding the roles of Heaven, Earth and Man, and how they interplay in one's life such that peace and harmony can be achieved. The focus again in this verse is on individual illumination as it were, if we can use that term, rather than socio-political philosophy.

Parallels to Indian philosophy can also be found in the Mohist tradition , where the natural order of Heaven and Earth is appealed to as the benchmark of *order* or *righteousness* - what in the Indian philosophical tradition comes to be known as *dharma*. So while the Daoists arguably are more concerned with epistemological issues, the Mohists can be seen in contrast to be more focused on issues of *morality* or *ethics*, claiming that there exists an objective standard of *morality* and *ethics* as measured by, and ultimately as justified by, Heaven.

From the Outer Chapters of the *Zhuangzi* for example, we find some content that rests along similar lines, aligning the behavior of the *perfect* (Daoist) *sage* with Heaven and Earth, i.e. the eternal *Dao*.

(The operations of) Heaven and Earth proceed in the most admirable way, but they say nothing about them; the four seasons observe the clearest laws, but they do not discuss them; all things have their complete and distinctive constitutions, but they say nothing about them. The sages trace out the admirable operations of Heaven and Earth, and reach to and understand the distinctive constitutions of all things; and thus it is that the Perfect Man (is said to) do nothing and the Greatest Sage to originate nothing, such language showing that they look to Heaven and Earth as their model.³⁹¹

In this passage, we can see clearly the intellectual leaning and justification of the existence of eternal laws which govern the universe, the realm of both Heaven and Earth, which ultimately are the qualities of the *Daoist sage* – a perfect manifestation of the eternal *Dao* as it were. Furthermore, the way this perfection is achieved, one of the key attributes or qualities of this *Daoist sage*, is not their action necessarily – what they do or say - but their “inaction”, i.e. *wu wei*. It is this *inaction* in fact, according to the ancient Daoist texts, that is equated to living in balance or harmony with *nature*, which in Daoist terminology is living in harmony with (the laws of) Heaven, Man and Earth. Despite the fact that - like the *Dao* itself - these laws cannot be fully articulated, or even said to be fully understood in the semantic or philosophic sense, they nonetheless are held to not only exist, but at the same time be the very foundation of not just

³⁹¹ *Zhuangzi*. Translated by J. Legge 1891. From “Knowledge Rambling in the North” Chapter, verse 2. <http://ccontext.org/zhuangzi/knowledge-rambling-in-the-north>

the Daoist sage, but more broadly and generally Daoist *ethics*. In Daoist terminology we might call it “perfect living”, or the *Way of Virtue*, which again is not only the benchmark for Daoist *ethics* and *morality*, but also is the fundamental characteristic of the *Daoist sage*.

No doubt however that the *Dao De Jing*, as well as later Daoist texts such as the *Zhuangzi*, were influenced by the prominence of the Confucian, Mohist and other schools of thought which focused much more on defining social norms and socio-political behavior. While still intended to satisfy the same basic purpose as the other philosophical material that is reflective of the same time period in Chinese history, namely the cultivation of a sound life to achieve peace and happiness, the *Dao De Jing* does have more of individual and spiritual focus as compared to the Confucian or Mohist doctrines. For example, in the *Dao De Jing* we find passages like the following:

*Empty your mind of all thoughts.
Let your heart be at peace.
Watch the turmoil of beings,
but contemplate their return.*

*Each separate being in the universe
returns to the common source.
Returning to the source is serenity.*

*If you don't realize the source,
you stumble in confusion and sorrow.
When you realize where you come from,
you naturally become tolerant,
disinterested, amused,
kindhearted as a grandmother,
dignified as a king.
Immersed in the wonder of the Tao,
you can deal with whatever life brings you,
and when death comes, you are ready.³⁹²*

³⁹² *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-tzu. Translation by S. Mitchell. <http://acc6.its.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~phalsall/texts/taote-v3.html#1>

Here we find an almost direct element of *mysticism* as we would call it in modern parlance referenced to in the ancient text, very much akin to much of Upanishadic philosophy and also referenced in some passages of Plato.

Compare for example the following verses below, the first from Plato's *Phaedo* and the second from the *Katha Upanishad* for example:

From Plato:

*"But when the soul inquires alone by itself, it departs into the realm of the pure, the everlasting, the immortal and the changeless, and being akin to these it dwells always with them whenever it is by itself and is not hindered, and it has rest from its wanderings and remains always the same and unchanging with the changeless, since it is in communion therewith. And this state of the soul is called wisdom. Is it not so?"*³⁹³

From the *Katha Upanishad*:

12. 'The wise who, by means of meditation on his Self, recognizes the Ancient, who is difficult to be seen, who has entered into the dark, who is hidden in the cave, who dwells in the abyss, as God, he indeed leaves joy and sorrow far behind.'

13. 'A mortal who has heard this and embraced it, who has separated from it all qualities, and has thus reached the subtle Being, rejoices, because he has obtained what is a cause for rejoicing. The house (of Brahman) is open, I believe, O Nakiketas.'³⁹⁴

Both of these passages are from texts that are dealing directly with the nature of death in fact – the former upon the eve of Socrates death where they are discussing whether or not one should fear death and whether or not there is anything that persists after it (i.e. the immortality of the Soul) and the latter from Nachiketa who is sent to the realm of death (Yama's realm) upon frustration by his father for asking too many annoying questions (as young boys often do) where he presents Yama with the question of the what is it, if anything, that persists beyond death. The parallels between the underlying messages of the passages are striking – not from a linguistic sense of course but in terms of the true meaning and import of the passages themselves, each from one of the most influential and prominent works of their respective civilizations.

It most certainly begs the question as to what connection there was, if any, between the ancient Indian sages and the ancient philosophers of China although there is no direct evidence, from the

³⁹³ *Phaedrus*, 79c-79d. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Apage%3D79>

³⁹⁴ *Katha-Upanishad*. FIRST ADHYĀYA. Second VALLĪ. *The Upanishads, Part 2 (SBE15)*, by Max Müller, [1879], at sacred-texts.com. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/sbe15011.htm>.

archeological or written record, that any such connection existed prior to the second half of the first millennium BCE, well after the compilation of all of the major philosophical treatises of China antiquity were written and well after the majority of the *Upanishads* were written. While there is no direct evidence that there were any lines of communication between the ancient Chinese sages/philosophers and the sages/philosophers of India in antiquity, or certainly between ancient China and Greece as there are no references in either of the ancient textual traditions to each other, we do know that there was trade between the two cultures starting in at least the Han Dynasty (late 3rd, early 2nd century BCE), but that is some three or four centuries after the *Dao De Jing* is believed to have been transcribed.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ While classicists such as M. L. West In his seminal work *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford University Press 1971) and Thomas McEvilley in his comprehensive analysis and study of the parallels between ancient Greek and Indian philosophy in his work *Shape of Ancient Thought* (Allworth Press 2002), draw parallels between ancient Hellenic and Indian philosophy, and theorize communication and intellectual exchange between the Pre-Socratics in Eastern Ionia and ancient Upanishadic scholars vis a vi the Persian Empire in the early Persian dynastic period (roughly 6th century BCE), this evidence is scanty at best and does not explain the theo-philosophical similarities we are drawing here between ancient Chinese philosophy and the “Indo-European” theo-philosophical tradition if we may coin a term to place the early Hellenic and Upanishadic philosophical traditions under one umbrella.. However, while Plato’s writing stands at the cusp really of this “Indo-European” cultural exchange – through the Near east and Persian Empires - although while he clearly borrows heavily from his predecessors in the Hellenic world (Pre-Socratics such as Heraclitus and Parmenides for example), no traces of extra Hellenic influence are alluded to in any of his works, or by interpreters of his works, the most notable of which is of course Aristotle.

There are many parallels that can be drawn between early Hellenic and Upanishadic philosophy. In particular, we find many similarities between the philosophy presented by Plato in his Middle Period as he developed and fine-tuned his *theory of forms* - in particular as presented in the *Phaedo* - and much of what we find in the *Upanishads*. In fact this is the impetus of the seminal works of M. L. West (*Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, Oxford University Press 1971) and Thomas McEvilley (*The Shape of Ancient Thought*, Allworth Press, 2002), two of the most comprehensive works that outline not just the similarities of the two respective philosophical traditions, but attempt to establish direct links between the traditions themselves via some form of cultural and intellectual diffusion, both in the early period as the respective philosophic traditions evolve into their initial form in the first half of the first millennium BCE, and also as they evolve into more mature forms in the second half of the first millennium BCE and into the first millennium CE.

What both of these works allude to however, even though this hypothesis is for the most part rejected by both authors, is that these parallels and similarities could be the result of not simply intellectual borrowing and direct contact between the founders and initial shapers of the respective traditions, but ultimately could be that the two traditions emanate and originate from a common source. This hypothesis not only would explain the glaring similarities of the two systems of thought (if we can categorize them into such neat little boxes), but also would not require that direct contact between the two cultures and intellectual traditions existed, a fact which although each of the two authors make a valiant attempt to establish but nonetheless we have virtually no direct evidence of.

All of the evidence presented by the two authors and scholars in fact is circumstantial. In other words, their theory of direct contact of the Pre-Socratics and the Upanishadic philosophical tradition is based upon the similarities and parallels of the traditions, not based upon evidence of direct contact itself – from either the archeological, linguistic or historical evidence that is extent. And while certainly the absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence, the best theory of how these similarities came to be would seem to be that they share a common origin rather than the two systems of thought developed in parallel to each other with some sort of direct contact through the Sumer-Babylonian, Assyrian and then Persian Empires which did at least geographically speaking touch the outskirts of Ionia to the West and the Indian subcontinent to the East.

A theory of common origins is aligned with the linguistic evidence in fact³⁹⁶, but this theory requires an adjustment and recalibration of the mind of ancient man in the first millennium BCE. In other words, the direct contact and cultural diffusion hypothesis is convenient because it assumes that the underlying content of these philosophical systems is actually invented, i.e. does not exist prior to, the first half of the first millennium BCE as the various works that represent what we have come to understand as early Greek and Upanishadic philosophy were crafted and written down.

But a more reasonable hypothesis, and again one that is better aligned with the evidence and what we know about how “philosophy” - the ancients understanding of reality from a metaphysical perspective - was handed down was that in fact these ideas that we find in the *Upanishads* and the early Greek philosophic works had existed for centuries, and were passed down orally through various teacher and student settings as we know was common throughout antiquity, prior to them being written down and captured in the various treatises that have come to represent these respective traditions.

For it is well established that the seeds of many of the ideas present in the *Upanishads* can also be found in *Vedas*, works which although have a different emphasis than the *Upanishads*, nonetheless reflect the intellectual and theological (we hesitate to use the term religious) tradition of the so-called Indo-Aryans from at least the second millennium BCE. So the idea that the philosophy as presented and compiled in the *Upanishads* in the first half of the first millennium BCE did not exist until these works were actually compiled (based upon the linguistic evidence as they were probably not written down until the second half of the first millennium BCE at the earliest) presumes that the authors of the *Upanishads* were “inventors” of a new mode of thinking. But the works themselves say no such thing. The *Upanishads* speak to a perennial philosophy that was identified and “discovered”, i.e. “revealed” by the great *rishis*, sages or seers, who established the Indo-Aryan civilization as it is reflected by the *Vedas*, which they are simply recording and conveying in a different form as it were. In other words, there is nothing to say – and in fact the tradition itself speaks to this very point – that the philosophy of the *Upanishads* was not “existent” and “taught”, and ultimately originated from intellectual developments that were in fact much earlier than when these treatises were actually compiled.

While this idea, this notion that Upanishadic philosophy is a 2nd millennium BCE, or even 3rd millennium BCE construct, one that is co-existent with the Indo-Aryan peoples and culture and one that is not just seeded by the *Vedas* but in fact existed and was taught by the sages and seers of the early Indo-Aryans as the *Upanishads* attest to, implies that the similarities between the early Hellenic philosophical tradition and Upanishadic philosophy *must* be due to common

³⁹⁶ See the chapter in this work on the Origins of Greek Philosophy.

origins, effectively ruling out the possibility of the similarities being due to direct cultural or intellectual contact.

This common origins hypothesis, if true (and again it is the theory which most closely aligns with the evidence at present) which is what the author is proposing here does two things – 1) it rules out the theory of direct contact between the Pre-Socratics and the Indo-Aryans which again is consistent with the evidence which is altogether lacking in this regard (again similarities between the two traditions are just as easily, and arguably more coherently, explained by a common origin hypothesis), and 2) it implies that these intellectual traditions, these theo-philosophical systems of thought, which we find present in the early thinkers and writers in the Mediterranean and the Indian subcontinent in the first millennium BCE, must have been around, existent in some form or another, much earlier than is typically thought. So common origins presupposes, in fact depends upon categorically, the existence of these belief systems – at least the ones that we find present in both traditions – at a much earlier time frame in the history of man than is typically supposed by modern scholars.

This a very important and arguably revolutionary notion regarding ancient man that follows from this common origin hypothesis, i.e. our *Laurasian hypothesis*, is that these ancient peoples were in fact much more intelligent than we give them credit for being. That the ideas that they present in the respective traditions as writing is invented in the first millennium BCE actually reflect a tradition, a belief system, that does not just pre-date the compilation of the various texts – that Plato in fact conceptually “borrowed” from Heraclitus, Pythagoras and Parmenides for example which is basically considered to be a fact at this point – but that these Pre-Socratics which influenced Plato in fact drew from a much earlier theo-philosophical tradition which did not just “borrow” or was somewhat influenced from “Oriental” theo-philosophical traditions (which also is considered to be a fact at this point and again is the primary thrust of the works of McEvilley and West), but that in fact they were drawing from a much earlier tradition that was present in the Mediterranean and Near East in the first half of the first millennium BCE which was “Indo-European”. We call this belief system “Indo-European” in the sense that it was co-existent with the linguistic influence of the Indo-European language which we know, from the linguistic evidence, represents the parent linguistic systems of both the Indo-Aryan people as well as the Greeks, as well as the Indo-Iranians (i.e. the Persians).

Starting with this premise then, let’s look again at the similarities between the early Hellenic philosophical tradition and Upanishadic philosophy, but instead of trying to establish direct connections and parallels to the “founders” or “inventors” of the respective traditions as

McEvilley and West do³⁹⁷, we consider that Plato “expresses” and articulates this distinctive Indo-European philosophy in his works in Greek in the late 5th and early 4th century BCE just as the authors of the Upanishads “express” this Indo-European philosophy in Sanskrit, each using different words and symbols from their respective linguistic traditions (speaking and writing systems) but each expressing the same theo-philosophical principles more or less.

In other words, inverting the *logic* so to speak, if one starts with the assumption that there did indeed exist some form of Indo-European philosophy which was co-existent with the Indo-European people and language from which the Greeks and Indo-Aryans (and Indo-Iranians) descend - which again is the theory which aligns best with the evidence and best explains the similarities between the early Greek philosophical tradition and the theo-philosophical tradition present in the *Upanishads* – then we can ascertain the characteristics of this belief system, one which we can roughly date along with the parent of the Indo-European language family itself (i.e. roughly end of 4th to middle 3rd millennium BCE or so), by comparing and contrasting the two belief systems in their “mature” form. Characteristics that they share can be said to be in all likelihood of common origin and characteristics which are distinct can be said to be local variants, just as the linguistic theory holds.

To accomplish this, instead of taking broad strokes across the entire Pre-Socratic and Platonic intellectual landscape and comparing the various belief systems with counterparts from the “Orient” (which is code for the geographic regions to the East of Ionia, which is where many of the Pre-Socratics heralded from, i.e. what is referred to as the “Near East” which effectively describes areas of Sumer-Babylonian, Assyrian and Persian influence) which is the approach that McEvilley, West and Burkert take effectively, what we will do is look at two specific works that essentially reflect the core theo-philosophical traditions of the Platonic and Upanishadic traditions respectively in their most “mature” form in the middle of the first millennium BCE and deconstruct them so to speak to look at just how similar the doctrines are. We perform this analysis keeping in mind that while the treatises were written in geographical regions for which there is no evidence of intellectual contact (despite the Sumer-Babylonian and Persian theory of contact put forward by West and McEvilley which we reject for the more reasonable hypothesis that the similarities are due to common origins) and which were compiled in different languages and herald from different but ultimately related mythical and *theological* traditions.

The two works we will look at have a very similar narrative and a very similar context and topic/theme and therefore provide a sound basis for comparison and general summation of the metaphysics and philosophy of the respective traditions as a whole. They are the *Katha*

³⁹⁷ Or as Walter Burkert does in his chapter entitled “Prehistory of Presocratic Philosophy in an Orientalizing Context” from the Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy, Oxford University Press 2008.

Upanishad and the *Phaedo*, each which deals very directly and specifically with the notion of death and the question of what if anything that persists after it, i.e. the immortality of the soul, as well as the nature of reality and the means by which such knowledge can be revealed. The similarities between the two narratives, as well as of course the content which will be explored in depth below, speaks to and in and of itself a core piece of evidence for the common origins of the theo-philosophical doctrines presented therein.

The *Katha Upanishad* is one of the primary (*Mukhya*) Upanishads embedded in the last part of the *Yajurveda* and consists of two chapters (*Adhyāyas*), each divided into three sections or *Vallis*. The narrative starts with the story of a boy Nachiketa, who asks his father to whom he shall be given to knowing that his father, as a sage, is to give up all his worldly possessions. After asking his father, the sage Vajasravasa, three times to whom he shall be given to, his father states emphatically (no doubt with some level of annoyance at his son as any father can relate to), “to Death I shall give you”. Now given that Vajasravasa is a sage and therefore must be true to his word, and Nachiketa being the obedient son that he is, he takes his father quite literally and he travels to the land of the dead, a realm ruled by the Hindu deity Yama.³⁹⁸

But when Nachiketa arrives in the realm of the dead, Yama is not there. He therefore must wait for him. He waits for three nights, each without food or refreshments, and therefore when Yama finally returns, he grants Nachiketa three boons or wishes, one for each night that he waited as a guest without his host being present. The first boon Nachiketa asks for requests is that his father no longer be angered with him, and the second is for the secret of the fire sacrifice, which leads to heaven and a world without hunger or thirst and beyond the reach of sorrow. Yama grants both boons, and teaches him about the bricks that must be constructed and laid out upon the altar properly and precisely how the sacrifice (Agni sacrifice as it is referred to in the *Vedas*) is to be performed in order that it be effective such that the realm of heaven can be attained.

The last boon Nachiketa requests is the knowledge of whether or not the Soul lives on beyond death, a request that Yama pleads with him not to pursue, given the subtlety and rarity of such knowledge, knowledge that is even rare among the gods. As Nachiketa puts it, “*There is that doubt, when a man is dead --some saying, he is; others, he is not. This I should like to know, taught by thee; this is the third of my boons.*”³⁹⁹ Despite the prodding of Yama to choose another

³⁹⁸ There are two hymns to Yama in the *Rigvéda*, both from Book 10, supposedly the latest layer of the *Rigvéda* - hymns CXXXV and XIV (and X which alludes to him indirectly). Yama is spoken of as the first being to establish the realm of the underworld, the dwelling of the ancestors. In the most ancient strata of Indo-Iranian lore, there exists another deity called Yima, who is also the son of the Sun (*Sūrya* in Sanskrit) who is the protogenital man. In the *Rigvéda*, the realm of the underworld is spoken of as being guarded by two dogs, reminiscent of the two-headed dog Cerberus of Greek mythology who guards the realm of the dead as well. Similarities between Hades and Yama abound, they are almost direct counterparts.

³⁹⁹ *Katha-Upanishad*. FIRST ADHYĀYA. First VALLĪ. Verse 20. *The Upanishads, Part 2 (SBE15)*, by Max Müller, [1879], at sacred-texts.com. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/sbe15010.htm>.

boon, anything at all except the nature of the Soul beyond death, Nachiketa persists and so begins the teachings of Yama about the nature of the Soul.

The *Phaedo* on the other hand, is presented by Plato as a conversation regarding the discussion with Socrates having taken place on the morning of the day when he is to die, as presented by Phaedo who was supposedly present on that day, hence the name of the dialogue (although it circulated in antiquity with the title *On the Soul* as well). The dialogue starts with some of his followers arriving in his prison cell to find his wife, Xanthippe, as well as his son, present and very emotional of course about his impending death. Socrates sends them away however, after which he states cryptically, *"What a strange thing, my friends, that seems to be which men call pleasure! How wonderfully it is related to that which seems to be its opposite, pain, in that they will not both come to a man at the same time, and yet if he pursues the one and captures it he is generally obliged to take the other also, as if the two were joined together in one head."*⁴⁰⁰.

The battle lines being drawn as they were, the topic of taking one's own life comes up, upon which Socrates tells the listeners that it is not proper for a man to do so, even a philosopher who deals directly with, metaphorically and intellectually speaking, the notion of death quite directly.⁴⁰¹ This view is challenged by two of his students that are present however, and as such, Socrates is forced to lay out a stronger argument to defend his case as to why a) the philosopher should not fear death, and b) why it is that he at the same time it is not proper that he take his own life.

Socrates then lays out a very direct argument for death being the separation of the Soul from the body, the philosopher as one who is interested in the realm of the Soul rather than the physical realm of desire and sensation as governed by the body, as well as the acquisition of "pure knowledge" as distinct from the realm of the body, laying out as such his basic argument for the *theory of forms* that comes to represent the core part of Plato's metaphysics upon which it can be said that his whole philosophy in no small measure rests.

⁴⁰⁰ Plato, *Phaedo* 60b. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Apage%3D60>

⁴⁰¹ The argument for not doing so as it turns out, is based upon a notion of piety for the gods, to which the Soul as Socrates puts it, one's human life, is ultimately bound and "owned" just as livestock is owned by a man and as such it would not be proper for the livestock to take its own life without their master's permission. Generally, this theme is present throughout Plato's works, one where he is by no stretch of the imagination a "theist", but at the same time he is not an "atheist" either. He does not reject the gods as non-existent, and occasionally – as he does here – he does appeal to them for justification and rationale for a given argument. He appeals to the mysteries and the Homeric tradition as well at times, again more so adopting the eternal wisdom present in the mythological lore that preceded him rather than rejecting it outright as "myth" and fancy.

"Now, how about the acquirement of pure knowledge? Is the body a hindrance or not, if it is made to share in the search for wisdom? What I mean is this: Have the sight and hearing of men any truth in them, or is it true, as the poets are always telling us, that we neither hear nor see anything accurately? And yet if these two physical senses are not accurate or exact, the rest are not likely to be, for they are inferior to these. Do you not think so?"

"Certainly I do," he replied.

"Then," said he, "when does the soul attain to truth? For when it tries to consider anything in company with the body, it is evidently deceived by it." "True."

"In thought, then, if at all, something of the realities becomes clear to it?"

"Yes."

"But it thinks best when none of these things troubles it, neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor any pleasure, but it is, so far as possible, alone by itself, and takes leave of the body, and avoiding, so far as it can, all association or contact with the body, reaches out toward the reality."

"That is true."

"In this matter also, then, the soul of the philosopher greatly despises the body and avoids it and strives to be alone by itself?"

"Evidently."

"Now how about such things as this, Simmias? Do we think there is such a thing as absolute justice, or not?"

"We certainly think there is."

"And absolute beauty and goodness."

"Of course."

"Well, did you ever see anything of that kind with your eyes?"

"Certainly not," said he.

"Or did you ever reach them with any of the bodily senses? I am speaking of all such things, as size, health, strength, and in short the essence or underlying quality of everything. Is their true nature contemplated by means of the body? Is it not rather the case that he who prepares himself most carefully to understand the true essence of each thing that he examines would come nearest to the knowledge of it?"

"Certainly."

"Would not that man do this most perfectly who approaches each thing, so far as possible, with the reason alone, not introducing sight into his reasoning nor dragging in any of the other senses along with his thinking, but who employs pure, absolute reason in his attempt to search out the pure, absolute essence of things, and who removes himself, so far as possible, from eyes and ears, and, in a word, from his whole body, because he feels that its companionship disturbs the soul and hinders it from attaining truth and wisdom? Is not this the man, Simmias, if anyone, to attain to the knowledge of reality?"⁴⁰²

Herein we find not only the argument for the reality of Forms, or *ideas*, over the sensible or material realm – the argument for the actual existence of concepts such as "justice", "health",

⁴⁰² Plato, *Phaedo* 65b – 66a. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Apage%3D65>

“beauty”, etc. – but also Plato’s assertion, as voiced through Socrates, as to the power of “pure reason” (*logos*) in the attainment of such *wisdom (sophia)*, or the “highest form of knowledge”, a domain that is not just akin to, but in fact is fundamentally related to, the domain of the Soul, i.e. that which persists beyond death and that which can be said to be eternal and everlasting.

Here we find one of the major differences between the two traditions in fact, that Plato appeals to a faculty of man, even if it is ethereal or “divine”, in the sense that it is that which one can use this faculty to tap into the realm of the eternal and unchanging, whereas the *Upanishads* appeal to a more direct form of knowledge which lies beyond reason. So while the parallels between lower and higher form of knowledge are clear, as is at a very basic level the means by which this higher form of knowledge is to be attained - i.e. again the withdrawal or rejection of the sensible realm which by its very nature is not eternal, not everlasting but perishable and always changing – there is a subtle distinction between the means by which this higher form of knowledge is to be realized. This distinction, albeit subtle, comes to represent more or less the difference between these two philosophical traditions as they mature and evolve. A more rationalistic bent in the Western philosophical tradition as it were, while the Upanishadic tradition emphasizes a more direct form of knowledge which is beyond reason itself, albeit nonetheless related to some form of intellectual faculty of man by which this knowledge is “perceived”.

Compare the ideas presented in the *Katha Upanishad* where this notion of worldly knowledge versus eternal knowledge, i.e. wisdom, is distinguished as well:

1. *Death said: 'The good is one thing, the pleasant another; these two, having different objects, chain a man. It is well with him who clings to the good; he who chooses the pleasant, misses his end.'*
2. *'The good and the pleasant approach man: the wise goes round about them and distinguishes them. Yea, the wise prefers the good to the pleasant, but the fool chooses the pleasant through greed and avarice.'*
3. *'Thou, O Nakiketas, after pondering all pleasures that are or seem delightful, hast dismissed them all. Thou hast not gone into the road: that leadeth to wealth, in which many men perish.'*
4. *'Wide apart and leading to different points are these two, ignorance, and what is known as wisdom. I believe Nakiketas to be one who desires knowledge, for even many pleasures did not tear thee away.'*
5. *'Fools dwelling in darkness, wise in their own conceit, and puffed up with vain knowledge, go round and round, staggering to and fro, like blind men led by the blind.'*
6. *'The Hereafter never rises before the eyes of the careless child, deluded by the delusion of wealth. "This is the world," he thinks, "there is no other;"--thus he falls again and again under my sway.'*⁴⁰³

⁴⁰³ *Katha-Upanishad*. FIRST ADHYĀYA. Second VALLĪ. *The Upanishads, Part 2 (SBE15)*, by Max Müller, [1879], at sacred-texts.com. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/sbe15011.htm>

In the *Katha Upanishad*, knowledge of material world, which keeps people under the sway of death, is contrasted to a “higher” form of knowledge. These two forms of knowledge are distinguished, as they are in Plato’s *Phaedo*, along the lines of that which is perceived by the senses, i.e. the material world, versus the “eternal” world, a world governed by the Soul, what is referred to as *Ātman*, typically translated as “the Self” in the Upanishadic philosophical tradition. Withdrawal from the realm of the senses - the realm governed by the body - is called out specifically in the *Katha Upanishad* as well as the means by which this eternal wisdom, this higher form of knowledge, is to be attained.

12. *'The wise who, by means of meditation on his Self, recognizes the Ancient, who is difficult to be seen, who has entered into the dark, who is hidden in the cave, who dwells in the abyss, as God, he indeed leaves joy and sorrow far behind.'*

13. *'A mortal who has heard this and embraced it, who has separated from it all qualities, and has thus reached the subtle Being, rejoices, because he has obtained what is a cause for rejoicing. The house (of Brahman) is open, I believe, O Nakiketas.'*

14. *Nakiketas said: 'That which thou seest as neither this nor that, as neither effect nor cause, as neither past nor future, tell me that.'*⁴⁰⁴

The means by which this eternal *wisdom* is attained is describe by Plato as “pure reason”, what comes to be known as *Logos*, or *Nous*, in the Hellenic philosophical tradition as it matures in classical (Western) antiquity, which is slightly more nuanced and specific than what is called out in the Upanishadic tradition which is somewhat more indirect, i.e. to be attained by this withdrawal of the senses upon which, after instruction and guidance from a competent teacher, eternal wisdom and “knowledge” of that which persists beyond death, i.e. again “*Ātman*”, is “attained” or “realized”.

We see here that causality, and physical reality bound by time, is specifically called out as separate from, or distinct from, this higher form of knowledge. In the Hellenic philosophical tradition, specifically the teachings of Aristotle however, *causality* becomes a cornerstone of philosophical inquiry. That which defines existence, what has come to be known as Aristotle’s notion of *being qua being*.

⁴⁰⁴ *Katha-Upanishad*. FIRST ADHYĀYA. Second VALLĪ. *The Upanishads, Part 2 (SBE15)*, by Max Müller, [1879], at sacred-texts.com. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/sbe15011.htm>

However, what binds the two traditions, and really characterizes all early philosophical intellectual developments not only in the Mediterranean, Near East and Indian subcontinent – what we here are calling “Indo-European philosophy” – but also ancient Chinese philosophy as well is the search for, and definition of, that which is changeless and eternal versus that which is subject to change, destruction and decay.

18. *'The knowing (Self) [Ātman] is not born, it dies not; it sprang from nothing, nothing sprang from it. The Ancient is unborn, eternal, everlasting; he is not killed, though the body is killed.'*

19. *'If the killer thinks that he kills, if the killed thinks that he is killed, they do not understand; for this one does not kill, nor is that one killed.'*

20. *'The Self [Ātman] smaller than small, greater than great, is hidden in the heart of that creature. A man who is free from desires and free from grief, sees the majesty of the Self by the grace of the Creator.'*

21. *'Though sitting still, he walks far; though lying down, he goes everywhere. Who, save myself, is able to know that God who rejoices and rejoices not?'*

22. *'The wise who knows the Self as bodiless within the bodies, as unchanging among changing things, as great and omnipresent, does never grieve.'*

23. *'That Self cannot be gained by the Veda, nor by understanding, nor by much learning. He whom the Self chooses, by him the Self can be gained. The Self chooses him (his body) as his own.'*

24. *'But he who has not first turned away from his wickedness, who is not tranquil, and subdued, or whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the Self (even) by knowledge!'⁴⁰⁵*

To the authors of the *Upanishads*, this realm is defined by the Soul, i.e. *Ātman*, and its fundamental identity with the ever present and immanent Brahman, what in the Hellenic philosophical tradition comes to be known as the *World Soul*.

10. *'Beyond the senses there are the objects, beyond the objects there is the mind, beyond the mind there is the intellect, the Great Self is beyond the intellect.'*

11. *'Beyond the Great there is the Undeveloped, beyond the Undeveloped there is the Person (Puruṣa). Beyond the Person there is nothing--this is the goal, the highest road.'*

12. *'That Self is hidden in all beings and does not shine forth, but it is seen by subtle seers through their sharp and subtle intellect.'*

13. *'A wise man should keep down speech and mind; he should keep them within the Self which is knowledge; he should keep knowledge within the Self which is the Great; and he should keep that (the Great) within the Self which is the Quiet.'*

14. *'Rise, awake! having obtained your boons, understand them! The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over; thus the wise say the path (to the Self) is hard.'*

⁴⁰⁵ *Katha-Upanishad*. FIRST ADHYĀYA. Second VALLĪ. *The Upanishads, Part 2 (SBE15)*, by Max Müller, [1879], at sacred-texts.com. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/sbe15011.htm>

15. 'He who has perceived that which is without sound, without touch, without form, without decay, without taste, eternal, without smell, without beginning, without end, beyond the Great, and unchangeable, is freed from the jaws of death.'⁴⁰⁶

Immortality of the Soul, knowledge of Self – *Ātman* - cannot be obtained by learning or lower forms of knowledge, or by performing of the sacred rituals or sacrifice, but only by those who have turned away from wickedness, who is tranquil and subdued, not moved by worldly desires, whose mind is at rest.

6. 'Having understood that the senses are distinct (from the *Ātman*), and that their rising and setting (their waking and sleeping) belongs to them in their distinct existence (and not to the *Ātman*), a wise man grieves no more.'

7. 'Beyond the senses is the mind, beyond the mind is the highest (created) Being, higher than that Being is the Great Self, higher than the Great, the highest Undeveloped.'

8. 'Beyond the Undeveloped is the Person, the all-pervading and entirely imperceptible. Every creature that knows him is liberated, and obtains immortality.'

9. 'His form is not to be seen, no one beholds him with the eye. He is imagined by the heart, by wisdom, by the mind. Those who know this, are immortal.'

10. 'When the five instruments of knowledge stand still together with the mind, and when the intellect does not move, that is called the highest state.'⁴⁰⁷

Plato's *ethics, epistemology* and worldview rests on this *theory of forms, or ideas*, as reflected by the Allegory of the Cave and his views on knowledge as reflected in the *analogy of the divided line*. His belief in the immortality of the soul and its superiority to the physical body, the idea that evil was a manifestation of the ignorance of *truth*, that only true *knowledge* can be revealed by true *virtue*, all of these tenets stemmed from this idea that the abstract form or *idea* of a thing was a higher construct than the physical thing itself, and that the abstract Form of a thing was just as true and real, if not more so, than the concrete thing itself from which its Form manifested.

Furthermore, Plato rests his case as it were, upon the reality of *ideas* or concepts in and of themselves upon which anything in the material world can be known, or depends upon. It is *ideas, forms*, such as absolute *beauty* or absolute *goodness* – or absolute *justice* in the *Republic* – upon which not only his argument for the immortality of the Soul rests but upon which his entire *theory of forms* consists of.

⁴⁰⁶ *Katha-Upanishad*. FIRST ADHYĀYA. Third VALLĪ. *The Upanishads, Part 2 (SBE15)*, by Max Müller, [1879], at sacred-texts.com. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/sbe15012.htm>

⁴⁰⁷ *Katha-Upanishad*. SECOND ADHYĀYA. Sixth VALLĪ. *The Upanishads, Part 2 (SBE15)*, by Max Müller, [1879], at sacred-texts.com. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/sbe15015.htm>

"But my friends," he said, "we ought to bear in mind, [107c] that, if the soul is immortal, we must care for it, not only in respect to this time, which we call life, but in respect to all time, and if we neglect it, the danger now appears to be terrible. For if death were an escape from everything, it would be a boon to the wicked, for when they die they would be freed from the body and from their wickedness together with their souls. But now, since the soul is seen to be immortal, it cannot escape [107d] from evil or be saved in any other way than by becoming as good and wise as possible. For the soul takes with it to the other world nothing but its education and nurture, and these are said to benefit or injure the departed greatly from the very beginning of his journey thither. And so it is said that after death, the tutelary genius of each person, to whom he had been allotted in life, leads him to a place where the dead are gathered together; then they are judged and depart to the other world [107e] with the guide whose task it is to conduct thither those who come from this world; and when they have there received their due and remained through the time appointed, another guide brings them back after many long periods of time. And the journey is not as Telephus says in the play of Aeschylus; [108a] for he says a simple path leads to the lower world, but I think the path is neither simple nor single, for if it were, there would be no need of guides, since no one could miss the way to any place if there were only one road. But really there seem to be many forks of the road and many windings; this I infer from the rites and ceremonies practiced here on earth. Now the orderly and wise soul follows its guide and understands its circumstances; but the soul that is desirous of the body, as I said before, flits about it, and in the visible world for a long time, [108b] and after much resistance and many sufferings is led away with violence and with difficulty by its appointed genius. And when it arrives at the place where the other souls are, the soul which is impure and has done wrong, by committing wicked murders or other deeds akin to those and the works of kindred souls, is avoided and shunned by all, and no one is willing to be its companion or its guide, [108c] but it wanders about alone in utter bewilderment, during certain fixed times, after which it is carried by necessity to its fitting habitation. But the soul that has passed through life in purity and righteousness, finds gods for companions and guides, and goes to dwell in its proper dwelling..."⁴⁰⁸

Here we find, in an albeit allegorical passage of sorts, the notion of *ethics* and *morality* presented by Plato that rests on the assertion of the reality of *forms* and through its affiliation with the Soul, which he argues is eternal and "immortal", i.e. undying. This concept of *morality* which is based upon the immortality of the Soul, where the Soul reaps that which it sows in life in the "afterlife" as a permeating theme across not just early Hellenic philosophy but also in ancient Egypt as well as in early Indian philosophy as reflected in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. This notion of karma alongside the doctrine of reincarnation is in fact one of the key theo-philosophical notions that underlies early Indian philosophy, and one which we find clear parallels with in Plato's Middle

⁴⁰⁸ *Phaedrus*, 107b-108c. From *Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 translated by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1966. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Apage%3D107>

dialogues, again most notably *Phaedo* as indicated in the passages above.⁴⁰⁹ In this sense, the notion of the Immortality of the Soul can be viewed as the core binding theo-philosophical principle which underlies Indo-European philosophy in virtually all its forms.

No matter what dating of the Upanishads you ascribed to, either as far back as the early part of the second millennium BCE as indicated by some of the more arcane references in the *Vedas* and corresponding archeological evidence, or as a production in the later part of the first millennium BCE which is when the text is thought to have been initially transcribed, it was clear that the Upanishadic philosophical tradition of the Indo-Aryans, namely Vedānta, preceded its Hellenic counterpart by some centuries at least. To what extent the Hellenic philosophical systems that blossomed in the second half of the first millennium BCE in Greece borrowed from their Indo-Aryan brethren, rather than arising independently and spontaneously as a result of the same rebellious forces to religious orthodoxy, is open to scholarly debate. Nonetheless, it would very be hard to argue that both of these rich theo-philosophical systems which developed in the second half of the first millennium BCE – one from the Mediterranean under primarily Greek influence and another in the Indian subcontinent under primarily Indo-Aryan influence - did not spring from the same common quest for true knowledge and understanding of the origins of the cosmos and mankind's place in it by use of *power of the human mind* (and by extension the human spirit), rather than the predisposition to blind faith in age old mythological traditions that were protected and guarded by the elite and ruling classes and had been the hallmark of religious and political developments since the dawn of civilization.⁴¹⁰

It is certainly safe to say that the idea of man being created in the image of God, from which *Logos* as a theological and philosophical construct effectively comes to represent, goes much further back in antiquity than Plato, even if it is in Plato's *dialogues* that we find the first real systemic treatment of this connection. *Theology*, in an anthropomorphic context, was the source from which the natural world was born in Plato's view then, even though he points directly to the fundamental unknowable nature of the universe, stating that we can only know what it is

⁴⁰⁹ There is some debate among modern scholars as to whether or not reincarnation as a doctrine, that we see traces of in some of Plato's works and which is also associated with the Pythagorean as well as Orphic tradition, was held in in ancient Egypt or whether or not it was an "Oriental", i.e. "Eastern" construct that the early Hellenic philosophers adopted. For a detailed account, see McEvilley, the *Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies*, Chapter 4, "The Doctrine of Reincarnation", pgs 98ff. Allworth Press, 2002.

⁴¹⁰ There is some historical evidence that suggests that Indian sages and Vedic philosophers visited Ancient Greece in the first millennium BC, and certainly one could argue that some of the ideas put forth in Plato's *dialogues* have Indian counterparts, but this connection is loose at best and does not rule out by any means that the metaphysical constructs and frameworks developed independently from each other. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upanishads> for details on common dating of the Upanishadic sources as well as footnotes and references for further study on scholarship that links the Vedic and Hellenic philosophical traditions.

“like” rather than its true nature. Furthermore, by establishing the critical and comprehensive role of the Soul, both of an individual and for the world at large, Plato rooted his ethical and moral framework within his cosmological narrative, i.e. *a reason to be good* that did not necessarily rely on a concept of an afterworld, or hell in the Judeo-Christian (and Zoroastrian) context, as motivation for his *ethics*. In other words, *virtue* and *justice*, their eternally existent *forms* as it were, and their relationship to happiness and the “good life”, are means and worthwhile pursuits in and of themselves, given the Soul is immortal and given that the just and virtuous life is more pleasant, more rewarding, than the unjust and immoral life.⁴¹¹

While this view of the world being fashioned in the image of the creator, so to speak, is reminiscent of the Judeo-Christian cosmogonic account as reflected in *Genesis*, it is also at the same time markedly different in its specificity within which its metaphysical framework rests and at the same time explicitly calls out the fundamental limits of what can be altogether known about how the universe has come into existence or the nature of the creative process as well as what entity or being, anthropomorphic or otherwise, guided this creative process. He simply argues that a) because the world of *Becoming* is subject to change it must have a beginning and b) that there must be a changeless and eternal model from which the world of *Becoming* is shaped from.

⁴¹¹ For a review of Plato’s ethical framework and its evolution throughout his works, see Plato’s Ethics: An Overview at the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Frede, Dorothea, *Plato’s Ethics: An Overview*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/plato-ethics/>>.

At some level, a religious tradition can be thought of as distinguished by, or even defined by, its creation story – i.e. its cosmological narrative - and the Hindu/Vedic tradition is no different in this regard although it has many nuances and variances that distinguish it from Western theological traditions. If we approach the mythology as codified in the Hindu literature with an open mind – and myth in the Hindu tradition runs very deep - we can see strong undercurrents of Vedic philosophy from within the creation narratives themselves, speaking to the importance of philosophy from the very earliest texts we have from the tradition. The deep philosophical history of the Indo-Aryans, what we today call Vedānta (which Yoga is very closely related to and from which Buddhism emerged), ultimately sprung forth from these ancient creation stories, the mythological tradition as it were, which in turn yielded over time an in depth, scientific and analytical approach to the nature of mind and its relationship to liberation and experience of the divine which forms the basis of Yoga in all its forms.

When one looks at the early creation *mythos* of the Indo-Aryans, the first Hindus, one is confronted with the fact that their early mythology was not so clearly codified or synthesized as its sister cultures in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and certainly not as well codified and standardized as the mythology and *cosmogony* of the Greeks and Romans. This was somewhat odd, especially given that the extant Sanskrit literature from antiquity was fairly extensive, but it's important to keep in mind that the creation mythology of the Hindus was spread throughout a few different texts and traditions, as found in the *Rigvéda*, *The Laws of Manu* and the *Purāṇas* for example. *Brahman*, as conceived by the early Hindus as reflected in the *Upanishads*, is a self-evident construct that was is not just as old as civilization itself, it is in fact as old as mankind and is the source of life. The ancient Vedic religion from which Vedānta emerged was steeped in ritual no doubt, consistent with all of the hunter-gatherer societies throughout the world and from which modern civilization eventually evolved, but the essence of the rituals was not lost and the highest form of teaching in the Vedic tradition was not the rituals per se, but the meaning behind the rituals, an idea that was part of the tradition itself since inception.

While the Hindus kept their various gods and goddesses, they also held true to the messages of the great *rishis* of old and laid out perhaps a sophisticated system of psychology, *theology* and *metaphysics* whose ultimate objective was the *realization* that God - *Brahman* - did in fact exist, could in fact be realized just as clearly as the realization of the world of objects all around us are realized by our (physical) senses, and that in fact we as humans were fundamentally designed for this *realization*, our individual consciousness being simply a reflection of this broader sometimes anthropomorphized principle of the universe, i.e. *Brahman*. According to the Hindu faith, this heaven on earth so to speak was the birth right of all of us – no passage or gateway or ticketing

required. The authors of Vedic scripture in fact took pains to apply as systematic and comprehensive an intellectual framework as possible, alongside guidelines on *morality* and *ethics* that were based upon virtues like *justice* and *duty*, in contrast to its Western religious brethren that laid out more specific rules of conduct that were baked into the fabric of the *theology* – a trademark of Judaism and Islam and a source of much of their rigidity and inflexibility to adapt to modern times in many respects. Unique to the Hindu religious tradition which survives today, from which the ancient Vedic texts form the spiritual and ritualistic traditions, there existed not only the establishment of the authority of the Brahmins and their role as priests and the presider over religious ceremonies and rites which was a consistent feature of all ancient *mythos*, but also along with it, akin to the *mystery cult* traditions which flourished in areas of ancient Greek and Roman influence to the West, there existed a firm and well documented and thought out belief in the divine nature of the spirit, or *Ātman*, and its underlying unity with the penultimate creative principle of the universe, or *Brahman*.

When looking at the Indo-Aryan tradition, given its age and maturity and its fundamental belief and faith in the unity of man and the universe from which he emerged (unique to the Eastern religious traditions in general), a line can be drawn between creation *mythos*, aka *cosmogony*, and the philosophical underpinnings of the school of thought, or *metaphysics* as it were. The connection between *cosmogony* and creation *mythos*, as well as philosophy, is quite direct in the Vedic/Indo-Aryan philosophical tradition and in some sense this distinguishes this tradition from most other theological and philosophical traditions from antiquity - and most certainly distinguishes it from Western theological traditions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam for example where philosophy and *theology* are very much subsumed and overwhelmed by scriptural dogma and law. This delineation between philosophy and *theology*, philosophy and Religion really, is not nearly as hard cut in the Eastern philosophical tradition as it is in the West, or at the very least it can be said that the connections between the two seemingly distinct areas of study and concepts are more evident because they are not clouded within a tradition that is more focused on literal interpretation and the “word” rather than underlying “meaning”.

In Hinduism then, and in its branches like Buddhism (for Buddhism is to the Hindus what Judaism is to the Christians, Buddha was a Hindu like Jesus was a Jew) presumed this fundamental distinction between church and state, or perhaps more aptly put this *individuation* of *theology*. The Hindus did not codify these separation principles into law per se, like the United States had done after centuries of religious persecution in the western world, but the principle of religious freedom represented a core, integral part of their culture just the same. And from this social acceptance of the individual expression of the divine, many great sages and seers, also known as

*rishis*⁴¹², had been born over the centuries that personified this apex and goal of the Hindu religious system - namely the *realization* of the divine in this very life. These were such historic personalities as Krishna Buddha, and Chaitanya⁴¹³, and modern day great sages like Ramakrishna, whose existence and their ability to practice freely what can only be considered radical forms of religious expression could only have been possible within the society and culture of the Hindus who had an implicit belief in the freedom of religious expression, a belief that went back thousands of years and had its roots in the ancient scriptures themselves, namely the *Vedas*.

These great sages, these *rishis*, personified the goal of oneness with the divine, the perception of the kingdom of heaven within, and realized the end of the Hindu scriptures. And they all accomplished this in their own unique way, and yet at the same time each of them reestablished the validity of these ancient scriptures, renewing the people's faith in their content and precepts which had been born so many thousands of years prior. To all of these great sages the mind and body, and reason and *logic* itself, was to be used to realize the truth of this oneness. That was its sole purpose of existence. This truth was the great gift that was handed down from the ages from the *Vedas*. This approach, if it can be called that, is distinctive to Vedic and Hindu *theology* and is juxtaposed with what we find in the Judeo-Christian (and Islamic) tradition in the West where we see the myth and theological historical narrative encapsulated into a single book and single version (the *Old Testament*, *Qur'ān*, etc.), and even in Greco-Roman *mythos* where we find mythological lore encapsulated in single textual traditions attributed to single authors such as Hesiod's *Theogony* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. When trying to understand the meaning and later interpretations of some of these ancient Vedic texts however, texts which included not just philosophical material but mythological material and details on ritual and sacrifice as well, it is critical to have some sense of context – culturally and socio-politically – to try and get to the true meaning and import of the texts and how they impacted and were part of the development of this rich philosophical tradition.

To be fair the delegation of philosophy as a discipline and practice, or way of life, to religion, *theology* and faith in the "Word" is a somewhat later development in the West, aligned with the preeminence of the Roman Empire and the spread of Christianity as a systematic faith with approved scripture along with their associated approved interpretations of fundamental theological narratives (the Holy Trinity for example). This theological development not only marginalizes the Jewish faith and theological tradition, but also gives rise to Islam which arose in no small measure as a reaction and counterbalance to Christian interpretation of Biblical scripture and narrative, and in particular interpretation of the life and message of the prophet

⁴¹² *Rishi*, from the Sanskrit *ṛṣi* denotes the composers of Vedic hymns. However, according to post-Vedic tradition, the *rishi* is a "seer" to whom the *Vedas* were "originally revealed" through states of higher consciousness.

⁴¹³ Chaitanya (1486–1534), famous Saint known for his ecstatic devotion to Krishna.

Jesus – and of course to fill a socio-political vacuum which is so often the case. With this rise in Christianity's influence and predominance we see the waning of the Greco-Roman philosophical schools - Neo-Platonism, Stoicism and Epicureanism being the most far reaching and influential – after which we see a sharp decline in epistemological and social/ethical philosophy and a steep inclination toward scriptural dogma and moral and ethical platitudes and “law” as it were. Enter the Dark Ages.

All religious systems, either from the East or the West, espoused *morality* and *ethics* as a core fundamental principle for the life of man. Even the Greek philosophical schools had comprehensive system of *ethics* at their core. The Western system taught that these *morals* and *ethics* should be followed for the attainment of heaven. Eastern philosophy however, as well as arguably the teachings of Jesus specifically if they could be parsed from the Book within which they sat, looked at *morality* and *ethics* not as something to be followed for attainment of some desire or need, but as a representation of a higher and finer form of truth. In Aristotle's terminology, it was in *virtue*, *arête*, that the greatest good could be achieved, and that ultimate happiness could be achieved, and that this *virtue* was a learned skill and could be cultivated by habit, just as any art form could.⁴¹⁴

In its most pure form, as reflected in the basic tenets of Eastern philosophy however, and the fundamental principles that underlay *morality* or *ethics* in general, was that there was an interconnectedness to all things, all beings animate or inanimate, and leading a moral and ethical life allowed the individual to better comprehend and understand this interconnectedness, or at least abide by it and be in harmony with it. In Patañjali's model, arguably the most systemic and well thought out of the systems of Yoga as they survive down to us in modern times which Vivekananda for no insignificant reason termed Royal Yoga, consistent with all religious systems in one way or another, sound *morality* and *ethics* were a core prerequisite on the path of ultimate liberation or illumination, or in Patañjali's terminology *samādhi*, a goal which can be reached only by the practice of sound morals and *ethics*. In contrast to the Abrahamic religions which rested their *moral* and *ethical* code on the revelation of God as handed down by their respective prophets, to which its followers must abide or they be subject to eternal damnation in Hell, which were wrapped up in mandates of specific modes of worship, Yoga as it emerges as an offshoot of the philosophy of the *Vedas*, aka Hindu philosophy, in the first few centuries CE as reflected by Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* focus on what can be looked upon as a *scientific method* with respect to

⁴¹⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

the production of *liberation*, irrespective and independent of the object of *meditation*, or God, that one chooses to believe in.

One of the age-old questions that at some level provided the foundations of philosophy itself, is what could be considered objective truth? All of the philosophical systems of the world, despite their differences, all consider and try to answer in fact this single question. In every encounter or situation in each person's life, there is continuity. That is to say that throughout one's span of existence, there is always something that binds experience together. Usually we call this something "I". This was in essence the *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes, a Western interpretation of the age old Eastern philosophical notion of the *mind*. But what is this "I" that lays at the foundation of our very existence. We assume at every corner that we exist. But have we really delved into the nature of this "I" that provides the framework for our lives? Certainly, the philosophers throughout the ages had, and the *mystics* and *shamans* before them most certainly had, there was plenty of evidence for this. But the everyday folk, the ones that ran the banks and the schools and were in Congress and ran countries, had they really? Wasn't this one of the primary themes of Plato, and even the Muslim philosopher Al-Fârâbî of the 10th century, the importance of the role of the philosopher in society. Where had this notion gone? Had it been lost somewhere or was it never really adopted outside of a theoretical construct of a philosopher or two throughout the ages?

And therein lies one of, if not the, main distinction between the "Eastern" and the "Western" mode of thinking. The Eastern philosophical systems believed taught that the search for the nature of "I" represented the ultimate task of life, whereas the western systems relied on objective proof, verifiable results from the interaction between hosts of objects, as the basis for life and reality. It was this obsession with *duality*, the distinction between subject and object, although the cornerstone to *scientific method* and the means by which civilization has made so many significant advancements no doubt, had perhaps become an obstacle to the discovery of the very meaning of life itself. The quest for the answer to that age-old question, as old as man itself: "Why are we here and from whence we came?" had been relegated to the world of religion, a marked deviation from Aristotle in fact, where the question of why – causation – was in fact the pillar upon which knowledge was built.

When we look at the Far Eastern tradition (i.e. Chinese philosophy) specifically through the lens of the *Dao De Jing*, *Chuang-Tzu (Zhuangzi)*, the Confucian *Analects* and of course the *Yijing*, all of which are examined in this work, we find that contrary to the Western philosophical tradition, there were various versions of the texts that circulated, and more importantly, the texts themselves were less structured and organized than their Western counterparts. By organized what is meant is that there was, (perhaps by design) less semantic and philosophical specificity baked into these works. While their purpose was arguably the same as their Hellenic

counterparts, their emphasis was not on logical coherence and rational consistency so much as the conveyance of anecdotes and stories that were intended to illustrate how to live a moral and ethical life, how best to govern, and the explanation of the fundamental relationship between Heaven, Earth and Man within the context of the given philosophical context. With the case of the *Analects* and the *Zhuangzi*, perhaps the intent of the style of the work was to more closely capture the oratory style of the original teacher, by means of story and parable rather than *dialectic* or *logic* as a means for arriving at truth. The language that was used by the ancient Chinese no doubt had an influence on this approach, given the open-ended nature of the Old Chinese writing system, but the early Daoist works especially are in some ways more similar to some of the Pre-Socratics and poets (Homer, Hesiod, Parmenides) than they are the philosophers in the Socratic lineage.

While differences in style and philosophical content between these classic Chinese philosophical works and their counterparts in the Western Hellenic tradition are clear, what is interesting to note is that the overall intent of the body of work is very much the same, the *telos* (purpose) as it were. Both systems of thought were designed to express and capture how best to live, how best to govern, and the scope and boundaries of knowledge within this context. This perhaps is the most interesting parallel that can be drawn when looking to the Far East in antiquity through a comparative Western lens – namely that as societies became more complex, as the struggles between nation states became more brutal, violent and barbaric, there arose a need of some sort of ethical and moral norms upon which the society as a whole could be, should be, constructed. What we find in early Chinese history, no different than the other traditions in antiquity throughout the world, is that philosophy and theology in antiquity are closely linked, one born from the other really, and ancient China is no different in this regard. The notion that a supreme deity of the heavens establishes order and justice is a common theme throughout the ancient world in fact and parallels here can be drawn to the *Ma'at* of the Egyptians or the *Rta* of the Indo-Aryans as well as of course the aforementioned association of divine legitimacy to the rulers themselves. In this sense Shàngdì can be looked at as analogous to Marduk of the Sumer-Babylonians who rose to prominence as the head of the Babylonian pantheon as Babylon rose to power around the same timeframe much further to the West, or even Zeus/Jupiter in the Greco-Roman tradition a millennium or so later although the link to authority and power is not present.

Despite the diversity of Chinese philosophical traditions in antiquity given the broad geographic and cultural heritage which is so characteristic of the Far Eastern, i.e. ancient Chinese, civilization, there develops a common core set of theo-philosophical principles which emerge to form the basis of not just Daoist thought, but also the underlying *metaphysical* principles of Confucianism as well – the tradition that is adopted by the dynastic rulers toward the end of the first millennium BCE as the ancient texts, the *Five Classics*, become part of the common core curriculum of all state trained officials. These principles are based primarily on their notion of Heaven, i.e. *Tiān* (

天), from which their sense of not just universal order emanates but also their sense of socio-political and individual *morality* and *ethics* as well are based.

Qì(气), or divine energy or breath, also emerges as one of the cornerstone principles of ancient Chinese, and ultimately provides the basis for the Daoist conception of universal animation to which direct parallels to the *prāṇa*, or *cosmic breath* of the Indo-Aryan and Upanishadic philosophical tradition can be drawn. *Jingzu* (敬祖), or the veneration of ancestors is altogether markedly unique characteristic of ancient Chinese philosophy, harkening no doubt to their pre-historic, Neolithic past to which they ultimately integrated into their philosophical tradition as it matured and evolved in the second half of the first millennium BCE. And of course the basic principles of *Yīn* and *Yáng* (陰陽), the basic cosmic universal polarity of opposing forces of female and male, receptive and creative, passive and active, dark and light forces that not only provide the cornerstone *dualistic* elements that underlie the very ancient *divination* process as reflected in the *Classic of Changes*, the *Yijing*, but also through which the basic cosmological and universal world view comes to be understood.⁴¹⁵

What we have come to understand in contemporary academic circles as Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism all took root in ancient China, its pre-historic precepts incorporated and adopted into these theo-philosophical traditions which was picked up by early Christians in China who drew a direct parallel between their God the Father and China's Shàngdì in Heaven. This connection of Shàngdì to the legitimacy of the ruling emperor survived right up until the establishment of the Republic of China in the early 20th century CE, speaking to the broad influence of the deity as well as the lasting quality of the tradition to the Chinese. Similar pseudo-monotheistic traits can be found in Hinduism as well in sects such as Vaishnavism which worships Lord Viṣṇu as the one supreme godhead of the universe, or even the Brahmā of the *Vedas* which although a later Hindu development also takes on many of the attributes of a monotheistic deity. For it is from *Brahman* which all things emanate or spring forth and it is from the inbreathing and outbreathing of *Brahman* that the universe is created (evolution), preserved, and destroyed (involution) according to the Upanishadic texts⁴¹⁶.

For the most part however, the Hindu tradition is pantheistic and despite the different tendencies toward the worship of a single anthropomorphic deity, or even the worship of the somewhat asexual pseudo-anthropomorphic principle such as *Brahman*, the Hindu tradition throughout its history always recognized and accepted the worship of many gods and in this it is distinct from the religious traditions that rose to prominence in the West and even unique in modern times in

⁴¹⁵ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Chinese folk religion', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 19 September 2016, 04:20 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chinese_folk_religion&oldid=740115851> [accessed 30 September 2016].

⁴¹⁶ The worship of Lord Viṣṇu extends back into 2nd millennium BCE as reflected in the *Rigvéda*. Note the parallels which can be drawn of *Brahman* and the *first mover* of Aristotle.

this respect. These systems of belief that were prominent in the ancient Eastern civilizations for the most part prescribed to their followers the means of how to live in balance with your environment rather than who to worship to ensure a place in heaven, much more analogous to the ancient Greek theo-philosophical systems than the Abrahamic religious tradition. When we read Plato, Aristotle and even the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in their native language (Greek and Latin) we are presented with a semantic and linguistic continuity and precision in terminology, what words are used when, that allows us to reconstruct their philosophical systems and points of view in a fairly complete way – at least complete relative to their Eastern counterparts.

We also see a pronounced focus in these various schools which arose during Classical Greek antiquity of the role of *reason (Logos)*, *logic*, semantics and language itself, as providing the foundation for dividing up the different aspects of reality into the intellectual categories that eventually came to be distinctive of the Western philosophical tradition. From this initial bifurcation of *natural philosophy* and *first philosophy* by Aristotle, we see the fields of *physics*, *metaphysics*, *mathematics*, *Astronomy*, *logic*, and *theology* among others established deep in antiquity in the Western philosophical and subsequent *academic* tradition. This categorization of thought in and of itself is one of the most influential, lasting and distinctive characteristics of “Western thought”, an intellectual legacy of our Greek ancestors. Plato and Aristotle, arguably the foundational philosophical teachers in the West, wrote and crafted works that dealt with specific topics, specific themes, from which their philosophical systems could be fairly well constructed and from which a semantic framework could be built by later followers in the tradition. This allowed for later teachers and interpreters of their work to expound upon their original meanings, altogether allowing for metaphysical exposition in the various areas of the original works by expanding upon their original language and their original terminology. It is from these building blocks that the modern scientific intellectual precipice in the West has been constructed.

One of the unique contributions of the Indo-Aryans however is the conservation and preservation of the specificities of a great deal of their ancient sacrificial rites, hymns and mythology in textual form, i.e. the *Vedas*. The only corresponding set of texts and scripture that rivals it in terms of age is the *Avesta* of the Indo-Iranians (Persians) to the West, which although shares many similar linguistic and cultural themes that are found in the Vedic Sanskrit lore, does not have the same unbroken and longstanding continuing tradition of preservation and interpretation into the modern era as do the *Vedas*. So with the *Vedas* then we have a direct window into the world of the Asian & European pre-history like no other literary tradition in fact. This is what we term Eurasian philosophy, in terms of its age, its connection to the underlying *mythos*, and the continuation of themes and motifs that are atypical “Eurasian”.

The Eastern philosophical tradition however remains unbroken with respect to its emphasis on basic, classical philosophical questions in tandem to its emphasis on faith and *theology*. No doubt the Eastern tradition in antiquity had its pantheon of gods and goddesses which were formed out of the primordial chaos from which the universe emanates, its *cosmogony* – part of its Eurasian heritage - just as the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions espoused in fact, but the philosophical strain as it were was embedded deep in the Eastern traditions and was not subsumed by its anthropomorphic aspects and its scriptural tradition in and of itself. In both Daoism and Hinduism, and of course with Buddhism, we see a much more philosophic flavor than the grand dictums of the Judeo-Christian traditions that cast such a long shadow, and eventually subsumed, the philosophic traditions of the Greco-Romans that had shaped the development of civilization for some one thousand years or so.

We can see this distinct and enduring philosophical bent of the Indo-Aryan people, stemming no doubt from its Eurasian heritage which carried with it not only *mythos*, but *logos* as well, from some of the earliest passages we find about universal creation, *cosmogony*, from the *Rigvéda* in particular, which codifies stories, remnants and artifacts of the ritualistic, mythological and philosophical belief systems of the Indo-Aryan peoples from the second millennium BCE (1900-1200 BCE) which no doubt carries uniquely “Eurasian” characteristics and traits, features which we see throughout the *mythos* of Eurasia. It is from this rich Vedic philosophical tradition in fact, with its *mythos* rooted in Eurasian antiquity, from which the Hindu religion eventually emerges, as well as Buddhism as its offshoot which also bears many similarities to its parent tradition as reflected in the Vedic philosophical tradition, from which it gets its very prototypical Eurasian philosophical traits and features. And in these very early creation *mythos*, we find philosophical questions and openings that were preserved by the theological tradition of the East over millennia, the Eurasian *logos* as it were, which provided the metaphysical and theological basis for philosophy itself, as a function of the respective *theogony* and *cosmogony* rather than divergent from it, something again that we find lacking in the Western theological tradition in its mature form in Christianity and Islam most notably.

The *Rigvéda* is transcribed in Sanskrit verse, so there is a meter and a poetry to it that can only truly be appreciated when it is heard, typically when it is chanted as it is still done today. These verses, the text, is believed to be divinely inspired and to have co-existed with creation itself, and thereby lies at the heart of not just Vedānta but Hinduism proper as well. This belief in the co-existence of scripture with universal creation, or at least divine inspiration, is something that the Hindus share with their Judeo-Christian (and Islamic) brethren to the West. So what we see in the Vedic-Hindu creation *mythos* then, and what distinguishes the tradition as a whole from the Judeo-Christian tradition (again within which we place Islam) is a strong philosophical and analytical bent that goes back to the roots of the very scriptural tradition itself – this is what makes it so characteristically Eurasian in fact, its close connection not only with its Eurasian

mythos heritage, but with its *logos* heritage as well. This unbroken tradition, which starts with the pre-historical Proto-Indo-Europeans, if not earlier, is then persisted in and reflected in what we find in the *Vedas*, one of the oldest extant pieces of literature known to man.

Vedic philosophy as reflected in the *Vedas* then, a child of Eurasian descent, passes through the Upanishadic phase which further codifies and elaborates on the philosophical and ritualistic tradition that we find in the *Vedas*, establishing a more sophisticated *metaphysics* and *theology*, setting the stage for further philosophical development and providing the foundations for Indian philosophy – again a direct descendent of its Eurasian grandparent in this case. The tradition then moves through a more classic Western epic poetry phase, where this *mythos* from deep antiquity, that which was passed down from generation to generation from time immemorial through *oral transmission*, a specific linguistic technology from antiquity that that depended not just on language, but on verse - *lyric poetry* - in order to be preserved.

This ancient *mythos* is integrated and synthesized into a corpus, a single narrative that starts from the very beginning of Time itself, and then, through various stages of evolution and transformation, the universe unfolds and mankind is created. This is what we mean by a *cosmogony*, a universal ordering as it were, which is coupled in Eurasian antiquity more often than not by a *theogony*, where the gods themselves unfurl as it were from this chaotic watery abyss, this great *cosmic egg* that births this very universe itself as well as the pantheon of deities that are responsible for its preservation, who are responsible for its balance and harmony. From these primordial deities, these mythic tales tell the deeds of these gods and heroes, the Ages of Man that were sung by the ancestors, a story of a Great Flood, rooted in this ancient *mythos*, where man is wiped from Earth, only to start once again, all colored in rousing verse which characterizes this aspect of the *mythos* to *logos* to *theos* progression as it were, a progression which we find across Eurasia that happens once civilizations become more advanced and writing proliferates to a point where this ancient *mythos* can be captured, where these *lyric poems*, these great epics, can get captured not by symbols, but by *sounds* which are encoded in symbols, the basic characteristics and features of the fairly advanced systems of writing that emerged in the first millennium BCE throughout Eurasia that provide the basis for all systems of writing that are used today in fact.

But all these ancient theo-philosophical systems, regardless of their specific *theogonic* variants (their *mythos*), all share a common attribute that is inherent to their *cosmogony* itself, that is the notion of a cosmic and divine (and typically deified) ordering principle which was applied to the primordial chaos and/or watery abyss (via a *cosmic egg* or not) that existed prior to or is co-emergent with universal creation itself, which in turn effects balance and harmony within the heavens and throughout the cosmos, and then also - in either deified form or via some abstract metaphysical principle - is then aligned with order, balance and harmony (and justice) in human

affairs, providing the basis for not just *morality* and *ethics* for individual behavior (whatever the goal of life in that respect theo-philosophical system is presented as being), but also the *moral* and *ethical* foundations for society as whole as a collective. Effectively we find an alignment of this cosmic ordering principle across all spheres of human life - human (mortal), divine (immortal), and cosmic.

This principle comes in two flavors really, as an abstract idea, metaphysical and cosmic and philosophical at the same time (as we see with the Hellenic and Chinese philosophical traditions for example), or in its more monotheistic archaic variant which is more heavily rooted in ancient *mythos* where the ordering principle is conveyed rather than spelled out via allegory - myth really. The latter variant can be found for example in the Zoroastrian (Persian), Judeo-Christian, and Egyptian theo-philosophical systems where both cosmic and human order, again balance and harmony, are reflected in the and perennial battle between *good* and *evil*, deified as it were, which have direct counterparts in the *psyche* or *mind*, from which this notion of the Soul emerges which represents that which persists after death which is subject to judgement at death. These Theo-philosophical systems come with judgement ceremonies, rights, rituals associated specifically with death to determine the fate of the Soul in the afterlife. No matter what the respective manifestation of the idea is, again with the two primary variants that we find throughout Eurasia, they nonetheless rest upon the principle of order and justice which have a cosmic and a human element - the human mirroring the cosmic being a consistent theme throughout, man in the image of God as it were. This is the *Dao* of the ancient Chinese, the *Rta* of the ancient Hindus (Indo-Aryans), the *Aša* of the ancient Persians (the Indo-Iranians), the *Nomós*/Zeus of the Hellenes, the *Torah* of the ancient Jews, Marduk of the Sumer-Babylonians and the *Ma'at* of the ancient Egyptians.

The parallels here are not just eerie, not just strong, are certainly not coincidental or related to some sort of cultural diffusion, leaving really just two possible answers, the truth in all likelihood lying somewhere in the middle: 1) that all these ancient theo-philosophical systems throughout Eurasian antiquity all share a common ancestry, one that runs deeper than *mythos* (cosmos), and/or 2) that there is something fundamental to the human condition which maps the cosmos after the human mind, the latter being a rational entity with inherent ordering characteristics and traits that distinguish us from the rest of the species on the planet, therefore we apply the same qualities to our cosmos, to the divine, God being fashioned in the image of man as it were. Regardless of how they got there, most certainly these features are pretty much fundamental to all of the philosophical systems that we see emerge in the so-called Axial Age throughout Eurasia. We express this commonality using the Hellenic *logos*, although the term is being applied to a broader geographic context and is being pushed deeper into history, into pre-history and into the Neolithic, when a people who ended up spreading throughout all of Eurasia - or at least a set of ideas and principles related to this cosmic and material harmony, order and justice seeded all

of Eurasian *mythos* - from which all of the major philosophical and theological systems we have inherited and persist into the modern era descend from essentially.

This is our Eurasian philosophy, the second part of our *Laurasian hypothesis* which argues for the common, shared origins of not only the *mythos* of the major peoples of Eurasian antiquity but fundamental elements of the *logos*, i.e. philosophy, as well, from which is born the so-called Axial Age, within which not only are the *mythos* from antiquity captured, but the philosophical underpinnings from antiquity are captured as well, *logos*, the remnants of this Eurasian philosophical tradition which must have co-existed alongside the ancient *mythos*, captured and practiced and handed down through the sands of time by what we now call *shamans*, the priests of the Neolithic Era, who preserved and honed these ancient *mystical arts* out of which are born the first systems of philosophy – all of which share these *skeptical* and *mystical* features and traits for the most part, these very same features that we hear about that were in ancient Egypt, Greece, Persia and certainly on the Indian subcontinent as well as the Far East, China. For Eurasian *mysticism* is the sibling of Eurasian philosophy, just as is Eurasian *mythos* – a body of knowledge that travelled alongside these ancient wanderers as they moved out of Africa some 60 to 70,000 years ago trying to survive, trying to find a home. The ancient *human migration* which populated the globe, from which humans – *homo sapiens* – established themselves as the most dominant species on the planet.

For it was no doubt writing, and the advanced technology surrounding it that allowed for sounds themselves rather than just merely symbols to be portrayed and captured very specifically and nuanced as it were, allowing for the capture of ancient *mythos* and *theos*, and also as well – oft overlooked – the capture of this very ancient *logos* as well, one that came with those people as they left Africa but one which certainly continued to evolve over the ages into more local variants and flavors as it were, all the while – like man himself – adapting to its surroundings and terrain. This new technology though, and of course the advancement of civilization that came along with it, was codependent and co-emergent with it, allowed the first philosophers all throughout Eurasia to not just write down what they had already inherited from their teachers, and their teachers' teachers, back through the sands of time - that which had been encoded, hidden really, within the ancient *mythos* itself, the most precious of *wisdom* to be passed on to only the most adept and faithful and prepared of students - but to expand upon its foundations, using the new linguistic technology to create the first true systems of *metaphysics* and *theology* that the first philosophers are best known for, abandoning the old *mythos*, the ancient *cosmogonies* and *theogonies* not as useless, but as tools that can take a man, a people and a society, only so far, out of which emerges what we come to understand and appreciate as *logos*, the first rational reflection of the world as it were, the very hallmark of philosophy in the Axial Age all throughout Eurasia.

It is this process of evolution and transformation that we see taking place all throughout Eurasia in antiquity, reflected in each of the respective major traditions that have provided the foundations – both *mythos* and *theos* and *logos* – of all the major Religions as they stand today, and even Science itself, all of which emerged out of and from these ancient philosophical traditions that cropped up in the Mediterranean, the Near East, the Indian subcontinent and the Far East representing all of the major philosophical traditions from antiquity, each reflected throughout this Eurasia land mass that was the path of ancient man in his *human migratory* path that led to his dominion of the planet, planting the seeds of this so-called Axial Age, where we find these different traditions emerging and evolving, flourishing and advancing, moving beyond the ancient *mythos* and appealing to *reason* as the benchmark for truth, seeing the cosmos in *mind* as it were, existing in all these different variants and languages no doubt, all encoded with different systems of writing and different mythical narratives that had become socio-politically specific, but nonetheless all conserving and revealing as it were, their shared origins and past which despite all efforts at masking it and hiding it, can still nonetheless be found now that we, in the Quantum Era and the Information Age, the age of the genome and advanced computer systems technology, can put all the pieces together finally and see Eurasian philosophy for what it truly was. Not so advanced as the philosophies that are the hallmark of the Axial Age no doubt, but more advanced than we give them credit for undoubtedly as well, and at the same time illustrating the sheer power and grace, and persistency and fortitude, of the spoken word and *mythos* itself, which when coupled with its mystical trappings which were preserved right alongside the *mythos* itself, kept and preserved this ancient *wisdom* throughout the ages, reaching further back into the *mind* of man than anyone would think possible. If only one would dare.

And it is from this ancient *mythos*, coupled with this ancient *logos* which was intrinsically linked to *theos*, all harkening back to, and originating from and ultimately derived from, our ancient “Eurasian” ancestors, with each respective tradition and variant reflecting almost breadcrumbs on the journey of man, seeds as it were that all took root in local river valleys and basins which ended up blossoming into the philosophical traditions that span the globe today - from which we trace not only our theological heritage (Religion) in fact, but also from which our beloved Science owes its allegiance as well. A heritage that reaches so far back in time, that it is forgotten that they all came from the same source – that *mythos*, *logos* and *theos* were all siblings as it were, and not descendants of each other as most would have us believe. But the breadcrumbs were there, they still are, if anyone cared to look. The clues are in the *cosmogonies* and *theogonies* no doubt, with so many shared features and parallels across such a geographic expanse, throughout Eurasia, but the clues are there in the first systems of philosophy as well, where our *Dao* from the Far East is essentially the same as Plato’s *Being*, and the Vedic *Brahman*, each of which are rooted in their own *mythos* and their own language and history yes, but these ancient remnants from Eurasian philosophy, Proto-Indo-European philosophy as it were, the grandparent of all

these systems throughout Eurasia in antiquity, nonetheless persevered even if they took different form and shape as they found permanent homes in all these ancient theo-philosophical traditions which emerge in the so-called Axial Age of man.

Part III: On Religion and Science

The Indo-Europeans: The Grandparents of Philosophy

There has been and continues to be much scholarly debate as to what extent the classical Greek philosophical tradition, what we call Hellenic philosophy herein, which classically begins with a study of the so-called “Pre-Socratics”, the bulk of which are Greek in the Hellenic sense of the term (i.e. they spoke and wrote in Greek and lived in a region of Greek influence around the Mediterranean), is of specifically and distinctively Greek origin. We find this debate in antiquity as well, where the two sides can be summed up by Clement of Alexandria the 2nd century Christian theologian and apologist and Diogenes Laertius, the 3rd century CE philosophical historian, respectively.

From Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE) in his influential apocryphal work *The Stromota* (or *Miscellanies*) a reference to the sources and origins of philosophy as a discipline from outside Greece are outlined in some detail, pre-dating Greek philosophical development from which the early Hellenic philosophic schools borrowed or at the very least were influenced by, calling out not only the Chaldeans, Persians (*Magi*) and Jews, but also the Indian philosophical schools as well (Brahminical tradition as well as Buddha himself).

Zoroaster the Magus, Pythagoras showed to be a Persian. Of the secret books of this man, those who follow the heresy of Prodicus boast to be in possession. Alexander, in his book On the Pythagorean Symbols, relates that Pythagoras was a pupil of Nazaratus the Assyrian a (some think that he is Ezekiel; but he is not, as will afterwards be shown), and will have it that, in addition to these, Pythagoras was a hearer of the Galatae and the Brahmins.

...

Numa the king of the Romans was a Pythagorean, and aided by the precepts of Moses, prohibited from making an image of God in human form, and of the shape of a living creature. Accordingly, during the first hundred and seventy years, though building temples, they made no cast or graven image. For Numa secretly showed them that the Best of Beings could not be apprehended except by the mind alone. Thus philosophy, a thing of the highest utility, flourished in antiquity among the barbarians, shedding its light over the nations. And afterwards it came to Greece.

First in its ranks were the prophets of the Egyptians; and the Chaldeans among the Assyrians; and the Druids among the Gauls; and the Samanaeans among the Bactrians; and the philosophers of the Celts; and the Magi of the Persians, who foretold the Saviour's birth, and came into the land of Judaea guided by a star. The Indian gymnosophists are also in the number, and the other barbarian philosophers. And of these there are two classes, some of them called Sarmanae, and others Brahmins. And those of the Sarmanae who are called Hylobii neither inhabit cities, nor have roofs over them, but are clothed in the bark of trees, feed on nuts, and drink water in their hands. Like those called Encratites in the present day, they know not marriage nor begetting of children. Some,

*too, of the Indians obey the precepts of Buddha; whom, on account of his extraordinary sanctity, they have raised to divine honours.*⁴¹⁷

In his prologue to his famed and influential work *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* Diogenes Laertius denies such assertions, establishing the very foundations of what is sometimes referred to as *le miracle grec*, or the belief that philosophy as a rational discipline is an altogether uniquely Greek “invention” as it were.

*There are some who say that the study of philosophy had its beginning among the barbarians. They urge that the Persians have had their Magi, the Babylonians or Assyrians their Chaldaeans, and the Indians their Gymnosophists; and among the Celts and Gauls there are the people called Druids or Holy Ones, for which they cite as authorities the Magicus of Aristotle and Sotion in the twenty-third book of his Succession of Philosophers. Also they say that Mochus was a Phoenician, Zamolxis a Thracian, and Atlas a Libyan. If we may believe the Egyptians, Hephaestus was the son of the Nile, and with him philosophy began, priests and prophets being its chief exponents. Hephaestus lived 48,863 years before Alexander of Macedon, and in the interval there occurred 373 solar and 832 lunar eclipses. The date of the Magians, beginning with Zoroaster the Persian, was 5000 years before the fall of Troy, as given by Hermodorus the Platonist in his work on mathematics; but Xanthus the Lydian reckons 6000 years from Zoroaster to the expedition of Xerxes, and after that event he places a long line of Magians in succession, bearing the names of Ostanas, Astrampsychos, Gobryas, and Pazatas, down to the conquest of Persia by Alexander. These authors forget that the achievements which they attribute to the barbarians belong to the Greeks, with whom not merely philosophy but the human race itself began.*⁴¹⁸

So while we find Diogenes Laertius pointing to a potentially broad and extensive reach for the potential origins of Hellenic philosophy, and the works of the Pre-Socratics in particular, he himself, no doubt reflecting the traditional beliefs of the Greco-Roman intellectuals of his day, dismisses the theory of the external source of the Hellenic philosophical tradition out of hand despite the acknowledgement given to outside influences by other prominent intellectuals of the time as reflected by Clement of Alexandria’s sentiments quoted above. Hence, we see here illustrated and reflected the long-standing belief that philosophy as a pure intellectual pursuit of

⁴¹⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, Chapter XV, “The Greek Philosophy in Great Part Derived from the Barbarians.”. Kirby, Peter. “Historical Jesus Theories.” *Early Christian Writings*. 2014. 1 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book1.html>>.

⁴¹⁸ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Diogenes Laertius. R.D. Hicks. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1972 (First published 1925). Prologue. Verses 1-3. From <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0258%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3Dprologue>.

wisdom is an altogether “Greek” invention, what Staal refers to as *le miracle grec*⁴¹⁹. This question is of course of particular significance to one of the major themes and hypotheses of this work as we try and ascertain as much as is reasonably possible given the scarcity of the textual and archeological evidence from this time period of history to what extent these various theo-philosophical developments throughout the classical period in Eurasian antiquity can be said to be of common origin or common descent.⁴²⁰

Perhaps the most well understood and firmly established intellectual theory of cultural diffusion and evolution from this period of antiquity within the geographic region which classical “Hellenic” culture emerged can be found from the academic discipline of linguistics, or the study of (spoken) languages. Almost all modern scholarship surrounding the study of language groups languages into various families, each family being related by a theoretical ancestor which it is believed that all the languages from that family originated from or in some way are closely associated from, making all languages within a given family either sibling languages or cousins so to speak.

One can make a strong case that language and culture, as we understand it and as can be defined as the set of ideas, concepts or principles that connect a given set of people or society from a given region, are in fact synonymous. Or if not synonymous, then very closely related. And it is from the study of ancient (and modern) language families that the close association between the ancient Greeks, the Hellenes, which are attributed with the “discovery” of philosophy, and their neighbors to the East - what much of the academic literature classifies as the “Orient” or “Oriental” but what we prefer to classify as “Eastern” to more closely align the designation with the relative geographical designation - can perhaps best be illustrated.

⁴¹⁹ “Greek and Vedic Geometry” by Frits Staal. Published in the Journal of Indian Philosophy in 1999 by Kluwer Academic Publishers. Vol. 27, No. 1/2, pg. 105.

⁴²⁰ In particular, significant work has been done to establish the connection and similarities between the theo-philosophical systems of the Indo-Aryans, i.e. ancient Hindu and Vedic, and the Greeks, in particular the Pre-Socratics and Plato. As specific examples one can refer to a) *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* by Martin Litchfield West, published by Oxford: Clarendon Press in 1971, b) an article on the similarities and potential connection (borrowing) of mathematical developments in Classical Greece from ancient Vedic texts - specifically the contents of the *Śulbasūtras* which contains information surrounding fire altar construction - by Frits Staal, department founder and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and South/Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, entitled “Greek and Vedic Geometry” published in the Journal of Indian Philosophy in 1999 by Kluwer Academic Publishers. [Vol. 27, No. 1/2, pp. 105-127], c) the chapter entitled “Prehistory of Presocratic Philosophy in an Orientalizing Context” authored by Walter Burkert, a former German professor of classics at the University of Zurich, Switzerland who was a renowned scholar of Greek mythology mystery cults from the *Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, edited by Patricia Curd and Daniel W. Graham. Oxford University Press, 2008. [Chapter 2, pages 55-85], d) the book *The Shape of Ancient Thought* by Thomas McEvilley, a renowned art critic and expert on ancient Greek and Indian culture and language from Rice University and the School of Visual Arts in New York City published in 2002 by Allworth Press in New York that maps out the extensive similarities and cultural borrowing between the ancient Sumer-Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks and Indo-Aryans in the 2nd and first millennium BCE, and e) The “Roots of Platonism and Vedānta: Comments on Thomas McEvilley” by John Bussanich, professor of Philosophy at the University of New Mexico published in the International Journal of Hindu Studies, Jan 2005 [Vol. 9, No. 1/3, pp 1-20] which analyzes and criticized the views and positions put forward by McEvilley in his work.

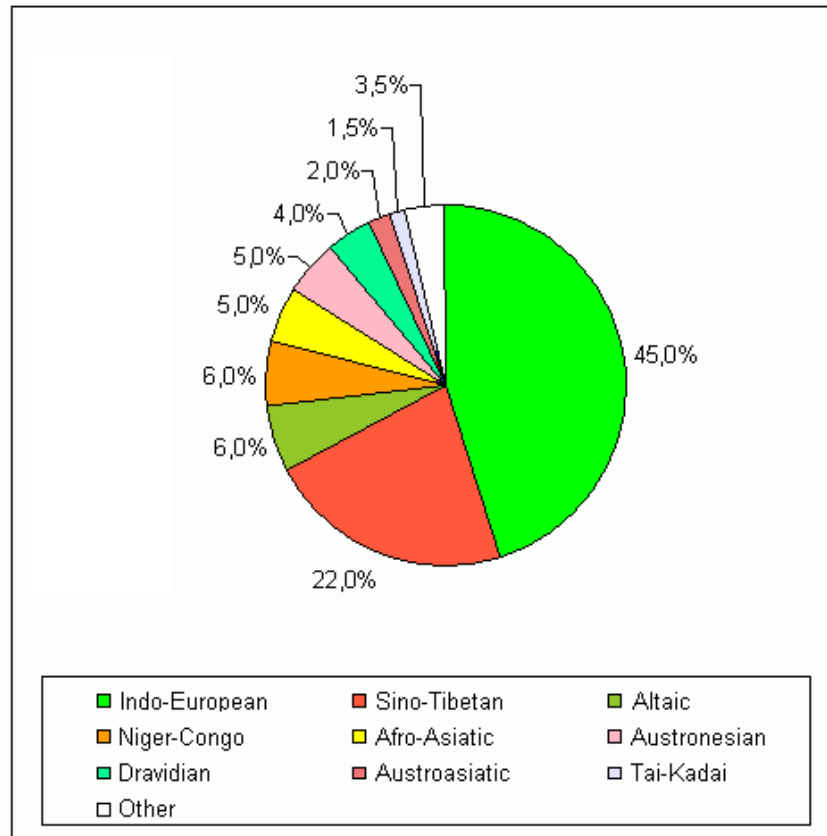


Figure 25: Pie chart of world languages by percentage of speakers⁴²¹

The two families of interest from this time period of antiquity in the regions we are studying (Eurasia) are Sino-Tibetan, a family of more than 400 languages spoken in East, Southeast and South Asia (of which Chinese is a member), which is second in terms of number of (modern) speakers only to the Indo-European language family which is widely spoken today in almost all of Europe, in Western and Southern Asia (and in turn the Americas) and of which all modern Romance languages, English included, are classified as a member of.⁴²²

Ancient Greek, the languages spoken in Anatolia (what is now Turkey) as well as ancient Sanskrit and ancient Persian are all in the Indo-European language family and all share not just a similar structure and design but also share many *cognates*, or word meanings, across a variety of areas

⁴²¹From Wikipedia contributors, 'List of language families', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 5 October 2016, 05:33 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_language_families&oldid=742688812> [accessed 5 October 2016].

⁴²² This theory of language origination and dissemination in *philology* is similar to the approach of modern biology in its classification of various animals and plants into various species, genus and family designation, a designation that is hierarchical in nature and also maps back to the formulation or origination of species and life on earth, aligning with Darwin's theory of *natural selection*.

that indicate and speak to the similar cultural background of all of these ancient people who (again in theory) all come from a similar background, at least linguistically speaking – in other words who all share a common linguistic, and therefore intellectual, heritage. For again the premise here is that language and ideas, and in turn culture, are all very closely related and affiliated psychological and socio-political phenomena.

Common *cognates* across these ancient languages are words for kinship (mother, father, sister, brother, etc.), numbers (one, two three, four, ten, one hundred, etc.), animals (cow, horse, sheep, mouse, pig, wolf, etc.), agriculture (grain, field, honey, salt, to plow, to sow, etc.), body parts and processes (eye, ear, tooth, knee, bone, blood, tongue, foot, to breathe, to sweat, to eat, to drink, to live, to die, to know, to find, to see, to think, to say, to ask, etc.), natural features and phenomena (star, sky, fire, wind, snow, light, dark, water, earth, moon, sun, wood, tree, hot, cold, etc.) and a variety of other concepts that can be loosely categorized as “human”. All of these words, ideas and principles reflect symbolically and linguistically, and again socially and culturally, the society and culture within which these languages were spoken and in theory if we believe the linguistic theory itself of language families and evolution, originated in this geographic region – a geographic region which essentially covers (Western) Eurasia in antiquity.⁴²³

While dating this common ancestral language from which all Indo-European languages are believed to have derived from in some form or another is not an exact science by any means, and it is not even widely held that in fact a common ancestral language (typically referred to as Proto-Indo-European) was ever actually spoken by anyone, based upon the current archeological and linguistic evidence, one can postulate that these word forms and the semantics and syntax of the basic structure of Indo-European languages was developed somewhere in the 4th millennium BCE (give or take a thousand years) and originated and disseminated from a region that is centrally located to where the languages were spoken, i.e. somewhere between the Near East/Asia Minor and the Indian subcontinent from which these Indo-European languages “diffused” or spread, and from which the various dialects or subfamilies of languages within that family developed and evolved.

As an example of how this dating of this Proto-Indo-European language from which the Indo-European languages derived and how they all came to share many of the same words and ideas, one can look at the development of the Romance languages and how they evolved from the Vulgar Latin language which was the lingua franca of the Roman Empire. It took some two thousand years for this early Latin dialect to evolve into the modern languages such as French, Portuguese, Romanian and Italian which all belong to the Italic family of Indo-European

⁴²³ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Indo-European vocabulary', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 28 September 2016, 12:57 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indo-European_vocabulary&oldid=741589022> [accessed 28 September 2016].

languages. If we use this as a benchmark of sorts, using modern languages as an analogy to the Indo-European, one could argue that it took at least two thousand years for the Indo-European languages to develop from whichever language they presumably originated and derived from. In reality though, the rate of progression and evolution of languages from this time period in antiquity was arguably much slower than the last two thousand years (if we presume the rate of evolution runs parallel to the rate of the development and evolution of society and civilization for example) which would tack on an extra thousand years at least just in terms of how long they might have taken to evolve. This in turn would mean that given that Indo-European languages were spoken in the 2nd millennium and early part of the first millennium BCE, if we assume based upon the preceding *logic* that they took roughly three thousand years to develop, it places this Indo-European parent tongue, again called Proto-Indo-European, in roughly the 5th millennium BCE or so.⁴²⁴

⁴²⁴ "It is highly probable that the earliest speakers of this language originally lived around Ukraine and neighboring regions in the Caucasus and Southern Russia, then spread to most of the rest of Europe and later down into India. The earliest possible end of Proto-Indo-European linguistic unity is believed to be around 3400 BCE." From 1. Cristian Violatti, "Indo-European Languages," *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, last modified May 05, 2014, http://www.ancient.eu/Indo-European_Languages/. Note our estimates based upon the heuristic model above place the language some two millennia earlier in antiquity. It's also worth noting that at least two of the three primary languages believed to have been spoken throughout the Assyrian Empire, Akkadian and Aramaic, are from the Afro-Asiatic family of languages rather than Indo-European so while this Empire clearly held sway over the area in question in the Near East and Mediterranean in the 2nd millennium BCE or so, the wave of cultural diffusion represented by Proto-Indo-European must have pre-dated the influence of this civilization, consistent with the premise of a date of the 5th or 4th millennium BCE.

It is from linguistics in fact that the close association between for example Vedic Sanskrit and ancient Persian (Avestan) is found, showing the close relationship between not just these two languages but of course the people that spoke them, people whose theological and religious beliefs are captured in some of the oldest extant literature known to man, i.e. the Persian *Avesta* and the Indian *Vedas*, and through which can be ascertained many similar cultural, social and religious beliefs, lending further credence to the linguistic theory itself.

The Indo-Iranian sub branch of Indo-European languages includes the languages of the ancient Persians and Indians, basically the languages spoken by the people and societies that lived in modern Iran and India. This branch includes two sub-branches, Indic (Indo-Aryan) and Iranian. The former classification includes ancient languages such as Vedic Sanskrit (the language of the *Rigvéda*) and its child language Sanskrit (the language of the later *Vedas*) as well as modern languages spoken in India such as Hindi, Punjabi, and Bengali. The Iranian sub branch of Indo-Iranian languages include ancient languages such as Old Avestan, sometimes called Gathic Avestan which is the language from the oldest strata of the *Avesta*, or *Gathas*, Old Persian which was the primary language spoken in the Achaemenid Empire), Avestan which is the language of the later *Avesta* Zoroastrian literature, as well as languages from Iranian/Persian later antiquity such as Middle Persian and Parthian, and modern languages such as Farsi (modern Persian), Kurdish and Pashto which are spoken in modern day Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Ancient Greek, part of the Hellenic sub branch of Indo-European languages, was spoken in various dialects throughout the Aegean and Peloponnese peninsula in the latter part of the second millennium BCE and throughout the first millennium BCE. It is perhaps best known in its Athenian dialect form referred to as “Attic”, which is the language of the Homeric epics as well as the language of the early Greek philosophers⁴²⁶. Classical Latin, the Latin dialect used by authors such as Ovid, Cicero, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, and its successor tongues Vulgar and Ecclesiastical Latin which became the predominant languages of the Roman Empire, both also belong to the Indo-European language family, under Italic branch of Indo-European languages, sister and cousin languages to the Hellenic tongues. Again, all modern Romance languages such as Romanian, Italian, French, Spanish, Danish, German, etc. all originate from Vulgar Latin language, the lingua franca of the Roman Empire.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁶ Some of the earliest known forms of the ancient Greek language were spoken by the Mycenaeans, a culture which flourished in the Mediterranean region. what later came to be known as the area of Hellenic influence, in the middle and latter part of the 2nd millennium BCE.

⁴²⁷ All modern Romance languages in fact, such as Romanian, Italian, French, Spanish, Danish, German, etc. all originate from Vulgar Latin in fact under the Italic branch of Indo-European languages. Again see 1. Cristian Violatti, “Indo-European Languages,” *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, last modified May 05, 2014, http://www.ancient.eu/Indo-European_Languages/.

This development of *philosophy* itself runs parallel not coincidentally to the development and proliferation of writing throughout the region of Hellenic influence. For the development and exploration of ideas and concepts which came to be grouped together under the heading of *philosophy*, as distinguished from the mythological tradition which preceded it (again as reflected by the writings attributed to Homer and Hesiod), arguably required an advanced system of writing within which these complex sets of ideas and their interrelationships could be explored. In other words, in order for the oral tradition which was characterized by myth and parable and compressed verse based language which facilitated the faithful transmission of theological ideas from generation to generation to evolve into a more complex and fuller system of *philosophy*, a written language and an intellectual tradition surrounding the writings of various thinkers is absolutely necessary. In fact, one could argue that Platonic philosophy itself, as it survives down to us in its classic dialogue form, illustrates this very fact – i.e. *oral transmission* of ideas explored through what has come to be called *dialectic* by Aristotle and what is referred to typically as *Socratic method* in Plato's works in and of itself shows how a complex system of philosophy can be constructed from the exploration, and documentation, of ideas in written form.

It is no accident that as the Greek alphabet system, from which the Roman alphabet originated from, which was "invented" in the 8th and 7th centuries, a system borrowed from the Phoenicians (i.e. the Phoenician alphabet from which the Greek alphabet evolved from), becomes prevalent at the same time that the Homeric epics are written down, and in turn marks the beginning of the Hellenic philosophical tradition. For again writing itself is a *necessary* condition (not *necessary and sufficient*) for the development of philosophy.

To summarize then, as we look at the attempt at the very beginnings of philosophical inquiry, of rational thought really, in the second half of the first millennium BCE more or less, we find similar developments – both culturally and technologically – that support this advancement, this intellectual revolution if we may call it that, across virtually all of Eurasia. In each of these respective geographic and socio-political centers within which civilization emerges, we see an attempt by each of these peoples, the first philosophers, to attempt to answer various questions about the nature of reality and the "universe", its component parts and pieces, as well as how best the individual, as well as the society and people at large, are to live within this (fundamentally theological, i.e. "divine") world. This enquiry happens almost simultaneously from amongst the various social, political, linguistic and of course "intellectual" traditions which emerge at this very unique time in our history – what some call the Axial Age given that in a very real sense it represents the time period which many of the foundational aspects of civilized society emerged.

We find these similar lines of enquiry, the manifestation of the same intellectual journey to a large extent, in the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition to the West, in the Upanishadic and early Indian philosophical tradition on the Indian subcontinent to the East and even to the Far East in ancient China in the Far East, each of which started to formulate, in writing, their own conception of *reality*, what today in philosophical circles we would refer to as an *ontology*, as well as the boundaries of what can be said to be *real* or *true*, what is referred to as *epistemology* in modern philosophical circles.

In its initial formulation, at least with respect to lasting influence and persistence of teachings, in the West, in the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition, this intellectual endeavor takes shape in the works of Plato as his *theory of forms*⁴²⁸, which ultimately leads to his notion of the Good , establishing the intellectual, and metaphysical, foundations of Christianity and *monotheism*.

To the East on the Indian subcontinent, similar intellectual efforts were underway, and in what has come to be known as the Indian theo-philosophical tradition, and in the *Upanishads* in particular, the core metaphysical (and theological) constructs of *Ātman* and *Brahman* were established, each of which is akin to and mapped directly with the notion of what we in the West have come to refer to as “Soul”, one at the individual level and another at the cosmic level. In the Far East, an alternative metaphysical and ontological picture emerges, where emphasis is on the notion of change, cycle, and process – what comes to be known as the *Dao*, or simply the “Way” – rather than on any one substance, principle, form or idea.

In each of these traditions however, the notion of the emergence of the physical universe, along with mankind itself, out of some kind of divine, cosmic, creative event, which in turn is presided over by some type of divine, immortal being (i.e. a god or gods) is an integral part of the respective belief system, even if it is not explicitly called out or emphasized as such. Furthermore, in each of these traditions, the idea of some immortal or persistent entity that is tied or affiliated to an individual person that persists beyond death is also presumed and fully integrated into the respective belief system, even if it again is manifest, referred to or called, something different and/or it is given a different emphasis, in each of the theo-philosophical systems from antiquity across Eurasia.

The primary distinction however between what we shall refer to as Indo-European philosophy⁴²⁹ and effectively the theo-philosophical systems of the Far East, is the emphasis on the notion of

⁴²⁸ In the Greek εἶδος, or *eidōs* meaning “form”, “essence”, “type”, or “species” along with the complementary notion of ἰδέα, or *idea*, meaning “form” or “pattern”. Both Greek words incidentally come from the Indo-European root “to see”. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Theory of forms', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 25 October 2017, 16:23 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Theory_of_forms&oldid=807055180> [accessed 30 October 2017].

⁴²⁹ Following the linguistic theory from *philology*, the study of languages, which holds that there was a foundational people and language from which all Indo-European languages originally were derived from, or at the very least were heavily influence by that

the Soul not just as an ontological predicate upon which *reality* is perceived, but also as a cornerstone metaphysical and intellectual construct from which *reality* is effectively defined.

This idea of the Soul, and its preeminent place within the *ontology* of the theo-philosophical systems in question, one of the unique elements of what we are calling Indo-European theo-philosophy, can be found for example in both the Hellenic theo-philosophical system, in all its variants in fact, as well as the Indian, or Upanishadic, theo-philosophical traditions. The reality, and immortality, of the Soul plays a significant role in the overall theo-philosophical system articulated by Plato, as a metaphysical entity that exists as the *form*, or underlying *idea*, of a person or human being, and also as the underlying metaphysical principle upon which Plato's notion of *virtue*, or excellence (*arête*) is based, upon which both his ethical as well as political philosophy rests in fact. The notion of *Ātman*, the Indian theo-philosophical corollary to the Hellenic Soul, plays a very similar role theo-philosophically in fact, being perceived as an immortal construct which underpins not just the individual person or psyche (*jiva*), but also represents the cornerstone principle or idea, metaphysical construct, upon which its system of *ethics* is based.

In contrast, in the Chinese theo-philosophical tradition, which is not of Indo-European heritage or descent, while a notion of *ancestral spirit* is no doubt present⁴³⁰, it does not carry the same ontological or metaphysical significance as it does in the theo-philosophical systems we are categorizing, again along linguistic (and in turn intellectual and ultimately theological) lines, as "Indo-European". We do not find in the Chinese theo-philosophical tradition for example, the same ontological emphasis on this construct of the Soul, that element or component of the person or human being which persists beyond death, that we find in its Western theo-philosophical counterparts, even if it can be argued that the role of the realm of spirit and the existence of some form of life associated with individual existence does in fact persist beyond death⁴³¹.

The Indo-European theo-philosophical tradition also subsumes this idea of the anthropomorphic creator, even as it evolves in later renditions to more of an abstract concept rather than an anthropomorphic deity per se. As we find in the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition as the

originated somewhere in the Near East and which ended up spreading across most of the Mediterranean and into the Indian subcontinent and parts of Asia. For a more detailed look at the theory, as well as some of its variants, see <http://www.humanjourney.us/indoEurope.html>.)

⁴³⁰ In Chinese philosophy, and in particular in the theo-philosophy attributed to the Confucian school, veneration and consideration, akin to worship in a sense, of ancestral spirits or forefathers, *shén* (神) does in fact play a significant role, but much more in terms of ritual and ethical or moral precepts - the core characteristics of Confucian philosophical thought in fact - rather than as again an ontological or metaphysical, or even theological, principle or concept.. While *shén* roughly translates into English as "spirit" or "god", the word can take on a much broader and diverse set of meanings depending upon context. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Shen (Chinese religion)', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2 August 2017, 21:26 UTC, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Shen_\(Chinese_religion\)&oldid=793612697](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Shen_(Chinese_religion)&oldid=793612697)> [accessed 30 October 2017].

⁴³¹ As we find for example in the ancestral worship practices that persist even in modern China, practices that represent a key element of Confucian theo-philosophy.

penultimate god in the pantheon, i.e. Zeus, which morphs into the more abstract metaphysical notion of the *Good*, or the Cosmic Soul of Plato. We also find similarly in the Indian theosophical tradition, the *Vedic*, anthropomorphic deity *Puruṣa* or *Brahmā*, which morphs into the more abstract concept of *Brahman* in the *Upanishads*.

This notion of universal creation by some anthropomorphic being, or god, also persists into the Abrahamic monotheistic traditions as well, the notion of a single anthropomorphic deity resting of course at the very heart of the Judeo-Christian theological tradition as Yahweh in the *Old Testament* or simply God in the *New Testament*, and also manifesting in the Islamic theosophical tradition as Allāh, the primordial one true God of the *Qur'ān*.

The strength and persistence of the Abrahamic religions which are a hallmark of the theological developments in the West in the first millennium CE in fact arguably stems not from their unique characteristics necessarily, their relative truth as you might say, but due to the continuity and proliferation of these characteristically Indo-European theosophical belief systems that had already been present throughout the geographic and cultural landscape within which these monotheistic belief systems took root - the seeds had been sown to a large degree, prior to the inception and spread of *monotheism* throughout the Mediterranean initially and then through and throughout the Roman Empire eventually.

In other words, a case can be made that as (Abrahamic) *monotheism* evolved and spread, it found that the people and societies were already conceptually, and to a large extent *theologically*, prepared for the next step in religious evolution as it were - the jump from a pre-historic, myth based narrative with many gods and deities representing many different forms or aspects of nature, to a more *idealistic* and abstract metaphysical system where the universe in all its forms was thought to have emanated, or originated, from a single divine anthropomorphic figure that ultimately held dominion over the entire world order. In this broader intellectual context, Plato's concept of universal creation, *emanation* really, that we find in the *Timaeus* for example, can be seen as a more allegorical interpretation, a close relative as it were, to the of the universal creation story that we find in *Genesis*, as opposed to a wholly distinctive take on universal creation.

So from what *intellectual* and socio-political and cultural context did the works and schools of Plato and Aristotle emerge? Where did their ideas come from, even if they are altogether unique in their language, tenets and ideas and even if they were put forth in contrast to, in juxtaposition to, the theo-philosophical traditions which came before them? Hence our need to reach back a century or two before the time of Plato and Aristotle into the minds of the so called “Pre-Socratics”.⁴³²

During the height of Greek/Hellenic influence in the Mediterranean which begins from the time of Homer and Hesiod in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, extending and expanding during the reign of Alexander the Great during the end of the 4th century BCE whose imperial expansion broadened the area of Hellenic influence well beyond the Mediterranean to the East into Persia/Iran and as far as the borders of India and established the socio-economic and political infrastructure that provided the basis for the Roman Empire and then the Byzantine Empire which lasted well into the second millennium CE, Hellenic philosophical development took root and evolved in a cultural melting pot that included at the very least Persian (Avestan), Egyptian, Hebrew, and Sumer-Babylonian influences, with perhaps some influence from the traditions of the Indo-Aryans (Vedic) further East. And as this melting pot of cultural and socio-political civilization evolved, the underlying theological and philosophical beliefs of the people in this region evolved along with it.

With the advent of the Macedonian (Greek) Empire stemming from Alexander’s conquests, the spread of Greek culture moved beyond just the areas in and around Athens and the surrounding city-states. Alexander’s empire at its height extended as far south as Thebes in Egypt to as far East as the Indus River in the Indian subcontinent. This imperial conquest enabled Greek culture and thought to spread throughout the ancient Western world, at least definitively into the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, i.e. Mesopotamia, and Upper and Lower Egypt, and to a lesser extent in the Indian subcontinent as well despite Alexander’s failed attempt to conquer the territories east of the Indus River.

⁴³² While I am not a fan of the term “Pre-Socratics”, it is used so widely in the academic and scholarly literature to describe these group of thinkers from around the Mediterranean prior to Socrates that coming up with a new term would be altogether confusing and inconsistent with the rest of the literature on the topic. Also, the term itself has been criticized and analyzed by many other scholars and academics and there is no reason to repeat those arguments here. For a review of the use of the term as well as the intellectual developments in and around the Mediterranean from the 6th century BCE onwards up until the time of Socrates (471 – 399 BCE) that typically fall under this broad heading, see the “Introduction” chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy* edited by Patricia Curd and Daniel W. Graham, Oxford University Press 2008.



Figure 27: Map of Alexander's empire and his route⁴³³

Historically, this cultural intermixing and spread of primarily Athenian/Macedonian “Greek” culture into these foreign lands is referred to by modern historians as *Hellenization*, and despite its imperial context, this cross-pollination of cultures contained the seeds of much of the philosophical and theological evolution that took place in the Mediterranean until Roman and then Christian influences took hold from the first century BCE until the adoption of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire at the end of the 4th century CE with the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 CE.⁴³⁴

The stage of Western metaphysical and theological thought in the ancient Western world after the decline of the influence of Athens/Greece as the cultural and intellectual epicenter in the Mediterranean was marked by a much more cross-cultural context and blend of influences than the tradition which preceded it, a period where traditions developed in a much more insular and isolated fashion due to the more or less isolation of the various different cultures. But it was the Hellenic theo-philosophic tradition more so than any other that dominated intellectual development in the centuries following Plato and Aristotle which took root not only in ancient Greece, but also in the Egyptian territories, the Mesopotamian regions, as well as the Near East

⁴³³ From Wikipedia contributors, 'Alexander the Great', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 28 October 2016, 17:38 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Alexander_the_Great&oldid=746647937> [accessed 28 October 2016]

⁴³⁴ The Edict of Milan in 313 CE established the legality and tolerance of Christianity within the Roman Empire. The Edict of Thessalonica in 380 CE, also known as the *Cunctos populos*, made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, ordering all the subjects therein to profess the faith of the bishops of Rome and Alexandria as established by the Nicene Creed in 325 CE.

(Persia), albeit driven mostly by cultural assimilation forced by military conquest more so than anything else.

Pre-Socratic philosophy is the term modern scholars and academics use to describe the intellectuals and teachers that were responsible for, and preceded, the intellectual developments prior to Socrates (471 – 399 BCE), and in turn Plato (428/427 – 348/347 BCE) and Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE), hence the term. In actuality, some of these so-called Pre-Socratics were actually contemporaries of Socrates himself, so while the classification is somewhat misleading, it does reflect almost all of the modern academic classification of these groups of thinkers and therefore is the term we use here to remain consistent with this literature.⁴³⁵

Classical Hellenic philosophy, again in contrast to Pre-Socratic philosophy, represents to modern scholars and academics a period of intellectual development that focuses not just on the rational order and foundational principles of the natural world as distinctive from the theogonic and mythical accounts which preceded it, but also the analysis and exploration of the nature and extent of knowledge itself (*epistemology*), and how the universe came into being (*cosmogony*) as described by the fundamental and elemental principles (*arche*) and their respective interactions and formulations from which the universe as the ancient Hellenic thinkers understood it emerged.

In the end, they developed the rational basis for *morality* and *ethics*, the basis of what they referred to as *virtue* and *happiness* (*eudaimonia*), as well as the metaphysical and philosophical foundation of how they believed societies and nation states should be organized and governed. All of these attributes are not only marked characteristics of the intellectual traditions of Plato and Aristotle themselves, but also of all Hellenic philosophical development which succeeded them - as represented not just by the Platonic and Peripatetic schools founded by Plato and Aristotle respectively, but also by the Stoic and Epicurean traditions as well, the latter of which were also very influential in Greco-Roman intellectual and socio-political development.

Some of these so-called “Pre-Socratics” are believed to have written at least one work or text⁴³⁶, although others – most notably Pythagoras - are not believed to have written anything

⁴³⁵ The Pre-Socratic philosophical tradition for example, as it has come to be understood by modern classicists, does not include the works and literary traditions associated with Homer and Hesiod, nor do they include “Orphic” *mythos* either, despite the fact that these traditions, and the underlying theological beliefs (i.e. again *mythos*) which they reflect, did significantly influence early “Hellenic” intellectual developments even if they were only used as examples of what “philosophy” was not by the early Hellenic philosophers.

⁴³⁶ For example, Parmenides of Elea (southern Italy) is believed to have authored a *lyric poem* in hexameter verse referred to as *On Nature* of which significant fragments survive. Heraclitus is believed to have written a book of the same title that he (according to Diogenes Laertius) donated to the temple Artemis in Ephesus (modern Turkey). For a review of the philosophy of Parmenides

themselves. However, what is extant from these works, and what we understand and know about the belief systems which these ancient Pre-Socratic thinkers are believed to have espoused, survive primarily in fragments and quotations from later authors, the primary source of course being Plato and Aristotle themselves who for better or worse cite these figures and their respective belief systems mostly to criticize or counter oppose their ideas against theirs. This is an important point to keep in mind when trying to decipher and understand precisely what these early precursors to the Hellenic philosophical tradition that fall under the broad heading of “Pre-Socratic philosophy” actually thought and taught, namely that most of what we know about them is second hand.

Some of the earliest Pre-Socratics heralded from the so-called “Milesian School” which was “founded” in the 6th century BCE, some century or so before Socrates. Despite the fact that it’s not clear that there was in fact a “school” of philosophy from the Ionian town of Miletus, a city on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor, three of the most influential of the early Greek (Hellenic) philosophers did hail from this city so clearly there must have existed intellectual developments that were specific to that region that fall into the category of what has come to be known as Hellenic philosophy. The three “Milesian” philosophers were Thales (c. 620 – c. 546 BCE), Anaximander (c. 610 – 546 BCE), and Anaximenes (c. 585 – 528 BCE), the latter being considered as either a close friend or student of Anaximander. All three “philosophers” studied, taught and wrote about the nature of the universe and its beginnings (*cosmogony*), the basic substances of matter and reality and the source of change, i.e. metaphysics and *arche*, as well as other topics such as Astronomy, geography, biology and politics, altogether representing some of the very first teachers of the Hellenic philosophical intellectual revolution, i.e. “philosophers” (literally “lovers of wisdom”) as the term came to be understood some centuries later.

It is to the linguistic, as well as the archaeological and written evidence of course, that we lean on to support the thesis that at least the Milesians could not help but be influenced by these “Eastern”, or sometimes referred to as “Oriental” theo-philosophical traditions.⁴³⁷ For the ancient city of Miletus is on the very Eastern edge of what was then Ionia (i.e. Greece), and while they most likely spoke “Greek” in some form or another, they lived just West of the border of the last and perhaps greatest vestiges of what is now referred to as the Assyrian Empire (c. 2500 – 612 BCE).

and an analysis of his work, or again the fragments which survive of his work, see <https://snowconenyc.com/2016/09/30/parmenides-of-elea-what-is-versus-what-is-not/>.

⁴³⁷ See the Chapters in this work on the Source of *Hellenic philosophy* and *Indo-European philosophy* for a detailed treatment of the topic of “Oriental”, or “Eastern” influences of early Greek philosophy.



Figure 28: Map of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and its expansions.⁴³⁸

This region of “Assyrian” influence included not just Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean (Middle East), but also the “Near East” as well, an area that covered modern Turkey, Iraq, Iran. The primary spoken languages in this region are believed to be Akkadian, Sumerian, Aramaic, Egyptian, Greek and Old Persian (Avestan). Just to the East of the region of Assyrian influence of course is the Indian subcontinent which we already know had close ties with the Old Persian and Indo-Iranian peoples and cultures, and where Sanskrit was the spoken language, a close relative of Avestan.

This geographic region that included Egypt and the Middle and Near East, later transformed into an area of primarily Persian influence under the Old of First Persian Empire, aka Achaemenid Empire (550 – 330 BCE) where the predominant theo-philosophical traditions are believed to be what has come to be understood as “Zoroastrian”, typically associated with the term *Magi* in

⁴³⁸Neo-Assyrian Empire (911 – 605 BCE). From Wikipedia contributors, 'Neo-Assyrian Empire', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 19 October 2016, 18:15 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Neo-Assyrian_Empire&oldid=745176770> [accessed 19 October 2016].

the early Hellenic literature (for example Herodotus) as well as Sumer-Babylonian, or “Chaldeans”, all of which carried significant astrological and astronomical connotations.



*Figure 29: The Achaemenid Empire at its greatest territorial extent.*⁴³⁹

What we do know is that the territory within the borders of these empires was not nearly as culturally homogenous as compared to the Roman Empire which was dominated by Roman/Latin cultural influence toward the end of the first millennium BCE some centuries later in the same geographic region more or less. Regardless, we do know that the cultures and civilizations within the borders of the Assyrian and Persian Empires, which again lay just to the East of Ionia, included Egypt and bordered not just the area of Greek influence to the West, but also bordered the Indo-Aryans in the East. Miletus itself is located on the Western edge of modern Turkey close to the Aegean Sea and as such no doubt – as reflected by the Pre-Socratic philosophers which heralded

⁴³⁹ Under the reign of Darius I, 522 – 486 BCE. From Wikipedia contributors, 'Achaemenid Empire', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 26 October 2016, 09:00 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Achaemenid_Empire&oldid=746264420> [accessed 26 October 2016].

from this town – provided an environment for Greek, Persian and Sumer-Babylonian theo-philosophical, i.e. intellectual, traditions to synthesize and come together.⁴⁴⁰

The orthodox view that these Pre-Socratic philosophers from the Near East were not influenced directly or indirectly by the Persian and Sumer-Babylonian cultures, and in turn perhaps to a lesser extent by the Indo-Aryan theo-philosophical beliefs which were prevalent in the Indian subcontinent at the time which sat just at the border of the Old Persian (Achaemenid) Empire, is not just naïve but almost racist at some level. While that is not to say that many of their ideas and theories were not altogether unique and revolutionary from an intellectual standpoint, it is simply that outside influences have been historically downplayed in the primarily Western academic literature.⁴⁴¹ In fact fairly strong evidence has been provided for the development of certain ideas - in particular concepts related to *mathematics*, *geometry* and *Astronomy* in particular - from pre-Hellenic civilizations throughout the Near East, North Africa and even as far east as the Indian subcontinent from Sumer-Babylonian, Egyptian and even Indo-Aryan civilizations respectively.⁴⁴²

We do know for certain however, that these intellectual developments which fall under the broad and generic heading of the “Pre-Socratics” - of which again we know primarily through the preserved fragments and comments on their systems of belief from later authors - influenced not only Socrates himself, as we understand him through his caricature in Plato’s *dialogues* within which he plays such a prominent role, but also clearly Plato and Aristotle as well who refer to and speak of the belief systems of their philosophic predecessors, even if again only to malign or criticize them. It is fair to say therefore that these Pre-Socratics, as well as of course the other influential theological and mythical traditions that pre date classical Greek philosophical development (i.e. the intellectual traditions associated with Hesiod, Homer and Orpheus), provide if nothing else the intellectual catalyst and semantic framework for the field of study that has come to be understood as Classical Greek philosophy which has provided us with almost the entire intellectual backbone of all Western thought up until the Enlightenment Era. Such prominent influence in fact that Alfred North Whitehead, a renowned 20th century philosopher

⁴⁴⁰ It is these empires and spheres of political influence in fact which provided the socio-political foundations for not just the great Greco-Persian wars of the middle of the first millennium BCE which are such a core part of classical Greek (Western) history, but also the impetus and socio-political foundations for the great conquests of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BCE which was to have such a lasting influence on Western culture and provided the basis for the Roman Empire which succeeded it/him.

⁴⁴¹ A good summary of the topic of “non-Greek” origins of Hellenic philosophy can be found in the Chapter entitled “Prehistory of Presocratic Philosophy in an Orientalizing Context” authored by Walter Burkert, a former German professor of classics at the University of Zurich, Switzerland who was a renowned scholar of Greek mythology *mystery cults*. See the *Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, edited by Patricia Curd and Daniel W. Graham. Oxford University Press, 2008. Chapter 2, pages 55-85.

⁴⁴² See for example the article by Frits Staal entitled “Greek and Vedic Geometry” which theorizes a common origin of Greek and Vedic *mathematics*, and by extension *theology* and philosophy. “Greek and Vedic Geometry” by Frits Staal. Published in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy* in 1999 by Kluwer Academic Publishers. Vol. 27, No. 1/2, pp. 105-127.

and mathematician once wrote, “*The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.*”⁴⁴³

So how did these schools of philosophy emerge? What were the social and political factors that allowed them to flourish, establishing the *modus operandi* and environment of teaching and curriculum which has had such a marked influence on intellectual development in the Western world, developments which are characterized by distinctive Hellenic philosophical traits such as “reason” and *logic* which have survived even into the modern era?⁴⁴⁴ The socio-political environment of the ancient Greek city-states, and Athens in particular, was ripe for the flourishing of independent thought for many reasons but it is fair to say that their system of government itself, given that it was not altogether totalitarian, at the very least accepted relatively independent intellectual inquiry and teaching, i.e. philosophy. The proliferation of trade and cultural exchange in the Mediterranean at the time also provided the basis for intellectual development no doubt due to the intermingling and cross-pollination of the various theological belief systems that were prevalent in the region at the time, begging for some sort of assimilation and integration as the cultures and various nation-states merged and conquered each other.

Also, in all likelihood, the very public death of Socrates in Athens roused some sort of public empathy (or perhaps better put tolerance) for the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge’s sake throughout the region of Greek influence. That is not to say that these great thinkers did not put themselves in some level of political danger by their “irreligious” and sometimes revolutionary ideas,⁴⁴⁵ but clearly there was something unique about the culture of ancient Greece that made for fertile ground for this new discipline of “philosophical” inquiry. Again, the ancient Greeks were not ruled by a king or emperor per se, and as such they had somewhat more latitude to speak freely about their theo-philosophical beliefs than say the priestly classes of the Assyrians, Persians or Egyptians, who were all more tightly controlled by their respective rulers.

Also of note, this time period in antiquity in the Mediterranean was also marked by the advent and increasing spread of the use of (alphabetic) writing as well, something most if not all of the Pre-Socratics took advantage of, with perhaps Pythagoras being the notable exception. This great flourishing of intellectual thought for which the ancient Greek civilization is most known

⁴⁴³ *Process and Reality* by Alfred North Whitehead. Free Press, 1979. Pg. 39.

⁴⁴⁴ The term *academia* itself derives directly from the name of the school which Plato established (c. 387 BCE) in Athens toward the end of his life, i.e. The Academy.

⁴⁴⁵ For example, in 323 BCE after Alexander the Great died, a former pupil of Aristotle, the Assembly of Athens declared war against Alexander’s successor and since Aristotle was considered pro-Macedonian given his ties to Macedon, he went into voluntary exile where he died in 322 BCE at the age of 63. See <http://ancienthistory.about.com/cs/people/p/aristotle.htm>

for which had its epicenter in Athens included not just the writings and teachings of Plato as taught in the Academy which he founded in 387 BCE, but also the Peripatetic School founded by Aristotle circa 335 BCE, the Epicurean school at the end of the 4th century BCE (303 BCE), and the Stoic School founded by Zeno of Citium in the early 3rd century BCE (circa 300 BCE).

But the influence of Hellenic philosophy, in particular as reflected in the works of Plato and Aristotle, is not just limited to “philosophical” development alone in the West. The broad based theo-philosophical teachings which fell under the banner of *Hellenic philosophy* were also heavily leveraged by the early Christian Church Fathers to provide the rational foundations of Christianity - as reflected for example in the works of Philo Judaeus, Origen and Clement of Alexandria all of whom had broad reaching influence on early (Judeo) Christian *theology*. Even Science itself as we know it today – the disciplines of Physics and *logic, mathematics* and Astronomy for example - rests upon the very same semantic and intellectual developments that can be found in the works of these early Hellenic philosophers, mainly Aristotle in fact.

The Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition was also leveraged by Arabic theo-philosophical tradition as well, as reflected in the Arabic *falṣafa* (the Arabic transliteration for the Greek work *philosophia*) tradition as it came to be defined within the nation of Islam which was established by Muḥammad in the 5th and 6th centuries CE on the Arabian Peninsula. In the Arabic theo-philosophical tradition (sometimes referred to as Muslim philosophy), which arose as a counter balancing force to the spread of Christianity just to the West, many of the Greek philosophical works, in particular the treatises of Aristotle, were translated into Arabic and directly integrated and assimilated into Islamic *theology* as expressed in the *Qur’ān*. This was done in order to provide the rational foundations for Islam just as the early Christian Church Fathers used the Hellenic philosophical tradition to provide the rational underpinnings of Christianity (and again Judaism via Philo Judaeus). Hellenic influence spread to the Arabic world via the Byzantine Empire (aka Eastern Roman Empire) which carried on the Greek/Hellenic language and culture after the fall of the Roman Empire in the 5th century CE and held sway over much of North Africa, the Mediterranean and Near East until the middle of the 15th century. This again primarily Aristotelean influence permeated the thought of the early Arabic *falṣafa*, as is reflected in the influential and lasting theo-philosophical works associated with Al-Kindi, Al-Fârâbî, Avicenna, and Averroes to name but a few of the most influential of the Arabic philosophers.

In fact, many of the ancient Greek texts that we have today would have been lost had it not been for the efforts of this Arabic *falṣafa* tradition which translated many of the ancient Greek works that would have been otherwise lost in the West into Arabic. In so doing, the *falṣafa* not only translated these Greek works into Arabic, but also provided running commentaries and expanded upon the theo-philosophical tradition itself along the way, developing a distinctive and influential in and of itself (and characteristically Arabic in language and culture) philosophical tradition that

in some sense picked up where the Hellenic philosophical tradition left off after it was effectively abolished by the onslaught of Christianity and destruction of “pagan” belief systems and literature in the 4th and 5th centuries CE in the area of Roman/Latin influence in the Mediterranean.

This Hellenic intellectual revolution, if we can call it that, rivalled if not dwarfs in importance, relevance and influence the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries with respect to its overall impact on not just the worldview of the peoples in the Mediterranean that came under Greek influence in the succeeding centuries, but also a worldview that was adopted by the Latin/Romans and spread throughout the Roman (and Byzantine Empire) until it was ultimately replaced by Christianity, and then Islam to the East, in the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries CE and the worldview which underpins virtually all theological, intellectual, metaphysical and scientific thought in the West, whether we recognize it or not. These developments represented no less than a radical transformation of how the world was viewed, as well as how the world was to be looked upon, studied and understood – a system of rational order, i.e. *Logos*, which could be explored and deduced from discernible facts along with refined techniques of reasoning and *logic*.

These principles were not just a marked characteristic of Hellenic philosophy proper as we understand it through the teachings of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and the Stoics for example, but also were the basis of Aristotle’s works on *logic* which circulated in antiquity under the title of the *Organon* and were used through the Middle Ages as the basis for the teaching of reason and *logic* in and of themselves, but were also the very same principles upon which perhaps the most influential mathematical treatise of all time, Euclid’s *Elements*, was authored.

During this era of radical intellectual upheaval - one that in fact had an almost direct corollary intellectual counterpart to the East at around the same time - the disciplines of physics, Astronomy, medicine, *logic* and *mathematics* were created all under the broad heading of “philosophy”, and all of which were taught in some form or another at these various “schools” of philosophy which were established after Plato and Aristotle had laid the primary intellectual foundations so to speak, and which in turn fueled each other forward intellectually in these various disciplines which again were all considered to fall under the broad heading of *philosophia* together with *theology* and *first philosophy*. These developments stemmed from, or at the very least ran parallel to, not necessarily an altogether dismissal of the religious practices and beliefs of their ancestors, but at the very least a reclassification of the mythical and *mystery cult* traditions that had preceded them – i.e. from *mythos* to *Logos*.

For example the *Theogony* of Hesiod, Homer’s epic poetry, the Orphic mystery cults and practices, even the historical work of Herodotus, all of which of which basically dominated the cultural, intellectual and theological landscape of Greece before the classical era, were not

altogether abandoned or rejected as works of little or no value in the pursuit of knowledge (although according to some early philosophers they were looked down upon somewhat as for example with Heraclitus and Aristotle), they were re-categorized by the early philosophers in a sense into an altogether different branch of knowledge, different from *philosophy* per se that was considered to have a more pure rational foundation – not empirical just quite yet but certainly Aristotle laid the groundwork for *empiricism* with his doctrine of *substantial form*.

This re-classification of knowledge was a byproduct of this creation of an altogether new branch of knowledge in fact, i.e. *philosophia*. Myth, ritual and ceremonial worship, and almost all of what we would consider today theological or religious study, which arguably had dominated the intellectual landscape of humanity since the dawn of man, was relegated into a domain of study that did not lack value necessarily, but one that did not, could not, provide the same unique value proposition of *philosophy* given its rational (*logos*) foundations. *Mythos*, as we refer to it throughout, which reflected the and the firm conviction of the underlying order of the *cosmos*, driven by some divine hand as it were, is in fact perhaps the only consistent theme of all creation narratives that underpinned all the advanced civilizations that sprang up in Eurasia (North Africa, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Near East, India and the Far East/China) from say 5000 BCE to 500 BCE – driving this new intellectual revolution which pivoted away from *mythos* to *Logos* - with *reason* and *logic* becoming the focus of the ancient mind supplanting myth, ritual and worship to a large extent. In turn, this new metaphysical and philosophical domain eventually gave way in the first few centuries CE (Anno Domini, the year of the Lord) to the establishment of religion in the West as we know it today. Jesus in antiquity by the early Christian Church Fathers is viewed as the divine personification of *Logos* in fact, providing the rational and theological underpinnings to Christianity, effectively fully adopting and integrating the Hellenic philosophical tradition, that came to form the doctrine of the Trinity.

But in classical Greek antiquity, and in fact in the Far East in antiquity as well, *philosophy* came to represent the pursuit of wisdom on its own grounds, what we would call today the *scientific inquiry* into the true nature “reality” and upon which interestingly rested the basic fundamental principles of the good, happy and virtuous life (*eudaimonia*). For to the ancients, the earliest civilizations that were established across Eurasia as they evolved in the latter part of the first millennium BCE, philosophy was a practical art that was co-opted by the aristocrats and rulers of these peoples. It became an essential discipline upon which the guiding principles of a well-functioning and healthy society – which rested upon the well-functioning and healthy individual – were established. This became really the guiding force of almost all of the philosophical schools of thought that were established during this “Classical Era”, one that again was marked by this pivot from *mythos* to *Logos*. This intellectual revolution held sway over the Mediterranean and Near East for some thousand years until it was supplanted by Christianity and Islam, and in the Far East for another millennium more which although was heavily influenced by Buddhism,

nonetheless held fast to the ancient philosophical systems of classical antiquity – namely Confucianism and Daoism.

These schools of thought as a whole did not altogether reject the worship and reverence, or even existence, of the old pantheon of gods, or ancestors as the case may have been, however. And they most certainly – at least in the West - did not deny the import of the temples of worship where these ancient belief systems continued to be taught and practiced, and where the various ceremonies and rituals to these gods were performed. These ceremonies and rituals reached far back into pre-history no doubt, and they continued to be respected in one way or another by the various philosophical schools that emerged in the area of Hellenic influence until they were ultimately banned, along with all “pagan” religious practices, in the Roman Empire dominion toward the end of the 4th century CE.

For example, the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, was arguably the most sacred of all the sites in the ancient Greek world, first constructed in the early part of the 7th century BCE at the very beginning of Hellenic influence in the Mediterranean, and more or less held significant holy stature to the Greco-Roman society until the beginning of the 4th century CE when Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman Empire, and pagan rituals and practices, of which the worship of Apollo at Delphi was one, were banned. It was the Oracle at this temple in fact, according to Plato⁴⁴⁶, that Socrates was declared the wisest man in Greece, helping to usher in the new era, an era which was founded upon Socrates’s search for true wisdom which became the distinguishing mark of philosophy in antiquity. The Temple at Delphi was also where Plutarch, perhaps the most influential and prominent thinker of the Middle Platonist era, wrote his *Parallel Lives* and *Moralia* treatises, among other significant ancient theo-philosophical works, and where he spent the last 30 years of his life as a priest, speaking directly to the symbiotic and close relationship that existed between philosophy and *theology* in the Hellenic world.

Even in the Epicurean worldview, the most *materialist* and *atheistic* of the Hellenic philosophical schools, the claim was made that even if the gods did exist, they were not, nor should they be, concerned with human affairs, hence the need for, and ultimately value of, the creation of systemic rational belief system from which a set of guiding rules related to *morality* and *ethics* could be deduced as it were. These principles, based again upon what was considered to be a purely rational method of inquiry (*logos*) established the groundwork for *ethics*, from which rules and guidelines and practices for the living of a *happy* and *fulfilling* life (*eudaimonia*), which ultimately was a virtuous one (*arête*), were deduced. These guidelines then, if followed by individuals and citizens of the state as a whole, should lead to a well-functioning, stable and just society. This was the “purpose” of Hellenic philosophy from a socio-political perspective, and in

⁴⁴⁶ Plato's *Apology* 21a-d

fact was the purpose of philosophical inquiry in the Far East as well which saw similar cultural and social factors at work which drove parallel intellectual innovations.

For *philosophy* in antiquity in the Hellenic world was designed not only to help people understand the nature of the universe, the *kosmos* as it were (*cosmogony*), but also evolved into a system of belief surrounding the essential *nature* of world – *metaphysics* as it were. These systems of belief, these theo-philosophical systems that evolved over centuries and came to have such a lasting influence on intellectual developments throughout all of the Eastern and Western world, were constructed and developed primarily for the purpose of understanding, and providing the rational foundations, upon which *knowledge* itself came to be defined. This helped establish the foundation of *ethics*, but also the model of the *ideal state*. This is the content and purpose of Plato's seminal works the *Republic* and *Laws*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, Lǎozǐ's *Dao De Jing*, the *Analects* of Confucius, and the *Laws of Manu* which provide the *moral* and *ethical* foundations of Hindu culture, all texts which were written within 300 or 400 years of each other throughout Eurasian antiquity from roughly 500 BCE to 200 BCE.

The gap of 8 or 9 centuries between the Ancient Greek contributions to philosophy until Christianity gained traction and adoption in the Western world illustrates just how broad and far reaching an influence the Ancient Greek philosophers had on the development of the Western mind and even on Western civilization as a whole given the broad scope of the topics covered in the domain of *philosophy* – from *physics* to *theology* to *ethics* to *Astronomy*. Christianity in fact, a tradition which had its own unique underlying *mythos* and *cosmogony* which bears close resemblance and association with the religions of the Hebrews and the Persians, borrowed from, or from a different perspective superimposed upon, the philosophical and metaphysical systems of the Ancient Greeks.

It was not until many centuries, and even millennia later, not until the power of the Church and the associated threat of persecution for non-believers in the Western world began to wane, that the work of Plato and Aristotle could begin again to be expanded upon and drawn from in a purely metaphysical, and even scientific, context and it could break free from the bondage of pure religion, an era that ushered in the end of the Dark Ages and the beginning of the Enlightenment Era and the Scientific Revolution in the West.

Aristotle is arguably one of, if not the, most influential philosophers in the history of Western civilization, outlining in painstaking detail not only a fully formed and comprehensive system of reason and *logic*, but also a comprehensive system *metaphysics*, what some (including Aristotle himself in fact) refer to as a *theology*, as well as an ontological framework which for the first time, at least in the history of Western civilization, defined the requirements and boundaries of not just *knowledge*, but *reality* itself.⁴⁴⁷ Aristotle takes pains to distinguish himself from his predecessor and teacher Plato but nonetheless, if his doctrines are truly understood, represents more of a development or evolution of Plato's theo-philosophy rather than an opposing or distinctive intellectual, metaphysical or even theological system per se. In fact, this more cohesive and integrated perspective on the classical Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition as a whole (a tradition which was of course dominated by the teachings, works and influence of Plato and Aristotle) is precisely how the Neo-Platonists, as well as the early Muslim philosophers - the so-called *falṣafa* - viewed the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition; the whole being greater than the sum of its parts as it were.⁴⁴⁸

Given the style and technique, the intellectual strategy as it were, that Plato employed by using *Socratic Dialogue*, even if it were by design, left much room for interpretation not only with respect to the philosophical system itself, but also in regard to the clear understanding of what Plato actually held to be true, what his actual philosophy was even. Aristotle took pains to avoid the same lack of clarity, and actually articulated as much in some of his criticisms of Plato's philosophy in *Metaphysics*. It's with Aristotle however, that we find the first expansive, cohesive, and rational framework, comprehensive attempt, at a fully rational conception of the world and mankind's place in it, effectively establishes the very ground of rational thought, what became known in the Hellenic world and beyond as *philosophia*, i.e. *philosophy*⁴⁴⁹, providing the intellectual foundations of Western thought. Plato's work and teachings, , while certainly extensive, nonetheless did not provide the same level of detail, the same specificity, that we find in Aristotle's work. So much so in fact, that the Arabic philosophical tradition, the *falṣafa*, who looked upon the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition as their forefathers in a very real sense (*falṣafa* is in fact directly derived, phonetically, from *philosophia*) referred to Aristotle as the *First*

⁴⁴⁷ Aristotle is also known to have been the tutor for Alexander the Great, the great Greek empire builder of the 4th century BC. While the extent of the influence that Aristotle had on Alexander is debated by scholars, it is well established that Aristotle was Alexander's teacher/tutor for at least two years, from when Alexander was 13 to 15. At 15 however, Alexander was commissioned to the Macedonian army and therefore any later influence by Aristotle is brought into question.

⁴⁴⁸ In later centuries in fact, with the work of Plotinus and Porphyry in particular (as illustrated in the *Enneads*), the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are looked upon as complementary and not altogether inconsistent - hence the name given to the *Enneads*, classically considered to be part of the Platonic tradition proper, in Muslim philosophical circles as the *Theology of Aristotle*.

⁴⁴⁹ *Philosophia* In the Greek φιλοσοφία.

Teacher, establishing him as the forerunner of the Arabic/Muslim *falṣafa* tradition as a while, with Al Fārābī from 9th century Baghdad being designated his successor, the so-called *Second Teacher*, or *Second Master*..



Figure 30: Aristotle's School, a painting from the 1880s by Gustav Adolph Spangenberg⁴⁵⁰

Having said that, it is still important to keep in mind when studying Aristotle, that he was a student at Plato's Academy for some twenty years, and although he diverges from Plato in some very significant respects (and he does not shy away from letting the reader know when he does just that), he nonetheless could not avoid being heavily influenced by Plato's philosophy, as well as his mode of teaching. So while it is very easy to focus on the differences between Plato and Aristotle's belief systems, and in fact much of the academic literature is devoted to precisely this topic, nonetheless it is important to keep in mind that it is within Plato's Academy that Aristotle's philosophy was born, and that without Plato there would in fact be no Aristotle. Just as Plato's works and teachings, his *philosophy*, was much more expansive and comprehensive in terms of intellectual breadth and scope than what today considered Philosophy, Aristotle's works explored many topics outside of the realm of what we would classify as Philosophy proper as well, exploring the very boundaries and structure of *knowledge* itself and in many respects establishing the intellectual and epistemological framework in the West for centuries to come, millennia even. His works and teachings covered topics such as Biology, Physics, *Logic*, Mathematics, and even Geology, along with topics that we consider falling under the umbrella of Philosophy proper,

⁴⁵⁰ From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spangenberg_-_Schule_des_Aristoteles.jpg, public domain.

including *metaphysics*, *epistemology* and *ontology*, topics that are especially relevant with respect to many of the arguments and theses we make throughout this work.

Note that this broad range of topics that Aristotle explored, all of which he clearly felt required further examination and analysis relative to the work of his predecessors (the Platonists included of course), covered not only how the world should be viewed or framed, with respect to identifying those qualities or attributes that describe *reality*, or *being* - i.e. *ontology* - which represent his *metaphysics* and/or *theology*, but also the theoretical foundations for *ethics* and *morality*, as well as the optimal socio-political structure, all topics that were of special interest to most of the philosophical schools in the classical Hellenic period and in fact came to define the Hellenic philosophical tradition, i.e. *philosophia*, in many respects. It's within this more broad intellectual framework then, what came to be understood as *philosophy*, or *philosophia*, that Aristotle could establish the principles and basic intellectual framework within which the "natural world" could be defined and explored, what he referred to as *natural philosophy*, which, along with his work in *logic*, *geometry* and *mathematics*, provided the very foundations of philosophical, really *scientific*, enquiry in the West.

All of these fields of research, these *sciences*, were related not just from Aristotle's perspective, but also from the perspective of the school established by his predecessor, Plato, the two arguably establishing the next major step in the evolution of *philosophia* in the Hellenic world as it had been passed down to Athens primarily out of the tradition of the so-called Pre-Socratics,, which although were revolutionary in their own right, nonetheless were more concerned with the more general problem of providing a more rational structure of the cosmos (*kosmos*) necessarily, rather than a full description of what might be considered to be (borrowing Aristotle's terminology) the more *practical*, or *theoretical* disciplines that came to be hallmarks of *philosophia* in the classical Hellenic period.

Aristotle is perhaps best known however for not only his comprehensive and cohesive system of *metaphysics*, or his *ontology*, fleshing out in much greater detail that had been done prior a completely rational model for the universe, and the boundaries of *reality* itself in fact, as well as his *epistemological* framework, his *theory of knowledge* as it were, consisting of a set of basic delineated types, or branches, of *knowledge*, combined with a fairly sophisticated notion of *causality* upon which the more abstract aspect of *knowledge* is constructed. Aristotle's *causal framework*, his *theory of causality*, not only represents a hallmark distinction and unique invention with respect to Aristotle's philosophical system in and of itself, but it also represents one of the very unique characteristics that has come to be associated with the Western worldview itself, as reflected most definitively in the field of Science of course, what we refer to within the context of 20th century Physics as the principle of *causal determinism*. Up until the Middle Ages, in fact, Aristotle's works on *logic* and *metaphysics*, the *Organon* and *Metaphysics*

respectively, continued to be used as standard teaching texts throughout the West, and even were used in areas of Muslim influence as well further East, effectively establishing much of the intellectual foundation of classically Western, and Arabic, thought more so than perhaps any other single figure in the history of civilization.

One of the most pervasive and intellectually loaded words that we find used throughout Aristotle's works as they have survived down to us through the centuries in various languages in various (Western) theo-philosophical traditions, is *epistêmê*, a Greek word that translates into the English as "knowledge", or "science" but in the more broad and general context that Aristotle uses the term can perhaps more accurately be translated as "field of knowledge" or "branch of study".⁴⁵¹ The branch of Philosophy called *epistemology* in fact, a more modern, post Scientific Revolution philosophical development, is derived from Aristotle's semantic framework around this very topic - the word meaning literally the "study of" (*logos*), "knowledge" (*epistêmê*). This branch of Philosophy is concerned specifically with the nature and scope of *knowledge* itself, exploring its nature and boundaries as a metaphysical and intellectual construct, as well as how it can be acquired and to what extent it is possible for a given subject or entity to be *known*.⁴⁵² The English word *science* as it turns out, which is typically how the Greek word is translated, comes to us through the intermediary language Latin as *scientia*, which in turn is derived from the Latin verb *scire*, or "to know" or "understand". It's worth pointing out that It wasn't until much later in history, not until after the Scientific Revolution (aptly named we might add), that *scientific method* as a method of investigation in and of itself transformed what Aristotle originally referred to as *natural philosophy* (more below) into Science proper as we understand it today. Subsequently, Science became an independent and very technically defined branch of study, or again field of knowledge, that was founded upon well-defined *empiricist* and *rationalist* principles that were some of the hallmark intellectual and philosophical developments of Enlightenment Era philosophy.

With respect to Aristotle's extant works specifically, there are in total thirty-one surviving works that can be attributed directly to Aristotle, occasionally referred to in the academic literature as the *Corpus Aristotelicum*. Although classification and grouping of Aristotle's extant work is open

⁴⁵¹ The English word *science* as it turns out, which is typically how the Greek word is translated, comes to us through the intermediary language Latin as *scientia*, which in turn is derived from the Latin verb *scire*, or "to know" or "understand". Furthermore, it's perhaps worth noting that It wasn't until much later in history, not until after the Scientific Revolution (aptly named we might add), that *scientific method* as a method of investigation in and of itself transformed what Aristotle originally referred to as *natural philosophy* (more below) into Science proper as we understand it today. Subsequently, Science became an independent and very technically defined branch of study, specific field of *knowledge*, that was founded upon well-defined *empiricist* and *rationalist* principles that were some of the hallmark intellectual and philosophical developments of Enlightenment Era philosophy.

⁴⁵² *Epistemology* as a specific term in philosophy was introduced by the Scottish philosopher James Frederick Ferrier (1808–1864) and the field is sometimes referred to as the *theory of knowledge*. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistemology> for more details.

to interpretation (to say the least), for the most part it is agreed that Aristotle divided *science*, again *knowledge*, into three basic categories. The first category, and the one of most interest within the context of inquiries into the historical development of *philosophy* as a discipline in and of itself, is what Aristotle refers to as the *theoretical sciences*, what he calls *first philosophy*. Aristotle actually uses a variety of terms and phrases to describe this more theoretical and abstract branch of the *sciences*, this field of *knowledge*, what has come to be known in modern Philosophical circles as *metaphysics*, describing it variously as *first philosophy*, *theology*, *first science*, or the somewhat loaded Hellenic theo-philosophical *sophia*, typically translated as *wisdom*. From Aristotle's perspective however, the discipline that we will, for simplicity's sake, refer to as *first philosophy*, was primarily concerned with the study of that which defines that which *is* or *can be said to exist* - what in philosophical circles, based again upon the terminology used by Aristotle, has come to be known as the oft quoted and oft misinterpreted and/or not so well understood, *being qua being*.⁴⁵³

The term *metaphysics* has stuck over the centuries however, and over time has evolved into a very specific discipline within Philosophy, despite its very close affiliation and association, from the very beginning in fact, with Physics. Aristotle's *first philosophy* included works in fields that would fall under the umbrella of Philosophy proper, as well as *theology* (more below), a discipline which in Aristotle's time was in no way distinguishable from *philosophy* itself, and also works in fields of study related to disciplines today that fall under Science proper, e.g. Biology, Astronomy, and of course Physics.⁴⁵⁴ His second *science*, or *branch of knowledge*, he referred to as *practical philosophy*, distinguishing it from the theoretical branches of *science*, consisting primarily of the analysis of human conduct, the idea of *virtue*, and socio-political issues as they related to *ethics* and *morality* in general. Much of his work in this area built off of the foundation provided by his predecessor and teacher Plato, as set forth in *The Republic* primarily, although Aristotle deviated from Plato's ethical and socio-political philosophy in many significant ways. The third main branch of *knowledge* according to Aristotle epistemological framework was what he referred to as the *productive sciences*, a domain which included exploration into such topics as rhetoric, agriculture, medicine and ship building, as well as the arts of music, theater and dance.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ The philosophical discipline of *metaphysics* is in fact derived from the title of one of Aristotle's works on this very subject. Aristotle however, did not himself use this word as either a title to any of his works or even as a description of any of their contents, but it was the title that was assigned to his work on the subject by later editors and compilers of his work because the work was to be introduced subsequent to, or was to be studied after (*meta*) Aristotle's treatises on *Physics*, in all likelihood because the work was more intellectually challenging and advanced than certainly his treatises on *Physics* necessarily. Thereafter his works on the subject, which now were assembled as a collection of works under the title of *Metaphysics*, came to be forever be associated with the specific discipline within Philosophy we now know as *metaphysics*.

⁴⁵⁴ See Cohen, S. Marc, "Aristotle's Metaphysics", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>>.

⁴⁵⁵ The epistemological framework established by Aristotle was used in the West up until the very end of the Scientific Revolution. Prior to the establishment of Science in the post-Enlightenment Era, scientific questions were addressed as a part of the domain

While Aristotle no doubt was heavily influenced by the teachings of his predecessor, he differed with his teacher in many key, significant areas, many of which in fact continue to be the subject of philosophical debate even today. In particular, Aristotle took issue with not only Plato's *epistemological* framework, but also his *metaphysics*, or *theology* as well, topics that are covered at length also in *Metaphysics*. Aristotle for example, is openly critical of Plato's *theory of forms* as we can see in the below excerpt from *Metaphysics*, Book I:

The fact, however, is just the reverse, and the theory is illogical; for whereas the Platonists derive multiplicity from matter although their Form generates only once, it is obvious that only one table can be made from one piece of timber, and yet he who imposes the form upon it, although he is but one, can make many tables. Such too is the relation of male to female: the female is impregnated in one coition, but one male can impregnate many females. And these relations are analogues of the principles referred to.

This, then, is Plato's verdict upon the question which we are investigating. From this account it is clear that he only employed two causes: that of the essence, and the material cause; for the Forms are the cause of the essence in everything else, and the One is the cause of it in the Forms. He also tells us what the material substrate is of which the Forms are predicated in the case of sensible things, and the One in that of the Forms—that it is this the duality, the "Great and Small." Further, he assigned to these two elements respectively the causation of good and of evil; a problem which, as we have said, had also been considered by some of the earlier philosophers, e.g. Empedocles and Anaxagoras.⁴⁵⁶

Despite its brevity, we have here in this passage not only the rationale behind Aristotle's criticism of Plato's *epistemology*, his *theory of forms* primarily, we also have here find some of the intellectual pieces, as well as the rationale, for what has come to be known in philosophical circles as *hylomorphism*, one of the cornerstones of Aristotle's *metaphysics* and, to use the more modern designation, *ontology*. We can see here quite clearly as well, the basic strategy that Aristotle employs to try and distinguish himself from his "Platonist" brethren, providing what he

of *natural philosophy*, as established in the epistemological framework established by Aristotle some two thousand years prior. After the Scientific Revolution however, once *scientific method* and empiricism became entrenched and formalized, *natural philosophy* was transformed into a purely empirical activity, where theoretical advancements were derived from hypotheses and ensuing experiments to test the same, after which *natural philosophy*, as Science, became split from Philosophy proper as we know the fields today. Some philosophers of science believe that the *natural sciences*, or *natural philosophy*, is mutually exclusive from the study of *metaphysics*, while other philosophers of science strongly disagree. This author holds, as did Aristotle, that Science is just as much a philosophical endeavor as is *metaphysics*, or *theology* for that matter. Even though Science in the modern era focuses on empirical results and theories of *reality* based upon measurable results of material phenomena, i.e. *empiricism* or *objective realism*, without a system of *metaphysics* and system of *logic* upon which science undoubtedly rests, no rational notion of *reality* – be it scientific or metaphysical – can be arrived at.

⁴⁵⁶ Aristotle *Metaphysics* Book I 988a. Aristotle. *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vols.17, 18, translated by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989. From <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D1%3Asection%3D988a>

sees (and arguably fundamentally is) as a more rationally sound and complete metaphysical framework upon which a more robust and cohesive system of philosophy can be constructed. While Platonic *idealism* - as understood via *theory of forms*, perhaps most eloquently described the famous Allegory of the Cave passage in *The Republic* - along with the technique that he employed, and arguably perfected, to convey his teachings, i.e. *Socratic method* or more generally, *dialectic*, no doubt represented significant intellectual and philosophical advancements relative to his predecessors who collectively are referred to as the “Pre-Socratics, Platonism still left much open to question and lacked definitional certainty in many areas, even a generation or two after Plato’s death which is when many of Aristotle’s later works are believed to have been written.⁴⁵⁷

In order to provide *logical* framework within which all of Aristotle’s *sciences* could be established, however, Aristotle first found it necessary to fully articulate and describe how precisely one can discern *truth* from *falsehood*, as well as the methods of *reason* from which any argument can, or should, be considered sound, or coherent - e.g. *inductive* or *deductive reasoning* techniques or more generally *dialectic*. To this end, Aristotle wrote several works that fell under the heading of what in antiquity was referred to as *logic*, and his works in this area are typically collected together under the title of the *Organon* (the title being derived from the Greek word which means “instrument”, “tool”, or “organ”), a treatise which had a profound impact on Western philosophy and was used as the standard textbook on *logic* for some two thousand years. The *Organon* consists of six of Aristotle’s titles on *logic* and more generally, *reason* - *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations*.. In *Categories*, Aristotle outlines his basic ontological framework, delineating and “categorizing” *existence* itself, establishing its scope and boundaries as well as its basic system of classification. In *Prior Analytics* and *Topics*, Aristotle delves into the very foundation of *reason* itself, providing the grounds for not just his rational methods for his entire philosophical system, but also providing the logical, or rational, basis for truth and falsehood, some of the very underpinnings of *philosophy*.

Some of the other epistemological groundwork so to speak, that was necessary to be established prior to fleshing out both his *Physics* as well as *Metaphysics*, can be found in a work entitled the *Categories*. In this work, Aristotle lays out his basic conception of the complete division of the *known* universe into ten basic *categories*, or kinds, into which the entire landscape of “things”, or again more accurately “beings”, belong (a list which is presumably exhaustive but not necessarily mutually exclusive). Aristotle’s *category theory*, not only informs the rest of his

⁴⁵⁷ This is perhaps the reason why, for example, Aristotle’s philosophy - and in particular his work in *metaphysics* and *logic* (the *Organon*) - rather than the teachings attributed to the Platonic school, were integrated into the core curriculum of Scholasticism, the dominant method of teaching and learning during Medieval Europe, lasting for roughly 600 years from circa 1100 to 1700 CE.

philosophy, it outlines the very foundational structure of his epistemological framework, providing some of the core components of that permeate much of his *theoretical philosophy*. In it, we find the basic organization of the entire epistemological landscape as it were, the division not of existence itself or the universe, but a division of all of the possible *descriptions, qualities* or *attributes* that could possibly be associated with *things*, or again *beings*, which may exist in the *known* universe.⁴⁵⁸ The most ontologically significant of these *categories*, with respect to Aristotle's *theoretical sciences* at least, was what has come to be understood as *substance*, or *ousia* in the Greek, one of the very cornerstones of Aristotle's *metaphysics*.

Of things said without combination, each signifies either: (i) a substance (ousia); (ii) a quantity; (iii) a quality; (iv) a relative; (v) where; (vi) when; (vii) being in a position; (viii) having; (ix) acting upon; or (x) a being affected. (Cat. 1b25–27)

All other things are either said-of primary substances, which are their subjects, or are in them as subjects. Hence, if there were no primary substances, it would be impossible for anything else to exist. (Cat. 2b5–6)

In this passage, we see the *categorical* list under, or into, which all “*beings*” (*tá ónta*), or what he refers to as “*things that are said*” (*ta legomena*), must fall into. This list includes, the ontologically more significant first four categories of:

- *Substance, Quantity, Quality or Qualification, and Relative or Relative to,*

followed by the somewhat less significant:

- *Where or Place, When or Time, Posture or Attitude, Having a state or condition, Doing or Action, Being affected or Affection.*

Again, it is the *category* of *substance*, which more so than any of the other *categories* underpins Aristotle's *metaphysics*, and also plays a primary role in one of Aristotle's other primary ontological theories, which has also had a profound influence on Western philosophy,

⁴⁵⁸ Note that despite the critical role that Aristotle's *category theory* plays in his *metaphysics* and worldview, he does not anywhere describe the rational foundation as to why the world should be broken up into the ten *categories* that outlines. This of course leaves much of his *category theory* open to criticism by later scholars and interpreters of his work given the lack of rational underpinning for such a critical metaphysical construct that permeates virtually all of his *theoretical scientific* work. Furthermore, Aristotle's *category theory* also exerts a profound influence on the development of Western philosophy, even if many subsequent philosophers rejected his basic division - which many of them did in fact

hylomorphism (more below).⁴⁵⁹ Translating *ousia* to *substance* in English however, does not express the full meaning of the term the way Aristotle intends. Given the critical importance of this term in Aristotle's *theoretical science*, it is worth exploring this term *ousia* and how its relationship to its Latin derivative *substantia* or *essentia*, from which its English counterpart *substance* originates.

Ousia (οὐσία) is the Ancient Greek noun formed on the feminine present participle of εἶναι (to be); it is analogous to the English participle being, and the modern philosophy adjectival ontic. Ousia is often translated (sometimes incorrectly) to Latin as substantia and essentia, and to English as substance and essence; and (loosely) also as (contextually) the Latin word accident (sumbebekós).

Aristotle defined protai ousiai, or "primary substances", in the Categories as that which is neither said of nor in any subject, e.g., "this human" in particular, or "this ox". The genera in biology and other natural kinds are substances in a secondary sense, as universals, formally defined by the essential qualities of the primary substances; i.e., the individual members of those kinds.

Much later, Martin Heidegger said that the original meaning of the word ousia was lost in its translation to the Latin, and, subsequently, in its translation to modern languages. For him, ousia means Being, not substance, that is, not some thing or some being that "stood"(-stance) "under"(sub-).⁴⁶⁰

As illustrated from the passage above, the word *ousia* that Aristotle uses to describe the cornerstone of his *metaphysics* is far from straight forward to translate into English, and the word *substance*, again, does not really do it justice so to speak. In fact, as noted in the quotation above which attempts to define its meaning within which Aristotle originally intended, it seems clear that Aristotle's *ousia* is closer to Plato's *Being* - i.e. that which is not subject to *change* in contrast to *Becoming* which was, the two ontological predicates in Plato's *metaphysics*, or *theology*, that we find in the *Timaeus* - than it is to *material* or *physical reality* in the modern, scientific, sense that typically one would think *substance* is very closely related to if not almost identical to.⁴⁶¹ So

⁴⁵⁹ Before being able to classify and determine *substance* and its relationship to *reality*, it should be pointed out that it was necessary for Aristotle to define quite clearly, at least as clearly as he possibly could and more clearly than his predecessors had done, how one can discern *truth* from *falsehood*, a subject that he deals with at great length in his works that were later compiled together the *Organon*, which as we've already mentioned had profound influence on the development of Western philosophy.

⁴⁶⁰ From Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ousia>.

⁴⁶¹ This is a perfect example of the non-trivial task to try and translate some of these ancient esoteric ideas from Ancient Greece to the Indo-European, Romance languages in particular, languages that derived from the Latin translation of the Greek and then into the destination tongue, i.e. at least two transliterations away from the original source. This was true not only when attempting to translate some of the works of the Ancient Greek philosophers into English, but also when translating some of the extent Judeo-Christian literature into English which in many cases was also authored in Greek, or in many cases from an even more distant relative of English, Hebrew. To make matters worse, the Greek language itself was not necessarily designed to handle these esoteric and philosophical ideas that Aristotle, Plato and others were trying to articulate. A classic Judeo-Christian

in a very real sense then, Aristotle's *substantial form*, *ousia* or essence, is no doubt a derivation and type of evolution of Plato's notion of *Being*. In typical Aristotelian fashion however, the concept is expanded upon, and placed in a much broader metaphysical context, provide for a much stronger rational foundation to his *metaphysics* than his predecessors no doubt, but also establishing it as one of the cornerstones of not just Aristotelian philosophy, but of Western philosophy as a whole.⁴⁶²

One of the most preeminent philosophical principles that underpins Western thought, one of the foundational presumptions of modern Science in fact, is the notion of *causality*, or what we refer to more specifically within the context of 20th century Science as *causal determinism*. This doctrine, the belief that our *knowledge of reality*, is effectively determined by *causation*, and that every action or state of being has come to be as such due to the compilation of, or the direct result of, a series of causal based actions or events, is directly attributed to Aristotle's *theory of causality*.⁴⁶³ In order to fully appreciate and understand Aristotle's philosophy, one must

example of this transliteration problem can be found in the *Gospel According to John*, or simply *John*, the fourth of the Canonical Gospels of the *New Testament* and the Gospel unique to the other three Synoptic Gospels in many respects. The oldest extant examples of the John were authored in Greek, and in particular the opening verse which is classically translated into English as "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" Contrast this with the Indian theo-philosophical tradition who from earliest times had a language framework, namely Sanskrit, from which their esoteric and metaphysical, and of course theological, principles and constructs could be articulated to the reader. A reflection of this translation difficulty is that much of the Indian philosophy, and many of the key terms that are used, are NOT in fact translated into the English when being described or conveyed to the modern reader, i.e. English has adopted some of the original Sanskrit terms for there is no English equivalent. The terms *Ātman* and *Brahman* for example, and their relationship in the human body-mind construct as described by the *chakras* and Kuṇḍalinī Yoga, are all Sanskrit terms that represent core Vedic philosophical and theological constructs that have no English counterpart. These terms, and others such as *Satcitānanda*, typically translated into English by modern Sanskrit and Vedic scholars as "Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute", or even *samādhi*, the state of immergence of the individual soul *Ātman* into the essence of the source of all things or *Brahman* which is the eighth and final limb of the Yoga, both are examples of esoteric terms that have a deep philosophical and psychological meaning in the Vedic tradition and have no direct English translation. These Sanskrit terms, and many others, have made their way into the English language over the last century as Yoga has been introduced to the West as the most accurate way to describe these principles and to a great extent this provides for a better direct communication of their true underlying meaning. *Samādhi* has no English equivalent; the state which it refers to is best understood within the context of the *Yoga Sūtras* within which it is described and the seven limbs that come before it, all of which also have their own Sanskrit counterparts and also have no direct English translation. Not so for the Greek and Judeo-Christian esoteric words that were used by the ancient philosophers and theologians, these words in almost all cases have been transliterated into English and in so doing have lost at the very least some of their meaning and context, and in some cases the original meaning intended by their original authors may have been lost altogether.

⁴⁶² Plato, and in turn Aristotle, should be considered the first *metaphysicians* in the modern day sense of the word, a metaphysician in this sense being defined as someone who attempts to create and describe a framework within which *reality* as a whole can be described, as well as the boundaries which *knowledge* and *truth* can be ascertained, the prevailing characteristic of such a quest being the implementation of *reason* and *logic* as opposed to myth or any theological framework which rested on *faith*. They called this search and exploration *philosophy*, but the meaning of the term in Greek implied not only at the study of the true nature of *knowledge* and *reality*, but also the source of *virtue* (*arête*) and *ethics* and their relationship to society at large.

⁴⁶³ The Greek word that Aristotle uses is *aitia*, from Greek αἰτία, which is more accurately translated as "explanation" rather than "cause". However, our terminology, for consistency sake, will follow the philosophical literature on the topic which refers to Aristotle's theories related to *aitia* as *causality*, or more broadly Aristotle's *theory of causality*. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Four causes', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 29 June 2017, 12:28 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Four_causes&oldid=788094892> [accessed 8 November 2017].

understand his *theory of causality* which underpins his epistemological framework as well as his *metaphysics* to a large degree. It is Aristotle's *theory of causality* which comes to underpin and ultimately define his notion of *being qua being* upon which Aristotle ultimately comes to define *existence* itself, and it is his *causal framework, described below*, that he uses as the intellectual foundation for his *metaphysics*. In other words, the existence of a thing, its *substance* or *essence*, is understood and defined by the things which bring said *substance* or thing into existence, i.e. its *causes*. Aristotle's *theory of causality*, sometimes referred to as the *four causes, or four-causal theory*, rests on the assumption that knowledge of a thing, or *being* itself really, is fundamentally predicated upon a complete understanding of how, and why, such a *being* has come into existence. That is to say, *to understand the nature of any being, anything that can be said to exist, one must come to a full and complete understanding as to all of the underlying causes that have brought said being into existence*. From *Physics*, for example, we find:

This is most obvious in the case of animals other than man: they make things using neither craft nor on the basis of inquiry nor by deliberation. This is in fact a source of puzzlement for those who wonder whether it is by reason or by some other faculty that these creatures work—spiders, ants and the like. Advancing bit by bit in this same direction it becomes apparent that even in plants features conducive to an end occur—leaves, for example, grow in order to provide shade for the fruit. If then it is both by nature and for an end that the swallow makes its nest and the spider its web, and plants grow leaves for the sake of the fruit and send their roots down rather than up for the sake of nourishment, it is plain that this kind of cause is operative in things which come to be and are by nature. And since nature is twofold, as matter and as form, the form is the end, and since all other things are for sake of the end, the form must be the cause in the sense of that for the sake of which. (Phys. 199a20–32)⁴⁶⁴

Here we find a very apt description of another one of Aristotle's metaphysical cornerstones, i.e. the notion of *hylomorphism*. In Aristotle's philosophy, the known universe consists again not of things necessarily but of *beings*, entities that are primarily defined by the notion of *substantial form*, a so-called "hylomorphic" construct where *being*, or *substance (ousia)* is a compound of *matter* as well as its underlying *form*. In contrast, to Plato the underlying *form*, or *idea*, of thing not only "informs" its existence, the thing itself actually depends upon its underlying *form* in order to exist at all.⁴⁶⁵ To take this argument one step further, and a precursor to an understanding of Aristotle's *theology*, to Aristotle, *existence* itself is to a large extent is defined

⁴⁶⁴ From the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Aristotle. Found at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle/>.

⁴⁶⁵ While Aristotle does not go so far as Plato as to put forth the notion of a full *cosmological* order based upon the "likely" existence of some intelligent creator upon which the Good or Best, as a divine, ideological ordering principle, serves as the underlying principle, or model, upon which the material universe is fashioned as he lays out in the *Timaeus*, Aristotle nonetheless does clearly indicate that from his perspective as well, what has come to be - *reality* – is so because of some reason, or set of reasons, i.e. *causality*, that not only determine the nature of that which comes into existence, but also bring said being into existence in the first place.

by its underlying *purpose* or *meaning*. That is to say, using Aristotle's terminology, for everything that can be said to "exist", there must be an underlying *purpose* that brings said *being* into existence, this is what Aristotle refers to as the *final cause*. This idea of existence being ultimately dependent upon some underlying purpose then, or meaning, in turn from a theological and cosmological standpoint yields the necessary existence of some *penultimate*, or *first cause*, which later Islamic philosophers interpreted as equivalent to God, or Allāh, effectively placing the complete Islamic theological framework, their *theology*, directly on the back of Aristotle's rational metaphysical model of the universe and epistemological framework.

In *Physics*, we find a detailed explanation of his *theory of causality*, a description of the *four causes*, as:

One way in which cause is spoken of is that out of which a thing comes to be and which persists, e.g. the bronze of the statue, the silver of the bowl, and the genera of which the bronze and the silver are species.

In another way cause is spoken of as the form or the pattern, i.e. what is mentioned in the account (logos) belonging to the essence and its genera, e.g. the cause of an octave is a ratio of 2:1, or number more generally, as well as the parts mentioned in the account (logos).

Further, the primary source of the change and rest is spoken of as a cause, e.g. the man who deliberated is a cause, the father is the cause of the child, and generally the maker is the cause of what is made and what brings about change is a cause of what is changed.

Further, the end (telos) is spoken of as a cause. This is that for the sake of which (hou heneka) a thing is done, e.g. health is the cause of walking about. 'Why is he walking about?' We say: 'To be healthy'— and, having said that, we think we have indicated the cause.⁴⁶⁶

From this we can gather that Aristotle's intellectual framework for determining the full scope of knowledge of a thing, the core of his epistemological framework, which consists of four distinct but related causes, the second of which corresponds loosely to Plato's *forms*.

1. the *material cause* of a thing or that from which a thing is made,
2. the *formal cause* of a thing or the structure to which something is created (loosely corresponding to Plato's idea of Forms or Ideas),

⁴⁶⁶ Aristotle, *Physics* 194b23–35 as taken from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Aristotle at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle/>.

3. the *efficient cause* of a thing which is the agent responsible for bringing something into being, and
4. the *final cause* of a thing (*telos*⁴⁶⁷) which represents the purpose by which a thing has come into existence.

The first two causes, the *material* and the *formal*, are born out of the importance that Aristotle places on the notion that *being*, which is the term he (and Plato in fact) uses to define reality, or existence – i.e. “things” – requires both *form* as well as *substance*, in order for it to be brought into existence as it were. These two basic elements of Aristotle’s epistemological and ontological system are typically described using the term “hylomorphic” denoting the complex and interdependent relationship they have as they come together to establish Aristotle’s *substantial form*, arguably the basic building block in Aristotle’s *ontology*. The third of the four causes, the *efficient cause*, represents that which brings something into being, incorporating to a large degree his *physics* into the system, and the final cause (no pun intended) is Aristotle’s *final cause*, which integrates the notion of purpose, or meaning (from the Greek *telos* meaning “end”, “purpose” or “goal”) directly into Aristotle’s epistemological framework, one of its distinguishing features in fact.

Aristotle’s doctrine of *substantial form* to a large degree can be seen as, and perhaps best understood as, an enhancement to Plato’s notion of *forms*, the fundamental building block in Plato’s *epistemology*, but Aristotle grounds the forms, ties them as it were, directly into the material world with *ousia*, the Greek word for *substance* but is perhaps better translated as *essence*. The epistemological system as a whole not only rests on the hylomorphic construct of *substantial form*, but also quite elegantly integrates the notion of *change* as well with the notion of the *efficient cause* which represents that which brings something into existence - a feature that is arguably lacking in Plato’s *metaphysics*. *Form* in Aristotelian philosophy, is that which gives shape to *matter*, and is the source from which *potentiality* yields *actuality*, *informing* as it were, and providing the intellectual guiding principle, to things that can be said to *exist*. Although it is open to debate whether or not Aristotle presupposes that all *four causes* must be present in order for a thing to exist (in fact in some cases he cites examples of which all four causes are not present but yet existence of said thing is still adequately explained⁴⁶⁸), this idea of a required *efficient cause* is unique to Aristotle relative to the philosophers that came before him and forms the basis upon which much of his theory of *natural philosophy* rests. This *efficient cause* of Aristotle can also be seen as representing the connecting principle of Plato’s concept of *forms* to

⁴⁶⁷ In the Greek, *τέλος*, or *telos*, for “end”, “purpose”, or “goal” is an end or purpose used in a philosophical sense as the end or purpose of a thing, the root of teleology as a philosophical pursuit.

⁴⁶⁸ See Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Aristotle at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle/> pages 41-43 for a more detailed description of Aristotle’s view on the necessary and sufficient attributes of his *four causal theory*.

Plato's illusory realm of the senses, representing again an expansion of Plato's *metaphysics* as reflected in the *theory of forms* rather than a complete abandonment of it.⁴⁶⁹

Perhaps the best way to understand Aristotle's *theology* - outside of his *theory of causality* which speaks to the question as to the existence of some underlying *final cause, purpose* as it were, for the entirety of existence - is to contrast his theological system as we understand it with that of Plato's, specifically as represented in the *Timaeus* along with his *theory of forms* as outlined in *The Republic*. Aristotle does not necessarily directly attack Plato's belief in the existence of a divine creator per se, Plato's *Demiurge*, but he did argue, as we have seen, that Plato's *idealism* lacked the rational foundations to truly explain the totality of *existence*, what has come to be understood as *being qua being*. That is to say, Plato's *theory of forms*, despite being a powerful metaphor to describe the what Plato at least considered to be the underlying illusory nature of *reality*, did not truly and completely describe how a *form* or *idea* transformed or constituted *being* in its myriad of representations or manifestations. Aristotle however, takes pains to articulate these concepts in detail, how *form* underpins existence as a component of *substantial form*, i.e. Aristotle's *hylomorphic* conception of *existence*, but nonetheless does not carry the same ontological significance as *substance*, i.e. *ousia*. Through the notion of *substantial form* then, Aristotle provides not only the rational underpinnings of his *ontology*, his description of reality or the totality of *being* as it were, but also the rational foundations of his conception of the Soul, and as such his philosophy of *ethics*.

In *Metaphysics* Book XII, we perhaps find the most intriguing and forthright evidence of how Aristotle conceives of what we call in the West God, but to Aristotle represents a primordial ontological entity that sits behind the natural world and all of its phenomena.

*There is something which is eternally moved with an unceasing motion, and that circular motion. This is evident not merely in theory, but in fact. Therefore the "ultimate heaven" must be eternal. Then there is also something which moves it. And since that which is moved while it moves is intermediate, there is something which moves without being moved; something eternal which is both substance and actuality.*⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁹ It is however, very clear that Aristotle most definitely deviates from Plato's view that the world of *forms* is real and the world of the senses is simply illusory, which does in fact represent a significant divergence from Plato in his world view of reality akin to the *dualistic* view of reality in the Vedic philosophical tradition.

⁴⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book XII, 1072a-1073a. Aristotle. *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vols.17, 18, translated by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D12%3Asection%3D1072b>.

Here we find Aristotle's *unmoved mover*, that which sets the entire universal order, the heavens in motion. His rational deduction which leads to its existence, is based upon his principles of *change*, or *motion*, from which deduces that there must exist something *eternal* and *unchanging* behind it. Furthermore, this primordial *entity*, is both *substance* and *actuality*, which in Aristotle's metaphysical and epistemological framework puts it in the category of things that have a material existence. The *unmoved mover* is not an *idea* or a *concept* - something that has *potentiality* but is not yet *actualized* - it's an "eternally" existent *entity*, a *being*, which sits behind the motion of the heavens. Now that the rational necessity of the *unmoved mover* has been established, according to principles of Aristotle's *Physics* primarily, Aristotle goes on to apply his *causal theory* to it, specifically the *final cause*, outlining its application to immovable objects in general, and – somewhat surprisingly – ascribes the source of the motion of said objects to *love*, blessed *Eros*.

That the final cause may apply to immovable things is shown by the distinction of its meanings. For the final cause is not only "the good for something," but also "the good which is the end of some action." In the latter sense it applies to immovable things, although in the former it does not; and it causes motion as being an object of love, whereas all other things cause motion because they are themselves in motion. Now if a thing is moved, it can be otherwise than it is. Therefore if the actuality of "the heaven" is primary locomotion, then in so far as "the heaven" is moved, in this respect at least it is possible for it to be otherwise; i.e. in respect of place, even if not of substantiality. But since there is something—X—which moves while being itself unmoved, existing actually, X cannot be otherwise in any respect. For the primary kind of change is locomotion, and of locomotion circular locomotion; and this is the motion which X induces. Thus X is necessarily existent; and qua necessary it is good, and is in this sense a first principle. For the necessary has all these meanings: that which is by constraint because it is contrary to impulse; and that without which excellence is impossible; and that which cannot be otherwise, but is absolutely necessary. ⁴⁷¹

In applying his *causal theory*, along with rational deduction, he ascribes to this primordial ontological principle - again the *unmoved mover* - not just as a requisite entity in and of itself, but also as representative of benevolence in some way, ascribing "good" behavior to it within the context of his *ethical* philosophy. The introduction of *Eros* into the rational framework is interesting, betraying Aristotle's uniquely Hellenic, and Platonic heritage, where *Eros* of course plays such a prominent role in the *Theogony* of Hesiod. And Hesiod's *Eros*, is no stranger to Plato's Good, the *form of forms* who provides order - *logos* - to the world in the *Timaeus*.

⁴⁷¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book XII, 1072a-1073a. Aristotle. *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vols.17, 18, translated by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D12%3Asection%3D1072b>.

Aristotle goes on describe this *entity*, this *being*, referring to it more specifically now as it relates to the notion of God, or *theos*, the ancient anthropomorphized figure that holds dominion over the natural world.

*Such, then, is the first principle upon which depend the sensible universe and the world of nature. And its life is like the best which we temporarily enjoy. It must be in that state always (which for us is impossible), since its actuality is also pleasure. (And for this reason waking, sensation and thinking are most pleasant, and hopes and memories are pleasant because of them.) Now thinking in itself is concerned with that which is in itself best, and thinking in the highest sense with that which is in the highest sense best. And thought thinks itself through participation in the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought by the act of apprehension and thinking, so that thought and the object of thought are the same, because that which is receptive of the object of thought, i.e. essence, is thought. And it actually functions when it possesses this object. Hence it is actuality rather than potentiality that is held to be the divine possession of rational thought, and its active contemplation is that which is most pleasant and best. If, then, the happiness which God always enjoys is as great as that which we enjoy sometimes, it is marvellous; and if it is greater, this is still more marvellous. Nevertheless it is so. Moreover, life belongs to God. For the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and the essential actuality of God is life most good and eternal. We hold, then, that God is a living being, eternal, most good; and therefore life and a continuous eternal existence belong to God; for that is what God is.*⁴⁷²

In this passage, arguably representing the very summit of Aristotle's *theology*, he bridges the gap between the *first mover*, the Good (in the Platonic sense), and the existence of God as benevolent, fully actualized being that is "*eternal*" and the "*most good*". Interestingly, this deduction is made by applying some of Aristotle's *psychological* theories, his theories surrounding the Soul and its sensory apparatus and the relationship of thought and "*participation in the object of thought*" - once again using his notion of *actuality* (versus *potentiality*). He completes the passage with the conclusion that *best* life, the "*most good*", is one that is lived in the likeness of God, i.e. the contemplative life. And in the last line, we can find the seeds of the Stoic notion of *corporealism* as well as, perhaps somewhat less directly, the Neo-Platonic notion of *emanation*, where God is held to be not just a primordial entity that sets the heavens in motion, or some idealistic conception of the most Good, but is equated in the broadest metaphysical sense with all of existence as a "*living being, eternal, most good*", and equated with "*life and continuous eternal existence*" which "*belong to God, for that is what God is.*" While a bit of a circuitous journey no doubt, we see here in Aristotle's argument the application of many

⁴⁷² Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book XII, 1072a-1073a. Aristotle. *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vols.17, 18, translated by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D12%3Asection%3D1072b>.

of his philosophical doctrines and tenets, from his theoretical framework of *motion* and *change* which underpins his *Physics*, to his *theory of causality* combined from a teleological perspective (*final cause*), using *logic* to argue for the existence of God as *actualized substance*, and finally the combination of some of his psychological theories around *perception* and *apprehension* along with his physical theories on *actualization* and *potentiality* that are used to not only argue for God's existence as a contemplative being, but one that *actually* exists, is *eternal* and Good, and ultimately is equated with the entirety of *existence* - existence itself really.

While Aristotle's theological beliefs are certainly open to debate, it is nonetheless safe to say that his *theology* differed from that of his teacher and predecessor Plato, on both *physical* and *epistemological* grounds - *physical* in the sense that his notions of *substantial form*, *actuality* and *potentiality* all represent the basic building blocks of not only his notion of *Physics*, but his *theological* framework as well, and *epistemological* in the sense that his understanding of God rests squarely within his overall *theory of knowledge*, and more specifically his *theory of causality* as the *final cause* of the universe as it were. But despite these differences, there are some very basic and fundamental - and oft overlooked - similarities between Aristotle and Plato's *theology*. While within the context of Plato's *idealistic theology* we find an *ontology* that is fundamentally predicated on *ideas*, or *forms* rather than on any material *substance* (in contrast to Aristotle), God is nonetheless represented in both philosophical systems as the ultimate *creator* - Aristotle's *prime mover* and Plato's *Demiurge* - of a fundamentally *rational* and *ordered* universe. It is the core belief in the creation of an *ordered, rational* universe by a divine, primordial *being* in fact, that is not only central to the theologies of Plato and Aristotle, but also represents *the* fundamental theological, and cosmological, ordering force of all of creation itself, all of existence, all throughout Eurasia in antiquity in fact.

In particular in the Hellenic philosophical tradition however, and again both Plato and Aristotle are no exceptions here, this abstract concept of *reason* itself as it were - what came to be understood as *Logos* which played such a prominent role in the Stoic philosophical tradition as well as early Christianity in particular - comes to play a fundamental role not only in *theology* and *cosmogony*, but in a broader sense in the Hellenic philosophical tradition as a whole. We can see this principle of *reason* or *order* at the very root of the Hellenic cosmological tradition in fact, with the very word for *cosmos*, the Greek *kosmos*, meaning literally "ordered" or "harmoniously arranged". And then of course we find this notion of *order*, or *reason*, as a fundamental ontological principle not only in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, but also in Plato's *Timaeus* and also in Pythagorean philosophy. The Hellenic philosophical tradition as a whole in fact, to a large degree has become known for, is fundamentally characterized by, its fundamentally *rational* basis - the first theo-philosophical tradition in antiquity, at least in the Western world, to establish a fully rational framework for *reality*. For in the Hellenic philosophical tradition, the epistemological, metaphysical and ontological positions are effectively established by, are rooted in, *reason* itself

as it is understood through the system of *logic* that is also (for the most part) a fundamentally Hellenic discipline that is tied to the very heart of the philosophical tradition itself. It is reason itself, as an ontological precept that again comes to be known as *Logos*, from which all *knowledge*, all *existence*, is born. This is one of the hallmarks of Hellenic philosophy in fact, and certainly the philosophical traditions of Plato and Aristotle represent this just as much as, if not more so, than any other philosophical tradition in the Hellenic world.

It is this concept of the abstract principle of *reason* in fact, as a further abstraction to the discipline of *logic*, a discipline which plays an integral role in virtually all of the schools of classical Hellenic philosophy, which forms the basis of not just *geometry*, but of *mathematics* as a whole as well. And it is these two disciplines in fact - *geometry* and *mathematics* - that, outside of the discipline of *philosophy* as a whole, represent perhaps the defining contributions of the ancient Greeks, the Hellenes, to Western thought. And it is these two disciplines as it turns out, which are also integrally linked to *cosmogony* and *theology* throughout almost the entire Hellenic philosophical tradition, with again Plato and Aristotle being no exceptions here, through again this notion of *Logos* - as we find in Plato's *Timaeus* for example, or again in Pythagorean philosophy (the Tetractys), both of which are heavily laden with geometrical symbolism - symbolism that also managed to find its way into Christianity (presumably through the Gnostics) as reflected in the profound geometric symbolism that underpins the story of Jesus the fisherman and the net in the *Gospel of John*.

Furthermore, we find the ontological significance of *love*, *Eros*, buried right into the very core of both Aristotle's and Plato's *theology*, and *cosmogony*. In each of these philosophical systems, it is *love* – again *Eros* – that is the motivating, or driving force as it were, that brings the universe into existence. In this sense, both Plato and Aristotle here reflect a much broader Hellenic cosmological tradition, one that is in fact rooted, and expressed, in the *Theogony* of Hesiod where *Eros* represents one of the primordial deities who participates in the very act of *creation* - what in the Orphic tradition is conceived of as Phanes, who emerges out of the great *cosmic egg* at the beginning of time from which the *kosmos* itself is created. *Love* in fact, outside of its role in Plato and Aristotle's *theogony* and *cosmogony*, plays a pivotal role in the philosophical system as a whole, providing one of the core, fundamental building blocks in each of their conceptions of *virtue*, as reflected more broadly in their systems of *ethics* - *love* as it were representing a very basic, and core, desire and motivating principle in man just as in God.⁴⁷³

So more generally then, in looking at the *theology* of Aristotle as it relates specifically to the *theology* of his predecessor and teacher Plato, we clearly find that the two differ fundamentally

⁴⁷³ Plato in particular delves into the nature of *love*, *Eros*, as reflected most poignantly in perhaps the *Symposium*, as well as in *Lysis* and to a lesser extent in the *Phaedrus*.

in terms of their overall epistemological and metaphysical framework, however Aristotle does not necessarily completely abandon Plato's *idealism* entirely, even though ontologically speaking Aristotle treats the abstract concept of *form*, or *idea*, very differently than Plato, as a component of *substantial form*, but not as significant ontologically speaking as *substance*, or *ousia* - necessary but not sufficient as the case may be. In Aristotle's *ontology*, which very much rest at the heart of his *theology*, it is *causality*, and more specifically the notion of *purpose*, his *final cause*, from which the very necessity of the existence of an *unmoved mover* is deduced. It is only when applying his psychological theories (his theoretical framework for thinking as the apprehension of objects, which only when *actualized* come into existence) that Aristotle establishes - under the implicit assumption that man is fashioned in the image of God (or perhaps better put that God is a contemplative being just as man is) - that God in fact exists and that he is nothing other than the entirety of (eternal) existence itself.

Stoicism: *Naturalism, Corporealism and Logos*

In the period of philosophical development that arose as the influence of the Greek culture bled into the period of Roman/ Latin dominance in the Mediterranean and Near East, both the Stoic as well as the Epicurean philosophic schools rose in prominence to challenge and provide alternatives to some of the basic, fundamentally non-materialistic assumptions that were characteristic of their Greek philosophical predecessors. Both of these schools were very popular and influential in their own right in Greek and Roman antiquity, at least up until the time period where Christianity fully eclipses the Hellenic philosophical traditions some six or seven centuries later, after which all of these Greek philosophical schools, including the Greek *mystery cults* and early Gnostic sects, were branded “pagan” and thereby ostracized and sometimes brutally exorcized by the Roman state.

Both schools attacked, and ultimately emerged from, the Skeptic bent of the Academy that stemmed from their epistemological stance based upon the reality of *eidôs* (*forms*) and the unreliability of the physical world of the senses. The debate between what can be viewed as two opposing epistemological positions, which in some respects still rages on today, was concerning the basic building blocks and conception of the not only the universe itself (*cosmogony* and physics), but also of knowledge and reality itself (*epistemology* and physics), the Stoics and the Epicureans holding that the material world of our senses was in fact more real than the cognitive reality of *forms*. This metaphysical inversion has significant implications not only physics and *cosmogony*, but also on *ethics* as well. These two philosophic schools were founded by Zeno of Citium (c. 334 – c. 262 BCE) and Epicurus (341 – 270 BCE) respectively, and despite their differences each took a more *materialistic* concrete epistemological stance as opposed to the teachings of Plato or even Aristotle who despite rejecting Plato’s *theory of forms* nonetheless was not a materialist per se.

Epicurus (341-270 BCE) was the founder of the Epicurean school and he based his teachings, at least from a cosmological and physics perspective, on the atomic doctrine that was espoused by Democritus some hundred or so years earlier. But the Epicurean system was popular for its ethical, way of life based tenets, teaching that although the world of the gods existed and was true, these gods were too busy in their own mythical world to be bothered with human affairs and therefore supplication to them was of no consequence. He further espoused the belief, consistent with his basic atomic physical *cosmogony* and distinct from the beliefs of the Stoics founded by Zeno of Citium, that the Soul was a material substance just like the rest of the universe and therefore perished upon death of the body, i.e. was not in fact immortal, constructing a system of beliefs that was based upon the optimization of pain and pleasure to

achieve peace and tranquility in this life and effectively removing the concern about judgment and the afterlife from the life equation as it were, thereby eliminating what he considered to be a significant cause of human anxiety. Epicureanism was influential not only during the Hellenic period in antiquity, but also through the period of Roman influence as well as evidenced by its significant treatment and faithful transmission of doctrines through the philosopher/historian Diogenes Laertius from the 3rd century CE who devotes a full chapter on Epicureanism, from which much of our knowledge of the original teachings and metaphysical underpinnings are conserved in fact.

The Stoic theo-philosophical tradition more so than Epicureanism was perhaps the most influential doctrine outside of Platonism in the Hellenic world in antiquity, providing for an alternative, and more intellectually comprehensible approach to *metaphysics* and *ethics* as juxtaposed with the seemingly ethereal, and perhaps even *mystical*, nature of Platonism. Stoicism in particular put forth a fairly advanced view of the Soul and the Mind, one which although was more *materialistic* than Plato from a certain perspective, was nonetheless fundamentally *theological* in nature, citing the existence of one true and omnipresent God through which the universe itself not only came into existence but through whom the existence of the universe was looked after and kept in balance – a doctrine that came to be known as *corporealism* which is an essential and distinguishing feature of Stoic *cosmogony*, psychology and physics. It could be argued that Stoicism put forth one of, if not the, first comprehensive psychological frameworks in the West, a byproduct of its materialistic realism as it was forced to create a comprehensive framework of mental cognition and perception that synthesized and bridged the concept of *logos* at the individual as well as cosmic level.

Stoicism was founded by Zeno of Citium (335-263 BCE) in the third century BCE and although differing from the prevalent Academic Skepticism in many respects and on some important key points, it nonetheless emerges from, and borrows many tenets and terminology from, the Academic Skeptics, Peripatetics and even Pythagorean schools which came before him. Zeno, having been born on the island of Samos off the coast of modern day Turkey, is believed to have spent his most prolific studying and teaching years in Athens, where at the time the Academy was flourishing and the legacy and teachings of Pythagoras were no doubt still fresh in the minds of the Greeks. The Stoic lectures and teachings were said to have been held in public in Athens, specifically in the Agora under a “painted porch” (*stoa poikilê* in Greek) hence the philosophical school came to be known as “Stoic”. The fact that the lectures were open to all and not kept secret, or only taught to the initiated as was the case for the Pythagoreans and even at the Academy albeit to a lesser extent, is certainly one of the reasons as to why Stoicism resonated so well with the Greek populace at large. The popularity of the school and the fame and esteem to which Zeno was regarded at least within Athens is reflected in the fact that, according to Diogenes Laertius the 3rd century CE philosophic historian and author of seminal work *Lives of*

Eminent Philosophers, pillars were erected in his honor at the Academy and the Lyceum and a publicly funded burial was granted to him.

The philosophical tradition founded by Zeno was succeeded by his pupil Cleanthes (331-232 BCE), who was in turn succeeded by perhaps the most notable and prolific of the Stoic philosopher in antiquity Chrysippus (c. 280-207 BCE), the three of which make up what modern philosophical historians call the Old Stoa. But it is no doubt through the teachings and prolific works of Chrysippus, who incorporated and responded to many of the vocal and powerful critics of early Stoic doctrines, that Stoicism matured and became more formalized as a systemic and coherent philosophical system to rival the Academics and Peripatetics and take its place as one of the preeminent philosophical systems in antiquity. To paraphrase an oft quoted line from Diogenes Laertius, "*But for Chrysippus, there would be no Porch.*"

Although the works of the Old Stoa survive only in fragments and pieces, the doctrine as presented and codified by its first teachers, along with specific and relevant Stoic quotations and excerpts are extant from many subsequent authors and philosophers, speaking to its far-reaching influence in antiquity. The Stoic school showed particularly marked influence on many esteemed Roman/Latin statesman and politicians, collectively referred to sometimes as Late Stoa, and whose writings reflect the deeply practical and ethical foundations of the tradition. With the later Stoic theo-philosophical tradition we find more focus on the practical aspects of the philosophy, the ethical component mostly, as opposed to the physical, logical and cosmological pieces of the doctrine on which the ethical foundations were laid by the Old Stoa. Late Stoa consist of likes of great Latin philosopher and statesman Cicero (106-43 BCE) who provided the basis of the conception of *natural law*, the Roman philosopher and dramatist Seneca (4 BCE-65 CE) who was also known to be a Stoic, and the even the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE) whose diary which came to be known as *Meditations* (written in Greek) provides remarkable insight into the daily trials and tribulations of a practicing Stoic in Roman times, albeit from a very lofty perch so to speak.

The intellectual landscape within which Stoicism was born was dominated by the teachings of Plato and his successors at the Academy which was reflected by epistemological *skepticism* and the supremacy of the world of *ideas* over the material world as the source of *knowledge* as well as the Peripatetic school founded by Aristotle which expanded the footprint of philosophy in general and was predicated on *causation* and the notion of *substantial form* providing for a much more extensive and cohesive epistemological system than his predecessor, albeit not nearly as materialistic as the Stoic and Epicurean systems, and bridged the gap between *forms* and *substance*, or *essence*, to a large extent.

In Aristotle's doctrine of *substantial form*, the Stoics most certainly found the core aspects of their *physics*, resting on very similar epistemological foundations of *causation* and *change*, or

motion, with an additional fundamental biological component (*pneuma*) added to their physics which established the metaphysical bridge between the physical world, the world of the Soul (which subsumed their *ethics* and system of *virtue*), and the realm of the divine (*theology*), all of which were considered to be *corporeal* in the sense that all these principles could be acted upon and were subject to change or evolution, well beyond Aristotle's original conception of change or motion no doubt, but an interesting and compelling alternative solution to the metaphysical and theological questions which Plato's doctrines had brought to light.

The origins of Stoic *cosmogony*, physics and psychology in its earliest form clearly evolved out of the Academic and Peripatetic traditions begun by Plato and Aristotle respectively of which the early Stoa were no doubt intimately familiar, along with some of the more ancient mythological traditions which still held a prominent place in the sociological psyche of the ancient Greeks in the time period that Stoicism flourished in antiquity. The synthesis and process of development of these aspects of Stoicism are probably best summed up by the author of the defining work on Stoic *cosmogony*, David E. Hahm who although authored *Origins of Stoic Cosmogony* in 1977 it still nonetheless remains the most comprehensive and definitive work on the subject.

*In conclusion, it appears that the origin and development of Stoic cosmobiology was no simple process. The fundamental idea that the cosmos is a living, sentient, intelligent animal was firmly enunciated by Zeno and perpetuated by his successors. This idea, rooted deeply in the mind of the ancient world, Greek and non-Greek alike, was first stated by Zeno in Platonic terms, after Theophrastus had shown that Aristotle's attempt to eliminate the World Soul had left it as firmly implanted in the cosmos as Plato had believed it to be. Cleanthes continued to support Zeno's doctrine and to buttress it with new arguments. In so doing, he expanded the concept of the World Soul to embrace Aristotle's three psychic functions; and he identified the World Soul with the heat of the cosmos, an identification that Zeno must also have made, but to which Aristotle's physiology now seemed to give further support. Chrysippus, noticing that medical theory had left his school behind, updated Stoic cosmobiology by identifying the World Soul with the *pneuma* (air-fire mixture) that permeates the cosmos. To this *pneuma* he assigned the three psychic functions that Cleanthes had taken from Aristotle, but he broke up the nutritive function into growth and a new function called *hexis* or cohesion (*συνεχία*). This last function he used, probably following the precedent of Cleanthes, to explain the cosmological problem of the survival of the cosmos in the void. The ultimate result was that the Stoic cosmos had a biological as well as physical side. Though each side owed its existence to the ideas of others, the total integration of the physical and the biological sides of the cosmos resulted in a totally new cosmogony, one that can only be characterized as purely Stoic.⁴⁷⁴*

⁴⁷⁴ *Origins of Stoic Cosmogony* by David E. Hahm. Ohio State University Press 1977 pgs. 173-174.

Stoicism therefore not only offered up an alternative *materialistic* and *deterministic* philosophical viewpoint to Epicureanism which accepted the Greco-Roman *mythos* which was still deeply engrained in the psyche of Greeks and Romans, but also a more practical and sophisticated ethical system based upon their innovative psychological framework and their more broad *epistemological* position, at least more broad than the view offered by the Platonic school. These no doubt are some of the reasons why the philosophical system was so popular in the Hellenic world in antiquity before being eclipsed, and in many respects integrated into, Christianity.

With respect to Stoic *cosmogony* and physics as reflected by the works of the Old Stoa, we have to look to sources such as the Middle Platonist author, theologian (priest at the Temple at Delphi) and philosopher Plutarch (c. 45-120 CE), who although a staunch defender of Platonism and is critical of Stoicism in many respects, provides very credible, sound and comprehensive material on many major Stoic philosophical positions and tenets, as well as of course the aforementioned philosophical historian Diogenes Laertius from the 3rd century CE who although wrote many centuries after the Old Stoa still provides a credible and fairly extensive account of the history of Stoicism and its major philosophical tenets within the Chapters he devotes to each of the Old Stoa in Book VII of *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, one each for Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus within the Ionian philosophical lineage branch of his work.

It is through all of these authors, again much of which is in Latin as well as Greek, that what we know about Stoicism survives down to us, clearly representing one of the most influential, widespread and lasting philosophical traditions in antiquity. And although much of the original work of the Old Stoa is lost to us, it is possible to ascertain with a good deal of certainty even some of the more esoteric cosmological (physics) tenets of the doctrine which, even though are not the main focus of any of the extant works by self-proclaimed Stoics, can be strewn together by its critics as well as by some philosophical historians – namely Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius specifically. Their fundamental and most lasting precepts, from which our modern notion of “Stoic” derives, primarily have to do with their ethical and moral philosophy, of which we have plenty of direct first-hand materials – notably Marcus Aurelius, Cicero and Seneca among others.

What must be kept in mind in particular when studying the Stoic philosophic tradition, which to a large extent is true of all of the ancient Greek philosophical systems, is that one cannot just look at the *ethical* and *moral* tenets of the philosophy without having a good understanding of the basic cosmological tenets, i.e. physics, as well as the philosophy of *logic* which underpinned it. This is why Aristotle as well as Plato wrote treatises that deal with rhetoric, *logic*, poetry, along with *ethics* and philosophy proper (*epistemology* for example). These were all branches on the same tree to these ancient philosophical schools and Stoicism had a tradition that called this out explicitly.

We find the most clear exposition of this interconnectedness in the writings of Diogenes Laertius, who in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Book VII Chapter on Zeno gives a wholesale review of not only Zeno's life and times (which arguably borders on myth the in the way he relates some of the stories of his life) but also a fairly detailed overview of the philosophic system which is invaluable in that it is one of the only extant sources that covers the philosophical presumptions and assertions of the system as a whole, at least as reflected by a 3rd century CE philosopher/historian who had access to a wealth of materials and works that are now lost and who was clearly well read in such materials and the Hellenic philosophical tradition as a whole.

Philosophy, they say, is like an animal, Logic corresponding to the bones and sinews, Ethics to the fleshy parts, Physics to the soul. Another simile they use is that of an egg : the shell is Logic, next comes the white, Ethics, and the yolk in the centre is Physics. Or, again, they liken Philosophy to a fertile field: Logic being the encircling fence, Ethics the crop, Physics the soil or the trees. Or, again, to a city strongly walled and governed by reason. No single part, some Stoics declare, is independent of any other part, but all blend together. Nor was it usual to teach them separately.⁴⁷⁵

To the Stoics then, it was within three separate but inextricably linked disciplines of *logic*, *physics* and *ethics* (the order of which were taught differently depending upon the teacher) from which not only would a true understanding of Stoicism could be found but also from which, if understood and practiced correctly, the perfection of the ideal of Stoicism, the attainment of what one might call perfect *wisdom*, *sophia*, or perhaps better put the attainment of the full refinement and perfection of the faculty of *reason* – the *Stoic sage* - could be realized. All the disciplines hung together in a coherent system - at least coherent to the Stoics - that allowed for their basic philosophical conclusions and allowed for them to reach their basic conclusions around ethical principles which represented what the Stoic tradition in antiquity was best known for.

Furthermore, during this period of six or seven centuries where Stoicism flourishes in the West before being eclipsed by Christianity, there is a somewhat symbiotic evolution that takes place between Platonic thought and doctrine and Stoicism itself, arising out of the debate and exchange of ideas between the two schools - the Skeptic tradition as reflected by the Academy on the one hand, and the Stoics (and to a lesser extent the Epicureans) who could loosely be categorized as *materialists* on the other.

To the Academic Skeptics who followed the teachings set forth by Plato and his teacher Socrates, *ideas* were the ontological *first principle* within which philosophy and its child disciplines - *physics*,

⁴⁷⁵ Diogenes Laertius: *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Translated by R.D. Hicks. Harvard University Press 1931. Book VII: 40.

ethics, logic, etc. – were viewed, but to the Stoics and Epicureans, the physical world as perceived by the senses was the ontological first principle upon which their *philosophy* as a whole was formulated. It must not be forgotten that Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school, studied at the Academy and it is through this lens of epistemological dispute as it were, that we know much about the Stoic tradition, at least some of its more esoteric philosophical aspects. In other words, the Skeptics and the Stoics in some sense defined each other in terms of their epistemological positions.

The Stoics held that not only could fundamental truth and knowledge be ascertained, that Truth in fact could be discerned from falsehood, the fundamental philosophical tenet that distinguished it from the Academic tradition most clearly and was the source of much of the debate between the two schools. In the Stoic tradition, *eudaimonia* was attainable via the fine-tuning and perfection of the rational faculty of man, which was an integral part of the Soul and reflected the divine rational faculty of God (*logos*), that when functioning optimally discerned this truth from falsehood consistently thereby preventing the individual from any sort of error in judgment. The goal of the Stoics then was to align this “commanding faculty” (*hêgemonikon*), with *reason* and/or Nature, again *logos*, facilitating the attainment of complete harmony with said Nature and hence *eudaimonia* – hence their famed adage “*living according to the laws of Nature*” which codified their beliefs in many respects.

It also must be understood, and is sometimes lost by modern academics who study these ancient systems of philosophy and theology, that although these disciplines provided the rational foundations and systems of learning which provide the backbone of modern science and *academia*, it was still nonetheless liberation, freedom and more so than anything else what is almost always translated into English as “happiness” but in Greek had much broader connotations stemming from the Greek word *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία) which etymologically comes from the conjunction of the root *eu* meaning “good” or “benevolence” and *daimōn* which is an ancient word that can loosely be translated as “spirit” or “god” but has clear theological connotations. There was a shared goal, a purpose, to each these various philosophic systems, the so called *final cause* of Aristotle (*telos*), even if the means by which the goal could be reached, along with some of the basic philosophical tenets of the different systems, was constantly being debated and argued amongst the various schools.

Although it may seem straightforward and rather simplistic at first glance, the whole Stoic philosophical system actually rested on deep and interconnected philosophic assumptions and assertions not only in *logic* itself, but physics as well which included *cosmogony* (how the universe was created and what were its basic fundamental constituents) and even fairly well thought out theories of language and its inherent symbology (meaning) which were included in their study of *logic* (which included the study of *dialectic* and rhetoric) and included a well thought out system

of interpretation of ancient mysteries and poetry, what is sometimes referred to as *allegoresis* and represents one of the defining intellectual contributions of the Stoics to the West..

Hence, we find the following statement defining the term *allegoresis*, with supporting quotations attributed to Cleanthes, the student of Zeno and one of the three Old Stoa, from Ilaria L.E. Ramelli in an article from 2011 entitled *The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception in Platonism, Pagan and Christian: Origen in Dialogue with the Stoics and Plato*:

Allegoresis had been used since the very beginning of Stoicism, from Zeno's commentaries on Homer and Hesiod onwards. Cleanthes also engaged in the allegorical interpretation of archaic poetry, even proposing textual emendations that supported it. He was convinced that poetry is the aptest way to express the sublimity of what is divine:

"Cleanthes maintains that poetic and musical models are better. For the rational discourse [Logos] of philosophy adequately reveals divine and human things, but, per se, it does not possess appropriate expressions to convey the aspects of divine greatness. This is why meter, melodies, and rhythms reach, insofar as possible, the truth of the contemplation of divine realities (Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta 1.486).

Consistently with this, "Cleanthes [...] used to state that the divinities are mystical figures and sacred names, that the sun is a bearer of the sacred torch, and that the universe is a mystery, and used to call those inspired by the divinities priests capable of initiating people to mysteries (Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta 1.538).⁴⁷⁶

The uniquely Stoic emphasis on *allegoresis*, which was tightly woven at least in the later tradition to the etymology and underlying meaning of the Greek gods in the Hellenic poetic tradition of Hesiod and Homer can be found in the lasting and influential treatise written in Greek by the Roman (Late) Stoic philosopher Cornutus who flourished in the 1st century CE entitled *Theologiae Graecae Compendium, Compendium of Greek Theology*, which outlined the symbolic and etymological interpretation of Greek *mythos* and deities, again speaking to the lasting tradition of the allegorical interpretation of myth in general that was a key part of the Stoic curriculum.

This approach to interpretation of ancient *mythos* and gods of old can also be found in the Middle Platonist tradition as reflected in some of the works written by the Delphic priest and Middle Platonist Plutarch (c. 48 – 120 CE) like *Of Isis and Osiris, Or of the Ancient Religion and Philosophy of Egypt* which uses the same technique to interpret some of the ancient myths of the Babylonians and Egyptians, as well as in many of the works of the early Christian Church Fathers

⁴⁷⁶ Ramelli, I. (2011). "The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception in Platonism, Pagan and Christian: Origen in Dialogue with the Stoics and Plato", *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 18 (3), 335-371.

in their exegesis of the *Old Testament*, Philo Judaeus and Origen of Alexandria being prime examples.

In many respects borrowing from the tradition of the Academy put forth by Plato, Stoic *cosmogony* as it survives down to us speaks of two primary principles (*archai* or *arche*) which are eternal and which exist throughout the universe - the first being the Creator who is identified with intelligence or reason (*Logos*), Plato's *Demiurge* and the active participant in creation, and a second inert and inactive principle which is acted upon by the *Divine Intellect* and corresponds roughly to matter. There is a subtle distinction between how these primordial forces are seen to interact and permeate throughout the physical, material universe though and this represents one of the unique and lasting contributions of Stoicism to *metaphysics* in the Western theological tradition.

In the Stoic tradition, this creative force behind the universe, what came to be equated with the God of Christianity, is identified with an intelligent force, fire or breath – *pneuma* - the latter term of which came to hold great significance in Stoic metaphysics. This rational Creator structures the physical world of matter according to its plan (again order, or *Logos*), beginning first with a flash of light or fire and then proceeding with the creation of the four elements - fire, air, water, and earth. In the Stoic cosmological tradition fire and air were seen as active elemental forces and water and earth were viewed as being characteristically passive and receptive.

In both the Stoic as well as the Platonic traditions, as was true in nearly all of the cosmological traditions in antiquity in fact, it is via the movement or combination/mixture of an active (male) force upon a receptive (female) force which is typically associated with matter, what the Stoic tradition termed *unqualified substance*, from which the four elements emerge in turn from which the entire physical universe is constructed. It is with the Stoic tradition however that this active, ordering principle of the universe (*Logos*) takes on a more significant metaphysical role, supplanting as it were the *cosmogony* put forth in Plato's *Timaeus* where a *Demiurge*, or creator, works in conjunction with the principle of the *Good* (the *form of forms*) to create the basic elements of the universe, providing a more secure metaphysical construct within which this "order" or "reason" operates to shape matter into the form of the physical universe as we know it.

The notion of fire, or light, being the primary creative principle of the universe, as well as the term *logos* to denote the divine ordering principle of the cosmos, *kosmos*, had antecedents in the tradition attributed to the philosopher Heraclitus (c. 535 – c. 475 BCE), at least according to Diogenes Laertius, although how influenced Zeno was by this Pre-Socratic is largely a matter of speculation.

The Stoics affirm that God is a thing more common and obvious, and is a mechanic fire which every way spreads itself to produce the world; it contains in itself all seminal virtues, and by this means all things by a fatal necessity were produced. This spirit, passing through the whole world, received various names from the mutations in the matter through which it ran in its journey. God therefore is the world, the stars, the earth, and (highest of all) the supreme mind in the heavens.⁴⁷⁷

In the more mature Stoic cosmological doctrine as put forth by Chrysippus which sought to address some of criticisms from the Academic Skeptics no doubt, after the initial creation of the cosmos and the creation of the four elements, the two active elements (fire and air) combine with the two passive elements (water, earth) to form the basic constituents of universal matter which consisted of and were governed by various types of *pneuma*, a word which is translated as “breath” or “spirit” or “soul” depending upon the context. *Pneuma* in the Stoic tradition is a key concept that not only underlies its *cosmogony*, but also all of its physics as well.

Pneuma represented the basic metaphysical building block of the universe which to the Stoics was a fundamentally living and breathing entity from start to finish and permeated all matter. This *corporeal*, i.e. living and breathing, principle not only helped to define Stoic physics – as a principle which was characterized as capable of acting or being acted upon and subject to change - but also represented the fundamentally intelligence of the universe/cosmos at all levels of creation, from the smallest rock to the most adept of sages. The Aristotelian themes present in this very biological view of the cosmos, specifically pointing to perhaps strong influence from Aristotle’s theories surrounding procreation and generation, have been well documented by Hamm in his comprehensive and seminal work *The Origins of Stoic Cosmogony*⁴⁷⁸.

In the Stoic system of *logic*, which underpinned its *epistemology*, language and speech – if formed according to the basic principles of *logic* that were laid out – was also *corporeal*, in the sense that it could cause a real effect of change on those that were spoken to, or even read from, the spoken or written word. Stoic *logic* in this sense, with its underlying semantic and propositional *logic*, language and grammar theory in general in fact, also represents one of their lasting contributions to the Hellenic philosophical tradition. This emphasis on *logic*, in the broadest sense of the term as it was used in antiquity which included *dialectic*, rhetoric and propositional *logic* (*syllogism* in the Aristotelian works) is reflected in the fairly extensive treatment of the topic by Diogenes Laertius in the chapter on Zeno where he covers the Stoic views in the discipline of *logic* in some detail. In Stoic philosophy, the perfect Stoic sage was predicated upon the mastering of language in both its written and spoken form, a “master dialectician” to use their words.

⁴⁷⁷ Goodwin, W. (1878). “Plutarch, *Moralia*”, Boston: Little, Brown, and Co. 1878. “OF THOSE SENTIMENTS CONCERNING NATURE WITH WHICH PHILOSOPHERS WERE DELIGHTED”. Book I, Chapter VII.

⁴⁷⁸ *The Origins of Stoic Cosmogony*, by David E. Hahm. Published by Ohio State University Press 1977.

Underlying everything corporeal was again varying degrees of *pneuma*, looked upon as the “sustaining cause” (*synektikon aition* in Greek or *causa continens* in Latin) of all material entities – again anything that could be acted on, acted upon or was subject to change in general, a *theory of substance* akin to Aristotle but more broad conceptually, somewhat akin to what he would refer to perhaps as *substantial form*. This *pneuma* existed throughout the universe in a continuum starting with inanimate matter, the plant and animal kingdom, and culminated at the top of the universal hierarchy in man which had the distinguishing, and fundamentally divine, capability of reason (*hêgemonikon*), a psychological faculty whose proper functioning was tied very closely to their system of *logic* which again was very closely allied with their theory of language and propositional *logic*.

Pneuma was characterized by both an inward as well as outward motion which was the source of both the external qualities of a “thing” or “body” (again inanimate as well as animate) as well as that which provided for unity of existence to that object or entity. In the concept of *pneuma* the Stoics saw the hierarchy of substance/essence itself, akin to the hierarchy of Souls laid out by Aristotle (vegetative, animal and human). For in Stoicism, *pneuma* existed in various forms along the *corporeal* hierarchy; in inanimate objects where it was characterized primarily as that which gave the object unity or held it together (*hexis* or “holding”), in the plant kingdom where *pneuma* was characterized by a more active principle referred to as “nature” (*phusis* or *physis* in Greek), in animals where it is characterized by a more complex structure where it was associated with Soul or *psychê* and was subject to passions and some level of conception or mental reception of said passions (or literally changes of the Soul), and then finally in rational animals, i.e. man, where *pneuma* is characterized by the divine attribute of Reason (*Logos*), which is reflected by the existence in man of a “commanding faculty” (*hêgemonikon*) through which through proper attunement a state of divinity could be attained, thus forming the guiding principle of their entire system of *ethics*.

*Only human beings and gods possess the highest level of pneumatic activity, reason [logos]. Reason was defined as a collection of conceptions and preconceptions; it is especially characterized by the use of language. In fact, the difference between how animals think and how humans think seems to be that human thinking is linguistic — not that we must vocalize thoughts (for parrots can articulate human sounds), but that human thinking seems to follow a syntactical and propositional structure in the manner of language. The Stoics considered thinking in rational animals as a form of internal speech.*⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁹ Rubarth, S. (2014). “Stoic Philosophy of Mind”, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Where the *cosmological* traditions of the Platonic and Stoic philosophical schools diverge however is not only in the combination and primacy of the four elements, but also in the underlying mechanics – *metaphysics* as it were - at work within the *World Soul* and the human Soul, from which the two significantly different ethical and psychological systems derive and which is attached metaphysically speaking this notion of *pneuma* which is unique to the Stoic tradition in terms of emphasis and primacy.

The well documented Skeptic attack on the Stoic philosophical tradition was that for any absolute truth that the Stoics could come up with that their theoretical Stoic sage could “assent” to, the Skeptics could come up with what appeared to be the very same Truth but in fact was not, yielding the paradoxical conclusion that the perfect Stoic sage would actually never “assent” to anything thereby making them in reality a skeptic, i.e. that the physical world made up of impressions and cognitions was not to be taken as constituents of any of the basic elements of Truth, only images or shadows of Truth (Plato’s Allegory of the Cave)]. This criticism can be seen in Plutarch treatise *On Nature* where his clear Platonist bent is can be seen as he explains the different views of the notion of a mental construct, i.e. Plato’s *ideas*, in the Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian traditions in contrast to Stoicism where the construct lies outside its epistemological boundaries:

An idea is a being incorporeal, which has no subsistence by itself, but gives figure and form unto shapeless matter, and becomes the cause of its manifestation. Socrates and Plato conjecture that these ideas are essences separate from matter, having their existence in the understanding and fancy of the Deity, that is, of mind. Aristotle objected not to forms and ideas; but he doth not believe them separated from matter, or patterns of what God has made. Those Stoics, that are of the school of Zeno, profess that ideas are nothing else but the conceptions of our own mind.⁴⁸⁰

To the Stoics, this primordial creative principle of *Logos* which is the highest derivation of their metaphysical notion of *pneuma*, acts to not only create the universe but is active within it to preserve and maintain it so to speak, and the entire physical universe is looked upon as fundamentally living and breathing entity, i.e. corporeal. In this sense the Soul of man is seen as a manifestation of this corporeal entity and it is again with the alignment of the same ordering principle of man as well as with the universe itself that the Stoics look to as the way toward

⁴⁸⁰ Goodwin, W. (1878). “Plutarch, *Moralia*”, Boston: Little, Brown, and Co. 1878. “OF THOSE SENTIMENTS CONCERNING NATURE WITH WHICH PHILOSOPHERS WERE DELIGHTED”. Book I, Chapter X.

liberation or freedom, that term that is typically translated as “happiness” (*eudaimonia*) but connotes something much deeper in significance in antiquity.

The God of the Stoics was present in all of creation then, not just the manifestation of the hand of the divine craftsman as was typically interpreted to be the case in the Platonic tradition, and this emphasis – what is typically referred to in the academic tradition surrounding Stoicism as *corporealism* - is unique to the Stoicism and is one of the primary metaphysical constructs that persists into Christian theology. This ever permeating ordering principle which is characteristic of the Creator as well as his creation is the *pneuma*, or breath of the universe, which corresponds quite directly to the Holy Spirit in Christianity (the same word in fact is used in Greek in the *New Testament*, i.e. *pneuma*) which denotes the ever present existence God within the physical universe itself, not simply a physical act of creation *ex nihilo* as reflected in the *Old Testament* Elohim or Yahweh version of creation (*Genesis*), or even in Plato’s account of creation which albeit may not reflect an *ex nihilo* act by the *Demiurge* nonetheless retains some level of distinction between the Creator and his creation, what is roughly assigned to the so-called “Receptacle” in the *Timaeus*.

Stoic *cosmogony* is also characterized as a constantly evolving and changing process however, not as a creation *ex nihilo* and not as eternal as the prior philosophic schools had put forth, proving for a notion of destruction, or perhaps better termed devolution, of the universe at the end of its current cycle back into the primary fire (light) from which it initially emerges. This Stoic cosmological doctrine is referred to as *conflagration*” (*ekpyrôsis*) - meaning destruction by fire - which fell under their discipline of *physics* (*cosmogony* specifically) and distinguished it from the Academic and Peripatetic cosmological doctrines⁴⁸¹.

The Stoic conception of God can be seen as a monistic interpretation of Plato’s *cosmogony* then, pointing to very similar creation story, a parallel version of events from which the primary elements come forth to construct the universe, but reflects and emphasizes that there exists and ever present divine ordering principle, again *Logos*, which sustains and permeates the physical universe it until it perishes at the end of the cycle, after which the whole process is repeated again ad infinitum according to the Stoic tradition. Stoic *monism* is called out specifically by Plutarch, again one of the greatest critics of Stoic ethical doctrine:

⁴⁸¹ The doctrine of *conflagration* can be traced back to the school’s founder Zeno and bears close resemblance to some of the cosmological themes ascribed to the Pre-Socratic Heraclitus (c. 535 - c. 475 BCE). See Salles, R. (2013) Chapter 5 and/or Long, A. (2006) Chapter 13 for more detailed look at the Stoic notion of universal everlasting recurrence, i.e. *conflagration*.

*The Stoics pronounce that the world is one thing, and this they say is the universe and is corporeal.*⁴⁸²

This Stoic principle of *assent* then, as adjudicated and applied by the *commanding faculty* of the Soul, *hêgemonikon*, along with the complementary system of *logic* which was closely associated with language and propositional *logic* which enabled for the clear establishment of truth versus falsehood, allowed the Stoics to develop a system of *ethics* that (to them at least) had a sound rational and metaphysical foundation that rested, in contrast to the Platonic tradition, on the presumption of the reality of the *corporeal*, physical world which in turn mirrored the *corporeal* universe, each governed by the same principle of reason or *logos* and was further characterized by their notion of *pneuma*, which permeated and was subsistent throughout the universe, at the both the individual level and the cosmic level and everything in between, and was governed by a divine ordering principle which came to be known in the Judeo-Christian theological tradition as *Logos*. For in the Stoic tradition, the notion of *corporeality* extended not only to the physical world, but also to the abstract world such as the Soul and even to abstract concepts and ideals such as *Virtue* (*arête*), Justice and Wisdom (*sophia*).

So whereas the Platonic tradition rested on the epistemological and ontological primacy of the realm of Ideas and the power of the Intellect to discern fundamentally Good characteristics such as *virtue* and justice from which happiness ultimately derives, the Stoic school taught that the physical, material world of the senses shared the ultimate *spirit* of the *cosmos* with the human soul, albeit of a lesser quality, and that the refinement and ultimate perfection of a particular aspect of the human intellect which is sometimes translated as the *commanding faculty* but can also be looked upon as the psychological function of what we might refer to as *assent* (*hêgemonikon*), one could act in perfect accord with *virtue* which was the key to human peace and happiness.

To the Stoic then, although the universe was governed by Reason and to a certain extent was predetermined given God's pervasiveness throughout the universe and their fundamental belief in cause and effect as an *a priori* construct of the human condition (God is referred to sometimes in this tradition as Fate), although an individual did have Free Will to the extent that they had control over their commanding faculty, which again fully assimilated and absorbed the senses (these were not fundamentally irrational impulses as put forth by Aristotle) within the Soul, of which proper rational adjudication of assent to truth and reality was the key to a virtuous and

⁴⁸² Goodwin, W. (1878). "Plutarch, *Moralia*", Boston: Little, Brown, and Co. 1878. "OF THOSE SENTIMENTS CONCERNING NATURE WITH WHICH PHILOSOPHERS WERE DELIGHTED". Book I, Chapter V.

therefore happy life which, consistent with all of the Hellenic philosophical traditions, was the goal of life and the purpose in fact of philosophy itself.

In the Stoic tradition, the agent of *logos* was viewed as the rational and active principle of God that permeated the universe and gave it life and characterized both the *World Soul* and the individual human soul, and again when harmonized and understood properly, with proper attunement of the instrument of *logos* and its corollary *assent*, was the secret to their notion of *happiness*, or contentment, and the core of their *ethics*.

In this sense Stoic *psychology* which was based upon the supremacy and reality of the physical world as perceived by our senses and the role of the active principle of intelligence that permeated through the eternal universe, not only deviated from the supremacy of Platonic Ideas, the realm of *Being*, over the realm of *Becoming*, or that which was subject to change, but also from Aristotle's doctrines of *being* and *essence* which although more broad than Plato still distinguished between the material world, which to him depended upon *intelligibles* as well as *particulars* as reflected in his doctrine of *hylomorphism*, and the world of Soul which included both form and matter alike and from which all virtues and vices had their source.

True *wisdom* for the Stoics was in harnessing and utilizing this *commanding faculty* which was unique to mankind to *assent* only to impressions that were deemed consistent with Truth according to their system of philosophy (enter the importance of *logic*), thereby living completely in accordance with Nature, or God, which abided by the very same principles. By purifying the mind and attaining wisdom, one's commanding faculty could be honed to perfection and no false judgment or "assent" (*sugkatathesis*) would in fact be possible, hence again the ideal of the perfect Stoic sage, being propelled by the pursuit of pure reason as it were and hence also the modern associations of the term "Stoic" as being bereft of emotion or feeling. In his sarcasm, representing the position of the Academy relative to the Stoic school, Plutarch from the first century CE refers to the Stoic Sage thus:

*...but the Stoics' wise man is not detained when shut up in a prison, suffers no compulsion by being thrown down a precipice, is not tortured when on the rack, takes no hurt by being maimed, and when he catches a fall in wrestling he is still unconquered; when he is encompassed with a rampire, he is not besieged; and when sold by his enemies, he is still not made a prisoner. The wonderful man is like to those ships that have inscribed upon them a prosperous voyage, or protecting providence, or a preservative against dangers, and yet for all that endure storms, and are miserably shattered and overturned.*⁴⁸³

⁴⁸³ Goodwin, W. (1878). "Plutarch, *Moralia*", Boston: Little, Brown, and Co. 1878. "A BREVIAE OF A DISCOURSE, SHOWING THAT THE STOICS SPEAK GREATER IMPROBABILITIES THAN THE POETS".

Even if one takes the position that Stoicism does more borrowing than innovating however, its influence in the philosophical, political and theological landscape in the West is substantial after the period of the late Stoa which ends with Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor who authored *Meditations* in the latter part of the second century CE. For example, we find many classically Stoic themes in the early Christian tradition which, at least in the first few hundred years before orthodoxy is established, leaned heavily on its Greek philosophical predecessors to legitimize its teachings, in much the same way that the early intellectual interpreters of Islam did. The Stoic philosophical concepts of *logos* and *pneuma* both play crucial theological roles in defining early Christian theology, as the “Word of God” and the “Holy Spirit” respectively, both of which display remarkably Stoic features.

Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word [Logos] was with God, and the Word [Logos] was God.”

The similarities between the Stoic concept of *pneuma*, which sat at the heart of its corporeal conception of the universe, as well as its notion of the divine *Logos* which was also the seat of the human intellect, and the Christian Holy Spirit and their view of Christ as the manifestation of the divine *Logos* (Word) in the flesh reflections of which can be seen in the two oft quoted passages from the *Old* and *New Testament* respectively above, are profound and telling and speak to the strong influence that Stoicism had on Christianity which dominated the Western theological and philosophical intellectual landscape for some thousand years after Greek (and pagan) philosophical traditions were persecuted into nonexistence.

Furthermore, the first few (Judeo) Christian theologians who established the philosophical backbone of Christianity not only drew on Stoic *metaphysics* in order to shed light on the intellectual depth and meaning of the Judeo-Christian scripture, but also made extensive use of *allegoresis*, again a uniquely Stoic intellectual contribution in antiquity, to illustrate the hidden meanings of various parts of the *Old* and *New Testament* outside of a simple literal interpretation which even to the intellectuals of antiquity in some cases was nonsensical.

These altogether Hellenic philosophical trademarks to which the Stoic tradition heavily contributed can be found in the works of Philo Judaeus (c. 25 BCE – c. 50 CE), particularly in his works on *Old Testament* exegesis where he made extensive use not only of *allegoresis* in general

but also of the Stoic theological construct of *Logos* as well which is likely the ultimate source of its usage in the *Gospel of John*. The same textual interpretative techniques can also be found in the works of Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – c. 215 CE) and Origen of Alexandria (c. 184 – c. 254) who both drew heavily on their Hellenic philosophical predecessors along with Philo Judaeus and also made extensive use of *allegoresis* to provide the intellectual and philosophical underpinnings to the distinctly theological and mythological literature that characterizes Christian Scriptures as they laid the groundwork for early Christian *theology*.

Furthermore, the concept of *natural law* which has had a profound influence on the development of *jurisprudence*, i.e. legal theory, in the West has its roots with the Roman Stoic philosopher/statesman Cicero (106-43 BCE), particularly in his work *On the Laws* and *On the Republic* where he speaks to the important significance of natural law in the proper governance responsibilities of the state, a state governed by and held together by jurisprudence or law in its most pure and objective form as social good in and of itself.

Cicero was strongly influenced by Stoicism, at least in terms of *ethics* and *political philosophy* and his theory of *natural law* can be viewed as an extension of the Stoic precept of “*living according to the laws of Nature*”, which was the more common transliteration of the more technical Greek term first attributed to Zeno, *oikeiôsis*, which is although literally translated sometimes as “affiliation” or “orientation” more broadly means “that which belongs to oneself”, like familial affiliation for example. In the legal theory of *natural law*, the authority of legal standards derives, at least in part, from considerations having to do with the independent and eternally existent moral merit of certain behaviors upon which the laws are crafted and established. That is to say, in the theory of *natural law* moral propositions are believed to have objective, epistemological, standing in and of themselves and derive from eternal laws of nature which are inherently rational - i.e. reflect the divine *Logos* which in turn is reflected in the rational faculties of man and contain inherent value from a sociological and political perspective beyond their personal and psychological value.

We can even find very Stoic like themes in the *practical philosophy* of Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) where he deals specifically with *ethics* and the existence of God and the immortality of the Soul. In his seminal work *Critique of Practical Reason* he argues that *morality* stands on pure *rational* and *logical* foundations, even if it has no grounding in *objective reality* as bound by the epistemological stance he puts forth in his *theoretical philosophy* outlined in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. That is to say that according to Kant’s philosophical framework, the existence of *moral* and *ethical* standards and behavior was based upon *reason* itself and exists for us as human beings as a byproduct of us being *rational*, social interdependent creatures. He furthermore put forth that the existence of these moral and ethical standards was predicated on the belief in the immortality of the Soul, the existence of a benevolent God, and the hypothetical existence at

least of what he referred to as the *highest good*, a theoretical reality where all rational beings behave according to *pure reason* which in turn aligned with perfect *morality*.⁴⁸⁴

Lastly, we can even find many Stoic philosophical parallels in Eastern philosophic traditions such as Yoga and Vedānta, where *pneuma*, divine and individual *corporealism*, the idea of the existence of a commanding faculty which governs human behavior, the idea of living according to the laws of Nature and *natural law*, and even the idea of the eternal creation, preservation and destruction of the universe in fire, i.e. *conflagration*, all have direct parallels in the Yogic concepts of *prāṇa*, *Brahman*, *Ātman*, *buddhi*, *dharma*, and the cosmic cycles of *Brahmā* or *Yugas*. While we cannot trace these Eastern motifs directly back to Stoic origins in the West their philosophic similarities and terminological parallels are remarkably similar.⁴⁸⁵

To conclude then, despite Stoicism's clear borrowed and synthesized heritage, the philosophical school made distinct, unique and lasting contributions to philosophy proper, *ethics*, political philosophy and *theology* in the West. And furthermore, some of its unique intellectual contributions, particularly in the realm of *ethics*, and *epistemology* (*allegoresis* specifically), can provide us with the basis for having a more inclusive and *holistic* perspective on the seemingly disparate disciplines of Science and Religion even today.

⁴⁸⁴ For a more detailed look at Kant's practical philosophical framework and origins see Rohlf, M. (2014). "Immanuel Kant", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

⁴⁸⁵ See the relevant sections of this work for a more detailed look at Indo-Aryan philosophy and Vedānta.

The Seeds of Christianity: The Hellenization of Judaism

Two of the most influential Greek philosophical traditions in antiquity, in both the Hellenic period as well as the period of Roman influence and domination, were Stoicism and Epicureanism, the former of which exerted considerable influence on early Christian *theology*, which in turn was influenced by Jewish theological development during the same time, most notably seen in the work of Philo of Alexandria. The Stoic and Epicurean philosophical systems survive down to us in fragments and pieces for the most part, in contrast to the more complete philosophical systems and works that survive down to us from the Platonic and Peripatetic (Aristotle) schools. For example, the (Middle) Platonic philosopher and historian Plutarch from the 2nd century CE, who incidentally was also a priest at Delphi, wrote a quite few works that criticize Stoicism from which we gain important insights into its underlying philosophy. We also find material related to Stoicism and Epicureanism in the works of the philosophical biographer Diogenes Laertius from the third century CE who was the author of *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, a comprehensive treatise which included extensive autobiographical as well as philosophical summaries of virtually all of the major ancient Greek philosophers and schools - Stoic, Platonic and Epicurean being three schools which he covers in great detail.

One cannot ignore the underlying socio-political context which drove these philosophical, really scientific, developments. With the advent of first the Persian Empire and then the Macedonian Empire in the middle and latter half of the first millennium BCE, we see the lines of communication, exchange and trade routes open up which bridged the ancient populations of the Macedonians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans (Palestine and Israel region today) and of course the Persians.⁴⁸⁶ The cultural and philosophical epicenters of these developments were, as they are today, forged in urban centers of learning, most notably of course first in Athens, then in Alexandria in northern Egypt, and then in turn in Rome as the Roman and Latin culture began to dominate the intellectual landscape in the first few centuries CE.

Alexandria in particular saw the development of profound intellectual and philosophical development, where most if not all of the most influential ancient philosophers and theologians lived and studied to a large extent between the second century BCE and the second century CE. This was of course the home of the great Library of Alexandria, perhaps the greatest legacy of Alexander, and the place where the Hebrew *Old Testament* was translated into Greek, the famed

⁴⁸⁶ Although Alexander the Great did get as far as India in his travels, and there are references in many of the ancient Greek philosophical works of the Indian *gymnosophists* (literally “naked sages”), the influence of the Indian philosophical systems on the West was minimal and marks from a cultural as well as intellectual development perspective the line between the East and West that is most commonly drawn today.

Septuagint (or simply *LXX*), and where early Christianity first took shape as reflected in the works of the esteemed Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (also known as Philo Judaeus) who lived and wrote around the time of Christ, Clement of Alexandria who wrote and taught in the 2nd and third centuries CE, and Origen also of Alexandria who is believed to have studied with and was greatly influenced by Clement. Clement and Origen were some of the first Christian theologians to interpret the Gospels in light of the Hellenic philosophical tradition, building on the work of Philo who had analyzed and encapsulated *Old Testament* wisdom in the light of Hellenic philosophy.

This period represented a melting pot of theological dialogue and development, perhaps best described as the *enlightenment era of philosophy* in antiquity and it is no accident that it is from this period that perhaps the greatest religious figure in the history of mankind emerges, Jesus of Nazareth. It was a time when all of the significant religious traditions (philosophy) of the Mediterranean, Near East and Egypt were assimilated by some of the best minds in antiquity, an assimilation that occurred at the same time as advanced civilization was starting to blossom, and language and writing – and the existence of extensive libraries – began to manifest in the ancient world, giving philosophers and historians alike access to broad expanses of knowledge across an extensive cultural landscape, granting a perspective on history and theology, and science which at that time encompassed theology, that was unmatched in all of mankind's history up to that point. Perhaps it's not too much of an exaggeration to say that it was a time when Reason began to take prominence over ritual and myth as the predominant determining factor that shaped religious thought, where all knowledge was looked upon as a single system and body of work that must hang together cohesively, and where *ethics* was considered a branch of *science* just as important as *physics*. This is the legacy of the ancient Greeks to the West.

The philosophers of this era looked upon the mythology of the ancient peoples, their *cosmologies* that were wrapped in fable and epic poetry, as allegories for the ascent of the Soul, not as true stories that explained the inner workings of Nature as some modern historians would have us believe. This was the "secret" that was kept by the priests of the major sects of the ancient world, with whom the philosophers studied, and what they attempted to encapsulate and describe in whatever form they deemed most appropriate. Plato wrote in a form of literary prose known as *Socratic dialogue*, hiding more abstract and esoteric teachings to a large extent perhaps because he was concerned the same fate of Socrates might befall him or perhaps because he thought that the ancient wisdom he was trying to convey was most appropriately done wrapped in allegory and *dialectic* so that the wisdom and elegance of the teaching, which he believed was beyond words, could be conveyed as best as possible. Aristotle was more direct in his approach, more scientific to the modern reader, and perhaps because of this not terribly popular to the everyday man in antiquity that still had an appreciation for myth and allegory – at least certainly not as

popular as the Stoic and Epicurean schools which had significant followings in the aristocracy and the middle class of antiquity respectively⁴⁸⁷.

With the proliferation of Hellenic philosophy in classical (Western) antiquity from the 3rd century BCE to the first few centuries after the death of Jesus and the advent of early Christianity, the most prominent theo-philosophical systems in the Mediterranean are (primarily) Middle Platonism and Stoicism, both of which inform early Christianity in many respects – in the canonical Gospels in particular which show clear Hellenic philosophical influence not surprisingly. In this period of *theological* history in the generations following the death of Christ, the focus turns toward interpretation of these books which stemmed from the tradition surrounding Jesus's life and teachings from which the *New Testament* canon was constructed by the early Church, as well as in turn the *Old Testament* to which the early Christians turned for their legitimacy and historicity, within the context of the firmly established Hellenic philosophical tradition which had been adopted by the intellectual and academic community of the Greco-Roman world.

In the works of the early Christian apologists and theologians, we find the exploration of the notion of good and evil, fate versus free will, salvation, the meaning of Christ and his resurrection, the role of wisdom and law, etc. as reflected in the *Old Testament* canon and the *New Testament* books all within the philosophical and metaphysical framework of the Hellenic tradition that preceded it. In these early phases of Christianity, before the doctrine of the Trinity is established in fact, the role of *reason*, what the early philosophers referred to in the abstract as *Logos*, begins to be interpreted as a sort of hand of God so to speak. Only later, as the doctrine of the Trinity becomes more mature and is firmly established in Christian orthodoxy, is Christ himself looked upon as a manifestation of this *Logos* in human form. This is the so-called “Word of God” who becomes “flesh” in the *Gospel of John* (which was written in Greek of course as were all the Gospels).

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

⁴⁸⁷ Seneca a first century CE Roman statesman and the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius from the second century CE are both notable followers of the Stoic philosophy. Virgil the famed author of the epic poem about the founding of Rome entitled the *Aeneid* from the first century BCE, the poet and philosopher of the first century BCE Lucretius, and Diogenes Laertius the historian and autobiographer of the third century CE are all associated with the Epicurean school, the latter two authors being the source of much of our information about ancient Epicureanism.

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.
 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.
 15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.
 16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.
 17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
 18 No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.⁴⁸⁸

In these 18 initial verses of *John*, sometimes referred to collectively as the “Prologue”, we find perhaps more so than in any other place in the *New Testament* – in particular in the first few verses - this Hellenic philosophical interpretation of the meaning of (the Jewish) Christ as interpreted via the *Logos*, i.e. the “Word”.

In this oft quoted passage, we see here not only very close references and analogues to *Genesis*⁴⁸⁹, but also a classically Stoic, or perhaps better put a classically Hellenic philosophical interpretation of the birth and teachings of Jesus, ignoring the reference to John the Baptist which plays a central role here clearly in John’s conception of setting the stage for the tale of the life of Jesus. The Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke* are known collectively as the “Synoptic Gospels” because they share many of the same characteristics and story line, but the *Gospel of John*, sometimes called the “Gnostic Gospel”, is unique in its conception and interpretation of the life and teachings of Jesus, drawing insights from the more esoteric and mystical traditions surrounding early Christian followers, schools which were categorized as “Gnostic” by the early

⁴⁸⁸ John 1-18. King James Version. From <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1&version=KJV>

⁴⁸⁹ *Genesis* 1:1-1:5 “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth— 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. 3 And God said, “Let there be light!” And there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good, and God caused there to be a separation between the light and between the darkness. 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” Lexham English Bible, from <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1&version=LEB>.

Christian Church Fathers and apologists and schools which drew inspiration from the Hellenic philosophical tradition, the Platonic school most notably.

Within the context of later Christian theological development, we see a clear shift away from the view of the supremacy of *reason* over God, and a focus more on salvation through Christ. The tradition almost inverts the priority with the doctrine of the Trinity, where *reason* is not the pinnacle of *metaphysics* as it is in the Neo-Platonic tradition quite explicitly and in the Peripatetic tradition implicitly, but *reason*, again *Logos* or what has come to be known as the “Word”, is looked upon as a medium through which the power of the Trinity moves through man, and is personified in the Son of God, Jesus, who is the one and only savior of mankind.

In exploring this notion of what has come down to us as the “Word” in *New Testament* and Christian canon and theology, and its place within the tripartite theology of the Christians (the Trinity), it’s important to have a clear notion as to the history and context of the term as it used by the author of *John*, and its meaning within the philosophical community from within which it emerges in the first few centuries after Christ, particularly in the Gnostic tradition which was shunned by later Christians as heretical but which exerted at least some influence over early Christian theological development, even if only as a point of reference for its critics.⁴⁹⁰

Perhaps the most fleshed out philosophical notion of *Logos* in the Judeo-Christian tradition can be found in the work of Philo of Alexandria (c.20 BCE - 40CE), aka Philo Judaeus, a Jewish philosopher who synthesized the tradition of Moses as reflected in the *Old Testament* directly into the Hellenic philosophical tradition, landing on the idea of *Logos* as one of the core theological and philosophical principles upon which his theological scheme rested, a scheme which placed Moses as the most revered and esteemed of all philosophers in antiquity. Interestingly, Philo’s works were mainly conserved in the Christian theological tradition despite his Jewish heritage and that the main thrust of his teachings were the legitimization and synthesis of the teachings of Moses (*Pentateuch*) into Hellenic philosophy, even going so far as to suggest that the Greek philosophical tradition borrowed from the Jewish sage rather than emerging independently.

Philo’s work can be roughly categorized between his *Old Testament* exegesis and commentary and his more philosophical treatises that dealt with more classical philosophical problems such as *ethics*, of the problem of Free Will, the nature of the soul, etc. A good summary of his doctrine

⁴⁹⁰ Much insight into early Gnostic philosophical development was gained with the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945 and the subsequent translation of the texts therein. In the twelve leather-bound papyrus codices that were discovered as part of the Nag Hammadi library were mostly texts labeled as Gnostic, but also some works belonging to the *Corpus Hermeticum* as well as a partial translation of Plato’s *Republic* speaking perhaps to the eclectic philosophical milieu within which philosophic schools, and in turn libraries, evolved during this time period (circa 4th century CE).

of *Logos* and its influence on subsequent Christian theological development can be found in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Philo:

The pivotal and the most developed doctrine in Philo's writings on which hinges his entire philosophical system, is his doctrine of the Logos. By developing this doctrine he fused Greek philosophical concepts with Hebrew religious thought and provided the foundation for Christianity, first in the development of the Christian Pauline myth and speculations of John, later in the Hellenic Christian Logos and Gnostic doctrines of the second century. All other doctrines of Philo hinge on his interpretation of divine existence and action....

In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament the term logos (Hebrew davar) was used frequently to describe God's utterances (Gen. 1:3, 6,9; 3:9,11; Ps. 32:9), God's action (Zech. 5:1-4; Ps. 106:20; Ps. 147:15), and messages of prophets by means of which God communicated his will to his people (Jer. 1:4-19, 2:1-7; Ezek. 1:3; Amos 3:1). Logos is used here only as a figure of speech designating God's activity or action. ...

The Greek, metaphysical concept of the Logos is in sharp contrast to the concept of a personal God described in anthropomorphic terms typical of Hebrew thought. Philo made a synthesis of the two systems and attempted to explain Hebrew thought in terms of Greek philosophy by introducing the Stoic concept of the Logos into Judaism. In the process the Logos became transformed from a metaphysical entity into an extension of a divine and transcendental anthropomorphic being and mediator between God and men. Philo offered various descriptions of the Logos.⁴⁹¹

The general academic and scholarly consensus appears to be that Philo's philosophical and allegorical (*allegoresis*) work is not necessarily innovative in and of itself per se, but more reflects the current thinking among Jewish scholars in his day. But it is Philo's work that survived however, again preserved primarily through the early Christian theological and philosophical tradition which leaned on Philo to establish the *wisdom* and authenticity of the *Old Testament* within the context of the Hellenic philosophical tradition which was the dominant intellectual current of the time.

Philo Judaeus was a product of the intellectual melting pot of Alexandria which we know had strong ties to Hellenic philosophy, his writings show clear signs of this. But at the same time, Philo is first and foremost a Jewish scholar. His work is an exegesis of Jewish tradition, mythology and history in the light of Hellenic philosophy which was considered to be the intellectual benchmark of the times. His work to a large extent is meant to establish Moses as one of the great philosophers of antiquity and his allegorical interpretation of *Genesis* for example follows

⁴⁹¹Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *Philo of Alexandria* (c. 20 BCE-40CE) entry. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/philo/#H11>

the lines of the Greek philosophic tradition of interpreting mythology allegorically, referred to in the academic literature as *allegoresis*, a tradition that was well established by the time of Philo.

With Philo Judaeus we do have a significant break from the more orthodox Jewish interpretation of the *Old Testament* however. This ancient Jewish theological and historical narrative is captured in the (Hebrew) *Old Testament* and covers the history of the Jewish people roughly from 2000 BCE to 350 BCE or so. It starts from the moment of creation to the world of primordial man/woman and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden as described in *Genesis* which as most are familiar with and then moves on to describe the history and lineage of the Jewish people up to the time of Moses, the great prophet of the Jewish people and the main figure, and supposed author, of the first *Five Books* of the *Old Testament*, sometimes called the *Pentateuch* in the Greek historical tradition. The narrative describes the exodus of the Jewish people out of Egypt, led out to freedom of course by Moses himself, all the way down to the formulation of the state of Israel and the construction of the First and Second Temples in the first half of the first millennium BCE.

This long period of Jewish history effectively comes to an end with the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth, his life and teachings, and the (orthodox) interpretation thereof of course captured in the *New Testament* scripture, works that reflect a significant Hellenic influence not just linguistically (there were written in Greek using the Greek language) but also philosophically as subsequent theologians incorporate the mysterious role of the living Christ into their Abrahamic *monotheistic* tradition, i.e. enter Christianity.

All of this history, representing the lineage and trials and faith of the Jewish people, is captured in the *Old Testament*, in Hebrew, and in it we find the core tenets of the Jewish faith stemming in large part from the covenant that Yahweh makes with Moses when he leads the Jewish people out of Egypt, i.e. the Ten Commandments, and the introduction of the *Torah* or “law” which is captured primarily in the *Five Books of Moses* and is established to guide the Jewish people, a people that are distinguished by their long history of trials and tribulations and exile from, and re-establishment of their homeland in modern day Israel and their three thousand year relationship with the Temple of Jerusalem, a place that not only plays a significant role in the *Old Testament* but also of course continues to play a significant role in Middle East politics even today.

It is in the *Torah* that we find seeds of all of the Abrahamic religions which are so prevalent in the world today, representing more than two-thirds the global population. But this history and culture, the language (Hebrew), the mythology, etc. becomes deeply Hellenized starting in the 3rd century BCE after Alexander the Great conquers Israel/Judea and incorporates the land into the Macedonian Empire, marking the beginning of the period of Greek influence over the Middle

East and Northern Africa (Egypt primarily) and establishing the social and political foundations for Western civilization.

This Hellenization process of Judaism, which lays the groundwork for the later interpretations of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and the advent of Christianity, has essentially two parallel transformations that take place in the last half of the first millennium BCE. The first path is represented by the writings that are accepted within the orthodox Jewish community that reflect (relatively later) interpretations of the *Torah*. These texts were primarily written in Hebrew (and to a lesser extent Aramaic as with the later books such as *Daniel* and *Ezra*) and were the last works to be incorporated into the Jewish canon as the *Ketuvim* (*Writings*) between the 1st century BCE to the second century CE. This is the so-called Wisdom tradition that has Jewish roots but is essentially adopted and incorporated into the Christian tradition albeit transformed theologically and otherwise into the doctrine of the Trinity and the deification of Jesus.

The second parallel track of the Hellenization of Jewish *theology* takes place primarily in Alexandria and starts with the commissioning of the translation of the *Old Testament* from the Hebrew into Greek proper, a work commissioned by the Ptolemaic Dynasty that takes place starting in the 2nd century BCE supposedly by seventy Jewish scholars - hence the name given to the work, i.e. the *Septuagint*, or simply *LXX*). The lasting import of this translation cannot be overstated as it represents not just the beginning of the direct availability of Jewish history and theology in the Hellenic world but also the beginning of the interpretation of Jewish theology into the more modern and widely accepted Greek philosophical framework which had evolved independent of the Semitic/Hebrew culture for at least a thousand years. It is from the tradition of the *LXX* that not only the influential pseudo-Christian theologian Philo Judaeus comes from, but also from which the *New Testament* and its interpretation of the life and teachings of Jesus are crafted and squarely rest.

The *LXX* categorized a good portion of what were later to be incorporated into the *Ketuvim* as the “Wisdom Books”, a categorization stemming primarily due to the significant Hellenic philosophic influence that is displayed that marks a departure from earlier Jewish canon, characterized primarily with the role that Wisdom (the Greek σοφία or *sophia*) plays as one of the defining features of Jewish history and theology. The books of *Job*, *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Song of Songs* which are all part of the *Ketuvim* fall into this Wisdom literature category, along with the *Sirach* and *Book of Wisdom* which were included in the *LXX* and therefor in almost all Christian *Old Testament* literature, but are not included in the Jewish *Old Testament*, i.e. the *Tanakh*.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹² *Sirach* and the *Book of Wisdom* are referred to as *deuterocanonical*, a term used to describe certain passages or books of the Christian *Old Testament* that are not included in the Hebrew/Jewish *Bible* proper.

A good description of this Wisdom tradition within the Jewish historical and theological narrative can be found from the online Jewish encyclopedia:

In the main, wisdom was greatly valued and eagerly sought during the Second Temple, and the wise became the teachers of the young and the models of the old. An extensive Wisdom-literature, of which large portions may have been lost, sprang up in continuation of the Proverbs of Solomon. Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) proves, on analysis, to be a compilation of writings which belong in part to an older generation; and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, which recent research has reclaimed for Jewish literature, may also be classed among these Wisdom-books.

...

In all these books wisdom is extolled and invested with divine attributes (Ecclus. [Sirach] i. 1-26, iv. 11-29, li. 13-30, and especially xxiv. 1-29, where it is identified with the law of Moses; Test. Patr., Levi, 13; Enoch, xlii. 1-2). The book on Astronomy and cosmography in the writings of Enoch is described as celestial wisdom (Enoch, xxxvii. 2, xlix. 1-3, lxxxii. 2-3; comp. Book of Jubilees, iv. 17, xxi. 10), and Noah's book on healing (Book of Jubilees, x. 13) belongs to the same class.

...

Under the influence of Greek philosophy wisdom became a divine agency of a personal character (Wisdom vii. 22-30), so that Philo terms it the daughter of God, "the mother of the creative Word" ("De Profugis," §§ 9, 20), while as the creative principle of the world, wisdom occurs in Targ. Yer. to Gen. i. 1 (comp. Hag. 11b; Gen. R. i., where the Torah takes the place of wisdom; see also the midrash on Prov. iii. 19 in Jellinek, "B. H." ii. 23-39, v. 63-69). In Christian and Gentile Gnosticism, wisdom became the center of speculation (see Gnosticism). The so-called Fourth Book of Maccabees, a philosophical sermon on self-control with reference to the seven martyred sons of the Maccabean heroine, is another contribution to the Hellenic Wisdom-literature.⁴⁹³

This Wisdom tradition, which again has its roots in Jewish philosophy, represents at a very basic level a synthesis of Hellenic philosophical thought and Judaism, with some strong connections that can be drawn, particularly with the *Book of Wisdom* or the *Wisdom of Solomon* and Isis, the ancient Egyptian Goddess that was associated with the throne and royalty, eternal life and salvation, light and order - *Ma'at* to the Egyptians, *kosmos* and/or *Nómos* to the Greeks and the *Torah* of the Jews - all characteristics that are attributed to *wisdom* in *Old Testament* scripture, again particularly in the *Book of Wisdom* which is a fairly late (1st century CE) work⁴⁹⁴. Although at first glance this slight shift in emphasis in the interpretation and analysis of *Torah* into an albeit simplified pseudo-Hellenic philosophic framework might seem inconsequential, it marks the

⁴⁹³ Jewish Encyclopedia, entry on WISDOM - <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14950-wisdom>.

⁴⁹⁴ For a detailed account of the similarities and parallels between Isis and sophia in the *Book of Wisdom* see *Isis and sophia in the Book of Wisdom*, Harvard Theological Review by John S. Kloppenborg (1982), 75, pp 57-84 and for a more broad picture of Second Temple Period Wisdom literature and themes in *The Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Bruce K. Waltke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), pgs 212-225 – chapter on "Wisdom of Solomon and Biblical Interpretation in the Second Temple Period".

beginning not only of a new phase of Jewish exegesis, but also establishes the philosophical framework from which Christianity in all its forms is constructed, Gnosticism included.

This salvation attribute to *sophia*, which runs as a consistent theme in Jewish *Old Testament* commentaries and interpretations of the Second Temple Period as Yahweh personified as *sophia* is looked upon as the savior of the Jews, along with her association with light, order and the Sun, is to gain significant traction in the Gnostic tradition that takes root after the death of Jesus and his life and teachings are adopted and interpreted by various schools and sects throughout the Mediterranean, particularly in Alexandria which is the source of many of the Gnostic sects which are prevalent in the first few centuries after Jesus is crucified and before Christian orthodoxy takes shape.

All of the “Jewish” literature that is extant from this period - from the *Wisdom Books* that come down to us as part of the *Old Testament* literature which personify *wisdom* as the agent of salvation, order and knowledge to the Jews, to the work of Philo Judaeus the philosopher and theologian who applied a classically Hellenic philosophic lens to *Old Testament* interpretation, to Josephus the Jewish historian who interpreted the Jewish tradition from an historical perspective for the Greeks and Romans during the first century CE⁴⁹⁵ – established the theological and intellectual foundations, set the stage as it were, for the interpretation of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, and provided the theological and historical foundations of Christianity. A “religious” and theological movement, ironically enough, which diverged significantly from the prevalence of truth and order as prime metaphysical and philosophical building blocks as had been so well established by the Greeks (and to a lesser extent Jews), to the rise in prevalence of the role of salvation and eternal life, through Christ, as the core tenets of faith.

⁴⁹⁵ Josephus was another important intellectual figure in this Hellenization of Judaism which was leveraged by the early Christian Church Fathers and theologians. He was a first century CE Jewish scholar and historian who initially fought against Rome during the First Jewish-Roman War (66-73 CE), when the Second Jewish Temple in Jerusalem is destroyed, but is later adopted by the Roman Emperor Vespasian first as a hostage and then as an interpreter and then later granted freedom. In his first major work entitled *The Jewish War*, or *Judean War*, Josephus accounts the struggles of the Jews in Judea from the capture of Jerusalem by the Seleucid (Greek) ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 164 BCE to the fall and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE by the Romans. His second major work, which is authored in Greek and is oft cited by Christian theologians as evidence for the historical Jesus as well as John the Baptist, is entitled *Antiquities of the Jews* (circa 94 CE) and covers Jewish history back from the Garden of Eden up to the 1st century CE Jewish War against Rome. His last major work which is extant is entitled *Against Apion*, and is a defense of Judaism as a classic religion and philosophy and is addressed to detractors and critics of the Jewish faith which were prevalent at the time, Apion and Manetho specifically.

Early Christian *Theology*: Jesus, *Gnosis*, and *Logos*

With the Hellenic philosophic tradition and culture firmly planted in the Mediterranean in the last few centuries BCE and the first century CE, we see a drastic shift in theological and philosophical thought as sages, mystics and philosophers alike try to make sense of the larger than life figure and story that comes to be associated with Jesus of Nazareth. In the first few centuries after his death we have several different streams of thought that crop up as a reaction to, and in order to try and interpret, his life and teachings within the context of prevailing theological, religious and philosophical views. Although it's not easy to box these different streams of thought into just a few categories – each school or sect had their own unique take and interpretation – it is convenient for the purposes of our discussion to draw the line between three categories of schools of thought, all of which took different approaches in integrating and interpreting the life and teachings of Christ into their own respective belief systems and teachings – namely Gnosticism and Christianity, both of which view Jesus as a great prophet and savior but who differed significantly on how he fit into the rest of the cosmological order and how to fit him into the Jewish tradition which preceded him, and then on the Greek philosophical front Neo-Platonism which takes the torch from the rest of the Greek philosophical schools after Christianity takes root and although doesn't recognize Jesus as a prophet or savior in any way, still evolves parallel to Christianity and influences Christianity's theological development to a large extent.

All of these streams of theo-philosophical development show marked Hellenic philosophical influence and the surviving works from these traditions were almost entirely transcribed in Greek, speaking to the continuous and altogether “Greek” intellectual tradition to which they are undoubtedly an integral part. In the case of the Christian and Gnostic traditions specifically, as they evolved in the first few centuries after Jesus is crucified, they look to establish the credibility and truth of Christ and place him within the prevailing theology of the time. The early Christian theologians and apologists leveraged the Hebrew tradition and the lineage of Moses for this purpose of course⁴⁹⁶, while the Gnostics looked to a more esoteric and mystical bent regarding the interpretation of Jesus as the manifestation of the divine and through which knowledge and truth in and of themselves could be “seen”, borrowing in many respects the most esoteric and mystical elements of the Hellenic philosophical tradition, much of which was to be found in the Platonic school. While the Gnostics influenced early Christian theology, remnants of which can be found in the *Gospel of John* for example, its tenets were ultimately rejected by the Church.

⁴⁹⁶ See the Chapter in this work on the Hellenization of Judaism for details on this synthesis of Hellenic philosophy and *Old Testament* exegesis, in particular by Philo Judaeus, as well as the associated “Wisdom” literature, i.e. *sophia*, which also become an integral part of the early Jewish theo-philosophical tradition.

In parallel to these “Christian” theo-philosophical schools, to use a more broad sense of the term and one which includes the early Christian doctrines and streams of thought that were eventually regarded as heresy by the Church as it is established and refined in the 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries CE, we have a renaissance of sorts of Platonic thought that is classically referred to as “Neo-Platonism”, a philosophical tradition which more or less viewed the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato, as well as the Hellenic philosophical tradition more broadly, to reflect a cohesive whole rather than as competing, or contradictory, schools of thought.

The Neo-Platonists supposedly relied on the *unwritten teachings* of Plato as the basis for this more inclusive philosophic view. These *teachings*, as the tradition holds, were orally transmitted from Plato himself directly to his students and followers, and to some extent at least conveyed subtly different views and beliefs that diverged from the standard, public (and written) teachings of Plato as reflected in his *dialogues* that were widely disseminated in antiquity. The Neo-Platonic tradition very much evolved alongside of, and was influenced by, early Christianity, representing the last ditch effort as it were to defend the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition from the onslaught and spread of orthodox *monotheism*, as manifest first with Christianity of course and then morphing into its Arabic cousin Islam. The tradition also incorporated some of the ancient threads of *mysticism* and *esotericism* into their teachings and practices as well.

Neo-Platonism as a theo-philosophical tradition is perhaps best known in the end not only for their mystical bent, but also for their doctrine of universal *emanation* from the *One*, or the *Good*, a metaphysical principle which plays a large part in the creation narrative of Plato’s *Timaeus*, the metaphysical equivalent of the *form* of *forms* that manifests itself in the world via the *Divine Intellect*, or *Nous*, roughly equivalent to the role played by Plato’s *Demiurge* which is the anthropomorphic principle that produces the “*World Soul*” in the *Timaeus*.

The theo-philosophical *Logos* for example, was not in any way a Christian invention, the principle having a long history in the Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition going back to not just Philo Judaeus, but even as far back into the classical Hellenic philosophical period with the Stoics, where *Logos* was not only an important theological, metaphysical and cosmological ordering principle, but a basic and fundamental characteristic of philosophy in and of itself as a rational discipline. This fundamentally Hellenic theo-philosophical principle then, i.e. *Logos*, morphs into this concept of the *Divine Intellect* in the Neo-Platonic theo-philosophical tradition, i.e. *Nous*, providing the metaphysical bridge, and basic (animated or spiritual) universal ordering principle, between the Creator, the *Demiurge* or God, and his creation - the Platonic *World Soul* which roughly corresponds to the Christian Holy Spirit.

It is fairly well established that these ideas, Hellenic philosophy in general and in particular Neo-Platonic thought, heavily influenced not only Christian *theology*, but also its underlying *metaphysics* as well. In fact many scholars believe, and there is certainly is a strong case to be

made given the intellectual, metaphysical and theological similarities, that the notion of the Trinity - as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit of course - was not so much a unique contribution of the early Christians so much as a borrowed and refurbished fundamentally Hellenic, Neo-Platonic theological and metaphysical construct.⁴⁹⁷

The most influential of the “Neo-Platonists” were Plotinus (204 – 270 CE), his student Porphyry (234 – 305 CE), and perhaps most prominently Proclus (412 – 485 CE). While Neo-Platonism as a school of thought was not necessarily “anti-Christian”, it was branded “pagan” by the Church, and after Plotinus the center of gravity for what we consider “Greek” philosophy shifted eastward to the Arab world, subsequently picked up after the advent and proliferation of Islam by the so-called *falṣafa*, the name adopted by the Muslim philosophers that, in Arabic translation, also looked upon the Hellenic philosophical tradition as more of an integral whole rather than competing schools.⁴⁹⁸

Although it’s easy to criticize the standard orthodox interpretation and canonization of the early Christian Church Fathers, when looking at the extant schools and teachings and books that were prevalent in the first few centuries after Christ one can certainly see why the Gnostic doctrines, with their emphasis on direct knowledge and realization, i.e. *gnosis* or “knowledge” (from the Greek verb “to know”), represented a threat of sorts to what eventually became the more orthodox interpretation of Christianity which focused on the saving grace of Christ and the more literal interpretation as it were of the “Word” of God. This tradition emphasized not only his crucifixion and resurrection as not just proof of the immortality of the Soul but also as the sole means by which individuals could be “saved”.

As part of this theological stance which developed in the first few centuries after the death of Christ, the Gnostic and other “pagan” philosophical schools and traditions were rejected and a specific set of texts and books which reflected this belief system around Christ the savior of mankind were ultimately established into what today is the canonical version of the *Bible*. This text of course includes the *Pentateuch*, or the *Five Books of Moses* along with other selected *Old Testament* books, along with the selected *New Testament* books of which the *Four Gospels* - *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John* - represent the heart. Parallel to the creation of the “Christian

⁴⁹⁷ In particular in its manifestation as reflected in the teachings and writing of Plotinus (204 – 70 CE) – the One, the Intellect and the Soul as a metaphysical triumvirate of sorts, i.e. a theo-philosophical *trinity*. For more on the Neo-Platonic influence on the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in particular, see Tuggy, Dale, “History of the Trinitarian Doctrines” (Supplement to Trinity), The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/trinity/trinity-history.html> - pgs. 75-76.

⁴⁹⁸ See the Chapter in this work on Muḥammad, the *Qur’ān* and Aristotle for a detailed look at the continuity of Greek, i.e. Hellenic, philosophical thought and inquiry by the Arabic philosophical tradition, i.e. the *falṣafa*.

Canon” as it were, a standard interpretation of these texts, i.e. Christian orthodox *theology*, developed and was established as well, all evolving alongside the establishment and flourishing of the Church itself. The doctrine espoused by the early Church, as all of the pagan centers of worship and schools were effectively banned, persecuted and outlawed (ironically just as the early Christian schools were) centered around the doctrine of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and their union in concept – what was established as the principle of *homoousios* or *hypostasis* by the early Christian Church Fathers which denotes the unity of the Trinity in *substance* or *persona*.

The Christian orthodox view on the interpretation of Christ and his relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit, the three pillars of orthodox Christian faith, was first established in the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE), which set out among other things to establish the Church’s position on the precise theological relationship between God the Father and his Son, Christ and the Holy Spirit, the three different aspects of the Trinity which were different aspects of the one true God. In so doing, these early Christian theologians not only established the orthodox Christian canon, but also outlined quite specifically the accepted theological boundaries of the orthodox Christian faith, establishing in no uncertain terms which pre-existing “Christian” schools of thought and doctrines were to be considered heretical which of course included the Gnostic schools among others.

The Nicene Creed of 325 convened due in no small measure to what modern historians refer to as the “Arian controversy”, which was plaguing and dividing the early Church at the time and was concerned about how the three main spiritual aspects of God – again God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – were to be interpreted within the context of the *monotheistic theology* which was of course also a hallmark of early Christian thought. The question was essentially how were God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit – all main themes and aspects of divinity that were spoken of quite clearly not just in the Gospels but permeated the rest of the core Christian books, were to be viewed in relationship to each other. Were they one and the same substance? Just different names of the same things? Different aspects of the same principal? Or were they fundamentally different aspects of different ontological significance?

Although this may seem like splitting hairs to the present day scholar or student of religion, or to someone who is interested in the development of early Christianity simply from an academic perspective, to the authorities of the then nascent and early forming Church, these were absolutely critical issues to its survival. If they could not agree on how to interpret the message of Christ, could not agree on which texts should be considered orthodox and standard and which were not, the very survival of the Church was in jeopardy. They needed not just a single set of works and books that were to be used and disseminated by the Church, but also a consistent – and coherent - message and interpretation of the texts which centered around Jesus of course in

order to consolidate and establish the authority and power of the Church as the proprietor as it were of the message of Christ and the means by which “Christians” were to be saved. These motivating factors of the early Church must be kept in mind when looking at the history of the development of the early canon of the *Bible* and its associated theology, the Nicene Creed being a perfect example of this.

Despite hundreds of years of philosophical thought that preceded the rise of Christianity, and even with several centuries of interpretation of Jewish philosophy within the light of prevailing Greek philosophical views, i.e. the so-called Wisdom tradition which did have a clear role and place for prophets and sages, there existed no *theological* framework for the existence of a man who was theologically equivalent to God, calling into question mortality in and of itself and the “oneness” or unity of God which had been clearly established metaphysically for some time in the Greek philosophic tradition. The *metaphysical* framework simply did not exist, and arguably one of the biggest challenges of the early Church was to figure out how to bridge this gap theologically while still holding true to the Greek philosophical movement which had become widely accepted as the intellectual benchmark for any theological system.

The Nicene Creed itself which was established in 325 was enhanced and modified somewhat in the First Council of Constantinople in 381, and in this credo we have the precise form of the doctrine of the Trinity which survives down to Christian liturgy even to this day and essentially defines orthodox Christianity. Although there are different variants, as they all exist in English translation since the creeds themselves were defined in Greek, Latin and Armenian, we have the English version below that was adopted by the Episcopal Church in 1973 and which retains all of the main, salient features of the creed as it was established some 1700 years ago:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

*We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*⁴⁹⁹

That's it in a nutshell, the Christian faith and doctrine as it stands even to this day. And one can see why it was necessary for the early Christian Church Fathers, or at least why they felt compelled, to establish and outline the creed of Christianity so explicitly – they wanted to stop the fractions in the early Christian Church which were threatening to dissipate and at worst destabilize the early Church itself, one that had taken centuries to establish and had done so at the threat of death and persecution by most of the early Christians, many of whom had been ostracized and even killed for professing their faith.

Leaving aside the semantic debate as to the words chosen for the Creed as it become established and the underlying theological debates which were to a large extent put to bed so to speak with the establishment of the Creed, what is worth considering and looking at the non-standard early Christian traditions, which fall loosely under the umbrella as Gnosticism, as well as what characters and teachers played a role in the shaping of the standard orthodox interpretation of Christ which ended up being encapsulated in this Creed which forms the theological foundation for Christianity even to this day.

Because although we gain consensus in the Christian theological family by adoption of the Creed, we do lose a sense of individual expression, of the notion of direct perception and knowledge of the divine – i.e. *gnosis* – which rested at the heart of the Gnostic traditions which were prominent in the first few centuries after Jesus died, and which stemmed in no small measure from the Greek *mystery cults* which still remained somewhat popular throughout the Mediterranean until they were first persecuted during the latter part of the reign of Constantine the Great (Roman Emperor from 306 to 337 CE) and then outlawed explicitly during the reign Constantine's son Constantius II (Roman Emperor from 337 to 361). Nothing is gained without something being lost and that is certainly the case in the consolidation of the theological creed of orthodox early Christianity, a theological movement which rose on the backs of the persecution of its brethren and competing theological traditions, many of whom had lineages that went back deep into antiquity.

⁴⁹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_versions_of_the_Nicene_Creed.

Let's start our review of how orthodox Christianity came about, which in turn drove the formation of this Creed which defines the Christian orthodox theological position for the most part, by looking at the development of some of the early Christian Church Fathers⁵⁰⁰, and by doing so we can see what the competing schools and interpretations of the life and times of the great prophet Jesus of Nazareth looked like and why the various schools disagreed on the points they did, and what forces drove the consolidation of the belief systems into orthodox Christianity and in turn the suppression and altogether destruction of the competing outlooks and philosophic disciplines and schools.

The main figures of this early (orthodox) Christianity are Justin Martyr (c. 100 – 165 CE), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – 215 CE), his student Origen also of Alexandria (Origen of Alexandria) (c. 185 – 254 CE) and then of course St. Augustine, or Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 CE) whose most important works *City of God* and *Confessions* have come to be regarded as some of the standard classic literature of (Western) Christian doctrine. The teachings of these great early Christian theologians and believers can be contrasted with the various “Gnostic” sects which were also very popular at the time, most notably the school started by Valentinus (c. 100 – 160 CE) who studied in Alexandria but started his school and teaching in Rome toward the latter part of his life, the Christian Gnostic Basilides who taught and flourished in the first half of the second century CE also in Alexandria, and even the sect of Manichaeism founded by Mani (216-276 CE) which was a main rival to Christianity to the East and synthesized elements of Jewish Christianity, along with Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and even to some extent the Near Eastern mystical sect of Mithraism.

What we do know about the first few centuries after Christ was killed by the Romans (the Jewish authorities in Palestine of course playing no small part in the process) was that the overall flavor and theme from a philosophical and theological perspective was one of great diversity and synthesis, an *enlightenment era* of philosophy and *mysticism* as it were, with much of the intellectual innovation occurring not surprisingly in Alexandria in Egypt which at the time was the center of learning, scholarship and tolerance in antiquity certainly through the first few centuries CE until paganism and alternative Christian theological interpretations (Gnosticism) becomes outlawed and outright persecuted into extinction.

While it doesn't necessarily reflect the true diversity and depth of the various schools of thought which took root during this time of theological and philosophical flourishing, a simplifying

⁵⁰⁰ Here we use Christian Church Fathers in the most broad sense of the term to denote those early theologians and scholars, philosophers for the most part, whose work in one way or another influenced the development of early Christianity, whether or not they are considered to be Church Fathers by the Church itself. Origen of Alexandria is one such example, who like Philo Judaeus, exerted profound influence on the early Church from a theological and philosophical standpoint, even if again, they were or are not recognized by the Church itself as a so-called “Father of the Church” for whatever reason.

categorization of the schools of belief that were prevalent during this era – leaving aside Manichaeism which can be viewed as falling outside these three (simplifying) categories - could be broken out as follows:

- *Orthodox Christianity*: resting on the Four Canonical Gospels (*Mathew, Mark, Luke and John*) and the writings and letters of the Apostle Paul (aka St. Paul), who although not one of the 12 disciples of Jesus was certainly the most influential in spreading his message after his passing and most certainly the most influential to the development of orthodox Christianity.
- The *Gnostic tradition* which was a synthesis of not only Jewish Wisdom literature and its unique *sophia/Isis* view of *Old Testament* exegesis but also the incorporation of some the predominant astronomical and cosmological Greek philosophical themes (most notably the incorporation of the notion of the seven celestial spheres and the synthesis of both *sophia* and Christ within this cosmological framework)
- *Neo-Platonism* which continued the Platonic (and Peripatetic) philosophical tradition but at the time had incorporated Stoic elements as well also began to evolve in parallel to orthodox Christianity in its adoption of the Trinity which of course bears striking resemblance to the Neo-Platonic triad of the *One*, the *Intellect* and the *Soul* which is manifest in the teachings of Plotinus and Proclus most clearly.

The *New Testament* canon as we know it today, consisting of the Four Gospels, *Acts of the Apostles*, letters of the *Apostles* and *Revelation* was formalized in the Second Council in Trullo, also known as the Quinisext or “Fifth-Sixth” Council, in 692 CE during the reign of the Roman Emperor Justinian II. The Council was held in Constantinople with some 300 Bishops from both the Eastern and Western Roman/Byzantine Empire with the intent of establishing a more consistent approach not only in the interpretation of the *Bible* itself, but also in the practices and teachings of all of the Churches throughout the empire, with the intent of crafting a more consistent message and to (re) establish the orthodox Biblical, i.e. *New Testament*, canon.

The heart of the *New Testament* canon is of course the Gospels, so named because they relay the good news (from the old English “god-spell” meaning “good news” or “glad tidings”) of the coming of the messiah and the saving of mankind, the core belief of the Christian faith. In the Gospels, which were four of many Gospel like texts that were in circulation after the death of Jesus, we find four separate but very similar accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus’s ministry,

which incidentally only reflects the last three years of his life and as well know includes not only his ministry, but also the story of his death and resurrection.

Although the date and authorship of these Gospels is disputed, it is general agreed by academics and Biblical scholars that these books were written sometime in the first century CE somewhere between 20 and 50 years after Jesus's death, that there were in all likelihood *not* written by direct disciples of Jesus, and that at least three of the Gospels – *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke* which are collectively referred to sometimes as the “synoptic” Gospels, given their similarities in all likelihood share a common, earlier source that has been code named “Q” by modern Biblical historians.

Q as it turns out is believed to have a close relationship with the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*, a book of sayings attributed to Jesus which was discovered as part of the Gnostic archive in the Nag Hammadi Library of Gnostic texts, a text which consistent with most of the other Gnostic literature does not focus on the events of Jesus's life, nor his resurrection, but more so on what he said and what he taught, hence the Gnostic (Greek *gnosis* or knowledge) classification. The *Gospel According to John* also bears some classically Hellenic philosophic and Gnostic elements, showing particular strains of Philo Judaeus's doctrine of *Logos* illustrating that this text at least stemmed from perhaps an alternate early Christian theological tradition, one which the Hellenic philosophical schools, or at least the teachings of Philo Judaeus and his successors Origen and Clement played a more predominant role.

The next heart of *New Testament* canon which was established in the early Church are the Books attributed to the apostle Paul. St. Paul is one of the most prominent and influential figures in the history of Christianity and although not one of the twelve direct disciples of Jesus, he is considered by most academics and historians to be an apostle/student of Jesus proper and his efforts and accomplishments in founding the Christian faith, as reflected in the *Pauline Epistles*, or *Epistles of Paul*, which represent thirteen (or fourteen depending upon which version of the canon) books out of the twenty-seven books in the *New Testament*. The *Epistles of Paul* give us great insight into not only how the early Church and Jesus's message took root in the decades following his crucifixion, but also, along with the canonical Gospels, the general tenets of the faith (presumably) as taught by Jesus himself. It is no wonder that these books were included as part of the official canon.

One of the first early Christian apologists was Justin Martyr, also known as Saint Justin (c. 100 – 165 CE), who was born in Judea is known for being one of the foremost interpreters of the *Logos* doctrine in early Christianity, the very same *Logos* that played such a prominent theological and philosophical role in the *Old Testament* exegesis by Philo Judaeus. Of Justin's extant work

perhaps the most influential is the *First Apology*, a work which defends the reality and truth of the Christian faith and attempts to convince the Roman Emperor at the time, Antonius, to stop his persecution of early Christians. His reliance on the principle of *Logos* as the principle by which God acts and creates in the manifest and material world, a pre-existing force from which Christ comes forth (see John 1), is his means of establishing the connection to, and ultimate synthesis of, Christ and the Greek philosophers which preceded him, concluding that some Greek philosophers, most notably Socrates and Plato, were in fact unknowing Christians, just as Philo Judaeus considered the early Greek philosophers to be a continuation and synthesis of the philosophical doctrines and teachings of Moses.

In his other extant work *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin attempts to show in classically Greek dialogue form between himself as a recently converted Christian, and Trypho a Jewish rabbi, that Christianity is the new law for all mankind and that Jesus is in fact the Jewish messiah. In the beginning of this work Justin relates his (failed) search for knowledge of God amongst the Stoics, Pythagoreans and Peripatetics, and although he found solace and insight in the teachings of Plato in his exposition of the one and true God head, he later became much more drawn to the teachings of the Jewish scripture in light of its consummation and manifestation in the life of Christ to whom he attributed the greatest source of truth and knowledge of God, and which of course was the source of his own conversion to Christianity despite his Greek philosophical education and exposure.

From his *Dialogue with Trypho*, we can see his identification of Jesus with the classic Hellenic philosophic *Logos*, consistent with the tradition that had been laid down by Philo Judaeus before him:

I shall give you another testimony, my friends," said I, "from the Scriptures, that God begat before all creatures a Beginning, [who was] a certain rational power [proceeding] from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, and then Lord and Logos; and on another occasion He calls Himself Captain, when He appeared in human form to Joshua the son of Nave (Nun). For He can be called by all those names, since He ministers to the Father's will, and since He was begotten of the Father by an act of will; just as we see happening among ourselves: for when we give out some word, we beget the word; yet not by abscission, so as to lessen the word [Logos] [which remains] in us, when we give it out: and just as we see also happening in the case of a fire, which is not lessened when it has kindled [another], but remains the same; and that which has been kindled by it likewise appears to exist by itself, not diminishing that from which it was kindled.

The Word of Wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things, and Word [Logos], and Wisdom [sophia], and Power, and the Glory of the Begetter, will bear evidence to me, when He speaks by Solomon the following: If I shall declare to you what happens daily, I shall call to mind events from everlasting, and review them. The Lord made me the beginning of His ways for

His works. From everlasting He established me in the beginning, before He had made the earth, and before He had made the deeps, before the springs of the waters had issued forth, before the mountains had been established. Before all the hills He begets me. God made the country, and the desert, and the highest inhabited places under the sky. When He made ready the heavens, I was along with Him, and when He set up His throne on the winds: when He made the high clouds strong, and the springs of the deep safe, when He made the foundations of the earth, I was with Him arranging. I was that in which He rejoiced; daily and at all times I delighted in His countenance, because He delighted in the finishing of the habitable world, and delighted in the sons of men..⁵⁰¹

Here we see Justin looking not only to the scriptures themselves as the starting point from which true knowledge of God is to be ascertained, but also a metaphysical and theological equivalence is drawn between this “rational power” of God, i.e. *Logos*, which brings the world into existence, which establishes “order” from chaos as it were, and which emanates from, and yet at the same time is unified with the one true God of “scripture”. This *Logos* is described by Justin, as was also interpreted by the orthodox Christian tradition in the doctrine of the Trinity, as equivalent to not only Wisdom (*sophia*), but also with Jesus himself as the Son of God, as well as God himself, differing in name only, not in principle.

In contrast to what we would consider the more orthodox interpretation of Jesus through the doctrine of *Logos*, and incorporating the Wisdom tradition of the Jews at the same time, we find another influential early Christian teacher who comes from the academic and intellectual milieu of Alexandria, namely Valentinus (c. 100 – 160 CE), typically categorized as one of the early “Gnostics”, a group of early Christian teachers and schools of thought which were much more esoteric and mystical in their interpretation and view of the meaning of Christ and his place in the cosmological world order than what came to be considered “orthodox” Christianity as viewed through the lens of the canonical Gospels that were incorporated into the *New Testament*.

Although born and educated in Northern Egypt and Alexandria, Valentinus spends his most productive years teaching in Rome and at one point, according to Tertullian, was considered for the position of the Bishop of Rome but started his own group after he was passed over. Although none of Valentinus’s writings are extant, we know of the popularity of his school (Valentinianism) as well as many of its tenets and beliefs through some of the extant works of Clement of Alexandria, who writes that Valentinus was a follower of Theudas and that Theudas in turn was a follower of St. Paul, as well as from the early Christian theologian and apologist Irenaeus (c.

⁵⁰¹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho*. Chapter entitled *Wisdom is Begotten of the Father, as Fire from Fire*. Excerpt from http://biblehub.com/library/justin/dialogue_of_justin_philosopher_and_martyr_with_trypho/chapter_lxiwisdom_is_begotten_of.htm

early 2nd century – 202 CE) whose best known work, *Against Heresies* (c. 180), which defends “orthodox” Christianity against the various so-called heretic Gnostic schools that were prevalent at the time, with a special emphasis on the school started by Valentinus and the so-called *Gospel of Truth* which was attributed to him.

In the words of the Irenaeus, we find the following description of Valentinus and his teachings, making explicit reference to the *Gospel of Truth* which is one of the core so-called “Gnostic” treatises from antiquity:

But the followers of Valentinus, putting away all fear, bring forward their own compositions and boast that they have more Gospels than really exist. Indeed their audacity has gone so far that they entitle their recent composition the Gospel of Truth, though it agrees in nothing with the Gospels of the apostles, and so no Gospel of theirs is free from blasphemy. For if what they produce is the Gospel of Truth, and is different from those the apostles handed down to us, those who care to can learn how it can be shown from the Scriptures themselves that [then] what is handed down from the apostles is not the Gospel of Truth.⁵⁰²

The copy of the *Gospel of Truth*, which Irenaeus refers to explicitly in his *Against Heresies* and is attributed to the Valentinian School, was discovered in the Nag Hammadi Library collection in the second half of the twentieth century and is believed to have been authored in the middle of the second century CE, in Greek. In this Gospel, the life and tribulations of Jesus are not called out specifically as they are in the four canonical Gospels, and instead there is a focus on the creation of the known universe in *Error* (in personified form), and the delivery of Jesus (a messiah) to the earth to show us eternal life in order to (re)establish the *wisdom* of *gnosis*, or *knowledge*, which in itself grants salvation.

This salvation, this blessing of eternal rest, comes to those who have experienced *gnosis*, a *transcendental* state of *awareness* where the object of worship is merged entirely not only within the act of worship itself but also with worshipper as well. The Gnostic tradition no doubt, for all intents and purposes reflects a deep *esoteric* and *mystical* teaching that was said to have come straight from the master (Jesus) himself – his “secret” teachings as it were. This was the pinnacle state of Hellenic *mystical* schools, where the man once bound in the cave to perceive shadows, is released from his prison and shown the true divine realm which was illuminated by the Sun, of which the images in the Cave were but Shadows (Plato’s Allegory of the Cave reference).

⁵⁰² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.9. Quotation from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Truth.

The Gnostics were true *mystics*, but at the same time were faithful to the worship of Jesus in their own way, not in his physical form as having been born in the flesh and then crucified in the flesh by Pontius Pilot, but his message of immortality and the esoteric truths which he taught and personified. To the Gnostics, Jesus of Nazareth was *Logos* personified, and in that sense he was not born, he was every present since the beginning of time.

This idea of the dichotomy of God the Father and Jesus the Son, through which is the only means to salvation in the Christian tradition of course, is theologically speaking the most radical notion that we find in the Gospels which presumably accurately reflects the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. In fact this dichotomy not only separates or distinguishes the *New Testament* theology from the *Old Testament* doctrines, the split between the Jewish and Christian faiths as it were, but ironically, as we are told directly in the Gospels themselves, is the very reason why Jesus is put to death in the first place.

But to the Gnostics, in contrast to the as of yet germinated orthodox interpretation of Jesus's life, with a focus on the life of the flesh, it was what Jesus taught was inside of all of us, our birthright in fact, if we could just merge ourselves into knowledge itself we could be saved here and now. This was the blessed Gnostic, the knower of God, whose teachings are ultimately that the kingdom of God is within us all and no Church is required to determine our salvation. The Gnostic philosophy shared some Platonic features as well to be sure, for it was the existence of the *One*, *Being* itself, that the Gnostic could truly know. *Logos* however was still the key, the connecting force and principle that bound the eternal cosmos to the individual Soul, in whose image it was created and who was born in the flesh to show us the way.

The *metaphysics* behind Gnosticism, despite being poorly documented given the *mystical* and *esoteric* nature of the movement and given that its teachers and doctrines were effectively obliterated from the earth by the early Church, or at the very least driven underground, nonetheless sit on, not surprisingly, the Hellenic philosophic tradition which preceded it which had incorporated mystic elements from the start. But with Gnosticism, Plato's embedded *mysticism* was drawn out and put at the forefront of the message. To the Gnostics, *gnosis* itself was the goal, a state of being or *realization* that could in fact be attained and which Jesus himself represented and died for. This was Plato's *Good*, his *Being*, the Pythagorean Monad that could, upon constant contemplation and reflection, be fathomed and understood, and in so fathoming one could become co-existent with and merged into this *One*. And in this state of *gnosis*, this embodiment of pure, unadulterated *knowledge* as it were, Plato's Indefinite Dyad, the world of *Becoming*, could be perceived for what it truly was, a manifestation of pure *Being*.

To the Gnostics, Jesus was the personified *Logos*, his life and teachings illustrative of the potential for *gnosis* in all of us. Plato's Forms and Ideas, whose penultimate source and final end was the

Good, represented the metaphysical framework within which the Sun of *gnosis*, which shone outside of the Cave of delusion, the world of Shadows.

*That is the gospel of him whom they seek, which he has revealed to the perfect through the mercies of the Father as the hidden mystery, Jesus the Christ. Through him he enlightened those who were in darkness because of forgetfulness. He enlightened them and gave them a path. And that path is the truth which he taught them. For this reason error was angry with him, so it persecuted him. It was distressed by him, so it made him powerless. He was nailed to a cross. He became a fruit of the knowledge of the Father. He did not, however, destroy them because they ate of it. He rather caused those who ate of it to be joyful because of this discovery.*⁵⁰³

This extant passage from the *Gospel of Truth* illustrates the esoteric nature of the Gnostic tradition which took a much more metaphorical and mystical approach to the comprehension of the Passion of Christ. The Gnostic tradition embraced the persecution and crucifixion of Christ as a reflection of an element of imperfection that exists in the material universe, but through a proper understanding could be “overcome”. Jesus was a manifestation of the eternal *Logos* in the flesh and in coming into being through the will of God the Father illustrated the truth of the *Old Testament* scripture but at the same time showed that *gnosis* as a state of being, in a Platonic sense, was just as real as Jesus himself.

Part of the Gnostic interpretation of Christ which was rejected by Christian orthodoxy was this view that he was the consort of *Sophia*, the goddess of *wisdom* who was reflected in the Wisdom tradition embedded in the *Old Testament*, e.g. in the *Wisdom of Solomon* or *Book of Wisdom* which in turn had come to be associated with Isis, the savior and goddess of knowledge from Egypt.⁵⁰⁴ It was within this Wisdom tradition, along with the vengeful God of the Jews that we find throughout the *Old Testament* in fact, that the Gnostic schools attempted to reconcile in a way that was distinct from, and therefore was ultimately rejected by, the orthodox Christian doctrine that came to be known as the Trinity. The Gnostics looked upon Yahweh, who was equated with Plato’s *Demiurge* in some sense, as a great deity who although believed he had mastered and created the whole universe, but in fact there was another layer of heavens and gods above him, from which *sophia* and Christ as the eternal *Logos* emerge, and in their emergence rectify and balance the “erred” and flawed condition of the imperfect state of man.

⁵⁰³ *Gospel of Truth*, translation by Robert M. Grant. From <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/got.html>.

⁵⁰⁴ See *Isis and sophia in the Book of Wisdom* by John S. Kloppenborg from Harvard Theological Review for a detailed look at the parallels of the personified Wisdom of the Jewish tradition, Christ and the characteristics of Isis as the savior of Egyptian *mythos*. Harvard Theological Review / Volume 75 / Issue 01 / January 1982, pp 57 - 84 DOI: 10.1017/S0017816000018216, Published online: 10 June 2011.

Sophia and Christ as her consort is the mythological narrative upon which the explanation of the meaning of Christ and his crucifixion is framed. *Logos*, the ordering principle of the universe which was an aspect of God himself, God the Father, is sent down to the world of man to bring about a new age of spiritual enlightenment and unify the old-world gods with the one and only god the Father which Jesus taught and embodied. Their conception of Jesus as the “Word” in the flesh was as the theological bridge between world of men and the world of God which had been ripped asunder since mankind was cast out of the Garden. Through his message, the truth of *gnosis*, which was explained within the context of this intermixed and synthesized mythological narrative, brings the spiritual world into balance as it were, bringing together the Wisdom tradition of the *Old Testament*, Platonic *theology*, along with ancient *mythos* as reflected in the tradition surrounding Isis, i.e. *Sophia*, in her goddess form.

Another of the Gnostic classified teachers and schools from this early “Christian” period, also from Alexandria, was Basilides. Basilides flourished from approximately 117 to 138 CE and was a contemporary of Valentinus whose teachings he must have been exposed to at least some extent, and Justin Martyr whose life was spent further to the East somewhat outside of Alexandrian influence. Basilides claimed to have inherited his teachings directly from the apostle Matthew and is known to have been one of the first commentators on the Gospels in a work entitled *Exegetica*. Although this work is extant only in fragments and quotations, from detractors unfortunately, he is also known for having developed a *cosmogony* and world order that differed quite significantly, at least according to Irenaeus, from the majority of the other “Gnostic” traditions. His teachings must have been popular however for it is said that his followers, known as Basilidians, persisted for at least two centuries after his death in Alexandria.

It’s worth quoting a passage from the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy which speaks to his life and teachings directly in the entry on Gnosticism, drawing primarily on Irenaeus’s *Against Heresies* as the primary source:

The Christian philosopher Basilides of Alexandria (fl. 132-135 CE) developed a cosmogony and cosmogony quite distinct from the sophia myth of classical Gnosticism, and also reinterpreted key Christian concepts by way of the popular Stoic philosophy of the era. Basilides began his system with a “primal octet” consisting of the “unengendered parent” or Father; Intellect (nous); the “ordering principle” or “Word” (logos); “prudence” (phronêsis); Wisdom (sophia); Power (dunamis) (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.3, in Layton, The Gnostic Scriptures 1987) and “justice” and “peace” (Basilides, Fragment A, Layton).

Through the union of Wisdom and Power, a group of angelic rulers came into existence, and from these rulers a total of 365 heavens or aeons were generated (Irenaeus 1.24.3). Each heaven had its

own chief ruler (*arkhôn*), and numerous lesser angels. The final heaven, which Basilides claimed is the realm of matter in which we all dwell, was said by him to be ruled by “the god of the Jews,” who favored the Jewish nation over all others, and so caused all manner of strife for the nations that came into contact with them—as well as for the Jewish people themselves. This behavior caused the rulers of the other 364 heavens to oppose the god of the Jews, and to send a savior, Jesus Christ, from the highest realm of the Father, to rescue the human beings who are struggling under the yoke of this jealous god (Irenaeus 1.24.4).

Since the realm of matter is the sole provenance of this spiteful god, Basilides finds nothing of value in it, and states that “salvation belongs only to the soul; the body is by nature corruptible” (Irenaeus 1.24.5). He even goes so far as to declare, contra Christian orthodoxy, that Christ’s death on the cross was only apparent, and did not actually occur “in the flesh” (Irenaeus 1.24.4)—this doctrine came to be called docetism.⁵⁰⁵

So in the teachings and doctrine of Basilides we see clear “Gnostic” elements in Jesus as the personified *Logos* being manifest to bridge the theological gap as it were between the wrathful God of the *Old Testament* and the benevolent God the Father as taught and personified by Jesus himself. We also find this synthesis of all of the different metaphysical and theological elements which were characteristic of Hellenic philosophy integrated into a wholly unique and distinct cosmogony and world order as it were, another marked characteristic of the Gnostics.

Further insights into the Gnostic tradition can be gleaned from The *Gospel of Thomas*, one of the other great finds in the Nag Hammadi Library collection of scrolls that was not included in the *Bible* and contains what are thought to be quite early sayings and teachings of Christ. Much of the material can actually be found in the canonical Gospels themselves pointing to either a common source of all of the material – the Four canonical Gospels and the *Gospel of Thomas* - to perhaps an earlier origin of the *Gospel of Thomas* work, or to the existence of an even earlier source from which all the Gospels stem from, a source given the code name “Q” by modern scholars from which they theorize that both the *Gospel of Thomas* and the synoptic Gospels drew on heavily. The latter view is probably the most dominant one amongst early Biblical scholars, that is the existence of an earlier source Q from which all these Gospels drew, but it is also believed that perhaps the *Gospel of Thomas* had ties with Syria where sentiment for Thomas was strong.

The *Gospel of Thomas* itself is composed of 114 sayings which are attributed to Jesus, almost half of which strongly resemble similar passages in the canonical Gospels, the others being of perhaps more Gnostic origin as they are not found in any of the canonical Gospels. In all likelihood however, it does appear that the *Gospel of Thomas*, although categorized as Gnostic given its

⁵⁰⁵ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry for *Gnosticism*. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/gnostic/>

exclusion from standard biblical canon and its existence in the Nag Hammadi Library texts which at some level define what we now refer to as Gnostic literature, does represent a valid and very close connected tradition to the teachings of Jesus himself, and this Gospel, like the majority of the other Gnostic texts, does not emphasize the great prophet's death and resurrection and its meaning for the salvation of mankind, but on the notion of the knowledge which he revealed to his followers, hidden in secret teachings and rituals which the masses could not understand or comprehend – a notion that clearly found few proponents in the early Christian Church Fathers.

*Jesus saw some babies nursing. He said to his disciples, "These nursing babies are like those who enter the (Father's) kingdom." They said to him, "Then shall we enter the (Father's) kingdom as babies?" Jesus said to them, "When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female, when you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom]."*⁵⁰⁶

The theme of the *Gospel of Thomas* runs from esoteric teachings of inner, hidden knowledge as evidenced from the quotation above, but reference to a variety of other parables some of which are also found in the canonical Gospels, speaking to the validity of the tradition represented by the *Gospel of Thomas* as well as the varying interpretations of the message of the historical Jesus that existed in the few centuries after his death. In this gospel, Jesus's divinity is not explicitly referred to, nor is the story of his death by crucifixion or resurrection from the dead, the theme of the Gospel is the "hidden words that the living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down", as is stated in the introduction, the hidden and secret nature of the teaching lends itself to Gnostic classification, and clearly it circulated in Gnostic like esoteric and mystical communities as evidenced by it being found in the Nag Hammadi Library, which also contained an excerpt from Plato's *Republic*, speaking to the continuity and synthesis of the Platonic teachings alongside the Gospels in the early Gnostic movement.

Another Gnostic classified text which is worth mentioning is the so-called the *Apocryphon of John* from the second century CE (it was known to Irenaeus and mentioned in his *Against Heresies*) which survives in four extant manuscripts in varying lengths, three of which were found in the Nag Hammadi Library, and narrates an alternative story of creation which can only be looked at as an attempt to synthesize the *Demiurge* of Plato, the Yahweh of the Jews and the one true God the Father that Jesus speaks of in some sort of coherent story line. The cosmological account

⁵⁰⁶ *Gospel of Thomas*, verse 22. Translation by Stephen Patterson and Marvin Meyer, from <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/gosthom.html>.

describes the single unified and eternal principle of the Monad from which all creation comes forth and from which the *Aeons* emerge, Light (which is synonymous with Christ) and Mind being some of the basic constituents of the early creation and from which further Aeons and powers are created. Eventually one of these Aeons, *sophia*, without consent of the Monad and without the aid of a male companion brings forth an entity named *Yaltabaoth*, who is the first of a series of fallible and less than purely divine heavenly creatures called Archons and from which our heavenly and earthly creation is formed and from which salvation, via Christ, is required in order that eternal life and balance to the universe be restored.

The *Pistis Sophia*, a Gnostic text of somewhat later origin from maybe the third or fourth century CE, relates the gnostic teachings of Jesus to his disciples after he is resurrected from the dead, alluding to period of 11 years that he taught his disciples after his death by crucifixion. In this text *Sophia* also plays a prominent role and is associated as the consort of Christ, the revealer of mysteries, the Heavenly Mother, the Psyche of the world and even as the female aspect of *Logos*. The *Pistis Sophia* describes the highest realm of the light, the nature and subsistence of souls after death, and the way of salvation through initiation into the mysteries of Christ. This book quotes from *Psalms*, from prophets of the *Old Testament*, as well as from some of the canonical Gospels and despite its Gnostic bent retains some of the core Christian theological features that survived into orthodox Christianity, with an altogether *esoteric* and *mystery cultish* bent consistent with the Gnostic sects and schools of thought from which it must have emerged.

What we can clearly say about Gnosticism in general, despite the differences among the various so-called “Gnostic” schools themselves is that they shared an esoteric view of the interpretation of the teachings of Christ and that they developed various cosmogonies which although stemmed from the spherical notion of the heavens which has become the predominant astronomical picture of the times (think Ptolemy) but they looked upon these spheres not just as an astronomical system but also as a system for the ascent of the soul, an ascent that in their view Jesus had outlined for them in his “hidden” teachings and one which, according to some astrological teachings reflected the “descent” of the soul into this world.

Interestingly, most of the Gnostic teachers claimed close lineage to the Apostles themselves - Valentinus to St. Paul and Basilides to Matthew for example and both these early Gnostic teachers were from Alexandria of course, the home and heart of Hellenic philosophy in the first few centuries after Christ and where many of the most influential of the early Christian Church Fathers were schooled and taught as well. Despite their differences however, their doctrines focused less on the physical life and death of Christ but the eternal message that lied within his secret teachings and the mystical and esoteric meanings that were to be gleaned from his teachings from the vantage point of the “ascent of the soul”, i.e. *gnosis*.

The Gnostic tradition was a mystic one no doubt, one that had many heads and many variations in practice, but they were at the least united on Christ as the consort of *sophia*, and that it was the flawed *Demiurge* (the *Old Testament* God) who needed to be bailed out of his self-created predicament by Christ the savior. So while their worship of Jesus as the messiah was consistent, as well as their view of him as the personified *Logos* of God, there were clearly different interpretations of the underlying world order and *mythos* within which his teachings were interpreted throughout the Gnostic landscape, and they also held different views than what came to be understood as the orthodox Christian position with respect to the reality and meaning of the so-called "Passion" of Christ.

To the Gnostics, and even to Clement of Alexandria (among others such as Irenaeus most notably) who spoke against them, it was Jesus who was the new song for the new age. They just disagreed on the song itself, but their tune was not altogether different. The message spoke consistently of the true existence of eternal life, and Christ's role in teaching, illustrating and at some level "granting" it to all who looked to him as the carrier of the true message of salvation for the "new age", even if they each presented a somewhat different picture as to how Christ fit into the eternal celestial and cosmological structure that underpinned creation itself.

Although it's hard to sum up and categorize the position of the various Gnostic sects which from a certain vantage point sat in opposition to the more orthodox interpretations of Christian theology as espoused in the *Epistles of Paul* and the canonical Gospels of *Mathew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*, it is clear that this tradition represented some sort of threat to the growing power of the Christian authority which chose to focus less on his "mystery" and "secret doctrine" and more on his birth, teachings and resurrection as relayed in the canonical Gospels, and the reliance on his words as captured therein that spoke to Christ the savior as being the only gateway to heaven.

According to the Gnostics, this world, the material cosmos, is the result of a primordial error on the part of a supra-cosmic, supremely divine being, usually called sophia (Wisdom) or simply the Logos. This being is described as the final emanation of a divine hierarchy, called the Plêrôma or "Fullness," at the head of which resides the supreme God, the One beyond Being. The error of sophia, which is usually identified as a reckless desire to know the transcendent God, leads to the hypostatization of her desire in the form of a semi-divine and essentially ignorant creature known as the Demiurge (Greek: dêmiourgos, "craftsman"), or Ialdabaoth [Yaltabaoth], who is responsible for the formation of the material cosmos. This act of craftsmanship is actually an imitation of the realm of the Pleroma, but the Demiurge is ignorant of this, and hubristically declares himself the only existing God. At this point, the Gnostic revisionary critique of the Hebrew Scriptures begins, as well as the general rejection of this world as a product of error and ignorance, and the positing of a higher world, to which the human soul will eventually return. However, when all is said and done, one finds that the error of sophia and the begetting of the inferior cosmos are occurrences that follow a certain law of necessity, and that the so-called "dualism" of the divine and the earthly is really a

*reflection and expression of the defining tension that constitutes the being of humanity—the human being.*⁵⁰⁷

Although it's easy to understand why the early Church rejected these "Gnostic" teachings as heresy, one wonders how much of the teachings – as little as we know of them – were true in the sense that they reflect what Jesus actually believed and taught to his inner circle. What also remains a mystery is what schools of thought if any, from a philosophical or even mystical perspective, influenced Jesus himself. Yes he spoke in parables and yes he – at least in the last few years of his life – lived and taught in Palestine and of course he was a Jew. What can be said is that he was no doubt exposed to Jewish orthodoxy given his own cultural heritage, even if he ultimately rejected it, and was in all likelihood exposed to some of the *mystery cult* traditions that were prevalent in Palestine at the time, the *Chaldean Oracles* for example, which helped him see no doubt the unity of existence and the unity of the individual with the cosmos, but of course it does not leave out the possibility that he was simply divinely illuminated himself without any outside assistance or prodding – an unlikely scenario but a possibility nonetheless.

Looked at in this way, it is clear why the orthodox Christian tradition had to fully reject the Gnostic interpretation and view of Jesus as it represented not just a threat to the power of the Church itself (for if Christians didn't need the Church then upon what authority would they stand?), but a completely different interpretation and underlying *mythos* for the explanation of reality. This essentially was the great divide between the orthodox interpretations of Christ and Gnosticism.

Leaving the mystical bent of the Gnostic tradition aside, which in and of itself threatened the emerging authoritarian structure of the Church, there was still a major theological divergence from a cosmological and causality perspective, that separated the two opposing perspectives on the meaning of the Life and Death of Christ - the one orthodox view that his life, in its divine character, its extraordinary and miraculous beyond belief story line, was in itself his message and his life should be worshipped, and sanctified and celebrated, and the other Gnostic view looked more upon his life not as existing actually but took more of an esoteric and mystical vantage point, where the Christ was not actually born and did not die but in fact lived eternally as a manifestation of the *Logos* and which bridged the Jewish conception of God and the conception of God as put forth by Jewish as reconcilable in a different light than (what became) the standard orthodox view.

The standard view became, and in many respects was forced to become, the doctrine of the Trinity which spoke of Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit who were of one, *unqualified substance* (*homoousios*) which moved the waters at the beginning of time itself (*Genesis*), and were

⁵⁰⁷ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *Gnosticism*. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/gnostic/>

undivided and ontologically equivalent and yet at the same time different manifestations of the great unified force of the undivided *One*, providing the theological explanation to the various passages in the (orthodox) *Bible* which were seemingly contradictory and retaining the unity of God in no uncertain terms.

Islamic Philosophy: Allāh as the *Final Cause*

One cannot properly explore the evolution of metaphysics and theology in Western civilization and its metamorphosis into *science*, without having some level of understanding of its development and evolution after the so-called fall of the Roman Empire through the Middle Ages, after which science clearly emerges as the dominant world view, eclipsing theology and religion which had dominated the intellectual landscape since the dawn of man. Furthermore, it is also clear that one cannot look at theological development during this time period without seeing it not only through the lens of Christianity, but also through Islam, the latter of which was a major force in the Western world not long after its introduction by its prophet Muḥammad in the 7th century up until modern times. Interestingly enough, once one starts to dig into this era of metaphysical and theological evolution, from an Islamic/Muslim perspective, it becomes clear that the early Muslim theologians and philosophers also leaned on Hellenic philosophy for their legitimacy and authority in much the same way that their Christian counterparts to the West had done some five centuries earlier, even going so far as to refer to Aristotle as the *First Teacher*” in some contexts.

As the stability of the Roman Empire broke down in the 5th century, marked most notably by the sacking of Rome by the Visigoths in 410 CE, a new center of influence and power emerges in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire with its capital in Byzantium, later renamed Constantinople and today called Istanbul in the modern nation of Turkey. The Byzantine Empire, or Eastern Roman Empire, as it came to be known by modern historians, was effectively an extension of the Roman Empire in the East after Rome collapses in the 4th century, although it reflected a much more Hellenic and Greek outlook than its Latin counterpart to the West. The state sponsored religion remained Christianity however, and this Empire persisted as a force in the Mediterranean and Near East for a thousand years or so until Constantinople fell to the invading Ottoman Turks in 1453.

As orthodox Christianity starts to mature and spread with the help of first the Roman and then Byzantine Empire, Islam is founded as a counter force by Muḥammad (c. 570 – 632 CE) in the 7th century in what is now modern day Saudi Arabia, lying just South East of Constantinople and the center of Christianity. Islam in the coming centuries and even down through into modern times becomes a powerful socio-political as well as theological influence in the region running parallel to and in many respects in reaction to Christianity in the Mediterranean, Middle East, and North Africa (and in present day of course throughout the world).

Islam leans on the same Abrahamic heritage as does Judaism and Christianity, and yet at the same time it espouses the belief that although Jesus as well as Moses were in fact true prophets of God, or Allāh, that their message had been altered and/or misinterpreted over time and that

it was Islam, as revealed to Muḥammad by Allāh himself and as reflected in the *Qur'ān*, is the one and only unadulterated version of truth and represents the final revelation of God in the modern era.

And We did certainly give Moses the Torah and followed up after him with messengers. And We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear proofs and supported him with the Pure Spirit. But is it [not] that every time a messenger came to you, [O Children of Israel], with what your souls did not desire, you were arrogant? And a party [of messengers] you denied and another party you killed.⁵⁰⁸

The word Islam in Arabic stems from the assimilation and integration of three letters/concepts in the Arabic language, *s-l-m*, the combination of which are taken together and denote “wholeness”, “safety” or “peace”. Within a religious context, Islam is the infinitive of a verb which can be loosely translated into English as something along the lines of “the voluntary submission to God’s will” and the word *Muslim*, which is what followers of Islam are referred to as of course, is the active participle of the same verb.⁵⁰⁹ During the latter years of his life, Muḥammad not only founded Islam and established the Muslim brotherhood, but he also became a renowned political leader and consolidated the various warring tribal forces of the Saudi Arabian peninsula, culminating toward the end of his life in the establishment of the Constitution of Medina in 622 CE which established the first Islamic state in history.

As the story goes it is said that the *Qur'ān*, as transcribed by Muḥammad’s followers shortly after his death, was revealed to Muḥammad by the archangel Gabriel in a series of revelations starting from when he was around 40 years old up until the end of his life. The *Qur'ān*, written in poetic Arabic, is composed of verses, or *ayat*, that make up 114 chapters, or *Suras*, which are classified either as Meccan or Medinan depending upon the place and time of their claimed revelation. The *Qur'ān*, along with the biographical and historical material associated with the life of Muḥammad in what is referred to as *Al-Sīra*, or simply *Sīra*, along with the *Ḥadīth*, which are sayings and phrases attributed to Muḥammad or his followers that have been handed down over the centuries in either oral or written form, in toto form the basis of Islamic thought and religion as it is practiced today.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁸ *Qur'ān* Sura 2, Al-Baqara, verse 87. From <http://quran.com/2>.

⁵⁰⁹ The Hebrew word *Shalom* and the Arabic word *Salam*, which both mean “peace” in their respective tongues, share a similar linguistic root, i.e. both Arabic and Hebrew are Central Semitic languages so share some of the same common word etymologies and meanings.

⁵¹⁰ The *Qur'ān*, *Sīra* and *Ḥadīth* are roughly analogous to the concepts of the *Tanakh*, *Torah*, and *Talmud* in the Judaic tradition respectively which make up not only the revealed scripture of the Jews (the *Torah*), but also the rabbinical and oral teachings handed down over the ages after Moses via the Rabbinical tradition, i.e. the *Tanakh* and *Talmud*.

In Islam, the concept of *monotheism* is referred to as the *tawhīd*, a word reflecting the singular, unique, and wholly integrated nature of the one true God, or Allāh (*wahid* is the word for “one” in Arabic). Islamic *monotheism* can be viewed as a purer form of *monotheism* relative to Christianity in that it, consistent with the Jewish tradition, does not teach the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, holding it to be a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the inseparable and unified nature of the one true God, or Allāh.

Although Islam references and acknowledges the prophets of the Jews as documented in the *Old Testament*, and even acknowledges the *Torah* and Gospel as revealed scripture⁵¹¹, it does not distinguish Jesus as the son of God and as the one and only messiah as Christianity does, and in the *Qur’ān* its message is quite clear that Christianity and Judaism, as it was practiced by the followers of the respective faiths as viewed through the eyes of Muḥammad, had become watered down and diluted and no longer paths to righteousness or salvation and unless a believer was to take up the message of Islam, then they would be subject to eternal damnation upon Last Judgment, just as the Christians believed was the fate of all those who did not take shelter in Jesus as their savior.

Islam teaches that the Jewish and Christian religions, like other pagan or polytheistic religious practitioners, have lost their way, and that despite their shared lineage and history with Muslims, have had their faith tarnished and jaded over the centuries since their scripture had been revealed to their respective prophets – the *Torah* of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus - and that the world was in need of a new, freshly revealed and interpreted faith in order to save mankind from evil.

*The Jews say "The Christians have nothing [true] to stand on," and the Christians say, "The Jews have nothing to stand on," although they [both] recite the Scripture. Thus the polytheists speak the same as their words. But Allāh will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that over which they used to differ.*⁵¹²

From a more scholarly and historical perspective, the *Qur’ān* is believed to have been transcribed some 20 years or so after Muḥammad’s death by one of his followers in order to ensure a single source of the scripture for all Muslims and discourage fragmentation among the Muslim community. Islam over the centuries has remained largely unified in its basic *theology* and content of its scripture, much more so than Christianity in fact, and it is the adherence and belief of different sets and interpretations of *Ḥadīth*, which are variously attributed to Muḥammad by

⁵¹¹ “He has sent down upon you, [O Muḥammad], the Book in truth, confirming what was before it. And He revealed the *Torah* and the Gospel”; *Qur’ān* Sura 3, Al-Imran, verse 3.

⁵¹² *Qur’ān* Sura 2, Al-Baqara, verse 113. From <http://quran.com/2>.

different sects of Islam, rather than different interpretations of the *Qur'ān*, that are the source of the various flavors of Islam present today; namely Sunni, Shi'a and Ibadi.

Consistent with all orthodox religious believers of scripture across all major faiths, fundamentalist Muslims believe that the precise words and verses that exist in the *Qur'ān* were directly revealed to Muḥammad by Allāh himself and furthermore Muslims believe, perhaps more so than their religious counterparts, that this transcription of revelation was kept word for word into the Arabic, hence the significance of the contents and verses of the *Qur'ān* and their recitation to the devout Muslim community. Whether or not this transcription was in fact as accurate and unadulterated as the orthodox Muslims believe, and of course whether or not one believes that the *Qur'ān* represents a direct divine revelation at all, is, like all religious doctrines, a matter of faith. However, it is fairly safe to assume as most modern scholars do that the organization of the sayings of the *Qur'ān* into verses and chapters (Suras) was a later invention of the author/editor of the *Qur'ān* rather than a construct of Muḥammad himself, speaking to the relevance and importance of written transcription upon the Islamic faith that is characteristic of all major religions no matter what their place in history is.

As Christianity incorporates the Jewish tradition, Islam also looks to the same historical and mythical narrative as encapsulated in the *Old Testament* to establish its own legitimacy and authority. Islam however, as juxtaposed with Judaism, accepts the message of Jesus as captured in the Gospels as revelatory as well, although it does not go so far as to accept him as the Son of God or of course as the only means of salvation as Christianity preaches.

The *Qur'ān* contains many references to the long line of Jewish prophets as well as Jesus, and even contains reference to *Old Testament* characters and stories such as Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, etc., assuming in fact that the reader (or listener/student as the case may be) is already quite familiar with Jewish and Christian lore. The *Qur'ān* relays some of the same *Old Testament* stories and myths within its own unique and colloquial narrative but adds a slightly different perspective, constantly reinforcing the notion that the message as it was revealed to the *Old Testament* prophets and to Jesus was true and legitimate, but that it had been so garbled by subsequent practitioners and followers that it was in need of a new and revised revelation, i.e. Islam. Even more so Christianity perhaps, Islam looks to its scripture the *Qur'ān* and the life of its prophet Muḥammad as the one and only means to salvation, resting on the revealed nature of its scripture along with its breadth and scope of social and legal tenets as the basis for all spiritual life and ethical conduct and ultimately as the source of salvation.

What is interesting and not so well known about the Islamic faith however, is that in the centuries that followed the death of Muḥammad and as the Islamic empire expanded throughout the Middle East, some of the most prolific and influential interpreters of the Islamic faith looked to Hellenic philosophy to legitimize and establish a more sound metaphysical foundation for

Islam, just as the early Judeo-Christian theologians had done. This is the so-called *falṣafa* tradition as they were called in Arabic, a direct transliteration of the Greek word *philosophia* into Arabic in fact. This tradition shows marked influence by the works of Aristotle, but also from Plato, Euclid and others classical Greek texts and authors as well.

During the first few centuries after Muḥammad's death in 632 CE and the subsequent proliferation of Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East via the Muslim conquests, many of the Greek philosophic works were translated into Arabic. The Arabs used the word *falṣafa* as the Arabic translation of the Greek word "philosopher", and as these classic Greek works were translated into Arabic and incorporated into the Muslim theological traditions via commentaries and teachings, Greek philosophical constructs were integrated into the Muslim theological tradition in much the same way as had occurred in the Jewish and Christian theological traditions some four or five centuries earlier. These works and their associated commentaries and interpretations by Muslim theologians were categorized as Islamic *wisdom*, or *ḥikmah* in Arabic, a word that is used in the *Qur'ān* associated not only with the teachings of the *Qur'ān* itself, but also as an epithet of Allāh, "the Wise", establishing the connection between the wisdom of the Hellenic philosophy tradition (*sophia*) with the teachings of the Islamic faith.

*Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise.*⁵¹³

The Arabic/Islamic respect for the Greek philosophical tradition begins very early in the history of Islam, and it is documented that as early as the reign of the Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma'mun (786-833 CE), significant efforts were made to collect Greek philosophic manuscripts from the Byzantine Empire and have them translated into Arabic by scholars in Bagdad, establishing an academic tradition and sphere of influence in the Muslim world that was akin to Hellenic Alexandria in antiquity. As part of this 9th century movement in Bagdad under the Abbasid Caliphs⁵¹⁴ to translate Greek philosophic works into Arabic, Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi, known in the West as Al-Kindi (801-873), emerges as the first and perhaps foremost of the Muslim *falṣafa*. Bagdad during this time is sometimes referred to as the "house of wisdom", or *Bayt al-Ḥikma* in Arabic during this early period of Arabic (Muslim) philosophical development, again speaking to the high position that the Arabic / Muslim community had for theological and philosophical thought in general, which at that time was very closely tied to – as it was with the

⁵¹³ *Qur'ān* 2:129. Translation taken from quran.com/2.

⁵¹⁴ *Caliph* being the term Arabs user for their rulers some centuries after Muḥammad's death. It means "successor", "lieutenant" or "substitute" in Arabic, referring to the connection between rulers and the lineage back to Muḥammad.

Greeks before them – what we would now consider to be the sciences, both moral and ethical, as well as physical.

Although much of his work is lost, Al-Kindi is remembered and revered as the leader of the first major effort by the Muslim Empire to translate Hellenic philosophic works into Arabic and thereby comes to be known as the father of Muslim philosophy. Some of the most lasting and influential works translated under the name Al-Kindi are Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *The Enneads* (IV-VI) of Plotinus, the *Elements of Theology* by Proclus, the *Timaeus* of Plato as well as many other assorted works by Aristotle and other less well known Greek philosophers. Although it is believed that Al-Kindi himself did not know Greek and therefore did not translate any of the texts himself, it is believed that he made corrections and provided commentary to the translations that are attributed to him and his team of scholars and academics.

Following the Hellenic philosophic tradition, and speaking to Al-Kindi's being a philosopher (*falṣafa*) in the true Greek sense of the word as a "lover of wisdom", Al-Kindi authored works on topics as broad ranging as medicine, Astronomy, and *mathematics* alongside his theological and metaphysical works, and is attributed by later historians to be skilled in the arts of the not only the Greeks, but the Persians and Hindus as well.⁵¹⁵ He is believed to have been the author of works such as *On First Philosophy*, for which is perhaps best known, an ontological work called *On the Definitions of Things and Their Descriptions* which was subsequently superseded by Avicenna's *Book of Definitions* in the 11th century, a treatise on *ethics* entitled *On the Art of Averting Sorrows* which bears many resemblances to Greek Stoicism⁵¹⁶, and other works entitled *On the Unity of God and the Limitation of the Body of the World*, and *Quantity of the Books of Aristotle and What is Required for the Acquisition of Philosophy*, displaying a marked Aristotelian influence on his work, albeit from a creationist perspective, both characteristics which were inherited and fleshed out by subsequent Islamic *falṣafa*.

With his body of work and efforts, Al-Kindi is attributed to having not only making mainstream Hellenic philosophy available to the Arabic world for the first time, but also establishing the first semantic bridge between Greek and Arabic philosophy and establishing the importance and relevance of specifically Aristotelian doctrine in the Islamic philosophical tradition, a somewhat unique and distinctive characteristic relative to Christian theological development which was influenced much more by Neo-Platonic thought and principles than the more logical and metaphysical Aristotle.

⁵¹⁵ See <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ip/rep/H029.htm>

⁵¹⁶ Authenticity of this work to Al-Kindi is questioned by some later historians.

Further assimilation of Hellenic philosophy into the Islamic philosophical tradition is attributed to Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Fārābī, or simply Al-Fārābī (c 872-951 CE), one of the most renowned and prolific of the Arabic/Muslim philosophers whose influence extended even beyond the Muslim world to the European philosophical community at large as well. Al-Fārābī is believed to have spent most of his life in Bagdad and along with his contributions to Muslim philosophy proper, also made significant contributions to the fields of *logic*, *mathematics*, music and psychology, following the tradition of the Greek philosophers as a true lovers of *wisdom* in all its forms.

Al-Fārābī is known in the Arabic community as the *Second Teacher*, or *Second Master*, Aristotle being known as the *First Teacher*, speaking to the prestige within which not only Al-Fārābī was held by subsequent Arabic/Muslim philosophers and theologians, but also the respect given to Aristotle himself in the Muslim philosophical community despite his altogether Greek, and foreign, heritage from some 1500 years prior. His most famous work is perhaps *The Virtuous City*, which despite being authored in a similar vein as Plato's *Republic* in describing the characteristics of the ideal state and the role of the philosopher within it as well as being designed to be a critique of the political structure and establishment of his time, displays a much more monotheistic and Neo-Platonic view of the world than his Greek predecessors, espousing the belief of a single creative force in the universe which distinguishes Al-Fārābī's philosophy from his Greek predecessors and even his Neo-Platonic predecessors in his monism.

In general, Al-Fārābī's philosophy/*theology* is a unique blend of Platonism and Aristotelianism, with emphasis on the unity of existence combined with a physical *cosmogony* and world order that was based on practical Astronomy derived from the work of the famous Greco-Roman Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy. Al-Fārābī's emphasis is ultimately on the indescribable and ineffable *first cause*, displaying his characteristically Aristotelian and in turn Western influence, but he identifies this *first cause*, the so-called *prime mover* of Aristotle, as indistinguishable or synonymous with God, or Allāh, putting him in what might be considered an orthodox monotheistic Neo-Platonic tradition, diverging from the Neo-Platonists before him, which works he clearly had access to in Arabic, but spoke of the divine triad and *emanation* of the many from the *One* rather than a *deterministic* type world view which is more attributable to Aristotelian works.

Al-Fārābī's work, as Plato and Aristotle had focused on before him, also dealt extensively with socio-political matters, emphasizing the practical importance of philosophy and the role of the philosopher in society, not as the *philosopher king* necessarily (as Plato describes in his *Republic*) but as a harbinger and role model of *moral* and *ethical* standards and responsible for leading a life directed toward the realization of what he refers to as "true happiness", a goal which he describes not just for the individual but as for the society as a whole, within which it is the role

of the philosopher to lead and show the way by example, reminiscent to some extent of Stoicism in some respects, whilst at the same time leaning on the civic duty constructs that were so prominent in the works of Plato and Aristotle.

The next Arabic/Muslim philosopher whose life and works influences not only subsequent Arabic/Muslim philosophers but also Medieval philosophy in general is *Ibn Sīnā*, or as he is known in the West Avicenna (c 980 - 1037 CE)⁵¹⁷. Avicenna followed Al-Fârâbî by a century or so and published many works on topics ranging from philosophy, Astronomy, *mathematics*, *logic*, *theology* and medicine that were influential on Arabic thought, scientific and medical practices in the Arabic world in his day and thereafter, philosophical and otherwise making him one of the best known of the historical Muslim philosophers. Perhaps his best-known philosophical treatise is his *Kitab al-Shifa'*, sometime referred to simply as *al-Shifa'*, or in the West known as the *Book of Healing*, which was written early in his life and partially in exile (reflecting the revolutionary aspects of some of his beliefs and writings), covers topics as broad as the not only *theology* and *metaphysics*, the soul and the afterlife, but also on *mathematics* and *logic*, carrying the tradition of Arabic *falṣafa* forward to no small degree. His work on *logic* that he is perhaps best known for are *al-Mantiq*, translated as *The Propositional Logic of Ibn Sīnā*, and a commentary on Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* which forms part of *al-Shifa'* entitled *al-Isharat wa-'l-tanbihat* or *Remarks and Admonitions*. He is also known by later biographers to have published works many other short works on *metaphysics* and *theology*, medicine, *philology*, zoology as well as poetry, much of which is unfortunately lost.

From a philosophical standpoint, Avicenna is clearly heavily influenced by his Greek and now Muslim predecessors in his upholding of the primary role of the faculties of human Reason and the Intellect as the primary tools, or guides, to God, or Allāh. He creates a fairly comprehensive *theory of knowledge* which underpins his philosophy which bears resemblance to Plato's *theory of forms* to some degree but to Avicenna, Allāh is equivalent to pure unadulterated Intellect which represents a somewhat unique twist on the philosophy and metaphysics of his predecessors, both in the Muslim philosophical tradition as well as the Hellenic one, although he still leans on the equivalence between Allāh and Aristotle's *prime mover*, consistent with his Muslim philosophical predecessors, but with a marked Islamic focus on the eternity of the soul and its battle between good and evil which in turn leads to reward or punishment, themes that are prevalent in the *Qur'ān* and also showed marked Persian, Zoroastrian influence.

Another influential member of the prestigious Arabic *falṣafa* tradition is Ibn Rushd (1126-1198), know to us in the West as Averroes. He is perhaps best known for the innovative creation of a markedly pure Aristotelian doctrine which came to be known as "Averroism" which as it turned

⁵¹⁷ Latin translations of Avicenna's works influenced many Christian philosophers, most notably Thomas Aquinas.

out was not nearly as influential in the Islamic world as it was in Medieval, primarily Judeo-Christian, Europe. His influence from a theological and philosophical standpoint can most notably be seen in the development of early Scholasticism, which in turn heavily influenced the education system in Europe through the Middle Ages and even into the Renaissance. He wrote many commentaries on Aristotle's works including *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *Book of the Soul*, and *On the Heavens* as well as *Posterior Analytics*. His classic work *Fasl al-maqal*, or *Decisive Treatise On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* went one step further from a philosophical standpoint than his Muslim philosophical predecessors and not only established the ultimate compatibility of philosophy and Islam, but also, much to the chagrin of his orthodox Islamic brethren, argued that philosophy in its pure quest for knowledge represented a more pure and direct path to salvation and pointed out the role of politics and power within the context of religious interpretation, emphasizing the important role of language citing how words can be understood to mean different things to different people in different socio-political contexts.

Irrespective of the clear and powerful impact of Muslim philosophy in the Middle Ages not only on Islam but also on Judeo-Christian theological development in the West, this Arabic movement facilitated and in some cases was the only source of the availability of the Greek philosophical texts the now predominantly Christian and Islamic Western world in the Mediterranean and Near East from the 7th through the 12th centuries and even down through modern times.

Orthodox Islam then, like Christianity and perhaps to a lesser extent Judaism before it given the age of its scripture, places emphasis on the literal interpretation of the *Qur'ān* itself as revealed scripture before individual theological interpretation or individual realization – all questions and answers lay either in the *Qur'ān* itself or in the *Ḥadīth* and *Sīra* that sprung from Muḥammad's "revelation". What is sometimes forgotten however, when looking back at the context within which the Islamic movement begins and spreads throughout the Arabian Peninsula and then in the Middle and Near East, is that there was clearly a socio-political motive embedded and integrated within the message of Muḥammad which was reflected quite markedly in the *Qur'ān* itself, more explicit and emphasized in fact than in its rival Jewish and Christian faiths to which the *Qur'ān* repeatedly references as tainted and outdated paths to salvation, paths followed by the so-called "unbelievers". The attempt is commendable, and surely the times and turmoil of the age of Muḥammad in some sense demanded this broad theological and socio-political grounding, but scholars and interpreters of his "words", be they people of Islamic faith or simply philosophers, must take into account the social, economic and spiritual plight of the peoples to which Islam originally resonated to truly understand his message.

Also somewhat deemphasized in the Islamic theological tradition is that the *Qur'ān*, along with being a map to salvation and a roadmap or guide to the rules and tenets of Islam, was also used

as a means to political ends, along with a guidebook for social welfare as well as the Islamic state begins to take shape in the aftermath of Muḥammad's death and subsequent spread of Islam throughout regions of greater geographical influence required a consolidated and coherent socio-political structure as well as theological beliefs to bind and bring together peoples from disparate tribes and cultures throughout what became known as the Islamic Empire. This dual utility of the *Qur'ān*, *Ḥadīth* and *Sīra* is evidenced by the breadth of socio-political topics covered in these works, topics ranging from banking and trade, the role of war in society, women and marriage, and even man's relationship to the environment – alongside the classic theological and Judeo-Christian historical narratives as well of course.

These views lay somewhat in contrast to the philosophy of the Hellenes who are known for the grounding of *morality* and *ethics* into a rational and intellectual framework rather than a religious one based upon the quest for salvation or inversely the avoidance of eternal damnation. The Hellenes however, a tradition followed and emphasized by Averroes, believed not only that philosophy and religion were ultimately compatible and complementary, but that it was the path of philosophy and the pursuit of knowledge that was in fact a more direct and unadulterated path toward liberation, in this life or the next, given in no small measure due its independence from political motive which undoubtedly has historically, and continues to this day, to taint organized religion.⁵¹⁸

Over the centuries following Muḥammad's death, Islamic influence spread throughout the Middle East, North Africa and into Central Asia via the Muslim Conquests, an age of conquest and proliferation of the Islamic faith that Muḥammad himself started on the Arabian Peninsula, creating a sphere of influence by the 8th century CE that rivaled even the Roman Empire at its height. From the start, Islam was not only a religious system that outlined how to worship the one true God, i.e. Allāh, and that idolatry and paganism was to be shunned, but it also prescribed a system of law and a way of life in a very detailed and explicit way such that political as well as religious harmony could be achieved. Such was the origin of the great faith of Islam that has been handed down to us over the centuries.

⁵¹⁸ Note the philosophical parallels that can be drawn between the role of the *intellect* as the means toward liberation in Muslim philosophy which is such a prevalent theme in Averroism, its precursors in Hellenic philosophy as can be found in the philosophy attributed to Anaxagoras which can be found inherent in the *cosmogony* implied or inferred from the *Derveni Papyrus*, and the importance of knowledge, *or jnana*, in Vedānta, most prominently seen in the path of Jnana Yoga as interpreted by the more modern Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902).

The Age of Enlightenment: The Philosophy of Science

Ever since the dawn of civilization mankind has created mythological, semantic and metaphysical paradigms within which the nature of existence and knowledge itself, along with the underlying order of the heavens and the earth and all its creatures within it, mankind included, could be explained. In modern times this evolution of thought, if you can call it that, has culminated in a predominantly *deterministic* and *empiricist* view of reality and one which is completely absent of the symbols and psychological import of the *act of perception* upon this view of reality, a development which can only be looked at as an unintended, and potentially destructive, byproduct of these so-called developments of intellectual progress that were such a marked characteristic of the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment Era in the history of Western civilization.⁵¹⁹

These altogether Western theo-philosophical developments which have evolved into modern science emerged from the cultural melting pot in the Mediterranean that began first with the Persian and then Greek empires in the first millennium BCE and then was followed by the development and subsequent spread of *monotheism* by first Latin/Roman imperial conquests and then counteracted and fueled even further by the spread of Islam, forces which ultimately culminated into the revolutionary developments that are so characteristic of the Enlightenment Era period of our history where religion was at best cast aside as a complementary and independent pursuit to knowledge, i.e. science, and at worst was abandoned altogether as a product of the ignorant, uneducated or uninformed mind.

The common thread for Western philosophical development since the teachings of Aristotle however, independent of *theological* and *monotheistic* developments which attempted to usurp his, as well as Plato's teachings, has been the supremacy of Reason and *Logic* as the tools by which reality and in turn knowledge itself should be defined, the very same tools which were the source for the categorization and development of what we today call science in all its forms, the Tree of Knowledge so to speak. And in modern times, particularly in the last two centuries, this Tree of Knowledge has grown more and more branches as modern man has developed more advanced tools to understand and peer into the universe at both the macrocosmic as well as microcosmic scale and the different branches of science have grown more and more specialized and nuanced.

⁵¹⁹ The Scientific Revolution is an historical period which is classically bound by modern historians by Copernicus's publication of *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (*On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*) in 1543 and ends with Newton's publication of *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*) in 1687.

From a pure, or first, philosophical standpoint, i.e. *first philosophy*, using the definition provided by Aristotle, although many individuals contributed to intellectual developments during what modern historians call the “Age of Enlightenment”, there are four in particular that from this author’s perspective exerted the greatest influence on subsequent modes and arenas of metaphysical thought, all living and writing between the 16th and 18th centuries CE in Western Europe. These are the empiricist Francis Bacon (1561-1626 CE), the famous French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes (1632-1704 CE), the Dutch rationalist philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677 CE), and then the great and prolific German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804 CE) whose work in some respects summarizes and consolidates, and represents the height and apex of, Enlightenment Era philosophy.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626 CE) was a successful politician in England the 16th and early 17th century who (re-)established and emphasized *inductive* methods of inquiry for the attainment of knowledge, providing for the foundations for our modern *scientific method* which was leveraged not only by subsequent philosophers of the Enlightenment Era, but also by the natural philosophers, or scientists, that followed him that provided the intellectual basis for the Scientific Revolution which followed. Although he was a prolific author and wrote works as broad ranging as political science, *ethics*, *theology* and medicine, he is probably best known for his work in *natural philosophy* and *metaphysics* than anything else and his attacks on Scholasticism⁵²⁰ and Aristotelianism in particular as inadequate tools and means for the acquisition and categorization of *knowledge*, forever changing our approach to *how* we understand the world around us, how we define reality itself, as well as the means to which we should arrive at such definitions.

Bacon espoused *empiricism* and inductive reasoning as the most effective means at arriving at knowledge or truth, and speaks from a *deterministic* and *materialistic* worldview as laid out by the Epicurean school in classical antiquity, as juxtaposed with the Platonic (and Neo-Platonic) and Peripatetic (Aristotelian) schools which were the primary focus of his (and most other) studies and curriculum that he followed at Trinity College and Cambridge University, both of which followed the “Scholastic” method of teaching that was prevalent at the time. Bacon believed that the human mind was not in fact *tabula rasa*, or a “clean slate”, and that in order to prepare

⁵²⁰ Scholasticism is a method of teaching and learning that dominated the intellectual landscape in universities during the “Medieval” period of history in Europe from circa 1100 to 1700 CE. Scholastic method placed a strong emphasis on *dialectical* reasoning, which included inductive as well as deductive methods of *logic* as elucidated primarily by Aristotle in classical antiquity, as the basis for knowledge and the establishment of truth versus falsehood. Reconciliation and harmonization of Christian *theology* and classical *philosophy*, which included the *sciences* as we understand them today, was one of the main thrusts of the curriculum in general. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Scholasticism', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 23 November 2016, 00:51 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Scholasticism&oldid=751042398>> [accessed 23 November 2016].

the individual for the acquisition of *true knowledge*, it must be purged of what he referred to as intellectual “idols”.

Bacon’s philosophy does not exclude the notion of God or God’s will however, but in order to reconcile the laws of the world of the spirit and the laws of the world of matter, or the material world, he posits the existence of what he refers to as the “Two Books” - the *Book of God* which he believed reflected God’s Will and the *Book of Nature* which he believed reflected God’s Works, establishing an intellectual framework within which God could co-exist with science but at the same time splitting the two domains of knowledge into separate pursuits thereby establishing the legitimacy of different ground rules for the acquisition of knowledge in each.

From the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Francis Bacon we find a good description of these two different modes of thinking and their relationship to one another:

*The glory of God is to conceal a thing, but the glory of the king is to find it out; as if, according to the innocent play of children, the Divine Majesty took delight to hide his works, to the end to have them found out; and as if kings could not obtain a greater honour than to be God's playfellows in that game, considering the great commandment of wits and means, whereby nothing needeth to be hidden from them.*⁵²¹

Rene Descartes (1632-1704 CE) follows shortly after Bacon from an historical perspective and not only establishes the foundations of *analytic geometry* (the *Cartesian coordinate system* bears his name), but also makes significant contributions in *philosophy* and *metaphysics* proper as well. His seminal work *Meditations on First Philosophy*⁵²², provides not only a detailed, rational and logical proof of the existence of God, but also a metaphysical system which incorporated the science of human nature - *theology* in many respects - alongside the physical sciences. In fact, Descartes’s theory of *knowledge*, or *epistemology*, emphasized the importance of *mathematics* in not only describing reality but in providing the intellectual and metaphysical framework for which things could be “known”.

⁵²¹ Taken from Klein, Jürgen, "Francis Bacon", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/francis-bacon/>>. Quote from Blumenberg, *Der Prozess der theoretischen Neugierde*, 1973. For more on Bacon’s philosophy and theory of Idols and theory of Two Books, see <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/francis-bacon/>.

⁵²² *Meditations on First Philosophy* was originally written in Latin and first published in 1641, its title revealing the still prevailing influence of Aristotle on the various branches of knowledge, i.e. *first philosophy* being equivalent to *metaphysics* as it were and in Medieval times, as in antiquity although to a lesser extent, represented the inquiry into the fundamental nature of existence, i.e. *metaphysics* and/or *theology* depending upon the emphasis of the tradition within which it was studied.

He is perhaps most famously known for his phrase *cogito ergo sum*, or “I think therefore I am”, which comes from his work *Discourse on the Method and Principles of Philosophy*, usually abbreviated as *Discourse on Method*, signifying the close relationship between perception and existence in his metaphysical framework. Descartes held an Aristotelian view of *knowledge*, reinforcing the notion that the field of philosophy embodied all knowledge, spanning all of the modern-day disciplines that we now refer to as Science: Medicine, Biology, Psychology, etc. Describing it thus in a letter he wrote to the French Translator of his *Principles of Philosophy*, using terminology that could just as easily been used by Diogenes Laertius to describe Stoic philosophy in antiquity:

*Thus, all Philosophy is like a tree, of which Metaphysics is the root, Physics the trunk, and all the other sciences the branches that grow out of this trunk, which are reduced to three principal, namely, Medicine, Mechanics, and Ethics. By the science of Morals, I understand the highest and most perfect which, presupposing an entire knowledge of the other sciences is the last degree of wisdom.*⁵²³

With Descartes, we find a heavy reliance and emphasis on *reason* and *logic* to arrive at *truth* and *knowledge*, at a more mature and modernized level than the ancient philosophers that came before him. Descartes the mathematician, as well as the philosopher, attempted to apply the same rigors of inference and deductive reasoning that underpinned the laws of *mathematics* into the realm of philosophy, *metaphysics*, and even *theology*. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes takes his concepts of reason and *logic* as pillars of truth and understanding to prove the existence of God and the Soul, through the use of the same rational methods that he outlines in his *Discourse on Method*.

*I have always thought that two issues – namely, God and the soul – are chief among those that ought to be demonstrated with the aid of philosophy rather than theology. For although it suffices for us believers to believe by faith that the human soul does not die with the body, and that God exists, certainly no unbelievers seem capable of being persuaded of any religion or even of almost any moral virtue, until these two are first proven to them by natural reason.*⁵²⁴

One could argue that it is with Descartes that we have firmly established *reason* and *logic* in and of themselves as the pillars of knowledge, rejecting the notion of blind faith, or belief, in in things

⁵²³ René Descartes: *Letter of the Author to the French Translator of the Principles of Philosophy serving for a preface*". Retrieved December 2011.

⁵²⁴ *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Rene Descartes, Third Edition, Letter of Dedication, pg. 1.

that could not be proved or reasoned out by *logic*. It is important to point out of course, that while he looked to reason and *logic* as the cornerstones of all philosophical inquiry, which included *first philosophy* as well as what we consider today *theology*, he in no way postulated that God or the Soul did not exist, in fact quite the opposite. He intended to place and prove their existence upon firm, rational and logical foundations. In this context Descartes can be looked upon as an Enlightenment Era Plato of sorts, as Plato very much looked to reason and *logic* as the primary guideposts of determining the nature of reality just as Descartes did, and they both used these “rational” tools (as Aristotle did thereafter even more so), to attempt to establish not just the reality and eternal existence of *ideas* in and of themselves (i.e. *forms*), upon which his principle of the *Good* ultimately rested, but also the reality and eternal existence of the Soul upon which his entire system of *ethics* and political philosophy was based. After Descartes and the natural philosophers that followed him, most notably Newton of course, it was almost considered self-evident that the natural universe, material reality, operates according to rational and reasonable laws that are best described by *mathematics*, the language of God if you will.

Descartes’s intellectual developments in many respects can be looked upon, despite the sophistication of the *logic* and *mathematics* that he was exposed to and which clearly influenced his work, as a harkening back to the time of the height of Hellenic philosophy in classical antiquity. A time before *theology*, as reflected in both the Christian and Muslim movements, dominated the intellectual landscape of Europe and the Middle and Near East for some thousand years or so, a time period referred to by many historians from the Middle Ages even into modern times as the so-called “Dark Ages”, a term used due to of course to the perception that for some one thousand years or so, during the time when religion dominated the intellectual as well as socio-political landscape in the West, pure “scientific” and/or philosophical inquiry independent of religious dogma was almost non-existent.

The next influential philosopher of the Enlightenment Era that made significant contributions uniquely to the intellectual developments of the Scientific Revolution was Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677 CE). Spinoza was a 17th century Dutch philosopher and naturalist of Jewish descent who is perhaps best known for directly and openly challenging the authority of Scripture. He also directly challenged and rejected Descartes’s *mind-body dualism*, and put forth an alternative *metaphysics* and *moral* and *ethical* framework that is perhaps best described as *naturalism*, very much in the spirit of the Stoics some thousand years earlier in fact.

Spinoza believed that there was only one corporeal substance that permeated all of nature and that it was governed by a set of rational and universal laws, challenging the notion of Free Will, the existence of an anthropomorphic God, as well as the validity of Scripture and the validity of miracles. His ideas, to say the least, not only constituted very radical notions in his time, but also

not surprisingly put him at odds not just with the Church of course, but also within the Jewish community as well. He was excommunicated, or perhaps more accurately put publically censured, by the Jewish community in 1656, at the ripe age of 23 in fact.

*Nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same, i.e., the laws and rules of nature, according to which all things happen, and change from one form to another, are always and everywhere the same. So the way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same, viz. through the universal laws and rules of nature.*⁵²⁵

His seminal work which, was published posthumously, was entitled *Ethics* and is a systematic critique not just of Descartes's *mind-body dualism*, but also of the traditional conceptions of God, and Christian *theology* in general, along with – as the title implies - and the ethical and moral framework upon which these belief systems sat. Spinoza, as reflected in most predominantly in *Ethics* but also was a constant theme in his other works as well, advocated - again very much in the same vein as the spirit of the Stoic philosophers some thousand years prior – for the restraint of passions as the key to the leading of a virtuous life which in the end was to Spinoza the true source of happiness. In general, Spinoza promoted and taught that the key to happiness lay in the supremacy of the rational faculty of man over not just blind faith in God or Scripture, but also over the pursuit of passions and desire as well, his philosophy later coming to represent what later philosophers and historians called *rationalism*.

Spinoza, like many natural scientists that followed him and reflecting in fact a sentiment which is common within the scientific community in modern times - with Einstein being perhaps the most illustrious example – was a *determinist* and as such believed that all events and effects and outcomes of the world were entirely predestined and based upon the laws of cause and effect, i.e. completely abandoning the notion of Free Will which is incompatible with this doctrine. In his own words, *"That eternal and infinite being we call God, or Nature, acts from the same necessity from which he exists."*⁵²⁶. His belief in *necessity* and *determinism* were hallmarks of his philosophy:

The more this knowledge that things are necessary is concerned with singular things, which we imagine more distinctly and vividly, the greater is this power of the Mind over the affects, as

⁵²⁵ Nadler, Steven, "Baruch Spinoza", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/spinoza/>>. Page 22.

⁵²⁶ Spinoza, *Ethics*, Latin version only. Part IV, Preface.

experience itself also testifies. For we see that Sadness over some good which has perished is lessened as soon as the man who has lost it realizes that this good could not, in any way, have been kept. Similarly, we see that [because we regard infancy as a natural and necessary thing], no one pities infants because of their inability to speak, to walk, or to reason, or because they live so many years, as it were, unconscious of themselves. (Vp6s)⁵²⁷

As this passage reflects, Spinoza's answer to the question of how one should conduct one's life, i.e. his ethical philosophy as it were, was the use of *reason* itself in order to fully appreciate and understand one's place in this natural order. In so doing, one can only conclude that one should minimize the extent and influence of the "passions of the human soul" via the pursuit of true *knowledge* and *virtue* via *reason* itself, through which happiness could ultimately be achieved - as much as it could be achieved in the natural order of things that is. Spinoza's ethical philosophy rests on the principle of the natural world reflecting the unified essence of God, i.e. *naturalism*, and by subduing those passions that lead to misery, pain and suffering – again the direct cause and effect relationship and the use of pure reason to determine this relationship and reach the conclusion that by removing the original cause the effect, i.e. misery, can also be removed – optimal happiness in this life can be achieved.⁵²⁸

This focus on pure reason as the "means to salvation" as it were, and in particular the subduction of the passions as the means by which happiness, i.e. *eudaimonia*, can be achieved in many respects echoes the sentiments of the Stoic philosophical school from classical Greek antiquity. The idea of suffering and misery being caused by the mindless pursuit of passions, from which one can deduce that by minimizing such pursuits optimal happiness can be achieved, echoes in many respects the Buddhist doctrine of suffering as well. Although there is no evidence that Spinoza was influenced by Buddhist doctrine, it is very possible that the philosophy of the Stoic school influenced him to a large extent

It's important to recognize however, that even though he disagreed with much of the philosophical framework put forth by Descartes, he nonetheless – like Descartes - did not altogether disavow or reject the notion or existence of "God", but rather argued that God should be identified with the whole of nature rather than some anthropomorphic and all-knowing deity that sat in Heaven and granted mankind some special place in the universe and on Earth as taught by Christian dogma and Scripture. Hence the *naturalist* and *rationalist* categorization of his philosophy which led directly to his expulsion from the Jewish community, and the theological

⁵²⁷ Nadler, Steven, "Baruch Spinoza", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/spinoza/>>. Page 27.

⁵²⁸. See the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Spinoza for parallels on his philosophy with some of the Greco-Roman Stoic philosophers from antiquity - Nadler, Steven, "Baruch Spinoza", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/spinoza/>>.

community at large really, given his rejection of Scripture as a source of knowledge and in fact his rejection of the orthodox Judeo-Christian perspective of God.

In Spinoza's *metaphysics* God is equated with the underlying substrata of the entire universe and is directly associated with and described as inseparable from Nature, discarding the then orthodox and standard notion of an anthropomorphic omniscient and omnipotent God, and therefore the existence of miracles as a manifestation of his power. He described miracles as "human inventions" and was extremely critical of any literal interpretation of the *Bible*. Spinoza even went so far in his *naturalist* bent as to suggest that that human beings, i.e. the race of man, did not hold some special dominion or authority over nature as was espoused by all of the Abrahamic religions, but associated mankind directly with and as a product of Nature, a world which again was governed by wholly *deterministic forces* and laws that once discovered and properly understood could explain all of the different aspects of *reality*, including of course how mankind should behave in order to achieve happiness at the individual as well as at the socio-political level.

Spinoza's represented a sharp contrast to the Christian ideology which had so influenced Europe for so many centuries of course, and it is fair to say that work empowered and emboldened subsequent philosophers and scientists and represented a significant departure from the longstanding Christian (and Islamic and Jewish) theological view that upheld the special place of mankind in the universe. In fact, one can look at Spinoza's philosophy as laying the intellectual groundwork as it were for the philosophy put forth by the famous English-American political activist and philosopher Thomas Paine (1737 – 1809), one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, who wrote perhaps one of the most influential and controversial treatises of the Enlightenment Era, i.e. *The Age of Reason* at the end of the 18th century some hundred plus years after Spinoza. Paine, as Spinoza had done before him, strongly rejected the authority of Scripture and the existence of God in the orthodox Judeo-Christian sense, raising the fury of Christian believers on both sides of the Atlantic but at the same time no doubt influencing the design of the Constitution of the United States with its fundamental separation between Church and State.

On the natural philosophical side of development, the branch of the Tree of Knowledge that ends up transforming into what we today refer to as the Science proper, the beginning of the Scientific Revolution starts with Copernicus (1473-1543), best known of course for explicitly challenging the long held belief that the Earth was the center of the Universe, a notion that underpinned Western civilization's view of mankind's place in the cosmos for at least a thousand years and

was a cornerstone to Christian *theology*.⁵²⁹ The association between Astronomy/astrology and Religion had a long tradition dating back to the dawn of Western civilization, reflected in the belief systems of the Ancient Babylonians, the Ancient Egyptians, and of course the Ancient Greeks and Romans. It was with Copernicus however that the break between these two disciplines, religion and Astronomy, was rifted for good however, solidified over the centuries following Copernicus with the work of Galileo, Kepler and then Newton, all who built upon and confirmed Copernicus's thesis of *heliocentrism* and established the foundations of modern Astronomy, and science in general in fact, as well as its close association with *mathematics*.

As previously noted, the curriculum that was taught throughout the institutions of higher learning throughout the Middle Ages and into the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries was greatly influenced by the Church and its institutions of learning which were run primarily by monks and priests, all of whom taught (and presumably believed) that mankind was created by God in his own image and that the Earth, which mankind held dominion over by divine authority, was the center of the Universe. When Copernicus questioned this assumption, based primarily upon mathematical problems he encountered in Ptolemy's work, the Church did not receive this criticism lightly to say the least.

Copernicus most influential work which laid out his case for a *heliocentric model* of the universe was written in Latin, as most standard intellectual works of his day were, and was entitled *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, or *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, sometimes referred to simply as *On the Revolutions*. It was published just before his death in 1543 and set out to demonstrate that the observed motions of stars, planets and other celestial bodies can be explained without having the Earth be the center upon which all else revolves. It being published posthumously kept Copernicus out of controversy for the most part, but as his work was picked up and expounded upon by subsequent authors and teachers, most notably Galileo, the rift with the Church manifested quite forcefully.

Galileo (1564-1642), sometimes referred to as the "father of science", was the first to publically defend Copernicus's thesis that the Earth revolved around the sun, despite Copernicus's *On the Revolutions* being officially condemned pending correction in 1616 some 60 years after it was published. Galileo defended the Copernican system in his work, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, a work which was published in 1632 in Italian and translated into Latin in 1635 and compared the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems directly and laid out a strong case for a *heliocentric model* of the universe. In 1633, in no small measure due to his popularity, Galileo

⁵²⁹ Although there had been authors and mathematicians that had proposed a *heliocentric* view of the universe in late antiquity, most notably by Aristarchus in the 3rd century BCE and then Seleucus of the 2nd century BCE, it was the *geocentric* models expounded by Plato and Aristotle, codified in Ptolemy's *Almagest* in the 2nd century CE, that served as the standard astronomical textbook throughout the Middle Ages up until Copernicus challenged its fundamental assertions and underlying *mathematics*.

was condemned by the Church, convicted of heresy, forced to recant his *heliocentric* views, and exiled, spending the rest of his life under house arrest where he ironically produced perhaps his most profound work, *Discourses Concerning the Two New Sciences* which was published (in Italian) in 1638. In the *Two New Sciences*, Galileo outlined an entirely new framework for *natural philosophy*, described two new fields of study that fell under the heading of *natural philosophy* which he called “strength of materials” and “motion of objects”, laying the groundwork for the field of Physics which was to follow in his wake.

In the *Two New Sciences* Galileo lays the foundation for the work of Kepler and Newton among others and provides the intellectual framework within which modern Physics sits, where celestial and terrestrial matter obey the same laws and where the language of *mathematics* is called out specifically to be the greatest form of universal expression.

For most people, in the 17th Century as well as today, Galileo was and is seen as the ‘hero’ of modern science. Galileo discovered many things: with his telescope, he first saw the moons of Jupiter and the mountains on the Moon; he determined the parabolic path of projectiles and calculated the law of free fall on the basis of experiment. He is known for defending and making popular the Copernican system, using the telescope to examine the heavens, inventing the microscope, dropping stones from towers and masts, playing with pendula and clocks, being the first ‘real’ experimental scientist, advocating the relativity of motion, and creating a mathematical physics. His major claim to fame probably comes from his trial by the Catholic Inquisition and his purported role as heroic rational, modern man in the subsequent history of the ‘warfare’ between science and religion. This is no small set of accomplishments for one 17th Century Italian, who was the son of a court musician and who left the University of Pisa without a degree.⁵³⁰

Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) was a German mathematician, astronomer and astrologer, and although a contemporary of sorts of Galileo, followed in his footsteps and built off of Galileo and Copernicus’s work to invent (or discover depending upon your perspective) *three laws of planetary motion* around the sun, grounding Copernican *heliocentrism* in sound *mathematics* and laying the groundwork for Newton's theory of *universal gravitation*.⁵³¹

⁵³⁰ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, The Metaphysics Research Lab, Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford University, Galileo Galilei, by Peter Machamer.

⁵³¹ Kepler’s *three laws of planetary motion* specifically are 1) the orbit of each planet is elliptical with the sun being one of the two foci of the ellipse, 2) a line joining each planet and the sun sweeps out along the elliptical orbit in equal areas during equal intervals of time, and 3) the square of the orbital period of a planet is proportional to the cube of the semi-major axis of its orbit. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kepler/> for a more full account of the *mathematics* underlying his laws.

Throughout the Enlightenment Era period, consistent widely held beliefs since the dawn of civilization, there was no hard line drawn between Astronomy and astrology, although there was a strong division since Aristotle between Astronomy, which was typically covered in *mathematics*, and Physics, which was considered a branch of *natural philosophy* and covered separate from Astronomy. Kepler's work, built off the foundations laid out by Galileo before him, broke down the distinctions of these two fields however and created an even larger divide between *theology* and science, where Astronomy became a subsidiary branch of natural philosophy and was governed by the same laws as the physical world, i.e. the field of *natural philosophy*. Kepler however, consistent with the philosophers that preceded him, did not abandon Religion altogether but encapsulated *theology* and the belief in an anthropomorphic Creator in his works, arguing that *mathematics*, *reason* and *logic*, were the tools used by God to create and maintain the universe, further entrenching *rationalism* and *empiricism* into the intellectual development that followed him and further galvanizing Religion and Science.

It's with Newton (1642-172) however that we see celestial and terrestrial mechanics become completely integrated in a *holistic* system as well as the solidification of *mathematics* as the tool best suited to describe God's creation. Newton, best known for his principle of *universal gravitation* which underlies his *three laws of motion* which govern the interaction of all mass and bodies in the universe, provided the final blow to the Ptolemaic/Aristotelian (and Christian) *geocentric* model of the universe. His work was the final blow to the Judeo-Christian view of the universe as God's willful creation and marks the rise to supremacy of the role of *mathematics* and *scientific method* in the description of the "physical" world. Newtonian Mechanics, as it is commonly referred to today, dominated the scientific view of the universe for the next three centuries and arguably still represents the primary mode within which most of us understand our relationship to the physical world around us even today⁵³².

What is most fascinating about Newton though, when you looked under the covers a bit and tried to step back from the laws of physical motion that he was most known for, was that he was an interesting and diverse, and god fearing, intellectual with a wide range of interests in a variety of fields, both scientific and theological. For example, in his astronomical studies he invented the first reflecting telescope and in the field of optics he was the first to demonstrate that light can be decomposed into a spectrum of colors via a prism. He is also known for his contributions to the field of *mathematics* of course, with the invention of *calculus* in particular⁵³³, but he also was

⁵³² Newton's *three laws* and principle of *universal gravitation* are laid out in *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, published in Latin in 1687. For a more detailed account of the Life and Works of Isaac Newton see <http://snowconenyc.com/2012/10/21/classical-mechanics-the-life-and-times-of-sir-isaac-newton/> by the same author.

⁵³³ Leibniz also invented *calculus* at around the same time somewhat independently as well. For a history of *calculus* and specifically the controversy surrounding its discovery between Newton and Leibniz see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_calculus.

a serious student of alchemy and some scholars and historians even believe that it was his work with *alchemy* in particular that provided Newton with the inspiration for his notion of *gravity*.⁵³⁴ John Maynard Keynes, the famous economist, after purchasing many of Newton's extant alchemical treatises, is reported to have said, "*Newton was not the first of the age of reason, he was the last of the magicians.*"

But Newton, as with his predecessors, did not abandon faith in God. Although he was unable to accept the beliefs of the Church of England (and according to some scholars believed that the Church had deviated from the teachings of Christ over the centuries), he was required as a Fellow of Trinity College to take holy orders, i.e. follow the curriculum and guidance of the Church with respect to what he could research, write about or teach. The Church of England however, was more understanding and sympathetic to the ideas of Newton than Galileo, and King Charles II issued a royal decree excusing Newton from the necessity of taking holy orders saving Newton from the hardships and censorship that Galileo had to endure.⁵³⁵

What is interesting then in looking at the *life* of Newton rather than focusing on his scientific discoveries, and considering all of his works and contributions to many different branches of thought, was that Newton must have had a very broad view of the nature of the universe that synthesized what we might consider to be mystical or theological in today's nomenclature with his belief in the natural order of the universe which was best described in mathematical terms. Like many of the other Enlightenment Era philosophers and astronomers that preceded him, Newton clearly believed that there existed *fundamental laws* which governed the material universe, laws which were best described by mathematical equations and relationships. Laws which could be arrived at by inspiration (the establishment of a premise or *hypothesis*), but needed to be verified empirically, i.e. proven, via *experimentation* and *measurement* to validate these theories.

However, to look at the conclusions that Newton came to with respect to the world of classical mechanics without at least taking note of his theological beliefs and his considerable work in *alchemy* (much of which was apparently lost in a fire), would be like tasting a salad without dressing – yes it would be the same salad without the dressing, the same underlying physical and chemical structure of lettuce fruits and vegetables, but it would lack *flavor*, and all of the

⁵³⁴ *Alchemy* is an ancient philosophical tradition stemming from the doctrines attributed to Hermes Trismegistus (*Corpus Hermeticum*) that transformed in Medieval times from its philosophical roots to more materialistic pursuits, including the creation of the fabled *philosopher's stone* which could facilitate the transformation of base metals into gold or silver. The practice still has a following even today, even though it is a very small one, and its philosophy from a psychological and spiritual perspective had a profound influence on Carl Jung..

⁵³⁵ More specifically the decree specified that, in perpetuity, the Lucasian professor, which was the title given to the incumbent of the Lucasian Chair of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge (widely regarded as one of the world's most prestigious academic posts even to this day, currently held by the famed theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking), was exempt from holy orders.

subtleties and intricacies of the taste of that very same salad *with* the dressing. And it's Newton's alchemical, theological and philosophical beliefs that were the dressing to the salad of his work in Classical Mechanics and *mathematics*, a fact which has very much been lost with respect to his contributions to Science as they are presented to students today.

During the Enlightenment, the supremacy of *rationalism* and *empiricism* became firmly established in the intellectual community no doubt, but the rational order of the universe as a divine *emanation* of an anthropomorphic God was still very much present in the works of the great philosophers and (what we would today call) scientists of the Age of Reason, despite their view that reason and *empiricism* was to be held in the highest regard and the one and only tool for enlightenment and knowledge - higher than revelation, scripture or even faith in God itself. While not a bad thing in and of itself, particularly given how those in power had abused religion over the centuries to serve the pursuit of power and authority of the few over the many, of the fortunate over the unfortunate, this very same emergence of Science during the Enlightenment Era period sowed the seeds of this *mechanistic* and *deterministic* worldview which characterizes the modern Western world, a view where belief in the existence and importance of the Soul as the source of *ethics* and *morality* was subsumed by the belief in the rule of *law* and the powers of free market economy and *capitalism* as the source of welfare for society.

As a result of these developments however, advancements that have improved society and social welfare no doubt, expanding the average lifespan of the individual by a factor of two or three at least, we now live in a world that is dominated by *materialism*, a world where the notion of what reality is can only be determined only by the use of deductive reason based upon that which can be *proven* to exist by the observation of undeniable facts that consist of that which we can see, touch or hear or smell by either direct perception or via technologies that enhance these powers of perception, and one which presumes that the entire universe, including the evolution of mankind along with all of the biological processes which are such a marked characteristic of life itself, must be governed by fundamental laws of cause and effect which have either already been discovered or have yet to be discovered.

This revolution that brought about the developments of the Scientific Revolution during the period which modern historians call the "Age of Reason" was a direct result of the spread of Abrahamic *monotheism* from the time of the Roman Empire up through the Middle/Dark Ages where theological and philosophical views were imposed upon people by force and by legal mandate and where religious ideology was usurped to consolidate and expand the power and authority of the fortunate few over the unfortunate and uneducated masses. These imperial rulers and the aristocracies and armies that supported them imposed their versions of theology upon the masses, using religion and "salvation" as justification to quench their thirst for more

power and more riches and expand their empires, leading to systems of belief that were devoid of any rational moral or ethical framework beyond the avoidance of damnation in eternal fiery Hell, absent of the rational systems of *ethics* and *morality* that had been emphasized and put forth by the philosophical schools of Ancient Greece which rested on the fundamental belief in the Soul and *virtue*, or *excellence*, as the highest pursuit of man.

As the true import and unadulterated teachings of the Greek philosophers proliferated during the Enlightenment Era, handed down by the Greek scholars and philosophers and subsequently kept alive by the intellectual communities of first the Latin/Romans which espoused Neo-Platonism and then by Arab intellectuals, *falṣafa*, in the Middle Ages who translated and interpreted these ancient works into Arabic, these faith based and rationally bereft Abrahamic religious doctrines which had played such a prominent role in the development of Western civilizations for some 1500 years were supplanted by what can only be termed radical developments in socio-political theory, *natural philosophy* and *metaphysics* all of which in toto make up what modern historians refer to as the Enlightenment Era. And the Scientific Revolution which was a key factor in driving these Enlightenment Era developments throughout Europe and the Western world, with all the benefits and technological progress which it drove, represented the first nail in the coffin of the subjugation of the reality of the Soul to the reality and supremacy of the material world, laying the foundations for the materialistic and mechanistic view of reality which is endemic in Western society today.

The *Metaphysics of Morality*: Kantian Cognitive Ontology

The Enlightenment no doubt represents one of the most transformative periods in the history of civilization. While it was primarily an intellectual (really philosophical) movement, with a locus in 17th century Europe, it is rooted in intellectual developments that took place a century or two prior during the so-called Scientific Revolution, when quite literally the model of the universe was overturned, and a new age of Science was ushered into Europe, challenged the authority of the Church which had reigned supreme for over a thousand years.

While the Enlightenment Era is identified primarily with intellectual (mainly philosophical) developments, it also represented a period of great social and political change and upheaval as well, providing the intellectual basis for, and driving force to a large degree, *liberalist* and *democratic* movements that underpinned both the French and American Revolutions in the latter part of the 18th century, forever changing the political landscape of the West by advancing democratic and liberal ideals and relegating authoritarianism and absolute monarchy to history. These revolutionary movements, again the French and American, to some degree represented the culmination of the socio-political changes that had swept Europe in the preceding century, as exemplified with the English revolution some one hundred years earlier or so, called the “Glorious Revolution” or the Revolution of 1688, which led the establishment of the Bill of Rights and the dissolution of absolute monarchy in the British kingdoms and basically established the system of Parliament and constitutional monarchy that persists to this day in Great Britain.

The intellectual grounding of the Enlightenment however had been well established for a few centuries, more prominently reflected in the works of philosophical giants such as Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626), René Descartes (1596 – 1650), and John Locke (1632 – 1704) - the so-called “Father of Liberalism” - among others. Their work, combined with the revolutionary scientific advancements from which the Scientific Revolution got its name, set the stage for what arguably represents the very height of Western philosophy.

In order to gain a better understanding of the intellectual themes that dominated the academic landscape in the centuries leading up to, and just prior to, the Enlightenment, let’s look a little more closely at the specific advancements, and intellectual conclusions, that are characteristic of the Scientific Revolution – two basically, each of which contributed significantly to the shift in worldview that was such a hallmark of that period in European, i.e. “Western”, history:

- ✓ *Astronomy*: the adoption of the so-called “heliocentric” model of the universe which was put forth first by Copernicus in a work that was published upon his death in 1542 (the famous *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*) which was then validated and confirmed by Galileo - for which he was famously convicted of heresy and imprisoned - which

overturned the standard *geocentric* model of the universe which had held sway more or less since the time of Aristotle and Ptolemy some two thousand years prior, and

- ✓ *Physics*: the establishment of the basic laws of Physics - what came to be known as Classical Mechanics (as distinguished from Quantum Mechanics) as outlined by Newton in perhaps the most influential text in the history of Science, the *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, at the end of the 17th century (in 1687).

The revolutionary advancements in these two domains, effectively re-wrote the foundations of not just science, what was then referred to as natural philosophy, but of the intellectual landscape as whole, tearing at the foundations of religious orthodoxy in their inversion of the geocentric model of the universe which had held sway for over a thousand years to which the Church looked to as the basis for their authority to a large degree.

The advancements also came together to further reinforce the mode of thought, the way of thinking, that had underpinned the developments themselves – what we refer to throughout as *causal determinism* and *objective realism*, the two cornerstone presumptive worldviews or philosophical systems which, along with its sibling the *scientific method*, provided the impetus, the intellectual fuel as it were, for both the *empiricist* and the *rationalist* philosophical movements which were the most dominant philosophical strains during the Enlightenment, the Age of Reason, from which Kant emerges as the most influential figures.

All of these intellectual, scientific and even socio-political developments however, both from a philosophical and theological perspective, led precipitously to what is referred to sometimes as “the crisis of the Enlightenment” - where the very advancements that these developments ushered in were under threat due to the source of their foundations as it were, i.e. *reason* itself. For as many Enlightenment Era philosophers were beginning to conclude, not surprisingly perhaps, was that if empiricism and rationalism in and of themselves were to be held in the highest regard with respect to establishing truth and knowledge, then not only was the existence of God called into question, but also the very nature and basis for *morality* and *ethics* as well, for these fields had since time immemorial been integrally linked to *theology*, a field whose foundations had effectively been destroyed. As Rohlf puts it:

The problem is that to some it seemed unclear whether progress would in fact ensue if reason enjoyed full sovereignty over traditional authorities; or whether unaided reasoning would instead lead straight to materialism, fatalism, atheism, skepticism, or even libertinism and authoritarianism. The Enlightenment commitment to the sovereignty of reason was tied to the expectation that it would not lead to any of these consequences but instead would support certain key beliefs that tradition had always sanctioned. Crucially, these included belief in God, the soul, freedom, and the compatibility of science with morality and religion...

Yet the original inspiration for the Enlightenment was the new physics, which was mechanistic. If nature is entirely governed by mechanistic, causal laws, then it may seem that there is no room for freedom, a soul, or anything but matter in motion. This threatened the traditional view that morality requires freedom. We must be free in order to choose what is right over what is wrong, because otherwise we cannot be held responsible. It also threatened the traditional religious belief in a soul that can survive death or be resurrected in an afterlife. So modern science, the pride of the Enlightenment, the source of its optimism about the powers of human reason, threatened to undermine traditional moral and religious beliefs that free rational thought was expected to support. This was the main intellectual crisis of the Enlightenment.⁵³⁶

It is within this period of “crisis”, where the foundations of Western civilization had been rocked by advancements in our understanding of the universe which were almost diametrically opposed – quite literally actually – to how we had viewed the world since the very dawn of Western civilization, that provided the foundations for the “Science”, that Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) emerges as not just one of the towering intellectual giants of the Enlightenment, but one of the most influential philosophers in the history of Western civilization.⁵³⁷

Kant lived and published toward the end of the Enlightenment, providing him with a unique opportunity and insight into the developments of the century or two that had preceded him and of course the ability to summarize and synthesize said intellectual achievements and advancements – a task which he took on with great vigor. Kant is also arguably one of the last of the philosophers in the classic Hellenic conception of the term, i.e. *philosophia*, where the discipline of *philosophy* represented more than just Philosophy proper and sat at the very forefront of the Academy, i.e. *academia*, rather than representing the quite narrow field that Philosophy has been relegated to today.

He came from a fairly modest background and although not wealthy by any means, nonetheless were well educated, Kant himself having – not unlike most educations from that time period – a solid foundation in the Classics, in the native Latin of course, which was the language that many of his works were published in in fact, again not uncommon for that time period. He spent almost all his life in the city of Königsberg, a metropolitan city on the coast of Baltic Sea in North-Eastern Europe that had been the capital of Prussia (the precursor to the modern German state) before it moved to Berlin in 1701. Despite its distance from the then German (Prussian really) cultural and intellectual center of Berlin, Königsberg nonetheless remained during Kant’s life a relatively flourishing metropolitan city, and most certainly – as reflected quite profoundly with Kant himself

⁵³⁶ Rohlf, Michael, "Immanuel Kant", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/kant/>, pg. 13.

⁵³⁷ It’s from Kant’s corpus in fact that the term “Enlightenment” was coined (*Aufklärung* in German), him having written a piece toward the end of his academic career entitled *Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment* in 1784.

– was an intellectual center not just for Prussia, but for all of Europe as well during the Enlightenment.⁵³⁸

Kant attended the University in his hometown of Königsberg, known as the Albertina, and outside of a few years after University where he was away from Königsberg, taught at the University of Königsberg for his entire academic career - first as an unpaid lecturer starting in 1754 at the age of 30, and then from 1770 on as the Chair in Logic and Metaphysics until he retired from the University in 1796 at the age of 72. He died in 1804, just shy of his 80th birthday.

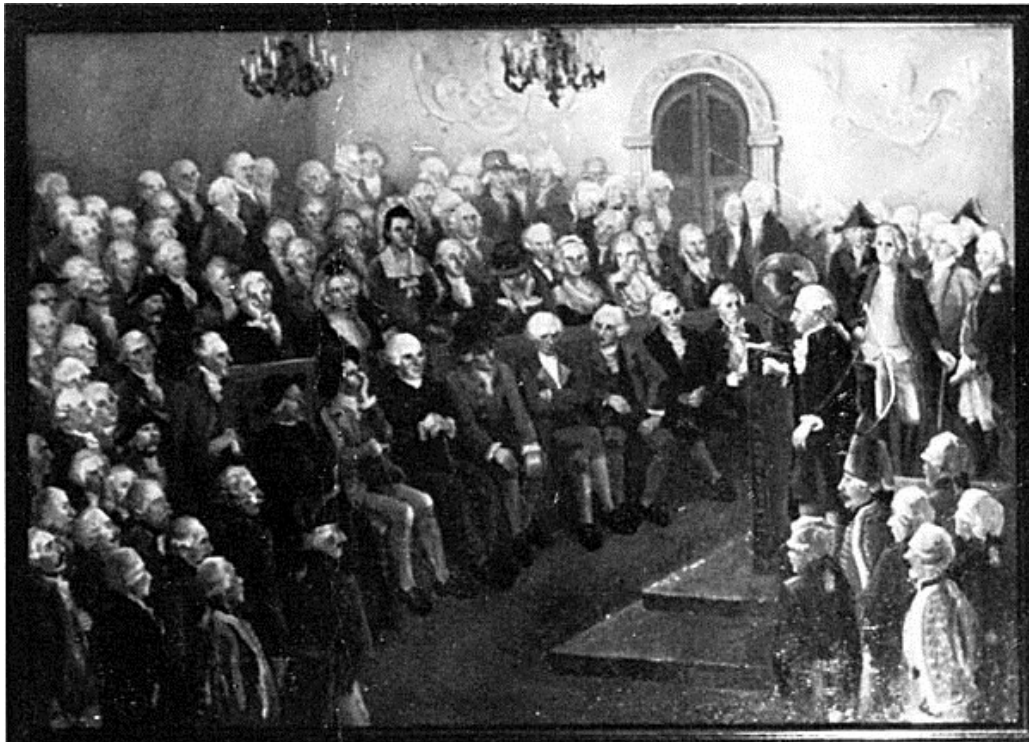


Figure 32: Immanuel Kant, lecturing to Russian officers—by I. Soyockina / V. Gracov⁵³⁹

Kant's publishing career started primarily in his 30s at around the time that he began teaching at the University of Königsberg (1754). It was not until some 27 years later that he published *Critique of Pure Reason* being published (1781) at the age of 57, after having supposedly spent

⁵³⁸ While today the city of Königsberg lies on the very Western edge of Russia, the city in Kant's time was categorically German, and as such Kant is German through and through, his work representing the very height of German philosophy and is illustrative of a very long history of German intellectual, intellectual, academic and scientific achievements which continues to this day.

⁵³⁹ Painting at Kant Museum, Kaliningrad. Immanuel Kant, lecturing to Russian officers—by I. Soyockina / V. Gracov. Public domain, From English Wikipedia: en Image:KantLecturing.jpg {{PD-Old}} Category:Immanuel Kant.

some 10 years on it (he published a major revision in 1787). *Critique of Judgement*, the third and last of his “Critique” works, which were his most influential, did not come until 1790 when he was 66. Kant’s primary contributions to Philosophy, although he made contributions to the field of Anthropology as well), were in the area of *epistemology* and *metaphysics*, both of which represent the primary focus of his first major work, the *Critique of Pure Reason* which he published first in 1781 without too much fanfare and not altogether terribly well received, and then a second revision in 1787.⁵⁴⁰

The impetus of the thrust of Kant’s work was not only his deep concern related to the current state of philosophy and *theology*, *knowledge* really in a broader sense, but also more specifically as a response to the writings of the Scot David Hume (1711 – 1776), whose philosophy reflected a somewhat radical form of *sentimentalist empiricism*, arguing that there was no rational basis for *morality* or *ethics*, and attacking the discipline of *metaphysics* as an intellectual endeavor in and of itself with respect to its ability to establish any degree of certainty regarding *knowledge* or *truth*, i.e. *epistemology*.⁵⁴¹

As a step back to outline the prevailing philosophical trends that shaped Kant’s philosophical enterprise, the two predominant philosophical trends during the Enlightenment - each of which contributed to in their own way, and provided the intellectual foundations for, the Scientific Revolution, and each representing a philosophical extreme relative to the other - were the *rationalists* which held that *reason* in and of itself was not only real and *true*, but that it was also the ultimate benchmark for *knowledge* and *truth* as abstract principles in and of themselves⁵⁴², and the *empiricists* who held that it was only through *experience* - sensory experience more specifically (which included its logical extension through the use of various technical apparatus) - that *knowledge* could be established and ultimately that *truth* could be discerned.⁵⁴³

The *rationalists*, reflected perhaps most prominently in the works of the René Descartes and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (both of which perhaps not surprisingly were mathematicians) are typically characterized by their epistemological position which equates *knowledge* and *truth* with *reason*, that it is by *reason* alone that *knowledge* and *truth* are ultimately defined and bound. As

⁵⁴⁰ Adapted from Rohlf, Michael, "Immanuel Kant", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/kant/>.

⁵⁴¹ *Sentimentalism*, or moral sense theory, is a theory that *morality* is related to, or is generated from, *sentimentality*, or emotional responses to experience.

⁵⁴² While some scholars place Kant in the rationalist camp, his philosophy - which came to be known as *transcendental idealism* - fundamentally rejected not only the epistemological position of the *empiricists*, but also in fact the epistemological position of the rationalists.

⁵⁴³ The English word “empirical” derives from the Greek *empeiria*, which comes to us through the Latin as *experientia*, from which in fact our words *experience* and *experiment* are ultimately derived from.

such, the rationalist philosophical tradition is also characterized by the belief that *reality* itself has a fundamental, inherently *rational* structure. This universal rational structure then, which exists outside of man, or the mind, is not only inherently *real*, it is in fact the only thing that can truly be said to be *real* – a reality which is reflected in, and to a large extent equated with, the *rational faculty* of man. Like for example the axioms of *mathematics* of the underlying eternal truths of *geometry* for example whose existence, in contrast with the *empiricists*, could be established without physical evidence and/or empirical proof.

The *empiricist* epistemological position in contrast, reflected perhaps most prominently in the strain of thought dominated primarily by English, and Scottish, philosophers Francis Bacon, John Locke and David Hume, is that in order for something to be *known*, it must be established as an empirically valid, as established by some form of the *scientific method* for example. That is to say, the truth of said thing is established and verified either by the senses directly, and/or their extension via scientific measurement apparatus, effectively aligning the field of *knowledge* itself with the *objective realist* and *causal determinist* positions that underpinned the new Science as it were. John Locke for example, famously held that the mind at birth was like a “blank slate”, i.e. a *tabula rasa*, born without any innate knowledge inherent to it, and it was only through experience - as driven primarily through sensory perception of the external world along with the various associations and presumptions that came along with said experience - that *knowledge* of the world in any way shape or form could be established.

Rationalism as a philosophical theme can be traced as far back to the very origins of Western philosophy, with Pythagoras and Plato considered, at least in retrospect, to fall squarely in the *rationalist* camp. *Empiricism* on the other hand, from an historical perspective viewed within the context of the longstanding tradition of Western philosophy, while clearly a byproduct of Newtonian Science as it were, nonetheless had well established roots in the Hellenic philosophical tradition as well, primarily in its *materialistic* variant, traces of which can be found as far back as the Pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus (460 – 370 BCE) but perhaps most pronounced, and influential, in the system of philosophy that is attributed to Epicurus - i.e. Epicureanism, which was not only popular in the Hellenic world, but also established a significant following during the Roman period as well, more or less on par from an influence and popularity perspective as the (Platonic) Skeptics and the Stoics, arguably the three most widespread and popular philosophical schools in pre-Christian Mediterranean antiquity.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁴ Epicureanism, despite the fact that they did not have the benefit of Enlightenment Era Science, nonetheless held that the world consisted primarily of matter, i.e. *atoms*, a position which, epistemologically speaking at least, is very similar to, and again at some level arguably provides the foundation for, not only the Enlightenment Era *empiricists*, but also the science of Newton, i.e. Classical Mechanics, as well. Epicureanism as a system of philosophy known not only for its materialistic conception of the universe, but also of course it's (somewhat related) counterpart belief in pleasure as being the primary driving force of a good, or happy, life.

From an historical perspective then within the history of Western philosophy, the Enlightenment Era *rationalists* can, and should, be seen within the context of a long line of *idealists* that betrayed varying degrees of *skepticism* (and ultimately *rationalism*) that dated back to the very root of the Hellenic philosophical tradition itself, Pythagoras to Socrates and Plato most notably. This *idealistic* bent in turn was juxtaposed by, and was very much influenced by and evolved alongside of, the *materialist* philosophical tradition which evolved into what became known as *empiricism* during the Enlightenment. In Hellenic philosophy, this materialistic *epistemology* was most notable with the Epicureans, but traces could also be found in the Peripatetic tradition left by Aristotle as well as the Stoics, each of which held similar views as Locks for example with respect to knowledge and its relationship to *mind*.

Kant's philosophical work represented to a large degree - outside of the effort to try and establish the rational foundations for *morality* and *ethics*, and *theology* more broadly – an attempt to synthesize, and ultimately supersede, these two extreme philosophical positions which had taken such strong roots in the Enlightenment and to a large degree had been taken to their most extreme forms and as such threatened the very fabric of society.

In this context, Kant's role and contributions to modern Western philosophy can be viewed as similar to Aristotle, who although rejected Plato's *idealism* from an epistemological perspective nonetheless incorporated his doctrines as part of his overall intellectual framework as *universals* which although did not have existence in and of themselves nonetheless provided the basis, metaphysically, of the materialistic world which was characterized primarily by *matter* and *causality* - his doctrine of *substantial form* more or less. Aristotle's position can be viewed as a hybrid, or perhaps better put, synthetic approach to that offered by the *skeptics* who represented the Socratic idealist position and the *materialists* who were represented first by Democritus and then later by the Epicurean school, the latter of which although came after Aristotle were nonetheless influenced by him to no small degree and represented a more materialist bent than the Peripatetic school which Aristotle founded.

This ancient philosophical argument, which manifested itself in the Enlightenment as the conflict between the *rationalists* and *empiricists*, falls along similar philosophical grounds – the rationalists in the most extreme holding that *a priori knowledge* not only exists but in fact is the very source of all *knowledge* itself, and the empiricists holding that all knowledge is derived from sensory experience, i.e. *a posteriori knowledge*. The terminology that Kant uses to distinguish between the *empiricist* and *rationalist* epistemological positions in fact - i.e. *a priori*, literally “from the prior”, versus *a posteriori* or “from the latter” - is actually derived from the Hellenic philosophical tradition, derived from perhaps the most influential mathematical treatises in the history of Western philosophy, Euclid's *Elements*. In this broader sense, *a priori knowledge* is aligned with basic mathematical or geometric postulates that are considered postulated, or true

by their very nature, like for example a basic mathematical formula such as $2 + 1 = 3$, and *a posteriori knowledge* in turn, very much like it does quite explicitly in the empiricist philosophical tradition in fact, represents a truth that depends a set of predefined facts or truths - e.g. empirical evidence, data or predefined postulates – from which its verity can be established or deduced. Ultimately though, *a posteriori knowledge* is effectively defined by how it differs from, sits in contrast to, it's theoretical sibling *a priori knowledge* more so than anything else.⁵⁴⁵

The problem Kant had with each of these respective epistemological positions was that in his estimation he could not establish the existence of anything *a priori* from an epistemological perspective through reason (induction) alone, or through any sort of *objective realist* approach where said knowledge existed independent of that tool from which perception and understanding itself took place. Hence, he felt the need to reject both schools of thought and come up with a new philosophical foundation which reconciled the *empiricist* and *rationalist* positions, while at the same time providing a complete, cohesive and consistent *rational* foundation for *knowledge* (and *metaphysics*) within which the existence of *morality* and *ethics* could be safely established.

At least this is how Kant framed the distinction between the two schools, which in turn provided the intellectual foundation for not only his epistemological framework, but for his *metaphysics* and philosophy as a whole, resolving the philosophical quagmire as it were by inverting the perspective from which *knowledge* and *truth*, in all its forms, could be established with any degree of certainty.

*Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them a priori, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. This would agree better with what is desired, namely, that it should be possible to have knowledge of objects a priori, determining something in regard to them prior to their being given.*⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁵ See Wikipedia contributors, 'A priori and a posteriori', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 1 November 2017, 18:37 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=A_priori_and_a_posteriori&oldid=808241275> [accessed 8 November 2017].

⁵⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface to the Second Edition, Bxvi, xvii). From <http://staffweb.hkbu.edu.hk/ppp/cpr/prefs.html>, pgs. 23-24.

And herein is the so-called *Copernican revolution of philosophy* which Kant is attributed, or to which he attributes himself, *that instead of having knowledge conform to objects, objective reality must conform to our knowledge.*

As Kant himself explains next in the same passage, this inversion of thought is akin to Copernicus's theoretical inversion regarding our solar system from the prior century, adapting the theoretical framework to better match the problem, rather than continuing to further modify and/or change a theoretical framework that is effectively wrong and therefore leads to all sorts of irrational or preposterous conclusions.

*We should then be proceeding precisely on the lines of Copernicus' primary hypothesis. Failing of satisfactory progress in explaining the movements of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that they all revolved round the spectator, he tried whether he might not have better success if he made the spectator to revolve and the stars to remain at rest. A similar experiment can be tried in metaphysics, as regards the intuition of objects. If intuition must conform to the constitution of the objects, I do not see how we could know anything of the latter a priori; but if the object (as object of the senses) must conform to the constitution of our faculty of intuition, I have no difficulty in conceiving such a possibility. Since I cannot rest in these intuitions if they are to become known, but must relate them as representations to something as their object, and determine this latter through them, either I must assume that the concepts, by means of which I obtain this determination, conform to the object, or else I assume that the objects, or what is the same thing, that the experience in which alone, as given objects, they can be known, conform to the concepts. In the former case, I am again in the same perplexity as to how I can know anything a priori in regard to the objects. In the latter case the outlook is more hopeful.*⁵⁴⁷

His strategy philosophically then, how he arrived at this *Copernican revolution* as it were, was to search for how it might be possible from a metaphysical perspective to establish the verity of any *a priori knowledge*, and then only after this has been established, construct an epistemological and again metaphysical framework around these assumptions rather than the other way around. In so doing, he concluded that it was impossible to conceive of any *a priori* conceptual building blocks if one assumes that the material world is ontologically primary, or even if we presumed that the rational world was essential and primordial. If however, one places *cognition* itself as the primary ontological and metaphysical building block, it then becomes feasible to entertain the idea of *a priori* concepts that provide coherence to this mentally dependent, human cognitive, *reality*. Once he switches this perspective, he is able to establish both a *rational* as

⁵⁴⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface to the Second Edition, Bxvi, xvii). From <http://staffweb.hkbu.edu.hk/ppp/cpr/prefs.html>, pgs. 23-24.

well as *objective* reality, but only through the presumption that their reality, their inherent knowledge, is a function of the human mind.

From this vantage point then, Kant's philosophical pursuits then - his *metaphysical enquiry* - can be viewed as a search for what in fact, if anything, could be considered to represent *a priori knowledge*, if anything, stripping away all possible preconceived notions on what could be said to truly exist and how *truth* itself, *knowledge*, could be defined as a function of the human condition rather than in relation to it. As a result, Kant concludes that there is no way to establish any *a priori knowledge*, anything that could be said to be true in and of itself, outside of our ability to conceive said truth. In other words, in Kant's *epistemology*, which he effectively equates with *metaphysics*⁵⁴⁸, *knowledge* is defined neither by *reason* itself in the abstract (as held by the *rationalists*), nor by *objective reality* in and of itself (as held by the *empiricists*), but in fact is ultimately bound and determined by our mind and its cognitive capacities from which the truth of those two seemingly opposed realms of knowledge are both rooted.

In this theoretical model - this inversion as it were of knowledge of *objective reality* being dependent upon, conforming to, concepts, rather than *knowledge* being dependent upon the objective, or rational, reality - Kant asserts that we can now possibly establish certain *a priori* principles and tenets to facilitate the creation of a new epistemological framework as it were where *a priori* concepts are tied not to reality in and of itself, but to the cognitive and conceptual framework that is reflected in the human mind, which in Kant's philosophy represents the ultimate determinative factor by which *knowledge* is, or can be, defined.

Looking at Kant's philosophical work, and influence, as a whole from an historical context, outside of his contributions to *epistemology* and *metaphysics* (as he defines it) as reflected in the first of his *Three Critiques*, his work as whole is perhaps best looked at as it relates to the contents and material that he covers in each of the *Three Critiques*, as they were published over the course of his academic and publishing career which in turn reflect the arc of his philosophical thinking and philosophical evolution one could say.

It is again in response to this radical form of Enlightenment *empiricism*, in particular again as reflected in the works of Hume, that motivated Kant to embark on what is by far his most influential work, the so-called *First Critique*, the *Critique of Pure Reason*. As the title suggests, Kant explores the extent to which what he refers to as *a priori propositions*, eternal truths like

⁵⁴⁸ In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant defines *metaphysics* as "the cognitions after which reason might strive independently of all experience showing clearly Kant's association of the field of *metaphysics* itself with *a priori knowledge*. See Rohlf, Michael, "Immanuel Kant", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/kant/>>.

for example mathematical axioms, are possible, providing the rational grounds as it were for metaphysical enquiry and in turn a new intellectual framework for the discipline of Philosophy itself. In this context then, Kant undertakes his philosophical enterprise, attempting to not only save *morality* (and *ethics* more broadly) from the clutches of *causal determinism* and *objective realism*, but also in a more general sense Religion, God and the Soul, from Science itself which threatened its very existence.

The *First Critique*, by far the most influential of all of Kant's works, was the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which again focused on, using Aristotle's terminology, the *theoretical sciences* or *first philosophy*.⁵⁴⁹ This work was followed by the *Critique of Practical Reason*, published in 1788, which delved into matters of *practical philosophy*, i.e. Kant's philosophy of *ethics* and *morality* or using Kant's own terminology, his *metaphysics of morals*.

To do this, Kant had to develop a comprehensive and cohesive model of the entire *cognitive* experience, as described in the ensuing quotation for example, where Kant describes *experience* as a type of knowledge which involves a specific faculty of the human mind which he calls *understanding*.

*For experience is itself a species of knowledge which involves understanding; and understanding has rules which I must pre-suppose as being in me prior to objects being given to me, and therefore as being a priori. They find expression in a priori concepts to which all objects of experience necessarily conform, and with which they must agree. As regards objects which are thought solely through reason, and indeed as necessary, but which can never -- at least not in the manner in which reason thinks them -- be given in experience, the attempts at thinking them (for they must admit of being thought) will furnish an excellent touchstone of what we are adopting as our new method of thought, namely, that we can know a priori of things only what we ourselves put into them.*⁵⁵⁰

Understanding then, along with *sensibility* and *reason*, as specific faculties of the mind that facilitate *cognition*, come to form the basis of Kant's epistemological framework, a framework which now can support the existence of *a priori knowledge*. And this epistemological pivot as it were - from the real world having an existence in and of itself (viewed either as fundamentally empirical or fundamentally rational) to the concept of reality being ultimately determined and bound by the human mind, is what came to be known as the *Copernican revolution in philosophy*.

⁵⁴⁹ This work was first published in 1781, following some 10 years of work where Kant effectively lived in solitude in order to ensure its completion. Once published, based upon feedback from the academic and more broadly European philosophical and scientific community, he published a much shorter treatise that summarized and clarified the material of the *First Critique* in 1783 in a work entitled (in true Kantian form with respect to brevity) *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as a Science*, and then a significant revision of the *First Critique* in 1787.

⁵⁵⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface to the Second Edition, Bxvi, xvii). From <http://staffweb.hkbu.edu.hk/ppp/cpr/prefs.html>, pgs. 23-24.

This ontological inversion which placed the cognitive process at the center of the epistemological universe, not only established the basis for his *metaphysics*, but also established the grounds for a philosophical framework that allowed for the truth of the *empiricists* (*objective reality*) and the truth of the *rationalists* (universal truths or non-objective knowledge), to peacefully coexist within the same intellectual paradigm.

This idea of *human autonomy* as it came to be known, underpins not only Kant's *metaphysics*, but also his *practical philosophy* – i.e. *ethics* – as well, the subject of his *Second Critique*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*. From a metaphysical perspective, this notion of *human autonomy* rests upon the basic assumption of the ontological precedence of the world of “appearances”, really the world of the mind, over what might be termed “objective reality”, ultimately relying upon *perception*, *understanding*, *reason* and ultimately *judgment*, as outlined in his *Third Critique*, as basic human faculties from which any and all *knowledge* must be rooted in, providing the basic intellectual - and to a large extent psychological or conceptual - building blocks of his philosophical system upon which he subsumes and supersedes both the *empiricist* and *rationalist* perspectives.

From this perspective, Kant places the *intelligible world* - the world of mental constructs and abstractions upon which *theology* historically had rested since the days of Plato - the *Good* or *Best* as a logical abstraction of the *form of forms* - not above *objective reality* necessarily, but on the same ontological level as the reality of the *natural*, or *material*, world, Aristotle's *substantial form*. Both as it were, again at least from an epistemological perspective, subservient and ontologically inferior to the cognitive experience itself, a uniquely “human”, *autonomous*, process which *knowledge* in all its forms is subjugated to.

While at first glance this might appear to be a step backward philosophically, pushing *ideology* and *theology* further into the ontological backwaters per se, but this was a necessary result of the *Copernican inversion* that he was forced to make to bridge the *empiricist* and *rationalist* philosophical divide as it were. In other words, in order for Kant to establish the truth of *theology*, i.e. God, as well as *morality* and more generally *ethics*, principles that were under rigorous attack in philosophical and intellectual circles during the time period that he was writing, on the same ontological and rational footing as *natural philosophy*, or Science, the *cognitive faculty*, i.e. *reason*, had to be established at the very top of the epistemological food chain as it were, transformed into the very source of *knowledge* itself.

In other words, in Kant's philosophy and *metaphysics*, the structure of our experience is determined by our intellectual faculties, which in turn fundamentally defines and bounds *knowledge* – in both its empirical or rational form – as opposed to the objective, or rational, world existing independent of any act of cognition or *experience* in and of itself. This perspective allowed for the epistemological *reality* of the natural world as well as the rational world to

coexist, but their existence - their reality and verity - existed only in relation to the human mind which he defined as a collection of cognitive faculties that included *perception (sensitivity)* *understanding* and in the last word, a more refined and specific attribute of *reason* that he called *judgment*. This “revolution” of perspective, this philosophical inversion as it were that subjugated both *objective* and *rational* reality - *objective realism* and *idealism* - under the umbrella of a single philosophical system which rested on perception of and by the human mind as the primary ontological principle as it were. As such, *empirical reality* as well as *rational reality*, as viewed by the empiricists and the rationalists respectively, could in a sense both be true.

Furthermore, this inversion paved the way for the potential establishment of a set of *a priori* *concepts* which framed said *reality*, a reality whose existence was a function of the human mind and our cognitive faculties. To this end Kant establishes, very much like Aristotle before him⁵⁵¹, that all *knowledge*, be it objective or rational, is structured in accordance to certain pre-ordained *categories* which are inextricably linked with the human cognitive process from which all knowledge is again derived. In Kant’s *metaphysics* however, a *category* is inherently related to, and intrinsically tied to, human cognition, representing a quality or attribute of an entity or idea whose very existence depends upon *consciousness* and the act of *perception (sensitivity)* along with *understanding* - independent of experience or objective (or rational) reality in an abstract sense.

Categories to Kant then, as again they were for Aristotle more than two thousand years prior, represent the metaphysical bridge as it were between the *materialists* and the *idealists* - or in Enlightenment Era terms the *empiricists* and the *rationalists* - providing the epistemological foundations upon which the truth of each respective philosophical school could be established, rolling them up to the ontologically primordial notion of human cognition upon which *knowledge* fundamentally depended upon in Kant’s *metaphysics*. As such Kant referred to these *categories* in fact as *ontological predicates*, placing them square in the middle of an *epistemology* that rested on human cognition which in turn employs *categories* to classify and compartmentalize said knowledge. Kant’s *categories* then, again just as they were with Aristotle, were prerequisites to the synthesis of our experience of not only the objective realm, but also the rational realm as well, providing another intellectual building block as it were to bridge the gap between the empiricist and rationalist epistemological divide.

⁵⁵¹ Aristotle’s *categories* enumerated all the possible kinds of things that can be the subject or the predicate of a proposition, providing a semantic and logical underpinning to the notion. He placed every object of human apprehension under one of ten *categories*; *substance* or *essence*, (*ousia*), quantity or how much (*poson*), qualification or quality (*poion*), relative or relation (*pros ti*), where or place (*pou*), when or time (*pote*), being-in-a-position, posture, attitude (*keisthai*), having a state, condition (*echein*), doing or action (*poiein*), and being affected or affection (*paschein*). For more detail on Aristotle’s category theory, see the Chapters in this work on Aristotle, his *metaphysics* in particular.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that it is the *human intellect* which is the source of the *laws of nature* and that these laws are not things in and of themselves and do not have existence outside of the human *mind* as it were, and that in turn the mind is not in fact a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, necessarily, having within it, or inherent to it, certain *a priori concepts* or *postulates*, from which our knowledge of the natural world which “appears” to be independent of us. Although he confines *knowledge* to *natural philosophy* (Science) and *mathematics* more or less, he is emphatic in concluding that *mind* makes *nature* and not the other way around and that it’s impossible to extend *knowledge* to supernatural, super sensual world, outside of the conditions of our own experience. Kant's investigation resulted in his claim that the real world of experience can only be an *appearance*, what he called a *phenomenon*, a term which he uses to refer to how an object of knowledge appears to an observer which he juxtaposes with the concept of how things, objects of knowledge, are in and of themselves, what he referred to as *noumenon* - the latter aspect of reality, property of objects, things or beings, which is completely unknowable by any human, or animal, mind.

In his *Critique of Practical Reason* he argues that *morality* does indeed stand on the same pure rational and logical foundations as does *theoretical philosophy*, once one discerns and extracts *reason* itself from *natural philosophy* and establishes the *a priori* notions which govern it, even if *practical philosophy* in and of itself has no grounding in *objective reality* as bound by his *theoretical philosophy*. That is, that *morality, ethics* is the product of pure *reason* itself, is a byproduct of us being rational beings, and furthermore is predicated on the belief in the immortality of the Soul, God, and the possibility of what he calls the “highest good”, a theoretical concept which is characterized by all rational beings behaving according to *perfect morality*, which he equates with *purely rational* behavior, or according to the rules of *pure reason*.

His *Critique of Practical Reason* deals with how world *ought to be* versus *how it actually is* and within this context he establishes what he himself refers to as his *Metaphysics of Morals*. For one of the other hallmarks of Kant’s philosophy on both the *theoretical (metaphysics)* as well as *practical (ethics)* fronts is the basic assumption again of *human autonomy* - that both the reality of the world of “appearances”, his *theoretical philosophy*, as well as his *metaphysics of morality*, his *practical philosophy*, should be formulated based on assumptions which are of and within the realm of human cognition or being.

To Kant, the only intrinsically good thing is good will, or intention, *moral law* being the will of rational agents based upon a *pure rational* foundation. Kant’s *practical philosophy* is rooted in, and fundamentally related to, his *Copernican revolution of philosophy* which posits that all *knowledge* is a function of human *cognition*, or the human mind, an organ which consists primarily of the faculties of *sensibility (perception) understanding*, and then penultimately *reason* and *judgment* - the latter of which serves to provide a *teleological* conception of existence that

again, even though it cannot be said to exist in and of itself, nonetheless provides an underlying meaning to our lives which serves the purpose of unifying *morality* and *natural philosophy*. His *practical philosophy* therefore was guided by the same principals, i.e. based upon the presumptions and *metaphysics*, as his *theoretical philosophy*, resting on the notion of *human autonomy* which presumes an intellectual foundation to *morality* and *ethics* without relying on any principles or concepts external to, or independent of, the human being in and of itself.

Kant develops a notion of a *categorical imperative* based on notion of *universality* upon which all actions of an individual, of a rational individual, should be based. In other words, if an individual is governed by *reason*, each action should be judged according to the standard where if everyone were to act in such a way would it be good for society at large and would the act itself still have its implied meaning - for example telling the truth or promises, if people were to not behave this way, were to lie to each other, the fabric of society would not hold together. If an action when *universalized* makes sense so to speak, then it is inherently *moral* or *ethical*, Good, and if everyone behaved perfectly rational the world would be transformed into the greatest of all worlds, Kant's perfect world akin to the utopia of Plato. To Kant, the *highest good* is *virtue* underpinned by *happiness*, the latter depending upon the former and the former dictated by *reason*, the same standard which he uses to establish his epistemological foundations.

In Kant's view, objective rational laws necessitate rational actions and the perfect rational man must behave in a perfectly moral manner, similar in many respects to Stoicism from an ethical perspective. Therefore, there exists a collective good element of perfect, morally sound, actions, which rely on his principal of *universality* as the definition of the perfect Good. The *theological* conclusions he draws are that even though no *a priori knowledge* of God or the Soul is possible, as existing in and of themselves, they do serve a very *practical* value for if these beliefs did not exist there would be no metaphysical foundation for *ethics* and therefore society at large would break down and there would be anarchy or chaos. *Morality* then, in this framework, depends upon the existence of Free Will as well as the immortality of the Soul and the existence of God – these are *morally necessary postulates*, i.e. rational prerequisites to *morality*.

In other words, a belief in a perfect world, what again he calls the *highest good*, is a prerequisite for moral behavior and actions. Hence his *categorical imperative* which is dictated by *pure reason* where *morality* is dictated and governed by *reason*, from which ultimately all duties and obligations as a human being and member of society derive. *Categorical imperatives* are absolute, unconditional requirements that must be obeyed in all circumstances, i.e. acting according to the maxim of *universalization* which is based upon *pure reason*, in contrast to *hypothetical imperatives* such as acting to quench one's thirst or to acquire knowledge and understanding for example which are more subjectively defined. Kant's *ethics* therefore is based upon *duty* which in turn is a byproduct of us being *rational* beings.

The *Critique of Practical Reason* was followed by his last major work - the last of the *Three Critiques* - the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* which was published in 1790 and was more or less the last of Kant's major works, and of course the last of the *Critiques*, after which he retired from academic life a few years later in 1796.

In the *Third Critique*, Kant explores in depth the notion of *teleology*, or ends in and of themselves, specifically as they relate to matters of *aesthetics*, or *beauty*, and again more broadly, purpose, theorizing that all such intellectual acts if we may call them such, were a function of, or driven by, a relatively distinct cognitive faculty that he referred to as *judgment*, a further delineation or derivative of the faculty of *reason* which he outlined in his *First Critique*. To Kant, as explained in his *Third Critique*, *judgment* is the last of the core cognitive faculties which completes, or augments, the faculties that he outlines and explores in detail in his *First* and *Second Critiques*, namely the *sensible*, which he refers to as *perception* and *understanding*, or *intellect*.

The faculty of *perception* according to Kant was constrained, or bound by, *objective reality* - i.e. the material world - whereas *understanding* - or again the *intellect* - was constrained by the *intelligible world*, corresponding more or less to Plato's *ideas* or *forms*. The sum total of *perception*, *understanding* and *judgment* as the three core cognitive faculties come together to establish not only the basic epistemological framework of Kant's *metaphysics* which he covers in his *First Critique*, but also represent the psychological and metaphysical foundations of his *practical philosophy* which is covered in his *Second Critique*, as well as his *theology*, or more specifically his *teleology*, which he covers in his *Third* and *Final Critique*.

Judgment to a large extent provides the final overarching aspect of cognition which extends beyond his *practical* and *theoretical* philosophical systems that he explored in his *First* and *Second Critiques*. In his *Third Critique*, Kant links the world of *perception*, *understanding* and *appearances* which are covered in his *First Critique* - how the world actually appears as it relates to primarily the faculty of *understanding* - and the *Metaphysics of Morals*, i.e. *ethics*, which he outlines in his *Second Critique* - how the world ought to be which is governed by *reason* - with *judgment*, which sits atop both *understanding* and *reason* and provides meaning to our existence. It is through the power of *judgment* that we conclude that there is a purpose to life, and in turn deduce the (theoretical at least) existence of God and the immortality of the Soul, from which all moral and religious beliefs ultimately derive. While the existence of God is not a fact in and of itself, as is true with the meaning of life - again *teleology* - but these presumptions serve to guide human behavior and provide a metaphysical and philosophical means to a better world. Belief in an underlying purpose to the world, which presupposes some sort of intelligent design, serves a purpose for humanity be it true or not. *Judgment* therefore connects Kant's theoretical and practical philosophical frameworks despite the metaphysical divide between the two

Kant's philosophical position has come to be known as *transcendental idealism*, positing that the human experience of things, objects of reality, are a function of how these things "appear" to us, making the human mind, the navigator and charioteer of the perceptory process, as the definer of the rules of the game so to speak rather than declaring the existence of things in an absolute sense outside of this realm of mind. That doesn't necessarily mean that there is a physical reality that does not in fact exist independent of our observation of said reality, (although this point is debated among interpreters of Kant's philosophy), but that from our perspective the existence of this independent reality has no meaning and no bearing on us as individual members of society and as individual human beings. Because our reality, everything we understand, comprehend, perceive using our mind and intellect and our power to understand, is predicated upon the metaphysical foundations of our mind itself, from which the ideas of time, space, depth etc. stem from – not the other way around hence his analogy of the *Copernican revolution of philosophy*.

By transcendental idealism I mean the doctrine that appearances are to be regarded as being, one and all, representations only, not things in themselves, and that time and space are therefore only sensible forms of our intuition, not determinations given as existing by themselves, nor conditions of objects viewed as things in themselves. To this idealism there is opposed a transcendental realism which regards time and space as something given in themselves, independently of our sensibility. The transcendental realist thus interprets outer appearances (their reality being taken as granted) as things-in-themselves, which exist independently of us and of our sensibility, and which are therefore outside us -- the phrase 'outside us' being interpreted in conformity with pure concepts of understanding. It is, in fact, this transcendental realist who afterwards plays the part of empirical idealist. After wrongly supposing that objects of the senses, if they are to be external, must have an existence by themselves, and independently of the senses, he finds that, judged from this point of view, all our sensuous representations are inadequate to establish their reality.

The transcendental idealist, on the other hand, may be an empirical realist or, as he is called, a dualist; that is, he may admit the existence of matter without going outside his mere self-consciousness, or assuming anything more than the certainty of his representations, that is, the cogito, ergo sum. For he considers this matter and even its inner possibility to be appearance merely; and appearance, if separated from our sensibility, is nothing. Matter is with him, therefore, only a species of representations (intuition), which are called external, not as standing in relation to objects in themselves external, but because they relate perceptions to the space in which all things are external to one another, while yet the space itself is in us. ⁵⁵²

⁵⁵² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. From <http://staffweb.hkbu.edu.hk/ppp/cpr/prefs.html> - pgs. 345-346.

Kant's work and legacy in aggregate reflects deep analytical exploration into the very boundaries of not only *reason* itself, but also the establishment of the rational foundations of *morality* and *ethics*, as well as the importance of the role of *judgment* - as conceived of as a composite of *aesthetics* and *teleology*, i.e. "ends" or "purpose" – in philosophical enquiry, the topics of his *Three Critiques* respectively. It can be argued that Kant held that, despite the evolution of the rationalist and empiricist schools of thought which had been a hallmark of the Age of Reason up to that point, those that although done the world a great service by establishing the rational underpinnings that drove the Scientific Revolution which helped upend the longstanding authority of the Church over intellectual thought which had held sway over *academia* for centuries, had nonetheless serious logical holes from his perspective, putting the study of *theology* itself - the existence of God and the Soul - as well as the *ethics* and its close cousin *morality*, in serious jeopardy from a philosophical perspective.

In perhaps one of the most famous and lasting quotations attributed to Kant he says, "*I had to deny knowledge to make room for faith*", providing perhaps the most succinct rationale behind his entire philosophical enterprise which represents his life's work and has left such a lasting impact on the West. He can be looked at as a Platonist to some extent given the *skepticism* that underlies his *theoretical philosophy* but yet at the same time he does not explicitly deny the existence of the material world, he simply (or perhaps not so simply) predicates its existence upon the cognitive capabilities of man, which when fully explored and mapped out also provide the framework within which a belief in God and the Soul, and *ethics* and *morality*, all hang together in a coherent system of *metaphysics*.

Reason then, a function of mind, according to Kant, can give us the foundation of *morality* and *theology* as well as Science, allowing for the recognition of the existence of God and the Soul, without them having to rest on empirical and/or scientifically based proofs. This approach, which is the hallmark of Kant's philosophy in toto, is unique in that it allows for Science and Religion to co-exist. Not on the same empirical foundations necessarily which were such an important aspect of the evolution of natural philosophical development during the Scientific Revolution, but co-existing within the same rational framework, subsumed within the totality of Kant's *metaphysics*, perhaps one of the most elegant and extraordinary philosophical developments not just in the Enlightenment, but in the history of Western philosophy.

Albert Einstein: *Spacetime* and Relativity Theory

As we trace the intellectual developments through beyond Middle Ages into and beyond the Enlightenment Era, we find that reason and *logic*, referred to more specifically as *rationalism* and *empiricism*, become the predominant intellectual building blocks of scientific inquiry, what had been studied under the heading of *natural philosophy* since the time of Aristotle, thereafter. This era of modern Science, i.e. the so-called Quantum Era, a byproduct of the discoveries that were later categorized and glorified by historians as the “Scientific Revolution” began with the revolutionary idea first put forth by Copernicus (1473 – 1543), and then confirmed and heralded by Galileo (1564 – 1642), that in fact the earth, and man along with it, was not in fact the center of the universe. This view had held by all scholars, theologians and intellectuals since the time of Ptolemy (100 – 170 CE) in the second century CE and proved in no uncertain terms the now common adage, “old habits die hard”.

These no less than revolutionary discoveries, which took generations to become firmly established as “truth”, laid the groundwork for the developments of Sir Isaac Newton (1643 – 1727), who with the aid of the now *heliocentric model* of the universe, “discovered” his famous *three laws of motion* which provide the basis even today for Classical Mechanics, or what is sometimes called Newtonian Mechanics in his honor. This new worldview was characterized and framed by who established beyond a shadow of a doubt, via various mathematical laws and theorems which accurately predicted behaviors of planets as well as other objects, that the earth in fact revolved around the sun driven by a new force which he called *gravity*, and that matter and objects on earth behaved according to the same laws which governed the motions of the planets, just on a smaller scale and subject to the massive gravitational force of the earth.

These so-called *laws of motion* all rested on very specific and well defined mathematical theorems alongside very specific measurement criteria such as “mass”, “velocity”, “acceleration” and “force”, establishing and solidifying not only the basic principles and terminology of modern science, but also firmly entrenching the idea that the natural world not only obeyed consistent laws and patterns, but that these patterns and laws were best explained and described via *mathematics*. *Mathematics* was the language of God as it were – at least as seen by the Enlightenment Era thinkers – and little did they understand the full implications of the profound and ground breaking “discoveries” that these new laws represented. These *three laws of motion*, what has come to represent the basis of Newtonian Mechanics became, and still remain to this day, the cornerstones of modern Physics. Alongside Classical Mechanics, *empiricism* became the guiding principle for establishing the basic characteristics of all Scientific inquiry.

The Age of Science had begun, and with it, as perhaps an unintended byproduct, came the relegation of *theology* and *philosophy* (i.e. all those domains of knowledge that had previously

fallen under the heading of philosophy other than *natural philosophy* as Aristotle had defined the various branches of knowledge that is), along with the closely affiliated fields of *morality* and *ethics* (what Aristotle had referred to as *practical philosophy* which had always been and continued to be closely tied to, and resting on the fundamental belief in the existence of the Soul, aka theology), to fundamentally “nonscientific” inquiry. These “nonscientific” fields are typically categorized within the academic and scholarly community mostly under the broad heading of “humanities” today, outside of theology proper of course which for the most part remains squarely within the domain of religion which is considered by most, certainly in the academic community, to be a wholly separate and distinct field of knowledge from “science” given its lack of “empirical” foundations.

It is this bridging of this intellectual gap between a) the existence of God and the Soul, as well as the field of *morality* and *ethics*, together with b) the pure *rationalist* and *empiricist* pursuits that established the basis for “physical reality” and became the hallmark of modern Science (again what was called *natural philosophy* from the time of Aristotle straight through the Enlightenment Era and certainly by the great thinkers and innovators who drove the Scientific Revolution⁵⁵³ which was the life’s work of Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) in fact. His philosophy, which came to be known as *transcendental idealism*, was designed specifically to bring all of these various intellectual and metaphysical domains which had been broken apart as an unintended byproduct of Enlightenment Era philosophical and scientific developments under one intellectual roof as it were, bringing them all together under the more broad and abstract heading of “Reason”, which to him formed the basis of all knowledge – knowledge of both of the physical world which was underpinned by *rationalism* and *empiricism*, as well as the ontological preeminence of the *ideas*, to which the domain of *theology*, *morality* and *ethics* belonged, which had been the subject of attack during the Enlightenment Era due to its “supposed” lack of rational foundations.⁵⁵⁴

Despite Kant’s work however, most of his works being published toward the end of the 18th and century, *materialism* and *causal determinism* became the most influential philosophical principles which underpinned this new age of scientific development, which although had clearly liberated academics and scholars to pursue knowledge for knowledge’s sake without the fear of persecution of the religious authorities which has been one of the hallmarks of the Scientific Revolution, nonetheless established the groundwork not just for the split of the various domains of knowledge which had hitherto all fallen under the broad heading of Philosophy, but also laid

⁵⁵³ *Natural philosophy* was the common name given to the study of the “science of the natural world” even through the 18th century, as evidenced for example by the title of Newton’s most famous work *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* - Latin for *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*.

⁵⁵⁴ See the Chapter in this work on Immanuel Kant’s philosophy, *transcendental idealism*, for a detailed look at his philosophical system as whole, one which is considered by most philosophical historians to represent the height of Enlightenment Era philosophy and by some to be the greatest philosopher of the modern era.

the groundwork for subsequent developments in scientific inquiry which for the most part fell under the domain of Physics. In other words, even though virtually all of the major thinkers of the Enlightenment Era (with very few notable exceptions) had not, nor would they have ever referred to themselves as “atheists” per se, their intellectual developments and innovations in terms of how knowledge itself was to be ascertained, and how in fact it was to be defined, nonetheless changed the center of gravity of intellectual developments and academic study as a whole. The academic and intellectual community shifted from being less “theologically based” - i.e. the study of the laws of nature and the laws of man within the context of mankind’s place in the universe which presumed the existence of some divine creator as well as a Soul which was to be judged by this creator upon death or at the time of revelation as well as a moral and ethical framework which could be deduced directly from this theological framework – to a focus on the “discovery” of further natural laws which explained natural phenomenon, laws which were not necessarily based upon Reason necessarily (as had Kant’s system as well as some of his *rationalist* and *empiricist* predecessors), but were based upon mathematical laws that could accurately predict “measurable phenomenon”.

Although this seems like a subtle distinction, and most certainly this emphasis and focus did not change overnight, it came to have very broad reaching implications within the academic and scientific community as the rate of progression of scientific innovation and discovery increased in the 19th and 20th centuries as *objective realism*, and its theo-philosophical counterpart *naturalism*, began to replace nearly all other theo-philosophical belief systems within the scientific community, the community as it turns out that was, and still is to a large extent, began to be viewed as the height of the intellectual and academic community at large. The brightest of the bright and the smartest of the smart. The individuals that were considered by the public to hold not only the highest place in the scientific community – the Theoretical Physicists as they have come to be known – but the ones that also were looked to as the keepers and definers of “knowledge” and “reality” itself. By the end of the twentieth century in fact, the tables had almost entirely turned.

It wasn’t necessarily that the belief in a Creator had been abandoned per se by the philosophers and scientists of the Enlightenment Era, it had most certainly not in fact, but it had been superseded, subsumed so to speak, by the belief that the material universe, the *substance* of Aristotle,⁵⁵⁵ obeyed natural laws which could be “discovered” and could be, in fact should be, best described by advanced *mathematics*. So a byproduct of the Scientific Revolution was not so

⁵⁵⁵ Aristotle used the word *ousia* in Greek, which stems originally from the Greek verb “to be” or “being” which of course had roots in Plato’s epistemological doctrine of *Being* vs. *Becoming*, but was typically translated into Latin as *essentia* or essence which of course loses something in translation.

much *materialism* and *atheism*, but the introduction of advanced *mathematics* as the language of God.

With Newton (1642-1727 CE) then, in particular with his law of *universal gravitation* and the *three laws of motion* as articulated in his *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*) first published in 1687, the foundations of *mechanism* and *determinism*, two of the most prevailing philosophical principles of the twentieth century - the notion that the world can be completely and entirely explained through mechanical and mathematical laws which had at their basis the principles of cause and effect - but also the natural extension of this premise which was *determinism*, i.e. the belief that the course of the universe was laid out entirely by cause and effect which was driven by these same mathematical laws and principles that governed *materialism*.⁵⁵⁶

Although traces of these basic principles can most certainly be found in Aristotle, he in no way abandoned the notion of a) the existence of the Soul, or b) the notion of Free Will, both of which formed the prevailing notions of his system of *ethics*, just as it did for Plato in fact.⁵⁵⁷ But it however undoubtedly in the work of Sir Isaac Newton that we find the establishment of the field of what we now refer to as Physics, along with the root and origin of what today we refer to as *materialism*, i.e. this notion of *knowledge* being defined or bounded by what can be *measured* or *quantified*, i.e. *objective realism*.

It is however, whether intentional or not, with Newtonian Mechanics, that we find the root origins of this now ubiquitous *materialistic* worldview which permeates Western culture and society. For if the entire physical world not only defines the boundaries of *knowledge* and *truth* itself, but is also at the same time fundamentally and intrinsically governed by not only the laws of cause and effect but also by mathematical principles in toto, and in turn all of the laws that govern this material universe are “discoverable”, then what room is there from an

⁵⁵⁶ This is not to say that Newton himself was strict *determinist*, in fact much to the contrary, or that all twentieth century influential scientists are for that matter, but it does in fact perhaps best reflect the views of perhaps the most famous scientist of the modern era, Stephen Hawking who is a self-proclaimed Atheist and determinist. Notably, although Einstein did claim he was strict *determinist*, he is still nonetheless known for his oft quoted criticism of Quantum Theory, “*God does not play dice*” which at least some level illustrates that he had some room for a “Creator” within his notion of a physical universe which was entirely made up of matter, basic forces which acted on said matter, as well as a set of laws which governed how matter and these related forces acted on each other – i.e. was completely *deterministic*. Although not clearly understood or conveyed by Einstein, perhaps God to him is more akin to the God of Nature of Spinoza than the God the *Old* or *New Testament* who creates the universe ex nihilo and is the ultimate judge of the Soul upon death. Spinoza’s view on the subject is typically described by the somewhat esoteric and obtuse quotation where he equates God with Nature: “*That eternal and infinite being we call God, or Nature, acts from the same necessity from which he exists.*” (Part IV, Preface).

⁵⁵⁷ Even though Aristotle himself uses the term *Physics*, as the title of one of his most influential works in fact, i.e. *Physics*, the topic of this treatise is on the nature of things that are subject to change, i.e. a further explanation and exposition of Plato’s world of *Becoming* (versus the world of *Being* which is eternal and not subject to change and is metaphysically equivalent and intellectually on par with the realm of *forms, ideas*, as well as the Soul itself) which is of course a much more broad discipline and field of study than the field of modern Physics as we know it today which is more concerned with the study of the various forces, laws and principles which govern “physical”, “objective” reality.

epistemological perspective for the Soul? Or Free Will? Or myth even? Whose purpose is arguably to stir or “speak” to the Soul at some basic level. Or to take the logic on step further, what is the purpose or fundamental nature of *ethics* or *morality* for that matter? Outside of their place in the social and political spheres of *democracy*, and in the West *capitalism*, which is more focused on the preservation of property and the civil obedience of society at large, and the protection of basic property rights and “liberty”, or “freedom” at some level because they promote a healthy and growing society and protect, at least in theory, this idea of “freedom” which is open to interpretation to say the least. These fundamental tenets of “democracy” as we define it in the West is primarily predicated not on the reality of *ethics* or *morality* necessarily, but on the existence of some form of *natural law*”, as put forth initially by the Stoics in classical antiquity to a large extent and then echoed by much of the political philosophy which emerges alongside philosophy proper in the Enlightenment Era which in no small measure provided the impetus for the English, American, and French Revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries, the end and culmination of which marks the end of the Age of Enlightenment.

The word Science derives from the Latin *scientia*, meaning knowledge or “that which can be known”, and is a derivation of the Latin verb *scire*, or “to know”. *Scientia* is the Latin translation of the Aristotelian term *epistêmê* which meant the same, i.e. knowledge, although *epistêmê* the way Aristotle used it had a much broader meaning than the term “science” does today, and Aristotle spelled out in painstaking, and broader detail, the various types and domains of “knowledge”, its Categories, and even a broad description of *Being* itself, or “existence”, i.e. *being qua being* which represented not the sum total of knowledge but just one of the fundamental aspects of knowledge. At some level, the bulk of the corpus of Aristotle’s work could be considered the rational framework for knowledge itself, what modern philosophers refer to as *epistemology*. What is clear however, is that the terminology we use today to discern and distinguish between the various branches of “knowledge”, and even the word “science” itself, have their origins in the semantic and linguistic framework which Aristotle put forth some 2500 years ago.

The word *scientia* as a derivation of the Greek word *epistêmê* used by Aristotle was carried down through the Middle Ages well into the Age of Enlightenment and right down through to the modern era of “science”. And what we consider science today, whether intentionally or not, has become almost metaphysically and ontologically equivalent with our modern conception of “reality”, and even in a more broad sense, “truth” itself. This fact, again intentional or not, is the reason why any field or branch of knowledge that exists outside of Science, i.e. lays outside of the domain of empirical or verifiable “proof” as it were, is in turn less precise, or less “true”, is “subjective” and therefore imbued with opinion and subject to interpretation to some degree.

This is what separates philosophical inquiry, which includes *metaphysics*, as we understand it today in academic circles, as well as the rest of the Humanities for the most part, from the grand pedestal of Science as the benchmark of not just *reality* but again, in the extreme view, *truth* itself.

Aristotle's *epistêmê*, what came to be known as "*scientia*" in the West and the Scholastic method of teaching which was a hallmark of the European system of education throughout the Middle Ages, provides the basis for the categorization of all intellectual study and intellectual disciplines in the West all the way through to the Enlightenment Era, after which - once freed from the dogmatism and intellectual and metaphysical inflexibility enforced by the doctrines of the Church governed by their specific interpretation of Christian Scripture – the various branches of knowledge that were more familiar with today begin to take shape, culminating from a natural philosophical perspective in Newton's great work *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, which in many respects marks the beginning of modern Science, and from which the modern field of Physics as we know it today ultimately emerges.

Newton's seminal work outlined the core *mathematical principles* that governed the physical world, the field of *natural philosophy* which again harkened all the way back to the categorization of the various domains of knowledge, *epistêmê*, by Aristotle. Aristotle again distinguished various domains of knowledge, of which *ethics* and *morality* of course was one (falling under the heading of *practical philosophy*) and *natural philosophy* was the term he used to denote the field of study of the world that was subject to change, which to the Enlightenment Era philosophers, the first *scientists* really, came to be known as the domain of Physics. [Aristotle however, and this point cannot be overemphasized, also called out specifically the branch of knowledge which was to be studied "before" (*meta*) *physics*, as *first philosophy*, what we now refer to as *metaphysics*, again using his terminology.]

But in the subsequent centuries following the adoption and establishment of Newtonian Mechanics in the academic and intellectual community, the word "science" becomes rooted in Western *academia* and effectively replaces the old term "natural philosophy", reflecting the displacement of Aristotle's framework for *epistêmê* which had persisted for over a thousand years. This linguistic shift had the unintended effect of relegating the branches of knowledge or study outside of science proper, and physics even to a lesser extent, as not just separate domains or fields of study, but also as "less accurate", less "refined" and in some sense "less true" or "real" disciplines since they did not have a basis in measureable and empirically verifiable, reproducible and predictable results. The implications of this slight shift in how knowledge and reality itself comes to be defined and perceived again cannot be overstated.

Theology, or Religion, and its natural cousin the domain of *ethics* and *morality*, from the perspective of the academic community given this shift in the definition and classification of

knowledge in toto, was to say the least relegated and pushed aside, isolated as it were into the domain of religion for the most part, or even worse into the newly relegated and much more isolated and restricted domain of “philosophy”, which no longer included natural philosophy of course, but even no longer included Aristotle’s *first philosophy*, the latter of which was at some level equated with *theology* and/or philosophy in its new, restricted definitive form.

This further delineation and distinction between the various branches of knowledge and the break of Science from the rest of the field so to speak, is one of the most important side effects of the Scientific Revolution. On the one hand, it “liberated” Science from Religion and allowed it to be pursued and to evolve independent of any pre-conceived theological or even political motivations (at least in theory) but on the other hand it slowly and gradually began to not just supplant religion as the hallmark of truth, but also supplant *first philosophy*, i.e. *metaphysics*, as the final measure of *reality*.

Between Newton and Einstein, the two most influential Physicists of the modern era (if you can call Newton a physicist even though there was no such thing in Newton’s time), we do find a variety of developments in not only the field of Astronomy, which tested and verified Newton’s laws on *universal gravitation* and *motion*, but also in the fields of Optics, Electricity and Magnetism, work which culminated in the 19th century with the discovery of what are called *Maxwell’s equations*, a theoretical, and of course mathematical, model that consolidated and integrated the previously separate domains of optics, *magnetism* and electricity under the heading of *electrodynamics*, proving that all three of these previously distinct domains were actually just manifestations of the same underlying force, a force subsequently referred to as *electromagnetism*.

As experimentation and testing of theories advanced however, and instrumentation became more advanced and precise, various holes and inconsistencies developed which pointed to cracks not only in Newtonian Mechanics itself, but also with Maxwell’s mathematical and theoretical models surrounding the new, consolidated field of *electromagnetism*. These inconsistencies, or perhaps better-termed irregularities, to a very great extent provided the impetus for Einstein’s original work in Physics before he developed his Relativity Theory.

Einstein is best known for two fundamentally radical scientific developments that forever changed the course of scientific history, Relativity Theory which built upon and effectively supplanted Newtonian Mechanics as the dominant model of the physical universe, reconciling inconsistencies in some of the astronomical observations of his time and at the same time upending the notion that time was a constant *force* that moved at a constant rate of progress no matter where you were or how fast you were traveling in *relative space*, and of course his discovery of the equivalence between mass and energy that is captured in the elegant and now

famous equation $E = mc^2$, both revolutionary theories that were to forever change the nature of physics.

His Relativity Theory is actually broken into two parts, the first of which is Special Relativity which posits an altogether new structure of the physical universe by integrating the notion of space and time, what he called *spacetime*, and General Relativity, which builds off of the developments of his Special Relativity Theory and postulated a notion of *universal gravitation* at the cosmic, as well as earthly scale. Both theories rested squarely on the idea that the speed of light is constant in the universe (186,000 miles per hour), no matter what an observer's frame of reference and no matter how fast an observer is moving relative to the object of measurement.

Einstein was undoubtedly the most influential physicist of the 20th century, the century that ushered in the so-called "Quantum Era", and his work was truly ground breaking and represented a major step in the development of advanced mathematical models to represent the world around us at the cosmic scale, illustrating to the academic and intellectual communities at the time, i.e. physicists and scientists, that the world as they knew it was not as simple as had been previously thought. Although Einstein is best known for his theories on Relativity and *mass-energy equivalence* however, the work that he actually won the Nobel Prize for in 1921 (at the age of 42) actually created some of the building blocks for what later became the field of Quantum Mechanics, a theory incidentally that Einstein voiced great concern with over the course of his career, calling it "incomplete" or at the very least missing some key variables/inputs.⁵⁵⁸

Einstein was just as much of a philosopher as he was a physicist however, and much of the latter part of his career he not only questioned the premise of the quantum mechanical models that began to take shape during the middle of the twentieth century, but he also spent a good deal of his time thinking and writing about what the great "discoveries" of twentieth century physics actually *meant*, i.e. their relevance to and about the world we lived in from a metaphysical and theological perspective. In his view, the advancements in Physics marked by General Relativity and Quantum Theory were not simply mathematical and measurement tools to aid the development of science and technological advancement, but also had serious implications on the nature of reality itself, as well as God's role in the creation and sustenance of said reality.

Perhaps the most notable example of the moral dilemma which Einstein faced with respect to technological advancement as a result of developments in Physics in the first half of the twentieth century and their social as well as ethical implications is illustrated in his involvement, and

⁵⁵⁸ It is within the context of his concerns and skepticism regarding Quantum Mechanics in fact, that he is believed to have stated, "*God does not play dice*" given the stochastic (probabilistic) nature of the underlying mathematics which described the "behavior" of particles at the sub-atomic level.

subsequent regret, in the famed Manhattan Project, the US Government funded initiative during WW II that developed, and of course then later used, the atomic bomb against Japan in 1945. Despite his later public regrets on the subject, Einstein contributed significantly to these efforts which ran for some seven years, cost the United States nearly 2 billion dollars, and at its height employed more than 130,000 people.⁵⁵⁹

Albert Einstein was born in Germany in 1879 and spent most of his formative years there in school. His father was an electrical engineer so you could say that the study of electrical currents, and science in general, was inherited to a great extent. He supposedly wrote his first paper on scientific topics at the age of 16 on the behavior of magnetic fields, a work entitled *On the Investigation of the State of the Ether in a Magnetic Field*. In 1900 Einstein's was awarded his degree in teaching from the Zurich Polytechnical school and after struggling for almost two years to find a job, he finally landed work in Bern, Switzerland, at the Federal Office for Intellectual Property as an assistant examiner where he evaluated patent applications for electromagnetic devices. Interestingly enough, his work in the patent office was very much in line with his later research and thinking with respect to the transmission of electric signals and the synchronization of time, concepts which played a significant role in the subsequent development of his theories in *electromagnetism* and Physics which had such a profound effect on modern Science.

On 30 April 1905, Einstein was awarded a doctorate in Physics by the University of Zurich with his thesis *A New Determination of Molecular Dimensions*. That same year he also published papers on the *photoelectric effect* (for which he later won a Nobel Prize in Physics), *Brownian motion* which developed mathematical models describing the motion of particles suspended in a fluid, liquid or gas, Special Relativity, and the relationship of mass and energy as a function of the speed of light, marking the beginning of decades of revolutionary scientific developments at both the cosmic and subatomic scale.⁵⁶⁰

Einstein's work on the *photoelectric effect* in particular had significant impact on the subsequent development of the Quantum Theory. For it proved that when certain types of matter were bombarded with short-wave *electromagnetism*, they emitted what Einstein referred to as *photoelectrons*, particles which later came to be known simply as *photons*, the study of which led directly to some of the most odd and mysterious behaviors that have come to characterize Quantum Theory, i.e. the fact that light behaves both like a particle and a wave depending upon the experiment used to study it. This discovery led to important developments in understanding

⁵⁵⁹ Toward the end of his life, Einstein is attributed to have said to his friend Linus Pauling, "*I made one great mistake in my life — when I signed the letter to President Roosevelt recommending that atom bombs be made; but there was some justification — the danger that the Germans would make them*". Quote from *Einstein: The Life and Times* by Ronald Clark. page 752

⁵⁶⁰ 1905 which was the year where Einstein's ground breaking work in *Brownian motion*, Special Relativity, and mass/energy equivalence were published is sometimes referred to as *Annus Mirabilis*, or literally "extraordinary year".

the *quantized* nature of light, i.e. it's characteristic to move from state to state in a non-continuous fashion, a discovery which in many respects formed the basis of Quantum Mechanics.

At the beginning of the rise of Nazi power in Germany in the 1930s, and while visiting Universities in the United States in 1933, Germany passed a law barring Jews from holding official positions, including teaching at Universities, and it is said that Einstein also learned at this time that there was a bounty placed on his head. Einstein then moved to the United States in 1933 permanently, as the Nazis rose in power in his homeland of Germany. There he took up a position at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University, a position which he held until his death in 1955. During this period, Einstein spent much of his intellectual pursuits trying to come up with a unified theory that incorporated his models of Relativity (the General case) which dealt with the behaviors of massive bodies, light and time at a cosmic scale, and Quantum Mechanics which dealt with the description of the world at the microscopic and subatomic scale, an endeavor which the field of Theoretical Physics still struggles with to this day.

On a more personal level, Einstein was a great lover of music and an accomplished violinist. His mother was a pianist and Einstein was taught the violin at a very early age, supposedly starting at the age of 5, although he is said to have taken up music more passionately in his teenage years where he grew a great affection for the work of Mozart. His music is thought to have played a significant role in his social life over the years, as he is noted to have played violin in Germany and Switzerland with friends, most notably with Max Planck and his son prior to moving to the States in 1933, and then in the United States as well later in life at Princeton University where he is said to have joined in with the famed Julliard Quartet on occasion.

From a pure Science and Physics perspective however, it is Einstein's work on Relativity and the equivalence of *mass* and *energy* that gained him the popularity and repute that still stands to this day. His theories on Relativity are separated into what he referred to as the "Special" case, which was published initially in 1905 where he posited the notion of *spacetime* as a *holistic* construct within which classical Newtonian mechanical observations of "physical bodies" and "motion" must be viewed in order to be fully consistent and coherent, and the "General" case which expanded upon Special Relativity to include a more *general* case which included mathematical formulae for measuring Classical Mechanical attributes such as *mass* and *speed* when no reference system existed from which the measurements could be made and sat *relative* to.

Special Relativity is the physical theory of measurement in an inertial frame of reference and was proposed by Einstein in a paper in 1905 entitled *On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies*. The paper reconciled James Clerk Maxwell's mathematical models (aka *Maxwell's equations*) on *electricity* and *magnetism* which had been published in the 1860s, with the laws of mechanics as described by Galileo and Newton. Einstein reconciled these seemingly disparate fields of study by introducing major changes to mechanics close to the speed of light. This work only later

became known as the Theory of Special Relativity , which is distinguished from the Theory of General Relativity in that it considers the frame of reference of the *observer*, whereas General Relativity assumes all observers are equivalent.⁵⁶¹

In his work on Special Relativity, Einstein generalizes Galileo's notion of *relativity* - which states that all uniform motion is relative and that there is no absolute and well-defined state of rest – from classical mechanics to *all* the laws of Physics, including both the laws of Classical Mechanics as well as the new field of *electrodynamics*, unifying these hitherto seemingly distinct scientific fields of study, a unique characteristic of many of his scientific breakthroughs in fact, and one which plagued him toward the end of his life as he failed to come up with a unifying theory which encompassed Quantum Mechanics and General Relativity.

He sums up his synthesis of the field of *electrodynamics* and Classical Mechanics leveraging this principle of the constant speed of light no matter what an observer's frame of reference is in the opening section from one of the seminal papers he published in 1905 called *On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies*:

*... the same laws of electrodynamics and optics will be valid for all frames of reference for which the equations of mechanics hold good. We will raise this conjecture (the purport of which will hereafter be called the "Principle of Relativity") to the status of a postulate, and also introduce another postulate, which is only apparently irreconcilable with the former, namely, that light is always propagated in empty space with a definite velocity c which is independent of the state of motion of the emitting body. These two postulates suffice for the attainment of a simple and consistent theory of the electrodynamics of moving bodies based on Maxwell's theory for stationary bodies.*⁵⁶²

Much of Einstein's work on Special Relativity can also be seen as an extension, or at least complementary, to the work of the Russian theoretical physicist and mathematician Hermann Minkowski, a contemporary of Einstein. More specifically, it was Minkowski's notion of *spacetime*, which extended the 3-dimensional classical view of reality based upon the *algebraic geometry* of Euclid, Galileo and Descartes among others, to include a fourth dimension of time to come up with a more complete description of the frame of reference for an "event":

⁵⁶¹ Both Special Relativity and General Relativity in fact are constructed upon the notion that the speed of light is fixed in an absolute sense, and is the same for all inertial observers regardless of the state of motion of the source.

⁵⁶² Albert Einstein, *On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies*, 1905. From <https://www.fourmilab.ch/etexts/einstein/specrel/www/>.

*The views of space and time which I wish to lay before you have sprung from the soil of experimental physics, and therein lies their strength. They are radical. Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality.*⁵⁶³

What the Theory Special Relativity states basically, and much of its theoretical implications have been experimentally verified at this point, is that the concepts of “space” and “time”, which had been looked at as constants no matter what the reference point for the previous two millennia, had to be considered *relative* – relative in the sense that their measurement and value depended upon the frame of reference, and the speed, at which the *observer* was moving. To arrive at these conclusions, and implicit in the theorems and *mathematics* behind the theory, the speed of light was presumed to be fixed from all vantage points and frames of reference. Furthermore, and this was no small contribution of course, it posits and proves that mass and energy are equivalent, as expressed in the famous equation $E = mc^2$.

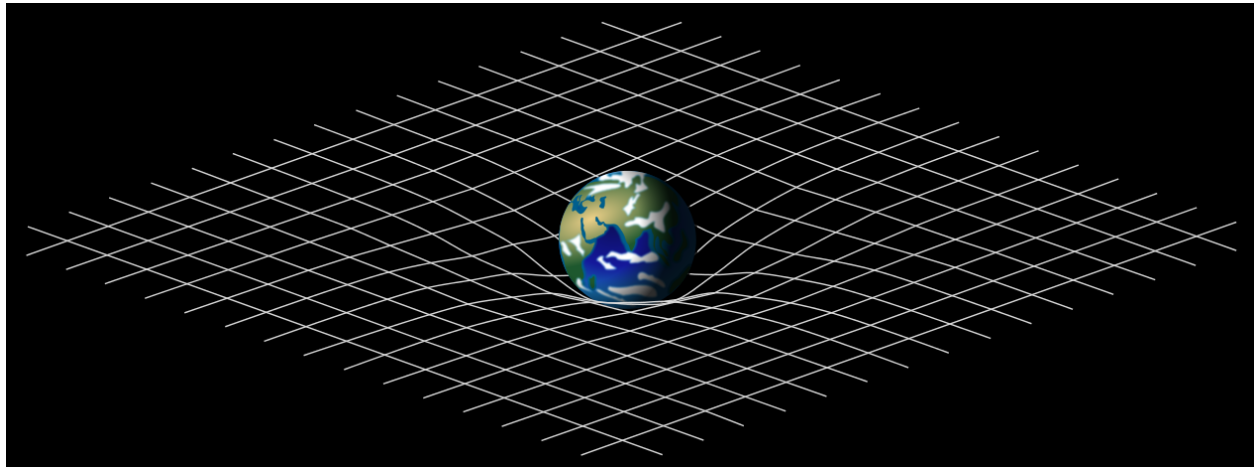


Figure 33: Illustration of the curvature of spacetime in Einstein's Theory of General Relativity⁵⁶⁴

General Relativity, as it was later called to distinguish itself from Special Relativity, was developed to apply the principle of Special Relativity to the more general case, i.e. to any frame

⁵⁶³ From Minkowski's address delivered at the 80th Assembly of German Natural Scientists and Physicians on September 21, 1908.

⁵⁶⁴ By Mysid - Own work. Self-made in Blender & Inkscape., CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=45121761>. From Wikipedia contributors, 'Spacetime', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2 December 2016, 14:47 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Spacetime&oldid=752656514>> [accessed 2 December 2016].

of reference. General Relativity introduces Einstein's *theory of gravity*, as it exists and acts upon bodies in motion in the *spacetime* continuum that is established in Special Relativity. Whereas Special Relativity restricts itself to a flat spacetime continuum where cosmic scale gravitational effects are negligent, in General Relativity gravitational effects are represented as *curvatures of spacetime*, i.e. at the cosmic scale gravity affects the very nature of the spacetime continuum itself. And just as the curvature of the earth's surface is not noticeable in everyday life and can be effectively ignored in everyday life (when measuring distance or speed for example), the curvature of spacetime can be effectively ignored on smaller, non-cosmic scales of measurement. In other words, Special Relativity, is a valid approximation of General Relativity at smaller, non-cosmic scales.

From Einstein's General Relativity theory then, we not only have the beginnings of the establishment of the model within which the cosmos itself can be studied, introducing the basic principles that are used to this day that define modern Cosmology culminating perhaps most notably in the discovery of modern conceptions of the beginning of the universe known as Big Bang Theory in the latter part of the twentieth century, but we also have a dissolution of the notions of space and time as absolute, independent entities, bringing an end to the era of absolute physical existence which had been an implicit assumption of Western physicists, philosophers, naturalists and theologians for at least some 2000 years or so.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁵ As a thought experiment and to illustrate the implications of Relativity when taken to extreme limits, imagine for a moment that you were able to travel at the speed of light, or at least close to it. Not only would you become enormously massive (infinitely so at the speed of light), but your perception of time relative to your peers at rest would slow down dramatically, a notion known as *time dilation*, and furthermore your idea of space as defined by any act of measurement would change dramatically as well, a concept referred to as *length contraction*, where objects that are parallel with the individual's line of movement would appear to be infinitely small.

Quantum Mechanics: *Wave-Particle Duality and Uncertainty*

Following the intellectual bread crumbs of Albert Einstein, let's try to understand how his revolutionary ideas and theories of *universal gravitation*, the notion of *spacetime*, the establishment of the equivalence of *mass* and *energy*, the necessary condition of the existence of a "frame of reference" as a fundamental aspect of Physics, along with the revolutionary idea of the eternally fixed nature of the *speed of light* under all measurement conditions formed the basis, ironically, of perhaps the most influential and revolutionary theory in modern Physics – namely Quantum Theory, sometimes referred to as Quantum Mechanics primarily to distinguish it from Classical Mechanics which obeys an entirely different set of rules and laws as it turns out.

Quantum Theory is the term used to describe the *stochastic* (i.e. probabilistic) mathematical models that were developed in the early part of the 20th century to describe the "behavior", really the measurement of specific "qualities" or "characteristics" for lack of a better description, of so-called "sub-atomic" particles, what were initially referred to as *corpuscles* in the early Quantum Mechanics academic literature. Quantum Theory has effectively turned the field of physics on its head for the last century or so as its underlying theories and equations have proved to be accurate and have tremendous predictive power over and over again through various experiments throughout the 20th century.

Despite its predictive power however, the basic underlying principles, assumptions and tenets of Quantum Mechanics - mathematical models and equations which are fundamentally a) "probabilistic" and b) depend upon an "act of observation" for the derivation of a specific measurement – fly directly and squarely in the face, and essentially completely contradict, the basic causal, *materialistic* and *deterministic* assumptions upon which both Classical Mechanics and Relativity Theory rest. These underlying contradictions and paradoxes have driven most if not all of the work in the field of Theoretical Physics since its inception in the middle of the 20th century as researchers and mathematicians alike have struggled in vain to come up with some sort of "unified" theory that bridges the conceptual and theoretical gap between the two models and their inherent contradictory assumptions.

What is even more interesting, and quite pertinent and relevant to this work in fact despite its primarily theo-philosophical bent, is that these theories have much to say - individually as well as *holistically* despite their inherent incompatibilities – about what can be concluded about the nature of reality itself, the bounds of physics as a discipline and field of study as it were, as well as potentially how "reality", however we choose to define it, came into existence. Furthermore, we shall find that in fact that our definition of reality ultimately depends upon not just on the "physical scale" that we are looking at, but also (in somewhat of a circular logistical fashion) upon what characteristic and qualities of this "reality" that we are actually measuring which in turn to

a large extent define the boundaries and assumptions of the “reality” that we are looking to describe and explain, and “predict” which is what Physics is ultimately designed to do. In this respect, and perhaps unintentionally, 20th century Physics has contributed greatly, even if inconclusively, to the resurgence of metaphysics, i.e. first philosophy.

To begin, Classical Mechanics is based upon Atomic Theory, a conceptual framework established by Niels Bohr in the early part of the 20th century which posited that *atoms*, the fundamental component of the physical universe, were actually composed of a central, relatively massive *nucleus*, surrounded and encircled by much less massive particles called *electrons* which orbited this *nucleus*. This theory to a large extent forms the intellectual basis for virtually our entire materialist modern-day view of “physical reality”, i.e. the model which underlies all of physics – Classical as well as Quantum. Atomic Theory in its most basic and elementary form posits that all matter, all substance or physical reality, is composed of these composite “things”, “elements” or “objects” which are referred to as *atoms*. According to the theory, at least in its initial form, *atoms* represent the fundamental building blocks of the entire physical universe and are, conceptually at least, indivisible in nature.

Atomic Theory from this basic perspective can be traced back to ancient Hellenic philosophy in fact, as put forth by some of the Pre-Socratic philosophers such as Democritus, Leucippus, and the Epicurean school from the 6th and 5th centuries BCE. The word “atom” in fact comes from the Greek word *atomos* which means “indivisible”. In its earliest form as understood and articulated by these Pre-Socratic philosophers, specifically the Epicurean school, the world consisted of indivisible *atoms* that moved through a universal substratum of physical existence, i.e. the void or “ether”, which was effectively defined as the basic substratum of space through which these indivisible *atoms* moved. It was believed that *atoms* joined together in various combinations which was the explanation for the existence of the variety of things or substances that existed in nature, animate and inanimate objects included. It is important to point out and recognize however that these *atoms* are primarily conceptual constructs – powerful and meaningful conceptual constructs no doubt but still conceptual constructs. For what we call *atoms* have been proven to consist primarily of empty space even if they in toto are measurable constructs that have quantifiable “mass” and “energy” and can be more or less distinguished from one another. In one of the most illustrative and powerful analogies that describe the amount of empty space that exists in an atom, it is said that if an *atom* were the size of a football stadium, the *nucleus* would be the size of a pea at the center and the *electrons* would be circling and whizzing around the outside of the stadium itself, everything in between would be “empty”, i.e. not contain any elements or particles of mass or velocity.

It wasn’t until the end of the 18th century however, more than two millennia after the initial basic tenets of Atomic Theory were put forth by the Ancient Greek philosophers, that physicists

were able to expand upon this theory and provide a more empirical and mathematical basis for these essential building blocks of nature, building blocks which were eventually determined to be divisible in fact, and consisted of *electrons*, *protons* and other even further divisible structures that are the basis of much study and debate in modern particle physics. The first of these developments was the *law of conservation of mass*, formulated by Antoine Lavoisier in 1789, which states that the total mass in a chemical reaction remains constant, and the second was the *law of definite proportions*, first proven by the French chemist Joseph Louis Proust in 1799 which states that if a compound is broken down into its constituent elements, then the masses of the constituents will always have the same proportions regardless of the quantity or source of the original substance. Then, with the publication by James Maxwell in the work entitled *Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism* in 1873, it was shown that the interactions of both positive and negative charges that had been previously thought of as two separate forces, i.e. *electricity* and *magnetism*, could actually be viewed as just one force, what was subsequently referred to as *electromagnetism*. This force which he “discovered” which was described in details by a series of complex mathematical equations, i.e. Maxwell’s Equations, can be viewed as the synthesis of four basic laws or principles which describe the force itself. These are; 1) electric charges attract or repel one another with a force inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them: unlike charges attract, like ones repel, 2) magnetic poles, or states of polarization at individual points, attract or repel one another in a similar way and always come in pairs: every “north” pole is yoked or conjoined to an opposite counterpart or a “south” pole, 3) an electric current in a wire creates a circular magnetic field around the wire, where its direction, clockwise or counter-clockwise, depends on the direction of the current, and 4) a current is induced in a loop of wire when it is moved towards or away from a magnetic field.

Then in 1897, J.J. Thompson discovered a particle, or *corpuscle* as he called it, that was some 1000 times smaller than the *atom* as it had been estimated at the time. Thompson didn’t know it then but this corpuscle that he had discovered was actually the *electron*. Thompson’s discovery was followed closely thereafter by the discovery of a positively charged constituent of mass that rested in the center of the *atom* by Ernest Rutherford in 1909, a student of Thompson. Rutherford, building on the work of his teacher, discovered that most of the mass and positive charge of an *atom* was concentrated in a very small fraction of its volume, which he presumed to be its center, what later came to be known as the *nucleus* of the *atom*. This result led Rutherford to propose a planetary model of the *atom* where *electrons* of negative charge orbited around a positively charged *nucleus* that again consisted of the vast majority of the mass contained in an *atom*. Shortly after Rutherford’s discovery, one of his students, Niels Bohr, landed on a more broad and well defined model for the structure of the *atom* that leveraged findings in Quantum Mechanics (although the field wasn’t called that quite yet) and specifically some of Planck’s work on *quantization* to further describe and model the picture of the *atom*. By studying the hydrogen atom, Bohr theorized that an *electron* orbited the *nucleus* of an *atom* in very specifically

quantifiable and particular, i.e. *discrete*, circular orbits with *fixed* angular momentum and energy, with the *electron's* orbital “distance” from the *nucleus* being a function of its energy level.

Bohr's theory clarified and shored up some of the basic shortcomings of the planetary model of the *atom* proposed by Rutherford because it explained how *atoms* could achieve stable states, a shortcoming of the prior work by Rutherford. He further theorized, in one of the defining discoveries of 20th century and modern Physics, that *atoms* could only make *quantized* leaps of energy *states*, and furthermore, when this change of states occurred, light or energy was emitted or absorbed from or into the *atom* itself with a frequency proportional to the change in energy state, explaining another phenomenon that was lacking in Rutherford's planetary model of the *atom* and at the same time introducing, albeit unintentionally, the basic building blocks of the Quantum Theory. Essentially what Bohr discovered and contributed to Quantum Theory, leveraging Plank's models in the *quantized* nature of radiation emission, was that *electrons* orbit *neutrons* in the outer part of the *atom* corresponding to *definite, discrete* and *fixed* energy levels, and that when an *electron* jumps from one *discrete* state to another, it gives rise to the emission or absorption of *electromagnetic radiation* at a specific characteristic wavelength.⁵⁶⁶

Atomic Theory as it stands today was later refined through works of many physicists in the fields of *electromagnetism* and radioactivity, developments which further divided atomic structure and gave rise to the term elementary particles, which refers to the subatomic particles we are most familiar with today, namely *electrons, protons* and *neutrons*. But the story doesn't end here. Models in the world of Theoretical Physics start to get complicated pretty quickly over the next few decades after this wave (no pun intended) of discoveries in the early twentieth century. And as the theories became more complex, and the experimental results that they predicted become more expansive, comprehensive and verified, some very interesting and revealing questions are posed about the fundamental nature of reality and the basic theoretical assumptions that govern said reality that have still yet to be answered, a problem that Einstein himself spent the majority of the end of his life trying to solve, unsuccessfully as it turns out.

Quantum Mechanics is the branch of Physics that deals with the behavior of particles and matter in the atomic and subatomic realms, or *quantum realm* so called given the *quantized* nature of “things” at this scale. So you have some sense of scale, an *atom* is 10^{-8} cm across give or take, and the *nucleus*, or center of an *atom*, which is made up of what we now call *protons* and

⁵⁶⁶ Since Bohr's model is essentially a *quantized* version of Rutherford's, some scholars refer to the model as the Rutherford-Bohr model as opposed to just the Rutherford model. As a theory, it may be considered to be obsolete given later advancements however, because of its simplicity and its correct results for selected systems, the Bohr model is still commonly taught to introduce students to Quantum Mechanics.

neutrons, is approximately 10^{-12} cm across. An *electron*, or a *photon* for that matter, cannot truly be measured from a size perspective in terms of Classical Mechanics for many of the reasons we'll get into below as we explore the boundaries of the *quantum* world, but suffice it to say at present our best guess at the estimate of the size of an *electron* are in the range of 10^{-18} cm or so.⁵⁶⁷

Whether or not *electrons*, or *photons* (particles of light) for that matter, really exist as particles whose physical size, and/or momentum can be actually “measured” is not as straightforward a question as it might appear and gets at some level to the heart of the problem we encounter when we attempt to apply the principles of *existence* or *reality* to the subatomic realm, or quantum realm, within the context of the semantic and intellectual framework established in Classical Mechanics that has evolved over the last three hundred years or so; namely as defined by independently existing, deterministic and quantifiable measurements of size, location, momentum, mass or velocity. The word “quantum” comes from the Latin *quantus*, meaning “how much” and it is used in this context to identify the behavior of subatomic things that move from and between *discrete* states rather than a continuum of values or states as is assumed and fundamental to Classical Mechanics. The term itself had taken on meanings in several contexts within a broad range of scientific disciplines in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but was formalized and refined as a specific field of study as Quantum Mechanics by Max Planck at the turn of the 20th century and *quantization* arguably represents the prevailing and distinguishing characteristic of reality at this scale.

Newtonian Mechanics, or even the extension of Newtonian Mechanics as put forth by Einstein with Relativity Theory in the beginning of the twentieth century (a theory whose accuracy is well established via experimentation at this point), assumes that particles, things made up of mass, energy and momentum *exist independent of the observer or their instruments of observation*, and are presumed to exist in continuous form, moving along specific trajectories and whose properties (mass, velocity, etc.) can only be changed by the action of some force upon which these things or objects are affected. This is the essence of Newtonian Mechanics upon which the majority of modern day physics, or at least the laws of physics that affect us here at a “human” or “cosmic” scale, is defined. Theories and models of reality which as we have pointed out rest

⁵⁶⁷ Our current ability to measure the size of these subatomic particles goes down to approximately 10^{-16} cm leveraging currently available instrumentation, so at the very least we can say that our ability to measure anything in the subatomic realm, or most certainly the realm of the general constituents of basic atomic elements such as quarks or gluons for example, is very challenging to say the least. Even the measurement of the estimated size of an atom is not so straightforward as the measurement is dictated by the circumference of the atom, a measurement that relies specifically on the size or radius of the “orbit” of the *electrons* on said atom, “particles” whose actual “location” cannot be “measured” in tandem with their momentum, standard tenets of Quantum Mechanics, both of which constitute what we consider measurement in the classic Newtonian sense.

upon, whether explicitly called out or not, the fundamentally philosophical assumptions that are best described as *objective realism* and *determinism*.

The only caveat to this view that was put forth by Einstein is that these measurements themselves, of speed or even mass or energy content of a specific object, can only be said to be universally defined according to these physical laws within the specific frame of reference of an observer. Their underlying *reality* is not questioned – these things clearly exist independent of observation or measurement, clearly (or so it seems) - but the values, or the properties of these things is relative to a frame of reference of the observer change depending upon your frame of reference. This is what Relativity tells us. So the velocity of a massive body, and even the measurement of time itself which is a function of distance and speed, is a function of the *relative* speed and position of the observer who is performing said measurement.

For the most part, the effects of Relativity can be ignored when we are referring to objects on Earth that are moving at speeds that are minimal with respect to the speed of light and are less massive than say black holes. As we measure things at the cosmic scale, where distances are measured in terms of light years and black holes and other massive phenomena exist which bend *spacetime* (aka singularities) the effects of Relativity cannot be ignored however.⁵⁶⁸ Leaving aside the field of Cosmogony for the moment and getting back to the history of the development of Quantum Mechanics, at the end of the 19th century Planck was commissioned by electric companies to create light bulbs that used less energy, and in this context was trying to understand how the intensity of electromagnetic radiation emitted by a *black body* (an object that absorbs all electromagnetic radiation regardless of frequency or angle of incidence) depended on the frequency of the radiation, i.e. the color of the light. In his work, and after several iterations of hypotheses that failed to have predictive value, he fell upon the theory that energy is only absorbed or released in *quantized* form, i.e. in *discrete* packets of energy he referred to as *bundles* or *energy elements*, the so-called “Planck postulate”. And so the field of Quantum Mechanics was born.⁵⁶⁹

Despite the fact that Einstein is best known for his mathematical models and theories for the description of the forces of *gravity* and light at a cosmic scale, his work was also instrumental in the advancement of Quantum Mechanics as well. For example, in his work in the effect of

⁵⁶⁸ In some respects, even at the cosmic scale, there is still significant reason to believe that even Relativity has room for improvement as evidenced by what physicists call Dark Matter and/or Dark Energy, artifacts and principles that have been created by theoretical physicists to describe matter and energy that they believe *should* exist according to Relativity Theory but the evidence for which their existence is still yet “undiscovered”. Both Dark Matter and Dark Energy represent active lines of research in modern day Cosmogony.

⁵⁶⁹ Quantum Theory has its roots in this initial hypothesis by Planck, and in this sense he is considered by some to be the father of Quantum Theory and Quantum Mechanics. It is for this work in the discovery of *energy quanta* that Max Planck received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1918, some 15 or so years after publishing.

radiation on metallic matter and non-metallic solids and liquids, he discovered that *electrons* are emitted from matter as a consequence of their absorption of energy from electromagnetic radiation of a very short wavelength, such as visible or ultraviolet radiation. Einstein termed this behavior the *photoelectric effect*, and in fact it was for this discovery that he won his one and only Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921. Furthermore, Einstein established that under certain conditions and in certain experiments, light appeared to behave like a stream of tiny particles, not just as a wave, lending credence and authority to the particle theories which had begun to be established to describe the subatomic realm, i.e. *quantum* realm. As a result of these experiments, he hypothesized the existence of light *quanta*, or *photons*, laying the groundwork for subsequent *wave-particle duality* discoveries and reinforcing the discoveries of Planck with respect to *black body radiation* and its *quantized* behavior.

Prior to the establishment of light's properties as waves, and then in turn the establishment of wave like characteristics of subatomic elements like *photons* and *electrons* by Louis de Broglie in the 1920s, it had been fairly well established that these subatomic particles, or *electrons* or *photons* as they were later called, behaved like particles. However, the debate and study of the nature of light and subatomic matter went all the way back to the 17th century where competing theories of the nature of light were proposed by Isaac Newton, who viewed light as a system of particles, and Christiaan Huygens who postulated that light behaved like a wave.

It was not until the work of Einstein, Planck, de Broglie and other physicists of the twentieth century that the nature of these subatomic particles, both *photons* and *electrons*, were proven to behave both like particles *and* waves, the result depending upon the experiment and the context of the system which being observed. This paradoxical principle came to be known as *wave-particle duality* and it is one of the intellectual cornerstones, and in fact underlying mysteries, of the nature of the sub-atomic world and in turn one has become one of the fundamental properties that underlie Quantum Theory and distinguish it from Classical Mechanics.

As part of the discoveries of subatomic particle wave-like behavior, what Planck discovered in his study of *black body radiation*, and Einstein as well within the context of his study of light and *photons*, was that the measurements or states of a given particle such as a *photon* or an *electron* had to take on values that were multiples of very small and *discrete* quantities, i.e. were *non-continuous*, the relation of which was represented by a constant value known as the *Planck constant*⁵⁷⁰.

⁵⁷⁰ The *Planck constant* was first described as the proportionality constant between the energy (E) of a *photon* and the frequency (ν) of its associated electromagnetic wave. This relation between the energy and frequency is called the *Planck relation* or the *Planck–Einstein equation*: $E = h\nu$. It is interesting to note that Planck and Einstein had a very symbiotic relationship toward the

In the *quantum* realm then, there was not a continuum of values and states of matter as had been the assumption upon which Classical Mechanics had been constructed, in the sub-atomic realm there existed not a continuum of “physical existence”, but instead bursts of energies and changes of state that were *discrete*, i.e. had fixed amplitudes or values, which of course implied that certain states or amplitudes could in fact *not* exist, representing a dramatic departure from the way physicists, and the rest of us mortals, think about movement and change in the “real world”, and most certainly represented a significant departure from Newtonian Mechanics upon which Relativity was based where the idea of continuous motion, in fact continuous existence, is a fundamental proposition upon which these models are predicated.

The classic demonstration of light’s behavior as a wave, and perhaps one of the most astonishing and influential physical experiments in the history of science, is illustrated in what is called the “double-slit experiment”. In the basic version of this experiment, a light source such as a laser beam is shone at a thin plate that is pierced by two parallel slits. The light in turn passes through each of the slits and displays on a screen behind the plate. The image that is displayed on the screen behind the plate as it turns out is not one of a constant band of light that passes through each one of the slits as you might expect if the light were simply a particle or sets of particles, the light displayed on the screen behind the double-slitted plate is one of *light and dark bands*, indicating that the light is behaving like a wave and is subject to *interference*, the strength of the light on the screen cancelling itself out or becoming stronger depending upon how the individual waves interfere with each other. This behavior is exactly akin to what we consider fundamental wavelike behavior, for example like the nature of waves in water where the waves have greater strength if they synchronize correctly (peaks of waves) and cancel each other out (trough of waves) if not.

middle and end of their careers, and much of their work complemented and built off of each other. For example Planck is said to have contributed to the establishment and acceptance of Einstein’s revolutionary concept of Relativity within the scientific community after being introduced by Einstein in 1905, the theory of course representing a radical departure from the standard Classical Mechanical models that had held up for centuries prior. It was through the collaborative work and studies of Planck and Einstein in some sense then that the field of Quantum Mechanics and Quantum Theory is shaped how it is today; Planck who defined the term *quanta* with respect to the behavior of elements in the realms of matter, electricity, gas and heat, and Einstein who used the term to describe the discrete emissions of light, or *photons*.

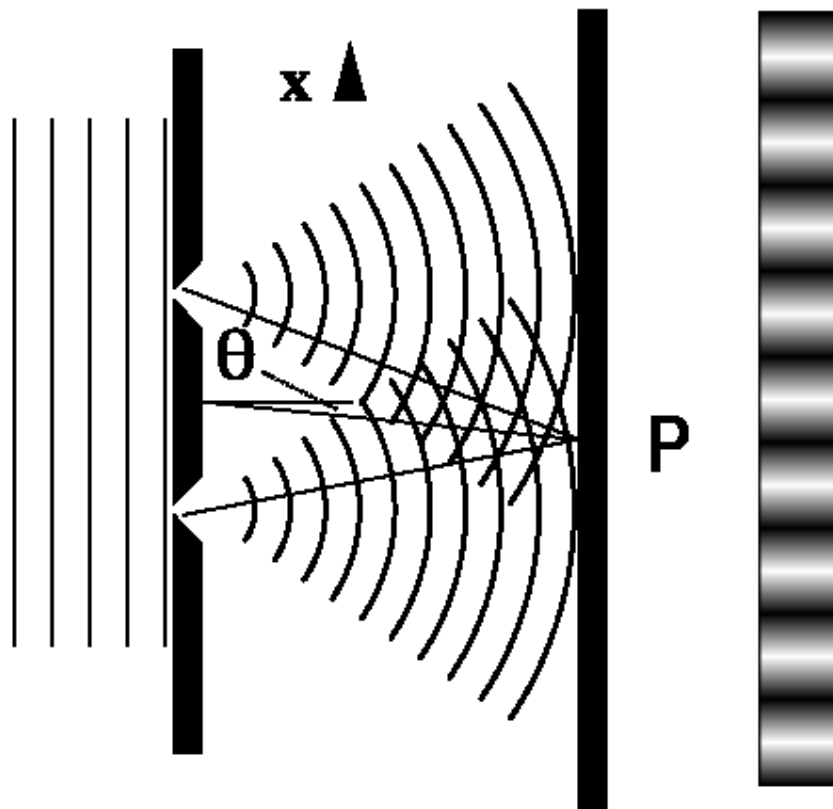


Figure 34: Classical illustration of the famous "double slit" experiment.⁵⁷¹

What is even more interesting however, and was most certainly unexpected, is that once equipment was developed that could reliably send a single particle, an *electron* or *photon* for example, through a double-slitted slate, the individual particles did indeed end up at a single location on the screen after passing through just one of the slits as was expected, but however – and here was the kicker - the location on the screen that the particle ended up at, as well as which slit the particle appeared to pass through (in later versions of the experiment which slit “it” passed through could in fact be detected) was not consistent and followed seemingly random and erratic behavior. What researchers found as more and more of these subatomic particles were sent through the slate one at a time, was that the same *wavelike* interference pattern

⁵⁷¹ Image illustrates the *wave-particle dualistic* nature of light, i.e. *photons*, which are “diffracted” and “interfered with”, like a wave, as they pass through a wall with two slits and come to form a distinctive “wave like” pattern on the screen behind the wall. Image by Ebohr1.svg: en:User:Lacatosias, User:Stanneredderivative work: Epzcaw (talk) - Ebohr1.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15229922> from Wikipedia contributors, 'Double-slit experiment', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 3 December 2016, 23:05 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Double-slit_experiment&oldid=752882651> [accessed 3 December 2016]

emerged that showed up when the experiment was run with a full beam of light as was done by Young some 100 years prior.⁵⁷²

Arguably this experiment illustrates the very essence of the mystery behind much of Quantum Mechanics, showing that our basic understanding of nature or physical reality was not in fact what it appeared to be. In other words, the ground or substratum of the physical world could be seen as “objective” or “wavelike”, depending upon how one looks at it. While this seems confusing at first, and no doubt is one of the most influential discoveries and principles of science in the modern era. What was clearly demonstrated in this experiment however, is that a subatomic particle, a *corpuscle* or whatever you wanted to call it, does not have a completely linear and fully deterministic trajectory in the Classical Mechanics sense - as indicated by the fact that the end distribution of said *corpuscles* against the back screen after they are projected through the double slitted wall appeared to be “random”, i.e. again not fully *deterministic*. But what was more odd was that when the experiment was run one *corpuscle* or particle at a time, not only was the final location on the screen seemingly random individually, but the same aggregate pattern emerged after many, many single *corpuscle* experiment runs as when a full wave, or set of these *corpuscles*, was sent through the double slits.

So it appeared, and this was and still remains a very important and telling mysterious characteristic feature of the behavior of these “things” at the subatomic scale, is that not only did the individual *photon* seemed to be *aware* of the final wave like pattern of its parent wave, but also that this *corpuscle* appeared to be *interfering with itself* when it went through the two slits individually. The result of this experiment and the inherent logical conclusions that scientists arrived at, is that the fundamental substratum of existence was not objective in the classical sense, but was also wavelike at the same time. Furthermore, even when the experiment is performed with just one subatomic *particle*, the *particle* itself seemed appeared to be *aware* of its inherent wave structure, i.e. that the individual particle was interfering with itself, calling into question the notion of *objective reality* itself.

Furthermore, to make things even more mysterious, as the final location of each of the individual *photons* in the two slit and other related experiments was evaluated and studied, it was discovered that although the final location of an individual one of these particles could not be determined exactly before the experiment was performed, i.e. there was a fundamental element of *uncertainty or randomness* involved at the individual *corpuscle* level, it was discovered that the final locations of these particles measured in toto after many experiments were performed

⁵⁷² The *double-slit experiment* was first devised and used by Thomas Young in the early nineteenth century to display the wave like characteristics of light. It wasn't until the technology was available to send a single “particle” (a *photon* or *electron* for example) that the wave like and stochastically distributed nature of the underlying “particles” was discovered as well. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young%27s_interference_experiment

exhibited statistical distribution behavior that could be modeled quite precisely, precisely from a mathematical statistics and probability distribution perspective. That is to say that the sum total distribution of the final locations of all the particles after passing through the slit(s) could be established stochastically, i.e. in terms of well-defined probability distribution consistent with *probability theory* and well-defined *mathematics* that governed statistical behavior. So in total you could predict what the particle like behavior would look like over a large distribution set of particles in the *double slit experiment* even if you couldn't predict with certainty what the outcome would look like for an individual *corpuscle*.

The *mathematics* behind this particle distribution that was discovered is what is known as the *wavefunction*, typically denoted by the Greek letter *psi*, ψ or its capital equivalent Ψ , predicts what the probability distribution of these “particles” will look like on the screen behind the slate after many individual experiments are run, or in quantum theoretical terms, the wave function predicts the quantum state of a particle throughout a fixed *spacetime* interval. The *wavefunction* was discovered by the Austrian Physicist Erwin Schrödinger in 1925, published in 1926, and is commonly referred to in the scientific literature as the *Schrödinger equation*, analogous in the field of Quantum Mechanics to Newton's second law of motion in Classical Mechanics.

This *wavefunction* represents a probability distribution of potential states or outcomes that describe the quantum state of a particle and predicts with a great degree of accuracy the potential location of a particle given a location or state of motion. With the discovery of the wavefunction, it became possible to predict the potential locations or states of these subatomic particles, an extremely potent theoretical model that has led to all sorts of inventions and technological advancements since its discovery. Again, this implied that individual *corpuscles* *were interfering with themselves* when passing through the two slits on the slate, which was very odd indeed. In other words, the individual particles were exhibiting wave like characteristics *even when they were sent through the double-slitted slate one at a time*. This phenomenon was shown to occur with *atoms* as well as *electrons* and *photons*, confirming that all of these subatomic so-called particles exhibited wave like properties *as well as* particle like qualities, the behavior observed determined upon the type of experiment, or measurement as it were, that the “thing” was subject to.

As Louis De Broglie, the physicist responsible for bridging the theoretical gap between matter, in this case *electrons*, and waves by establishing the symmetric relation between momentum and wavelength which had at its core *Planck's constant* (the De Broglie equation), described this mysterious and somewhat counterintuitive relationship between matter and waves, “A *wave must be associated with each corpuscle and only the study of the wave's propagation will yield*

information to us on the successive positions of the corpuscle in space.”⁵⁷³ In the Award Ceremony Speech in 1929 in honor of Louis de Broglie for his work in establishing the relationship between matter and waves for *electrons*, we find the essence of his ground breaking and still mysterious discovery which remains a core characteristic of Quantum Mechanics to this day.

*Louis de Broglie had the boldness to maintain that not all the properties of matter can be explained by the theory that it consists of corpuscles. Apart from the numberless phenomena which can be accounted for by this theory, there are others, according to him, which can be explained only by assuming that matter is, by its nature, a wave motion. At a time when no single known fact supported this theory, Louis de Broglie asserted that a stream of electrons which passed through a very small hole in an opaque screen must exhibit the same phenomena as a light ray under the same conditions. It was not quite in this way that Louis de Broglie's experimental investigation concerning his theory took place. Instead, the phenomena arising when beams of electrons are reflected by crystalline surfaces, or when they penetrate thin sheets, etc. were turned to account. The experimental results obtained by these various methods have fully substantiated Louis de Broglie's theory. It is thus a fact that matter has properties which can be interpreted only by assuming that matter is of a wave nature. An aspect of the nature of matter which is completely new and previously quite unsuspected has thus been revealed to us.*⁵⁷⁴

So by the 1920s then, you have a fairly well established mathematical theory to govern the behavior of subatomic particles, backed by a large body of empirical and experimental evidence, that indicates quite clearly that what we would call “matter” (or particles or *corpuscles*) in the classical sense, behaves very differently, or at least has very different fundamental characteristics, in the subatomic realm. It exhibits properties of a particle, or a *thing* or *object*, as well as a wave depending upon the type of experiment that is run.

So the concept of matter itself then, as we had been accustomed to dealing with and discussing and measuring for some centuries, at least as far back as the time of Newton (1642-1727), had to be reexamined within the context of Quantum Mechanics. For in Newtonian Mechanics, and indeed in the geometric and mathematical framework within which it was developed and conceived which reached far back into antiquity (Euclid circa 300 BCE), matter was presumed to be either a particle or a wave, but most certainly not both.

What even further complicated matters was that matter itself, again as defined by Newtonian Mechanics and its extension via Relativity Theory taken together what is commonly referred to as Classical Mechanics, was presumed to have some very definite, well-defined and fixed, real

⁵⁷³ Louis de Broglie, “The wave nature of the electron”, Nobel Lecture, Dec 12th, 1929

⁵⁷⁴ Presentation Speech by Professor C.W. Oseen, Chairman of the Nobel Committee for Physics of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, on December 10, 1929. Taken from http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1929/press.html.

properties. Properties like mass, location or position in space, and velocity or trajectory were all presumed to have a *real existence* independent of whether or not they were measured or observed, even if the actual values were relative to the frame of reference of the observer. All of this hinged upon the notion that the speed of light was fixed no matter what the frame of reference of the observer of course, this was a fixed absolute, nothing could move faster than the speed of light. Well even this seemingly self-evident notion, or postulate one might call it, ran into problems as scientists continued to explore the quantum realm.

By the 1920s then, the way scientists looked at and viewed *matter* as we would classically consider it within the context of Newton's postulates from the early 1700s which were extended further into the notion of *spacetime* as put forth by Einstein, was encountering some significant difficulties when applied to the behavior of elements in the subatomic, quantum, world. Difficulties that persist to this day in fact. Furthermore, there was extensive empirical and scientific evidence which lent significant credibility to Quantum Theory, which illustrated irrefutably that these subatomic elements behaved not only like waves, exhibiting characteristics such as *interference* and *diffraction*, but also like particles in the classic Newtonian sense that had measurable, well defined characteristics that could be quantified within the context of an experiment.

In his Nobel Lecture in 1929, Louis de Broglie, summed up the challenge for Physicists of his day, and to a large extent Physicists of modern times, given the discoveries of Quantum Mechanics as follows:

*The necessity of assuming for light two contradictory theories-that of waves and that of corpuscles - and the inability to understand why, among the infinity of motions which an electron ought to be able to have in the atom according to classical concepts, only certain ones were possible: such were the enigmas confronting physicists at the time...*⁵⁷⁵

The other major tenet of Quantum Theory that rests alongside *wave-particle duality*, and that provides even more complexity when trying to wrap our minds around what is actually going on in the subatomic realm, is what is sometimes referred to as the *uncertainty principle*, or the *Heisenberg uncertainty principle*, named after the German theoretical physicist Werner Heisenberg who first put forth the theories and models representing the probability distribution of outcomes of the position of these subatomic particles in certain experiments like the *double-*

⁵⁷⁵ Louis de Broglie, "The wave nature of the electron", Nobel Lecture, Dec 12th, 1929

slit experiment previously described, even though the *wavefunction* itself was the discovery of Schrödinger.

The *uncertainty principle* states that there is a fundamental theoretical limit on the accuracy with which certain pairs of physical properties of *atomic particles*, i.e. *corpuscles*, position and momentum being the classical pair for example, that can be known at any given time with certainty. In other words, physical quantities come in *conjugate pairs*, where only *one* of the measurements of a given pair can be known precisely at any given time. In other words, when one quantity in a conjugate pair is measured and becomes *determined*, the complementary conjugate pair becomes *indeterminate*. In other words, what Heisenberg discovered, and proved mathematically, was that the more precisely one attempts to measure one of these complimentary properties of subatomic particles, the less precisely the other associated complementary attribute of the element can be determined or known.

Published by Heisenberg in 1927, the *uncertainty principle* states that they are fundamental, conceptual limits of observation in the quantum realm, another radical departure from the realistic and deterministic principles of Classical Mechanics which held that all attributes of a thing were measurable at any given time, i.e. this thing or object existed and was real and had measurable and well defined properties irrespective of its state. It's important to point out here that the *uncertainty principle* is a statement on the *fundamental property of quantum systems* as they are mathematically and theoretically modeled and defined, and of course empirically validated by experimental results, *not* a statement about the technology and method of the observational systems themselves. This wasn't a theoretical problem, or a problem with the state of instrumentation that was being used for measurement, it was a *characteristic of the domain itself*.

Max Born, who won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1954 for his work in Quantum Mechanics, specifically for his statistical interpretations of the *wavefunction*, describes this now other seemingly mysterious attribute of the *quantum realm* as follows (the specific language he uses reveals at some level his interpretation of the Quantum Theory, more on interpretations later):

...To measure space coordinates and instants of time, rigid measuring rods and clocks are required. On the other hand, to measure momenta and energies, devices are necessary with movable parts to absorb the impact of the test object and to indicate the size of its momentum. Paying regard to the fact that quantum mechanics is competent for dealing with the interaction of object and apparatus, it is seen that no arrangement is possible that will fulfill both requirements simultaneously.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁶ Max Born, "The statistical interpretation of quantum mechanics" Nobel Lecture, December 11, 1954.

Whereas Classical Mechanics, physics prior to the introduction of Relativity and Quantum Theory, distinguished between the study of *particles* and *waves*, the introduction of Quantum Theory and *wave-particle duality* established that this classic intellectual bifurcation of Physics at the macroscopic scale was wholly inadequate in describing and predicting the behavior of these “things” that existed in the subatomic realm, all of which took on the characteristics of both waves and particles depending upon the experiment and context of the system being observed.

Furthermore, the actual precision within which a state of a “thing” in the subatomic world could be defined was conceptually bound, establishing theoretical limits upon which the state of a given subatomic state could be defined, another divergence from Classical Mechanics. And then on top of this, was the requirement of the mathematical principles of *statistics* and *probability theory*, as well as significant extensions to the underlying *geometry* which were required to map the *wavefunction* itself in subatomic *spacetime*, all called quite clearly into question our classical *materialistic* notions, again based on *objective realism* and *determinism*, upon which scientific advancement had been built for centuries.

Relativity Theory could be grasped intellectually by the educated, intelligent mind. You didn’t need advanced degrees or a deep understanding of complex *mathematics* to understand that at a very basic level, Relativity Theory implied that basic measurements like speed, distance and even mass were relative and depended upon the observer’s *frame of reference*, that *mass* and *energy* were basically convertible into each other and equivalent, related by the speed of light that moved at a fixed speed no matter what your frame of reference, and that space and time were not in fact separate and distinct concepts but in order for a more accurate picture of the universe to emerge they needed to be combined into a single notion of *spacetime*. Relativity says that even gravity’s effect was subject to the same principles that played out at the cosmic scale, i.e. that *spacetime* “bends” at points of singularity (black holes for example), bends to the extent that light in fact is impacted by the severe gravitational forces at these powerful places in the universe. And indeed our measurements of time and space were “relative”, relative to the speed and frame of reference from which these measurements were made, the *observer* was in fact a key element in the process of measurement.

If you assumed all these things, you ended up with a more complete and accurate mathematical and theoretical understanding of the universe than you had with Newtonian Mechanics, and one that is powerful enough that despite the best efforts of many great minds over the last 100 years or so, has yet to be supplanted with anything better, at least at the macro scale of the universe. Relativity undoubtedly represents a major intellectual leap in mankind’s understanding of the shape, behavior and underlying laws that govern the physical universal, but a subtle and quite distinctive feature of this model was that it fundamentally relies on the same *deterministic* and

objective realist assumptions which underlie Classical Mechanics as “discovered” and modelled by Newton.

In other words, Relativity Theory implicitly assumed that objects in the physical do in fact exist, i.e. they were “real”, real in the sense that they had an absolute existence in the *spacetime* continuum within some frame of reference by some “observer” that also “existed” within the spacetime continuum, each of which could be described, or “defined”, in terms of qualitative data like speed, mass, velocity, etc. Furthermore, Relativity Theory like Classical Mechanics before it, was framed and built upon the notion that if you knew a set of starting criteria, what scientists like to call a “system state”, as well as a set of variables/forces that acted on said system, you could in turn predict with certainty the outcome of said forces on such a system, i.e. the set of observed descriptive qualities of the objects in said system after the forces have acted upon the objects that existed in the original system state. This is the essence of the *deterministic* model of the universe, a principle which underlies the both Relativity Theory as well as Newtonian Mechanics.

It’s quite relevant and important to point out however that in fact these “assumptions” upon which all modern Physics are based - all modern Physics except Quantum Mechanics which is where we’re headed here with this line of reasoning - were quite modern metaphysical assumptions that were a product of the Scientific Revolution more or less. In other words, a fully *deterministic* and *objective* view of reality which came to define early 20th century physics, although it had roots going back to ancient Greece as we have already pointed out, had not in fact been the prevailing assumptions that governed models of the universe prior to Newton and Einstein, at least not in to the degree of certainty that had been established by these powerful theories and mathematical models and laws that these two great minds had firmly established and had been proven by a variety of experiments and data. Prior to Newton, the world of the spirit, *theology* in fact, was very much considered to be just as real as the physical world, the world governed by Science or *natural philosophy*. This fact was true not only in the West, but also in the East, and while this idea has been all but abandoned by the Western scientific tradition, it nonetheless to a great extent remains true within the domain of Eastern philosophy which includes and synthesizes the model of the physical world, the intellectual or cognitive world, as well as the spiritual world which is defined and bounded by the domain of the Soul.

But at their basic, core level, these concepts of the *atom*, *electromagnetic force*, *gravity* and Relativity could be understood, grasped as it were, by the vast majority of the educated public, even if they had very little if any bearing on their daily lives and even if didn’t fundamentally change or shift their underlying religious or *theological* beliefs, or in turn their moral or ethical principles which still remained rooted in Religion for the most part. Relativity has been “accepted” in the modern era, the so-called Quantum Era, as a basic truth as it were, along with

its *deterministic* and *objective realism* philosophical and metaphysical assumptions. What tends to be forgotten however, and not really covered or mentioned in the “scientific” and academic circles which reinforce the “truth” of these theories and laws is that their underlying principles and assumptions do not have any bearing whatsoever on the “subject” in question, i.e. the mental, cognitive or intellectual state of the “observer” whose frame of reference is used for the measurement of these quantifiable phenomena.

So one of the major and significant implications of the influence and prevalence of modern physics, again leaving aside Quantum Theory for a moment, is that these theories and models completely ignored, and in fact came to represent a sort of intellectual or ontological superiority to, the “act of observation”, and the mode and means of perception itself, one of the driving principles and ideas of Enlightenment Era philosophical inquiry in fact. The dictum put forth by Descartes as “*cogito ergo sum*”, i.e. “*I think therefore I am*” was superseded by a dictum that is perhaps best expressed as “*I observe and measure therefore I am*”.

Quantum Theory is an altogether different beast however, even though it still falls squarely within the discipline of Physics. The mathematical laws and their underlying assumptions and principles are very different from, and in fact incompatible at a very basic level with, the mathematical laws and principles that were “discovered” by Newton, Einstein that describe Classical Mechanics and Relativity respectively. And in order to truly “understand” Quantum Theory, or at least try to come to terms with it, a wholesale different perspective on what *reality* truly is, or at the very least how *reality* is defined, is in fact required – hence the continued struggle for a so-called Unified Field Theory of Physics which describes the quantum realm and also takes into account the notion of *spacetime* and *gravity* as described by Relativity Theory. In other words, in order to understand what Quantum Theory actually *means*, its underlying ontological implications as it were, or in order to grasp the underlying intellectual context within which the behaviors of the underlying particles/fields that Quantum Theory describes can be properly understood, a new framework of understanding, a new description of reality, *must* be adopted. What we consider to be “reality”, our *objective realism*” which underlies Classical Mechanics which has dominated Physics and our modern perspective and definition of “physical reality”, or simply “reality”, since the publication of Newton’s *Principia* at the end of the 17th century needed to be abandoned, or at the very least significantly modified, in order for Quantum Theory to be understood in any meaningful way, i.e. in order for some comprehension of the implications of Quantum Theory’s underlying truth about the nature and behavior of the substratum of physical reality, and in turn the role of the “observer” in said reality, to be understood.

Schrödinger's Cat: The Death of *Local Realism*

As civilizations and empires emerged in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, there was a need, a vacuum if you will, for a theological/religious force to keep these vast empires together. One can see this reflected in the proliferation of the pantheon of Egyptian/Greek/Roman gods whose worship dominated their respective cultures and societies in the Mediterranean and North Africa in the first millennium BCE, gods who were synthesized and brought together as the civilizations from which they originated slowly merged and comingled through trade and warfare. Also in the first millennium BCE we find the first vast empires, initially with the Assyrians and Persians and then followed by the Greeks, all of which not only facilitated trade throughout the region but also drove cultural assimilation as well.

In no small measure out of reaction to what was considered dated or ignorant belief systems, belief systems that merely reinforced the ruling class and were not designed to provide real true insight and liberation for the individual, emerged the various Greek philosophical schools and teachings, reflecting a deep seated dissatisfaction with the religious and mythological systems of the time, as well as even the political systems that were dependent on these religious structures for power and authority, to the detriment of society at large from the philosophers perspective. The life and times of Socrates probably best characterizes the forces at work during this period, whose teachings inspired Plato and Aristotle alike whose works guided the development of the Western mind for some two thousand years.

Jesus's life in many respects runs parallel to that of Socrates, manifesting and reacting to the same set of forces that Socrates rose up against, except slightly further to the East and within the context of Roman (Jewish) rule rather than Greek rule, but still reflecting the same rebellion against what he saw as illegitimate and abusive authoritarian rule that stifled freedom of thought and freedom of worship in particular. Jesus's message was in many respects lost however, and survives down to us only through translation and interpretation that invariably has diluted and bastardized his true teaching, of which only snippets survive down to us in the Gospels. The works of Plato and Aristotle are extant however, at least a good portion of them are, so we can analyze and digest their comprehensive philosophical and metaphysical (and in many respects theological) belief systems that touch on virtually all aspects of reality, from the nature of existence itself, to the source of happiness and the ideal state; the scope of Aristotle's *epistêmê*.

In the Common Era (CE), aka Anno Domini (AD) or the Year of the Lord, *monotheism* takes root in the West, maturing and evolving in the few hundred years after Jesus's death and in many respects providing the glue as well as fuel for expansion of first the Roman Empire and then the Byzantine Empire that followed, and then providing the basis of the Islamic Conquests and their subsequent Imperial conquests, the Muslims attesting to the same Abrahamic lineage as the

Christians and Jews (of which Jesus was of course one, a fact Christians sometimes fail to remember). Although undoubtedly monotheism did borrow and integrate from the philosophical traditions that preceded it, mainly to justify and solidify their theological foundations for the intellectually minded, with the advent of the authority of the Church which “interpreted” the Christian tradition for the good of the masses, there emerged a lasting trend of suppression of rational, or at the very least free, thinking that was in any way inconsistent with religious authorities’ interpretation of the *Bible*, the Word of God as they called it, or in any way challenged the power of the Church. In many respects, with the rise in power and authority of the Church we see an abandonment of the powers of the mind, the intellect, which were held so fast and dear to by Plato and Aristotle. Reason was abandoned for faith as it were, blind faith in God. The Dark Ages came and went.

Then another intellectual revolution took place some two thousand years after the one that Socrates started in ancient Greece, one that unfolds in Western Europe over several centuries marking the end of the Dark Ages, starting with what later historians have called the Renaissance, then followed by the Age of Enlightenment, a period characterized by the rejection of religious and socio-political orthodoxy and the rise of *rationalism* and *empiricism* as the basis for knowledge and truth, laying the groundwork for the Scientific Revolution which was to follow.

Educational systems akin to colleges, along with a core curriculum of sorts (Scholasticism) start to crop up in Western Europe in the Renaissance and Enlightenment Era, providing access to many of the classic texts and rational frameworks to more and more learned men, ideas and thoughts that expanded upon mankind’s notion of reason and its limits, and its relationship to *theology* and society, begin to be exchanged via letters and published works in a way that was not possible prior. This intellectual groundswell provided the spark that ended up burning a deep hole in the blind faith in the literal interpretation of not only the *Bible*, but other revealed Scripture as well, leading to not only waves of *skepticism* and *rationalism* from a philosophical perspective, but also providing the driving force behind political revolutions first in England (1688), then America (1775-1783), and then France (1789-1799), forever changing the political landscape in the West.

This era of intellectual growth culminates from a scientific perspective in the abandonment of the geocentric model of the universe, providing the crucial blow into the foundations of all of the Abrahamic religions that had dominated theological and philosophical thought in the West for some two thousand years and laying the foundation for the predominance of science (*natural philosophy*) and reason over religion that underpins Western thought to this day. This was the *Age of Reason* of Thomas Paine, and there was no turning back.

Then came Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and Newton, with many great thinkers in between of course, alongside the philosophical and metaphysical advancements from the likes of Descartes

and Kant among others, establishing without question *empiricism*, deduction and *scientific method* as the guiding principles behind which knowledge and reality should be based and providing the philosophical basis for the political revolutions that marked the end of the 18th century in England, America and France.

The *geometry* and Astronomy of the Greeks as it turned out, Euclid and Ptolemy in particular, provided the mathematical framework within which the advancements of the Scientific Revolution were made. Ptolemy's *geocentric* model was upended no doubt in the Enlightenment Era, but his was the model that was refuted in the new system put forth by Copernicus some 15 centuries later. It was the reference point. And Euclid's *geometry* was superseded, expanded really, by Descartes's model, i.e. the *Cartesian coordinate system*, which provided the basis for *analytic geometry* and *calculus*, the mathematical foundations of modern physics that are still with us today.

The twentieth century saw even more rapid developments in Science and in Physics, with the expansion of Newtonian Mechanics with Einstein's Theory of Relativity in the early 21st century, and then with the subsequent advancement of Quantum Mechanics which followed close behind which provides the theoretical foundation for the digital world we live in today.⁵⁷⁷ But the Scientific Revolution of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries did not correspond to the complete abandonment of the notion of an anthropomorphic God. The advancements of this period of Western history provided more of an extension of *monotheism*, a more broad theoretical and metaphysical framework within which the God was to be viewed, rendering the holy texts not obsolete per se but rendering them more to the realm of allegory and mythology, and most certainly challenging the literal interpretations of the *Bible* and *Qur'ān* that had prevailed for centuries.

The twentieth century was different though. Although you see some scattered references to God (Einstein's famous quotation "*God does not play dice*" for example), the split between Religion and Science is cemented in the twentieth century. The analytic papers and studies that are done, primarily by physicists and scientists, although in some cases have a metaphysical bent or at least some form of metaphysical interpretation (i.e. what do the theories imply about the underlying reality which they intend to explain), leave the notion of God out altogether, a marked contrast to the philosophers and scientists of the Scientific Revolution some century or two prior within which the notion of God continued to play a central role if only in terms of the underlying faith of the authors.

⁵⁷⁷ For example, without the understanding of the principles of Quantum Mechanics, we wouldn't have transistors which are the cornerstone of modern computing.

The shift in the twentieth century however, which can really only be described as radical even though its implications are only inferred and rarely spoken of directly, is the change of faith from an underlying anthropomorphic entity/deity that represents the guiding force of the universe and mankind in particular, to a faith in the idea that the laws of the universe can be *discovered*, i.e. that they exist eternally, and that these laws themselves are paramount relative to religion or *theology* which by its very nature does not rest on any sound empirical foundation. Some Enlightenment Era philosophers of course would take issue with this claim, but twentieth century Science was about what could be proven experimentally in the physical world, not about what could be the result of reason or logical constructs.

This faith, this transformation of faith from Religion toward Science as it were, is implicit in all the scientific developments of the twentieth century, particularly in the physics community, where it is fair to say that any statement or position of the role of God in science reflected sheer ignorance, ignorance of the underlying framework of laws that clearly governed the behavior of “things”, things which were real and which could be described in terms of qualities such as mass, energy, momentum, velocity, trajectory, etc. These constructs were much more sound and real than the fluff of the philosophers and metaphysicians, where mind and reason, and in fact perception, was on par with the physical world to at least some extent.

In this century of revolutionary and accelerated scientific advancement, the so-called Quantum Era, advancement which has fundamentally transformed the world within which we live and has facilitated the development of nuclear energy, weapons of mass destruction, and digital computer technology, and has in many respects driven tremendous economic progress and prosperity throughout the world, it is science driven at its core by advanced *mathematics* which has emerged as the underlying truth within which the universe and reality is perceived. Mathematical theories and their associated formulas that predicted the datum and behavior of not only the *objective reality* of the forces that prevail on our planet, but also explain and predict the behavior of grand cosmological forces; laws which describe the creation and motion of the universe and galaxies, the motions of the planets and the stars, and even laws that describe the inner workings of planetary and galaxy formation, stars and phenomenon as strange and perplexing as black holes.

And then to top things off, in the very same century we find that in the subatomic realm the world is governed by a seemingly very different set of laws, laws which appear fundamentally incompatible with the laws that govern the “classical world”. With the discovery of the laws of Quantum Mechanics, we begin to understand the behavior of the subatomic realm, a fantastic, mysterious and extraordinary (and seemingly random) world which truly defies imagination, *a world where the notion of continuous existence itself is called into question*. The Ancient Greek philosophers could have never foreseen *wave-particle duality* for example, and in fact no scientist

before the twentieth century would have guessed that the underlying substratum of reality could be as strange and perplexing as predicted by Quantum Theory.

But something was lost as these advancements and “discoveries” were made. These *scientific* advancements represented “progress” no doubt, bettering the human condition from the perspective of increased flow of goods and services, advancements in knowledge and science that have had a direct impact on our ability to combat disease and sickness, the ability to support the lives of billions of humans and send probes and space ships throughout the solar system to explore other worlds - all of these advancements and innovations and many more that are products of the technological and scientific “discoveries” of the modern era.

On the other hand, as a byproduct of these advancements a sort of social and/or theological intellectual rift had been created, one that distanced us as humans not only from each other, but also from the natural world and environment, the earth, to which our fate is ultimately tied. In this context, it seems that sort of replacement of the old tried and true religious systems which had served mankind for some 1500 years was needed, and this vacuum as it were is one of the main reasons why the ancient Eastern philosophical systems have become so prevalent in the West in the last 100 years or so. People are looking for different metaphysical and spiritual frameworks within which to view the world that are not steeped in outdated and historically flawed “books” and “scripture” that do not correspond or align to what we know is “true” and how the world really works.

Without religion the however, one can make a strong case for the absence of any basis for the moral and ethical framework of society, outside of the rule of law itself. And while this is a powerful force no doubt, one upon which the foundations of democracy in the West is based, one is hard pressed to see real justice and equality, and social harmony, within the modern social systems that are based upon this rule of law. At some level, the individual and personal foundations of *morality* and *ethics* had effectively been abolished with the advent of science, flooding the Western world into conflicts over wealth and access to resources and reinforcing *materialism* and greed, the basic underlying principles of *capitalism* and free markets.

It wasn't science's fault per se, but the advancements in the last 100 years or so, despite their inherent benefits, did leave a vacuum of sorts from a social, ethical and moral perspective, leaving most of the intellectual community of the West in need and search of some sort of replacement to that which had been lost from a moral and ethical point of view once religion was relegated to, arguably its rightful place, as subservient to Reason. But without religion as a moral force in society and civilization at large, there was no longer any self-governing force of “do good to thy neighbor” anymore, no fellowship of the common man. What was left to shape our world seemed to be a “what's in it for me” and a “let's see what I can get away with” attitude, one that floods the court systems of the West and at some level fuels radical religious groups and

terrorism itself which sees these Western values as intrinsically “bad” or even “evil”, leading to more warfare and strife rather than peace and prosperity.

With the loss of God, his complete removal from the intellectual framework of Western society, there was a break in the knowledge and belief in the interconnectedness of humanity and societies at large that had served mankind for thousands of years since they had first learned to communicate with each other and first told stories about how the world was created and how mankind was “born” and what his relationship to the cosmic, universal and natural order was.

Quantum Theory however, somewhat ironically, called this loss of faith of interconnectedness directly into question. If everything was connected, *entangled* as it were, at the subatomic realm, if this was a proven and scientifically verified fact, how could we not take the next logical step and ask what that meant to our world-view? What did that mean with respect to our understanding of *materialism* and *determinism* which underpinned Classical Mechanics as well as its socio-economic cousins *democracy* and *capitalism*? “*That’s a philosophical problem*” did not seem to be an adequate response, or one which reflects humanities responsibilities not only to each other, but to the world at large to which their fates again are ultimately tied.

Abandonment of religion for something more profound was a good thing no doubt, but what was it that people really believed in nowadays in the Quantum Era? That things and people were fundamentally separate, that they were operated on by forces that determined their behavior, and that the notion of God was for the ignorant and the weak and that eventually all of the underlying behavior and reality could be described within the context of the same *science* which discovered Relativity and Quantum Mechanics. Or worse that these questions themselves were not of concern, that our main concern is the betterment of ourselves and our individual families even if that meant those next to us would need to suffer for our gain? Well where did that leave us? Where do *ethics* and morals fit into a world driven by greed and self-promotion?

To be fair, there was some movement toward some sort of more refined theological perspective toward the end of the twentieth century and into the 21st century, as Yoga starts to become more popular and some of the Eastern theo-philosophical traditions such as Daoism and Buddhism start to gain a foothold in the West, looked at perhaps as more rational and reasonable systems of belief than the religions of the West which have been and remain such a source of conflict and disorder throughout the Western world. But the driving force for this adoption of Yoga in the West seemed to be more aligned with *materialism* and self-gain than it was for spiritual advancement and *enlightenment*. This “Eastern” philosophical perspective of compassion and mindfulness wasn’t permeating into the broader society. It most certainly wasn’t being taught in schools, the next generation, the Digital Generation, which in all likelihood look to be even more materialistic than their predecessors if that’s possible, *theology* being relegated to the

domain of Churches, Synagogues and Mosques, the discipline as a whole wasn't even fair game to teach in schools anymore.

The gap between Science and Religion that emerged as a byproduct of the Scientific Revolution remained significant, the last thing you were going to find were scientists messing around with the domain of *theology*, i.e. Religion, for that matter. *Metaphysics* maybe, in terms of what the developments of science said about *reality*, but most certainly not *theology* and definitely not God. And so our creation myth is bereft of a Creator – the Big Bang has no actors, no Intelligent Designers, no *Demiurge*, simply the primal nuclear and subatomic forces at work against particles that expanded and formed gases and planets that ultimately led to us - the thinking, rational animal who is actually capable of contemplating and *discovering* the laws of the universe and question our place in them, all a byproduct of natural selection, the guiding force was apparently random chance, time, and the genetic encoding of the will to survive as a species. Such is the teachings of Darwin, perhaps one of if not the most influential of scientists in the modern era in shaping our understanding of our place in the universe and how we came to be.

Perhaps Quantum Theory, Quantum Mechanics, could provide that bridge. There are some very strange behaviors that have been witnessed and modeled (and proven by experiment) at the quantum scale, principles that defy our notions of *space* and *time* that were cemented in the beginning of the twentieth century by Einstein and others. For if there were gods or heroes in our culture today, they were the Einsteins, Bohrs, Heisenbergs and Hawkings of our time that defined our reality and determined what the next generation of minds were taught, those that broke open the mysteries of the universe with their minds and helped us better understand the world we live in. Or did they?

Even after the continued refinement and experimental evidence that supported Quantum Mechanics however, there did arise some significant resistance to the *completeness* of the theory itself, or at least questions as to its true implications with respect to Relativity and Newtonian Mechanics. The most notable of these criticisms came from Einstein himself, most infamously encapsulated in a paper he co-authored and published in 1936 with two of his colleagues Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen which came to be known simply as the *EPR Paper*, or simply the EPR Paradox, which called attention to what they saw as the underlying inconsistencies of Quantum Theory, its *completeness*, that still required explanation. In this paper, they extended some of the quantum theoretical models to different thought experiments and scenarios to yield what they considered to be at very least improbable, if not impossible, conclusions.

They postulated that given the formulas and mathematical models that described the current state of Quantum Mechanics, i.e. the description of a *wavefunction* that described the probabilistic outcomes for a given subatomic system, that if such a system were transformed into two separate systems, split apart if you will, by definition both systems would then be governed

by the same *wavefunction* and whose subsequent behavior and state would be related, no matter what their separation was in *spacetime*, violating one of the core tenets of classically physics, namely communication faster than the speed of light. At the time, this theoretical result was proven mathematically, although it was not actually proven experimentally until much later.

They went on to show that if this was true, it implies that if you have a single particle system that is split into two separate particles and subsequently measured, these two now separate and distinct particles would then be governed by the same *wavefunction*, and in turn would be governed by the same *uncertainty principle* put forth by Heisenberg; namely that a defined measurement of a particle in system A will cause its conjugate value in system B to be undeterminable or *correlated, entangled*, even if the two systems had no “physical” contact with each other and were light years apart from each other, the so-called *measurement problem*.

But hold on a second, how could this be possible? How could you have two separate physical systems, that were governed by the same *wavefunction*, or behavioral equation so to speak, that no matter how far apart they were, or no matter how much time elapsed between measurements, that you had a measurement in one system which fundamentally correlated with (or uncorrelated with, the argument is the same) a measurement in the other system that it was physically separate from beyond the limits established by Relativity? They basically took the *wavefunction* theory, which governs behavior of *quantized* particles, and its corresponding implication of uncertainty as outlined by Heisenberg’s *uncertainty principle*, and extended it to multiple, associated and related subatomic systems, related and governed by the same *wavefunction* despite their separation in space (and time) yielding a very awkward and somewhat unexplainable result, at least unexplainable in terms of Classical Mechanics.

The question they raised boiled down to, how could you have two unrelated, distant systems whose measurements or underlying structure depended upon each other in a very well defined and mathematically and (theoretically at the time but subsequently verified via experiment) empirically measurable way? Does that imply that these systems are communicating in some way either explicitly or implicitly? If so that would seem to call into question the principle of the fixed speed of light that was core to Relativity Theory. The other alternative option seemed to be that the theory was *incomplete* in some way, which was Einstein’s view. Were there “hidden”, yet to be discovered variables that governed the behavior of quantum systems that had yet to be discovered, what came to be known in the literature as *hidden variable theories*?

If it were true, and in the past half century or so many experiments have verified this theoretical postulate, it is at the very least extremely odd behavior, or perhaps better put reflected very odd characteristics, characteristics certainly inconsistent with prevailing theories of what has come to be known as Classical Mechanics (Classical Mechanics now viewed in contrast to Quantum Mechanics which in no small measure due to the EPR Paradox has been proven to be inconsistent

with Classical Mechanics at a very basic level). Or perhaps better put, inconsistent with the underlying assumptions with respect to how “reality” had been described and understood.

Are these two subsystems, once correlated, communicating with each other? Is there some information that is being passed between them that violates the speed of light boundary that forms the cornerstone of modern, Classical Mechanics? This seems unlikely, and most certainly is something that Einstein felt uncomfortable with. This “*spooky action at a distance*”, which is what Einstein referred to it as, seemed literally to defy the laws of Physics. But the alternative appeared to be that this notion of what we consider to be “real”, at least as it was classically defined, would need to be significantly modified in some way to take into account this correlated behavior between particles or systems that were physically separated beyond classical boundaries.

From Einstein’s perspective, two possible explanations for this behavior were put forth, 1) either there existed some model of behavior of the interacting systems/particles that was still yet undiscovered, what came to be known in the physics community as *hidden variables*, or 2) the notion of *locality*, or perhaps more aptly put as the tenet of *local determinism* which Einstein and others associated directly and unequivocally with “reality” and was a core assumption to Classical Mechanics as a whole, had to be drastically modified if not completely abandoned.

In Einstein’s words however, the language for the first alternative that he seemed to prefer was not that there were *hidden variables* per se, but more so that Quantum Theory as it stood in the first half of the twentieth century was *incomplete*. That is to say that some variable, coefficient or hidden force was missing from the underlying mathematical models of Quantum Mechanics which accounted for not only the lack of *determinism* inherent in the *mathematics* itself as represented by the *wavefunction* and the notion of “collapse” at the moment of observation, but also explained the correlated “behavior”, or correlated measurements as it were, of these once bound but then physically separate particles that were separate beyond classical means of communication in any way but still nonetheless correlated to each other from a measurement perspective. For Einstein it was the *completeness* option that he preferred, unwilling to consider the idea that the notion of *locality* was not absolute.

Ironically enough, hindsight being twenty-twenty and all, Einstein had just revolutionized Classical Mechanics with Relativity Theory by postulating that there was no such thing as absolute truth, or absolute reality, on the macroscopic and cosmic physical plane so one might be inclined to think that he would have been more open to relaxing this requirement of absolutely defined reality in the quantum realm, but apparently not, speaking to the complexities and subtleties of the implications of Quantum Theory as well as the strength of conviction within the Physics community for *locality* and *determinism* and basic underlying principles of Physics.

Probably the most widely known metaphor that illustrated Einstein and other's problems with the theoretical implications of Quantum Theory is the thought experiment, or paradox as it is sometimes referred to as, called *Schrödinger's cat*, or Schrödinger's cat paradox.⁵⁷⁸ In this thought experiment, which according to tradition emerged out of discussions between Schrödinger and Einstein just after the *EPR Paper* was published, a cat is placed in a fully sealed and fully enclosed box with a radioactive source subject to certain measurable and quantifiable rate of decay, a rate that is presumably less than the life time of a cat. In the box with the cat is one internal radioactive monitor which measures if there exists any radioactive particles in the box (any number ≥ 1), along with a flask of poison that is triggered by the radioactivity monitor if it is triggered. According to Quantum Theory, which governs the rate of radioactive decay with some random probability distribution over time, it is impossible to say at any given moment, until the box is opened in fact, whether or not the cat is dead or alive. The implication here that the cat is in an undefined state until the box is opened, implying of course that there is nothing definitive that we can say about the state of the cat independent of actually opening the box.

⁵⁷⁸ Erwin Schrödinger made many of the fundamental discoveries in the foundation of Quantum Mechanics, most notably the *wavefunction* which described the behavior of subatomic particles. He shared some of the same concerns of standard interpretations of Quantum Mechanics with Einstein, as illustrated in his *cat paradox* that he is so well known for.

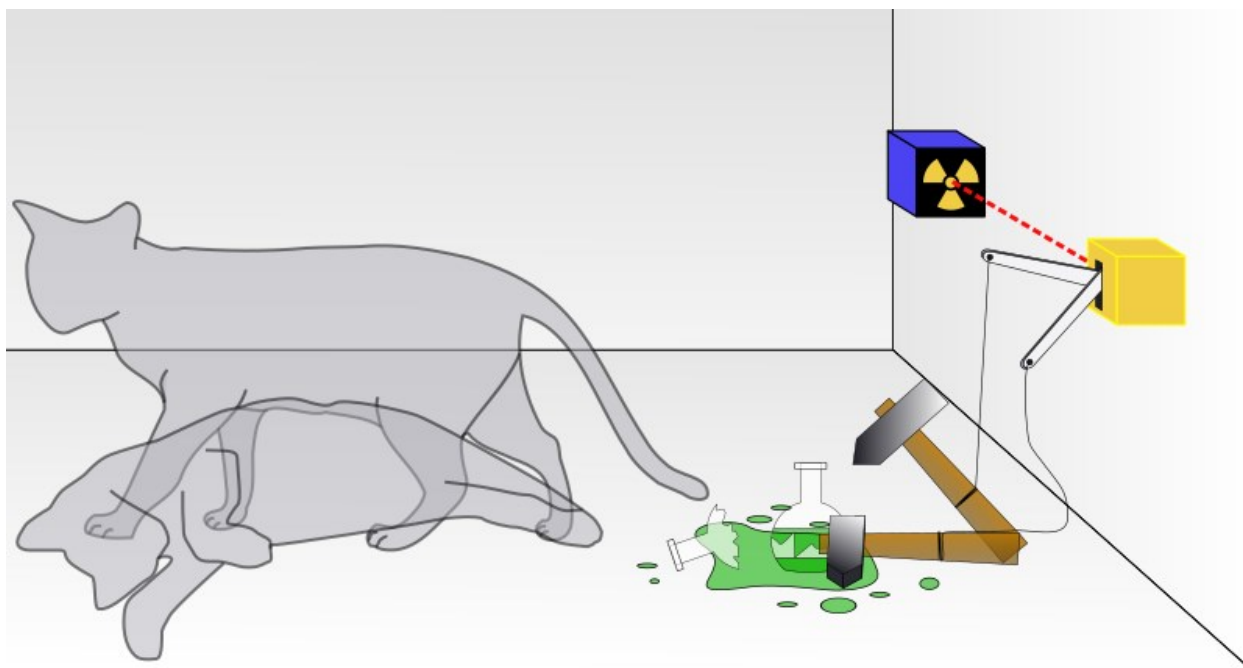


Figure 35: Illustration of Schrödinger's Cat paradox.⁵⁷⁹

The calls into question, bringing the analogy to the macroscopic or realistic level, whether or not according to Quantum Theory *reality can be defined independent of observation* (or measurement) within the context of the cat, the box and the radioactive particle and its associated monitor. Or of course taken to the logical next step, if Quantum Mechanics does accurately represent the substratum of physical reality, can reality itself at any level be fully determined independent of observation.

Now although this all might seem to be simply a philosophical problem, with no real bearing on physics proper, the theoretical and metaphysical implications of this, if it is in fact true, are quite profound. It means that if Quantum Mechanics is held to be true, and if the physical world around us is governed by Quantum Theory at a basic level, then the idea that reality has an existence outside of any act of measurement or observation must be abandoned. This represents a bit of a problem to the Physics community at large, as reflected in the widespread adoption and unwavering belief in Classical Mechanics, as put forth initially by Newton and enhanced and

⁵⁷⁹ A cat, a flask of poison, and a radioactive source are placed in a sealed box. When an internal monitor detects radioactivity (i.e., a single *atom* decaying), the flask is shattered, releasing poison that kills the cat. The implications of standard interpretations of Quantum Mechanics that after a period of time, the cat can be said to be potentially both alive and dead, i.e. where the state is only completely “determined” once the box is opened up and the cat is “observed” to be dead or alive. In other words, when exactly does quantum *superposition* end and reality begin, or *collapse* as it were into one possible reality or another. From Wikipedia contributors, 'Schrödinger's cat', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 3 December 2016, 19:03 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Schr%C3%B6dinger%27s_cat&oldid=752850801> [accessed 3 December 2016].

expanded upon by Einstein, which relies quite firmly on this assumption of *local realism*, i.e. the notion that physical reality has a state that is fully determined and quantifiable independent of any *observer* or *act of observation*.

In the course of developing this experiment, Schrödinger coined the term *entanglement*⁵⁸⁰, which is at some level is a re-factoring or rewording of Heisenberg's *uncertainty principle* but taken to the next theoretical implicative step. To Schrödinger however, this concept of *entanglement* was the defining characteristic of Quantum Mechanics that made it fundamentally incompatible with Classical Mechanics. Schrödinger himself is probably the best person to turn to understand what he meant by *entanglement* and he describes it thus:

*When two systems, of which we know the states by their respective representatives, enter into temporary physical interaction due to known forces between them, and when after a time of mutual influence the systems separate again, then they can no longer be described in the same way as before, viz. by endowing each of them with a representative of its own. I would not call that one but rather the characteristic trait of quantum mechanics, the one that enforces its entire departure from classical lines of thought. By the interaction the two representatives [the quantum states] have become entangled.*⁵⁸¹

The principle of *entanglement*, which again has been proven to be verifiably true now via a variety of experiments, calls directly into question of what is known as *local realism* - *local* in the sense that all the behaviors and datum of a given system are determined by the qualities or attributes of only those objects within that given system which is bounded by *spacetime* or some force that is acting upon said system as defined by Newtonian Mechanics and Relativity, and *real* in the sense that the system itself exists independent of observation or apparatus/elements of observation.

Taking the *non-local* theory explanation to the extreme, and something which has promoted quite a bit of what can reasonably be called hysterical reaction in some academic and pseudo-academic communities even to this day, is that the existence of proven correlation of two pairs of entities that are separated in *spacetime* far enough from each other so that the speed of light boundary could not be crossed - if the two separated particles do indeed seem to hold a distinct and mathematically predictable correlation, i.e. are truly *entangled* - then all of Classical Mechanics is called into question since this could only be possible if these two separate systems communicated with each other faster than the speed of light which is of course a core tenet upon

⁵⁸⁰ Actually, *Verschränkung* in German.

⁵⁸¹ Schrödinger, E. (1935) *Discussion of Probability Relations Between Separated Systems*. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society*, 31: pg. 555

which all of Classical Mechanical models of the universe rest. Einstein specifically called out these *spooky action at a distance* theories as defunct, he so believed in the invariable tenets of Relativity, and it's hard to argue with his position quite frankly because correlation does not necessarily imply communication. But if *local realism* and its underlying tenets of *determinism* are to be held fast to, then where does that leave Quantum Theory and how are its conclusions to be reconciled with Relativity and Newtonian Mechanics?

This problem gets somewhat more crystalized, or well defined, when the physicist John Stewart Bell (1928-1990) publishes in 1964 a paper entitled *On the Einstein Podolsky Rosen Paradox*. In this paper Bell takes the EPR Paradox argument one step further and asserts, proves mathematically via a *reductio ad absurdum* argument in fact, that if Quantum Theory is true, that in fact no *hidden variable theory* could possibly exist that reproduces all of the predictions of Quantum Mechanics *and is also consistent with locality*. In other words, Bell asserted that the *hidden variable hypothesis*, or at the very least a broad category of *hidden variable hypotheses*, were fundamentally incompatible with Quantum Theory itself, unless the notion of *locality* was abandoned or at least relaxed to some extent. In his own words:

*In a theory in which parameters are added to quantum mechanics to determine the results of individual measurements, without changing the statistical predictions, there must be a mechanism whereby the setting of one measuring device can influence the reading of another instrument, however remote. Moreover, the signal involved must propagate instantaneously, so that a theory could not be Lorentz invariant.*⁵⁸²

Lorentz invariance is a key tenet and assumption of Relativity Theory and basically states that experimental results in Classical Mechanics are independent of any movement of a laboratory, or system state boundaries of a given experiment, in *spacetime*. What Bell is saying here essentially is that even if *hidden variables* were added to Quantum Theory, there still must be present some form of communication, or correlation, between these two separate but correlated systems that violates the boundaries of light speed communication as laid out by Classical Mechanics. More specifically what he's saying is that if you have assume *hidden variables* as the answer to Quantum Theories completeness problem, then you needed to abandon at the very least the *Lorentz invariance* assumption, which again basically restates that Quantum Mechanics and Classical Mechanics are incompatible at a very basic level.

This assertion came to be known as *Bell's Theorem* and at its core posits, proves to a large extent, that Quantum Mechanics and the concept of *locality*, which again states that an object is

⁵⁸² Bell, John (1964). *On the Einstein Podolsky Rosen Paradox*. Physics 1 (3): 195–200.

influenced directly only by its immediate surroundings bounded by *spacetime* constraints set by Classical Mechanics and is a cornerstone of the theories of Newton and Einstein regarding the behavior of matter and the objective world in toto, are mathematically incompatible and inconsistent with each other, providing further impetus as it were, that this classical notion of *locality* was in need of closer inspection, modification or perhaps even abandoned entirely.⁵⁸³

Criticisms of *Bell's Theorem* and the related experiments aside however, if you believe Quantum Theory, and you'd be hard pressed not to at this point, you must conclude that the theory violates and is inconsistent with Relativity in some way, a rather disconcerting and problematic conclusion for the twentieth century physicist to say the least and a problem which plagues, and motivates, much of the research in Theoretical Physics to this day, all centered around trying to bridge the theoretical gap between the mathematical and theoretical models that govern the behavior of bodies or objects at the macro and cosmic scale, i.e. Relativity Theory, and the mathematical and theoretical models that govern the behavior of "things" at the subatomic scale, i.e. Quantum Theory.

If you stop and think about it for a second, this subatomic world and how it is now understood to behave represents a radical departure from how we typically perceive the world around us on a human and macro, and even cosmic, scale. People walk down the street, taking one step after the other. People get on planes and travel from one side of the country to the other, one side of the world to the other in a matter of hours. In all of these movements, our trajectories and paths are mapped conceptually through a continuum of states and values represented by a reality of space and time that have been mapped out for us over the last two thousand years by philosophers, mathematicians, scientists and physicists such as Euclid, Minkowski, Descartes, and Einstein among others. We think of the world as the interaction between independent bodies and objects that act and react to each other via the means of external forces. This isn't just a physics idea, these very basic principles are hammered into our heads from an early age and represent the intellectual paradigm within which we eat, breathe, sleep and interact with the world, and people, around us.

The quantum realm, which is the substratum of reality within which all physical objects, animate or inanimate, "exist" does not behave according to the same laws or principles however, it is a

⁵⁸³ Although there still exists some debate among physicists as to whether or not there is enough experimental evidence to prove out Bell's Theorem beyond a shadow of a doubt, it seems to be broadly accepted in the scientific community that this property of *entanglement* exists beyond Classical Mechanical boundaries, calling into serious question Classical Mechanics assumptions of *local realism*. However, the question as to whether or not all types of *hidden variable theories* are ruled out by *Bell's Theorem* appears to be a legitimate question and is still up for debate at some level, and perhaps one of these theoretical "loop holes" in *Bell's Theorem* is the one which Bohm and Hiley take advantage of with their *Causal, or Ontological Interpretation* of Quantum Theory which expands upon Quantum Mechanics to try and explain some of these problems and inconsistencies from a Classical Mechanics point of view (more on Bohmian Mechanics below).

non-continuous world that moves with bursts of energy and discrete changes of state, constantly emitting energy, a world that is very different than the one we normally perceive and conceptualize in our day to day lives. These bursts of energy, changes in quantum state, can be very accurately mathematically modeled and predicted from a statistical point of view, but do not obey classically *deterministic* behavioral models and exhibit strange properties like *entanglement* and *uncertainty*. These revolutionary ideas advanced by de Broglie, Max Planck, Schrödinger, Bohr and Einstein in the first half of the 20th century have had a profound impact on scientific thought and our perception of reality itself and their import cannot be understated. At some level, it has changed the entire way we think about the world, at least the subatomic world, and it has presented a whole host of theoretical challenges that are yet to be resolved, or fully integrated, even today.

Quantum Theory then, as expressed with *Bell's Theorem*, Heisenberg's *uncertainty principle* and this idea of *entanglement*, asserts that there exists a level of interconnectedness between physically disparate systems that defies at least some level the Classical Mechanics notion of *deterministic locality*, pointing to either the incompleteness of Quantum Theory or to the requirement of some sort of non-trivial modification or relaxation of the assumption of *local realism* which has underpinned Classical Mechanics for the last few centuries if not longer.

In other words, the implications of Quantum Theory, a theory which has been proven over and over again and has very strong predictive power (stochastically speaking) and underlies much of the technological advancement of the modern era, is that there is something else at work that connects the state of particles or things at the subatomic scale that we even to this day struggle to explain. Einstein himself struggles with this notion, and its profound implications, even toward the end of his life in 1954 when he says:

*...The following idea characterizes the relative independence of objects far apart in space, A and B: external influence on A has no direct influence on B; this is known as the Principle of Local Action, which is used consistently only in field theory. If this axiom were to be completely abolished, the idea of the existence of quasiclosed systems, and thereby the postulation of laws which can be checked empirically in the accepted sense, would become impossible....*⁵⁸⁴

There is no question as to the soundness of the *mathematics* behind Quantum Mechanics and there is now a very large body of experimental evidence that supports the underlying theoretical predictions of *entanglement* as well as experimental verification of *Bell's Theorem* and the EPR Paradox. What is somewhat less clear however, and what arguably may belong more to the

⁵⁸⁴Albert Einstein, *Quantum Mechanics and Reality* ("Quanten-Mechanik und Wirklichkeit", *Dialectica* 2:320-324, 1948).

world of *metaphysics* and philosophy rather than Physics, is how Quantum Theory is to be *interpreted* as a representation of reality given the state of affairs that it introduces, or perhaps better put the assumptions of *local realism* that it calls into question.

What does Quantum Theory tell us about the world we live in, what is its underlying *ontology* irrespective of the soundness of its predictive power? This is a question that physicists, philosophers and even theologians have struggled with since the theory has gained wide acceptance and prominence in the scientific community since the 1930s.

Part IV: On *Ontology* and *Mysticism*

The View from the West: The History of *Objective Realism*

The East-West division with respect to worldviews and ways of thinking clearly has significant limits in interpretative utility despite its proliferation and widespread use in the academic and intellectual community, in the West in particular. Having said that it is fair to say that the “Western worldview” is perhaps best characterized by *reductionism* and an almost obsessive focus on the that which can be “known” which rests on fundamentally *materialistic* and *deterministic* assumptions, i.e. what we call in modern philosophical circles as *empiricism*, which in turn sit upon on a fundamental belief in the supremacy of the physical world over the mental or theological world, and rest primarily on rules of *logic* and reason, and *causality*, as the principle tenets for how *reality* itself is defined. The East in contrast can be said to view the world much more *holistically*, or perhaps better put has inherent in it a more comprehensive and expansive view of reality as the *manifestation* of phenomena, which includes the psychological domain from which deeper meanings of reality can be grasped as much as they are graspable intellectually.

While any definition excludes certain criteria that may be of value in the domain being discussed, this delineation, definition and distinction of worldviews serves as well as any other with respect to drawing the lines between the two ends of the intellectual spectrum as it were of modern thought, a distinction that clearly goes beyond any geographical boundary at this point, but one which nonetheless has significant implications on how “reality” is defined and perceived. This contrast in modes of thinking about the world around us today in many respects resembles the metaphysical debates that arose between Plato and Aristotle in the Hellenic world in the 4th century BCE which provided the metaphysical and intellectual basis for the development of all of Hellenic philosophy for some thousand years. To Plato, *forms* (*eidôs*), or *ideas* (*ιδέες*), were the fundamental building blocks of *reality*. With Aristotle, this solution was inadequate or incomplete. To Aristotle, *reality* primarily consisted of *substance*, but also rested on the notion of *form*, albeit in the context of Aristotle’s *ontology*, *form* played a much less significant role than it did in Plato’s.

In Aristotle’s philosophy, the known universe consisted of *things*, or more accurately *beings*, that were primarily defined by the notion of *substantial form*, a *hylomorphic* construct where *being*, or *substance* (*ousia*) is a compound of matter as well as its underlying *form*. This he combined with a fairly comprehensive view of *causality*, which included all of the physical as well as mental aspects of a “thing” which underlie its “existence”, purpose being included as one of the components of *causality*. Aristotle’s theory of existence, his *being qua being*, eventually evolved

to provide the intellectual basis of *causal determinism* which underlies modern Science (Physics) as we understand it today.⁵⁸⁵

To Plato the *forms*, shapes or *ideas*, which manifested, were required even, to produce and define what we think of as “physical reality” so to speak were ontologically superior to the physical things themselves. These physical “things” could not exist, would have no definition or existence at all, without the underlying forms which made them what they are. This is essentially Plato’s *theory of forms* as we have come to understand it today, as perhaps best illustrated in his Allegory of the Cave story in the *Republic* where individuals are chained to the floor in a cave with a roaring fire in back of them that they cannot see, mistaking the shadows that are displayed on the wall in front of them which are merely reflections of objects passing behind them but in front of the fire as “real” things, having no knowledge of true objective reality until and unless they are “released” from their bondage and led up onto land where the sun reigns supreme and true physical reality is shown to them in all its glory.⁵⁸⁶

Aristotle’s view eventually won out of course in the West from an intellectual perspective but Plato’s *idealism* persists in religious, really theological, and (some) philosophical intellectual circles, as juxtaposed with the fundamental tenets of say science, physics, and biology - the modern pillars of science. We now however live in a world permeated by East/West synthesis and interaction and we can find many of the hallmarks of that ancient debate present within the scientific, philosophical and religious communities throughout the world today – for example the Creationists versus the Evolutionists where strict interpretative lenses are applied to ancient myths which clearly were crafted before any notion of modern science even existed.

Even though culturally speaking this East-West divide may no longer have any geographical boundary upon which it rests given how international a community we live in now, it does nonetheless reflect the division between contrasting worldviews that can be loosely aligned with the “scientific” versus “spiritual” worldview – i.e. the worlds of Science and Religion respectively. Perhaps another look may reveal that the two approaches need not sit in contrast with one another however, and if integrated into a larger whole can be looked at as two sides of the same coin. But what is missed by most it would appear is that there is no right or wrong worldview but in fact that the coin simply has two sides – speaking quite directly to the deeper knowledge that

⁵⁸⁵ For a more detailed look at Plato and Aristotle’s epistemological and cosmological views, see *Philosophy in Antiquity: The Greeks*. Lambert Academic publishing, 2015. By this same author. Chapters on Plato and Aristotle respectively.

⁵⁸⁶ A loose analogy can be drawn between the differing ontological views of Plato and Aristotle and the Daoists (*Daojiā*) and Confucianists (*Rújiā*) of ancient China, where the Daoists in many respects align to the *idealism* of Plato while the Confucianists, while not outright denying the existence of the ideals (the supreme of which is the *Dao* itself, corresponding in many respects to the Platonic *Good*), appeal to custom, ritual and ancestral worship as the harbinger of that which is right. One could perhaps best categorize them as “realists” to oppose the Daoist *idealism* rather than the more materialistic bent of Aristotle.

may rest in the power of the *Yīn-Yáng* intellectual framework, the integration and balancing of opposites, within which reality is viewed, at least in antiquity, in the Far East.

One way to classify and distinguish between the Western and Eastern worldviews, contrasting them from a cosmological and physical universe perspective, is that of a 'closed', or 'bound' view of physical reality versus an 'open', 'cyclical' or 'process' based reality. The former view is a hallmark of Western cosmological mythology and has continued to be a hallmark of Western intellectual development ever since. It permeates Western philosophical inquiry to a large extent and continues to be one of the defining characteristics of Western thought even today. Scientific development, from its first method of philosophical inquiry by the ancient Greeks straight through the more modern "Scientific Revolution" and even into the modern "Quantum" era has looked at the world primarily through a mechanistic and systematic lens, an analysis and modeling of these 'closed' systems and how the various components of these well-defined, 'bound' systems interact with each other and are described from a phenomenological, i.e. *objective realist*, perspective.

Western intellectual developments in this context can be looked at this quest for understanding the fundamental and most elemental characteristics of matter and the objective world, and in turn the relationships between these objects of perception. Quantum Theory represents the ultimate end of this line of inquiry though, the final boundary upon which the limits of this type of worldview, this idea of 'closed' systems of objective reality, can be defined without the aspect of cognition, the role of the observer, included in the model per se. This worldview, while not wrong or incorrect in any way, is primarily physical and objective, and leans heavily on the mathematical laws and theories which have been "discovered", which govern the behavior of these "things". All of these things being capable of objective description and whose states are ultimately defined by one or more physical, and measurable, properties. Things that can be said to exist within the system in question – be it a set of atomic data within the context of a quantum experiment or a set of interplanetary or galactic objects that are viewed within the context of the "known" or "visible" universe as a whole – are ultimately defined and "bound" by the underlying mathematical laws as well as the measurable qualities or characteristics that these laws are designed to yield.

In fact the boundaries of the entire system itself as defined from a "Western" worldview, is what we call the "Universe" or "Cosmos". This notion is defined as every "thing" that has existed or will exist within this physical and objective conception of reality since the beginning of "time". Time itself, what the Greeks referred to as *Chronos*, is created as part of the cosmological universal order as part of the creation of the universe itself. Time and the Cosmos (*kosmos*) are in fact co-eternal and co-existent. While we defer to all of the advancements of modern science

which point to a single, massive “singularity” which occurred some 13.8 billion years ago⁵⁸⁷. This is the universal creation event that we refer to as the Big Bang Theory which marks the primordial event after which all cosmological and theoretical physical study is concerned with and represents the beginning of not just “time” itself, but also the creation of the physical laws that govern “our” universe.

The very roots of these boundaries of space and time and the cosmos itself can be found in the ancient mythological narratives of our predecessors in the West, whether we give credit to our intellectual ancestors or not. In fact, to think beyond these boundaries, before the great singularity event from which our universe emerged, or even to look beyond the known (really “visible”) universe is not considered even a conceivable act of study from a physics or scientific perspective. Once someone leaves these boundaries, they in effect have left the boundaries of (Western) Science itself, and have entered into the realm of philosophical speculation or inquiry, i.e. non-empirically testable or verifiable theories or ideas which provide the “boundaries” of Science itself.

The view from the East however - as seen through the eyes of Vedānta, Buddhism and Chinese philosophy for example – can be characterized as “cyclical”, “process-oriented” or “open”. Open in the sense that the universe itself is not considered to have a beginning per se, but is believed to be eternally existent and always and forever manifesting as an “experiential” event that is not simply defined by the definition of physical objects which exist in time and space, but is a constant unfolding of “experience” which cognitive beings partake in and ultimately provide the basis for any understanding of “it” - it being “reality”. This distinctive characteristic of the East is evident in the Hindu belief in the cycles or “Ages”, or *Yugas*, of time that defines the cosmological worldview of the Hindus (and was embedded in early Greco-Roman *mythos* as well in fact), and is reflected – from an anthropomorphic and mythical perspective - by the inbreathing and outbreathing of *Brahman*.

In the “East”, speculation about the universal order of things and our place in it is viewed within this cyclical, or “unbound” context, not within a set physical boundary in time or space per se. This is why attempts to classify the ancient *mythos* of the Chinese almost defy definition from a Western intellectual perspective. The idea of “Cosmos” in fact, as defined by the boundaries of space and time within which the physical universe that we live in was “created” and will ultimately be “destroyed”, does not exist. Their view, most predominantly reflected in the *Yijing*,

⁵⁸⁷ According to modern cosmological theories, i.e. Big Bang theory, the physical universe came into “being” some 13.8 billion years ago in a massive explosion which not only created everything in the physical universe, but also spacetime itself as well as provided the basis for the physical laws that govern said universe. For details on the underlying theories and resulting calculations see Wikipedia contributors, 'Big Bang', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 11 December 2016, 14:55 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Big_Bang&oldid=754229288> [accessed 11 December 2016].

is one of a continuing process of becoming and change within which any sort of meaning, meaning which fundamentally includes and synthesizes not just the “person” who is looking for this meaning, but also the underlying socio-political context within which this individual “co-exists”. The physical aspect of the universe is not, and effectively cannot, be distinguished from the “being” who is participating in the continual process of change and becoming which is constantly unfolding. This is what we mean by an “open”, or essentially “unbound” worldview.

In order to find this source of this “closed” view of the West, this almost obsession to break things apart and drill further and further into the constituent components of a thing until once can literally go no further, one needs to reach back to the beginning of development of thought, and language, in the West. To the ancient Greeks who laid down the intellectual foundations – linguistic, metaphysical and otherwise – that we have inherited in the West through language and culture down through the ages. One can look at the beginning of this “bound” and “closed” systemic view of the world as having its roots in Pythagorean philosophy, a philosophy that as we understand it rested on the harmony and eternal co-existence of numbers and their relationship to each other, forming the underlying ground of all existence. It is from the Pythagorean tradition as we understand it, that Plato’s fascination with *geometry* – as reflected most readily in perhaps his most lasting and influential *dialogues* the *Timaeus* – was founded.⁵⁸⁸

To truly understand the context, source and origins of Western thought, we must of course reach back to classical Greek philosophical development, from which our definition of philosophy in the West rests, we must first understand the intellectual (and socio-political) context within which these great and lasting influential thinkers emerged, and how and why this transition from mythic poetry and divine worship as the primary source of *knowledge* becomes relegated and subservient to *philosophy*, a term first coined by Pythagoras in fact according to historical tradition. By philosophy here, we again use a primarily Western definition which is almost recursively defined as the purely rational and intellectual pursuit of knowledge itself as reflected in the classic philosophical tradition within which these intellectual developments evolved. Philosophy in this context can also be defined more specifically and literally being by looking at the meaning of the word itself in Greek from which it is derived, i.e. the “love” or “study of” “knowledge” or “wisdom”, i.e. *sophia*.⁵⁸⁹

While the intellectual and academic tradition has typically divided philosophical and theological development into “Western” and “Eastern” branches, some scholars have challenged this

⁵⁸⁸ For a more detailed look at Pythagorean philosophy please see <https://snowconenyc.com/2014/08/23/pythagorean-theology-truth-in-numbers/>.

⁵⁸⁹ Philosophy from the two Greek root words for “love”, i.e. *philo*, and “wisdom” or *sophia*, the latter term being the same root word that was used to describe the “Sophists”, a group of teachers in classical Greek antiquity that Plato in particular took great pains to distinguish himself from.

classical distinction, in particular in the last few decades as linguistic, genetic and archeological evidence has pointed to a more complex and interwoven evolution that took place in the Mediterranean, Near East and Indian subcontinent in classical antiquity. In this region, starting in the latter part of the 4th millennium BCE or so, we find evidence for perhaps the greatest invention in mankind's history - namely writing.

At this juncture in human history we find not only the beginnings of hieroglyphic script in Northern Africa (Egypt) from this time but also the introduction of cuneiform script in the Near East (Mesopotamia). Both systems no doubt started as *pictograms* and *logograms*, symbols that represented abstract thoughts or ideas, but each eventually evolved into more complex writing systems that contained what linguists refer to as *morphemes*, *graphemes* and *phonemes*, essentially smaller units of meaning which came to represent sounds and words alongside symbols and ideas. It is this development more so than any other that ushered in the era of human evolution that is characterized by advanced abstract thought, an invention that was arguably not only required in order to support advanced civilization in the respective cultures within which it evolved, but also at the same time supported and underpinned said developments.

For as we find evidence for these various systems of writing and they became more prevalent and widespread, the civilizations that utilized this invention at the same time became more urbanized and specialized, allowing and supporting the establishment of a “priestly” or “scholarly” class of individuals that eventually formed the social and intellectual basis for not just trade and commerce, but eventually the basis for all theo-philosophical development as well, even if we do not find true “philosophical” works from these regions until the first millennium BCE or so. Necessity is indeed the mother of invention and writing is certainly no exception to this universal rule.

These writing systems had to adapt and evolve to support not just barter and trade (basic *mathematics*), but also contracts and agreements between individuals and states, as well as – and this is perhaps a later development (3rd and 2nd millennium BCE) to codify and capture various rituals and ceremonies which had been established to appease the gods, a shared cultural and theological phenomenon that we find all through Eurasia in antiquity in fact. [Egyptian hieroglyphs associated with burial grounds (*Pyramid Texts*), cuneiform tablets with various myths and tales of the gods (the *Enûma Eliš*), the *divination* tools and symbols developed by the ancient Chinese (the *Zhou Yi*), the Indo-Aryan *Vedas* and the Indo-Iranian *Avesta* literature, etc.].

Another core characteristic of these ancient writing systems is that given that many different languages were spoken even in the specific geographic regions themselves (the Near East/Persia, North Africa and Egypt, ancient China, etc.), these writing systems had to evolve to support all of these different (spoken) languages as well. It is this feature, this requirement as it were, that in

no small measure drove the evolution of these first archaic hieroglyphic and pictogram writing systems into their more modern alphabetic form. For example, we have evidence that cuneiform in particular was adapted to support a wide variety of ancient languages of the Middle and Near East such as Akkadian, Elamite, Hittite, and Hurrian among others, languages from both the Afroasiatic branch of the linguistic tree as well as languages from the Indo-European branch.⁵⁹⁰

It is with cuneiform script that we find then - via its direct descendant writing system referred to as the Phoenician alphabet for which we find evidence in the first half of the first millennium BCE - what is commonly held to be the parent writing system of virtually all the alphabetic systems of writing in antiquity that were used not only throughout the Mediterranean but also in the Middle and Near East as well as the Indian subcontinent. For the Phoenician alphabet is held to be not only the parent system of the ancient Greek alphabet (and in turn Latin of course which evolved from a form of the Greek alphabet), but also the ancient Aramaic alphabet from which ancient Hebrew alphabet is believed to have derived, Pahlavi which is the script used to write many of the ancient Iranian and Persian languages (e.g. the *Avesta*), and even the various forms of the Brāhmī alphabetic script that we find in use throughout South and Central Asia in the latter part of the first millennium BCE which, in its various descendant forms, is the script used for the transcription of the ancient Sanskrit Vedic literature.⁵⁹¹

So again in the West, which includes in this context the Indian subcontinent which we have shown reflects the “Indo-European” theo-philosophical mindset more or less, we can actually follow the progression in written history of this transition from more archaic and pre-historical forms of divine worship, i.e. *mythos*, to the practice and discipline of *philosophy* as a practical art upon which the rational foundations of *ethics*, *morality*, and the common good rest, i.e. *Logos*. In the Hellenic world, which is what modern historians and academics look to as the basic building blocks of “Western” thought, this transition takes place in the first half of the first millennium BCE from the time of Homer and Hesiod, through the developments of the so-called “Pre-Socratics” (as we understand their views primarily through fragments from later authors and

⁵⁹⁰ In Egypt, the hieroglyphic writing system primarily evolved hand in hand with various forms of the Egyptian language, languages that are placed in the Afroasiatic language family. From the ancient hieroglyphs, various forms of script developed, hieratic being the most influential which was associated by the Greeks with the class of priests who used the script (derives from the Greek phrase (used first by Clement of Alexandria) *grammata hieratika*, literally “priestly writing”). [Hence the connotation of the word hieratic as meaning “of or related to sacred persons or offices”. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Hieratic', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 11 September 2016, 02:13 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hieratic&oldid=738788563>> [accessed 11 September 2016].

⁵⁹¹ Direct descent of Brāhmī script from the Phoenician alphabet is disputed by many scholars but the similarities nonetheless abound, and the time period of its inception corresponds very neatly into what we know of the spread of Near Eastern culture into the Indian subcontinent by the various Assyrian and then Persian empires which dominated the Near East and the Indian subcontinent part of the world in the late second millennium BCE into the middle of the first millennium BCE, making at the very least a very close relationship, if not an altogether direct descendant relationship, likely. For detail, see Wikipedia contributors, 'Brāhmī script', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 7 November 2016, 06:42 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Brahmi_script&oldid=748252726> [accessed 7 November 2016]

interpreters of their beliefs) and ultimately to the works of Plato and Aristotle which form the basis of Hellenic philosophy in all its forms.

It is then with this historical and evolutionary context in mind, we can see how it is that the Hellenic philosophical tradition has come to be so representative of “Western” thought, one which is characterized by the study and analysis of reality as a series of *bound* or *closed* systems in time and space and one which even God himself is seen as bound within said intellectual framework. He is the Creator. Prior to *creation*, God himself does not exist in fact. It is this intellectual framework which not only ultimately leads to the establishment of Science in the modern era, but also one which provides the rational underpinnings for *theology*, i.e. Religion, as well - as the both the early Christian Church Fathers as well as the early Islamic/Arabic philosophers (*falsafa*), all appealed to the Hellenic philosophy in one form or another to provide a rational foundation for their theological views.⁵⁹²

It was not until the Scientific Revolution some 1500 years later that intellectual thought breaks free of religious dogma, and while the basic principles laid down by the ancient Greeks which established the Truth of the Biblical narrative were for the most part altogether abandoned, at least from a physics perspective, later philosophers and the first scientists in fact remained nonetheless convinced of the underlying geometric foundation of the universe as the ultimate expression of God. None of these great thinkers were atheists in any sense of the word and although they may have rejected most, if not all of the basic tenets of the Church, especially with respect to Creation mythology as laid out in *Genesis* (at least from a literal standpoint), the still held onto the firm belief that *mathematics*, and in turn *geometry*, represented the ultimate and best expression of the divine in the material world.

Even to the Enlightenment Era philosophers, *mathematics* and *geometry* were the core basic building blocks of universe from which our natural world can be understood. Newton rested his grand *three laws of motion*, which underpin Classical Mechanics even today, upon Euclidean *geometry* which described physical space in terms of spatial coordinates on a three dimensional plane as well as their movement through time via a new method of *mathematics* called *calculus* which facilitates the calculation of the rates of change of objects and the slope of their respective curves in Euclidean three dimensional space (*differential calculus*) as well as the calculation of the areas under and between these curvatures (*integral calculus*). Using these tools, along with his universal law of gravitation, Newton was able to more accurately predict the orbits of the

⁵⁹² The early Christian Church Fathers looked to Plato's *Timaeus* perhaps more than any other ancient Hellenic philosophical work for the intellectual and rational foundations for their creation mythology that we see in the *Old Testament*, a work which of course the Christians wholeheartedly adopted as their own. For example, we find in the extant works of Philo Judaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and St. Augustine various attempts to construct and rationalize “Judeo-Christian” theological doctrine on top of the fundamental Hellenic philosophical intellectual systems that came before them.

planets around the sun – as first put forth by Copernicus – as well as establish the firm mathematical, and of course fundamental geometrical, ground for Physics which is still taught in schools today. This system that he created, which rested on his *three laws of motion* that described the interaction between objects within *Euclidean geometrical space*, were the cornerstones of Physics until the twentieth century when Einstein upended Physics with his Theory of Relativity.

Relativity, as Einstein “discovered” it, expands upon the three dimensional notion of space put forth first by Euclid and leveraged by Newton, and established a new geometrical fabric of reality based upon the notion of curved *spacetime*, fully integrating *gravity* into the geometrical framework (as the bending, or curvature of *spacetime*) rather than it being described as an external “force” acting on objects across space and time as Newton did. Einstein was required to create – or perhaps better stated “borrow” – a new and more complex geometrical framework within which the fabric of *spacetime*, its underlying curvature, as well as the objects moving within it could be described. It is within the framework of General Relativity that his famed equivalence of *mass* and *energy* is yielded ($E = mc^2$), where the overall system is bound by, and fundamentally constrained by, the constant limit of the speed of light no matter what an observer’s *frame of reference* is.⁵⁹³

Quantum Mechanics is no exception either. Despite the theory calling into question our basic understanding of what an “object” truly is and how it can be defined independent of its “environment”, calling into question our basic conception of *objective reality* in and of itself, a new geometrical framework needed to be established in order to describe the movement of these so-called objects, or “particles”, at the sub-atomic scale, i.e. *Hilbert space*, a generalization of Euclidean space which extends vector algebra and *calculus* to support any number (an infinite number in fact) of “spatial” dimensions. But of course, the underlying *geometry* of Quantum Mechanics, despite its predictive power, comes with its some very intriguing and “mysterious” mathematical certainties which call into question some of the foundational principles of Classical Mechanics, mainly the notion of *locality* as it relates to objective phenomena.

Leaving aside the fundamental inconsistencies and philosophical questions that Quantum Mechanics poses to the underlying assumptions and beliefs that underpin Classical Mechanics (in particular with respect to the notions of *causal objective determinism* and *objective realism* and its sister principle *locality*), regardless both “physical” models are understood and described within the context of *bound, closed* intellectual frameworks and systems. In other words, each *model of reality* - both Newtonian Mechanics as well its more abstract cousin which includes the

⁵⁹³ The *mathematics* used to support General Relativity falls under the heading of *differential geometry*. Within this framework Einstein leveraged Riemann curvature tensors, specifically a 4-dimensional Lorentzian manifold of signature (3, 1) or equivalently (1, 3) to model the movement of objects within a *spacetime* continuum.

notion of *gravity*, i.e. General Relativity, as well as Quantum Theory - describes *reality* as a physical system which includes *objects*, *things*, which interact with each other and *exist* and are describable within specific *quantifiable* and *measurable* physical states at specific moments in the *spacetime* continuum. Furthermore, these models have the power to predict the *behavior*, or *future states*, of these various *things* or *objects* using various sophisticated geometrical models and equations that in toto, with known starting variables such as position, momentum/velocity, mass, etc., can predict the movement of these *objects* through the *Euclidean geometrical space* within which these *objects* are said to exist via the use of sophisticated mathematical calculations and equations that operate on, and yield results within, these complex geometrical structures which are presumed to “represent” *reality*.

This is essentially the power of modern science, the ability to predict future states of phenomena given a set of starting variables, all measured and quantified within the context of an observer. What’s lost in all of this power and complex *mathematics* however is that it all rests upon a very specific set of assumptions and principles regarding *reality* itself, i.e. the *mathematics* and related theories *bound* the definition of *reality* – what in philosophical circles they call *ontology*. Such is the reason now doubt that many of the greatest minds of the twentieth century who understood Quantum Theory better than any of us refused to enter into any metaphysical interpolation of the theory itself, not just on philosophical grounds but on basic mathematical grounds – in short calling into question the ability for *mathematics*, and of course *geometry* to which it is intrinsically related, to provide and sort of *meaning* to *reality* from a philosophical and metaphysical perspective.

Such is the nature of Physics as it stands today, both when studied at the grand scale as governed by the laws of General Relativity “discovered” by Einstein as well as Quantum Mechanics, as put forth and articulated by the likes of Bohr, Heisenberg, Schrödinger, de Broglie and others in the twentieth century. Nonetheless this undying and unfailing belief that the natural world is best understood through the lens of *mathematical laws* and formulas which govern the various states and relationships of the “physical” world as it moves through a specifically described and formulated *geometric continuum*, reality in fact as we have defined it, is a belief shared by and first promulgated by the ancient philosophers from the Mediterranean starting with Democritus, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle among others and has carried forward into the 21st century. The problem comes when, to borrow a phrase from Robert Pirsig, *we confuse the map with the territory*.

Interpretations of Quantum Theory: Physics Meets Philosophy

If one believes in the power of *mathematics* to describe the universe, as the language of God so to speak, a notion which underpins all of Physics in the post Enlightenment Era as reflected in the two pillars of modern Physics, namely Relativity Theory and Quantum Theory, each of which has proven to have tremendously powerful predictive power for the explanation of measurement phenomena at the macrocosmic and microcosmic (subatomic) level of the “physical world” respectively, one is forced to radically change one’s perspective on, and fundamental definition of, “reality”. This is not a philosophical conclusion, or a theological one for that matter. This is a rationally deductive conclusion that anyone who understands modern Physics must arrive at if they follow the math. The two theories are fundamentally incompatible in the sense that they rest on fundamentally incompatible assumptions that have been proven to be mathematically true and again have been empirically verified. Most Physicists punt on the problem. They say that the *math* is a tool to predict the behavior of measurable phenomena in their respective domains and that any *interpretation* of what the math “means” or “says” about the nature of reality is a problem for philosophers of science, and in effect outside the domain of pure “science”.

The author takes issue with this type of interpretation however, even though it is the “standard” and “orthodox” view offered by Physicists and is most certainly the viewpoint offered by virtually every major textbook on Physics which is used to teach all modern students about science in the West. This conclusion, which the author deems is inescapable, in turn forces an expansion and redefinition of *knowledge* itself, one which is typically confined and equivalent to conclusions that are drawn by Science, but one which the science itself forces us to reconsider, as illustrated by any basic understanding of Quantum Theory as well as Relativity Theory, to include and integrate the “observer” as well as the “observed” into some sort of cohesive and coherent model. No matter what model one chooses to adopt, it is one that must sit “above”, ontologically speaking, any definition that can be offered by Physics or Science as it is understood today, and must incorporate some type of metaphysical intellectual system, back to the beginning really to what Aristotle called *first philosophy*, i.e. *metaphysics*, as the specific domain which must be explored and logically and rationally constructed to incorporate these scientific findings into our understanding of *reality*.

From a pure *mathematical* perspective, what Quantum Theory tells us is that there exists some sort of basic interconnecting principle that explains the behavior and complex relationship of these subatomic “particles” as we have come to understand them. While it would be convenient to categorize and define these strange properties and principles of the subatomic realm as the result of some type of “force”, i.e. a field of sorts that interacts between two separate and distinct

“things” or “objects” and results in some sort of correlative measurement phenomena that can be described by some sort of mathematical equation that relates the “objects” in question, any and all attempts to describe the behavior of the subatomic world in such a way has unfortunately completely eluded some of the brightest minds in physics for some 70 years or so. This in fact was the driving force of much of Einstein’s work in the latter part of his career, and one which he was ultimately unable to solve. It is intellectual driving force (no pun intended) that underpins the conclusions drawn in famed *EPR Paper* which criticized Quantum Theory as “incomplete” and posited the potential existence of so-called *hidden variables*, which would theoretically bridge the gap between the Quantum Theory and Relativity, the existence of which have been albeit entirely ruled out mathematically speaking by *Bell’s Theorem* which deals with the potential existence of *hidden variables* explicitly. The only exception perhaps is Bohmian Mechanics, aka *de Broglie-Bohm theory* or simply *pilot-wave theory* (more below), which is arguable the best of, if not the only, coherent *hidden variable theory* that is also fully *deterministic* that has been put forward since Quantum Theory has become widely accepted and empirically verified since the middle of the twentieth century or so, since the advent of the Quantum Era.

Leaving Bohmian Mechanics aside (a theory which has not been widely accepted by modern Physics for a variety of reasons and is very difficult for the layperson or non-Physicist to understand and arguably violates the principle of *Ockham’s razor*⁵⁹⁴ and is certainly not taught in schools and *academia* for the most part), our notion and definition of *reality* must in fact adapt and evolve to support the developments of modern Science, i.e. Physics, which explain the behavior of macrocosmic phenomena, but also subatomic phenomena, the latter of which of course exhibit quite paradoxically both wave like and particle like behavior and also at the same time have been shown to exhibit strange properties such as *entanglement*. Following this rationale to its logical conclusion, if we as human beings (and all animals or physical objects for that matter, the entirety of the “animate” and “inanimate” world), both subsist and consist of these elementary particles which exhibit these “non-classical” properties, we must in fact expand upon our notion of “reality” itself to incorporate these characteristics which have proven to be “scientifically” true. The author rejects the “math is for measurement and predictability only” position as an intellectual cop out of sorts for avoiding the albeit difficult problem of offering up a solution to the question of what it all means. A solution which must, by definition, delve into

⁵⁹⁴ *Ockham’s razor*, or *lex parsimoniae* in Latin meaning “law of parsimony”, is a principle initially forth by the 14th century theologian, philosopher and logician William of Ockham (c. 1287 – 1347), and states that among competing hypotheses, the one with the fewest assumptions should be selected and in most if not all cases represents the “best”, or “optimal”, solution. *Ockham’s razor* has been a guiding force for scientific theoretical advancement throughout much of the Enlightenment Era and remains a persistent and guiding principle of scientific theoretical analysis, and philosophical and metaphysical inquiry as well, to this day. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Ockham’s razor', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 8 December 2016, 02:13 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Occam%27s_razor&oldid=753591996> [accessed 8 December 2016].

the world of metaphysics at some level or another. Hence the reason no doubt that Physicists are reluctant to wade into these waters.

And therein lies one of the basic underlying problems this work is trying to address really, that the underlying rationale for the “its just math” position, that it’s a problem for philosophers of Science and not a problem for Physics as an academic discipline needs to be revised.⁵⁹⁵ Not only must we come up with a wholesale new definition of “reality”, but we need to reformulate our approach and definition to knowledge itself, which must incorporate what we understand as the basic substratum of existence as characterized by the basic characteristics and properties of Quantum Theory as well as Relativity by incorporating and integrating the *observer* and *observable phenomena* into a more *holistic* model, or into at least the presentation of alternative models which satisfy this very basic requirement. Hence the essays and subject matter of the last part of this work which deal with *ontology*. Once this is done, and again the author argues that it must in fact be done if we are to move knowledge forward and continue to evolve, intellectually speaking at least, as a species, we must ultimately confront what any of these alternative models of reality which incorporate and synthesize the notions of the *observer* and *observable phenomena*, but also the *substratum of existence* within which this act of perception is continuously taking place, we must then look at what if any conclusions can be drawn, regarding the *meaning* of life, the *meaning* of *existence*, its ultimate purpose, what we refer to following Aristotle as *teleology*, and how we as individuals should incorporate said conclusions into our daily lives in the Quantum Era which is dominated intellectually, in particular in the West, by *objective realism*, a somewhat unintended byproduct as it were of the Scientific Revolution which provided the intellectual platform for twentieth century Physics, i.e. Relativity Theory and Quantum Theory. Or alternatively, if we adopt a materialistic position and we look upon the domain of Physics as we understand it today as simply providing mathematical tools to drive innovation and make life “easier” or more “efficient”, at least we will be “consciously” adopting such positions rather than having them beaten into us by teachers and educators for virtually our entire early life.

So this is the rationale for providing these alternative, more encompassing theories of reality, for delving back into *first philosophy*, i.e. *metaphysics*, and concluding – just as Aristotle did some 2500 years ago – that *metaphysics* must be understood and covered at length, prior to studying physics, or what he and the intellectual and academic community termed *natural philosophy* up until fairly recently in fact. And the implications of this reversal, or really *inversal*, of domains of study that we are describing and providing the rationale for here have vast and wide-ranging

⁵⁹⁵ Not all Physicists fall into this category of course, and some have offered various metaphysical insights over the years, Bohm and even to a certain extent Einstein and Bohr representing some of the more prominent examples, but the general albeit prejudicial view still for the most part holds true and is reflected in the discipline of Physics as it is taught in the West which represents “intellectual orthodoxy” if we may use that term in this context.

implications not just for Physics and Philosophy, Philosophy in this sense being defined quite broadly, but on our view and definition of *knowledge* itself. For once we make this determination, once we come to this conclusion, the entire definition and discipline of what we call “scientific inquiry” must then be broadened to include *metaphysics*, and in turn – for better or worse – *theology*. This is precisely the conclusion that Aristotle came to when he attempted to define and describe *knowledge*, or that which can be said to be “known”, as reflected by the what he called *epistêmê*, i.e. *epistemology*, which has been handed down to us through translation as Science.

In other words, the fact that Physicists for the most part refuse to offer up any answers for us as a society as a whole as to what the basic pillars of Physics as we understand them in the modern era *mean*, or how they should be *interpreted* with respect to our notion of *reality*, again what we refer to as *teleology*, does not make the problem, or any of the proposed solutions to said problem, “unscientific”. Herein lies the heart of one of the underlying theses of this work, i.e. not only should *metaphysics* be brought back to its place as *first philosophy*, i.e. should be studied “before” Physics (which is where the term *metaphysics* actually comes from, i.e. the reason why Aristotle’s treatise *Metaphysics* was given its title), but that the academic community at large should be reformed and should teach *metaphysics*, i.e. *first philosophy*, *before Physics*, or even Biology or Chemistry for that matter which were topics covered as part of his *natural philosophy*. The problem with this of course is that *metaphysics* and *theology* are so very closely linked that it’s very hard to distinguish between the two once you follow any proposed system of *metaphysics* to its logical conclusion. For any system of *metaphysics* to be complete, must – again as put forth by Aristotle – address the underlying “causes” or “reasons” why some “thing” or some “principle” has been brought into existence. The “why” questions, our *teleology* again, that underlie not just Physics, again *natural philosophy*, but also the individual *beings* which participate in and are fundamentally *integrated* with this *physical* world, *ontology*. These questions take us quite naturally into the domains of *ethics*, *morality*, *theology* and Sociology (political philosophy), all of which again must rest, from a rational and logical perspective, upon whatever system of *metaphysics* we adhere to or adopt.⁵⁹⁶

This approach of course has the benefit of bringing back as it were, all of the branches of knowledge under a single, cohesive and integrated umbrella. This is one of the primary reasons why Aristotle’s philosophy was so influential for such a long period in the West, arguably representing the cornerstone and basic foundation of “education” in the West for some 2000 years. His conceptions and definitions of *logic*, reason and *metaphysics* and even *physics* and

⁵⁹⁶ This is arguably one of the reasons that *metaphysics*, and its companion subject *theology*, are not taught in the West outside of advanced classes in private high schools or universities, i.e. institutions that are not publically funded, given the predilection, for sound historical reasons undoubtedly, for refusing to mix not just Religion and Science but religion with “education” as a whole. Part of the byproduct of the separation of “church and state” as it were.

ethics underpinned almost all intellectual thinking more or less, *including* Religion as well, before the system was overhauled and effectively split in two as an unintended byproduct of the so-called Scientific Revolution after which Religion and Science have been subsequently become completely incompatible. Incompatible to the point where common and widely held conceptions of these two domains is that they rest on two entirely distinctive and almost diametrically opposed principles - one called Science, that is entirely *objective* and is bound by empirically valid and “proven” hypotheses and principles, i.e. *laws*, and another that is based upon “faith” or “belief” and is entirely subjective and is one that fundamentally cannot be “proven” empirically or otherwise and is therefore “unscientific”. Taken to the extreme, Science is looked upon as “rational” and Religion is looked upon as “irrational”. And this of course does not even broach the topic of the potential reality of the so-called “mystical” experience or the nature of *consciousness* itself which is arguably outside of the domains of Science and Religion at this stage of the intellectual development of human history, despite the existence of mystical disciplines that have persisted and have been written about, and ultimately provide the basis for all Religions, throughout the entirety of human history.

So we must therefore, to advance intellectual development as a whole, and for the good of society and the environment within which we live in fact, look at and analyze various coherent and cohesive intellectual systems, i.e. systems of *metaphysics* really, which bring together and make sense of these seemingly incompatible basic principles that underlie our modern conceptions of *physical reality* - i.e. that there is some *non-local* underlying attribute of the *substratum of existence* that manifests itself by the fundamental correlative measurement properties of subatomic *particles* that are separated by distances that cannot be traversed within the boundaries of Classical Mechanical assumptions. This requires us of course to make sense of what Quantum Theory actually implies, or means – enter *teleology* again - and in turn what the implications it has on any conception of *reality*, i.e. *ontology*, we come up with to explain these basic and seemingly incompatible assumptions, and in turn and expansion of the definition of *knowledge* itself, *epistemology*, to take these factors into account. Although at first glance the exercise might seem to be a purely intellectual one (really a Philosophical one in terms of how this discipline is understood in the modern, Quantum Era) the exercise nonetheless has great merit because at the very least it will help elucidate the limitations, and the subtle and far reaching implications in fact, of the pure *materialistic* and *objective* view of *reality* that prevails in the West today - even if one rejects any of the systems of *metaphysics* that are put forth herein as put forth in antiquity by Aristotle.

This leads us to questions and topics that fall under the heading of “Interpretations” of Quantum Theory, which arguably fall under the category of what is typically referred to as philosophy of science today but effectively, as keenly understood by Bohm for example, really are *ontological* questions – i.e. fall directly under the modern Philosophical discipline of *ontology*, a discipline

which studies the nature of reality, or technical being, terminology that harkens back to the very origins of Hellenic philosophy.

There are many *interpretations* of Quantum Theory, i.e. how to make sense of the model with respect to its implications regarding the nature of the physical universe, physical reality as it were, but there are three in particular that deserve attention due either to their prevalence or acceptance in the academic community, i.e. *academia*, and/or their impact on scientific and/or philosophical community in particular, which in this domain really amounts to the Physics community more or less. The fundamental question underlying these varying *interpretations* of Quantum Theory, what distinguishes them from one another essentially, are *philosophical* in nature - again *ontological* primarily. In other words, the fundamental question along which the various interpretations of Quantum Theory align, or misalign as the case may be, is *what does Quantum Theory, given its predictive power, imply about the true nature of physical reality?* We have come to a place in Science where we know that the underlying substratum of existence is bound by such mathematically proven principles such as *uncertainty*, *complementarity* and *entanglement*, and the implicit connection between the *observed* and the *act of observation* - all of which fly in the face of our long held beliefs with respect to our understanding of Classical Mechanics, i.e. how the world actually “is”, calling into question the nature of *objective reality* in and of itself.

On the one hand, we can say that it’s just a predictive model, no need to come to any radical conclusions about what it implies about the nature of the world we live in, much less any *metaphysical*, *ontological*, *ethical* or *moral* considerations (*Copenhagen Interpretation*). On the other hand, we can look at Everett’s *relative-state formulation* and conclude that the underlying math tells us that we are all, mathematically speaking at least, part of a constantly unfolding universe where the distinction between the observed and the observer is not nearly as clearly defined as we have come to think. But are there any other alternatives that give us the opportunity, at least theoretically at least, to hold on to our notions of *objective reality* that we have come to adore and consider to be almost unassailable assumptions about the world we live in? David Bohm, the main architect of what has come to be known as Bohmian Mechanics, offers an alternative interpretation of Quantum Theory that falls squarely in this camp.

The first is the so-called “Standard” or “Orthodox” interpretation, the one most often compared to or cited in reference to when differing interpretations are put forth and explained and the one presented in the majority of text books on the subject. This is most commonly referred to as the *Copenhagen Interpretation* and it basically renders the theoretical boundaries of interpretation of Quantum Theory to the results of the experiment itself and no further. This point of view can

be looked at as a pure mathematical and physical behavioral modelling view of Quantum Mechanics and fundamental rejects any philosophical or ontological implications.

The second is definitely a little out there but still nonetheless carries some weight within the academic community, the Physics and Mathematics community in particular, and is undoubtedly mathematically and theoretically sound, and intellectually interesting, even though its ontological implications are somewhat extreme, abstract theoretically mathematical case. This interpretation has a few variants but is mostly referred to in the literature as the *many-worlds interpretation*, or *many-minds*, Interpretation and it expands upon the theoretical boundaries of Quantum Mechanics by explaining its stochastic nature by proposing the existence of multiple universes, or at least multiple possible universes.

The third *interpretation* that intellectually is perhaps the most appealing, particularly given its implicit *ontological* and *metaphysical* underpinnings, and as such is sometimes the *Ontological Interpretation* of Quantum Theory or simply Bohmian Mechanics. It extends Quantum Mechanics to include a principle it refers to as *quantum potential*, and while it abandons the classical notion of *locality* it still preserves the notion of *objective realism* and *determinism* upon which Classical Mechanics is predicated.⁵⁹⁷

Of these three, the most widely accepted and commonly taught *interpretation*, the one that is presented in textbooks on the subject and is most often used as the standard bearer for alternative interpretations, is the *Copenhagen Interpretation*. This interpretation is most often associated with Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, stemming from their collaboration in Copenhagen in 1927, hence the name. The term was further crystallized in writings by Heisenberg in the 1950s when expressing his views on contradictory interpretations of Quantum Theory. The *Copenhagen Interpretation* holds that the Quantum Theory does not, and cannot, yield a description of any sort of objective reality, i.e. does not have any *ontological* implications, but deals only with sets of probabilistic outcomes of experimental values borne from experiments observing or measuring various aspects of energy *quanta*, entities that do not fit neatly into classical interpretations of mechanics. The underlying tenet here is that the *act of*

⁵⁹⁷ In the Physics community, and in particular with respect to Quantum Theory in particular, Bohmian Mechanics is viewed as a *hidden variable theory* within the context of the standard literature and findings with respect to the theoretical implications of the EPR Paradox and *Bell's Theorem*. Depending upon context, the same theoretical framework, which was developed primarily by Bohm but rests on work done by de Broglie, is referred to as the *Causal Interpretation* of Quantum Theory (given its fully *deterministic* model), or as *de Broglie-Bohm theory*. We shall try and use Bohmian Mechanics throughout as much as possible. We can find the most detailed description of Bohmian Mechanics in Bohm and Basil Hiley's book entitled *The Undivided Universe* which was first published in 1993 although much of its contents and the underlying theory had been thought out and published in previous papers on the topic since the 1950s. In this work they refer to their interpretation not as the *Causal Interpretation*, or even as *de Broglie-Bohm theory*, but as the *Ontological Interpretation* of Quantum Theory given that from their perspective it gives the only complete *causal* and *deterministic* theoretical model of Quantum Theory where it is the actual position and location of the particle within the "pilot-wave" that determines the statistical outcome of the experiment that is governed by the *wavefunction*.

measurement itself, the observer (or by extension the apparatus of observation) *causes* the set of probabilistic outcomes to converge on a single outcome, a feature of Quantum Mechanics commonly referred to as *wavefunction collapse* and that any additional interpretation of what might actually be going on, i.e. the underlying “reality”, defies explanation and therefore any interpretation of the model from an ontological or metaphysical perspective is in fact intellectually inconsistent with the fundamental mathematical tenets of the theory itself.

In this interpretation of Quantum Theory, *reality* - used here in the classical sense of the term as the existence of natural phenomenon, i.e. “things”, that exist independent of any “act of observation” - is *a function of the experiment*, and is defined as a result of the *act of observation* and has no ontological or metaphysical implications independent of the experiment itself which simply yields some measurement value. In other words, reality in the quantum world from this point of view does not exist independent of observation. Or put somewhat differently, the manifestation of what we think of or define as “real” is intrinsically *tied to and related to* the *act of observation* of the system itself. Niels Bohr is historically considered to be one of the strongest proponents of this interpretation, an interpretation which refuses to associate any metaphysical implications with the underlying theoretical model. His position is that given this proven interdependence between *that which is being observed* and the *act of observation* itself, no metaphysical interpretation should, or in fact can, be extrapolated from the theory. Quantum Mechanics from this perspective is simply a tool to describe and measure states and particle/wave behavior in the subatomic realm that are made as a result of some well-defined experiment.

In other words, in Bohr’s view, attempting to make some determination as to what Quantum Theory actually implies about the nature of reality, beyond the results of a given experiment, violates the fundamental tenets of the theory itself. From Bohr’s perspective, the inability to draw conclusions beyond the results of the experiments which the mathematical models predict, the yielding values or measurements from the experiments which run consistent with the stochastic mathematical models that underpin the theory, is in fact a necessary conclusion of the theorem’s basic tenets and therefore all that can be said about the theory itself, its ultimate interpretation, is defined wholly and completely by the mathematical model itself and that was the end of the matter. This view can also be seen as the logical conclusion of the principle of *complementarity*, one of the fundamental and intrinsic features of Quantum Theory that makes it so mysterious and hard to understand in classical terms. *Complementarity*, which is closely tied to the *Copenhagen Interpretation*, expresses the notion that in the quantum domain the results of experiments, the values yielded (sometimes called *observables*) are fundamentally tied to the *act of measurement* itself. In this sense *complementarity* can be viewed as the twin of *uncertainty*, or its inverse postulate.

Bohr summarized this very subtle and yet at the same time very profound notion of *complementarity* in 1949 as follows:

...however far the [quantum physical] phenomena transcend the scope of classical physical explanation, the account of all evidence must be expressed in classical terms. The argument is simply that by the word "experiment" we refer to a situation where we can tell others what we have learned and that, therefore, the account of the experimental arrangements and of the results of the observations must be expressed in unambiguous language with suitable application of the terminology of Classical Mechanics.

This crucial point...implies the impossibility of any sharp separation between the behavior of atomic objects and the interaction with the measuring instruments which serve to define the conditions under which the phenomena appear.... Consequently, evidence obtained under different experimental conditions cannot be comprehended within a single picture, but must be regarded as complementary in the sense that only the totality of the phenomena exhausts the possible information about the objects.⁵⁹⁸

Furthermore, based upon the model and the principles of *complementarity* and *uncertainty* which are both mathematically proven “attributes” of the underlying theory, in order to obtain a complete picture of the state of any given system, one would need to run multiple experiments across a given system. But any time an act of observation is made the state of the system changes - hence the notion of *uncertainty* which is a basic principle of any subatomic system that is subject to measurement or observation which again is a function of the underlying *complementarity* of the associated and related particles or corpuscles that are being measured in said system as fully described by the act of observation, mathematically described as *wavefunction collapse*.

In this view, the basic characteristics of the subatomic world which is described by Quantum Theory are *complementarity* and *uncertainty*, and these characteristics in and of themselves say something profound about the underlying uncertainty of the theory itself from a Classical Mechanics, *objective realist* perspective. To Bohr, *complementarity* is in fact the core underlying principle which underpins the *uncertainty principle* and these two basic and fundamental characteristics of the model which describes the *quantum world* captured at some level its very essence. Furthermore, according to Bohr and within the intellectual framework of the *Copenhagen Interpretation* generally speaking, these attributes taken to their logical and theoretical limits, do not allow for or provide any metaphysical framework for interpretations of the model beyond the model itself which is bound by a) the measurement values or results of a

⁵⁹⁸ Niels Bohr (1949), "Discussions with Einstein on Epistemological Problems in Atomic Physics". In P. Schilpp. Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist. Open Court.

given experiment, b) the measurement instruments themselves that were part of a given experiment, and c) the act of measurement itself. All that can be said about the model is contained within the model.

Another common and more recently popularized *interpretation* of Quantum Theory is that perhaps all possible outcomes as described in the *wavefunction* do in fact “exist”, even if they could not be *seen or perceived* in our objective reality as defined by a given experiment of a given system. This interpretation, which has come to be known in the literature as the *many-worlds interpretation* of Quantum Theory, actually incorporates all of the stochastic outcomes described within the *wavefunction* into the definition of reality itself so to speak. So rather than the *wavefunction* being a mere mathematical tool as it were, in the many-worlds interpretation the wavefunction is reality. In other words, if the math itself is viewed as the description of the underlying “reality”, and reality must conform to the basic underlying assumptions of Classical Mechanics – *causal determinism, local realism*, etc. – then *wavefunction collapse* which is a hallmark of Quantum Mechanics simply represents “one” of the many possible outcomes, one of the many “realities” that are inherent in the underlying system. In this respect, the *many-worlds interpretation* can be seen as juxtaposed with the *Copenhagen Interpretation* which presupposes that the alternative outcomes implicit in the *wavefunction* which are not yielded upon the act of observation, i.e. again *wavefunction collapse*, do not have any real existence per se. Although on the surface it might appear to be an outlandish premise, this interpretation of Quantum Theory has gained some prominence in the last few decades, especially within the Computer Science and Computational Complexity fields which are driven by pure math more or less.

This original formulation of this theory was laid out by Hugh Everett in his PHD thesis in 1957 in a paper entitled *The Theory of the Universal Wave Function* wherein he referred to the interpretation not as “Many-Worlds” but, much more aptly and more accurately given his initial formulation of the theoretical extensions of Quantum Mechanics that he proposed, as the *relative-state formulation of Quantum Mechanics*. Almost completely ignored by the broader scientific community for several decades after he published his work, the theory was subsequently developed and expanded upon by several authors in the last decade or two and has come to be known, along with its variants that have cropped up, as the *many-worlds interpretation*. Everett was a graduate student at Princeton at the time that he authored *The Theory of the Universal Wave Function* and his advisor was John Wheeler, one of the most respected theoretical physicists of the latter half of the twentieth century. In Everett’s original exposition of the theory, he begins by calling out some of the problems with the original, or classic, interpretation of Quantum Mechanics, specifically what he and other members of the physics community believed to be the artificial creation of the notion of *wavefunction collapse*

to explain the quantum uncertain to deterministic behavior transitions, as well as the difficulty that standard interpretations of the theory had in dealing with systems that consisted of more than one observer. These he considered to be the main drivers behind his search for an alternative view, interpretation, or theoretical extension even of Quantum Theory. He actually referred to his *relative-state formulation* of Quantum Theory as a *metatheory* given that the standard interpretation could be derived from it.

After writing his thesis, Everett did not in fact continue a career in *academia* and therefore subsequent interpretations and expansions upon his theory were left to later authors and researchers, most notably by Bryce Dewitt who coined the term “many-worlds”, and David Deutsch among others. DeWitt’s book on the topic published in 1973 entitled *The Many-Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics* in many respects popularized this interpretation and brought it back into mainstream Physics and it included a reprint of Everett’s thesis. Deutsch’s seminal work on the topic is a book entitled *The Fabric of Reality* published in 1997 where he expands and extends the *many-worlds interpretation* to other academic disciplines outside of Physics such as Philosophy, specifically *epistemology*, Computer Science and Quantum Computing, and even Biology and theories of evolution. Although Bohr, and presumably Heisenberg and von Neumann as well, whose collective views Quantum Theory’s philosophical implications make up the *Copenhagen Interpretation*, would no doubt explain away these strange and seemingly arbitrary assumptions as out of scope of the theory itself (i.e. Quantum Theory is intellectually and epistemologically bound by the experimental apparatus and their associated experimental results), Everett finds this view philosophically limiting and at the very least worth exploring tweaks and extensions to the theory to see if these shortcomings can be removed, and in turn what the implications are theoretically speaking when some of the more standard and orthodox assumptions of Quantum Mechanics are relaxed in some sense.

In Everett’s original conception of what he called the *relative-state formulation* of Quantum Mechanics” , is conceived to augment the standard interpretation of Quantum Theory (read *Copenhagen Interpretation*) which theoretically prevents us from any true *explanation* as to what the theory says about the nature of “reality” itself, or the real world as it were - a world which is presumed to be governed by the laws of Classical Physics where “things” and “objects”, i.e. measurable phenomena, exist independent of observers. Where “objects” or “particles”, depending upon the physical context, have real, well defined, static measurable and definable qualities that exist independently of the act of measurement or observation. This world of course is fundamentally incompatible with the underlying *mathematical* characteristics of Quantum Mechanics, a model which is stochastic, i.e. a probabilistic, where the outcomes of experiments are effectively defined by their *uncertainty* and *complementarity*, which seemingly contradict the underlying assumptions of Classical Mechanics.

Given the implications of this interpretation and again its more widespread adoption in recent years and in popular culture, it's important that we understand it's basic principles and tenets as Everett understood them. Everett's starts by making the following two basic assumptions:

- 1) he assumes that all physical systems large or small can be described as states within *Hilbert space*, the fundamental *geometric* framework upon which Quantum Mechanics is constructed, and
- 2) he abstracts the notion of the *observer* as a machine-like entity with access to unlimited memory, which stores a history of previous states, or previous observations, and also has the ability to make simple deductions, or associations, regarding actions and behavior of system states solely based upon this memory and deductive reasoning.

His second assumption represents a marked distinction between it and Quantum Theory proper and incorporates observers and acts of observation (i.e. measurement) completely into one *holistic* theoretical model. Furthermore, Everett proposes, and this is the core part of his thesis, that if you yield to assumptions 1 and 2, you can come up with an extension to Quantum Mechanics that describes the entire state of the universe, which includes the observers and objects of observation, that can be described in a completely mathematically consistent, coherent and fully *deterministic* manner without the need of the notion of *wavefunction collapse* or any additional assumptions regarding *locality* or *causal determinism* for that matter from which the standard interpretation of Quantum Theory as it were, can be deduced.

*The aim is not to deny or contradict the conventional formulation of quantum theory, which has demonstrated its usefulness in an overwhelming variety of problems, but rather to supply a new, more general and complete formulation, from which the conventional interpretation can be deduced.*⁵⁹⁹

Everett makes what he calls a *simplifying* assumption to Quantum Theory, i.e. removing the need for or notion of *wavefunction collapse*, and assumes the existence of a *Universal Wave Function* which accounts for and describes the behavior of all physical systems and their interaction in the universe, completely including the observer and the act of observation into the model - observers being viewed as simply another form of a *quantum* state that interacts with the environment.

⁵⁹⁹ From the Introduction of Everett's thesis in 1957 "*Relative State*" *Formulation of Quantum Mechanics*.

Once these assumptions are made, he can then abstract the notion of *measurement*, which is the source of much of the oddity and complexity surrounding Quantum Theory, as simply interactions between quantum systems that are all governed by this same *Universal Wave Function*. In Everett's self-proclaimed *metatheory*, the notion of what an observer means and how they fit into the overall model are fully defined, and what he views as the seemingly arbitrary notion of *wavefunction collapse* is circumvented. His *metatheory* is defined by the assumption of the existence of a *Universal Wave Function* which corresponds to the existence of a fully *deterministic multi-verse* based reality whereby *wavefunction collapse* is understood as a specific *manifestation* of the *realization* of one possible outcome of measurement that exists in our "reality", or our specific *multi-verse*, i.e. the one which we observe during our act of measurement.

But in Everett's theoretical description of the universe, if you take what can be described as a literal interpretation of this *Universal Wave Function* as the overarching description of *reality*, the other, unobserved, possible states reflected in the *wavefunction* of any system in question do not cease to exist with the act of observation. In Everett's original conception of Quantum Theory, his so-called *relative-state formulation*, the act of observation of a given system does not represent a "collapse" of the quantum mechanical wave that describes a given system state, but that these other states that are inherent in the *wavefunction* itself, while they do not manifest in our act of observation of said system do however have some existence per se. To what degree and level of reality these "states" exists is a somewhat open ended question in this model and is the subject of much debate in subsequent interpretations of Everett's *metatheory*, i.e. the *relative-state formulation*, but regardless according to Everett's original conception of *relative-state formulation*, observers and observed phenomena are abstracted to a single mathematical construct which is derived from the *wavefunction* itself, i.e. the *Universal Wave Function*, and collectively are entirely descriptive of not just a given state of a given system, but also in turn the entire physical universe, most of which is simply not *perceived* by us as we "observe" it.

What Everett has put forward with his notion of the *Universal Wave Function* really, with the so-called *relative-state formulation* of Quantum Mechanics, is a full *ontological* description of reality that is implied in the underlying *mathematics* of Quantum Theory, a complete *metaphysics* as it were, an interpretation that certainly goes well beyond the standard *Copenhagen Interpretation* with respect to *ontology*. In his own words, and this is a subtle yet important distinction between Everett's view and the view of subsequent proponents of the *many-worlds interpretation*, these so-called "unobserved" states exist but remain *uncorrelated* with the observer in question, an observer that is incorporated and abstracted into his notion of a *Universal Wave Function* which models all of "reality", again observed phenomenon and observers themselves.

*We now consider the question of measurement in quantum mechanics, which we desire to treat as a natural process within the theory of pure wave mechanics. From our point of view there is no fundamental distinction between "measuring apparatus" and other physical systems. For us, therefore, a measurement is simply a special case of interaction between physical systems - an interaction which has the property of correlating a quantity in one subsystem with a quantity in another.*⁶⁰⁰

This is his great intellectual leap, that measurement systems and observers are intrinsically, from a mathematical and *metaphysical* perspective, basically the same thing. The implications of this somewhat simple and elegant additional layer of abstraction upon the underlying math of Quantum Mechanics is that these so-called "unobserved" or "unperceived" states do have some semblance of reality. That they do in fact exist as possible realities, realities that are thought to have varying levels of "existence" depending upon which version of the *many-worlds interpretation* you adhere to. With DeWitt and Deutsch for example, a more literal, or "actual" you might say, interpretation of Everett's original theory is taken, where these other states, these other realities or *multi-verses*, do in fact *physically* exist even though they cannot be perceived or validated by experiment.⁶⁰¹ This is a more literal interpretation of Everett's thesis however, and certainly nowhere does Everett explicitly state that these other potential uncorrelated states as he calls them actually physically exist. What he does say on the matter, presumably in response to some critics of his *metatheory*, seems to imply some form of existence of these "possible" or potential universes that reflect non-measured or non-actualized states of physical systems, but not necessarily that these unrealized outcomes actually exist in some alternative physical universe which is typically how the *many-worlds interpretation* of Quantum Theory is commonly understood today (hence the name), again a significant deviation from Everett's original conception.

In reply to a preprint of this article some correspondents have raised the question of the "transition from possible to actual," arguing that in "reality" there is—as our experience testifies—no such splitting of observer states, so that only one branch can ever actually exist. Since this point may occur to other readers the following is offered in explanation.

⁶⁰⁰ Hugh Everett, III. *Theory of the Universal Wave Function*, 1957. Pg 53.

⁶⁰¹ Deutsch actually posits that proof of the "existence" of these other *multi-verses* is given by the wave interference pattern displayed in even the single split version of the classic *double-slit experiment* as well as the some of the running time algorithm enhancements driven by quantum computing, namely Shor's algorithm which finds the polynomial factors of a given number which runs an order of magnitude faster on quantum computers than it does on classical, 1 or 0 but based machines. This claim is controversial to say the least, or at least remains an open point of contention among the broader physics community. See <http://daviddeutsch.physics.ox.ac.uk/Articles/Frontiers.html> for a summary of his views on the matter.

The whole issue of the transition from “possible” to “actual” is taken care of in the theory in a very simple way—there is no such transition, nor is such a transition necessary for the theory to be in accord with our experience. From the viewpoint of the theory all elements of a superposition (all “branches”) are “actual,” none any more “real” than the rest. It is unnecessary to suppose that all but one are somehow destroyed, since all the separate elements of a superposition individually obey the wave equation with complete indifference to the presence or absence (“actuality” or not) of any other elements. This total lack of effect of one branch on another also implies that no observer will ever be aware of any “splitting” process.

Arguments that the world picture presented by this theory is contradicted by experience, because we are unaware of any branching process, are like the criticism of the Copernican theory that the mobility of the earth as a real physical fact is incompatible with the common sense interpretation of nature because we feel no such motion. In both cases the argument fails when it is shown that the theory itself predicts that our experience will be what it in fact is. (In the Copernican case the addition of Newtonian physics was required to be able to show that the earth’s inhabitants would be unaware of any motion of the earth.)⁶⁰²

According to Everett’s view then, the act of measurement of a quantum system, and its associated principles of *uncertainty* and *entanglement*, is simply the reflection of this splitting off of the *observable* universe from a higher order notion of a *multi-verse* where all possible outcomes and alternate histories have the *potential* to exist. The radical form of the *many-worlds interpretation* is that these potential, unmanifested realities *do in fact exist*, whereas Everett seems to only go so far as to imply that they “could” exist and that conceptually their existence should not be ignored but at the same time their existence need not have any bearing on our conception or notion of “reality”. As hard as this *many-worlds interpretation* (sometimes referred to as the *many-minds interpretation*) of Quantum Theory might be to wrap your head around, it does represent a somewhat elegant theoretically and mathematically sound solution to some of the criticisms and challenges raised by the broader Physics community against Quantum Theory, namely the EPR Paradox and the Schrödinger’s cat problems. It does also raise some significant questions however as to the validity of his underlying theory of *mind* and subjective experience in general, notions which Everett somewhat glosses over (albeit intentionally, he is not constructing a theory of *mind* nor does he ever state that he intends to in any way) by making the simple assumption that observers can be incorporated into his *Universal Wave Function* view of reality by abstracting them into simple deductive reasoning and memory based machines. Nonetheless this aspect of Everett’s interpretation of Quantum Theory, his implicit and simplified theory of observation and the role of *mind*, remains one of the most hotly

⁶⁰² Everett’s thesis in 1957 “*Relative State*” *Formulation of Quantum Mechanics*, Note on Page 15, presumably in response to criticisms he received upon publishing the draft of his thesis to various distinguished members of the physics community, one of who was Niels Bohr.

debated and widely criticized aspect of his *metatheory*, and one upon which arguably his entire theoretical model rests.⁶⁰³

The last of the so-called interpretations of Quantum Theory that are relevant to this study is what we refer to throughout as Bohmian Mechanics, a fully *deterministic* model of Quantum Theory pioneered by David Bohm, one of the most prolific Physicists of the twentieth century. David Bohm was an American born British physicist of the twentieth century who made a variety of contributions to Physics, but who also invested much time and thought into the *metaphysical*, really *ontological*, implications of Quantum Theory, and in Philosophy in general, topics that in fact most Physicists have steered away from. In this respect Bohm was a bit of a rebel relative to his peers in the academic community because he extended the hard science of Physics into the more abstract realm of the descriptions of reality as a whole, incorporating *first philosophy* back into the discussion in many respects, but doing so with the tool of hard *mathematics*, making his theories very hard, if not impossible, to ignore by the Physics community at large, and establishing a scientific – really mathematical - foothold for some very Eastern philosophical metaphysical assumptions, all bundled together under a notion that Bohm referred to as *undivided wholeness*.

Bohm was, like Everett and many others in the Physics community (Einstein of course being the most well-known), dissatisfied with mainstream interpretations of Quantum Mechanics, in particular the so-called *Copenhagen Interpretation* which basically said that Quantum Theory was just a predictive modeling tool and cannot be used as the basis for any sort of *metaphysical* or *ontological* interpretation regarding the true nature of reality whatsoever. This led him, apparently with some prodding by Einstein with whom he had ongoing dialogue toward the end of Einstein's life, to look for possible *hidden variable theories* which could take the probability and *uncertainty* out of Quantum Theory and provide for - at least from an ontological and metaphysical perspective at least - a common set of assumptions across all of Physics. Bohmian Mechanics is the result of this work, and although it generally speaking has not gained much traction in the scientific and academic community the model does a) prove that *hidden variable theories* are actually possible (something that still remained in doubt well into the 70s and 80s even decades after Bohm first published his adaptation of de Broglie's *pilot-wave theory* which supported multi-bodied systems in the 1950s) and b) actually provided for a somewhat rational (at least rational from a Classical Mechanics point of view) explanation of what might actually be going on in this subatomic world where waves and particles seemed to blend into this non-

⁶⁰³ See Bohm and Hiley's Chapter on Many-Worlds in their 1993 book entitled *The Undivided Universe: An Ontological Interpretation of Quantum Theory* for a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses mathematical and otherwise of Everett and DeWitt's different perspectives on the *many-worlds interpretation* of Quantum Theory.

classical, *indeterministic* reality - albeit requiring the relaxation of at least one of the prominent assumptions underlying Classical Mechanics, i.e. *locality*.

The foundations for Bohmian Mechanics were laid by Louis de Broglie in 1927 when he originally proposed that Schrödinger's *wavefunction* could be interpreted as describing the existence a central physical particle accompanied by a so-called "pilot-wave" that governed its behavior, thereby physically explaining why these subatomic "particles" behaved like waves and particles depending upon the experiment. De-Broglie's *pilot-wave theory* in its original form affirms the *existence* of subatomic particles, or *corpuscles* as they were called back then, but viewed these particles not as independent existing entities but as integrated into an undercurrent, or wave, which was fully described by Schrödinger's *wavefunction* and gave these subatomic particles their wave-like characteristics of diffraction and interference while at the same time explained their particle like behavior as illustrated in certain experiments. This represented a significant divergence from standard interpretations of Quantum Theory at the time. From his original 1927 paper on the topic, de Broglie describes *pilot-wave theory* as follows:

*One will assume the existence, as distinct realities, of the material point and of the continuous wave represented by the [wavefunction], and one will take it as a postulate that the motion of the point is determined as a function of the phase of the wave by the equation. One then conceives the continuous wave as guiding the motion of the particle. It is a "pilot wave".*⁶⁰⁴

De Broglie's *pilot-wave theory* was dismissed by the broader academic community however when it was presented at the time however due to the fact that the model, as presented by de Broglie, could only be used to describe single-body systems. This fact, along with the then very strong belief that any variant of *hidden variable theories* were theoretically impossible as put forth by von Neumann in paper he published in 1932 which led to the abandonment of *pilot-wave theory* by the Physics community as a possible alternative explanation of Quantum Mechanics for some two decades or so until it was picked back up by Bohm after von Neumann's thesis that no *local hidden variable theories* were possible was proven to be false, or at least not nearly as restrictive as originally presumed.⁶⁰⁵ According to Bohm, one of the motivations for exploring the possibility

⁶⁰⁴ Louis De Broglie 'Wave mechanics and the atomic structure of matter and of radiation', Le Journal de Physique et le Radium, 8, 225 (1927).

⁶⁰⁵ John von Neumann was instrumental in not only laying the mathematical foundations of Quantum Mechanics but also establishing the mathematical boundaries within which interpretations of the theory could be made, which included as it turned out a fairly comprehensive proof that ruled out (certain) classes of *hidden variable theories* to explain the underlying *mathematics*, a line of research that was followed by Bell which of course led to an expansion of the theoretical limitations of *hidden variable theories*, i.e. *Bell's Theorem*, which depending on which source you read proved von Neumann's assumptions to be false, or at best misleading. Von Neumann also interestingly enough posited the idea of consciousness as an explanation for

of a fully *deterministic/causal* extension of Quantum Theory was not necessarily because he believed it to be the *right* interpretation, the correct one, but to show the *possibility* of such theories, the existence of which was cast into serious doubt after the development of von Neumann's mathematical work in the 1930s, and even after Bell's continuation of these theoretical constraints on Quantum Theory, which did in fact allow for *non-local hidden variable theories*, in the 1960s.

... it should be kept in mind that before this proposal was made there had existed the widespread impression that no conceptions of hidden variables at all, not even if they were abstract, and hypothetical, could possibly be consistent with the quantum theory.⁶⁰⁶

So in the early 1950s Bohm, driven primarily by the desire to illustrate that *hidden variable theories* were in fact possible, picked up where de Broglie left off and extended *pilot-wave theory* to support multi-body physical systems., giving the theory a more solid scientific and mathematical ground and providing a fully developed, alternative theoretical and mathematical description of Quantum Mechanics for consideration by the broader Physics community. In the new framework, what he refers to as the *Ontological Interpretation* of Quantum Theory, Bohm-Hiley extend the underlying *mathematics* of Quantum Mechanics to include a fundamentally *non-local* force called *quantum potential*, a force which provided the rational and mathematical foundations for the explanation of *non-local* correlations between subatomic particles and their associated measurements. In his *Ontological Interpretation*, Bohm-Hiley suggests that it was in fact the actual position and momentum of the underlying particle(s) in question that were the so called *hidden variables*, values which governed, along with the *quantum potential*, how a quantum wave-particle would behave, effectively sidestepping the so-called *measurement problem*, i.e. the need for *wavefunction collapse*

The force of *quantum potential*, as Bohm-Hiley describe it is not the same type of force that underlies most of Classical Mechanics, where its effect is a function of intensity or magnitude. It is this extra variable, one which is inherently *non-local* in the Classical Mechanics sense, along with the *Schrödinger equation*, i.e. the *wavefunction*, which in toto govern and fully determine the behavior of a *quantum* system and has the potential (no pun intended) to fully describe all of its future and past states, irrespective of whether or not the *quantum system* is observed or measured. This is how Bohmian Mechanics can be said to be fully *causally deterministic*, hence the *Causal Interpretation* name given to the model in some circles. It is the notion of *quantum*

wavefunction collapse, a notion that of course was not addressed or picked up by the broader physics community given its philosophical implications.

⁶⁰⁶ David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, London: Routledge 1980 pg. 81.

potential that is the theoretical glue to speak that keeps Bohmian Mechanics together and, along with the establishment of the actual position and momentum of a given particle (or set of particles) as being fundamentally real, is the mathematical (and metaphysical) tool that is used to explain what's actually going on in the quantum realm. In other words – and this implication and assumption which underlies Bohmian Mechanics cannot be overstated - the *quantum* system not only has some definitive initial state, but it also *knows* about its environment to a certain extent, information that is embedded in the underlying *quantum potential* of a given system, a variable which can be added to the more standard mathematical models of Quantum Mechanics without changing any of the predictive results or fundamental attributes or properties of the underlying equations.

Quantum potential in Bohm's view is a force that is universally present not only in the *quantum* realm but underlying all of Physics, a force that effectively becomes negligent as the quantum system becomes sufficiently large and complex and is transformed from a system that exhibits both *wave* and *particle* like behavior to a system governed by Classical Mechanics as described by Newton. It provides us with an explanation for *wavefunction collapse* and *quantum measurement uncertainty* as put forth by Heisenberg, von Neumann and others by positing that the Schrödinger's *wavefunction* does in fact fully describe *quantum* system behavior, that the actual position and momentum of a given quantum state does in fact exist even if it is not measured or observed, and that there exists some element of *non-local active information* within the environment which explains the observable and experimentally verifiable existence of the correlation of physically separated quantum entities, i.e. *correlated observables*. As John Stewart Bell, a proponent in the latter part of his career of Bohmian Mechanics (what he refers to as *de Broglie-Bohm theory*) puts it:

*That the guiding wave, in the general case, propagates not in ordinary three-space but in a multidimensional-configuration space is the origin of the notorious 'nonlocality' of quantum mechanics. It is a merit of the de Broglie-Bohm version to bring this out so explicitly that it cannot be ignored.*⁶⁰⁷

Bohmian Mechanics, as Bohm's exposition of de Broglie's *pilot-wave theory* later evolved into its more mature form, provides a mathematical framework within which subatomic reality can indeed be thought of as actually existing independent of an observer or an act of measurement, a significant departure from standard interpretations of the theory that were prevalent for most of the twentieth century, i.e. the *Copenhagen Interpretation* mostly. In modern Philosophical

⁶⁰⁷ From Stanford Encyclopedia entry on Bohmian Mechanics by Sheldon Goldstein, quote from Bell, *Speakable and Unspeakable in Quantum Mechanics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1987, p. 115.

terms, it's a fully *realist* interpretation of Quantum Theory, providing a full ontological description as it were - one that's also fully *deterministic*, albeit *non-local* - of the reality that underpins Quantum Theory which is implicit to the *wavefunction* – hence the name that Bohm gives his so-called interpretation of Quantum Theory, i.e. the *Ontological Interpretation*. Bohmian Mechanics furthermore is consistent with *Bell's Theorem*, which again states that no “local” *hidden variable theories* could ever reproduce all the predictions of Quantum Mechanics, and also at the same time directly addresses the concerns regarding *completeness* of Schrödinger's *wavefunction* as a description of the subatomic world that were raised by the famed *EPR Paper*.⁶⁰⁸

Furthermore, Bohmian Mechanics is fully *deterministic*, proving that once the value of these *hidden variables* of position and momentum of the underlying particles within the system are known, and once an additional *non-local* attribute is added to the system state (i.e. *quantum potential*), all future states (and even past states) could be calculated and known as well. This solution effectively relieves and solves many of the problems and paradoxes that were/are inherent in standard interpretations Quantum Theory such as *uncertainty* and *complementarity* (i.e. *entanglement*), as well as getting rid of the need for *wavefunction collapse*. It furthermore provides us with a mathematically sound description of Quantum Mechanics which rests on almost all of the same basic underlying assumptions of Classical Mechanics, everything except the notion of *locality*. Bohmian Mechanics falls into the category of *hidden variable theories*. It lays out a description of *quantum reality* where the *wavefunction*, along with the notion of *quantum potential*, together represent a fully *deterministic*, albeit again *non-local*, description of the subatomic world – mathematically speaking. With respect to the importance of Bohm's work in Quantum Mechanics, Bell himself, albeit some 30 years after Bohm originally published his extension of de Broglie's *pilot-wave theory*, had this to say:

But in 1952 I saw the impossible done. It was in papers by David Bohm. Bohm showed explicitly how parameters could indeed be introduced, into nonrelativistic wave mechanics, with the help of which the indeterministic description could be transformed into a deterministic one. More importantly, in my opinion, the subjectivity of the orthodox version, the necessary reference to the 'observer,' could be eliminated. ...

But why then had Born not told me of this 'pilot wave'? If only to point out what was wrong with it? Why did von Neumann not consider it? More extraordinarily, why did people go on producing "impossibility" proofs, after 1952, and as recently as 1978? ... Why is the pilot wave picture ignored in text books? Should it not be taught, not as the only way, but as an antidote to the prevailing

⁶⁰⁸ In fact, Bohm's *pilot-wave theory* to a large degree inspired *Bell's Theorem*. See Bell's paper entitled *On the Einstein Podolsky Rosen Paradox* in 1964, published some 12 years after Bohm published his adaption of De Broglie's *pilot-wave theory*.

*complacency? To show us that vagueness, subjectivity, and indeterminism, are not forced on us by experimental facts, but by deliberate theoretical choice?*⁶⁰⁹

Again, in this model it is the “actual” position and momentum of said particle which is the so-called *hidden variable* which in turn *determine* the result of a given experiment or observable result. Bohmian Mechanics agrees with all of the mathematical predictions of standard interpretations of Quantum Theory, i.e. its mathematically equivalent, but it extends the theoretical model to try and explain what is actually going on, what is driving the *non-local* behavior of these subatomic “things” and what in fact can be said to be *known* about the state of *quantum* systems independent of the act of measurement or observation. With this notion of *quantum potential*, Bohm provides a mathematical as well as metaphysical principle which “guides” subatomic particle(s), gives them some sense of environmental *awareness*, even if the reality he describes, again the so-called *Ontological Interpretation* of Quantum Theory, does not necessarily abide by the same principles of Classical Mechanics gives its assumptions regarding *locality* - i.e. that all objects or things are governed by and behave according to the principles of Classical Mechanics which are bound by the constraints of Relativity and the fixed speed of light, principles which have been demonstrated to be wholly inconsistent with Quantum Mechanics, causing of course much consternation in the Physics community and calling into question *local realism* in general.

Bohmian Mechanics contribution to Quantum Mechanics, and Physics as a whole in fact, is not only that it calls into question the presumption of *local realism* specifically, what Einstein referred to as “*spooky action at a distance*”, but also in that it proved unequivocally that *hidden variable theories* are in fact theoretically and mathematically possible and still consistent with the basic tenets of Quantum Mechanics. Bohm in fact “completes” Quantum Mechanics in the very sense that the *EPR Paper* described when published in 1935 which is illustrated in their famed EPR Paradox. Bohmian Mechanics, whether you believed its underlying metaphysical assumptions about what was really going on in the subatomic realm, constructed in a very sound mathematical and theoretical model that was entirely consistent with Quantum Mechanics, the grounding of physical reality and existence itself as it were, brought very clear attention to the fact that our notions of *time* and *space*, and the perception of reality itself, was in need of a wholesale revision in terms of basic assumptions. What Bohmian Mechanics calls our attention to quite directly, and in a very uncomfortable way from a Classical Mechanics perspective, is that there are *metaphysical* assumptions about reality in general that are fully baked into Classical Mechanics that must be relaxed in order to understand, and in fact explain, Quantum Mechanics.

⁶⁰⁹ From Stanford Encyclopedia entry on Bohmian Mechanics, 2001 by Sheldon Goldstein; taken from Bell 1987, “Speakable and Unsayable in Quantum Mechanics”, Cambridge University Press.

Furthermore, it was these same subatomic particles (and/or waves) whose behavior which was modeled so successfully with Quantum Mechanics, that in some shape or form constituted the basic building blocks of the entire “classically” physical world - this fact could not be denied - and yet the laws and theorems that have been developed to describe this behavior, i.e. Classical Mechanics, were and still are fundamentally incompatible with the laws that govern the subatomic realm, specifically the underlying assumptions about what is “real” and how these objects of reality behave and are related to each other.⁶¹⁰

While the *Copenhagen Interpretation* of Quantum Theory holds that the model is simply a calculation tool and is bound by certain metaphysical constraints that are inherent to the theoretical model itself, Bohmian Mechanics, as well as Everett’s *relative-state formulation* in fact, provide explanations to what Quantum Theory’s underlying *mathematics* tells us about the nature of the universe we live in, about reality itself or again in Philosophical terms with respect to *ontology* (albeit drawing very different conclusions about the nature of the reality that is being described), arguably requiring us to reconsider the underlying assumptions that sit at the very foundation of Classical Mechanics. In Bohm’s own words:

*...in relativity, movement is continuous, causally determinate and well defined, while in quantum mechanics it is discontinuous, not causally determinate and not well-defined. Each theory is committed to its own notions of essentially static and fragmentary modes of existence (relativity to that of separate events connectible by signals, and quantum mechanics to a well-defined quantum state). One thus sees that a new kind of theory is needed which drops these basic commitments and at most recovers some essential features of the older theories as abstract forms derived from a deeper reality in which what prevails is unbroken wholeness.*⁶¹¹

And Bohm didn’t stop with his *Ontological Interpretation* of Quantum Theory, he expanded its theoretical foundations to establish a grounding of a new order, an order which could encompass not only Classical Mechanics and Quantum Mechanics, but one that encompassed the role of the observer, *consciousness* itself, as well. This is his notion of the *implicate order* and *holomovement*, principles upon which a sound logical, rational and *holistic* metaphysical framework could be constructed which encompassed all of existence; physical, mental and psychological, and in many respects covering all of the theological and philosophical ground that rested at the core of Descartes’s notion of *res cogitans*, *res extensa* and God but encompassing

⁶¹⁰ There has been significant progress in the last decade or two in reconciling Quantum Theory and Classical Mechanics, most notably with respect to Newtonian trajectory behavior, what is described in the literature as accounting for the classical limit. For a good review of the topic see the article *The Emergence of Classical Dynamics in a Quantum World* by Tanmoy Bhattacharya, Salman Habib, and Kurt Jacobs published in *Las Alamos Science* in 2002.

⁶¹¹ David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, London: Routledge 1980 pg. xv.

Physics as well. To Bohm, both Classical Mechanics as well as Quantum Mechanics could be looked at not as inconsistent with each other, but as different manifestations of what he referred to as the *implicate order*, an underlying order which reflected *pre-spatial* phenomenon which manifested itself in the various physical planes of existence, in the case of various scales, in what he termed *explicate orders*.

*My attitude is that the mathematics of the quantum theory deals primarily with the structure of the implicate pre-space and with how an explicate order of space and time emerges from it, rather than with movements of physical entities, such as particles and fields. (This is a kind of extension of what is done in general relativity, which deals primarily with geometry and only secondarily with the entities that are described within this geometry.)*⁶¹²

Bohm, and Basil Hiley who contributed to and co-authored their text that described in detail their *Ontological Interpretation* of Quantum Theory, not only proved that *non-local hidden variable theories* of Quantum Mechanics were possible, but also that in order to truly understand what was happening at this underlying substratum of existence, the notion of intellect, or at some level what could be construed as *consciousness*, had to be considered as an active participant in the model that explained what was going on – this is again what sits behind their notion of *quantum potential*, the means by which a quantum system is “informed” of its environment as it were, underpinning the notion of *active information* that complemented and augmented the *wavefunction* to govern elementary behavior – behavior that Bohm and Hiley at least considered to be “intelligent” in a way, or at the very least aware of the various elements of the environment beyond any Classical Mechanical boundaries. Their idea of *active information*, which is a, if not *the*, revolutionary idea that they propose to explain the subtleties and mysteries of subatomic behavior, implies that there is some sort of *awareness* the overall interconnected quantum environment which must be considered in order to fully explain quantum system behavior, an aspect which by its very nature violates some of the core assumptions of Classical Mechanics, namely that of *local realism*, i.e. that the behavior of any given “object” or system of objects is independently real, exists independent of the act of measurement or observation, and is governed entirely by the properties or qualities of said object or system or any forces which act on said system.

⁶¹² David Bohm: *Time, the implicate order, and pre-space*, In: David R. Griffin: *Physics and the Ultimate Significance of Time*, State University of New York Press, 1986, ISBN 0-88706-113-3, pp. 177–208, p. 192–193.

In Bohm's Philosophy, his *metaphysics* (and we're no longer in Physics proper just to be clear), he believed that the quantum reality, its *explicate order* that we perceive and can measure and interact with by means of various experiments, is further governed by a higher *implicate order* that stems from some cognitive aspect of *consciousness* - i.e. the human *mind* or some aspect of cosmic mind, even if he isn't explicit in using this terminology. That in fact we cannot get away from considering the role of *mind*, the role of the perceiver, in completely understanding quantum behavior or Quantum Theory in general. He perhaps best describes his notion of the *implicate order*, its relationship to various *explicate orders*, and what he means by *holomovement*, and how these metaphysical constructs from his perspective can be used to understand the seemingly *non-local* forces/interaction that *appear* to be at work in Quantum Mechanics, with an analogy of a fish swimming in an aquarium being looked at and perceived through different camera lenses, each yielding a different perspective on what the fish looks like but at the same time describing the same fish:

Imagine a fish swimming in an aquarium. Imagine also that you have never seen a fish or an aquarium before and your only knowledge about them comes from two television cameras - one directed at the aquarium's front and the other at its side. When you look at the two television monitors you might mistakenly assume that the fish on the screens are separate entities. After all, because the cameras are set at different angles, each of the images will be slightly different. But as you continue to watch you will eventually realize there is a relationship between the two fish. When one turns, the other makes a slightly different but corresponding turn. When one faces the front, the other faces the side, and so on. If you are unaware of the full scope of the situation, you might wrongly conclude that the fish are instantaneously communicating with one another, but this is not the case. No communication is taking place because at a deeper level of reality, the reality of the aquarium, the two fish are actually one and the same.

All things found in the unfolded, explicate order emerge from the holomovement in which they are enfolded as potentialities, and ultimately they fall back to it. They endure only for some time, and while they last, their existence is sustained in a constant process of unfoldment and re-enfoldment, which gives rise to their relatively stable and independent forms in the explicate order.⁶¹³

From a conceptual perspective, one can think of Bohm's idea of *implicate* and *explicate order* using the analogy of a game of chess. In chess, the game itself is governed by an *explicate order*, where the boundaries of the board and the rules of the overall game are established – who is white, who is black, the capturing of individual pieces, the goal of trying to capture the king to win the game, etc. Furthermore, each piece in the game is governed by its own set of rules that determine how it can move across the board, another *explicate order* as it were that although

⁶¹³ [Bohm, David, 1990].

subservient to the master explicate order of the game itself, represents an explicate order nonetheless. And yet *implicit* to the game is the mind and objectives of the two players themselves, who although must operate and behave according to the aforementioned *explicate order* directives or laws/rules not only of the game itself but also with respect to the individual movements of individual pieces on the board, but yet at the same time, all the while governed by another, higher order, i.e. the objective of trying to “win the game” by capturing the opponent’s king, i.e. the *implicate order* as it were. Each of the players (presumably if they are any good at chess) has the vision and intellect, the intelligence as it were, to leverage all of these different yet interrelated *explicate orders* – the explicate order of the game and the explicate orders which govern the behavior of the individual pieces - in an attempt to achieve the desired outcome, i.e. capture the king of the opponent which represents the underlying *implicate order* of the game in this analogy. The *implicate order* in this case is the mind of the player, from which each of the explicate orders unfolds as he (or she) moves each individual piece. It is within this higher order that each of the players comes up with their own strategy and framework in mind, processing and reacting to information about the game itself as each move is made. Each player understands how the game is to be played, what moves he can make as the game evolves and pieces come off the board – i.e. the underlying and always applicable *explicate orders* which govern the rules of the game - while at the same time the game is governed by a higher-level order which also describes the underlying behavior, the underlying reality” as it were, as to what is truly going on at a higher level of abstraction as it were. This is the *implicate order* underlying the game, i.e. that each player is trying to “win”. [Interesting enough in this example there are really two different *implicate orders* at play which influence the outcome of the game, both of which obey the same set of rules but the interplay of which governs the overall behavior, the outcome, of not only the individual moves as they are made but the outcome of the game itself.]

In many respects, this notion of *implicate order* is echoed in Everett’s *relative-state formulation* of Quantum Theory, i.e. that the underlying correlation of an observed state of a given system reflects our observation, the *relative-state formulation* of reality as it were, of a given quantum state and not that these other, uncorrelated, states that we do not perceive do not necessarily exist. Everett’s *relative-state formulation* of Quantum Mechanics ironically enough, and one of its biggest criticisms in fact, is that is fully coherent only because it incorporates a theory of *mind* directly into his model - a metaphysical construct which is abstracted into a quasi-mechanical reasoning machine (albeit greatly simplified relative to a functioning human *mind*) which has access to infinite memory that is capable of “remembering” prior states of existence or prior observation states, which in turn provides the rational explanation of the collapse of the *wavefunction* as a misunderstanding of what is actually going on - namely the observance of one manifest, correlated, state, not necessarily the lack of existence of all of the uncorrelated states, leading of course to the seemingly perplex and somewhat confounding notion of the of the existence of *many-worlds interpretation*. Bohm’s *metaphysics* makes essentially the same

philosophical leap, namely that it is the existence of an underlying *implicate order* which contains within it various explicate order which may or may not be manifest depending on which observational state, or perspective, we choose.

To Bohm, and Hiley, this *implicate order* construct can also be used to incorporate a theory of *mind* (back) into Physics, reverting back to *first philosophy* as it were, or in more modern philosophical parlance again, *ontology*. To Bohm, it is *quantum potential* or *active information* which point to the existence of a basic underlying *consciousness* or *awareness* that underpins physical reality - implying that the universe itself when looked at from this grand perspective, one that includes the act of perception along with that which is perceived (which arguably is an artifact and a necessary conclusion of Quantum Theory), points to the necessary conclusion of what he calls *undivided wholeness*.

*It is now quite clear that if gravity is to be quantised successfully, a radical change in our understanding of spacetime will be needed. We begin from a more fundamental level by taking the notion of process as our starting point. Rather than beginning with a spacetime continuum, we introduce a structure process which, in some suitable limit, approximates to the continuum. We are exploring the possibility of describing this process by some form of non-commutative algebra, an idea that fits into the general ideas of the implicate order. In such a structure, the locality of quantum theory can be understood as a specific feature of this more general a-local background and that locality, and indeed time, will emerge as a special feature of this deeper a-local structure.*⁶¹⁴

What is arguably the logical conclusions of any reasonable interpretation of Quantum Theory, leaving open the idea of at least some form of metaphysical/philosophical interpretation is possible (which seems rational), is that our notion of “order”, and our notions and assumptions regarding the basic nature of reality – what falls under the discipline of *ontology* which is a major theme of this work - need to be radically changed in order to account for all of the strange phenomenon, features and characteristics that come along with the tremendous predictive power of the underlying *mathematics*. Some elemental and basic *non-local* principle must be incorporated into our *ontology* in order to incorporate the truth and empirical validity of Quantum Theory - that is to say that no matter what *interpretation* of Quantum Theory you find most attractive, at the very least the notion of *local realism* which underpins all of Classical Mechanics, all of Western philosophy really, must be abandoned in order to make sense of what

⁶¹⁴ *Relativity, Quantum Gravity and Space-time Structures*, Birkbeck, University of London (12 June 2013).

⁶¹⁴ Max Planck, *Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers*.

is going on. One would be hard pressed to find someone with a good understanding of Quantum Theory who would dispute this.

In the words of Max Planck,, one of the greatest physicists of the 20th century by any measure, and words which you won't find in any Physics textbook mind you, he sums up the state of affairs as follows:

*All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.*⁶¹⁵

⁶¹⁵ Max Planck, Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers.

Modern Psychology: Freud Versus Jung

It must be understood that Psychology as a discipline, at least how we think of it today, did exist in antiquity. There were fairly well thought systems of belief however that framed Psychology, the study of the Soul, within the context of not only questions about from whence we came, i.e. the ultimate source of things, but also of its immortality, and its relationship in general – particularly in Platonic circles – with the realm of *intelligibles* which for all intents and purposes was its domain. There was no question to the ancients that man (and woman) had a soul, there were however questions as to whether or not animals (or plants for that matter) had Souls, whether or not the Soul persisted after death, and whether or not the actions in this life would have a long-standing effect on the Soul after death – enter the question of heaven and hell which was related to questions on Fate versus Free Will. Many of these questions are still bantered about today in philosophic circles, and although much ground has been covered laying out the pros and cons of various viewpoints even in light of modern scientific developments, the fundamental questions still lay before us, somewhat unresolved really and have been relegated to questions of faith, like religion itself, and have been pushed out of the boundaries of scientific enquiry proper for the most part - an unfortunate consequence of Science really.

Psychology then, as a Scientific discipline – the study of the Soul – and the analysis of and description of the faculties of mind which are part of this discipline were things that the sages and philosophers of antiquity were clearly very interested in and from their perspective held the key to happiness. It's not clear that anything has changed from that perspective even today. From an academic perspective, we typically classify these works within philosophy, or to be more precise, *metaphysics*, which is the analytic counterpart to religion or *theology*. In modern times however, philosophic studies have become extremely narrow focusing primarily on epistemological questions and excludes Physics, Ethics, and Political Science, all of which fell under the ancient philosophic domain – at least to the Greeks – and all of which were synthesized in single coherent rational systems of thought. Psychology, the role of the Soul in human endeavors, albeit an important facet of this philosophic discipline, was not the be all and end all of the discipline itself.

To the masses, the ones who latched onto the Stoic and Epicurean systems of belief which laid out in practical fashion what could be done to achieve stability and happiness in this world, and even to the Peripatetic school to some extent, it was *happiness*, i.e. *eudaimonia*, that was the goal of the practice. And in understanding the nature of the Soul, and how the *mind* behaves in relationship to it, one could have a better chance of taming it, tuning it, such that the great turmoils of life would not completely sink the boat of the human Soul in despair, grief and sorrow – an affliction that was all too evident even to the ancients. The Stoic school in particular laid out

a psychological approach, one based on the “assent” and the perfect rendering of the intellectual and decision-making part of the *mind*, to achieve such perfection or *happiness*. The Platonic school took a much more metaphysical approach however, laying out principles of *Being* and *Becoming* and the supremacy of *forms* and *ideas* over sensory perception, laying out a path of the contemplation of these almost ethereal and abstract notions to lead one to the contemplation of the *Good*, from which true *knowledge*, true *happiness*, could be found all others stepped in ignorance.

In the classical Hellenic theo-philosophical tradition however, consistent with its brother and sister theological positions to the South (Egypt) the East (Persia) and even in Judea to name but a few of the predominant theological schools that were influential and widespread at this time in antiquity, the fact that mankind was made in the cosmic image was a constant and consistent theme. There were exceptions of course, like in the materialist view of the Epicureans who although believed in the existence of the divine realm thought that the Gods were too busy to be bothered with the mundane affairs of humans, and who held that the universe consisted of the indivisible *atoms* who obeyed certain laws and which governed the earthly domain as well as the ethereal (and spiritual) domain, their *ethics* was based upon the optimal pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain, a social behaviorist view one might call it. But they believed in the Soul, just not its immortality, and to them there did exist an optimal functioning of the *psyche* even if it lacked some of the ethereal or esoteric features of some of the competing Hellenic schools such as Stoicism and Platonism.

This was the psychological landscape of the Hellenic philosophical schools which grew somewhat symbiotically from the 5th century BCE to the time of Christ before his message of salvation, combined with a renewed interest in the Judaic studies took hold in the West. But as part of this movement, the Greeks left us with the traditions of *ethics*, *political philosophy* and *physics* not as separate disciples but as integral parts of their so-called *philosophical* tradition, i.e. *philosophia*. The goal of philosophy in antiquity was knowledge and understanding and the role of the Soul in his process was considered integral. Somehow, with all of our advancement in science and technology this link has been broken, and the breaking of this connection as significant intellectual and socio-political consequences – some beneficial to our individual and societal growth (for example freeing up the discipline of Science from dogmatic religious authoritarian structures) and some detrimental (for example the relegation of the Soul as a non-real phenomenon relegated to the domain of Psychology).

The bridge between Science and Religion that is a topic of such great interest in modern times as more learned intellectuals reject the mythology ridden religious traditions that have dominated the theological landscape for the past two thousand years, as the more radical forms of these

religions become more and more isolated and more and more the source of political and violent upheaval and strife, has to cross the psychological divide. This is the common element that all humans share, no matter what their language, what their culture, what their nationality, what the color of their skin, or what their religious affiliation is. And in so doing, what we might find is that there are common elements there that not only help us understand each other's perspective, but help to explain why religion has been such an important part of our evolution as a species and why it's in need of substantial revision in modern times.

Interestingly, modern psychological theories follow parallel metaphysical lines to philosophical and epistemological debates that have been going on for millennia. The two most influential psychologists in the twentieth century, Freud (1856-1939) and Jung (1875-1961), developed almost diametrically opposing views of the mind while both attempting to establish the field of Psychology on more scientific grounds. Each of them, despite their well-known collaboration for many years followed by a fairly well publicized fall out, established very different views on the boundaries of the individual *psyche* while both leaning heavily on the role of *dreams* and the *unconscious* as holding the keys to mental health and well-being.

Freud was the elder of the two scientists and was trained as a doctor of medicine (MD) at the University of Vienna with a background in biology and neurology, graduating in 1881 and spending the first 5 years of his career at the Vienna General Hospital before starting his own practice in psychiatry specializing in nervous disorders in 1886. He developed his more mature psychological theories that he is best known for fairly late in his career, first publishing the work that he is perhaps best known for, *Interpretation of Dreams*, in 1899.

In *Interpretation of Dreams* Freud lays out his basic theory of *dreams* as wish fulfillment mechanisms of the *unconscious* aspect of the *mind*, introducing the beginnings of what would become his *Oedipus complex theory* which establishes the connection between unfulfilled and repressed sexual desires, specifically childhood desires to have sexual relations with parent of opposite sex, as a cornerstone to his psychological framework. To Freud, the realm of the mind consisted of the *conscious* waking aspect which is what we are most aware of but represented just a fraction of the source of our personalities and characters, the *unconscious mind* which made up the bulk of the source material which drove our behaviors and actions – be they “conscious” or not – and a *preconscious* aspect of the mind which served as a filter or gateway for the conscious and unconscious mind.

In *Interpretation of Dreams* Freud developed what can be considered to be a topographical model of the *mind* where the *conscious* aspect, what we are most directly aware of and can easily recall, is just the tip of the iceberg, the *unconscious* aspect being the repository of repressed desires, primitive impulses and painful memories and experiences which although were not top of mind so to speak still played a critical and fundamental role in not only driving our behavior in general

but also in many respects determining our ability to lead healthy and well-functioning lives as members of society. The *unconscious* aspect of the mind represented the core bulk part of the mental iceberg with the *preconscious* part of the mind mediating between it and the *conscious* part.

In his later work, in particular in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* which is an essay he published in 1920, Freud expands his view of the *psychic* forces which drive individual behavior beyond the drive of procreation and over-turning of the authoritarian father (or mother) figure (*Oedipal complex*) to the conflicting and opposing desires for life, *Eros* which was an expanded version of libido, and the death drive(s), which came to be referred to as *Thanatos* by later academics. In this view of the psychological forces that guide human behavior, a view that was not and is not widely accepted in the broader scientific/psychological community mind you, *Eros* is seen as the guiding psychological force which produces creativity and harmony and fuels the desires for procreation and self-preservation. The “death drives” in this system, again *Thanatos* although Freud does not use this term, are responsible for mankind’s destructive tendencies, are the source of aggression and compulsive behavior and are the ultimate cause of self-destruction for both the individual and society at large.

Dreams, be they active waking *dreams* (daydreams or hallucinations) or dreams during sleep, played an important role in understanding these forces as they served as the means by which one could understand one’s desires and ultimately gain better control one’s behavior thereby leading a more healthy and fruitful life. In this context *dreams* had both “manifest content”, or their literal meaning and interpretation as well as “hidden content”, or their latent underlying meaning which required interpretative techniques to fully understand and comprehend.

To Freud the *mind* was a complex, fully *deterministic* and *causal* based biological system based upon psychic energy transformation. This view of the *mind* was very much aligned with scientific developments in Physics and Biology that ran parallel to his psychological work such as the conservation of energy, *theory of electromagnetism*, etc. In Freudian’s psychological framework, human behavior was fully *deterministic* and was driven by the interaction and interplay of complex forces of *energy* that were primarily designed for the procreation and survival of the species (Darwin’s *Origin of Species* was published in 1859). Man was not a spiritual being to Freud, but part of the natural order and subject to the very same *natural laws* that governed Physics and Biology and the universe as a whole. The goal of Freud’s therapy then, i.e. what has come to be known as psychoanalysis, was to analyze and try to understand the contents of the hidden *desires* that lie latent in the *unconscious* aspect of an individual’s *psyche*, as manifest in *dreams* for example, so as to better understand and ultimately better control one’s behavior and psychological makeup.

Freud's psychological work in this sense can be seen as a legacy of Enlightenment Era philosophical and scientific developments which rebelled against theological explanations not just for mankind as a species but also for man as an individual, independent being. To Freud the goal of life was the fulfillment of *desire*, within *reason*, and the secret to optimizing this equation of wish fulfillment as it were lay in the understanding and unraveling of the *unconscious mind*.

In his works *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices* (1907), *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (1913) and the *Future of an Illusion* (1927), Freud explains religion and the belief in the immortality of the Soul as remnants of prehistoric man's attempt to understand *dreams*, *death* and the natural order of the universe, once a necessary and required function for the proper governance of society but can and should be set aside in favor of *reason* and Science. Faith and belief in God to Freud, consistent with his biological and purely deterministic and non-spiritual view of the *mind*, was a neurological condition of society at large similar to obsessive and compulsive behavior at the individual level, i.e. a neurotic obsession.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and more comprehensively in his *The Ego and the Id* published in 1923, Freud supplants and further elucidates his psychological theory with a more structurally dynamic model (rather than topographic) which was more consistent with his *mechanistic, deterministic* and biological view of the *mind*. In these works he lays out a tri-partite conception of the *psyche* which starts with the driving force of *desire* which is inherent and innate in all man, his *id* which exists in the *unconscious mind*, combined with a normative and socially imperative force which corresponds to one's conscience, or *ego* ideal, reflected in what he calls the *super-ego* (which is mostly but not entirely *unconscious*), and the *ego* which is the source of self-consciousness itself and mediates between the *id* and *super-ego* to govern overall behavior.

From this model Freud outlined clinical treatment based upon the goal of establishing harmonious relationship between these three elements. He also delineated different types of mental disorders, *neurosis*, which corresponded to conflicts between and among these various forces, establishing the prominence of *defense mechanisms* which are created by the personality to prevent conflicts between these various forces from becoming too acute: i.e. *repression*, *sublimation* (channeling of drives), *fixation* (failure to progress), *regression* – *repression* being the most significant.

Despite Freud's emphasis on a fully deterministic and causal based psychological framework and dismissal of spiritual or religious factors as neurosis or psychological disorders however, his tri-partite framework is eerily reminiscent of a description of the soul from Plato's *Phaedrus*, coming just after a case is made for the Soul's existence and immortality:

*Concerning the immortality of the soul this is enough; but about its form we must speak in the following manner. To tell what it really is would be a matter for utterly superhuman and long discourse, but it is within human power to describe it briefly in a figure; let us therefore speak in that way. We will liken the soul to the composite nature of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. Now the horses and charioteers of the gods are all good descent, but those of other races are mixed; and first the charioteer of the human soul drives a pair, and secondly one of the horses is noble and of noble breed, but the other quite the opposite in breed and character. Therefore in our case the driving is necessarily difficult and troublesome.*⁶¹⁶

To Freud then, man is wholly a product of nature like the rest of the natural world and is governed by and must obey the same natural laws as the rest of the physical world. This is the legacy of the Scientific Revolution that Freud was a product of. And Freud's psychological framework reflects his biological bent, where the human personality is product of the attempt to balance the basic human need to survive and procreate alongside the need to coexist as a member of society as a whole through which individual survival is ultimately predicated in fact. It is only through the balancing effect of one's conscience, the role played by the *super-ego*, via the guiding force of the *ego* - the charioteer who guides the chariot so to speak- that peace and harmony for the individual within the context of society at large, i.e. balance, can be achieved.

In many respects sitting in contrast to Freudian psychology is the more expansive and inclusive psychological theory put forth by Carl Jung (1875-1961), a contemporary of Freud who collaborated with him early in his professional career but could not ascribe to a purely biological and neurological perspective of the human *psyche*, a conflict that caused a rift in their relationship and one that clearly had a profound effect on Jung himself.

From early in his career Jung was interested in the paranormal and occult phenomena, having been impacted himself by such occurrences from youth, and much of his intellectual pursuits and theories were influenced by *alchemy* and Neo-Platonism which provided for a more *holistic* perspective on the nature of the *mind* and the individual and the role of what he called the *collective unconscious* in providing the gateway toward personality wellness. Jung, in contrast to Freud but yet at the same time building upon his theories of the *unconscious* and the *conscious* aspects of the *mind*, established a theoretical framework of the *psyche* which not only called out the direct influence and existence of an aspect of awareness that existed beyond the boundaries of time and space, but one which incorporated and called out specifically the reality of "ideas"

⁶¹⁶ Plato, Phaedrus, 246a-246b. Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 9 translated by Harold N. Fowler. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1925. From <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0174%3Atext%3DPhaedrus%3Asection%3D246a>

and abstract thought – what he referred to as *archetypes* – which were the key to human understanding and effectively the goal of human life.

Jung was a doctor of medicine as was Freud, although he did not have a biological and neurological background as Freud did, with a much greater interest in spirituality and religion not as a reflection of ignorance and barbarism but as a system of *symbols* and *myths* that spoke to a higher self, if the language could be understood. In 1900 at the age of 25 Jung began working in psychiatric hospital in Zurich, authoring his dissertation in 1903 which was entitled *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena*.

His collaboration with Freud began in 1906 and the two had a very intense relationship that lasted a good 6 years. In 1912 he published *Psychology of the Unconscious* which ultimately proved to be the initiation of his break from Freud (the book was later revised and retitled to *Symbols of Transformation* in 1922) where he put forth his views on an expanded view of the *unconscious* relative to Freud's position, incorporating the notion of the *collective unconscious* directly into his psychological model, a theoretical position that Freud absolutely rejected given his *pleasure principle* and biological based theoretical model, much to the consternation of Jung.

After the break from Freud, Jung had what can best be described as a psychotic or nervous breakdown, spending the next 13 years or so deeply immersed in his own mind in what he himself called a "confrontation with the unconscious". He actually scrupulously documented the journey in a vast book that was published only just recently in 2009 as the *Red Book*, a detailed documentation of his own implementation of a methodology of *active imagination* where he effectively induced visions and hallucinations of sorts in order to explore the symbols and *archetypes* of his own mind and ultimately assimilate the underlying conflict into his own persona, a process which he referred to as *individuation*. Jung later claimed, despite its horrifying aspects and latent uncertainty, that this period of intense inner thought and contemplation was the source of inspiration for the bulk majority of the psychological theories and breakthroughs that he is best known for, his greatest creative period.

Jung's theoretical differences with Freud were primarily in the role and nature of the *unconscious* aspect of the *mind*. Jung did not deny the existence of the *unconscious*, in fact he assimilated and incorporated many of Freud's ideas into his framework, but he believed that the *unconscious* as consisted not just of the individual *unconscious*, but also of a more broad and expansive framework which was consistent across and accessible to all of mankind, his *collective unconscious* which to Jung was the storehouse of not only contemporary social norms and ideals but also the storehouse of all past ideas of ancestral civilization as well. It was the *unconscious* of man which underlay the individual *unconscious* of each individual that was the key to his psychological model, and the grappling with and ultimate assimilation and comprehension of one's individual relationship with this collective storehouse of *symbols* and *myths* represented to

Freud not just the goal of all religious systems throughout history but still represented the goal of all individuals in modern society - even if the understanding of religion needed to be adapted to assimilate a more profound psychological model based upon the psychological developments of the twentieth century based upon the analytic practices and learnings of scholars like Freud and Jung.

In this sense Jung more directly incorporated the role of society, and the history of mankind – a sort of *metaprinciple* of the human individual to which the individual *psyche* was intimately related. To Jung, the individual *psyche* was a manifestation of this *collective unconscious*, what he referred to as the *persona* which to him was a consciously created personality or identity fashioned individually using the storehouse of the collective *psyche* via the process of *socialization* and *acculturation*. To Jung, the *persona* was a specific unique reflection of the collective *psyche* at the individual level, a mask so to speak which was created to mediate between the individual *psyche* and the individual's integration into society as a whole, while at the same time to conceal the true nature of the individual from the rest of the world. Again, it was the true understanding of this relationship between the *collective* and *individual* aspects of the human *mind*, through the use of *symbols* and *personal mythology* – i.e. *dreams*, *active imagination* where universal archetypes and their role to the individual could be more clearly understood – that was the goal of *psychotherapy* and ultimately the goal of all human life.

Whereas Freud rejected *theology* and religion as an outdated social evolutionary construct that could, and should, be abandoned in the age of science, Jung on the other hand, saw all religions as a manifestation of the *individuation* process across different cultures and different times, being representative of the underlying language of liberation and freedom of a given culture and given society which actively and profusely leveraged *archetypes* and symbols to lead people through the path of life toward their ultimate goal.

To Jung, whose exposure to Eastern philosophy – specifically with *alchemy* which he interpreted as *symbology* for the transformation of the Soul (he published *Psychology and Alchemy* in 1944) and Daoism in general through his exposure to and interpretation of the *I Ching* – heavily influenced his theoretical developments, it was the transformation of the Soul as through the recognition of the power and existence of the collective storehouse of *archetypes* and symbols and their synthesis and integration into the individual *persona* which was not just the goal of therapy, but the goal of all sentient life.

He advocated not just the use of writing and documentation of *dreams* to facilitate this process – *active imagination* which he extensively utilized as was documented in the *Red Book* – but also advocated and was fascinated by geometric and other advanced imagery and symbology which he felt, as the traditions of the Eastern philosophy and Western *esotericism* from which he drew, that these symbols more than any of other means crystalized the integration of the individual

with the collective and the integration of opposites which was so crucial to this process (think *Yīn-Yáng*). This underlying belief in the spiritual nature of mankind contrasts directly with Freud's *objectivist* worldview.

Also of note is Jung's attempt toward the latter part of his career to establish and integrate a theory of the existence of seemingly *acausal* and/or coincidental type events which had manifested themselves all throughout his life. These types of occurrences could be loosely categorized as paranormal type activities but Jung saw them as evidence of the *synchronous* and *acausally* related manifestation of *archetypical* images and symbols not only in the mental domain but also in the physical domain as well, speaking to the existence of a higher form of reality that was beyond the physical reality governed by laws of cause and effect. Jung himself, in his essay entitled *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, describes the phenomenon as follows:

*...it is impossible, with our present resources, to explain ESP, or the fact of meaningful coincidence, as a phenomenon of energy. This makes an end of the causal explanation as well, for "effect" cannot be understood as anything except a phenomenon of energy. Therefore it cannot be a question of cause and effect, but of a falling together in time, a kind of simultaneity. Because of this quality of simultaneity, I have picked on the term "synchronicity" to designate a hypothetical factor equal in rank to causality as a principle of explanation.*⁶¹⁷

His work in this area came in no small part through not just his exposure to the *I Ching* which arguably is based entirely upon the reality of and fundamental existence of this principal, but also at the behest of and in close collaboration with, to a limited extent Einstein and much more closely with Wolfgang Pauli (1900-1958), one of the pioneers of Quantum Theory in the first half of the twentieth century. The driving idea behind their work on the principle of *synchronicity* was that there existed an underlying metaphysical framework of *reality* which manifested not just what we understand about Physics but also what we understand about Psychology and the *mind*, attempting to bridge the mind/body intellectual gap which has been such a difficult problem not just throughout the history of philosophy but in modern times as well.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁷ From Wikipedia entry on *Synchronicity* at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synchronicity>. Quote from Carl Gustav Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, p 435 The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 8 Routledge London.

⁶¹⁸ Jung's work on *synchronicity* in collaboration with Pauli is analogous to work on *implicate order* and *explicate order* concepts but forth by the physicist David Bohm toward the latter part of his career. See *Snow Cone Diaries*, Part II Chapter on Quality and the Implicate Order, by Juan Valdez published in 2014 by Authorhouse for a detailed look at Bohm's notion of the *implicate order* and its relevance to both Psychology and Physics.

In summary then, our understanding of the psychological landscape today, at least one based upon findings of those professionals that have had a strong and practical analytic practice, sits between the two theoretical alternatives that have been provided by Freud and Jung, even today. From Freud's standpoint, we are autonomous creatures driven by desire and through a proper understanding of the various facets of the individual personality we can not only understand various pathologies and disorders but also come to a better understanding of ourselves as biological beings who are plagued by desires but who at the same time must coexist within familial and broader social structures. From Jung's standpoint there is a greater and larger force at work which underlies our personal psyche's and the understanding of these forces, which speak to us using symbols and personalities that have expressed themselves to mankind through *dreams*, religions and mystical experiences throughout the history of mankind, leads to the full blossoming of the individual personality within the very same social structures that were a key element in Freudian psychology as well.

Subject-Object Metaphysics and Quality: A Reformulation of Logical Positivism

Subject-object metaphysics, the reality doctrine of modern day, with the apex of thought represented by the highest levels of abstraction in *mathematics* and Theoretical Physics, has its origins as a reaction, a parallel conception of the nature of the universe, to the advent of religion. It is its pair, it's opposite if you will. And religious systems as they stand today can be defined as those systems of thought and belief whose purpose of to establish the authority and supremacy of a ruling power, such as royalty or religious authority duh as the Church. And by this definition is it too far a stretch to state the connection between current *materialism*, the reality of individualism as described by Bohm, and its authority?

The authority of *materialism*, the stratification of society to those that have and those that have not, to establish the credence and legitimacy of this behavior which leads us all in western society to consume, to believe that the one that ends up with the most toys wins, to cast aside those that we might love or feel for as chess pieces in the game of life on a board defined by a quest for power and wealth, subjugating all else. But modern-day Physics, and the limitations and postulates that are born from this very same religion, point very clearly to a collective consciousness that binds us all, that establishes beyond a reasonable doubt the relationship of the observer and the observed.

What also seemed very relevant, and somewhat lost in the deep physical exploration and developments of the twentieth century, was that the notion of an anthropomorphic God, a guiding force that drove the search for order, that in fact created the order, was completely divorced from Science. This reflected a major divergence from prior scientific development, as almost all of the works of Science, and philosophy/*metaphysics*, of the Age of Enlightenment alluded to or called out directly the role of God in their work and their underlying thinking. Even Kant, who proposes to expound upon and provide the full foundation of *reason*, finds that *theology*, *morality*, *ethics* and Science are all pillars of the same Church so to speak, they all coexist in a consistent manner and support each other for the framework of the human intellect and society.

Aristotle's ordering of *truth* and *knowledge*, his *epistêmê* from which our word science stems from, had been inverted. *First philosophy* was now an afterthought of *natural philosophy*. This perhaps is the most significant metaphysical development in the last two hundred years; that *metaphysics* itself had been demoted. God was cast aside, *metaphysics* was tossed into the realm of pure speculation, and we have undergone an age of tremendous technological advancements thrusting us into the Quantum Era.

But the foundations of our society, the *moral* and *ethical* foundations which were so closely tied to *metaphysics*, *philosophy* and *theology*, had been lost. To what then were people supposed to look to help them understand how to live? How to interact with their fellow man/woman? Did Quantum Theory have anything to provide to this debate? Should the interconnectedness of “things” as empirically shown by the success of the theory and its application call into question this reordering of knowledge that was now hard wired into society and the education of our youth?

One of the modern authors and philosophers that has attempted to bridge this metaphysical gap as it were is Robert Pirsig, the author of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* which was first published in 1974. The book was a bit of a cult classic, and narrates the story of an old college professor who is traveling cross-country to where he used to teach, and taking care of and maintaining his motorcycle along the way. The physical journey of Phaedrus, who is the main character in the book, runs parallel to his mental journey, which is a quest for truth within a world bounded by name and form, and the mental constructs that guide the individual’s perception of and reaction to this world of name and form that is what most of us would deem *reality*. Pirsig’s second book, entitled *Lila: An Inquiry into Morals*, was written about twenty years after the first. In *Lila*, Pirsig is more interested in the nature of what he refers to as the Metaphysics of Quality, rather than a journey into the nature of the ego or self which was the main topic of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. Although the two books go hand in hand, his metaphysical model is refined in his second book where he connects his beliefs that stemmed from his journey into the self in his first book into a modern Philosophical paradigm.

In the eyes of Pirsig, consistent with the author in fact, we have witnessed great paradigm shifts since the time of the ancient Greek philosophers, and even since the time of Newton in the 17th century. In the twentieth century, we have had several developments in science that have called this *subject-object metaphysics* view of reality into question. *Empiricism*, the fruits of *objectivism*, have led us to a much more inclusive view of *reality*, a view well described by Pirsig’s Metaphysics of Quality. Science in modern times is a hybrid of the *subject-object metaphysics* that could be argued stemmed from the works of Immanuel Kant, the influential German philosopher of the 18th century,⁶¹⁹ among others such as Newton even going back as far as Aristotle depending on your point of view and how far back into Western thought you wanted to go, combined with the

⁶¹⁹ Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher researching, lecturing and writing on philosophy and anthropology at the end of the 18th century. Kant’s *magnum opus*, the *Critique of Pure Reason* aimed to unite *reason* with experience to move beyond what he took to be failures of traditional philosophy and *metaphysics*. He hoped to end an age of speculation where objects outside experience were used to support what he saw as futile theories, while opposing the *skepticism* of thinkers such as Descartes, Berkeley and Hume. In his own words: “*It always remains a scandal of philosophy and universal human reason that the existence of things outside us ... should have to be assumed merely on faith, and that if it occurs to anyone to doubt it, we should be unable to answer him with a satisfactory proof.*”

mathematical foundations laid out by historical philosophers and modern day theoretical physicists.

Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity tore off the reigns of a three-dimensional absolute *space* and *time*. He stated that a better model for the universe was a four dimensional system of coordinates representing the standard three dimensions of space, and a fourth dimension of time, i.e. *spacetime*, as the standard continuum from which Classical Mechanics must lay its foundations and built a theory of *universal gravitation* around that that proved to be even more sound than Newton's physics. Furthermore, he shattered the belief that time was constant at all frames of reference as well as established that *mass* and *energy* were effectively equivalent, equal in proportion to the speed of light which was assumed to be constant no matter what an observer's frame of reference. He proved that when travelling at great speeds, close to the speed of light, time actually slowed down relative to an unmoved observer (*time dilation*). That is to say it slowed relative to the person that remained stationary relative to the person that was moving at the speed of light.

Quantum Theory followed up on Einstein's breakthroughs. The most prominent features of Quantum Mechanics were *wave-particle duality*, i.e. at the subatomic level particles appeared to be behave like particles as well as wave (weird) and the *uncertainty principle*, which basically put limits on what could even be measured in a given experiment (e.g. position and momentum), measurements that for all intents and purposes were in fact influenced by the act of measurement itself among other strange and fundamentally non-classical principles. So much for Classic, *objective realist*, fully *deterministic* Physics.

Wave-particle duality as described by modern Quantum Mechanics, as proven by verifiable and repeatable experimentation, must completely change our approach to the idea of what we call matter, substance, or any objects in the *subject-object metaphysics* view of the reality as well as what he role of the perceiver is in this reality, harkening back in many respects to the work of Descartes where *res cogitans* and *res extensa* where fundamentally related and not inseparable philosophical and metaphysical constructs (related by a third fundamental metaphysical construct incidentally, i.e. God).

Quantum Mechanics furthermore, breaks down what we would consider to be the absolute nature of cause and effect, and the interactions between particles or objects being governed by some fixed set of forces that interact with each other in a purely *local* and entirely *deterministic* way - there is no avoiding this conclusion anymore. The physical universe as we understand it today is fundamentally *connected*, it's an *undivided whole* to use the words of David Bohm, and the observer has been established in one way or another as an integral part of the system, both with Relativity and with Quantum Theory, in many respects leading us right back to Descartes. All of which should fundamentally question our view of what we would consider to be *reality*,

and most certainly renders classic *subject-object metaphysics* obsolete as Pirsig took so much pain to teach us.

As you can see, the twentieth century alone has contributed these paradigm shifts in the nature of reality and our perception of it. We can no longer look at the world as made up of subjects and objects. For *empiricism* itself, or Science, has showed us that these models are wholly inadequate. We now must view the world without the comforts of absolute *space* or *time*, and even without a clear distinction between *matter* and *energy*. Pirsig posits that a new paradigm is needed, one that acknowledges the relationship between the *subject* and *object*, the *perceiver* and the *perceived*.

Scientific method, experimentation, verifiable and repeatable results – all of these represent the core tenets of the scientific community and yet at their core, the driving force of science if you will, is this creative moment or experience that formulates the founding principle or idea that in turn drive the creation of theory itself, which in turn drove experimentation to either prove or disprove said theory. This was the irony of *scientific method* that so struck Pirsig that he attempted to establish a new *metaphysics*, one based upon *Quality* from which our subjective and objective world emerges. It is the experience and intellectual reaction and insight of the falling apple of Sir Isaac Newton, if we are to believe such fables, which in turn provided the impetus the creation of his theories that provide the very foundations of Classical Mechanics, what make them Classic in fact. And yet there was nothing scientific about this specific moment of revelation, and yet what was birthed from this experience is one of the monumental building blocks of Science itself, *gravity*.

Pirsig attempts to break down what he terms this *subject-object view of the world*, not leaning on any Eastern philosophical constructs, but creating a new metaphysical paradigm based upon the concept of *Quality* that connects the external and internal worlds of the perceiver in much the same way that Kant attempts to bridge the gap between *empiricists* and *rationalists* by pointing out their interdependence on each other. *Quality*, in Pirsig's paradigm of *existence* and *reality*, is that concept and principle which underlies all experience, and that which is the source of all inspiration and creativity.

Quality for example, is source from which the *hypothesis* spontaneously germinates in the mind of the scientist upon which to test their experiments and which drive the experimentation process that was designed to illuminate facts and irrefutable truths. From Pirsig's perspective though, the process of *hypothesis* and *experimentation* is an inspirational, fundamentally creative process that could not be deemed scientific in any way, shape or form. And yet ironically enough, the field of science, as defined by empirically tested theorems, in many respects was considered to be the only reality of the modern era, or at least the dominant reality, despite its foundation and fundamental dependence from Pirsig's perspective on the existence of *Quality* from which

our intuition about how things might actually work, the source of all science in fact before we start testing theories out.

In his first book, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (which incidentally has very little to do with Zen and is only tangentially related to motorcycle maintenance), Pirsig dissects *Quality* into two basic forms, Classic and Romantic, somewhat loosely corresponding to the feminine and masculine principles underlying Far Eastern philosophy as reflected in the conception of *Yin-Yang*. *Classic Quality* represents the world of underlying form, the beauty of structure and *logic*, whereas Romantic Quality represents the world of immediate experience or perception, e.g. the Quality extant in seeing a beautiful vista or painting. In Bohmian terms, Pirsig is speaking of the *explicate* and *implicate* orders respectively that underlie our conception and perception of reality, although of course he uses altogether different terminology.

From a philosophical point of view, Pirsig describes two opposing viewpoints, one Eastern and one Western, dividing the basic philosophical conflict between the East and West as the view of the *mystic* and the *logical positivist* respectively. He argues that these two belief systems are mutually exclusive and his Metaphysics of Quality is an attempt to reconcile the two, again just as Kant attempted to reconcile the *empiricist* and *rationalist* traditions of his day and just as Bohm, and others, attempted to bridge the world of *physics* and the *mind* with his concept of the *implicate* and *explicate* order.

The *logical positivists'* position is that the natural sciences are the only branches of knowledge that can legitimately investigate the nature of *reality*, given their reliance on experimentation and measurable results. This domain also includes *subject-object metaphysics* and all its subsequent branches of thought, *science* as we know it today and as it is taught to us in school. Pirsig's position is that this view of the world is inadequate, and he refutes the argument that this means of inquiry is the only verifiable means to *knowledge*, just as he refutes the argument that *mysticism* is a purely subjective and emotional experience which should not have any bearing or relationship to *objective reality*.

Pirsig's analogy of the Platypus, from a biological or zoological point of view, is probably his most powerful illustration of the limitations on this *logical positivist* point of view. The early biological classification of animals segregated mammals and reptiles as distinct and separate from each other - mammals suckled their young, and reptiles laid eggs. This model worked very well in categorizing existing animals until the discovery of the duck-billed platypus was made in Australia, which both lays eggs like a reptile and then suckles its young when it is born like a mammal. The zoologist got around this problem by creating a new order of animal that included the platypus and the spiny anteater, solving the problem of the classification of this enigma by simply creating a new order or classification that would not break the existing model.

Pirsig then generalizes this concept, the *Platypus*, as an idea or concept that cannot be properly explained by an existing paradigm. Mystical experiences in Pirsig's view are a Platypus to the *logical positivist*. It is not that the mystic experience has nothing to offer in terms of value or the enlightenment of truth, it is just that within the confines of *subject-object metaphysics* there is no frame of reference for the *mystic experience*. One then is presented with a choice. One can shrug off the mystical experience and argue that it has no intrinsic truth-bearing quality because it cannot be explained by his paradigm of thought, or one can search for a new paradigm that includes not only the world of the *natural sciences* and *subject-object metaphysics*, but also the *meditative experience* itself which is fundamentally subjective and could not be viewed in terms of *subject-object metaphysics* proper.

The view of the mystical tradition is that the fundamental nature of *reality* lies outside the realm of language, outside of the boundaries of *name* and *form*. It states that language splits things up into parts while the nature of reality is undivided and beyond our mental or reasoning capacity. Hence the Zen Buddhist will tell you to just sit, and with this sitting you will find out the true nature of *reality*. But from a Zen Buddhist point of view, if someone were to ask you what you believed the fundamental nature of *reality* was, you would not be able to answer the question. You would probably tell the questioner to just sit, and in this practice of sitting the nature of *reality* will become clear even if it didn't lend itself to linguistic description.

This system of belief, this practice of *direct experience of the source of all things*, leaves something left to be desired in the world of the West. The Westerner wants answers to questions, he wants verifiable data and empirically driven conclusions in order to make up his world view. If answers are not forthright, if a language does not exist to describe the nature of the mystical experience, the *logical positivist* must conclude that the experience must only be a figment of the person's imagination. Pirsig views his Metaphysics of Quality as a bridge between these two systems of belief. Within this paradigm, there at least exists the language, an underlying metaphysical framework, to describe the mystical experience along with the experiences of our everyday, objective world that involve the interaction between subjects and objects, and between objects themselves and the forces that act on these objects, that we more commonly associate with reality in the Western *logical positivist* sense.

The originator of all things in this paradigm, the seed from which all of the philosophy springs, is *Quality*. Pirsig's divides this *holistic* notion of *Quality* between the Static and Dynamic. The Dynamic aspect of *Quality* is the pre-intellectual cutting edge of reality. It is the source of all things, and it is always new and fresh. It is the Dynamic aspect of *Quality* that one taps into when they *meditate*. When one sits and allows his thoughts to flow unobstructed, catching glimpses of the nature of Mind, one is exploring the Dynamic aspect of Quality. The Static aspect of Quality in turn is a pattern of one-sided fixed values that tries to contain, box in, the ongoing free force

of life. It is derived from fixed laws and the traditions and values that underlie them. It is Static Quality that makes up our culture and defines it.

Dynamic *Quality* is changeless, that aspect of reality or existence which is changeless and yet at the same time the source of all things. We can, and do often, tap into it, and in fact the concept of Quality itself originated from Pirsig's curiosity regarding the source of hypotheses within the context of scientific method, arguably the most unscientific of things – with respect to how and where hypotheses themselves came from – and yet the very cornerstone of Science itself.

While Jung saw *dreams* as the most direct line of sight as it were into the *unconscious*, what he viewed as the eternal spring of inspiration, the source of what you might call intuition, to Pirsig, the Dynamic aspect of *Quality* represented this idea, i.e. the very raw and direct, the ultimate creative source, of not just experience but reality and existence in and of themselves - the eternal *metaphysical* spring as it were. To Pirsig, in his *Metaphysics of Quality*, while he does not speak directly about mystical, or higher, states of consciousness or awareness, one can surmise that during *meditation*, it would be the Dynamic aspect of *Quality* that was being tapped into, or unleashed as the case may be.

The static element of experience then, can be looked at as seen as everything else aside from the pure, unadulterated, direct Dynamic element. Every thought, or emotion we might have during an experience is the sum total of all our previous experience. All the events of our life are stored away in that most complex of machines - the human mind. We collect all of this information, all of our experiences. We cannot just live our lives without interpreting this information though. We must analyze it, categorize it; but most importantly we must run it through the existing programs of our brain before we can conclude or judge anything about our present experience.

These existing programs, the software that facilitates life in the hectic West, are the paradigms and models that we have been taught in school, or learned from our parents, or even religious dogma of any kind. All of this is used to sift the Dynamic *Quality* of the experience into small sand piles of what should be paid attention to, and what is unworthy of our attention. This is the static element of experience. The Dynamic and the Static parts of experience work together to formulate the entire experience. What goes unnoticed by the Static is surely recognized by the Dynamic - and vice versa.

Meditation then is the tool which connects us directly to the source of Dynamic Quality. In *meditation* we meet with the Dynamic and converse about the meaning of life. Its answers are all but obvious, and some questions go unanswered for many moons. Then when we are so close to giving up on the answer to our question, the answer comes at us in the most mysterious of ways. Knowing the Dynamic attribute of life, we can then see the static for what it really is. It is a map. The map changes over time. Even though Static Quality may be a bit of a misnomer, it

serves its purpose. It provides us with the language and cultural context necessary to share our experiences with others.

He goes on to say that static Quality patterns are in need of reformulation when they exclude certain basic fundamental aspects of reality (like for instance the experience of *meditation*), demand blind obedience, and suppress Dynamic change. But Static patterns nevertheless do provide a necessary stabilizing force to protect Dynamic progress from degeneration. Although Dynamic *Quality*, the Quality of freedom, creates this world in which we live, these patterns of static *Quality*, the Quality of order, preserve our world. Neither static nor Dynamic *Quality* can survive without the other.⁶²⁰

From Pirsig's point of view, *subject-object metaphysics*, or even Classical Mechanics itself which is simply a mathematical expression of *subject-object metaphysics*, represents our Static pattern of belief. This belief in and of itself is not inaccurate, yet in order for it to serve its purpose, it should not be asked to explain ideas or concepts that lie outside its domain. The experience of the mystic, or even altered states of consciousness that yield so called "out of body" experiences, are both examples of experiences that cannot be explained adequately by *subject-object metaphysics*, but that doesn't mean that they should be ignored as representative manifestations of *reality*, even if they fall beyond the boundaries of *subject-object metaphysics*.

With Pirsig's Metaphysics of Quality however, he proposes that there exists not only the language necessary to describe the empirical world of subjects and objects, i.e. *subject-object metaphysics*, but also the language to describe the *direct*, subjective and powerful experiences described by those in deep states of *meditation*, namely a direct connection to Dynamic *Quality* (Bohm's *implicate order*) from which Static Quality (Bohm's *explicate order*), are perceived and intellectually *understood*.

Pirsig theorizes that *Quality* is the originator of all subjects and objects. *Quality* represents the actual moment of intuitive understanding that one has before you are able to intellectualize *subject-object duality*. Furthermore, he states that subjects and objects can be defined, i.e. they can be described within the realm of Reason and Language, but *Quality* is the originator of *subjects* and *objects*, and in turn also the realms of Reason and Language themselves, and therefore is indefinable. *Quality* is effectively God in Pirsig's *metaphysical* framework, he just

⁶²⁰ Robert Pirsig, *LILA*, PG. 121. Note the parallels here between Pirsig's idea of Dynamic *Quality* and Bohm's idea of *holomovement* which is characterized by the constant *unfolding* of *reality* into various *explicate orders* and its subsequent *enfolding* back into the underlying and overarching *implicate order*, the metaphysical paradigm he uses to explain the *quantized* nature of subatomic reality that sits in contrast to our notions of the reality of an underlying continuous and fully *realist, objective* world.

casts it in a purely experiential and philosophical framework, one that is bereft of *theology* per se.

Within this subject/object dualistic view of reality and perception, using the Metaphysics of Quality, we now have a better tool to discuss the nature of *experience*. When we look at a painting for example, we might look at it and love it, or look at it and hate it. From a *subject-object metaphysics* point of view, there is no explanation for our attraction or repulsion to the painting. If we look at the painting objectively, we don't necessarily have any emotional reaction to it. But we do have a reaction to it, a feeling so to speak associated with the experience of looking at the painting itself. We don't know why, but we love it or we hate it. We can't describe why necessarily but the reaction, the emotional response, is real to us. It is the *Quality* that underlies the experience that brings about our love or hate for the painting. We cannot define why - we can talk about the shades of color, or the exquisite detail of the picture, but these are opinions or subjective impressions hence they would be left out of any objective description of one's experience with the painting.

The truth is though, that life is a series of experiences. Some we like, and others we do not. According to Pirsig, the difference between the two ends of the spectrum is the underlying *Quality* of the experience. *Quality* attracts us. One cannot deny this. We seek it in our relationships. We seek it in the books that we read, we seek Quality all day long. Pirsig's Quality then, provides us with a framework within which we are more equipped to discuss the nature of experience or Life itself. It is quite inclusive.

From Pirsig's perspective, *subject-object metaphysics* is the model within which we all perceive the world around us, as subjects and objects interrelating and interacting with each other which sat directly upon our belief in Newtonian Mechanics as the basis from which we consider the physical world around us to *be*, to *exist*. What Quantum Theory tells us is that this view of the world is fundamentally flawed, and limited to a domain of experience that has limits - limits not only at the subatomic scale which provide the intellectual basis for understanding the *substratum* of all *physical reality*, but also even limits at the cosmic scale, to which Einstein's Relativity even had limits with respect to explaining what was actually going on – as evidenced by the notion of Dark Energy and Dark Matter which are still yet unexplained phenomena within Einstein's models of *reality* as powerful as they might be.

And in Pirsig's view, it is the idea of *Quality* that drives the behavior of the subjects in his system. It is the underlying principle which establishes the inherent *goodness* or *badness* of a thing or experience, the inherent *Quality* in it. Pirsig's Metaphysics of Quality attempts to reconnect moral and *ethics* within a purely metaphysical framework to a great extent, and to this end it is

successful, successful at least in establishing that a new paradigm of *reality* is required in order to reconnect our modern day framework of perception of the physical world with some form of *practical philosophy* from which *morality* and *ethics* can be reconnected, irrespective of an dogmatic religious system and consistent with modern science. In many respects, he re-attempts to establish a system of *knowledge* that contains within it a moral and ethical philosophy, in much the same way that the Greek philosophers did, except Pirsig creates his system on top of modern day physics, something which the ancient philosophers did not have access to and did not fundamentally understand.

From a metaphysical perspective, Robert Pirsig's *Quality* encompasses not only *subject-object metaphysics*, but also at the same time subjugated *objective reality*, and even the *act of perception* of this *objective reality*, to the principle of *Quality*. *Quality* to Pirsig was the origin of all experience as defined by the interface between subjects and objects as bound by space and time, and at its core represented the grounding from which *hypotheses* themselves emerged, a process which he viewed not only as absolutely essential and critical to the evolution of science from which *subject-object metaphysics* had its roots, but also a fundamentally intuitive process which involved an understanding of some sort of *implicate order* (in Bohmian terms) which governed the behavior of the *explicate order* which was being studied.

How could the act of the creation of a *hypothesis*, a principle which lay at the heart of science itself, lay outside the realm and boundary of science? It was the answer to this question that led Pirsig to establish the principle of *Quality* as the primary source of not only *subject-object metaphysics*, but the means by which the *act of perception* itself takes place, the source of the *intuitive* process which *reveals* an *hypothesis* to a scientist before he starts and begins his experimental process which will eventually lead to the confirmation of, or the denial of, the original *hypothesis* in question. After which a new *hypothesis* will emerge, and so on and so forth.

Pirsig's *Quality* by definition lacks description within the boundaries established by *subject-object metaphysics*, which is in turn bound by language itself, be it mathematical or linguistic or metaphysical in origin. This principle of *Quality* loosely corresponds to the Buddha Nature of the Buddhists, the *Dao* of the Daoist, the God of the Christians, the Allāh of the Muslims, the Great Spirit of the Native Americans, and the all-pervading *Brahman* of the Hindus, all of which represent concepts, metaphors, of the reality which lay beyond the realm of name and form, a reality from which the universe itself has emerged, and anthropomorphically speaking corresponds to the God of the various *monotheistic* faiths which have dominated the religious landscape for the last 1500 years.

But this fundamentally *dualistic* and *relativistic reality*, *subject-object metaphysics*, is limited conceptually by language itself, language which is a tool by which we as humans communicate *thoughts* and *ideas* to each other, a *reality* which at its most abstract, can be perhaps best

described by the *forms*, or *ideas* which Plato so elegantly describes in his Allegory of the Cave. Plato's Forms being the underling intellectual foundation upon which the *knowledge* of anything, the understanding of its *essential* and abstract nature, can be *understood*, which may be indescribably or indefinable in terms of language but exist nonetheless, at least in an abstract way, and form the basis of our *knowledge* or *understanding* of anything and everything.

All of these universal words that we use to denote the notion of the Christian God, of the Hindu *Brahman*, or the Muslim Allāh, or any other word we use to describe the *underlying substratum of existence* from which all things or ideas of things come from, are simply personifications and/or metaphorical representations of the very grounding of *existence* from which the world of *name* and *form* emerge, and from which the idea and notion of the Soul is defined, or at least its defined existence relates to according to almost all Indo-European theo-philosophical belief systems more or less.⁶²¹

And the *reality* of this *underlying substratum of existence* seems to have been effectively (and somewhat strangely) described, by Quantum Theory, leaving aside the standard orthodox view that Quantum Mechanics defies any sort of metaphysical interpretation. It is this underlying *substratum of reality*, the belief in its existence and the belief and what can only be called "faith" in the ability to experience it directly, which rested at the heart of *meditation* practice which was the cornerstone of Eastern spirituality and ironically enough, was the same principle, the principle and belief (faith) in *revelation* itself, upon which all the prophets of all the great religions throughout the ages attested to and rested their authority on.

Pirsig's premise is that all philosophical, or perhaps better put *metaphysical* paradigms strength should be judged by their initial bifurcation. In the Western mind, this initial bifurcation is established between the *subject* and the *object*, and connected by the act of perception. This initial bifurcation of *reality* is in fact a *metaphysical assumption*, albeit implicit, that lays at the heart of *subject-object metaphysics* and of course Classical Mechanics, and even rests at the heart of the debate on *how* to interpret Quantum Mechanics.

⁶²¹ See the Chapter in this work that looks to the nature of the Soul as reflected in Plato's *Phaedrus* and in the *Katha Upanishad* for a deeper exploration of this notion of the Soul from an Indo-European philosophical perspective.

Eastern Philosophy: Back to the Beginning

Given the rapid globalization and synthesis of all human thought that is occurring throughout the world today as more and more Eastern works are translated and transliterated into Western languages and are the topic of much intellectual pursuit by not just academic scholars but also by individuals in the West as Yoga, Vedānta, Daoism and other classically Eastern philosophical systems have become more and more prevalent in Western society, it perhaps is a good time to look for, and look back to, how these two systems of belief really differ from each other and where this difference stems from and perhaps come to a better understanding as to how they might be better integrated or aligned to reflect a more global and complete perspective on *existence* and *reality* in the modern Quantum Era.

Throughout academic parlance in the Enlightenment Era intellectual and philosophical development throughout mankind's history has been divided into Eastern and Western branches. The Eastern branch of thought and development for many centuries was looked upon as "Oriental", a term that has fallen out of favor in academic and intellectual circles in no small measure due to the fact that it implied and originated within the context of the colonization of a good part of the "Eastern" world and Western academic pursuits into understanding the nature of theological and philosophical, as well as socio-political development of the so-called East – an outsiders view that came with its own bias that is considered by most scholars to be one of supremacy and dominance that looked down upon the cultural and religious systems of the East with not disdain per se but most certainly with a sense of arrogance and superiority.

There is undoubtedly much truth to the idea that the East-West divide is an intellectual delineation created by Western scholars upon its Oriental neighbors as a product of colonization by Europeans in the last few centuries, an outsider's view so to speak. There are still nonetheless certain unique characteristics of what we might call the "Eastern" worldview which are not necessarily unique to the Eastern part of the world geographically (although to the Greeks and Romans it most certainly was the East) but reflect an unbroken tradition that reaches more directly back into the mind of pre-civilized man given its unbroken linguistic tradition. In particular here we're referring to the Indo-Aryan peoples and the ancient Chinese, each of which has a direct and unbroken linguistic, theological and philosophical tradition that is preserved from the early origins of their respective civilizations.

The problem however, despite these known biases, is that the classification of East versus West does have a certain clarity and clean delineation in modes of thought however, modes of thought that are divided at least intellectually by what could be termed *reductionist* versus *holistic*. In other words, even if the classification of certain ways of thinking and development as a whole doesn't have a specific geographical divide between East and West (although one could argue

that in fact does), the tendency to break things down into parts and explore their relationships as individual automata and their interactions does in fact characterize Western thinking more or less since Hellenic antiquity and the tendency to look at individuals within the context of their relationship to the whole, or the universe at large, does in fact characterize “Eastern” modes of thought to a great extent.

Despite many scholars derision of the distinction between the “West” and the “East” as a gross oversimplification of the complex and interconnected cultural and societal development of the civilized world (and they have a sound point no doubt), this basic split in worldview can still be very helpful when looking not just at the development of civilization, but also when looking at the development of theology and philosophical systems in antiquity as clear lines between East and West can be drawn in these disciplines. Today no doubt, going back at least to the introduction of Yoga to the West by Swami Vivekananda in the early part of the twentieth century, these “Western” and “Eastern” worldviews start to blend. However, despite the integration between Eastern and Western cultures in the last hundred plus years, there does still however exist a chasm between Western *reductionist* and Eastern *holistic* perspectives on reality that makes it difficult at times for the two groups to communicate effectively – even if this distinction is not geographical any more.

In particular here we’re referring to the general position of the scientific community which takes a fundamentally *materialistic* and *objective realist* worldview in contrast to the Eastern philosophic perspective (Buddhism, Daoism) which is much more *holistic* and is primarily based upon the belief in the flow and harnessing of energy as predominant characteristics of reality rather than objective and materialistic components. The lines are drawn between objectivity and indivisibility and wholeness primarily. Although some scholars continue to work toward bridging this gap (the current author included), the intellectual chasm still exists nonetheless and represents a clear divide from which to view ancient philosophical and theological development which underpins the modern vantage points to a large extent. However, despite the advent of the Scientific Revolution in the last few hundred years the battle lines between the objective materialists and the unified idealists were drawn as far back as 2500 years ago in ancient Greco-Roman culture represented by the Epicureans and Neo-Platonists respectively, a point that few if any modern scholars fail to recognize.

So although it may be relatively true to diminish this very general and perhaps all too simplistic distinctive set of worldviews which divide mankind’s relationship to the universe, it is the author’s view that not only does this gap in thought between Eastern and Western world views still exist, but that it still exists in a very profound way and underlies each individual’s worldview and relationship to everyday reality in ways that are so assumed, so baked into our psyche’s from childhood, that their very existence is unknown to us given how at the very heart of our

perception of the world they sit. It is perhaps most pronounced when you look at the world of “physical reality” underpinned by modern Physics and its fundamental relationship to what we all see and perceive as “real”, the belief and blind faith in the *mechanistic* nature of things and the existence of individual objects outside of our individual nature that are separate from and only outwardly perceived by, our minds or subject.

The hypothesis here, and one that is difficult to prove no doubt but interesting in and of itself, is that perhaps what we in the West consider “East”, which initially came with all sorts of uncivilized and even barbaric connotations (going back to the age of colonization here where the Western world thought their systems of religion, their systems of governing, etc. were much more advanced than those of their Eastern counterparts), is maybe just a window into a more distant past of ourselves, a past that has not been whitewashed and completely blanketed over by the “righteousness” and “divine truth” of Scripture.

One cannot deny that Christianity, Judaism and Islam have had an immense cultural and socio-political influence on social development in the West for at least the last 1500 years. What is interesting to look in contrast however, is the view from the East which has produced a very different theo-philosophical tradition that reaches much deeper into antiquity; essentially as far back as the second millennium BCE which is a good 1500 years earlier than the Judeo-Christian tradition in the West. Both in the Indian/Vedic tradition and the Chinese philosophical tradition, their theological and philosophical systems rest on texts and schools of thought which date to the origins and dawn of their civilizations. They date back to the time when nation-states were first developing and when language and writing systems had just advanced enough to codify these systems of belief, these teachings, which no doubt stemmed from *oral traditions* which reached even further back into antiquity.

The theo-philosophical tradition in the West went through many phases of development before Christianity took root – the Pre-Socratics, Hellenic philosophy, the Jewish tradition and the *Septuagint*, the Gnostics, Egyptian and Greek *mystery cults*, Hermeticism, etc. All of these intellectual forces, these very ancient systems of belief from all of these different cultures were supplanted by, were whitewashed in fact, by the flood of Christianity (and then subsequently Islam) which swept the Western world from the 3rd century onwards and has had a direct influence on the theo-philosophical history in the West right up until the modern era.

But many of these ancient belief systems, in particular the Greek and Egyptian *mystery cults* (Orphism, Eleusinian Mysteries, Hermeticism etc.), retained many of the pre-historic shamanistic characteristics that harkened back to earlier times in socio-political history where communing directly with the divine wasn’t a hypothetical possibility but was a fundamental aspect of reality. Times when a direct connection between the divine was not only believed to have been possible but in fact considered to be an elemental aspect of what it meant to be human and in many

respects defined a people. The *mythos*, *cosmogony* and *theology* of these ancient peoples, their so called “barbaric” rituals, were all integrated and closely tied to the elemental and pervasive presence of the divine.

Over time, and this was progression can be seen in all ancient civilizations as societies became more complex this pseudo socio-political construct was hijacked by the rulers and emperors themselves who claimed to be the only ones that had or were privy to this divine connection. But this was most definitely not always the case as you reach deeper back into antiquity and in fact can be seen in many of the rites of passage and other shamanistic rituals that exist in some, now almost extinct, pockets of hunter-gatherer societies that still exist in the world today. This was part of the social and political developments within which Christianity took root in the West, as *theology* and the state became more and more interconnected and interdependent, and it was these characteristics in fact that had these ancient mystic theo-philosophical systems themselves labelled “pagan”.

When we look to the East, back into the depths of its history at the first written records to see what they believed, how their societies were organized and what the role of these ancient “priests” were and how their systems of belief were absorbed and used by those in power to stay in power, to re-write history, and to perhaps more than anything else unite a people, what we find is a reliance on, and a direct relationship back to (linguistically and culturally), the forefathers of philosophy and the original written works which came to define their civilization intellectually.

So while the Chinese specifically went through a similar process of social and political transformation and sifting process to determine which theo-philosophical systems to hold onto moving forward and which to reject and label “barbaric” (for example the so called “Burning of the Books” in the Qin Dynasty in the 3rd century BCE), alongside of the usurping of the divine connection by the emperors to assert their own authority, they still held onto an intellectual tradition, and a linguistic system, that spoke very directly of their pre-historic hunter gatherer and shamanistic societal past.

Far Eastern, i.e. “Chinese”, philosophy has as its basis one of the most persistent and lasting intellectual tradition of any modern civilization. Even into the modern era, its core curriculum - to use a Western term - continued to be rooted in the study of ancient texts, establishing and reinforcing the longstanding and persistent Chinese culture, history and philosophy as primarily reflected in the Confucian school (*Rújiā*). The Five Confucian Classics (*Wǔ Jīng*)⁶²² became part

⁶²² Again the Five Classics are the *Shujing* or the *Book of Documents*, the *Shijing* or *Book of Songs*, the *Liji* or *Book of Rites*, the *Chūnqiū* or *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the *Yijing* or *Book of Changes*.

of the state sponsored curriculum during the Western Han (aka Former Han) Dynasty (206 BCE – 9CE), when “Confucianism” was adopted by the state in a move that paralleled the adoption of Christianity by the Roman Empire some six centuries later to the West.

Added to this list of core literary Chinese state sponsored texts in the 12th century by the Confucian scholar Zhu Xi (1130 – 1200 CE), considered by most to be the most influential Confucian scholar in history outside of Confucius himself, were what have come to be known as the “Four Books” (四書 or *Sìshū*) a set of Confucian texts which provide the further exposition and explanation of classic “Confucian” thought. These Four Books are:

- *Great Learning*: originally a chapter in the *Book of Rites* that is attributed to Confucius along with a commentary by one of Confucius’s disciples,
- *Doctrine of the Mean*: Another chapter of the *Book of Rites* attributed to Confucius’s grandson focused on the attainment of perfect *virtue*,
- the *Analects*: the only text attributed directly to Confucius himself, and
- the *Mencius*: a collection of *dialogues* and conversations of the philosopher Mencius, a supposed disciple of Confucius’s grandson, which expanded and expounded upon the ethical, moral and political philosophy set forth by Confucius.

These Four Books were added to the *Five Classics* and established as part of the state sponsored curriculum in the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644 CE), and persisted into the Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1912 CE) until the early part of the 20th century, establishing the fundamental intellectual foundation of virtually all areas of of Chinese influence for almost two thousand years. It is tempting to speak of these *Five Classics*, along with the Four Books, as a canon of sorts and certainly if we use a broad definition of the term these texts represent the Chinese religious canon if there ever was one. The problem with using this terminology however is it invariably carries with it religious undertones, undertones that don’t necessarily carry over to the Eastern tradition completely and entirely. The logical question of course is, if we call these ancient Chinese texts a “canon”, can it be said that the content of this work, the belief system and worldview which underpins it, is religious?

There has certainly been plenty of debate on this topic in the academic community and otherwise. While we don’t see some of the hallmark characteristics of Western religion in this long-standing tradition – for example scriptural authority as divine revelation - we do however see an integral form of worship and ritual that is tied more to ancestor worship rather than to a divine being, i.e. a God or gods as the case may be. It is no doubt the absence of a strong creation story with its *ex nihilo* assumptions as well as the absence of obsession on the written words as truth (gospel), and clarity of truth itself really, that makes us reluctant to categorize Confucianism as a religious system per se. Here’s what can be said with certainty however: there does exist a

specific set of literature surrounding the philosophical system attributed to Confucius that was compiled and standardized into a set of received and orthodox texts that was used to indoctrinate an entire culture spanning a very large geography for many centuries, millennia even. It is representative of a distinctive mode of thought, a way of living and behaving, and even a way of governing and ruling that was adopted very early in China's socio-political history. Beyond philosophy proper, the tradition included elements of worship and veneration – at least in terms of approach and mode of thinking regarding the same - included a strong emphasis on cultural and ritualistic heritage, and even integrated an ancient notion of God (Heaven, *Tiān*) that was responsible for the dispensation of *justice* and the preserver of *order* in the natural world.

The Chinese philosophical tradition is much more focused on what the ancient Greeks would refer to as the “practical arts” of philosophical inquiry, i.e. Aristotle's *practical philosophy*, how is one to live and how is the state to govern its people for the optimization of harmony and prosperity. Such is their fascination with the Way, referred to as the *Dao*, a fairly esoteric philosophical construct that permeates virtually all of Chinese philosophy albeit much more strongly in the, not surprisingly, Daoist school which bears its name, versus the Confucian school which represents more or less Chinese orthodoxy after the 2nd century BCE. An interesting question is why this is the case? Why did the thinkers in the Far East lean in the direction they did with respect to theo-philosophical thought? The answer to this question, the theories we might come up with to explain this fundamental intellectual distinction between classic “Eastern” and “Western” modes of thinking, underlying worldviews in fact, although may not be able to be answered definitively, will most certainly lead to a better understanding of the two intellectual paths individually.

One possible explanation is that philosophical lack of precision is a function of the *ideogram* and *logograph* form of writing that is so characteristic of Classical Chinese. This can be directly contrasted from the semantic clarity of the alphabet and subject/object based writing tradition in the West, and by West here we mean not only the Greek/Roman system of writing but also the system of writing in ancient India or Sanskrit. Whether the writing system itself evolved (or didn't evolve depending on your perspective) due to this fundamental intellectual characteristic or if the causal relationship was the other way around (vice versa, chicken and egg problem) is perhaps not an answerable question. This lack of clarity in terms of how ideas are expressed via writing is however a fundamental characteristic of the ancient Chinese philosophical tradition. It could be argued for example that the language itself, the means of communicating ideas via writing at least, did not lend itself, or to go a step further even did not allow for, the type of systemic intellectual and metaphysical inquiry which is so characteristic of the ancient Hellenic and Indo-Aryan philosophical traditions.

The ancient Chinese system of writing was much more raw, and evolved more directly from the symbols that were used in deep antiquity to denote concepts and notions in and of themselves, and did not have (markedly so) implicit subject and object delineation. One can look at the Chinese system as a more direct representation of Plato's *forms* and *ideas* in fact, as their symbols, their written language, was a more direct representation of Forms and Ideas that could ever be reflected in Western linguistic systems. The Western systems were more powerful now doubt, more powerful to the extent that they were simpler, easier to learn, and had more far reaching and broader meanings that could be drawn and expressed than their Chinese counterparts. Perhaps this is the reason why the intellectuals in the West created what could be considered to be a more sophisticated philosophical and metaphysical system than their counterparts to the Far East, the ancient Chinese philosophers being more concerned with *ethics*, behavior and right living (*Dao*), rather than a comprehensive description of *metaphysics* and the nature of reality that was a hallmark of the early Greek philosophers.

While it is difficult to say whether or not the linguistic system within which these various philosophical systems developed was the cause of such a divergence, or the other way around, it is clear that the two civilizations, civilizations which had no real contact with each other until well into the Common Era, took very different routes in their approach to understanding the world around them and their development of intellectual thought to support the evolution and growth of their respective civilizations. What we do know however, and this is true in the West as well but perhaps more pronounced in the Far East in ancient China, is that philosophy was used as a form of statecraft. The connection between the philosophers, the intellectual elite, and the rulers and aristocracy was of a much different sort in the Classical era. While the philosophical schools in the West were intellectually free of political ties, particularly in the Hellenic tradition, in the East the art of intellectual inquiry, the written word, developed primarily as a means to help create a better society – in no small measure due to the fact that the time period of Chinese history when this intellectual development was taking place, when these texts that survive down to us were taking on their final form, was marred by great internal conflict and strife, aptly named the Warring States period.

As such we are left with an intellectual system from the ancient Far East that although reaches far back into history, it for the most part nonetheless takes on a very practical and sociological purpose - namely how to establish the best possible conditions for a conflict free and harmonious society. This can be said of virtually all of ancient Chinese philosophical inquiry, even the Daoist tradition which although was counter-cultural in a way, almost rebellious to the Confucian way of thinking, was focused on the Way (*Dao*) and not again necessarily on what could be considered "true" or how reality should be defined. In some sense, this is the fundamental distinction between Eastern and Western intellectual development – one which wants to break the world down into parts and structure and another that is much more concerned with how to live in a

more *holistic* way within the *universal order*, i.e. what has come to be called *naturalism* by many in Western academic circles.

In the Far East in particular, in ancient China, philosophical development is almost completely disconnected from the mythological traditions and ancient forms of worship which preceded them. So while we have evidence of these ancient forms of worship and surrounding *mythos*, primarily from the archeological record and some vague and indirect references from the ancient historical works, the intellectual tradition of the Far East is characterized by what can only be called a general skepticism, and perhaps even a dismissal of, these ancient forms of worship which no doubt – like their counterparts to the West and the Indian subcontinent – were associated with hymns, ceremonies, worship and sacrifice to their respective gods and deities, some of which can perhaps fall into the category of ancestral (heroic) worship which is one of the unique characteristics of (what we know of) the ancient theological tradition of the Far East. Nonetheless the ancient Chinese do develop lasting philosophical systems – such as Daoism and Confucianism for example – that although lack some of the distinguishing characteristics of Western philosophy, i.e. being based upon *reason* and *logic* (i.e. *Logos*) – still nonetheless fall into the broader category of philosophy in a global sense, i.e. one that includes the Eastern as well as Western traditions from antiquity.

The ancient Hindu (Indo-Aryan) philosophical tradition in contrast, still retains a clear record and connection to this transition from these ancient forms of worship into the study of philosophy, the nature of “reality”, as is recorded in the rich textual tradition that has survived intact as it were. We refer specifically here to the ancient texts of the Indo-Aryans such as the *Vedas* and their philosophical counterpart the *Upanishads*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Brahmā Sūtras*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the *Manusmṛiti* (*Laws of Manu*), the sum total of which provide not only the theo-philosophical underpinning of all Indian philosophy (what has come to be known as Hinduism) even to this day, but also record and capture the connection between, and the ultimate transition to, ancient forms of worship that are recorded in painstaking detail in these ancient works, the *Vedas* in particular.

To the Western *scientist*, at least most of them, this *objective realist subject-object metaphysics* world is in fact true, an accurate depiction of *reality*, and any other worldview that contradicts this is fundamental untrue, unreal, and based upon conjecture or some wishy washy philosophical belief system that is neither verifiable or objectively true. This is despite the fact that great thinkers such as Descartes and Kant, not to mention Plato and Aristotle, great thinkers who laid the philosophical foundations for modern science, were forced to incorporate the *act of perception* directly into their *metaphysics*. This *objective realist* intellectual position lies at the heart of the Western *materialism* and *consumerism* and sits in stark contrast to the philosophical

and metaphysical systems that have originated to the East - Vedānta, Yoga and Daoism being perhaps the best examples.

These philosophical systems of the East subsume the act of perception however, the subjective mental framework which guides our everyday existence, into their metaphysical models. They furthermore posit that the individual act of perception is connected and inextricably linked to the cosmic and organic principle which governs and rests within the physical universe. This is where the philosophical systems of the East and West diverge basically. The Western systems, which include the great religions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism speak of an external and omnipresent God who is to be worshipped and whose laws are to be followed whereas the Eastern systems do not distinguish between that which is within and that which is without, *tat tvam asi* as goes one of the great Vedic precepts, or “thou art that”.

In the East then, again most markedly by the underlying theo-philosophical systems of the Far East (China), what we in the West call “science”, i.e. the physical world, is seen as an aspect of what we in the West have come to call the “natural” world. In the East, the understanding of natural phenomenon is not completely segregated from other fields of study as it is in Western intellectual tradition, but integrated within it as a branch of knowledge but not complete within itself. This can be seen for example in the practice of Vedic (Ayurvedic) or Chinese medicine where the underlying “science” of the respective approach is built on top of and integrated with the underlying, and wholly integral, theo-philosophical system rather than standing alone outside and separate from it. This is why we in the West have come to call this “holistic” medicine. In many respects this worldview was reflected in Aristotle’s original conception of *knowledge*, *epistêmê*, where the Physics was referred to as *natural philosophy*, reflecting its essential codependence and relationship to the other branches of philosophy – *practical philosophy* - Ethics, Political Philosophy, the Arts, etc. - as well as *first philosophy* (i.e. *metaphysics*).

In this Eastern, *holistic* and process based worldview, the universe is not looked upon as fundamentally “objective” per se, as having existence outside of the context within which we experience it or perceive it, but from a more integral and synthetic, and ultimately harmonious, perspective. In this context, the goal of life is not the optimization of some self-centered idea of “happiness” - whether this notion is defined as the attainment of some set of predefined materialistic objective phenomena or even from a psychological perspective as the achievement of some certain state of “consciousness” that we look upon as reflecting “tranquility” or “serenity” necessarily, either of which focuses on a very narrow definition of “self” – but is rather defined as a harmonious and balanced state of *Being*, to use the English translation of the early Hellenic philosophical term which Plato adopts and which forms one of the cornerstone principles, along with the notion of *Becoming*, of his theo-philosophy.

In the *holistic* and process based worldview, one which we again are calling “Eastern”, “happiness” is achieved by first a recognition and basic understanding of the interconnectedness and codependence on the notion of “self” with the world within which it lives - as we learn from any rational interpretation of Quantum Theory quite definitively - both from a *naturalistic* and *humanistic*, as well as socio-political context, and then subsequently by a complete acquiescence and integration of this mindset, this understanding, into our whole existence, an existence which is defined not by the existence of some “I” or ego which perceives and interacts with objects that all exist within a basic space-time continuum, but an existence which is defined as a continuous process of *unfoldment* (to use Bohm’s terminology) of experience which includes not just the individual who is “perceiving” but also the “objects” of perception, the cognitive experience itself which “connects” the two, as well as the entire natural world within which this “experience” takes place.

However, in order to truly recognize the importance of the very basic idea of “the meaning of life”, our purpose for being here, and the relevance of whatever answer we may come up with for this very basic of questions really, we must first fundamental transform our definition of knowledge, i.e. *sciencia*, itself. The alternative being proposed here is that we revert back to a more Aristotelian definition of knowledge, i.e. *epistêmê*, where any understanding of a “thing” must include an understanding of its purpose, or “how” and “why” it came into being. Once we do this, then the question itself of the meaning of life, its underlying purpose as it were, is not “relegated” to the “unscientific” domains of religion or philosophy, given the “non-empirical” and “unverifiable” nature of any answer we may come up, but then wholly integrated into scientific inquiry, an inquiry that is defined in a much broader sense as an understanding of being – *being qua being* – rather than confined to the domains of natural philosophy or physics. This inversion allows us to establish at least the basic intellectual framework where we can incorporate “purpose” and “meaning” back into any study of anything really, or anything whose “existence” we wish to try to understand.

One of, if not the, unique contributions of the Indo-Aryan people⁶²³, to which Vedānta (the philosophical foundations of Hinduism) and Buddhism ultimately owe their heritage, is the importance they place, and fundamental belief in, what is variously referred to in the Western theological tradition as *realization*, *liberation*, or *enlightenment*, i.e. what the Buddhists call *nirvana* and what the Vedic tradition calls *mokṣa*. All of these various terms are used to describe what the ancient Indo-Aryans, the people from which the great religion of the Hindus emerged from which Buddhism eventually emerges from, believed was not only the fundamental nature of reality itself, but also the fundamental nature of the Soul which they not only believed existed, but also believed that it was in fact eternal, that it was subject to rebirth, and that in its essential state it is non-differentiated from the eternal Soul, what the *Upanishads* refer to as *Brahman*.

The ancient Indo-Aryan civilization sprung forth in the Indus Valley region in modern day India and Pakistan (to the ancients Eastern Persia), and was the source of the *Vedas*, which represents according to some scholars some of the oldest literature of mankind. This ancient Indus Valley civilization spread and flourished in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent from circa 3300 to 1300 BCE, roughly aligning with the advent of the ancient Sumerian civilization directly to the West and also the ancient Egyptian civilization even further West in North Africa. One of the great unanswered and hotly disputed topics of the study of philosophy in antiquity is when in fact these Indo-Aryan belief systems emerged, when they can be “dated” within the historical timeline so to speak, and what level of influence they had, if any, on the development of philosophical traditions in the West (as reflected in the Hellenic philosophical tradition for example) or to the Far East in what came to be known as China. As of yet we have not found any archeological evidence of any contact between these disparate civilizations, nor do we have any real evidence of any contact between the Indo-Aryans and the ancient Chinese either, but the absence of evidence, and in particular in this case, is not necessarily evidence of absence.

The civilization from which Hinduism emerges is traditionally associated with the Indus Valley, a river system from which an ancient culture could grow crops and thrive, a similar relationship to the Sumerians and their Tigris-Euphrates and the Egyptians and their Nile. This relationship with water and its fundamental existence and prerequisite feature for the source of life, clearly left its mark on the *cosmogony* and creation *mythos* of all of these ancient cultures and with the Indo-

⁶²³ We use the term Indo-Aryan here to denote the civilization of Indo-European origins (linguistically speaking) that emerges in the Indus Valley region in modern day India and Pakistan in the 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE, effectively following Swami Nikhilananda’s definition as presented in the Introduction to *The Upanishads*, Volume I, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, 1949. Sixth edition 2003.

Aryans we find traces of the belief in universal *emanation* from a watery abyss, i.e. *āpas* in Sanskrit, just as the Egyptians had their concept of *nu* and the Ancient Sumerians had their *Apsû*.

While one can argue that given the basic and fundamentally similar nature of these cosmogonic belief systems - beliefs that permeated not only the Mediterranean peoples but also the Sumer-Babylonians, the Indo-Aryans, and even the Chinese - that all of these traditions stemmed from a single, very ancient and pre-historic mythological narrative that followed the migration of ancient man out of Africa (roughly 60,000 years ago) and followed the migration path of early man as they spread to the East over the Eurasian continent in wave after wave of migrations, a much more plausible argument however would seem to be, is that the similarities in the cosmogonic and theogonic narratives of all these ancient peoples stems primarily from the fact that each of these individual cultures and societies was presented with similar challenges, experiences and relationships with their environment which ultimately held away over, and governed their existence and sustenance, out of which emerged their respective *mythos* and various theo-philosophical systems of belief.

This argument basically rests on the belief that it is from these common experiences, both in terms of the relationship with their environment and the ensuing socio-political challenges that evolved as their societies advanced - again given their common experience and common psychological constitution, which in each case was defined by their relationship with the river system and other natural surroundings that their respective civilization depended upon for survival - is ultimately the source of the similarities of the *mythos* and cosmogonic narratives of all of these ancient peoples. For it is definitely true that in each case the river system within which each of these great ancient civilizations emerged from and depended upon, was not only the source of their food and sustenance, their way of life really, but it also framed their idea of the passage of time and their sense of “order”.⁶²⁴

Right in the middle of this argument as it were, not just theoretically speaking but actually geographically as well, sits the Indo-Aryan people and the theo-philosophical systems attributed to them and their descendants. The common *mythos* across the ancient civilizations of Eurasia has already been analyzed in detail, but as we search for a deeper meaning behind these ancient creation narratives, or at least the meaning they had to the ancient authors and interpreters of the various traditions, it is to the subsequent theo-philosophical systems which emerged out of

⁶²⁴ This argument effectively aligns with the classic Jungian view, and the one held by Joseph Campbell as well, of the existence of a grand psychological construct which Jung calls the *collective unconscious*, which is the ultimate source of the respective *mythos* of all mankind. E.J. M. Witzel, the esteemed Sanskrit scholar and ancient historian argues however for the existence of a pre-historic and primordial *mythos* (what he deems “Laurasian” within the context of Eurasian ancient historical studies in particular) that follows the *human migration* paths and the subsequent diffusion of ideas as people migrated out of Africa and settled throughout Eurasia. This is the basic thesis of his epic work, *The Origins of the World’s Mythologies*.

the respective traditions themselves that we must look to - and for the Indo-Aryans this is Vedānta, or literally, the “end of the *Vedas*”.

The *Vedas* represent not just the earliest records of the *theology*, sacrifices, hymns and practices of the Indo-Aryans, but they also represent one of the earliest compiled works of literature and intellectual records of civilized man. The Sanskrit word *vēda* means *knowledge* or *wisdom* and is derived from the root *vid*, “to know”. Like many other religious traditions, the *Vedas* are believed to have been revealed directly to the ancient *rishis*, or “seers”, directly from Brahmā, the ancient Creator god of the Hindus, and passed down from generation to generation from teacher to student in a long standing oral tradition and then documented and transcribed by scholars and sages toward the end of the first millennium BCE.

While alphabetic writing does not appear in the archeological record in the Indian subcontinent before the 3rd century BC in the form of the Brāhmī script, a derivative of the Phoenician alphabet just as the ancient Greek alphabet system is, the *Vedas* were not actually written down until centuries later, being captured and passed down from generation to generation via the classic oral method, hence the nature of the text in verse which makes it much easier to memorize and record accurately. It is primarily from the linguistic evidence as reflected in the compiled works themselves that the date of composition of the earliest portion of the *Vedas* is believed to have occurred in the middle of the second millennium BCE give or take (c. 1500-1100 BCE), which means that the verses were orally transmitted for some 1500 years or so until they were finally written down in the first few centuries CE.⁶²⁵

The *Vedas* are the oldest Indo-Aryan Sanskrit texts and are the oldest extant Hindu scripture. Sanskrit was the primary liturgical language of Hinduism and its offshoots Buddhism and Jainism and virtually all of the ancient texts of these religions were authored in Sanskrit. Sanskrit’s position in the cultures of Greater India is akin to that of Latin and Greek in Europe and it has significantly influenced most modern languages of the Indian subcontinent, particularly in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. The pre-classical form of Sanskrit is known as Vedic Sanskrit, and it was the language used in the *Rigvéda*. This qualifies Vedic Sanskrit as one of the oldest attestations of any Indo-Iranian language, and one of the earliest attested members of the Indo-European language family, the family which includes English and most European languages.

The corpus of Vedic texts, all transcribed in some form of Sanskrit, are classically divided into *Samhita* portions, which are collections of *mantras* from the four *Vedas*, the *Brāhmaṇas*, which are prose texts that describe Hindu sacrifice and ritual, and some of the older *Upanishads* which deal specifically with the meaning behind the rituals and the nature of knowledge and reality.

⁶²⁵ See Wikipedia contributors, 'Rigvéda', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 16 September 2016, 10:52 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Rigvéda&oldid=739693206>> [accessed 1 October 2016]

Each of the *Brāhmaṇas* is associated with one of the *Samhitas* and may also include *Āranyakas*, literally “forest texts”, as well as one or more *Upanishads*.

The *Vedas* are a vast set of literature, typically classified into four sets of books or categories, the most ancient of which is the *Rigvéda*, a collection of over 1000 (Vedic) Sanskrit hymns written in the oldest form of language known to be associated with the Indo-Aryan people from antiquity, namely Vedic Sanskrit which is closely related to the language recorded in the *Avesta* literature of the Iranian/Persians, i.e. Indo-Iranians. The *Rigvéda*, give us glimpses into the life of the Indo-Aryan people who first settled and formed complex societies in the Indus Valley region some seven thousand years or so ago, and is also the primary source material of the mythology, rituals and belief systems of these pre-historic people. The *Rigvéda* is classically organized into ten books, called *mandalas* in Sanskrit, and consists mostly of *lyric poems* and *hymns* dedicated to various deities, chief of whom is Indra, the leader of the ancient Indo-Aryan pantheon.⁶²⁶

The other three *Vedas*, which are of similar structure, style and content as the *Rigvéda* speaking to consistent theo-theo-philosophical tradition which they represent, are the *Samaveda*, which is a collection of hymns and verses organized in a similar manner as the *Rigvéda* and which includes verses and hymns which are for the most part also found in the *Rigvéda* as well, the *Yajurveda* which is primarily a compilation of ritualistic formulas and offerings that are to be perfumed as part of the *yajña*⁶²⁷ fire sacrifice ritual, and the latest compilation of the four the *Atharvaveda*, which contains prose and poems verses related to various cultural and day to day rites and rituals which pertain to various medicinal, cultural and socio-political matters, including passages which discuss the meaning of ritual itself, i.e. the Upanishadic portions.

The *Samaveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda* are of similar structure, style and content of the *Rigvéda*, and in many cases (like the *Samaveda* for example), include much of the same material

⁶²⁶ Indra bears many similar traits to that of Zeus, being associated with rain, thunder and the lightning bolt for example, and can also be found in the Indo-Iranian *Avesta* literature as the name of one of the *daevas*, or evil or false gods as well as part of the Mitanni pantheon, a Hurrian speaking people who ruled northern Syria from ca. 1500 – 1300 BCE. In the *Vedas*, Indra is also known for his heroism for slaying the great evil serpent *Vrita*, or *Ahi* ‘snake’. Indra is relegated to a somewhat lesser status in the later mythological Hindu lore reflected in the *Purāṇas* relative to the status of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Agni, and Śiva for example. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Indra', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 30 September 2016, 22:38 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indra&oldid=741983648>> [accessed 1 October 2016] and Wikipedia contributors, 'Purāṇas', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 26 September 2016, 02:20 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Purāṇas&oldid=741209904>> [accessed 2 October 2016].

⁶²⁷ *Yajña* literally means "sacrifice, devotion, worship, offering", and refers to any ritual performed in front of a sacred fire, personified as the great god of fire and sacrifice, Agni, one of the primary deities in the *Vedas*. The Sanskrit word *yajña* is closely related to the Avestan word *yasna* of the ancient Indo-Iranian/Persian theo-philosophical tradition which is commonly referred to in Zoroastrianism, although in the Zoroastrian tradition, *yasna* not only represents the sacrifices and ceremonies themselves, but also is the name given, to the primary liturgical collection of Avesta texts, i.e. the *Yasna*. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Yajña', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 31 August 2016, 11:11 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Yajña&oldid=737038496>> [accessed 2 October 2016] and Wikipedia contributors, 'Yasna', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 21 June 2016, 03:49 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Yasna&oldid=726268311>> [accessed 2 October 2016].

that is to be found in the *Rigvéda* itself, speaking to the existence in Indo-Aryan antiquity of several different “schools” of thought, to use that term broadly, which all stemmed from the same original source material as it were, the oldest stratum of which can be found in the *Rigvéda*, but at the same time had different areas of emphasis and different traditions that were encapsulated in their respective “redactions” or “versions” of Vedic lore. While all three are believed to be of later composition than the *Rigvéda*, but nonetheless all are believed to have arrived at their existing form more or less by the middle of the first millennium BCE, thereby establishing an Indo-Aryan Vedic period of history which runs roughly from the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE to 500 BCE or so and which aligns with the composition of the *Vedas*. Nonetheless, all four of the *Vedas* are considered part of the Hindu theo-philosophical canon as it were and the subsequent various philosophical developments that emerge from ancient India are delineated along the lines as to whether or not the *Vedas* are appealed to as authoritative scripture.⁶²⁸

The *Vedas* represent a core part of the Indo-Aryan theo-philosophical belief system from a very early stage of their civilization development and in the latter half of the first millennium BCE their social structure was architected to reflect this; namely the sacred teachings of the *Vedas* were to be preserved and taught by a learned, priestly class of society, i.e. the Brahmins, while the ruling or governing of society was to be performed by the Kshatriyas (or warrior class), the herders, farmers, merchants and traders were delineated in the Vaishyas class, and the servants or working class was given the denomination of the Shudras. Traces of this stratification, what has come to be known as the Hindu caste system, can be found in the *Rigvéda* and the *Purāṇas*, but is clarified and codified more distinctly in the *Manusmṛiti*, or *Laws of Manu*, which was compiled sometime between the 3rd century BCE and 2nd century CE, reflecting a later socio-political transformation of Indo-Aryan/Hindu society – later than the Vedic period that is.

Parts of the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas*, as well as *Upanishads* explore what have become the theo-philosophical underpinnings of Hinduism, i.e. Vedānta. In these works, we find the roots of Vedānta which rests fundamentally on such notions as *Brahman*, the absolute or underlying nature of the universe, and *Ātman*, or Self, the reflection of *Brahman* within the context of the

⁶²⁸ The *orthodox* Indian philosophical schools, referred to as *Āstika* (literally “there is” or “there exists”), consider the *Vedas* and their underlying philosophy of the unity of *Brahman*, *Ātman* and the existence of *Īśvara* as authoritative and include philosophical systems such as Yoga, Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, Mīmāṃsā, Nyaya and Vaisheshika, and the non-orthodox philosophical systems which although emerged from the same ancient civilization, i.e. the Indo-Aryan peoples of the Indian subcontinent, do not accept the *Vedas* as authoritative, referred to as the *nāstika* (literally “not Astika”) or *heterodox* systems, which include Buddhism and Jainism among others.

individual *psyche*, or Soul. However, it is within the Upanishadic corpus that we find the philosophical foundations of what later came to be known as Vedānta.

Much like the ancient scripture of the Hebrews in the *Old Testament* or the Zoroastrian *Avesta*, or even the classical Greek mythic traditions of Hesiod and Homer, the *Upanishads* and the rest of the Vedic scripture in toto represent an *oral tradition* that reaches deep into antiquity that was only later written down as writing became ubiquitous in the latter part of the first millennium BCE but nonetheless represents an intellectual, theological and “mystical” tradition that reaches far back into antiquity, at least as far back as the advent of Indo-Aryan civilization itself and its supposed shared roots with Indo-Iranian culture and civilization.

The *Upanishads* however, form the philosophical backbone of Vedānta. The Sanskrit word *Upanishad* is derived from the Sanskrit root *sad*, which means to ‘to loosen’ or ‘to attain’ or even ‘to annihilate’, combined with the prefixes *upa* and *ni*, which denote ‘nearness’ or ‘sitting beside’ and ‘totality’ respectively. You can therefore translate the meaning of *upanishad* to mean something along the lines of *that which is attained completely and entirely whilst sitting beside or by*. As understood by Śaṅkara, one of the most influential Indian philosophers of all time from the 8th century CE, the term *upanishad* is in effect a veiled reference to the content of the *Upanishads*, namely *Brahmavidyā*, knowledge of *Brahman*, and *Atmavidyā*, knowledge of Self, or *Ātman*. It is the fundamental unity of *Ātman* and *Brahman* that represents the core tenet of Upanishadic philosophy.⁶²⁹

Vedānta is the term used to describe the orthodox philosophy of the Hindus and is reflected most notably in the *Upanishads*, the portions of the *Vedas* that do not deal with sacrifice or ceremonial worship, i.e. *karma* or *dharma*, but deal with the true meaning and import behind the various sacrifices, rituals and hymns that are described in the *Vedas* - namely the nature of *Brahman*, or the *World Soul*, and its ultimate unity with *Ātman*, the individual Soul. This literature focuses not on ritual or sacrifice, which represents the bulk of the *Vedas* in fact, but on the underlying meaning and import of said sacrifices and the fundamental nature of existence or reality.

Vedānta however, while intellectually and culturally linked to the *Vedas* and Indo-Aryan theosophy as a whole, expounds upon the more esoteric teachings of the *Āranyakas* and the *Upanishads* portion of the *Vedas* and are fundamentally “mystical” or theo-philosophical in nature. These portions of the *Vedas* were intended for use not just by the Brahmins, or Indo-Aryan priests, but also by renunciate practitioners, i.e. the “forest dwellers” as well as a means

⁶²⁹ Vedānta, literally the “end of the *Vedas*”, and is sometimes referred to as Uttarā-Mīmāṃsā, or the ‘latter’ or ‘higher’ inquiry - as juxtaposed with Purva-Mīmāṃsā, or the ‘former’ inquiry which deals with ritual and sacrifice described in the *Samhita* and *Brāhmaṇas* portion of the *Vedas*. Mīmāṃsā means “reflection” or “critical investigation” in Sanskrit.

to understand, or comprehend, the true import and relevance of the *Vedas* as understood by the *rishis*, the original authors of the *Vedas* from deep antiquity.

Although in antiquity Vedānta referred more specifically to the philosophic portion of the *Vedas*, the bulk of the content coming from the *Upanishads*, over time Vedānta took on a broader meaning to represent the body of work and knowledge that in toto interpreted the “meaning” of the *Upanishads*. As such, the three primary sources of Vedānta as a distinctly Indian theo-philosophical system are:

- 1) the *Upanishads*, representing the end of the *Vedas* or the philosophical and mystical portions of the *Vedas*,
- 2) the *Bhagavad Gītā* or “Song of the Lord” from the epic poem the *Mahābhārata*, and
- 3) the *Brahmā Sūtras* which was an attempt at consolidating and synthesizing Vedic philosophy from the 2nd or third century CE.⁶³⁰

The first attempt at compiling and synthesizing the teachings of Vedānta, their interpretation as it were, is contained in the *Brahmā Sūtras* (sometimes referred to as the *Vedānta Sūtras*) which are believed to have been written somewhere around the 2nd century CE. The *Brahmā Sūtras* are part of the Uttara-Mīmāṃsā (Vedantic) tradition and are in essence a summary and compilation of the teachings of the *Upanishads*. It is in the *Brahmā Sūtras* that the teachings of Vedānta are set forth in a systematic and logical order, rather than the scattered and somewhat inconsistent manner which the teachings are presented in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* given their deep historical and sometimes esoteric roots and their focus on sacrifice and ceremonial worship.

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, or the “Song of the Lord” has also, from a theo-philosophical standpoint, played a significant role in the development of Vedic thought over the centuries. The text is a part of the ancient Sanskrit epic called the *Mahābhārata*, of which some of its oldest parts date from the middle or early part of the first millennium BCE, and is undoubtedly one of the greatest epics of all time and is commensurate in stature and influence in the Hindu and Indian tradition as the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* are in the Western intellectual tradition. The *Bhagavad Gītā* is a portion of this mythological epic text and is a narrative of a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Prince Arjuna that takes place on the eve of a great battle of the Kurukshetra War.

⁶³⁰ Vyasa is the supposed author to whom is attributed both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Brahmā Sūtras*, while the *Upanishads* are considered to be the divine inspiration of the *rishis*, or seers, who fully realized and codified the knowledge of *Brahman* as put forth in the *Upanishads*. The three works together are also referred to as the *Prasthanas*, or canonical books, that form the foundation of the philosophy of Vedānta and form the foundation of Hindu religion even to this day.

Arjuna, whose name means “bright” or “shining”, is one of the five Pandava brothers, all sons of Pandu, who are aligned against their cousins the Kauravas, descendants of Kuru, in a great civil conflict that is ravaging the nation. On the eve of this great battle, a battle between cousins and brothers, Arjuna voices to Lord Krishna his great reservations and doubts about the righteousness of the war in general, and more specifically the duty he has as a warrior to kill and fight to protect his family and his country in the name of “righteousness”. Krishna, Arjuna’s charioteer, uses this stage as the pedestal from which he gives his great teaching regarding the nature of the Soul (*jīva*), the importance of duty (*dharma*), the path(s) to liberation (*mokṣa*), the true meaning of knowledge (*jñāna*), the importance of devotion (*bhakti*), and the ultimate grounding of all things and beings in the all-pervading *Brahman* in order to motivate and inspire Arjuna to perform his duty, his *dharma*, and fight.⁶³¹

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Krishna helps Arjuna understand why he must fight, and why it is morally right for him to do so, and his teaching comes to represent a key aspect of Vedānta philosophy as it is interpreted in the Indian philosophical tradition. In the process of his expositions, Lord Krishna expounds upon key Vedic philosophical constructs such as *mokṣa* (liberation), *karma* (action), and *dharma* (righteous conduct), forming the theo-philosophical foundations of not just Vedānta, but Yoga as well, and in the end helping Arjuna understand that while it may seem immoral for him to go to war with his kin, it is nonetheless his duty to do so and it would in fact be immoral to abstain from fighting.⁶³²

The very root of Vedānta however, rests in the philosophy of the *Upanishads*, a set of treatises attached to various portions of the *Vedas* that elucidated upon the true “meaning” of the Vedic rituals, and the underlying theo-philosophical system upon which it was based. Albeit a later development than the *Vedas* proper from an intellectual perspective, it is within the *Upanishads* that we perhaps find the most prolific and poetic expression of Vedānta. The philosophy of the *Upanishads* however is very esoteric, and in some cases can be seen to contradict itself, and to this end many scholars have debated the origins of the material as well as the philosophical implications of the verses themselves.

In this context, the philosophy of Vedānta has three primary interpretative traditions, each of which although shares the basic semantic and theo-philosophical intellectual framework as established and put forth in the *Upanishads* and *Brahmā Sūtras*, nonetheless has its own unique

⁶³¹ Krishna at one point in the dialogue reveals himself as God in a great vision to Arjuna and in this context represents an example of the so-called “avatar” tradition, where God descends from the heavens to take on human form, a marked and unique trait of the Hindu faith. An avatar is a human incarnation of the divine, one who although is none other than the great Īśvara himself, takes human form from time to time in every age to show people the true nature of existence and lay out and clarify the path to liberation for each age.

⁶³² The metaphor is intended of course to not only justify the class differentiation which represented the fabric of ancient Hindu society but to hold Arjuna up to its people as a “shining” example of the just and moral life.

perspective on the underlying *metaphysics* and *theology* as it were. These three schools are Advaita Vedānta, Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, and Dvaita Vedānta, founded by Śaṅkara, Ramanuja, and Madhvacharya respectively.

Probably the most lasting and influential of the three schools of Vedānta is the *monistic*, or *non-dual*, interpretative tradition which is referred to as Advaita Vedānta. This tradition and set of teachings is reflected most profoundly and influentially by the 8th century Indian philosopher and theologian Ādi Śaṅkara, sometimes simply referred to as Śaṅkara.



Figure 36: Ādi Śaṅkara with disciples. By Raja Ravi Varma (1848 - 1906).⁶³³

According to Śaṅkara, *Brahman* is the only reality, and the (mis)conception of the reality of the physical world of distinct subjects and objects is caused by illusory power of *Maya*, the creative

⁶³³ From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raja_Ravi_Varma_-_Sankaracharya.jpg. Public domain.

force, or “veil” as it is sometimes referred to as, which is an aspect of and function of Īśvara, the God of the Hindus, but not a fundamental attribute of reality itself. It is *Maya* which is the underlying source and cause for the individual persona’s (mis)conception to perceive any sort of separation or distinction between the Self or Soul, *Ātman*, and the all-pervading *Brahman* which represents not only the true underlying substratum of all existence of all animate or inanimate life, but also the very nature of *Ātman* itself.

*The thought that what is not That is That grows up in the fool through darkness; because no discernment is there, it wells up, as the thought that a rope is a snake; thereupon a mighty multitude of fatuities fall on him who accepts this error, for he who grasps the unreal is bound; mark this, my companion.*⁶³⁴

Advaita literally means “not two”, or *non-dual* and hence the basic characterization of the philosophical system as *non-dualistic* or *monistic*. Its primary tenet is the fundamental unity of not only *Brahman* and *Ātman*, but also that all of the physical universe, all cognitive beings in fact, are simply reflections of this all-pervasive *Brahman*. Since all of reality is simply and essentially *Brahman*, it cannot be said to possess any attributes per se, and it is only via the power of *Maya*, that our perception of the physical world “seems” real. As such, it is the ignorance of this *true* reality that lies both within and beyond the world governed by *Maya* that is the ultimate cause of all suffering and misery in the world. Therefore, it is through Knowledge, and ultimately *realization*, of the true nature of *Brahman* - and in turn *Ātman* which is essentially equivalent to *Brahman* at its core - that liberation, *mokṣa*, and an end to the endless round of births and deaths, and the suffering thereof, which characterize human existence, is ultimately attained.

The source of the concept of Īśvara, when looked at from this fundamentally *non-dualistic* and *monistic* perspective, stems from the inability of the individual Soul, i.e. the *jiva*, to grasp this very simple and yet at the same time very subtle and abstract concept of the existence of an all-pervading principle, i.e. *Brahman*, in a non-anthropomorphic way. Therefore God, or Īśvara to the Hindus, while a helpful and relevant construct to help us appreciate and come to understand and recognize the “unknowable”, nonetheless also owes its existence to *Maya*, the grand illusion. God, as well as the entire physical world itself in fact, are both equally illusory when looked at from the perspective of full realization and understanding of *Brahman*, i.e. *jñāna* or Knowledge in the most abstract and fullest sense of the term.

⁶³⁴ *The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom, Vivekachudamani*. Verse 138, translated by Charles Johnston. Theosophical University Press Online Edition. From <http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/crest/crest-1.htm>.

Again, from a theo-philosophical standpoint, according to Advaita Vedānta, there is not only no difference between the individual Soul, i.e. *Ātman*, and the fundamental underlying stratum of existence, i.e. *Brahman*, but in fact ultimately there exists nothing else *except Brahman*, and it is only through thorough and complete knowledge and understanding, i.e. *mokṣa*, of this basic characteristic of existence that one's Soul can be truly liberated.

Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta - literally *Advaita* (i.e. “not two”) combined with “uniqueness” or *qualifications* - as expounded by Ramanuja in the 11th and 12th centuries AD, is also a *non-dualistic* Vedantic school, but scholars mostly refer to this philosophical system as *qualified non-dualism*, as opposed to the pure *non-dualism* of Śaṅkara. The main difference between this school of thought and Advaita Vedānta is that *Brahman* is asserted to have real attributes or characteristics that have some level of existence in reality.

This *Brahman* with attributes is typically referred to as *Saguna Brahman*, and include such qualities such as the individual Soul as well as inanimate matter, i.e. the physical world. Viśiṣṭādvaita argues that while it is true that *Brahman* alone is real, but that it is also true that *Brahman* has real, concrete attributes which can be said to exist. These basic attributes, or qualities, are differentiated forms or manifestations of *Brahman* and are also real, i.e. are not illusory as postulated by Advaita Vedānta. Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta ultimately asserts the reality of the physical world, and the Soul, despite the basic truth and reality of the undifferentiated and all-pervading *Brahman* which underpins all of physical existence or reality.

From this *qualified non-dualistic* perspective, *Brahman*, matter, and Soul, are in fact all distinct from each other from a relative standpoint, even though they are in essence inseparable entities and reflections of the indivisible *Brahman*. In this conception of Vedānta then, *Brahman* is said to have “attributes”, and yet at the same time is also “attributeless” – both statements and perspectives are true and valid, i.e. they are not mutually exclusive concepts, and they depends upon one's perspective. Ramanuja argues that all of the main treatises of Vedānta - namely the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Brahmā Sūtras* – can only be interpreted in this way, i.e. that there is unity in diversity, and that *Brahman* is both with attributes and without attributes at the same time and that therefore the physical world and our concept of individuality, as reflected in our concept of the Soul (i.e. the *jīva*) is in fact “real” from a relative standpoint. This school puts forth that it is not through knowledge, *jñāna*, that the easiest and best path to liberation (*mokṣa*) lay, but through *bhakti*, or the path of “devotion”, to God (as represented by Viṣṇu), along with the notion of self-surrender, that are the clearest and best path to liberation.

Dvaita Vedānta, or the *dualistic* school of Vedānta, was founded by Madhwāchārya in the 13th century and probably comes closest to our Western conception of God and the world as we understand it in the Abrahamic theological context. Dvaita Vedānta differs from the Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita schools in that it identifies Viṣṇu directly with *Brahman* completely and in so doing

fundamentally asserts the existence of God as a creative and preserving entity and benefactor of the universe. That is to say, God as a creative principle is not an abstract construct per se, but is a real existing entity. At the same time also admits to, and asserts the fundamental reality of, the physical world and the world of the Soul as well.

Dvaita Vedānta asserts that Viṣṇu is not only metaphysically equivalent and indistinguishable from *Brahman*, and that this entity does in fact exist as the Supreme Self, it also (like Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta) asserts that this Supreme Self does indeed have “real” attributes which also “exists”, i.e. the notion of *Saguna Brahman*. But it also asserts, and this is what distinguished it from the other two predominant schools of Vedānta philosophy, that the best and truest, and in fact only, interpretation of Vedānta scripture as a whole from a theo-philosophical perspective is that while this Supreme Self does in fact “exist”, it’s “essential nature” is fundamentally different from the essential nature of individual souls (*jīvātmans*) and the physical world in toto.

In this light, it regards *Brahman*, all matter, and the individual Soul as eternally existent and mutually separate entities, as opposed to a manifestation of the one eternal substance or essence of *Brahman* as is reflected in the *qualified non-dualistic* and *non-dualistic schools* of Vedānta. This fundamental characteristic of the world, its wholly distinct and separate (albeit somewhat dependent) existence on *Brahman*, is unique to Dvaita Vedānta, hence the *dualistic* nature of the theo-philosophical system.

In this form of Vedānta, sentient beings are but shadows, or images, of the divine, i.e. the Supreme Self as Viṣṇu or *Brahman*,⁶³⁵ but at the same time are not constituted or made up of the same essential substance and in this respect are not “identical” with *Brahman* as is asserted by the *non-dualistic* and *qualified non-dualistic* schools of Vedānta. Given that the sentient and physical world that we as individuals, i.e. *jivas*, inhabit and live in, and (ultimately) are to be liberated from, is distinctive and unique in nature relative to the nature of the Supreme Self, this school also advocates *bhakti*, devotion and worship of the Supreme Self as manifest in Lord Viṣṇu or *Brahman*, as the best and clearest route to liberation. But, distinct from Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, it further expands upon this notion of *bhakti* to include the concept of hatred or separateness (*dvesha*), and indifference towards the Lord, which will lead the *jiva* to eternal hell and eternal bondage respectively, very much akin to the notion of heaven and hell that we find in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theological traditions in fact.

In the *non-dualistic* and *qualified non-dualistic* schools of Vedānta, liberation is ultimately achieved through *knowledge* or, and full communion with, *Brahman* as conceived of as the all-pervading substratum of existence. This knowledge is called *Brahmavidyā*, or literally knowledge

⁶³⁵ In very much the same way as Plato’s Forms, of which the Soul is one, is a reflection of the *form of forms*, i.e. the *Good* or *Best*.

of *Brahman*, and is fundamentally revelatory in nature, whether such revelation comes through knowledge, *jnana*, as put forth by Advaita Vedānta, or via a path of devotion and worship, *bhakti*, as put forth by Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. Fundamental to all of the different variants of Vedānta however, and consistent with any reading and interpretation of the *Brahmā Sūtras* the *Upanishads* or the *Bhagavad Gītā*, is the establishment of the importance of self-realization and liberation, i.e. *mokṣa*, as the goal and end, i.e. purpose, of life. And furthermore, regardless of the school of interpretation, be it *dualistic*, *non-dualistic* or *qualified non-dualistic*, it is *Brahman* as an abstract theo-philosophical construct, again as reflected in the underlying literature of the system itself, that represents the universal spirit that underlies all of the cosmos and all of its creation.

The characteristic Indian theo-philosophical system of Vedānta, as seen through the lens of any of the three primary schools in their respective nuanced metaphysical and theological conception of the meaning of life and the nature of existence as reflected in the *Upanishads*, the *Brahmā Sūtras* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, applies both a rational and cohesive structure to the extensive, esoteric and vast corpus of Vedic “scripture”. Each of the schools, despite their differences, all look to the *Vedas* as the ultimate source of Truth and believe them to have been “revealed” and compiled by the *rishis*, or seers, from antiquity, as well as believe them to be co-existent and co-emergent with the universe itself.

Vedānta philosophy in this context represents not just the pinnacle of the Indian intellect, but also one of, if not the, greatest and lasting contributions of the Indian or Indo-Aryan culture as a whole - one of the most lasting and persistent in the entire world - to the theo-philosophical legacy of mankind. Vedānta as a theo-philosophical system establishes not only the intellectual and metaphysical basis for the direct experience of the divine through the vehicle of the Soul (*Ātman*), i.e. what is referred to as “communion” in the Western theological tradition, but also the intellectual and metaphysical context within which the reality of the physical world, as well as the existence of the Soul (*Ātman*) along with the meaning of life, can be altogether understood. This theo-philosophical tradition from inception in deep antiquity, consistent with the theo-philosophical development in the West in antiquity in fact, recognized the existence of *Brahman*, or God, as well as the Soul, and lays out in painstaking detail and clarity the connection between the two, as well as the means by which the goal of life, *mokṣa* or liberation, is to be pursued and ultimately achieved.

While the Indo-Aryan theo-philosophical tradition as reflected by the *Vedas* is steeped in ritual no doubt, rituals and practices that persist to this day in fact, but the tradition also developed a comprehensive and thorough approach to ascribe “meaning” to these ancient rituals and rites, establishing a parallel and yet still ultimately interconnected and synthesized “interpretation” of

the rituals, rites and practices which were and still remain such a fundamental and profound aspect of Indian culture and society. *Brahman* then, as conceived by the Hindus, is a self-evident construct that was as old as civilization itself, in fact as old as mankind. It was the *Chaos* of the Greeks, the *Nu* of the Egyptians and the *Apsû* of the Sumerian cultures. But the Hindu religious tradition, and in particular in the theo-philosophical tradition that has come to be known as Vedānta, built upon this archaic and anthropomorphic conception of the universe and humanity and expanded upon it, reasonably and logically and for the most part bereft of religious dogma.

Vedānta professes quite specifically that God, *Brahman*, can in fact be “realized”, not just as a philosophical or intellectual construct, but as a fundamental aspect of life itself and that which ultimately gives human life meaning and distinguishes mankind from the rest of the species on the planet. Vedānta holds that not only can God be realized and “perceived” or “seen” in an analogous way as the physical world is “perceived” and that, in its purest and highest form as expressed by Advaita Vedānta by Śaṅkara, that the pinnacle of *knowledge* itself is recognizing this all-pervasive “reality”.⁶³⁶

And to this end, it’s important to understand the source of this knowledge, i.e. Vedānta, is from the eternally revealed *Vedas* themselves, the theo-philosophy being embedded and encoded in the Indo-Aryan *mythos* as it were. With Vedānta we find, like its cousin theo-philosophical system Buddhism, not only a rational approach to the nature of the Soul and its place within the cosmic and universal spectrum of existence, but also specific practices for revealing its true nature. Furthermore, Vedānta just as Aristotle does to the West without the so-called *mystic* or *idealist* element of Plato which he abandoned, also provides a cohesive and comprehensive system of metaphysics from within which the entire universal existence, and of course mankind’s place within it, can be understood, with critical importance held for a sense of purpose and value within the system itself.

In this context then, Indian theo-philosophy can be seen as much more integrated with their overall world view and their history as a culture and society that reaches far back into antiquity, and persisted, like the Chinese, as their civilization evolved and developed. This is reflected not only in Hinduism, which of course is the name given to the “religion” of the Indo-Aryan people, but also in Jainism and Buddhism as well which although are “unorthodox” traditions, i.e. *heterodox*, in the sense that they do not profess the validity and truth of the *Vedas*, they

⁶³⁶ *brahma satyam jaganmithyetyevamrupo viniscaya | so'yam nityanityavastuvivekah samudahrtah*, or “A firm conviction that *Brahman* alone is Real and the phenomenal world is unreal is known as discrimination between the Real and the unreal.” From Ādi Śaṅkara’s *Crown Jewel of Discrimination*, or *Vivekachudamani*, Verse 20, translated with commentary from the Devanagari by Acharya Pranipata Chaitanya. From <http://www.realization.org/download/sankara.vivekachudamani.chaitanya.pdf>

nonetheless are offshoots of this same intellectual development and profess, consistent with Vedānta more or less, the unity of the Soul with the Absolute.

The system of belief which rested on the indivisible nature of the Soul and its integral nature with the source of all things was kept alive in Indian society in a more pure form of religious thought that was divorced from politics and power which was in some sense juxtaposed with its counterparts to the West. It was protected by the personification of these ideas in the likes of Krishna, Buddha and others, and kept alive in the monastic, renunciate societies that interpreted the scriptures for the purposes of illumination and realization rather than for the establishment of authority or power. In Vedānta, *metaphysics* is baked into it and well documented in the theological tradition from the very beginning, whereas to the West the *metaphysics, theo-philosophy*, developed independent of the religious traditions per se. Furthermore, also unique to Vedānta as looked at as an example of a broad and robust theo-philosophical framework rather than simply the core foundation of the religion of Hinduism, you have a tradition that to a great extent continues to flourish today thanks to its reincarnation with the teachings of Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Order which was founded in the twentieth century, culminating in many new translations of the old Vedic texts and their subsequent commentaries. In contrast, the Western intellectual tradition as reflected in the Hellenic philosophical tradition, as primarily reflected in the works of Plato and Aristotle, was swallowed by Christianity (and Islam) in the second half of the first millennium CE and doesn't have a following or modern interpretation as does Vedānta, and its sister tradition of Yoga, today.⁶³⁷

In Hinduism then, and in its branches like Buddhism (for Buddhism is to the Hindus what Judaism is to the Christians, Buddha was a Hindu like Jesus was a Jew) presumed this fundamental distinction between church and state, or perhaps more aptly put this individuation (to borrow a Jungian term) of religion. The Hindus did not codify these separation principles into law per se, as has been done in modern American and European society (i.e. the West) after centuries of religious persecution, but the principle of religious freedom represented a core, integral part of Hindu culture just the same.

And from this social acceptance of the individual expression of the divine, many great sages and seers, known as *rishis*, had been born since the dawn of man that perennially personified this apex and goal of the Hindu religious system - namely the realization of the divine in this very life. The Indo-Aryan theological tradition (which includes Buddhism and Yoga as well as Hinduism/Vedānta) more so than any other allows for, and in fact insists upon, the existence of sages and seers throughout history who literally incarnate the divine and eternal truth underlying the

⁶³⁷ The era of Hellenic philosophy as an active and vibrant belief system which is "practiced" effectively ends with the downfall of Neo-Platonism in the 6th century CE as affected and orchestrated by the then leaders of the Roman (Christian) Empire.

universe and re-establish the core tenets of the *Vedas*, translating the eternal message for each era and each people as the need arises. Krishna, Buddha, and Chaitanya, Ramakrishna and countless others are examples of *incarnations* where God himself is believed to have taken human form to shed light upon the mysteries of the universe.

These great sages, these *rishis*, personified the goal of oneness with the divine, the perception of the kingdom of heaven within, and realized the end of the Hindu scriptures. And they all accomplished this in their own unique way and yet at the same time each of them reestablished the validity of these ancient scriptures, renewing the people's faith in their content and precepts which had been born so many thousands of years prior. To all of these great sages the mind and body, and reason and *logic* itself, was to be used to realize the truth of this oneness. That was its sole purpose of existence. This truth was the great gift that was handed down from the ages from the *Vedas*.

Christianity and Islam, much later religious developments, incorporated some of the metaphysical and philosophical traditions that came before them, namely Hellenic philosophy, but for the most part operate independently of these theo-philosophical traditions in that although some great Christian and Muslim theologians refer to and incorporate some of the Greek philosophical works, they are altogether usurped and modified within their respective religious frameworks in what can only be considered to be a bastardized and utilitarian form. Not so in the Eastern religious and pseudo-mystical traditions, or at least not nearly to the same extent. For example, in modern India, despite its conquest over the millennia by a long list of cultures and their representative religions (Muslim, Christian, etc.), retains a well-established and long standing tradition of spiritual and theological freedom from within which many religious practices and theological traditions have flourished alongside each other for centuries, stemming no doubt from the richness and depth of the teachings of the *Vedas* with their focus on religious practices being tools for individual realization rather than the avoidance of damnation in eternal hell and the notion of original sin, the combination of which perhaps represent some of the most misunderstood and destructive forces of these popular Abrahamic religions.

As reluctant as the author is to feign to have enough knowledge regarding the nature of the mystical experience, or Indian culture and mythology as a whole for that matter, to shed any further light on Ramakrishna as an historical and religious figure than has already been put forth by countless other learned scholars of Comparative Religion and Indian philosophy in the last century, most of whom are arguably much more experienced in the ways of *mysticism* and/or Indian philosophy than the author and are much more familiar with the language of the majority of the source material on the subject, i.e. Bengali and Sanskrit for the most part, the fact remains that Ramakrishna is not just an enigmatic and exemplary figure worth revisiting within the context of this work as whole and many of the underlying premises and theses of the work itself, but at a very fundamental level he represents the most well studied and documented *mystic* who represents perhaps the prime example in the modern era of the rationale or an expansion of the definition of “knowledge” within the Western intellectual system as a whole to include “mystical” experiences, one of the major themes and arguments of this work as a whole.

This debate surrounding the so-called “Interpretation” of Ramakrishna as a *mystic* and religious practitioner, and ultimately the perspective on him as a potential “divine incarnation”, or “avatar”, as it were as defined within the context of the Hindu religious tradition within which he emerges and represents an essential and integral part of, both theologically and socio-culturally speaking of course, effectively begins and is sparked by the publishing of a fairly controversial academic work called *Kālī’s Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* authored by Dr. Kripal and first published in 1995. It is this work that has in no small measure been the source of very vigorous and ongoing debate regarding how to “interpret” Ramakrishna as a religious and historical figure that has evoked, not surprisingly given the underlying theses therein and general tone of the work itself along with many of his self-termed “scandalous” accusations regarding not just Ramakrishna himself, but also the literary tradition that surrounds him which is effectively sourced from the Ramakrishna Order which Vivekananda himself founded.



Figure 37: Paramhansa Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar Temple⁶³⁸

A note on the background of Dr. Kripal who is arguably the center of this discussion, whose theoretical framework and analytical techniques with regards to the subject at hand have been highly criticized, a tradition in and of itself to which the present author has contributed and within the context of this work of course, continues to a large extent. According to publically available knowledge regarding Dr. Kripal, he was born in 1962 and received his Ph. D. from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 1993, with his thesis being on, and representing the origins and

⁶³⁸ In *samādhi*. From Wikipedia contributors, 'Ramakrishna', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 28 December 2016, 19:32 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ramakrishna&oldid=757095381>> [accessed 28 December 2016]. Image by Author Abinash Chandra Dna. In Wikimedia original uploader was Sray at en.wikipedia - Own work, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3245270>

source of, the very same material and subject which eventually made its way into the form of contents that were published initially in 1995 that carry the title, which in and of itself clearly is designed to evoke a strong reaction, *Kālī's Child: The Mystical and Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna*.

Dr. Kripal is by all measures a very well respected academic and scholar in particular within Comparative Religious circles and clearly has a deep background in Comparative Religion, Indian philosophy, Eastern *mysticism* and Western *esotericism*, and more recently it would appear, based upon some of his more recent publications, the Paranormal. Despite his familiarity and mastery of these subjects, at least from an academic and scholarly perspective, he nonetheless rests squarely within the Western intellectual and academic tradition itself, i.e. what the author somewhat affectionately refers to as (borrowing Pirsig's terminology) the "citadel of science". Dr. Kripal also clearly, and not surprisingly given his deep research and analysis of Ramakrishna, also has a strong grasp and intellectual background on Hindu and Indian philosophy in general, albeit – as judged from the contents of *Kālī's Child* specifically, the work which represents the definitive "outsiders" perspective on the subject at hand.

Furthermore, and to his credit, Dr. Kripal also has taken the time to learn and read Bengali in its original source script, which is no small accomplishment in and of itself (the present author in question has no such skill or expertise for example and as such has to rely on the English translations of much of the source material that sits at the heart of the debate in question, material which Dr. Kripal suggest of course which does not accurately reflect or cover the "hidden secret" which arguably rests at the very heart of his arguments and in no small measure represents the source of the heated controversy surrounding his work. It is from his knowledge of Bengali in fact, which he leverages to translate for himself much of the original source material regarding the subject at hand, which he uses to formulate the crux of his argument as it were, and provides the basis for much of the most controversial, and also in turn the most heavily disputed and criticized, assertions and arguments which underpin *Kālī's Child* - to use his language, what he refers to as, the "hidden secrets" that are of a "scandalous" and "sexually erotic" nature that the insider tradition (a term he does not use mind you) has not just closely guarded but has consciously whitewashed and removed from the English translations of said Bengali works (an accusation which he subsequently relaxes to a large extent after his initial publication of *Kālī's Child* in fact) which he has "recovered" from a thorough analysis and review of some of the main Bengali source texts themselves.

These source texts are for the most part first-hand accounts regarding the life and teaching of Ramakrishna that have the benefit of being written in the same language that Ramakrishna spoke and therefore represent to a certain degree a more "accurate" or "direct" line of sight into the events surrounding Ramakrishna's life and teachings that are described therein, and furthermore

has the potential at least to provide a more clear and “accurate” window into the subject at hand, as well as arguably has the benefit of reflecting more directly the precise language and terminology that presumably Ramakrishna himself used. All of which presume of course that the specific socio-cultural and theo-philosophical context of 19th century Bengal and Indian theo-philosophy in general are properly understood and taken into account when interpreting the meaning of, and providing accurate translations of, the underlying said Bengali source material, an assumption that in fact is called into serious question not only by this author, but also by the “insider” tradition as a whole.⁶³⁹ It is these assertions, and especially given the nature and extent, and potent and sexually charged language of said assertions, as well as the related translations and translation techniques in general that Dr. Kripal employs, along with the his overall knowledge and background of the underlying socio-cultural and theo-philosophical milieu within which Ramakrishna’s spiritual life is played out which is the very subject of the source materials in question, that represent the primary elements of criticism in the “insider” tradition’s response to *Kālī’s Child*, to which this author of course piles on to a large extent.⁶⁴⁰

Kālī’s Child however was met with a wide range of fairly extensive and severe criticism by a fairly broad base of scholars, who for the sake of simplicity purposes, we will categorize as representative of the “insider” perspective of the debate in question which is discussed herein at length, a delineation and terminology that is consistent with the description of the debate that is put forth by arguably the most influential and extensive work that represents the “insiders’ perspective, a work entitled *Interpreting Ramakrishna, Kālī’s Child Revisited*.⁶⁴¹ Insiders in this

⁶³⁹ One source in particular that Dr. Kripal uses as the basis for much of the main thrust of his self-proclaimed “scandalous” accusations and/or assertions about Ramakrishna is the first biography that was published about Ramakrishna in fact, in 1886 just after Ramakrishna’s death. The work in Bengali is entitled *Śrī Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahamsadever jivanvrittanta* and was authored by a reliable, albeit householder (i.e. not monastic), disciple and great devotee of Ramakrishna named Ram Chandra Datta, who was the cousin of Swami Vivekananda through which he was introduced to Ramakrishna and who incidentally was a teacher of chemistry and is known, in academic and scientific circles for having invented an antidote for blood dysentery, after which he was appointed a member of the Chemist Association of England. See Wikipedia contributors, ‘Ram Chandra Datta’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2 June 2016, 08:00 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ram_Chandra_Datta&oldid=723305904> [accessed 2 June 2016].

⁶⁴⁰ *Kālī’s Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and teachings of Ramakrishna*, the source of the debate in question, was authored by Jeffrey Kripal, Ph. D. and was initially published by the University of Chicago Press in 1995 and then republished again with significant revisions and edits in 1998, in no small measure in response to, and integrating to at least to a certain degree, wide ranging and broad criticism surrounding the initial publication of the work in question, the Second Edition being the version that is cited and referred to in this work. *Kālī’s Child* also notably won the American Academy of Religion’s History of Religions Prize for the Best First Book of 1995, exemplifying its “acceptance” to a certain degree at least, within the scientific and Comparative Religious academic community at large. A more complete listing of Dr. Kripal’s extensive publications, as well as areas of current research, can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffrey_J._Kripal as well as also at <http://kripal.rice.edu/bio.html>.

⁶⁴¹ *Interpreting Ramakrishna, Kālī’s Child Revisited* by Swami Tyagananda and Pravrajika Vrajaprāṇa with a foreword by Huston Smith published in 2010 by Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, India. The work covers at length the history and evolution of a broad range of source material regarding the life and teachings of Ramakrishna, both first and second hand, since his passing at the end of the 19th century up until the present and represents and reflects the most comprehensive and complete, i.e. the “definitive”, “insiders” perspective on the topic of “Interpreting Ramakrishna” and provides a detailed and comprehensive rebuttal and critique of the “scandalous” assertions made in *Kālī’s Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of*

context refer to those who are members of, or are affiliated or associated with in any way, the theo-philosophical tradition and heritage of Ramakrishna, primarily as established and interpreted in the recasting of Vedānta and Yoga in the West by Swami Vivekananda, a direct disciple of and the spiritual successor of Ramakrishna himself.

These so-called “insiders” are juxtaposed with “outsiders”, i.e. those who are *not* beholden to or have been immersed in the teachings of the life and times of Ramakrishna and his disciples by those who are directly responsible for bringing such message and teachings to the West, namely the Ramakrishna Order. *Kālī’s Child* of course, for better or worse (mostly for worse within the context of this work unfortunately) is the poster child for this perspective, and such is in the unfortunate position of having to bear the brunt of this author’s criticism. These “outsiders”, generally speaking, almost all hail from the Western intellectual and academic tradition, again from within the confines of the “citadel of science”, and have rightfully praised the work for its originality and courage and heralded it as a seminal work in Comparative Religious studies as a whole no doubt reflecting the (albeit ultimately fundamentally flawed from the author’s as well as insiders perspective), attempt at of the analysis of a modern Eastern “mystic” from a classically Western psychoanalytical perspective.⁶⁴²

For the purposes of full disclosure, while one could argue that the author represents the “insiders” perspective for the most part, having been schooled and trained in the art of Yoga and Vedānta by and within the tradition itself as inspired by Ramakrishna and as institutionalized and systemized and brought to the West within the context of the Ramakrishna Order by Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna’s direct spiritual successor.⁶⁴³ The author however does at the same

Ramakrishna which again represents the definitive “outsiders” perspective on said subject. Swami Tyagananda it should be noted is senior and well-respected member of the monastic branch of the Ramakrishna Order, i.e. the Ramakrishna Math branch thereof, and presides over one of the oldest branches of this institution in the United States, namely the Ramakrishna Vedānta Society of Boston which was founded in 1910 by Swami Paramananda, one of the 12 direct monastic disciples of Ramakrishna himself and one of the founding members of the Ramakrishna Order. Swami Tyagananda also serves as a Hindu chaplain to MIT and Harvard and as such teaches classes and seminars on Vedānta there. He is a respected author and scholar himself, albeit from within the “insider” tradition of course.

⁶⁴² This distinction that the author uses to denote the two ends of the spectrum of the current debate which is typically referred to in the literature on the subject as “Interpreting Ramakrishna” as being primarily characterized as between “insiders” versus “outsiders”, which reflects the relative position and perspective of the interpreter with respect to the theo-philosophical tradition directly associated with Ramakrishna and Vivekananda themselves, i.e. the Ramakrishna Order, the organization that was chartered with carrying out the message of Ramakrishna to the world, is taken primarily from *Interpreting Ramakrishna, Kālī’s Child Revisited*. This classification could just as readily be relatively accurately cast within the context of the theo-philosophical, intellectual and geographical (at least in antiquity) lines which are drawn throughout this work as a whole - namely “Western”, which not entirely but for the most part most definitively reflects the “outsider” perspective, and “Eastern”, which is a fairly broad generalization of the so-called “insider” perspective. The two sets of terminology will be used throughout this chapter somewhat interchangeably despite their inherent somewhat subtle distinctive nuances and connotations, however we will for the most part, in this Chapter at least, try to stick to the “insider” vs. “outsider” terminology.

⁶⁴³ The full transmission of Ramakrishna’s spiritual powers to Swami Vivekananda toward the end of his life is actually a very well-defined and documented “event” and represents not just a passing of the torch as it were from Ramakrishna to Vivekananda with respect to carrying on his teachings and looking after the monastic community which develops shortly after Ramakrishna’s passing (which came to form the basis of the monastic order centered around the Ramakrishna Math, one of two pillars of the

time benefit from not falling neatly into either the “insider” or “outsider” camp as he is not directly affiliated with or dependent upon the Ramakrishna Order in any way (despite his clear apologetic leanings thereof which he is very open about), nor is he wedded to or beholden to the academic community in any way either, the so-called “citadel of science” to borrow a term from Robert Pirsig, as Dr. Kripal clearly represents and in many respects is beholden to, and quite literally depends upon for his livelihood, a perspective that should be kept in mind at all times when his views are presented (as accurately and objectively as possible despite the author’s leanings) as they are reflected in *Kālī’s Child*, a work which no matter how much it is criticized nonetheless represents a definitive landmark in the history of the interpretation of Ramakrishna specifically, but also within the Comparative Religious academic and scholarly tradition itself no doubt, regardless of whether or not one agrees with its conclusions or assertions.⁶⁴⁴

First an analysis of the source material that is used and relied upon in *Kālī’s Child* evidence for the account and interpretation of the intense *sādhana* phase of Ramakrishna’s life as being more “true” and “factual” than the so-called standard interpretation of said events as has been inherited in the West by a variety of English translations of biographies of Ramakrishna. Three sources in particular are the most heavily cited by Dr. Kripal, and each is leveraged quite extensively, in both the source language Bengali as well as in English translation in fact depending upon the context, and in toto, depending upon Dr. Kripal’s interpretation and value and context that he attributes to said source text, are used to establish the basis for his thesis - namely that Ramakrishna’s *sādhana*, or practices of spiritual disciplines, are first and foremost best characterized as Tantric and as such lend themselves to be subject to Freudian psychoanalysis to a large extent, especially given the sexual and erotic associations that are attached to the Tantric tradition as a whole from a Western academic and scholarly perspective.

It is once this basic premise is established in *Kālī’s Child*, again that Ramakrishna’s spiritual practices and overall psych-analytical frame of mind is best characterized and viewed through a Tantric lens, that allows him to safely apply a Freudian psychoanalytical treatment of Ramakrishna’s “psyche” through which he is then able to deduce or infer potential sources and/or driving and motivating forces, again from a psychological perspective, that allow him to shed what he believes to be, or describes as new and previously unrevealed and even revelational insights into Ramakrishna as a psychological and erotic being as it were. It is from this intellectual foundation and line of argument, which starts with the characterization of Ramakrishna as a

Ramakrishna Order as it was established by Vivekananda in 1897, but in many respects represents the complete transfer of the spiritual powers, i.e. *siddhis* (spiritual powers that are said to originate from intense spiritual disciplines), as well as revelations and knowledge that Ramakrishna accumulated or acquired during his, and as a direct result of his, extensive spiritual practices or disciplines, i.e. his *sādhana*.

⁶⁴⁴ For a detailed account of the wide ranging reviews on both sides of the “debate” as it were, see Wikipedia contributors, ‘Kālī’s Child’, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 10 December 2016, 19:56 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kālī%27s_Child&oldid=754086111> [accessed 10 December 2016]

fundamentally Tantric spiritual aspirant and therefore neatly aligns and can be understood in a classical Freudian psychoanalytical framework, that provides the intellectual and rational foundations of his basic underlying and overarching thesis which underpins the entire work itself – namely that Ramakrishna’s states of mind, or experiences, which are so well documented in the literature surrounding the *sādhana* phase of Ramakrishna’s life, can be categorized or understood as the direct result of “secret” and previously unrevealed traumatic sexual encounters or experiences as well as repressed homoerotic sexual desires which have been left out of the English literary tradition surrounding Ramakrishna.

The first of these biographies is the first one that was actually published and was authored by Ram Chandra Datta, one of Ramakrishna’s so-called “householder” devotees who no doubt was part of Ramakrishna’s inner circle toward the end of Ramakrishna’s life.⁶⁴⁵ It should be pointed out that according to tradition, it is said that Ramakrishna asked Ram Chandra Datta to wait to publish his book until after his death for if it were published before Ramakrishna is said to have told him that it would hasten his death, as it is well known that Ramakrishna stated that his passing would be a direct result of, and follow shortly thereafter, when he became widely known heralded within the Bengal and Calcutta community as a so-called “incarnation” of God, i.e. when the secret was out so to speak. This biography represents the primary source of much of *Kālī’s Child* “scandalous” and altogether “left-handed” Tantric, and ultimately Freudian, perspective on Ramakrishna’s life and teachings, the verity of which he looks to defend, or challenge as the case may be, relative to the two other primary, first-hand accounts regarding the life and teachings of Ramakrishna, the two of which arguably represent the most widely read and influential works in the West at least, through English translation of course, a translational exercise that is used as one of the arguments in *Kālī’s Child* as one of the primary justifications as to why the “secrets” that he reveals in his work, i.e. are “recovered” from the original Bengali source material, had not been exposed or written about in the West until *Kālī’s Child* was first published in 1995.⁶⁴⁶

The second biography of Ramakrishna that is relied upon heavily in , and arguably which he turns to and quotes the most from, was also written in Bengali and was also written by another of Ramakrishna’s householder devotees, the famed Mahendranath Gupta. The work’s title in Bengali is *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Kathāmr̥ta*, which translates into English as *The Nectar of Śrī Ramakrishna’s Words* and in the English translation which was written by Swami Nikhilananda is entitled the *Gospel of Śrī Ramakrishna*. The English text was initially published in 1942 and includes a lengthy

⁶⁴⁵ *Śrī Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahamsadever jīvanvṛttanta* by Ram Chandra Datta, originally published in the Bengali in 1886 and last published in 1995 by Udbodhan, the publishing branch of the Ramakrishna Order, located in Calcutta, India.

⁶⁴⁶ Dr. Kripal even went so far as to claim, or perhaps better put accuse, the Ramakrishna Order of suppressing some of the more outlandish and “erotic” accounts of Ramakrishna’s *sādhana* as he views them being described from his interpretation of the biography authored by Ram Chandra Datta, i.e. *Śrī Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahamsadever jīvanvṛttanta*. After the work was reprinted by the Ramakrishna Math in the very same summer that *Kālī’s Child* was published however, Dr. Kripal subsequently withdrew this accusation.

Introduction which summarizes Ramakrishna's life and teachings and includes a lengthy summary and description of his spiritual practices as well. The *Gospel of Srī Ramakrishna* is arguably the most widely read of all of the works on Ramakrishna and was very influential in bringing his message and teachings to the West.⁶⁴⁷

Mahendranath Gupta is known within the tradition simply as "M", as this is how he refers to himself in the work itself, much of which is narrated in dialogue form, not unlike the form of Plato's *dialogues* in fact, except that M provides much background material along with the narrative of the *dialogues* themselves, many of which include conversations between and among many of Ramakrishna's disciples. Mahendranath Gupta was a well-respected scholar and academic within the Calcutta intellectual community who worked as a teacher and administrator for the majority of his professional life and who spent a good deal of time, as is documented in his work, directly with Ramakrishna in many intimate and personal settings in the last few years of Ramakrishna's life.⁶⁴⁸

According to tradition, the voluminous and detailed account written by Mahendranath Gupta was sourced from not only very detailed notes that he took during the time he spent with Ramakrishna, but also from his renowned, almost photographic, memory and covers much of the details and happenings of last few years of Ramakrishna's life - basically from the early 1880s until Ramakrishna's passing in 1886. Notably the time period described in this work comes after the period of Ramakrishna's intense practice of spiritual disciplines, i.e. the so-called *sādhana* period, during Ramakrishna's "teaching period" when his followers and subsequent bearers of his message began to flock to him, of which of course Mahendranath Gupta himself was one.⁶⁴⁹

The last of the primary sources of detailed biographical accounts of Ramakrishna's life and teachings which is leveraged throughout *Kālī's Child* was also written in Bengali by one of Ramakrishna's foremost monastic disciples, Swami Saradananda as *Srī Srī Ramakrishna*

⁶⁴⁷ *The Gospel of Srī Ramakrishna: Originally recorded in Bengali by M., a disciple of the Master*. Translated into the English with an Introduction by Swami Nikhilananda, published by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York in 1942, last reprinting in 1992.

⁶⁴⁸ *The Gospel of Srī Ramakrishna: Originally recorded in Bengali by M., a disciple of the Master* was originally written in Bengali by Mahendranath Gupta and was originally published in five volumes in 1902, 1904, 1908, 1910 and 1932 respectively. It was subsequently published in English in 1942 by Swami Nikhilananda by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York which Nikhilananda founded in 1933 and served as the spiritual leader and minister of until his death in 1973. Mahendranath Gupta was also the teacher and spiritual guide of Paramahansa Yogananda (1893 – 1952), a renowned Hindu spiritual leader who was also an influential figure in the introduction of Yoga to the West in the 20th century who is best known for writing the widely read, and arguably quite fantastic, autobiography entitled *Autobiography of a Yogi* which was published in 1946.

⁶⁴⁹ The English translation of the work has been criticized in *Kālī's Child* as having been "cleansed" for consumption in the West, and specific passages are pointed out and compared with the Bengali version of the text and Dr. Kripal argues that in certain passages that contain references or allusions to some of the more sexually charged events of Ramakrishna's *sādhana*, and even some of the sexually charged language itself, was softened in the English translation and in some cases specific words or phrases, or passages even, were intentionally left out by Nikhilananda. See *Kālī's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* by Jeffrey Kripal, Second Edition published by the University of Chicago 1998. Chapter called "Approaching the Secret", more specifically in the subheadings thereof entitled "Recovering the Text" and "Revealing the Secret" on pgs. 3-7.

Lilaprasanga, or *The Divine Play of Śrī Ramakrishna* and was published in 5 volumes between 1909 and 1919. This work is by far the most detailed and well researched account of Ramakrishna which not only includes a detailed history and account of all of the relevant biographical aspects of Ramakrishna's life which includes accounts and perspectives of virtually all people that were associated with, or came into contact with and/or influenced Ramakrishna, but also represents the most technically detailed account of Ramakrishna's spiritual life and experiences, all viewed (appropriately) through the very specific Hindu and Indian theo-philosophical tradition within which Ramakrishna squarely rests. This work is the subject of much criticism in *Kālī's Child* as not only being inconsistent with in many respects with the aforementioned biographical accounts of Ramakrishna that were written by householder disciples, but also as overly emphasizing the Vedantic aspects of Ramakrishna's spiritual practices and to a large degree ignoring and/or deemphasizing the specifically Tantric aspect of Ramakrishna's *sādhana* which of course is the cornerstone of Dr. Kripal's argument and rationale behind his "scandalous" and "homoerotic" interpretation of Ramakrishna that arguably represents the overarching theme of *Kālī's Child*.



Figure 38: Swami Saradananda, the direct monastic disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa⁶⁵⁰

This monumental work was translated into the English by Swami Jagadananda with the alternate title *Srī Ramakrishna, The Great Master* which was first published in 1952. Swami Saradananda was one of the foremost and influential members of Ramakrishna's 12 monastic disciples who went on to serve as the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Order from the time the organization was founded in 1897 until his death in 1927, during which time (after 1902) he also served as the editor of the *Udbodhan*, the Bengali journal published by the Ramakrishna Order. Swami Saradananda also notably was responsible for looking after and caring for Sarada Devi, aka Holy Mother, the holy consort and wife of Ramakrishna, during much of this period. It was in fact from the house that was purchased in Calcutta in 1909 for the purpose of housing and caring for Sarada Devi from which Swami Saradananda performed much of his editing work on the *Udbodhan* as well as where he wrote the bulk of *Srī Srī Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga*. Swami

⁶⁵⁰ Author of *Srī Srī Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga*, the *The Divine Play of Srī Ramakrishna*, translated into English by Swami Jagadananda. Image from Wikipedia contributors, 'Saradananda', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 16 May 2016, 12:40 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Saradananda&oldid=720528858>> [accessed 16 May 2016].

Saradananda is also known for overseeing the construction of the two temples that were built in honor of Holy Mother, one on the spot of her cremation within the grounds of the Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order in West Bengal, which was completed in 1921, and then a second temple that was constructed on the spot of her birthplace in Jayrambati in West Bengal which was completed in 1925.

Swami Saradananda's work, and its English translation, is arguably the definitive Indian theosophical account of Ramakrishna as a spiritual aspirant as seen through the eyes of not only a direct disciple and student of Ramakrishna himself, but also as seen from the perspective of a renunciate and monastic who by definition has dedicated their entire life to "living" or "embodying" the teachings of Ramakrishna. Given that this work was written from this unique perspective, it should come as no surprise that his account and interpretation of Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences differs in many respects from that of Mahendranath Gupta or Ram Chandra Datta, both of whom were householders and therefore were, according to the entire literary tradition surrounding Ramakrishna, were not only subject to a different set of teachings and precepts regarding spiritual life, but whom also clearly led very different lives, with very different pressures and influences, than that of Ramakrishna's monastic disciples of which Swami Saradananda was an exemplary member of.⁶⁵¹

In fact, one of the major criticisms of Swami Saradananda's account of Ramakrishna's *sādhana* and spiritual experiences in *Kālī's Child* - the description and interpretation of which arguably structures the work as a whole and also represents a significant portion of the work itself and is based not only on other first and second hand accounts that were researched as part of the work, but also based upon what Swami Saradananda was taught from Ramakrishna directly - is that in many respects Swami Saradananda's account is inconsistent with the other two biographical accounts that are used in *Kālī's Child* as primary sources.

Furthermore, in *Kālī's Child*, Swami Saradananda (again relative to the other two householder biographical accounts of Ramakrishna that are leveraged as source material) over emphasizes the non-dual Vedānta, i.e. Advaita Vedānta aspect of Ramakrishna's *sādhana* over the "Tantric", or "erotic" and worldly elements of his spiritual practices, which of course runs counter to the very basic arguments and conclusions in *Kālī's Child* with regard to how best to characterize Ramakrishna's spiritual life as a whole which sets the stage for the "scandalous" and "eroticized" interpretation therein. Hence the reason why *Kālī's Child* as a whole tends to discount and/or

⁶⁵¹ For a more comprehensive listing of the wide variety and expansive literature that has been produced in both the East and the West in the last century regarding Ramakrishna, see Wikipedia contributors, 'Bibliography of Ramakrishna', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 15 December 2016, 06:25 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bibliography_of_Ramakrishna&oldid=754919769> [accessed 15 December 2016].

downplay, generally speaking, Swami Saradananda's account of Ramakrishna's spiritual practices, as well as his interpretation thereof, relative to the other two (householder) narratives.

However, it should not come as much of a surprise to the reader, given the different teaching styles and methods that were employed by Ramakrishna depending upon the overall capacity, bent and disposition of the student, that his householder teachings in general would include more "erotic" or "sexual" innuendos and references than those delivered to his monastic disciples, of which again Swami Saradananda was a prominent member of. For at their very core, the monastic disciple has "renounced" physical desires and has specifically taken a vow with respect to the yielding to sexual desires specifically, to serve as an example of the ultimate end and highest manifestation of spiritual life in general from an Indian theo-philosophical perspective. This point is made repeatedly not just by Ramakrishna himself, but again is completely integrated into the Indian theo-philosophical tradition itself within which Ramakrishna was taught and within which his own spiritual practices were performed.

As mentioned, a good portion of Swami Saradananda's work regarding Ramakrishna is spent not just providing detailed technical descriptions and accounts of Ramakrishna's spiritual disciplines and experiences within the specific Indian theo-philosophical context of said practices, but also a detailed account of said experiences as Swami Saradananda understood them based upon his own spiritual practices and disciplines within the very same Indian theo-philosophical context and from the very same vantage point, i.e. that of a total renunciate of the world. This vantage point Swami Saradananda shared with Ramakrishna whereas Mahendranath Gupta and Ram Chandra Datta did not, as they were still creatures of the world to a large extent, despite the fact that they were of course nonetheless ardent devotees of Ramakrishna as well as very deep and profound mystics in and of themselves.

And of course given the spiritual stature of Swami Saradananda himself, as not just reflective of one who has devoted their entire life, the every core of his being, to the teachings of Ramakrishna - which is the very definition of a renunciate or a monastic disciple as viewed relative to a householder disciple in the Indian theo-philosophical and Hindu socio-cultural landscape - but also as one who, as arguably one of the foremost of all of Ramakrishna's disciples and spiritual successors, is an individual who from a "mystical" perspective comes as close as possible, or at least closer relative to the householder disciples in question, to having first-hand experiences that are akin to those which Ramakrishna himself experienced and which he describes and interprets from within the very same Indian theo-philosophical framework that Ramakrishna had his spiritual experiences. In other words, Swami Saradananda was in a very unique position in fact to be able to not just provide unique insights into Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences in and of themselves, but also to bring to bear his own personal spiritual experiences as it related to those of Ramakrishna's as seen through the eyes of a practitioner and follower of the very same

disciplines and forms of worship which Ramakrishna himself practiced, from the very same perspective that Ramakrishna himself had, i.e. as a renunciate in the fullest sense of the term.⁶⁵²

Also very relevant to this discussion here with respect to the merits and perspective of Swami Saradananda's account and interpretation of Ramakrishna's *sādhana* and related spiritual experiences relative to the other two householder accounts are relied on so heavily in *Kālī's Child* is the use and interpretation of a term called *Bhavamukha*, one that is unique in fact to the tradition surrounding Ramakrishna and one that has no precedent within the Indian theo-philosophical landscape prior to him in fact. This term is almost written off due to its limited use in the Indian philosophical literature as a whole, a phenomenon that is referred to as a *hapax legomenon*, a word for whose contextual meaning there exists only a single (*hapax*) occurrence.⁶⁵³

While this is not altogether technically accurate, as the term is used many times throughout all three of the source texts surrounding Ramakrishna that Dr. Kripal relies heavily on, speaking to the overall significance and relevance of the term itself from Ramakrishna's own perspective as he clearly used it on many occasions and in many contexts to describe his state of consciousness specifically, both with householder as well as monastic disciples, the characterization of the phrase as a *hapax legomenon* does nonetheless reflect the fact that the term is used only within the context of the life and teachings of Ramakrishna himself and does not exist in any of the other major Indian theo-philosophical literature that exists before him.

As such, *Bhavamukha* as a theo-philosophical principle which is associated with and co-emerges with Ramakrishna himself, and therefore is defined by, and is basically co-equivalent to,

⁶⁵² We describe Ramakrishna here as a renunciate, despite the fact that he took on a wife, consistent in fact with Swami Saradananda's interpretation of such which basically was that he did so in order to set an example for all householders that one need not be a renunciate monk in order to be devoted to God, or Īśvara (or from Ramakrishna's perspective, Kālī). This does not mean however, that Ramakrishna did not hold to the renunciation of the world as the highest form of worship, as reflected in fact of his famous interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* where he is quoted to have said something along the lines of the true meaning of the *Bhagavad Gītā* is that which comes from when you repeat the words over and over again, which yield the word "renounce" "renounce". Of course from a superficial perspective, superficial in this sense implying that Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi although were in fact "married", they never fully consummating their relationship and their relationship never existed on the "physical" plane, even though from a spiritual perspective they were in fact completely devoted to each other and were partners – as is most prominently reflected in the role that Sarada Devi had in continuing Ramakrishna's teachings and initiations after he passed for example. As is related elsewhere, Ramakrishna at one point worshipped Sarada Devi directly as a manifestation of the divine Mother of the universe, hence the term used in many cases to describe here, i.e. Holy Mother. All of this of course follows more or less Swami Saradananda's account of the "interpretation" of the relationship between Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi, as well as his "interpretation" of the relative merit and value from a theo-philosophical perspective of a monastic spiritual aspirant versus a householder one – the very assertion that is challenged in order to build the argument for the so-called "scandalous" conclusions that are presented in *Kālī's Child*.

⁶⁵³ See *Kālī's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* by Jeffrey Kripal, Second Edition published by the University of Chicago 1998, pg. 157.

Ramakrishna's state of "being" in and of itself as it is reflected, according to Swami Saradananda's account, during the so-called "teaching" phase of his life. A phase which, again according to Swami Saradananda, followed directly after his *sādhana* phase which culminates in his experience of *nirvikalpa samādhī* for a continuous six month period where he was supposedly only kept alive by the kindness of some strange man, an itinerant monk, that forced him to eat.⁶⁵⁴ *Bhavamukha* is very loosely translated into English as "the sweet mood", or "on the verge of the ultimate" but of course carries with it very specific and technical theo-philosophical significance, in particular with respect to Ramakrishna's *sādhana* as a whole. Swami Saradananda relates that the reason that Ramakrishna is told to remain in this state, and again this comes from Ramakrishna himself, is so that he could remain in his physical form for the benefit of his devotees, and in turn for the spiritual benefit of the world in general. For if he did not come "down" to this level of consciousness, down from the state of *nirvikalpa samādhī* which he had remained in for six months, he would have effectively died as all identification with his physical form, his body would have completely dissolved. As such, it was necessary for some level of ego consciousness to remain such that his physical form would persist.

This term *Bhavamukha* emphasizes the "relative" condition and disposition of Ramakrishna's state of mind as it related primarily to the goddess Kālī, and should be viewed as a very general description and characterization of his "state of being" rather than the technical, mystical description of any state of mind per se – like for example the term *samādhī* which carries with it a very specific and relevant theo-philosophical and Indian philosophical historical and spiritual context. It is very relevant and worth pointing out that despite the widespread use of this term by Swami Saradananda throughout his biographical work in toto, a work which he spent a good two decades or research and writing to pull together and which also included and integrated what he was told directly by Ramakrishna himself as one of his most prominent and advanced monastic disciples, the term is almost entirely disregarded, and in fact is directly attacked as inconsistent and irrational, even in the second and wholly revised and updated version of *Kālī's Child*.

And this term that Ramakrishna himself uses, and one which Swami Saradananda in fact takes great pains to explain not just the meaning of but also the significance of, i.e. its interpretation as it were, runs counter to the entire argument in *Kālī's Child* that the primary means, or lens, through which the "proper" understanding of Ramakrishna's *sādhana* in general, i.e. how his *sādhana* is to be "interpreted", is one that is fundamentally categorized by the "erotic", i.e. is inherently Tantric, given the role that Kālī herself and the related symbology surrounding her (as reflected in the statue in the Dakshineswar Temple for example where Kālī stands over Śiva in

⁶⁵⁴ See *Srī Ramakrishna The Great Master* by Swami Saradananda, translated by Swami Jagadananda published by Adhyaksha Srī Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai, India. Sixth revised edition published in 2008. Part III Chapter III, 8-11 pgs. 541-543.

symbolic representation of the cosmic domination of the female over the male which is an inherently Tantric symbol which is covered in detail in *Kālī's Child* as illustrative and exemplarity of Ramakrishna as a fundamentally Tantric devotee) plays in Ramakrishna's devotional life.

But Swami Saradananda's account of Ramakrishna's achievement of the ultimate state of absorption, the direct experience of *Satcitānanda* as it were, after his Vedantic spiritual practices under the direct guidance and instruction of the renunciate monk Totapuri, to the point where he almost gave up his body entirely, and after which he was directly instructed to remain in a very specific state of mind relative to the divine such that his physical form could continue to exist, or persist, that Ramakrishna himself referred to as *Bhavamukha*, signifies very specifically Ramakrishna's fundamental state of being relative to the divine as a human incarnation thereof and is the description that Ramakrishna himself provides for his overall state of "existence" and state of mind in general as it reflects his disposition toward and related to *Satcitānanda*, the very end goal of Vedānta which Ramakrishna fully "realized" as reflected in the state of *nirvikalpa samādhi* which he remained in continuously for almost six months, an accomplishment that for all intents and purposes is super human and has never before been documented within the history of the Indian and Hindu theo-philosophical tradition as a whole.

While it is clear that this very specific Indian theo-philosophical term is very critical to understanding or interpreting Ramakrishna from any sort of psychological perspective, as limited as these frameworks might be, we are left with simply one explanation of the term within the context of the Indian theo-philosophical landscape as a whole, and that is from Swami Saradananda's account, one which is almost altogether discounted in *Kālī's Child* based primarily upon the fact that from a linear, timing and order of occurrence perspective, his division and relative importance or value that he places upon the various aspects or components of Ramakrishna's *sādhana* - the sum total of which in their various parts are however consistent in all three primary source accounts that are used in *Kālī's Child*, despite their different ordering and/or different emphasis in the respective biographical accounts themselves (a fact that the author has already pointed out is easily explained by the fact that the householder teachings and monastic teachings are very well known to have been of a fundamentally different nature, type and emphasis as explained by Ramakrishna himself as well as detailed in virtually all of biographical narratives and accounts of the life and teachings of Ramakrishna).

Within the context of Swami Saradananda's account of the so-called "command" by the goddess Kālī herself of Ramakrishna to remain in the state of *Bhavamukha*, is that it is fundamentally related to, or using Dr. Kripal's linear and very literal perspective on Ramakrishna's *sādhana* phase as a whole (one that is altogether Western in and of itself and is not necessarily the one that is implied and or presumed in Swami Saradananda's work, which at some level should not be surprising given that he is looking to, more so than any of the other biographical accounts of

Ramakrishna, “interpret” and make sense of Ramakrishna as a religious and spiritual figure within the overall Hindu and Indian theo-philosophical landscape that he emerges from and out of. In other words, the rationale that is used in *Kālī’s Child* in order to discount Swami Saradananda’s account and interpretation which is embedded therein is fundamentally flawed in and of itself, applying a certain and very specifically Western intellectual metaphysical framework and benchmark upon it for “accuracy” which is fundamentally foreign to the tradition itself that it is describing and/or interpreting.

According to Swami Saradananda’s account then, this “command” comes from the Mother goddess herself after that after Ramakrishna achieves what he perceives to be, from his own interpretation of the meaning and import of the life and teachings of Ramakrishna of course, one which fundamentally differs from the householder accounts primary because its intention is not just one of the narration of the wondrous and amazing events which came about during their respective association with Ramakrishna, but because it’s very purpose as a work in and of itself is to make sense of Ramakrishna as a religious persona within the context of the Indian theo-philosophical landscape, one which arguably underpins the entire Indo-European theo-philosophical heritage, as is argued and which makes up a significant theme throughout this work.

To discount Swami Saradananda’s account then, based upon a set of entirely foreign criteria to the topic in question is not only flawed, but it undermines the essential argument of *Kālī’s Child* which characterizes Ramakrishna’s *sādhana* as primarily Tantric, which is not just inconsistent with Swami Saradananda’s perspective but is almost diametrically opposed to and fundamentally different from said perspective. Furthermore, the very fact that Dr. Kripal calls into question the validity and importance and relevance of Swami Saradananda’s account in general, again based primarily upon the application of a wholly foreign set of criteria with respect to “accuracy”, given Swami Saradananda’s place within the inner circle of Ramakrishna’s monastic disciples, as well as the consistency of Swami Saradananda’s account of the interpretation of Ramakrishna’s *sādhana*, and the meaning or interpretation of it as understood by the term *Bhavamukha* specifically (more below), with virtually the entirety of Swami Vivekananda’s interpretation of Ramakrishna as it should be understood as a reflection of Ramakrishna’s message, meaning and “interpretation” as a whole, not just calls into question the rational foundations of *Kālī’s Child*, but also implies that the “Western” perspective is more “accurate” or “true” than the “Eastern” or “insider” perspective which is reflected first and foremost in the teachings of his monastic disciples, namely Swami Saradananda and/or Swami Vivekananda themselves, both of who were not only intimate consorts and students and disciples of Ramakrishna of course, and as such were subject to his teachings both from a literal and intellectual perspective but also from a spiritual and experiential perspective as well and therefore were in the best possible position, relative to any specific individual who has ever existed or who will ever exist in fact, to “interpret”

Ramakrishna and any assertion to the contrary is not only (as much as the author is reluctant to use such strong language) represents the very height of arrogance as well as the very height of ignorance, and furthermore reflects at a very basic level an undercurrent of racism that continues to persist in academic circles with respect to the relative importance, validity and overall value of classically Western intellectual frameworks over the alternative classically Eastern intellectual frameworks (an ontological question that is dealt with at length below).

Given this context then, and placing a great deal of significance and importance to Swami Saradananda's account and interpretation of Ramakrishna as well as Swami Vivekananda's which can be viewed as a reflection of the entirety of his message in fact, the way Swami Saradananda describes *Bhavamukha* is as the very ultimate state of consciousness or existence that any human form can manifest or experience on a consistent basis and still remain in said human form. Again the term is defined, in a somewhat circular fashion again, as "the" very definition of Ramakrishna's state of mind in relation to the divine, that he manifests for the rest of his life after his *sādhana* phase, i.e. his Teaching phase.

Swami Saradananda then describes it within the context of the overall Indian the-philosophical landscape, using terminology that anyone familiar with Yoga, Sāṃkhya or Vedānta would be intimately familiar with – i.e. in terms of *Saguna Brahman* versus *Nirguna Brahman*, *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, in terms of the overall validity and spectrum of relative truth to all three basic Vedānta schools, i.e. *non-dualistic*, *qualified non-dualistic*, and *dualistic*, etc. – the sum total of which Swami Saradananda makes a point to express should be understood, as it was expressed and taught to him by Ramakrishna himself (maybe not using that language necessarily but is nonetheless an expression of Ramakrishna's teaching nonetheless according to Swami Saradananda), as all being real and true, simply being terminology that is used depending upon the specific (Indian) theo-philosophical perspective of the aspirant in question, i.e. the *sādhaka*.⁶⁵⁵

In fact, left out of this very detailed account and description by Swami Saradananda of *Bhavamukha* as a theo-philosophical construct which is reflected and manifest in Ramakrishna himself, is the very methodology and theo-philosophical framework that is used in *Kālī's Child* as the most "accurate" way to "interpret" Ramakrishna, i.e. Tantra Yoga which is based upon the *dualism* of the Female and Male primordial (and erotic) principles of the universe which are manifest in the divine interplay of Śakti and Śiva. While Swami Saradananda does express and define *Bhavamukha* in terms of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, the basic *dualism* that sits behind Sāṃkhya philosophy, this is not equivalent to the Tantric notions of Śiva and Śakti, even though they

⁶⁵⁵ See *Srī Ramakrishna The Great Master* by Swami Saradananda, translated by Swami Jagadananda published by Adhyaksha Srī Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai, India. Sixth revised edition published in 2008. Part III Chapter III, 7-22 pgs. 540-550.

“might” be related, with emphasis on might here because the relationship is not altogether clear. There is a notable ignorance displayed in on the nature and subtleties of the relation between this distinct and yet altogether related (related in terms of common origins and parent rather than related to each other as one being the direct descendant of another, a very significant difference especially within the context of the overall argument for characterizing Ramakrishna’s *sādhana* as fundamentally Tantric) in his description of Sāṃkhya philosophy and its underlying theo-philosophical relationship to Tantra Yoga.⁶⁵⁶

What is very interesting here, and another very important point that is entirely overlooked in *Kālī’s Child*, is that Swami Saradananda’s description of *Bhavamukha* is given within the context of the overall (orthodox) Indian theo-philosophical landscape where no school is perceived to be false necessarily, but that all schools should be viewed as true along a relative spectrum of existence that is fundamentally measured by the degree of “I” consciousness that exists, with Advaita Vedānta existing on one end of the spectrum, arguably the “highest” or “most complete” description of reality or the fundamental nature of existence and then the *dualistic* form of Vedānta arguably representing the lowest, or other end of said spectrum where the “I” of the *sādhaka* continues to exist in order to, and is defined relative to, Īśvara as the focus of the *jiva*’s worship. As such, this entire theo-philosophical landscape is described not just in terms of Vedānta – in again its *non-dualistic*, *qualified non-dualistic* and *dualistic* forms – but also in terms of Sāṃkhya philosophy as a whole (*Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*) as well as of course Yoga which is where the term *samādhi* is sourced from to begin with.

What we are left with of course, is almost exactly the same teaching of Swami Vivekananda even though this teaching is cast in a somewhat more different, and more simplified, light – i.e. within the context of four different aspects of Yoga, namely Jnana Yoga, Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga - which all work together for the ultimate *mokṣa*, or liberation of the *sādhaka*, or spiritual aspirant. The only real difference between the two teachings – Swami Saradananda’s and Swami Vivekananda’s – is really one of emphasis and focus rather than one of import or

⁶⁵⁶ See *Kālī’s Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* by Jeffrey Kripal, Second Edition published by the University of Chicago 1998, pgs. 148-149 in the sub-chapter entitled *Philosophical Roots: Sāṃkhya* which is under the broader Chapter heading of “Kālī on Top of Śiva”, right before his explanation of, and ultimate argument discrediting Saradananda’s account of, *Bhavamukha* where he describes Saradananda’s description of such a state as “Platonic” to a large extent, which reflects a fairly fundamental misconception of Platonism - for the way the Swami Saradananda describes the notion of *ideas*, the *Divine Intellect* and *emanation*, they do in fact exist within the Platonic tradition, but they are more a function of the penultimate form of Platonism, i.e. Neo-Platonism (as reflected in the works of Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus, and perhaps most poignantly by Proclus) which does in fact share many of the same characteristics of Sāṃkhya philosophy as it is framed within the context of *Puruṣa*, or the Supreme Self and *all-pervading consciousness* in its material aspect as *Prakṛti*, which combines with *Puruṣa* in various forms to establish the ground of the physical (and mental) universe. Kripal’s view is reflective of not only a somewhat restrictive and limited interpretation of not only Hellenic philosophy - seen in the context of its influence on not just early Christianity but also in Islam as well in the Muslim philosophical tradition - but also a somewhat limited view of Indian philosophy as well, which is reflected for example in his very broad brush classification of Ramakrishna as a Tantric *sādhaka* rather than as a true sage, or *rishi*, in the full context of Indian, really Upanishadic, philosophical tradition from which he emerges.

content. That is to say Swami Saradananda's is put forth to explain and interpret Ramakrishna specifically and Swami Vivekananda's teaching is put forth as a "translation" of Ramakrishna's message for all humanity in terms that are approachable and practical and comprehensible to the West in general.

Both teachings, both interpretations of Ramakrishna's true meaning and "message" however, nonetheless rest not only on the very same (Indian/Hindu) theo-philosophical framework which is a much more broad and fully integrated view of all orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, i.e. those that rest on the ultimate verity and truth of the *Vedas*, which is reflected in Swami Vivekananda's recasting and more broad definition of Vedānta that we find as a common theme that is prevalent throughout all of the literature that he leaves behind in fact that reflect this set of teachings.

Furthermore, both Swami Saradananda's interpretation as well as Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of the true message of Ramakrishna also rest on the very same principle of the ultimate truth of the entire spectrum and interpretations of the "entire" Indian theo-philosophical landscape into a single, unified whole. This is the modern version of Vedānta that Swami Vivekananda teaches, is the very same theo-philosophical language and description that Swami Saradananda uses to describe *Bhavamukha* as the penultimate term to describe Ramakrishna's teaching phase of his life, or his state of existence after his *sādhana* phase – an understanding of which arguably any interpretation of him must rest in fact. In fact, one of the reasons why Dr. Kripal is so apt to "misinterpret" Ramakrishna as fundamentally Tantric is because he clearly does not appear to grasp the true significance and import of said recasting of Vedānta as it is described by both Swami Saradananda and Swami Vivekananda. He chooses to take a narrower definitional perspective on this theo-philosophical system, as reflected in Ramakrishna's *sādhana* under the guidance of Totapuri specifically, rather than how the term is used in all of the "interpretative" literature that surrounds Ramakrishna after his death by his monastic disciples, the ones that are put in charge of bringing his "message" to the world in fact.

Needless to say, this entire dimension of Swami Saradananda's description of *Bhavamukha* and its ultimate almost complete and total alignment with Swami Vivekananda's teachings, are completely lost on Dr. Kripal and are buried, or perhaps more aptly put altogether ignored, in lieu of the fact that Swami Saradananda's narration and ordering of the events of Ramakrishna's *sādhana*, as well as the relative emphasis that he places on Vedānta in general (again this more expansive sense of Vedānta that we describe here) over Tantra Yoga, and the fact that he almost virtually ignores Tantra entirely as a means to best interpret Ramakrishna, is used to not better understand how to interpret Ramakrishna but is used as an argument as to why Swami Saradananda's account should be discounted, and fundamentally ignored really.

What is entirely ignored in *Kālī's Child* (or perhaps what is just quite simply overlooked because it flies in the face of the overall thesis) is that it *should* be expected that Swami Saradananda's account and understanding of Ramakrishna's *sādhana* is different than the accounts of Mahendranath Gupta as well as Ram Chandra Datta, or from any other householder disciple of Ramakrishna for that matter, as it is very well documented throughout the entire tradition surrounding Ramakrishna in fact (and is a very consistent and widespread characteristic of Yogic and Eastern theo-philosophical traditions in general) that the teaching methods, tools and practices that are "prescribed" or given to monastics is of a wholly different nature than that given to so-called "householders", i.e. those who were not in a position to "renounce" the world for whatever reason.

Ramakrishna's teaching style follows this tradition quite strictly in fact, and not only do we find extensive evidence and accounts of the description and general characterization of Ramakrishna's teachings styles, dictums, methods, emphasis and even underlying overall approach and understanding of the divine tailored to each of his students and disciples, given their own strengths and weaknesses as well their own individual psychological and socio-cultural backgrounds and predilections, but also widespread and very well documented accounts that in general, Ramakrishna's teachings to monastics and householders was of an altogether different type and emphasis altogether, no doubt stemming from the fact that Ramakrishna understood well in advance of the founding of the Ramakrishna Order by Vivekananda that the pressures and stress that his monastic disciples would undergo and pass through after his passing and after his "work" in the world would begin, spear headed by Swami Vivekananda of course, would be of an altogether very different and unique nature relative to his householder disciples which would remain "in the world" so to speak.⁶⁵⁷

Ramakrishna's monastic disciples in fact, and clearly Ramakrishna knew this, would not only be subject to the highest moral and ethical standards in fact, standards viewed within the context of an ascetic and monastic theo-philosophical tradition within India that was at least 3 millennia old (if not older) but also would be the subjects of a more direct, complete, and more full realization of the spiritual "realities" and "experiences" which Ramakrishna himself experienced and which he passed on directly to them, as the monastics, given the extent of their dedication and commitment, would be by definition capable of "withstanding" such revelations and thereby coming to a more complete and better "understanding" of the nature of existence and the

⁶⁵⁷ This practice can even be found within the Western intellectual tradition at its roots, as exemplified in the tradition surrounding Plato and his so-called *unwritten teachings* or "doctrines" which Aristotle alludes to and which are also referred to, albeit somewhat indirectly, in the so-called *Seventh Letter*, the one letter if any that is actually ascribed to Plato himself by most scholars.

meaning of his *sādhana* in general, than his householder disciples.⁶⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, the teachings that were delivered and instructed to Ramakrishna's monastic disciples was of a more intense and "renunciate" and *non-dual* nature, at least according to Swami Saradananda and Swami Vivekananda) characterization and interpretation of his teachings. Relative of course to the teachings given to the householder disciples which, not surprisingly, would be of a more "worldly", or perhaps even "erotic", i.e. Tantric, nature.

Furthermore, not only is Swami Saradananda's account of Ramakrishna's life and teachings discounted throughout *Kālī's Child*, but also Swami Vivekananda's teachings and thoughts regarding the true meaning and import of Ramakrishna's life and teachings, of which in fact the entire corpus and life work of Swami Vivekananda represents in fact, are also almost entirely ignored in *Kālī's Child*. And anyone with familiarity with Vivekananda's massive corpus of English texts on Indian philosophy in general, and on Vedānta and Yoga in particular, can readily see that Vivekananda's teachings are much more aligned with, and in many respects remain perfectly consistent with (not surprisingly) Swami Saradananda's depiction of Ramakrishna as reflected in his biography of him which includes of course an implicit "interpretation" and understanding of not only Ramakrishna's *sādhana*, but also the final message and import of his spiritual practices as is to be taught and carried on, primarily by his monastic disciple – NOT in fact by his householder disciples who were delivered an altogether different perspective and account of his spiritual experiences as well as how they should be interpreted from a practical standpoint given their lives as householders.⁶⁵⁹

As a further significant defect in *Kālī's Child* with respect to which sources are looked to as "authentic" or most true, or what sources again are included at all, it is important to point out that virtually no mention is made or any significance attached to the teachings or stories regarding Ramakrishna from his spiritual consort and wife, Sarada Devi, despite the fact that she

⁶⁵⁸ As an anticipated response to the question as to how Ramakrishna would know in advance which of his students would in the future end up being monastic disciples versus which would remain, or choose to live, in the world – i.e. "householders" - there are many documented cases recorded in the biographies and accounts of Ramakrishna's life where it is related that Ramakrishna knew in advance which of his students would end up being monastic disciples, in many cases way before they ended up renouncing the world and becoming so-called "monastics" in fact. It is with this foreknowledge, one of the most common and well documented of the so-called *siddhis*, or powers, of great realized spiritual teachers that Ramakrishna was able to delineate which of his students fell into monastic and householder camps and thereby would instruct them accordingly, again generally speaking.

⁶⁵⁹ In fact, no mention is made or any significance attached to the teachings or stories regarding Ramakrishna from his spiritual consort and wife, Sarada Devi, despite the fact that she was his spouse and shared a house with him for some 20 years and was his spiritual successor in many respects as well, tasked with continuing his work to a large extent with respect to initiating and teaching spiritual aspirants and students and delivering and passing on the basic message of his teaching to them, as Swami Vivekananda and the rest of the monastic disciples of Ramakrishna who founded the Ramakrishna Order were held responsible for. At one point in fact, in again a very well documented incident by M., Ramakrishna directly worshipped Sarada Devi as a manifestation of the divine Mother of the universe, and as such one would think – especially if one were trying to understand Ramakrishna through a very narrow Tantric lens, that her understanding of him as a spiritual aspirant and teacher, as well as what his overall message and meaning and import was, would be consulted.

was his spouse and shared a house with him for some 20 years and was his spiritual successor in many respects as well, tasked with continuing his work to a large extent with respect to initiating and teaching spiritual aspirants and students and delivering and passing on the basic message of his teaching to them – just as in fact Swami Vivekananda and the rest of the monastic disciples of Ramakrishna were tasked with who founded the Ramakrishna Order. At one point in fact, in again a very well documented incident by M., Ramakrishna directly worshipped Sarada Devi as a manifestation of the divine Mother of the universe, and after doing so remained in a very high, ecstatic state of divine bliss for some time thereafter. Given the importance and significance of such an event, as well as the importance and significance of the role of Sarada Devi within Ramakrishna's life and teaching in general, one would think – especially if one were trying to understand Ramakrishna through a very narrow Tantric, i.e. erotic and sexual lens, that her understanding of him as a spiritual aspirant and teacher, as well as what his overall message and meaning and import was, would be consulted and in fact highly regarded. But that is in fact not the case. Furthermore, and of course related to this very point, If one is attempting to frame Ramakrishna's psychological mindset and characterize his spiritual practices in toto in terms of the basic and primordial conception of the universe as the interaction and interplay of the Male (Śiva) and Female (Śakti), one must arguably closely analyze these very principles within the context of his marital life, i.e. as it manifested most concretely and directly in his relationship with his wife, i.e. Sarada Devi (1853 – 1920), aka Holy Mother.⁶⁶⁰

Again, how this very important distinction between the two arguably quite distinctive approaches and methods, and in turn no doubt underlying theo-philosophical frameworks within which said methods and teachings were given, which is clearly outlined in virtually all of the biographical and historical accounts of Ramakrishna be they originate from the accounts of householder or monastic devotees, is missed in *Kālī's Child* is somewhat incredulous in fact and reflects either a) a fundamental misconception and misunderstanding of the transmission methods of the Eastern, and in this case more specifically Indian, theo-philosophical tradition as a whole (which go back thousands of years in fact as reflected in both the Indian philosophical tradition, which includes Buddhism), b) reflects a conscious disregard of such fact when considering the evidence and context of the source material in question.

The latter option is of course the more serious accusation of the two, but either alternative rationale (or some third option that the author has not conceived of) is almost superfluous and inconsequential as it relates to the irrefutable conclusion that must be drawn that *Kālī's Child's* contextual misapprehension and misunderstanding of the tradition surrounding the transmission of Indian theo-philosophy as a whole, within which Ramakrishna squarely sits of course no matter how you choose to characterize the emphasis of his *sādhana* (more on this below), represents a

⁶⁶⁰ Sarada Devi and/or Holy Mother s not included in the index to *Kālī's Child* even once.

major, and almost completely destructive and dare we say catastrophic, failure of the rational basis for virtually the entire thesis that is presented in *Kālī's Child*. A thesis which rests on the assumption that Ramakrishna's *sādhana* should be characterized and viewed through a primarily Tantric, and therefore through a sexually charged and "erotic" lens (which is only one aspect of Tantra in fact, more on this below) which is more prominently reflected and emphasized in the sources documented above which were authored by so-called "householders" disciples and students of Ramakrishna.

In fact *Kālī's Child* consistently and persistently emphasizes that these "householder" biographical sources are more authentic and represent a more "accurate" and "truthful" narration of the description of Ramakrishna's spiritual life and experiences than the account given by Swami Saradananda – when in fact the reverse is actually true from a pure philosophical perspective as anyone with any direct experience with the transmission practices and methods of Eastern philosophy and spirituality would attest to. This very narrow selection of source material, combined with his very narrow interpretative lens that is used, along with the arguably invalid or misrepresentation of the relative potency or authenticity of the limited resources that are used, all add up to very significant, fundamental and inherent rational and logical flaws that underpin the entire argument and thesis of *Kālī's Child* and therefore call into question any conclusions or perspectives that are drawn therein on the life and teaching, and ultimate "interpretation" of Ramakrishna.

Next let us analyze the basic underlying assumption which sits at the very heart of Kripal's assessment and basic characterization of Ramakrishna's *sādhana* as fundamentally "Tantric", an assessment and categorization which rests at the very heart of *Kālī's Child's* conclusions regarding the source and nature of Ramakrishna's behavior as being most accurately viewed within a sexual and erotic context and therefore lend themselves to interpretation by a classically Freudian psychoanalytical intellectual framework and as such are "explained", or in turn best "interpreted" as a direct result of repressed homoerotic tendencies and/or are the result of traumatic sexual experiences that he experienced during and throughout his *sādhana*, a period which lasts some 12 years and which culminates in his 6 month absorption in *nirvikalpa samādhi* (what is described in *Kālī's Child* incidentally as a "catatonic" state) after which he claims to have been directed by Kālī herself to come back down to "reality" and serve humanity in a state which is referred to by Swami Saradananda as *Bhavamukha*, a term and a state that is challenged quite directly in *Kālī's Child* as inconsistent with the other, i.e. householder, descriptions of his spiritual experiences on the basis of what Kripal refers to as Saradananda's basic misunderstanding and misrepresentation in fact of Ramakrishna's entire *sādhana* practices in their entirety.

Part of the uniqueness, and one of the major challenges in fact, of classifying Ramakrishna within this basic Hindu and Vedic theo-philosophical and spiritual landscape in fact is that his *sādhana* was so extensive, and so exhaustive in many respects at least from a Hindu and Vedic perspective, that it is difficult to uniquely characterize or qualify Ramakrishna as a practitioner or adept under just one specific school of Hindu or Indian theo-philosophy. His *sādhana* phase of his life, according to most accounts, took place for a period of almost 12 years and, according to Swami Saradananda at least, culminated in his experience of total absorption in the Absolute (*Brahman* or *Satcitānanda* according to the Vedic philosophy) according the tradition of Advaita Vedānta which Ramakrishna studied under the wandering ascetic monk Totapuri.

These broad ranging set of spiritual disciplines and practices that Ramakrishna followed at one time or another over the course of his lengthy and intense phase of *sādhana* during the middle period of his life when he served as the high priest at the Kālī Temple at Dakshineswar Temple near Calcutta ranged from an Indian and Hindu perspective across Tantra Yoga (as taught to him by the female ascetic and teacher Bhairavi Brahmani), to classic “Vedic” (in particular that of the Advaita Vedānta school as expounded by Śaṅkara which Ramakrishna practiced under the guidance and tutelage of Totapuri), as well as various forms of Bhakti Yoga, or devotional forms of Hindu worship, such as Vaishnava Bhakti and Rāma Bhakti to name the most prominent and well documented examples. He even practiced spiritual disciplines and modes of worship of non-Hindu religious traditions and spiritual practices as reflected by his foray into Islam as well as Christianity, again making it even more difficult to not just classify him within the context of the Hindu/Vedic theo-philosophical tradition as a whole, but even to classify him within the context of simply the Hindu religious tradition as a whole.⁶⁶¹

This conundrum, mystery and unique attribute of Ramakrishna spiritual practices which are arguably the most well documented in the history of “prophetic” like historical figures in the history mankind, is arguably *the* defining characteristic of Ramakrishna as a spiritual “seer” and religious figure and therefore represents perhaps one of the biggest challenges from an interpretative standpoint in fact, to try and understand him through a classical, and predominantly Western of course, intellectual framework such as is reflected in the more modern discipline of Comparative Religion within which Dr. Kripal as an academic and a scholar squarely rests. The breadth and expanse of Ramakrishna’s spiritual practices, which really defy simply categorization and/or classification, is arguably one of the main sources and reasons behind the so-called “insider” versus “outsider” sides of the “Interpreting Ramakrishna” debate as it is framed and discussed herein and arguably is also one of the main reasons why he has such an enigmatic and influential, and again in the context of this particular debate, as controversial

⁶⁶¹ According to tradition, Ramakrishna reached the summit, or pinnacle of each of these disciplines.

as figure as he is, almost defying definition or classification of any sort from any sort of specific or narrowly defined theo-philosophical or religious perspective in fact.

This unique characteristic, or “quality” which is a hallmark of Ramakrishna and the theo-philosophical tradition that surrounds him as a whole, as it is reflected both in the events of his life (which are all very well recorded and documented) as well as with respect to his so-called “teachings” as we have come to understand them through the eyes and texts that have been left behind by many of his closest confidantes and students, is one of the main sources of confusion, and in turn misunderstanding or misconception, of how Ramakrishna is to be “interpreted” or again “understood”, not just an historical and influential religious figure, but as a psychological phenomenon in and of itself.

The term *sādhū*, is a Sanskrit word which literally translates as “holy man” and is the term given to a Hindu religious ascetic or holy person. It comes from the same root as the Sanskrit word, *sādhana*, which as has been pointed out throughout this work signifies Vedic and/or Hindu “spiritual practices” which in and of themselves serve to define and classify said *sādhaka* into one or more specific schools of Indian philosophy. As such, a *sādhaka* can be said to be “classified” or “characterized” by the specific *sādhana* that they practice.

The standard interpretation of the wide range of *sādhana* that was practiced by Ramakrishna, and again this comes from the direct first hand sources who were taught by Ramakrishna himself, most notably of course by his spiritual successor Swami Vivekananda, is that the breadth of his *sādhana*, and the assertion that he effectively “fulfilled” or “realized” the goal of each and every type or class of *sādhana* that he practiced not only represents one of, if not the, defining characteristic of Ramakrishna as a spiritual and religious figure in the history of the world. And that in light of these facts, his defining message, if it can be articulated or summed up in a single sentence or idea, is that Ramakrishna as a religious figure in and of himself reflects and exemplifies, and in turn embodies more less the concept or proof of, the so-called “harmony” of all religions.

Put in another way, Ramakrishna’s spiritual practices when looked at in toto, operating under the assumption that he did in fact realize the very end or goal of each and every set of *sādhana* that he practiced or “underwent”, effectively “proves” that the end of all religious systems, their penultimate goal, is precisely the same despite their seemingly broad range of superficial differences – and that this in turn is the best, and simplest, way to “interpret” Ramakrishna in the modern era that is characterized from a religious standpoint as one of strife and conflict and a focus on religious (and racial) differences as opposed to the ultimate truth that they all fundamentally at their core carry the same message. This message is summed up in the Vedic

adage that is used so often within the “insider” community, “*Truth is one, sages call it by various names*”.

This very unique characteristic that is fundamental to Ramakrishna both as a religious practitioner and teacher, and which is also reflected in his *sādhana* as well in toto, is arguably one of the main reasons behind some of what can only be described as the very basic and fundamental misinterpretations or misconceptions of Ramakrishna that are presented in *Kālī’s Child*. In this work, there is a far-reaching attempt to “interpret” or perhaps better put “frame” Ramakrishna’s spiritual practices as much as possible squarely within the discipline and context of “Tantra”. *Kālī’s Child* goes to great lengths to emphasize Ramakrishna’s Tantric spiritual practices and disciplines relative to the other, very well documented and studied, other types of spiritual practices and disciplines that Ramakrishna also practiced, many of which fall outside of Tantra Yoga as a spiritual discipline no matter how broad a definition of Tantra Yoga is used.

Once he does this, given the erotic and sexual connotations and symbols that are inherent to and characterize the spiritual practices and disciplines that typically fall under the heading of “Tantra Yoga” as it is understood in the West in the modern era (most notably in the so-called “left-handed” path of Tantra, more below), this allows *Kālī’s Child* to then categorize and describe Ramakrishna’s behavior, and in turn make certain presumptions about his state of mind and/or the driving force behind such behavior, based upon the standard, modern, Western psychoanalytical theory, i.e. Freudian psychology. This is the basic and overarching outline of *Kālī’s Child* and it all fundamental rests upon the presumption and argument that Ramakrishna is a Tantric Yogi through and through and therefore all of his spiritual practices and disciplines should be looked at from this perspective.⁶⁶²

Given the predilection and emphasis, especially in the West, of the sexual and erotic symbolism and practices which fall under the fairly broad and far-reaching heading of Tantra Yoga, and in particular the practices which are referred to in the tradition as so-called “left-handed” practices, this type of characterization of Ramakrishna’s spiritual practices of course serves to bolster and facilitate the Freudian psychoanalytic framework which is employed in *Kālī’s Child* and is “projected” (to use a specifically Freudian psychological term which is applicable here) upon Ramakrishna himself, despite all evidence to the contrary from virtually all of the primary sources

⁶⁶² Note that Freudian psychology is a *desire*, and primarily sexually motivated theoretical framework that is rooted a delineation of the *mind* as consisting of both conscious as well as unconscious elements, the latter of which is held to be the source of much, if not all, of so-called “neurotic” behavior and is driven by “repressive” or “suppressive” elements which are driven into said subconscious due to the emotional painful and traumatic experiences that one encounters during life, again all resting within a theoretical framework which is desire driven. For a more complete review and detailed analysis of Freud and his works and theories, please see the relevant Chapter in this work on the Psychology and Freud and Jung in particular.

that document in painstaking detail the extent and specificities, and ultimate results, of the broad range of spiritual practices which Ramakrishna is known to have employed.

This type of emphasis on Tantra Yoga as the main characteristic of Ramakrishna's spiritual practices as a whole, as well as his fairly immature and oversimplified classification of said practices into the so-called "left handed" school of Tantra Yoga, of course makes for fairly straightforward psycho-intellectual parallels to be drawn between Ramakrishna's spirituality and Freudian psychology - the latter of which is of course arguably almost entirely based upon the notion that the primordial motivating and explanatory system of reference for human behavior in general is sexual *desire* – which provides of course the primary psycho-intellectual and grounding of Kripal's basic thesis, which again is that it is Ramakrishna's latent and suppressed homoerotic desires that were the driving force of much, if not all, of his religious predilection and underpinned many of the psychological "states" that he experienced.

But this categorization of Ramakrishna's *sādhana* as primarily Tantric unfortunately is just simply not consistent with the facts and the wide variety of reliable first-hand accounts of his life and teachings and accounts of his broad ranging and intense spiritual practices and disciplines that he performed during his so-called 12 year *sādhana* phase while residing at Dakshineswar Temple, even in fact in the accounts and descriptions contained and related in the biographies authored by the two householder disciples of Mahendranath Gupta and Ram Chandra Datta, in Bengali, that Kripal holds in such high regard.

The perfect and perhaps most poignant counterexample to this gross oversimplification and classification of Ramakrishna's theo-philosophical evolutionary process as reflected in his *sādhana* specifically in *Kālī's Child* as simply "Tantric" (a counterexample that Kripal in fact takes great pains to discount, and for good reason his entire argument basically hinges on his ability to discount it in fact⁶⁶³) is the very well documented account of Ramakrishna's tutelage under the guidance of Indian ascetic named Totapuri, a wandering monk who heralded from, and was by all accounts an adept in, Advaita Vedānta, the *non-dualistic* school of Vedānta which is attributed to Śaṅkara, one of the most famous and influential of all of the Indian philosophers throughout India's history.

According to all accounts, Ramakrishna is said to have practiced under Totapuri for some time, and despite some difficulty given his attachment to Kālī as the manifestation of the divine Mother of the universe as his personal spiritual guide and teacher, he is said to have fully "realized" the

⁶⁶³ See *Kālī's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* by Dr. Jeffrey Kripal, Second Edition published by the University of Chicago 1998, pg. 159.

final end goal of Advaita Vedānta, after which Totapuri declared as much and then left the Dakshineswar Temple shortly thereafter.

Now despite the fact that both Tantra Yoga and Vedānta stem from the same socio-cultural and theological tradition as it were, i.e. as reflected in the *Vedas*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* most notably, they represent as it were the polar opposite ends of the spectrum from an Indian theo-philosophical point of view. Not only is Tantra Yoga fundamentally *dualistic* whereas Advaita Vedānta is fundamentally *non-dualistic* at its very core, the two theo-philosophical systems, as is reflected of course in the underlying spiritual practices and disciplines that are prescribed in each respective system, could not be further apart. Tantra Yoga being life affirming so to speak, and Advaita Vedānta being life-denying to a large extent.

According to Swami Saradananda account of Ramakrishna's *sādhana* in fact (an account that again Kripal finds all sorts of reasons to discount which rest on very shaky ground at best), he takes great pains to emphasize the importance of this *non-dual realization* that Ramakrishna experienced under the guidance of Totapuri, and he describes the related spiritual disciplines and practices under Totapuri - which again fall squarely under the *orthodox, non-dualistic* Indian theo-philosophical system of Advaita Vedānta - as *related to him by Ramakrishna himself*, as the very height, or apex, of the *sādhana* phase of his life.

While Vedānta and Tantra Yoga as theo-philosophical systems are related, cousins as it were as they do share the same parent and do at some level rest on at least very similar theological and socio-cultural foundations, both emerging out of the Hindu and Vedic mythological and theological tradition that goes back some four thousand years at least and which arguably represents the oldest active and "living" theo-philosophical tradition in the world. It is from and out of this tradition that Ramakrishna emerges, from both a theo-philosophical as well as socio-cultural perspective. To a large degree, Ramakrishna is in fact an *embodiment* of sorts, a reflection of the full realization of the mythological, theological and philosophical system of Vedānta, and Hinduism proper, which also includes from a socio-cultural perspective, given the rich and lasting open religious society of India, Christianity and Islam, faiths and religious systems which he is said to have practiced and "realized" alongside of the more classic Indian theo-philosophical traditions of Vedānta, Tantra and Bhakti Yoga which of course according to the "insider" tradition he fully realized as well.

Tantra Yoga is a Sanskrit word which translates into English literally as "loop", "warp" or "weave", generally speaking and refers to, from a Indian theo-philosophical perspective (i.e. as distinct from Buddhist Tantra) a set of practices and beliefs that have been more or less integrated and synthesized into Hindu and Vedic philosophy and spiritual practices in toto - in particular in the *orthodox* Indian philosophical systems, i.e. the theo-philosophical systems that look to the *Vedas* as the benchmark of truth and validity - throughout the long history of their respective evolution.

While definitions of Tantra as a specific theo-philosophical system are elusive, it is typically associated with the worship of the primordial female aspect of the divine as manifest in various incarnations and deities (e.g. most notably within this particular context with respect to the *sādhana* of Ramakrishna the goddess Kālī) that reflect the very essence of this primordial energy of life itself, i.e. the concept of Śakti or *kuṇḍalinī* within the context of the Indian theo-philosophical tradition as a whole. As such, Tantra is typically associated with, and therefore has developed specific spiritual practices related to, the divine interplay of the basic male and female universal principles, referred to in the Tantric corpus and literature as Śiva and Śakti respectively, the two collectively forming the very basis of, and source, of the cosmic world-order.

In this context then, various very specific spiritual disciplines and practices, generally falling under the category which in the West has now been termed “mysticism”, have evolved which have become associated with Tantra that reflect, and in turn in some respects, “reenact” this basic divine interplay such that the primordial energy of the goddess can be directly experienced by the spiritual aspirant. In the tradition surrounding Tantra that has evolved in fairly recent times, in the last few hundred years or so, scholars and theologians alike have categorized the various practices within Tantra that reflect this divine interplay between the primordial male and female forces which underpin the entire cosmic order as either “left handed” or “right handed”, the former being the term used for the more actively practiced and enacted forms of worship, from a physical perspective, of the “union” of Śiva and Śakti as typically exemplified in actual sexual intercourse between male and female aspirants that is performed in a very strict ritualistic and formalized fashion, supervised by a guru or teacher, that is intended to produce and effect ecstatic states of consciousness which ultimately reflect and “reveal” the very nature of these forces themselves.⁶⁶⁴

Despite the very unique theo-philosophical system that is referred to most commonly in the West now as “Tantra Yoga”, the system generally speaking is an outgrowth from, and is inherently related to by common origins to, basically all of the main - what are referred to as “orthodox” - Indian theo-philosophical traditions – i.e. Yoga proper as understood primarily in the tradition surrounding the *Yoga Sūtras*, Sāṃkhya philosophy which forms the basis of much of Yoga’s *metaphysics* and *theology*, and in turn Vedānta as reflected in the *Upanishads*, the philosophical portion of the *Vedas*. What we find in *Kālī’s Child* however, is a narrative that traces the fundamental *dualistic* features of Tantra Yoga, as it relates to the divine interplay between Śiva

⁶⁶⁴ For a more detailed account on the history, evolution and definition of Tantra Yoga the author refers the reader to *Śakti and Shakta* by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe), published by Dover Publications, Inc. in 1978 (which represents the sixth edition of the work which was originally published in 1965) as well as the more recent publication *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy* by Georg Feuerstein, published by Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston, MA, in 1998.

and Śakti, as having originated with Sāṃkhya philosophy, which provides the foundations for Yoga proper as it is presented by Patañjali circa 4th century CE.

In fact though, and this is fundamental to understanding all Indian theo-philosophy, which again in its main or “orthodox” branch rests upon the *Vedas* as its ultimate source and inspiration - Tantra Yoga of course being no exception this regard given its heritage and place within the Indo-Aryan *mythos* and Vedic corpus as a whole - this *dualism* that we find in Sāṃkhya philosophy is a direct derivation and outgrowth of Vedic *mythos*, a much older tradition from Indo-Aryan antiquity where we find this basic male and female cosmic interplay reflected in *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, *Puruṣa* being the male aspect of creation, its seed as it were, and *Prakṛti* representing the divine matter upon which *Puruṣa* acts to bring forth the universe.

We see then in the very heart and original conception of the Indo-Aryan *mythos* this male and female, active and passive *dualism*, certainly a fundamental aspect of the *Vedas* which in turn is fundamental to understanding Vedic theo-philosophy which is basically equivalent for all intents and purposes with the notion of Indian theo-philosophy, which is the tradition within which Tantra Yoga squarely rests, no matter how it is conceived or defined (and there are most definitely different ways and approaches as to how it is and has been defined).

The issue here is that such a significant error or misunderstanding, or lack of understanding really, of the foundations upon which Tantra Yoga rests and comes out of - a tradition which Ramakrishna didn't just study in as some scholar, he literally grew up within the tradition, not even just as a spiritually minded aspirant but as a practicing priest no less, a priest in a temple devoted to one of the primordial goddess in Vedic and Hindu *mythos*, i.e. Kālī, one of the primordial goddesses of the Hindu faith, a faith which is again rooted in the tradition surrounding the *Vedas*. It begs the question really, whether or not Kripal has a true understanding of Tantra Yoga in the way that Ramakrishna perceived and understood Tantra Yoga – which arguably he didn't even conceive of it at all given that it was so part and parcel to his “religious” beliefs as a whole. To Ramakrishna, his spiritual practices were Vedic and Hindu, this is effectively all he knew. And he followed certain teachers who practiced different variations and flavors of the Vedic/Hindu faith but they all were basically to him at least related to the primordial goddess who he worshipped – his divine Mother. The idea that Ramakrishna was primarily a Tantric Yogi would have seemed utterly ridiculous to him no doubt, a reflection of the Western mind to try and box him or Religion in general into a corner, a principle which to a large extent his entire spiritually life was effectively designed to dispel in fact – all roads leading to the same destination as it were.

The point being of course that while it might be convenient to paint Ramakrishna as a Tantric *sādhaka* in order to lock him into a male/female dualistic theological box as it were so that his spiritual practices as whole would line up nicely to a Freudian psychoanalysis which is arguably

almost entirely based on sex, i.e. Kripal's *eroticism*, is convenient with respect to making his argument and case around Ramakrishna's homoeroticism which is the "scandalous secret" which rests in the heart of *Kālī's Child*, just – like the case made for Tantra Yoga's dualism originating in Sāṃkhya philosophy, doesn't hold any water.

Leaving aside the specific heritage and lineage of Tantra Yoga within the Vedic theo-philosophical landscape as it were, a landscape and variety of traditions and practices that Ramakrishna espoused whole heartedly in a variety of favors and renditions⁶⁶⁵, it is very safe and accurate to describe Tantra Yoga as reflecting the underlying belief in the cosmic universal order consisting of the basic interplay and interaction of male and female forces that are personified in Śiva and Śakti specifically, deities that were not only pervasive in the theological tradition within which Ramakrishna was raised, but pervasive and distinctive in the place where Ramakrishna had his most intense years of spiritual and devotional practices and pursuits at the Dakshineswar Temple that Ramakrishna, with Kālī of course as the divine Mother being by far the most important spiritual and divine presence in his life. To this extent, Ramakrishna was most certainly a Tantric *sādhaka*. It is this symbol in fact, where Śakti (as Kālī) is seen as standing on top of Śiva, that Kripal spends a great deal of time analyzing and to a large extent provides the psycho-symbolic basis for his argument for classifying Ramakrishna's spiritual practices and mindset in toto, as "Tantric" and therefore subject to a classically Freudian psychoanalytic lens from within which the source sources of his behavior can be understood, or at the very least shed light into, from which his "states of mind" originate from.

⁶⁶⁵ Bhakti Yoga being the most relevant and persistent in regards to Ramakrishna's *sādhana* overall in the author's view-



Figure 39: *Dakshina Kālī, with Śiva devotedly at her feet.*⁶⁶⁶

So while Tantra Yoga does reflect a specific set of disciplines that Ramakrishna practiced - Tantra Yoga in this sense again signifying the standard meaning that that term has acquired in modern parlance in the Western literature that has developed to describe said specific spiritual practices and disciplines that are associated with, and intended to achieve union or realization of, the basic primordial divine female and male energetic components that underpin the universal world order - disciplines that were practiced primarily under the guidance of the female ascetic Bhairavi Brahmani specifically, and such disciplines are in fact historical and theo-philosophically associated with Male/Female divine union and as such are sometimes associated with ritualistic sexual intercourse in order to facilitate the full and complete “realization” of such divine interplay, such practices are not only extremely uncommon and guarded against for the most part within the more standard and orthodox Indian and Hindu religious circles, there in fact is no

⁶⁶⁶ From Wikipedia contributors, 'Kālī', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 25 December 2016, 09:25 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kālī&oldid=756585633>> [accessed 25 December 2016]. Image by http://wellcomeimages.org/indexplus/obf_images/fb/fa/05aaa8d7cbcb9f7e03cd3cec82dc.jpg Gallery: <http://wellcomeimages.org/indexplus/image/L0043631.html>, CC BY 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=36109392>.

evidence whatsoever that Ramakrishna himself engaged in such “left handed” practices, even within the context of his “Tantric” *sādhana* specifically.

The point here is that no matter how one chooses to interpret, categorize or define Ramakrishna’s *sādhana*, and in particular in the light of the very significant and almost completely diametrically opposing theo-philosophical systems as reflected by Vedānta and Tantra Yoga, both of which it is very well documented that Ramakrishna practiced and again is said to have fully realized, it is an altogether gross oversimplification to categorize his *sādhana* in toto, and therefore his psycho-analytical framework in general, as fundamentally and completely Tantric, even though it is fair to say that that theo-philosophical system in particular did play a significant role in his *sādhana* overall, just one aspect of it thought. The methods and practices as described in the literature surrounding Ramakrishna as it relates to these two “phases” or “aspects” of his *sādhana*, the summit of which is described by Swami Saradananda (and arguably as interpreted by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda albeit indirectly), are altogether distinct which is no surprise given the diametrically opposing theo-philosophical infrastructure that underpins the two respective belief systems.

But this however does not imply, and it would be in fact a further misinterpretation or misunderstanding of Ramakrishna if in fact one concluded such a thing, that the two teachings do not fundamentally agree with each other and complement each other at their most fundamental and essential core, at the very point of their ultimate *realization* as it were. What Ramakrishna reveals to us in fact, what he shows us and demonstrates to us, what his message truly is and how we should “interpret” him – as is the standard “insider” view in fact – is that all of the world’s religions, and most certainly all of the various Indian theo-philosophical systems which provided the very foundations of Ramakrishna’s spiritual practices and disciplines in all of their forms, all ultimately lead to, or result in, the same final “realization” or Truth.

Ultimately, therefore there is not an “insiders” or “outsiders” interpretation of the essential meaning, import and relevance of Ramakrishna as perhaps the predominant and most influential religious and spiritual figure in the modern era, there is but one true and most relevant, and most accurate and complete interpretation of him given all of the evidence at hand when looked at through this most complete, extensive and exhaustive theo-philosophical milieu from which he emerges and which he ultimately personifies that is represented in fact by the theo-philosophical heritage which succeeds him. As a further illustration of the point regarding the necessity and importance of including the socio-cultural and theo-philosophical context within which Ramakrishna lived and practiced his *sādhana*, through which his various, prolific and arguably extreme “states of mind” were in fact “experienced” by him, as a thought experiment of sorts (akin to Schrödinger’s Cat as it were which was presented as a thought experiment that provided

great insights into the shortcomings of Quantum Theory) one should consider whether or not it would have been possible for a figure such as Ramakrishna to have existed in the West in the 19th century.

The very simple and stark, rational and logical conclusion that anyone schooled or trained in *theology* or philosophy, or Comparative Religion for that matter, is that it would in fact not have been possible at all. That any society in the West confronted with a figure such as Ramakrishna who experienced these so-called “catatonic” and “ecstatic” states, i.e. his *nirvikalpa samādhi* later in his life and his what can only be termed “obsessive and compulsive” behavior as reflected in his worship of the divine as the goddess Kālī which was such a hallmark of the *sādhana* phase of his early adult life, could have only been interpreted in the West as at worst psychotic, and at best schizophrenic behavior and as such the poor man would have been in all likelihood institutionalized, or as Robert Pirsig was in fact, diagnosed as the effects of a nervous breakdown, committed to various psychiatric hospitals, diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and “treated” with healthy and consistent doses of electroconvulsive therapy on and off for two years.

One of Kripal’s insights which is poignant and relevant to this discussion in particular as it relates to the fundamental tenets and belief systems that underpin any person in any era in fact, is that Ramakrishna and what he became, the avatar of the modern era, an incarnation of God, great sage, whatever you’d like to refer to him as was a product not only of *his* personality, but also the culture and society within which he grew up and lived in, namely 19th century Bengal. Ramakrishna was an illiterate temple priest who interacted with some of the most well educated and highest (and lowest) class society of Calcutta, in a time and place where West met East in a radical and somewhat oppressive merging of cultures, the so called “Orientalism” in action where the indigenous Hindu and Indian culture was subsumed by the leading Western and British aristocracy. And with Ramakrishna’s pure and raw language, speaking in the same tongue that Jesus spoke essentially - in song and in analogy and metaphor, using parables and stories that the common folk could understand and remember quite easily – his message clearly resonated with a lot of people, many of whom who traveled long and far to come and spend time with him, to touch his feet as the custom of the Hindus as a sign of respect to holy people.

And yet even with the prevalence of Western modes of thought and scientific reason which was the benchmark of truth even in 19th century Calcutta, his personality had to be understood and had to be reckoned with, and understood and comprehended within the context of the Western cynical mindset. The Hindu, Western trained elite of 19th century Bengali culture could not ignore the strength and purity and power of Ramakrishna’s personality, this much is evident, and is most certainly reflected by his long-lasting and world affecting message that lives on and continues to gain strength in the East and West to this day – through the workings of the institutions which bear his name, the Ramakrishna Order which has among other things taken great pains to protect

and nurture the direct and subsequent interpretations of his life, works which are discounts to a large extent or in some cases simply completely ignored in *Kālī's Child*, the very source of this debate.

Let's not forget that Ramakrishna hand-picked both Vivekananda, along with Sarada Devi his wife and spiritual partner in fact, as the hall bearers of his message to the world, and as such these two more than any others in fact should be looked to as the best source of any "interpretation" of Ramakrishna's life, teachings or in general his spiritual disciplines and practices. Vivekananda, who is best known for recasting and revitalizing Vedānta and Yoga in the West, should be the first place to look if one is looking to try and understand the true "message" and/or meaning of Ramakrishna, especially from a Western vantage point. The three in fact – Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi (aka Holy Mother) and Vivekananda - are worshipped as a triad in many of the Vedānta centers that have been established across the world as outposts of the Ramakrishna Order in both the East and West, and in this context it is not just Ramakrishna in vacuum that should be analyzed to use a Western scientific term, but through and within the context of his relationship to both Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda as a triumvirate entity, a holy trinity as it were, that the best understanding and meaning of Ramakrishna can be revealed.

Arguably there is yet another, deeper and more fundamental dimension to the intellectual divide that sites between the two sides of the "debate" surrounding the interpretation of Ramakrishna life and teachings as one of, if not the, most influential religious and spiritual figure of the modern era. The lines or boundaries of this deeper dimension can in fact be represented along the same basic and fundamental intellectual lines upon which this work is basically constructed - one side which is altogether "Western" and is reflected by the conclusions drawn in *Kālī's Child* which posits in a nutshell that Ramakrishna's divine states of ecstasy and intense practice of spiritual disciplines stem from, or are the result of, repressed *desires* and/or deeply traumatic experiences that are erotic and sexual in nature (the Tantric and/or Freudian perspective), and the other side which is altogether "Eastern" which interprets the life and experiences of Ramakrishna through a higher, and more expansive theo-philosophical lens.

The latter perspective is of course the one which more accurately reflects the perspective of Ramakrishna himself, as well as his students and disciples for the most part, and hence the primary reason why this author looks at that perspective as the one which is more accurate, or "true". This "Eastern" perspective looks at Ramakrishna not as biological and neuro-chemical behavioral process which is driven by deep seated, unconscious emotions and desire, but as the manifestation of a higher order consciousness in human form, one that is subject to physical and psychological "laws" as we understand them in the West for the most part, but at the same time, given the altogether distinct and unique properties and qualities of this higher form of being, or

consciousness, is not subject to necessarily, and represents a stark exception to in fact, these basic fundamental “natural” laws which we in the West rely on so heavily to explain “phenomena” in all its forms – both physical and in this case psychological.

As expounded upon and proffered up throughout much of this work, this theo-philosophical and/or intellectual divide between the East and West is a very real phenomenon upon which the source of this debate ultimately hinges upon. From the Western perspective, reality is characteristically defined in objective and scientific terms - science in this sense being defined as that which can be proven via experiment and can therefore be held to be verifiable “true”. This view of the world, which is of course the predominant view in academic circles, is fundamentally *mechanistic* and *causally deterministic*, and therefore ultimately is *atheistic* (or *naturalistic*). Knowledge in fact is bound by these assumptions in the West whether this is recognized or not, and these assumptions are most certainly reflected in the “Western” interpretation of Ramakrishna as reflected in *Kālī’s Child*. For the bulk of the theoretical and rational underpinnings of this work rest squarely upon Freudian psychological theory, a model of the mind that is a direct product of, and is intimately related to, the Western mechanistic and causally deterministic framework that characterizes science as a whole, providing the underlying intellectual framework – and its related assumptions be they specifically called out as such or not - for the interpretation of Ramakrishna, and in particular the interpretation of his spiritual practices, practices which are viewed primarily (and inadequately to a large degree) through the erotic and sensual lens of Tantra Yoga, which of course lends itself quite nicely to Freudian psychoanalysis.

The “Eastern” view however, takes a much more *holistic* and “energy” based perspective, one which is not fundamentally mechanistic in any way really, and one which from a knowledge perspective, epistemologically speaking, includes and incorporates *supraconscious experience* and related states of consciousness that fall outside of Freudian psychological theory. The Eastern worldview, as reflected in its theo-philosophical tradition as a whole, integrates religious experience as we define it in the West into their ontological framework directly, i.e. their conception of reality. Therefore their perspective, in particular with respect to the interpretation of influential and powerful religious figures like Ramakrishna, is not constrained by the intellectual shortcomings that are inherent to so-called *subject-object metaphysics*, i.e. a *mechanistic* and *objective realist* conception of the world which frames experience and reality in terms of objects, measurements, and cause and effect relations.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁷ See the Chapter in this work regarding Robert Pirsig and the Metaphysics of Quality for a more detailed account and explanation of *subject-object metaphysics*, the term used by Pirsig to describe the Western worldview, as well as the intellectual framework which he provides to deal with its inherent shortcomings and limitations, i.e. what he calls the Metaphysics of Quality.

From the Eastern vantage point then, and this is a very important point with regards to the distinction between its perspective versus the Western perspective, Ramakrishna's states of consciousness are not only "real", they in fact reflect a state of being, or existence, which is ontologically more significant than, or prior to conceptually speaking, and therefore more fundamental than the reality of the physical and/or mental world as it is conceived of in the West and which ultimately provides the intellectual boundaries for understanding the types of experiences that he "embodies" and wholly manifests. Given this more broad and inclusive ontological framework then, the Eastern vantage point does not require any specific theoretical mental or cognitive scientific framework outside of the classical Indian theo-philosophical systems themselves which all include, and in fact help to define, the spiritual practices and experiences of Ramakrishna.

It is the mapping of the Eastern theo-philosophical systems into Western intellectual constructs that is the very source of the problem as it were when trying to understand the source of the two wholly distinctive and unique perspectives, i.e. interpretations, of Ramakrishna as a spiritual being as it were. Spirituality in fact, from a Western vantage point, has no place in science, which as it turns out is a big problem when trying to understand a pure and unadulterated spiritual being like Ramakrishna for example. This again is the square peg in the round hold problem in a nutshell.

At the heart of this distinction then, is the very nature of *reality* itself, and in turn what laws, or "lens", should be applied to any such being, or organism, that is a manifestation of said reality. But the basic premise here which is altogether "Eastern" from a theo-philosophical standpoint, and one that is lost to a large extent in the literature surrounding the interpretation of Ramakrishna that has emerged in the last few years, is that there does in fact exist a higher form of "consciousness", i.e. *supraconsciousness*, and that it is in fact a very "real" phenomena, albeit a phenomena that defies description in the Western sense of the term or perhaps more accurately put is that when these types of phenomena are described in Western intellectual terminology and frameworks, we end up with a wholly disfigured and disemboweled view of that which we are intending to study and analyze. This is essentially the source, and proper description really, of the contents of *Kālī's Child*, despite the fact that it remains a sound and well thought out and well researched piece of scholarship.

As such we are left with a great divide as it were, and one which has plagued the intellectual landscape of man since civilization has emerged some 3000 years ago, and one that arguably created the divide between Plato and his student Aristotle, the ontological debate between the two which on one side was altogether *idealistic*, i.e. Plato of course, and on the other side was altogether *hylomorphic*, i.e. where reality was defined as the combination of substance as well as form, and where – importantly – form in and of itself was no longer held to be "real". It is

with Aristotle's conception of *substantial form* that we in the West were provided with the basis of not only our entire logical and rational framework in and of itself (i.e. *dialectic* which is sourced from the *Organon*, the standard title of Aristotle's six basic works on *logic* and reason, but also from which the very initial boundaries of the Western mind, i.e. Science, are drawn.

This is the very problem that Kant tried to solve in fact, fully described in his theo-philosophical system that he claimed to be entirely constructed and built upon reason itself, and one which came to known as *transcendental idealism* which he developed to try and bridge this very divide to a large extent, one which in his day was reflected most prominently by the divide between Religion and Science that had developed as a direct result of the developments and innovations of the Scientific Revolution that were underpinned by what is referred to in Western philosophical and intellectual circles as (strict) *rational empiricism*.

So this is not a new problem by any stretch of the imagination, but it is one that continues to persist and plague us – in the West at least – and one which sits at the very root as it were of the problem of trying to understand or comprehend Ramakrishna within any sort of classically defines Western intellectual framework which as outlines above comes along with a variety of implicit assumptions that make it an altogether inadequate, and arguably inappropriate, means to understand any sort of “mystic” experience and as such provides the very impetus for a good portion of this work which attempts to expand the definition of knowledge in the West to incorporate such experiences - back to *first philosophy* to use the classical English translation of Aristotle's terminology. In many respects, Paramhansa Ramakrishna, as well as his spiritual successor Swami Vivekananda, the founder and expositor of the very intellectual (and inherently mystical) tradition within which the author was specifically trained, very much *embody* the *knowledge* which sits squarely outside of the Western intellectual framework - the so-called citadel of science - which is the very framework that is used of course used throughout *Kālī's Child* (mostly Freudian psychology).

Let us start with an analysis of the meaning of and significance of Ramakrishna, most often referred to as Paramhansa Ramakrishna in the literature surrounding and within the religious movement and theo-philosophical tradition which he inspired that was implemented and constructed for the most part by his spiritual successor Swami Vivekananda with the founding of the Ramakrishna Order at the end of the 19th century some 1 years after Ramakrishna's passing. First it is important to understand that in almost all Eastern theo-philosophical traditions, consistent with the idea of “spiritual rebirth” and baptism with the Christian theo-philosophical tradition, it is customary to have one's name changed once they enter spiritual life as an aspirant, what's called a *sādhaka* in Hindu and Vedic terminology. In this context, at some point during Ramakrishna's spiritual practices *sādhana*, his “reborn” “spiritual” name was given to him (it's

not altogether clear precisely when or by whom the name was given to him in fact) and he was referred to from then on not by his given birth name, i.e. Gadadhar Chatterji, but by his given, received, spiritual name, i.e. Ramakrishna.

The name of course carries with it great symbolic and mythological significance within the socio-cultural and mythological milieu and society within which Ramakrishna lived, i.e. northern India - Rāma being the central figure of the great Hindu epic the *Ramayana* of course, and Krishna is of course the great seer or prophet, i.e. avatar, of the *Mahābhārata*, who plays a central role of course in not just the *Bhagavad Gītā*, or *Song of the Lord*, but also within the context of Vedānta philosophy as a whole of which this text is one of the three canonical scriptures that underpin the theo-philosophical system (the *Brahmā Sūtras* and *Upanishads* being the other two). The given spiritual name Ramakrishna of course symbolizes and implies that Ramakrishna is an embodiment, or even more literally interpreted as, the reincarnation of both of the great figures of Hindu mythological lore and both of which were considered to be “avatars”, or manifestations of God, or Viṣṇu, in human form.

Furthermore, let us also review and understand the meaning of the epithet *Paramhamsa* which is many times used in conjunction with Ramakrishna as a sign of respect and status from a spiritual perspective within the Hindu and Indian socio-cultural and theological tradition. *Paramhamsa* is a composite Sanskrit word consisting of the root parama which means 'supreme' or 'transcendent' combined with the Sanskrit word hamsa which means 'swan' or “wild goose”. While the goose in Western mythological lore signifies silliness or foolishness, In Hindu cultural and mythological lore, wild geese, including swans, are noted for characteristics such as discipline, stamina, grace, and beauty. This is especially true of the “bar-headed goose” (*Anser Indicus*), whose migratory route from Central Asia to India and back forces it to fly over the Himalayas twice a year, a feat which makes it one of the highest flying birds in the world.

In the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas*, *hamsa* is a symbol for the Soul and is depicted as the “mount” or “vehicle” (*vahana*), the mount or vehicle, of the god Brahmā. It is also believed to be the only creature that is capable of separating milk from water once they have been mixed, which symbolically represents the ability of the Supreme Indian sage, i.e. the *Paramhamsa*, to discriminate between the “real” and the “unreal” which is one of the primary and principle characteristics and qualities of a Vedic sage, in particular as reflected in the non-dual tradition of Advaita Vedānta as described by Śaṅkara where this type of discrimination is held to be the highest form of knowledge and the ultimate source of liberation, or *mokṣa*. The swan then, or *hamsa*, is a metaphor for the spiritually advanced adept who is capable of such discrimination.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁸ Paraphrased and edited from Wikipedia contributors, 'Paramahamsa', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 21 December 2016, 09:34 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Paramahamsa&oldid=755990093>> [accessed 21 December 2016]

The epithet *Paramhansa* therefore is typically applied and prepended to Ramakrishna as a sign of respect and admiration with respect to his stature within the Hindu theological and religious tradition as a whole, and is an epithet that in fact is used throughout the Hindu religious community as a sign of respect and admiration for a variety of spiritual leaders and adepts. *Paramhansa* in Sanskrit means “supreme swan”, and it implies and signifies from a Hindu and Vedic symbolic perspective that Ramakrishna is akin to a great swan, the creature that is looked upon as one who bridges, or lives, in two distinct and yet related worlds – in the case of the swan it is both in the air and on water and in the case of a “Paramhansa”, like Ramakrishna, it signifies that they live both in the physical world as well as the spiritual world and that they are able to move freely, just as the swan, in both.

Arguably at the very center of this dimension of varying perspectives, again “Western” versus “Eastern”, is what to make of, and how in turn to interpret and comprehend the significance and import of the type of figure that Ramakrishna represents, a representation that is arguably very much embedded and encapsulated in the epithet that is most commonly used along with his given spiritual name, i.e. *Paramhansa*, or simply Paramhansa Ramakrishna. This name, its derivation and etymology, from a Hindu/Indian theo-philosophical tradition from which Gadadhar Chatterji as an actual historical figure, or persona, emerges not only carries with it a wealth of theological and mythological significance (Rāma and Krishna), but also embeds within it, and therefore signifies Ramakrishna’s attainment thereof, the penultimate notion or concept of the entire orthodox Indian theo-philosophical tradition within which Ramakrishna’s spiritual life (which is basically his entire life according to almost all of the biographical sources we have available on him) is played out (Paramhansa).

Once we start with this seemingly obvious but at the same time very relevant and important fact, we realize right at the outset that there is no way to translate his very name, i.e. Paramhansa Ramakrishna, into English and/or within the Western theo-philosophical framework that is used to interpret his life in *Kālī’s Child*. What we can do however, is to keep to the basic transliteration of the name itself, and let it to a large extent speak for itself – once we have established the basic grounds and significance behind the specific words that are combined to formulate his name that is. This is but a small example, but at the same time is reflective of the very nature and scope of the problem at hand, namely how to “translate” Ramakrishna into a Western intellectual framework, one that in fact is fundamentally bereft of any *theology* as that has been almost entirely stripped away since the so-called Enlightenment Era when religion and science were fundamentally split apart as a direct result of the rise of *empiricism* and *objective realism*.

Keeping this in mind then, let us now proceed to look at the terminology that is used to describe the various ecstatic states that Ramakrishna is known to have experienced consistently and quite powerfully and intensely throughout the full duration of his life really, although they became

more intense during his later more mature years of course. For it is perhaps in the very translation of these states of experience, or consciousness, into Western language and theoretical models, i.e. Freudian psychology primarily, that we encounter arguably the most difficult of challenges when trying to interpret Ramakrishna in the West. The literature surrounding Ramakrishna is abound with the very specific Indian philosophical Sanskrit compound term *nirvikalpa samādhi* which is consistently used, even in English translation in fact, to describe Ramakrishna's state of divine ecstasy - a state of "being" or consciousness to use a somewhat circular definition, that is described as *superconscious* in *Interpreting Ramakrishna, Kālī's Child Revisited*, no doubt in order to attempt to place *nirvikalpa samādhi* as a psychological phenomena somewhere within, or at least relative to, the standard view of mind as offered up by Freud which underpins the Western interpretation of Ramakrishna which is presented in *Kālī's Child*.

Kālī's Child argues that these ecstatic states are in fact due to, from a Freudian psychological perspective, repressed homoerotic desires of Ramakrishna and/or as a result of traumatic sexual experiences that he endured, in particular as reflected in the very long and persistent state that he was in after the culmination of his studies with the Advaita Vedānta teacher Totapuri toward the end of the so-called *sādhana*, or practice of spiritual disciplines, phase of his life. As such, given the intellectual psychological framework that is used to describe and explain said "behavior" or "states of consciousness", any sort of *acausal*, intuitive, or even synchronous (using that term in a Jungian sense) origin of said experiences is entirely ruled out and not even considered a possibility. In other words the underlying assumptions of the intellectual framework that is used to try and explain or understand said behavior requires not only that there be some sort of "cause" or reason behind said experience, which in this case is described or couched in psychological terms (the psyche being viewed as a natural, mechanistic biochemical and neurological stimulus- response, desire driven entity), but that the actual states of "consciousness" that Ramakrishna reflects and/or experiences be defined within said framework. The problem fundamentally here is that not only do these states not exist within the Freudian theoretical framework – he simply provides the conscious and the unconscious as the possible sources of behavioral response – but any sort of *acausal*, or non-natural source as it were of said phenomena is not even considered within the framework itself. *Causal determinism* underpins the entire model, and of course this is definitely not the case with most, if not all Eastern philosophical frameworks, within which Ramakrishna clearly stands and represents no matter what intellectual paradigms or tools one uses to try and understand him.

The Eastern vantage point then, the other side of the argument as it were, not only assumes that these states of "higher" consciousness do in fact exist, but that in turn no sort of cause or behavioral mechanism need be provided to explain their existence, i.e. in no way are any sort of trauma or any type of repression or suppression required to explain said phenomena. The

phenomena simply exist, and exist as an integral and in fact primordial characteristic of reality, or being itself. And from time to time, these states manifest themselves within the human form, and in particular, as evidenced throughout history, seem to coalesce and be associated with specific persona in a very fundamental, persistent and powerful way. This is the Eastern (Hindu really) avatar, or divine incarnation doctrine in a nutshell. But note that by definition, these beings exist outside of the realm of existence that is governed by causality. This is an important point. The Eastern worldview does not deny physical reality, and does not deny the notion of cause and effect which governs it (take the law of karma for example) it just provides for an exception to this reality, a higher ground of existence or being as it were that is not subject to these laws as it rests “above” them, which is the typical Western mode of thinking about such matters as it relates to “spiritual ascent” but a better way to put it is perhaps that these beings are inherent to, or are wholly integrated with, this higher order reality itself and therefore while their physical forms are bound by these laws of cause and effect, as is all physical reality, their spiritual forms, which to them represents their core being, their very fundamental aspect of their existence and reality, are bound to no such laws.

This is illustrated in the Buddhist conception of *nirvana* as well as the Indian theo-philosophical term *mokṣa*, both of which are of Indian origin in fact. These end states are defined more or less as the absence of, or the complete cessation of, subjugation to the laws that bind an individual soul, a persona, to the world, i.e. what is referred to in the Buddhist tradition as the endless round of birth and death, the *wheel of dharma*, etc. So in the Eastern worldview, there is an exception built into the intellectual and theological landscape itself that allows for beings like Ramakrishna to be understood and comprehended, from within a complete cohesive and coherent theo-philosophical infrastructure as it were, something that is altogether missing and absent from Western thought. At the root of this misconception of the so-called “Western” perspective then is the attempt at providing not only an intellectual foundation for, but also a “psychological” basis for (which is an altogether Western intellectual construct in and of itself) *samādhi* as a psychological phenomenon. What results unfortunately, given the limited capacity of the intellectual framework that is used is at best a misunderstanding of the concept within the Indian theo-philosophical landscape within which Ramakrishna as an historical and religious figure emerges and within which he studied and practiced his spiritual disciples, and at worst represents a complete Western and Freudian bastardization (excuse the strong language) of the term itself and as such the true meaning and import, and of course ultimately the “interpretation” of the manifestation of said states within the historical figure Ramakrishna, is lost.

Samādhi is of course the very specific Indian theo-philosophical Sanskrit term, which again is used in almost all the literature surrounding Ramakrishna to describe his almost constant “state of mind” and absorption in divine consciousness, or the Supreme Self, or alternatively what is

described in the *Upanishads* as *Satcitānanda*, or Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute. *Samādhi* however does carry with it a very specific and uniquely Indian theo-philosophical definition however, one which is defined specifically within the context of the system of Yoga as it is described in the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali, which is the origin of the Sanskrit word and term in fact and therefore the context from within which it is to be best, or most appropriately, understood. In Yoga, *samādhi* is the state of “being” or “awareness” which is perhaps best described in Western nomenclature as the most pure and unadulterated state of contemplation of the divine where the distinction between the individual, or *jīva*, and the object of contemplation, i.e. Īśvara or God, completely dissolves in fact. Where the two become one, and the subject and object merge into a single “experience”.

The more technical terminology that is used in the “Eastern”, or Indian theo-philosophical literature it describe Ramakrishna’s state of mind during what is often described as his almost constant states of “divine intoxication” that are characterized by an almost complete cessation of physical motor function or skills as well as a complete lack of perception or awareness of his “physical surroundings”, is in fact actually *nirvikalpa samādhi*. *Nirvikalpa* is a Sanskrit word (adjective in this case) that means something along the lines of “not admitting an alternative”, and which therefore, when applied to the very specific Indian theo-philosophical term *samādhi* as defined within the orthodox Indian philosophical school of Yoga as described by the 3rd/4th century sage Patañjali (which is then recast and re-interpreted for the West by Vivekananda in the late 19th century as Raja Yoga, or Royal Yoga), implies an even higher or more concentrated variant of *samādhi* proper than that which is described in the eighth limb of Patañjali’s eight limbed system of Yoga.

In Yoga, as described by Patañjali specifically, *samādhi* is the final, i.e. the eighth, of the eight limbs of his entire theo-philosophical system. While the eighth limb is typically perceived from a Western perspective as the final, or end goal, of the entire system itself, the author argues elsewhere in this work that this interpretation of *samādhi* within the context of Indian philosophy as a whole represents a basic misunderstanding or misconception of its place within the entire, eight limbed system itself – i.e. another example of the misuse of a Western intellectual framework, in this case one which is based upon motivation, goals and is fundamentally linear and progressive, upon a foreign theo-philosophical system which at its core is essentially cyclical, emergent and codependent. While Dr. Kripal never states this specifically, that he doubts that these states are achievable without some sort of trauma that sits behind them, this conclusion does nonetheless follow as a byproduct of his arguments and underlying theoretical frameworks that he uses. But the problem here is, and *Interpreting Ramakrishna, Kālī’s Child Revisited* covers this at some length, Freud does not recognize anything other than the *conscious* or the *unconscious* mind and therefore within this intellectual framework there is no room for any so-called *superconscious* experience. *Kālī’s Child* does not recognize or address this point in any

way, which is unfortunately a major flaw of the work, and as does not provide any intellectual framework for describing anything that resembles the states of mind that the East consider extraordinarily relevant and *real*. And yet this is the entire world that Ramakrishna lived in from a child from the classically “Eastern” vantage point rests upon the fundamental assertion of not just the existence of such experiences, their elemental reality, but also that the reality which they represent is in fact more true, or more real, than the world of name and form which for the most part is representative of the entire worldview of the West.

Kripal clearly approaches the validity of these states of mind with what can be best described as a healthy degree of skepticism, hence his subjugation of these prototypical Eastern, “mystical” states within a classically Western psychological framework, the only “accepted” intellectual framework in fact that exists in the Western academic and scholarly tradition to describe these so-called “higher states” of *mind* that are fundamental characteristics of Eastern theo-philosophy in general. The “Eastern” vantage point then, and this is not made altogether clear in *Interpreting Ramakrishna, Kālī’s Child Revisited*, is that in fact these higher states of consciousness and/or reality do in fact exist, and furthermore their existence is not predicated or dependent in any way upon any sort of traumatic psychological experience, sexually induced or otherwise. In fact, from an Eastern theo-philosophical perspective, as expressed in various schools of Buddhism as well as orthodox Indian philosophical systems such as Vedānta, Yoga and Tantra (all of which were practiced and followed by Ramakrishna during his *sādhana*), these experiences, this “higher” reality, is in fact considered to be more real, more ontologically significant and “prior” as it were, than the day to day mental and materialistic existence mankind which not only fundamentally bounds the psychological intellectual framework within which Kripal attempts to explain Ramakrishna’s “behavior” and “state of mind”, but also within which the entire intellectual system of knowledge itself is bound – hence again the square peg in a round hole problem.

So we are led quite naturally back to the basic assumption and intellectual bounds of Western science, i.e. what Pirsig refers to as the “citadel of science” and is reflected in what he calls most poignantly *subject-object metaphysics* which perhaps could provide us with at least a better intellectual and/or metaphysical framework from within which we can bridge this divide between Western and Eastern perspectives on the interpretation of Paramhansa Ramakrishna and what to make of his constant state of intense divine intoxication. As the author does, Pirsig attacks the very foundations of *subject-object metaphysics* as a wholly inadequate intellectual, philosophical and metaphysical framework for describing *reality* in all its component parts as it a) does not provide any sort of validity to what he calls the “direct intuitive experience” from which are sourced hypotheses themselves, the very pillar of modern empirical scientific inquiry in fact, and b) it does not incorporate or integrate, or even acknowledge the *reality* of Ideas in and of

themselves, in a very Platonic sense, i.e. concepts such as *beauty*, *quality*, or *virtue* for example, all of which are used and leveraged by the so-called “citadel of science” to determine not only which *divined* hypotheses should be pursued by the scientist, but also in turn by the scientific community at large to determine which possible theories are the “best” ones. This very conundrum or paradox is in fact crystalized and articulated perhaps best in the concept of *Ockham’s razor*, coined by the English Franciscan scholar and theologian from the 14th century which arguably provided at least to some extent the rational and theoretical impetus for scientific advancement since the Enlightenment Era.⁶⁶⁹

In this context, as outlined in Pirsig’s seminal work on the subject which is somewhat misleading titled *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Pirsig proposes that *subject-object metaphysics* as a metaphysical paradigm of reality is in fact the root of the problem of the overly materialistic and mechanistic worldview of the West which as a paradigm of thought not only alienates individuals from “things” or “objects” in and of themselves, but also in turn alienates individuals from each other and in turn entire societies and cultures from each other as “alien” entities which exist “outside” themselves.

As such, he formulates an alternative and more comprehensive system of metaphysics which directly incorporates the reality of *Ideas* (again in a Platonic sense of the term such as *Beauty* or *Virtue* “intuitive” experience, as well as), intellectual constructs which underpin the notion of *Ockham’s razor* which has more or less provided us in the West with the rational, albeit heuristic, model for determining the inherent “value” of scientific theories in general. Scientific theories in fact continue to be measured and/or evaluated by this albeit somewhat heuristic, and arguably Platonic, notion as expressed as *Ockham’s razor*, where theories are evaluated and adopted by the scientific community at large not just by their predictive modeling power with respect to “natural phenomena”, i.e. “physical reality”, but also by their inherent “simplicity” and/or “elegance”, attributes which are in and of themselves ethereal and resist measurement in any classical scientific way and in effect reflect, whether explicit or not, the fundamental belief in the reality and power of (Platonic) Ideas as foundational principles for the so-called “citadel of science”.

Pirsig then goes on to present what he refers to as the Metaphysics of Quality which not only incorporates the intuitive experience from which hypotheses themselves originate from, but also in turn as a byproduct thereof the “mystical” experience of prophets and sages throughout the ages as well which in effect are of the same character, and originate from the same “experience”

⁶⁶⁹ Also referred to as *Ockham’s razor* or in the Latin as *lex parsimoniae* or the “law of parsimony”. See Wikipedia contributors, ‘Ockham’s razor’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 8 December 2016, 02:13 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Occam%27s_razor&oldid=753591996> [accessed 8 December 2016].

as that which drives scientific empirical inquiry itself.⁶⁷⁰ Within the context of Pirsig's *Metaphysics of Quality*, and to borrow some of the very powerful language he uses to sum up and describe the basic limitations of classically Western materialistic *objective realism* - which he again refers to from a philosophical and metaphysical perspective as *subject-object metaphysics* - Ramakrishna represents the Platypus⁶⁷¹, i.e. the class of being or organism which does not fit into the pre-existing intellectual and scientific framework that has been designed to describe the psychology of modern man, i.e. Freudian psychology.⁶⁷² For it is through the lens of Freudian psychology that in fact virtually the entire assessment and analysis of Ramakrishna's "behavior" as "Tantric" rests in *Kālī's Child*.

From the introductory chapter on the "Hindu Unconscious", despite the fact that Freudian psychology is not presented as a "theory" of mind as such, albeit the most widely accepted theory of mind in the West from a modern academic and scholarly perspective but a theory nonetheless, and one that while proves useful in many contexts (for example in psychoanalysis which has become so prevalent in the West in the modern era), it represents a theory nonetheless, and one that sits in stark contrast to Jungian psychology in fact, a fact and an alternative theory of mind that is not addressed at all in *Kālī's Child* despite its inherent capabilities, given its altogether Idealist and arguably characteristically "Eastern" perspective, to better comprehend the experiences which Ramakrishna and those who came in direct contact with him describe, as well as the overarching and classically Indian and Hindu (and as such "Eastern") socio-cultural and theo-philosophical context within which Ramakrishna exists as a "cognitive" and "psychological" being.

From one of Kripal's introductory Chapters in *Kālī's Child*, entitled "The Hindu Unconscious", one which no doubt was significantly revised and/or edited upon the second edition of the work in response to the wide ranging criticism with which the initial publication of the work received, while we find Kripal reluctant to apply Freudian psychology as applicable to Hindu theo-philosophy and society as a whole, we do find a clear exposition of Kripal's assumptions regarding

⁶⁷⁰ The reader should refer to the Chapter in this work which covers at length Pirsig's criticism of what he again refers to as *subject-object metaphysics* which underpins the Western mind so to speak, as well as a more comprehensive treatment of his *Metaphysics of Quality* which he outlines initially in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* initially published in 1971 which is then fleshed out in more detail by Pirsig in his less publicized follow on work published some 20 years later entitled *Lila: An Inquiry Into Morals* which was first published in 1991.

⁶⁷¹ The Platypus both lays eggs AND has hair which means that it embodies the characteristics of both a mammal AND a reptile at the same time which of course flies in the face of modern biological species and evolution theory.

⁶⁷² Please see the relevant Chapter in this work on Modern Theories of Mind as put forth most prominently by Freud and Jung in this work for a more thorough and comprehensive review of their respective theories of mind, the two of which fundamentally establish the boundaries, the spectrum as it were, of modern Psychology in fact – with Freud putting forth a categorically materialistic, mechanistic and bio-chemical theory based upon the driving principal of "desire" and Jung providing an alternative, and more Idealistic conception.

the verity and objective validity of Freudian psychology as it applies to human behavior in general, and of course in turn to Ramakrishna specifically:

I can only say that I place myself somewhere in the middle, holding neither to a rigid Freudianism nor to a radical relativism. Put simply, I believe that the human mind possesses certain characteristics – a common biological base, a symbolizing function, defense and censoring strategies such as repression, displacement, and projection, a tendency to imagine in the language of the body and its shapes, and so forth – that give its functioning a certain universal character. This basic psychic or biological unity, however, is profoundly differentiated by such cultural forms as child-rearing practices, social organization, and religious doctrines, all of which differ radically from culture to culture. Human psychology, then, is relatively consistent across cultures. If it were not, such disciplines as anthropology and the history of religions would be impossible. But human psychology is also variable, and radically so. If it were not, anthropology and the history of religions might be possible, but they would also be unnecessary, not to mention uninteresting. Within this via media, I would assert that psychoanalysis, despite its birth in Western culture, can be used to interpret non-Western cultures, but I would add immediately, following the pioneering work of Stanley Kurtz, that it first must be “reshaped” to fit each and every cultural context in which it is applied.⁶⁷³

So while at some level credit must be given for at least the statement of position regarding the psychological assumptions upon which the arguments and analysis regarding Ramakrishna are based in *Kālī's Child*, and despite his admitting to some sort of relative casting as it were to Freudian psychology to fit the underlying socio-cultural and theological intellectual framework within which Ramakrishna lived and studied, that which formed the basic psychological imprint of his “mind” as it were, he does admit to any other psychological theoretical framework other than Freudian as a possible valid theory of mind, despite again his willingness to “relax” what he refers to as “*rigid Freudianism*”. However, if the presumption of the mind and psyche as a bio-chemical and mechanistic process which drives overall human behavior, behavior which is described in terms of a causal based psycho-analytic framework which is characterized by “*defense and censoring strategies such as repression, displacement, and projection*” is not rigid Freudianism then what is rigid Freudianism?

In brief, Freudian psychology rests primarily on the same *mechanistic* and *deterministic* assumptions as Western science, hence its adoption in the academic and scholarly community in the West as the standard bearing psychological framework. It works under the assumption that the mind of man is inherently a desire driven system, and as a biological organism it has evolved into its current “state” as the process of evolution and natural selection as put forth by Darwin

⁶⁷³ *Kālī's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* by Jeffrey Kripal. Second Edition, published by the University of Chicago Press, 1998 pg. 37-38.

and as such it is best understood through a fully *deterministic* and *mechanistic* vantage point taking evolutionary and genetic factors into account, as well as an understanding of the basic biochemical and neurological systems processing framework which underpins “man” as an animated thinking and living organism. Freudian psychology in fact rests squarely upon the same basic principles as empiricism and objective realism and as such should be considered to be a counterpart to classical “Western” scientific inquiry within as it pertains to the mental faculty of man and as a tool for describing the nature and origins and source of human behavior, in all its forms.⁶⁷⁴

In this context then, and despite the fact that it is not explicitly called out as such in *Kālī’s Child*, the validity and universal application of Freudian psychology as a framework for explaining human behavior of all kinds rests at the very heart, again not surprisingly, his entire argument, not to mention at the heart of modern psychiatric practice which is an altogether Western invention in fact. However, it is very relevant and important to point out that Kripal takes this assumption, despite the fact that he attempts to “loosen” it somewhat, as an a priori scientifically proven and empirically verified fact regarding human behavioral analysis, not even questioning as it were whether or not Freudian psychology as an intellectual theory a) has any limitations per se outside of the social and cultural nuances that he points out (but then arguably altogether ignores when he comes to his grand conclusions regarding the source and nature of Ramakrishna’s “behavior” as it is cast in a very classically Freudian intellectual framework by any stretch of the imagination), or b) whether or not there are any alternatives psychological frameworks which are better suited to explain not just Ramakrishna as a deeply religious man, regardless of culturally background, but whether or not alternative psychological frameworks exist to explain the “Eastern” mindset in general.

⁶⁷⁴ Freudian psychology in fact reflects the underlying theoretical psychological framework, the intellectual foundations as it were, to modern Cognitive Science, a discipline which also rests on the same basic theoretical framework and conception of the mind as Freudian psychology. Namely that humans can be conceived as cognitive structures that are essentially mechanistic biological organisms whose behavior and decision-making apparatus are best understood as the interaction and inner workings of a complex set of bio-chemical and neurological processes and therefore rest, as does the entire Western scientific intellectual structure in fact, on the same *causality* driven and fully *deterministic* based principles as machines. As such Artificial Intelligence as a discipline and mode of study, one that is of course fundamentally machine based in fact (based upon the various combinations of states of either “on” or “off”, i.e. 1 or 0) is considered to be an integral aspect of Cognitive Science as a modern intellectual discipline. In Cognitive Science, man is conceived of as a fully organic and yet at the same time mechanistic process based “being”, one which leverages the rational facilities of the mind, is more or less “state” driven, and incorporates and synthesizes both internal bio-chemical and neurological, and genetic, inputs, along with external stimuli that is “received” by the physical body and mind construct which come into the cognitive faculty, i.e. the human organism, in order that said being can determine how best to “act”, or from a psychological perspective, “behave”, so as to optimize some potential desirous outcome. As such, not unlike Turing’s *state machine*, the human *psyche* from a Cognitive Science perspective, which again is predicated upon Freudian desire drive stimulus response based theoretical structure, reflects the conception of mankind as a fully coherent, causal based deterministic and mechanistic process based organism which exists within a fully causal based mechanistic and objective physical universe. For a more comprehensive overview of Cognitive Science as it is defined in modern scholarly and academic circles, see Wikipedia contributors, ‘Cognitive science’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 5 December 2016, 11:53 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cognitive_science&oldid=753140293> [accessed 5 December 2016].

This assumption in fact, or this lack of perspective perhaps better put, is not just a defect of *Kālī's Child* however, it's a defect of the entire Western intellectual framework, as pointed out by Robert Pirsig among others over the last century or so, and is of course one of the major theses that underlies this work. The entire Western academic structure, the very core of science as we understand it in the post Enlightenment Era in fact, has led us to a place where we cannot, if we are to be taken seriously from within the academic and scientific community itself, challenge some of the basic assumptions upon which this so-called "citadel of science" is constructed.

But there is also an arguably more dangerous and deeper undercurrent of racism and/or "culturism" at work here within the context of the debate on how to "interpret" Ramakrishna's life and teachings as a whole as well, and this needs to be called out as such. We live in a world for better or worse that continues to be prejudiced toward Western civilization and Western modes of thought, in particular as it relates to more ancient, typically considered to be "less civilized" modes of thinking. 19th century Bengal is in fact a reflection of those very same forces at work, forces which at some level were elemental in producing not just Ramakrishna as a religious figure, but even more so producing and providing the impetus for the work of Ramakrishna's foremost disciple, i.e. Swami Vivekananda who is given credit for not just bringing Yoga to the West but also for revitalizing Hinduism and Indian nationalism in general.

In 19th century Bengal, British culture was being super-imposed onto Hindu and Indian culture in a very direct and somewhat oppressive manner, what is referred to in the academic and scholarly literature nowadays as one of the effects or manifestation of "colonization", which in many respects has been a hallmark of Western civilization in the modern era (from which the United States of course ultimately revolted against) as exemplified by the complete destruction of Native American culture by the Americans (and French and Spanish of course). In the historical record in fact over the last few hundred years, even after the so-called Enlightenment Era, we can find many examples of this cultural superimposition of Western civilization upon a variety of native cultures and civilizations, not just in India in the 19th century but throughout the Middle East and of course in Africa as well which was also subject to European "colonization" for centuries. The effect of this colonization by the West throughout the globe for the past few centuries has been at best a watering down of many indigenous host culture and societies, and at worst resulted in direct suppression, or even in some cases the outright annihilation, of many indigenous peoples, cultures and societies. As a justification of this "colonization" of course, the host cultures and societies which were being subjugated were looked down upon as backwards, ancient and outdated, fundamentally flawed and archaic.

Unfortunately, *Kālī's Child* fits right squarely into this category of work. By taking Freudian psychology as a more accurate and telling vantage point of Ramakrishna's life and teachings, than

say Yoga or Vedānta for example, Kripal is applying this very same Western paradigm of intellectual superiority over, specifically in his case, the Indian theo-philosophical tradition from which Ramakrishna himself emerged - a theo-philosophical tradition which rests within one of the longest lasting and most influential religious systems of the world, i.e. Hinduism, from which Vedānta, Yoga and Tantra Yoga are ultimately rooted, all of which were actively practiced and synthesized psycho-intellectually by Ramakrishna himself. This latter point is not only manifest in the Freudian psychoanalytical lens which is prominently figured in the interpretation of Ramakrishna in *Kālī's Child* and by which of course the rational argument is made for the emphasis of Ramakrishna's Tantric *sādhana* over his non-dual "Vedic" spiritual practices, or even his practice Bhakti Yoga, or devotional practices, which arguably underscores virtually his entire spiritual life.

Having said that however, there does in fact exist an alternative psychological framework from within which we have a much better chance and opportunity to understand Ramakrishna from, i.e. Jungian psychology. For Jung offered, in the early part of the twentieth century, in fact as a direct reaction to and as an alternative to Freud's mechanistic and process based, *desire* driven, model of the psyche, a comprehensive set of psychological principles, tenets and theories which fundamentally admit to the existence of not just the notion of the existence of an all pervading "consciousness" (akin to the Sāṃkhya philosophical notion of *Puruṣa*), i.e. Jung's *collective unconscious*, but also the description of methods, processes and mental constructs which facilitate and describe this so-called "spiritual ascent" which arguably best describes the very nature, and according to him at least as well as his followers, the basic and fundamental underlying purpose of Ramakrishna's entire life and teaching.

We refer here to the Jungian concepts of the *collective unconscious*, the existence of *archetypes* within the *collective unconscious* framework which manifest in the individual psyche, as well as the process of what Jung termed *individuation*, which leverages these *archetypes*, along with a uniquely Jungian methodology which he refers to as *active imagination* (a form of visualization which has direct counterparts to Tantra Yoga practices in fact, i.e. *mandalas*) which is meant to be used to facilitate the process of *individuation* and in turn lead to a more tranquil and harmonious psychological state of mind so to speak. While at first glance Jung's principle of *individuation* appears at some level to correspond to Eastern spiritual practices of ascent into "higher" stages of consciousness, the principle nonetheless sits apart from classical Eastern theo-philosophical systems. In fact, Jung has been known to recommend against the practice of *meditation* as a potentially dangerous and albeit unnecessary discipline and rather recommends

what he perceived to be a more practical, and less dangerous from a psychoanalytical standpoint, i.e. *individuation* supported by *active imagination*.⁶⁷⁵

This theoretical framework however, i.e. Jungian psychology, is entirely absent from *Kālī's Child*. One could argue that perhaps this absence reflects more of a defect of the Western academic and scientific community and tradition at large rather than a glaring defect of the work itself, regardless it nonetheless represents an enormous rational and intellectual blind spot of the work from an academic and scholarly perspective and in fact represents a significant missed opportunity to more accurately place Ramakrishna's life and teaching within a logical coherent and comprehensive Western psychological theoretical framework.⁶⁷⁶

But instead of abandoning said framework and looking for a more comprehensive theory of mind, or Soul, and *reality* itself within which categories of *beings* like Ramakrishna can be viewed on their own terms so to speak, beings which have exhibited many of the same characteristics as Ramakrishna and have put forth not only similar accounts of their so-called "experiences" but also who have put forth similar perspectives on the nature of reality itself which they have claimed to have directly *experienced* or *realized* in some supra-physical and/or super-conscious way (such as have been well documented throughout history with Jesus, Buddha, Muḥammad, Moses, Zarathustra, Krishna, being perhaps the most predominant examples) and instead of recasting or reformulating the underlying psycho-intellectual framework and theoretical assumptions to support said exceptions, *Kālī's Child* however quite stubbornly to the underling mechanistic and process oriented behavior models which modern science has *chosen* to accept and adopt.

To a large degree, once the selection of Freudian psychology is determined as the definitive intellectual framework from within which Ramakrishna is to be interpreted, some level of repressed or deviant sexual behavior is undoubtedly a predetermined conclusion as these latent

⁶⁷⁵ In fact, Jung himself practiced *active imagination* as a psychological discipline and mode of self-awareness himself for many years and as such wrote what is now referred to as the infamous *Red Book*, a book not published and made available to the public until 2009 which describes in great detail his direct experience using the technique of *active imagination*. The *Red Book* is in fact written in at least two different perspectives, i.e. from two different points of view from the perspective of two totally distinctive psychologically created or manifested characters and also utilizes a wide variety of artwork created by Jung himself that is integrated into the work and reflects the importance and relevance of archetypal imagery within the process of *individuation*, or journey through the self and its integration, via archetypal images and symbols into the *collective unconscious*. For a more detailed and comprehensive look at Jungian psychology, please see the relevant Chapter in this work on Modern Theories of Mind which covers Freudian and Jungian psychology in detail.

⁶⁷⁶ In other words, one can only assume that Dr. Kripal has heard of and is familiar with Carl Jung and his psychological theories, and yet he either consciously chose to not use this framework in any way shape or form to "interpret" his life and teachings, despite again the fact that they are much more appropriate and better aligned to interpret the "Eastern" mindset and belief system in general, or alternatively – and the critical alternative of course – is that Kripal consciously chose not to use Jungian psychological theories to model Ramakrishna's behavior because he knew that in so doing they would not have allowed for really any of the more shocking or disturbing conclusions that he comes to in *Kālī's Child*. Psychoanalyzing Dr. Kripal himself as reflected by his writing and his selection (or lack thereof) of relevant theoretic approaches to interpreting Ramakrishna is another topic entirely.

desires and their manifestation as “behaviors” is basically the foundation of Freudian psychology more or less. Anyone who has spent any time in a psychotherapist's office in the West can no doubt attest to a similar psychoanalytical experience along with a similar set of drawn conclusions. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy in some sense, although whether or not this analytical approach and the specific theoretical models that are leveraged in *Kālī's Child* to interpret Ramakrishna's life and teaching hold any validity, especially in light of the fact that Jungian psychology is not dealt with or addressed in any way, shape or form, can be left up to the reader to decide.⁶⁷⁷

If you don't believe in Jung's *collective unconscious*, and you don't believe that as Ramakrishna taught his disciples that “God can be seen with these very eyes”, or Jesus for that matter that “the kingdom of God is within you”, that is your prerogative. But if you want to study the life of a man whose entire existence lay in this boundary beyond the *conscious* or the *unconscious mind*, then you need a paradigm to explain Ramakrishna's behavior where he could believe such things, teach such things, and make extraordinary, outrageous efforts to achieve such states of *realization* - enter the classically “Western” worldview which is so prominently reflected in both Freudian psychology which underpins *Kālī's Child's* arguments more or less, a model which clearly is wholly inadequate for trying to interpret or understand Ramakrishna from a theo-philosophical vantage point which is the very vantage point that he “exists” in or from.

In other words, if you do believe these higher states of consciousness exist, i.e. what we are calling *supraconsciousness*, and that we can tap into them directly via the human form, i.e. the *jiva*, which arguably not only represents the so-called “Eastern” perspective from a theo-philosophical and metaphysical standpoint, and which is also reflected quite clearly in the teaching of not only Ramakrishna but also by his monastic disciples such as Vivekananda and Saradananda then Freud's model of the psyche becomes wholly inadequate as an explanatory tool. It doesn't even have a word to explain the whole paradigm within which these experiences happen or occur, if they can be said to happen or occur at all. At least Jung provides a psycho-metaphysical framework and language within which these types of “states”, or types of consciousness, can be describe - i.e. notion of the *collective unconscious* and the reality of *archetypes* that can be used along with the process of *active imagination* within the context of a process he refers to as *individuation* which effects an illumination of the individual *psyche* of sorts

⁶⁷⁷ Interestingly, as the author was writing this section of the work, an article published in the on line version of Scientific American regarding the problems of distinguishing between religious fervor and mental illness came to my attention, which of course is directly applicable to the point the author is making herein: namely that any Freudian psychological analysis of any significant religious figure in history, of which all have experienced states of “divine communion” or “divine ecstasy” in some form or another, would invariably be diagnosed as some form of mental illness from a modern, characteristically Freudian, psychoanalytic perspective. The article is entitled “How Do You Distinguish Between Religious Fervor and Mental Illness”, published by from Scientific American in Dec 2016 and authored by Nathaniel P. Morris which is available on line here: <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/mind-guest-blog/how-do-you-distinguish-between-religious-fervor-and-mental-illness/>.

such that this *collective unconscious* can be harmoniously manifested within the life of an individual person, i.e. within the *psyche* of an individual as conceived of by Jung.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁸ Jungian psychology does provide at least some sort of theoretical framework on which Eastern mystical practices, from a psychological standpoint, can be viewed. Even if Jung never, publically at least, attested to the “effectiveness” and/or “validity” of *meditation* as a therapeutic tool. In fact quite the opposite, he recommended against it and believed it led to a sort of madness (at least according to some sources although one could argue that, based upon the contents of the *Red Book* which was only just recently released, this “public” stance on Eastern *mediation* and *mysticism* in general may have been more a reflection of his concern regarding criticism from the scientific community had he not made such a recommendation rather than his own, personal beliefs per se. We know for example that he was very interested in not only *alchemy*, but also the *I Ching*, both areas of research that are closely tied to *mysticism*, or perhaps more aptly put in psychological terminology, *occult phenomena*.

In today's world, you don't have to go very far, or have too far out a view on the world, in order to be exposed to Yoga. Yoga is looked upon in the West today primarily as a means to better health, and (primarily) as a means to a better and more elegant body. The pursuit of the peace and tranquility of the calmed mind is somewhat of an afterthought in modern day Yoga although the nature of mind and the practices for calming it are baked into the very heart of Yoga as it was originally conceived. Although *meditation* and its offshoots do have a place in the modern practice of Yoga even if it is de-emphasized relative to the roots of the tradition, the practices inherent in Yoga of old have not been completely lost.

The word *Yoga* derives from the Vedic Sanskrit root verb *yuj*, which means to "add", "join", "unite" or "attach", or literally "yoke" in the most literal sense. According to Vyasa, the author of the first extant commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras*, *Yoga* is synonymous with *samādhi*, the end goal of Patañjali's theo-philosophical system, and as such its etymology is properly traced back to *yuj samādhau*, which means "to concentrate".⁶⁷⁹ The term has come to imply and mean "union" within the context of union with the divine, or alternatively as signifying a path to the union with the divine, as in Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga or Raja Yoga each of which is not synonymous with Yoga as outlined by Patañjali per se but nonetheless are related in kind to the system of philosophy called Yoga in its underlying purpose and content.

While Yoga is typically associated with specific "physical" practices such as postures, i.e. *āsanas*, and/or breathing exercises, i.e. *prāṇāyāma*, the identification of "Yoga" with these practices is somewhat misleading and is certainly inadequate from a theo-philosophical standpoint. Yoga as an "orthodox" system of Indian philosophy originates from a treatise attributed to the sage Patañjali from 3rd/4th century CE called the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, or sometimes simply referred to as the *Yoga Sūtras*. It is a set of 196 verses, or *sūtras* (literally "threads"), which outline a specific set of guidelines and practices for the attainment of *samādhi*, the highest state of concentration and *mokṣa*, or "freedom" which according to Patañjali is the end goal of life.

Yoga from a theo-philosophical perspective is very closely related Sāṃkhya philosophy, one of the other six orthodox Indian philosophical schools. And while the two theo-philosophical systems are distinct from a certain academic vantage point, both however rest and look to the *Vedas* as the ultimate guide for knowledge and truth (as does Vedānta). Yoga, as outlined by Patañjali in the *Yoga Sūtras*, while outlining a unique set of practices for living "rightly" or "properly", very similar to Buddha's Eightfold Noble Path in fact, is typically understood and

⁶⁷⁹*Samādhi* means literally a "putting or joining together" - from the compound *sam* which means "together" + *a* or "toward" and *dadhati* which is the verb "to put" or "place". See <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/samādhi>.

interpreted through the lens of Sāṃkhya philosophy, resting as it were upon the same underling metaphysical and theo-philosophical perspective as Sāṃkhya philosophy for the most part, even though there do exist some subtle differences in perspective.⁶⁸⁰

Sāṃkhya philosophy as a school predates and underpins Yoga, and references to Kapila, its founder, as well as the system of philosophy as a whole can be found in various texts from the middle of the second half of the first millennium BCE, some half a century at least before Patañjali. It, as does Yoga, adheres to an epistemological framework which admits to knowledge as resting upon three basic principles: 1) *Pratyakṣa* or perception (both internal and external), 2) *Anumāṇa* or inference, i.e. the reaching of a conclusion based upon original assumptions and the application of rational *logic*, and 3) *Śabda*, or the word, testimony of experts, e.g. the *Vedas*.

From a *metaphysical* and *cosmological* standpoint, Sāṃkhya sees the world as the combination and intermixing of two basic and fundamental principles. The first is the all-pervading consciousness or spirit which underlies the entire universe, both inanimate and animate “beings” called *Puruṣa*. *Puruṣa* is the underlying ground of existence, the primordial *first principle* as it were, and the roots of the concept of *Puruṣa* can be found in the *Vedas* themselves.

1. A THOUSAND heads hath *Puruṣa*, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet.
On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide.
- 2 This *Puruṣa* is all that yet hath been and all that is to be;
The Lord of Immortality which waxes greater still by food.
- 3 So mighty is his greatness; yea, greater than this is *Puruṣa*.
All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life in heaven.
- 4 With three-fourths *Puruṣa* went up: one-fourth of him again was here.
Thence he strode out to every side over what cats not and what cats.
- 5 From him *Virāj* was born; again *Puruṣa* from *Virāj* was born.
As soon as he was born he spread eastward and westward o’er the earth.
- 6 When Gods prepared the sacrifice with *Puruṣa* as their offering,
Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn; summer was the wood.
- 7 They balmed as victim on the grass *Puruṣa* born in earliest time.
With him the Deities and all *Sādhyas* and *Ṛṣis* sacrificed.
- 8 From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat was gathered up.
He formed the creatures of-the air, and animals both wild and tame.
- 9 From that great general sacrifice *Ṛcas* and *Sāma*-hymns were born:
Therefrom were spells and charms produced; the *Yajus* had its birth from it.
- 10 From it were horses born, from it all cattle with two rows of teeth:
From it were generated kine, from it the goats and sheep were born.

⁶⁸⁰From this perspective Yoga can be seen as akin to Buddhism or Daoism in the sense that it does not outline a *cosmogony* or *metaphysics* per se but nonetheless outlines a set of guidelines for “right living”.

11 When they divided *Puruṣa* how many portions did they make?
 What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?
 12 The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the *Rājanya* made.
 His thighs became the *Vaiśya*, from his feet the *Śūdra* was produced.
 13 The Moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eye the Sun had birth;
 Indra and Agni from his mouth were born, and *Vāyu* from his breath.
 14 Forth from his navel came mid-air the sky was fashioned from his head
 Earth from his feet, and from his car the regions. Thus they formed the worlds.
 15 Seven fencing-sticks had he, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared,
 When the Gods, offering sacrifice, bound, as their victim, *Puruṣa*.
 16 Gods, sacrificing, sacrificed the victim these were the earliest holy ordinances.
 The Mighty Ones attained the height of heaven, there where the *Sādhyas*, Gods of old, are
 dwelling.⁶⁸¹

One here finds that *Puruṣa* from a Vedic perspective is looked upon as a deity of sorts, we here see a hymn to “him”, from the latest portion of the *Rigvéda*, Book X. Even in the original, earliest conception of *Puruṣa* however, he/it is looked upon as the source of not just all the physical universe, but the source of the whole natural world as well as the social order and all mankind. In Sāṃkhya philosophy, in its original conception as the metaphysical interpretation of the *Vedas*, *Puruṣa* becomes pure consciousness, or spirit, which is “transcendental” so to speak, although at the same time is not active in and of itself, and is not the primary constituent of the natural world.

It is the concept of *Prakṛti*, which literally means “nature”, which is perceived to be the fundamental building block of the world as it were. *Prakṛti* is the initial, or first cause, of the manifest universe and combines with *Puruṣa* in various forms and combinations to make up the universe as we know and perceive it in all its forms. In Sāṃkhya philosophy *Prakṛti* is looked upon as consisting of three basic attributes called *gunas*, which represent the basic aspects or characteristics which underlie everything in the universe. These three *gunas* are *Sattva*, which signifies tranquility or lightness, *Rajas* which signifies activity or excitement, and *Tamas* which signifies inertia of heaviness.

It is important to understand that Sāṃkhya philosophy looks upon the universe not just as a physical construct, that which can be perceived by the senses, but also understood as consisting of mind and spirit as well and as such this is a fundamental difference between it and virtually all forms of later Western philosophy⁶⁸². In this context, while the Soul and mind are looked upon from a metaphysical perspective as manifestations of *Prakṛti* as well, the *jīva* is believed to consist

⁶⁸¹ *Rigvéda*, Book X. Hymn XC. “Puruṣa”. From *Rig Véda* translated by Ralph T.H. Griffith, 1896. From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/Rigvéda/rv10090.htm>.

⁶⁸² Classical Hellenic philosophy however, for example as reflected in the theo-philosophical frameworks put forth most notably by Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, included the realm of the Soul, or spirit, directly in their metaphysical frameworks.

of a synthesis and combination of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, the former being the source of intelligence and order, the primordial male principle in the universe, and the latter being the primordial essence of all matter, the female, or receptive, cosmic principle upon which *Puruṣa* acts.

In this context, it is *Sattva* that is looked upon as the finest and most subtle of “elements” of nature that is to be actively cultivated from a psychological standpoint in order to promote and facilitate the release the *jīva* or Soul from bondage. This state off delusion, or misconception, is referred to in Sāṃkhya philosophy as *saṃsāra*, which although is literally translated as “wandering” or “world”, it carries with it connotations of constant fluctuation or cyclical change.⁶⁸³ The source of *saṃsāra*, and the means by which *mokṣa* is ultimately attained, is by the proper and correct understanding of the nature of the *jīva* within the universal order of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, i.e. one’s true and complete identification with *Puruṣa* as the true and primordial state of being or existence.

In this context Sāṃkhya philosophy is typically understood as being atheistic, although perhaps a better term is “naturalistic”, even though even this term is not necessarily inclusive enough to provide the complete conception of “Nature” within the context of Sāṃkhya philosophy. In this sense, the system does not necessarily deny the existence of an anthropomorphic God or deity (Īśvara) but perhaps better put, as it believes the universe to be a manifestation of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* in various combinations and forms and as such does not require the existence of any specific deity or God to create or preserve the universal order and therefore looks upon God, or Īśvara, as a human construct that from a metaphysical standpoint has no “real” existence. Swami Vivekananda explains it thus:

Next, Sāṃkhya says, that the manifestation of nature is for the soul; all combinations are for some third person. The combinations which you call nature, these constant changes are going on for the enjoyment of the soul, for its liberation, that it may gain all this experience from the lowest to the highest. When it has gained it, the soul finds it was never in nature, that it was entirely separate, that it is indestructible, that it cannot go and come; that going to heaven and being born again were in nature, and not in the soul. Thus the soul becomes free.

All nature is working for the enjoyment and experience of the soul. It is getting this experience in order to reach the goal, and that goal is freedom. But the souls are many according to the Sāṃkhya philosophy. There is an infinite number of souls. The other conclusion of Kapila [the founder of

⁶⁸³ Parallels between the notion of *saṃsāra* in the Indian philosophical tradition to the Far Eastern ancient concept of *Yi*, or “change”, which is the basic subject matter of the *Yijing*, or *Classic of Changes*, can clearly be drawn. Technically speaking *saṃsāra* is a function of, or manifestation of *Maya* from an Advaita Vedānta Indian philosophical perspective.

*Sāṃkhya philosophy] is that there is no God as the Creator of the universe. Nature is quite sufficient by itself to account for everything. God is not necessary, says the Sāṃkhya.*⁶⁸⁴

saṃsāra then, has its origins in the false identification one's small self, or ego (*ahamkara*), that the *jiva* perceives itself as a separate and unique entity bound to a physical form which is subject to birth, growth, decay and ultimate death and destruction, characterized most emphatically by suffering and loss. In this sense Sāṃkhya again shares many of the same characteristics of Buddhism (the notion of *anātman* in Sanskrit and *anattā* in Pāli, or "not-self") although its underlying philosophy, as well as the path which it lays out for liberation, is altogether distinct and unique.

In Sāṃkhya philosophy, and in turn in its close cousin theo-philosophical systems of Yoga in its original conception as put forth by Patañjali, as well as in Vedānta in fact, *mokṣa*, or liberation, is conceived of as a state of being or consciousness that comes from a proper and complete understanding of the true nature of existence, and the true nature of self – *jiva* or *Ātman* – within the context of this "true state of affairs" so to speak, as understood by each of the respective metaphysical and theo-philosophical frameworks.⁶⁸⁵ With Sāṃkhya philosophy, and to a lesser extent in Yoga, *mokṣa* is attained when the psychic and intellectual root of *saṃsāra* is removed when one's true identity with the underlying ground of existence, *Puruṣa*, is ultimately realized and experienced directly.⁶⁸⁶

It is from the standpoint of Sāṃkhya philosophy then, that the eight limbed practices (again *ashtanga*) outlined in the *Yoga Sūtras* are typically interpreted, the sum total of which - in a manner very similar to Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path - a specific methodology as it were, specific observances and practices, which when properly and cohesively developed and mastered will facilitate the attainment *mokṣa*.

Yoga is defined in the *Yoga Sūtras* at the beginning of the work (Verse 1.2) as "*yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*", which is translated (by Vivekananda) as "*Yoga is the restraining (nirodhaḥ) of the mind-stuff (citta) from taking various forms (vṛtti)*". As such, one must look at the entire theo-philosophical system as presented by Patañjali with this one goal in mind, even though related

⁶⁸⁴ Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume 2*, "Practical Vedānta and other lectures" From https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Complete_Works_of_Swami_Vivekananda/Volume_2/Practical_Vedānta_and_other_lectures/Sāṃkhya_and_Vedānta.

⁶⁸⁵ In the system of Advaita Vedānta as put forth by Śaṅkara this is referred to as "Self-Knowledge" or, *Ātma-bōdha*

⁶⁸⁶ Sāṃkhya is *dualistic*, in the sense that it lays out more than one fundamental principle from which the universe comes into existence, namely the inert *Puruṣa* combined with the active principle of *Prakṛti* and in this sense it is distinguished for example with Advaita Vedānta where the individual Soul, or *Ātman*, is considered to be one and the same and fundamentally indivisible from the universal Soul, or *Brahman*, classified accordingly as a *non-dualist* philosophical system.

“results”, i.e. the release of one from bondage or suffering, are undoubtedly considered to be key byproducts of the attainment of said goal.

Yoga as outlined by Patañjali emphasizes the importance of posture, *āsana*, control of the breath, *prāṇāyāma*, and concentration, *dhāraṇā*, all as key tools to be employed by the spiritual aspirant who wishes to be liberated from the bondage of phenomenal existence and ultimately to experience the pure state of consciousness itself, i.e. *samādhi*. But what is commonly overlooked, particularly in the West, is that these physical and mental practices are grounded in a thorough and in many respects unyielding system of *morality*, *ethics* and observances that prepare the aspirant, provide the foundation for the aspirant, upon which the more advanced limbs of Yoga are based. The first 2 limbs of Yoga reflect this focus on the necessary grounding of *ethics* and *morality*, the *way* to live, to prepare oneself for the path to liberation, namely *yama* and *niyama*.

A proper understanding of Yoga yields the true import of both the means to the end as just as important, if not more so, as the end itself, and this is one of the characteristics of the traditional and original formulation of “Yoga” which distinguishes it from some of its modern variants such as Hatha Yoga or Kuṇḍalinī Yoga, both of which arguably have a much more “physical” or perhaps better put, “result driven” mindset or approach. In the case of Yoga proper however, the system which Vivekananda refers to as Raja Yoga, or “Royal Yoga”, the focus is on the control and purification of the mind, the so-called “mental sheathe” of the *jīva*, or Soul, as juxtaposed with a focus on the so-called “physical sheathe” of the human form which is the primary focus of Hatha Yoga for example.

However, in Patañjali’s eight limbed system, the first four limbs in fact represent the requisite preparation of the mind-body system for the higher practices of mental withdrawal and concentration which the Western mind typically associates with *meditation* which culminates in the state of *samādhi*, the eighth limb of Patañjali’s system.⁶⁸⁷ The first “limb” of Yoga is *yamas*, which literally means to “reign in” or “curb”, and consists of five basic *moral* or *ethical* precepts with which the practitioner must abide by, i.e. should preclude or refrain from doing. These are 1) *ahiṃsā* which means “nonviolence”, or the “non-harming” of other living beings⁶⁸⁸, 2) *satya* which means “truthfulness” or the abstention from lying, 3) *asteya* or “non-stealing”, 4) *brahmacārya* which can be loosely translated as “chastity”, but more appropriately translates to “sexual restraint”, and 5) *aparigraha* which means “non-possessiveness” or “non-attachment”.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ashtanga* means literally “eight limbs” and it is from this Sanskrit word that the name of the 20th century system called Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, or sometimes imply Ashtanga Yoga, as popularized and taught by K. Pattabhi Jois in the 20th century, is derived.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ahiṃsā*, typically translated as “non-violence”, as a moral precept is the source of the focus on “Vegan” eating habits and practices by most orthodox, or “traditional” practitioners of Yoga.

This first limb is followed by the list of attributes or qualities which should be cultivated by the Yoga practitioner, i.e. the second limb of Patañjali's theo-philosophical system which is referred to as *niyama*, which literally means "positive duties, observances, or practices". These are 1) *sauca* or "purity" of mind, speech and body, 2) *santoṣa* or "contentment", or "acceptance", 3) *tapas*, which comes from the root Sanskrit word for "fire" but in this context means austerity, self-discipline, or self-control, 4) *svādhyāya*, or "self-reflection" or "introspection", and 5) *Īśvarapraṇidhāna* which means "contemplation of God" or Īśvara, or from an Upanishadic philosophical context contemplation of the Supreme Self, i.e. *Brahman*.⁶⁸⁹

This list of observances and practices outlined in the first two limbs are followed by the third and fourth limbs which are what most Westerners typically associate with "Yoga" and which are the primary focus of Hatha Yoga. These are *āsana*, which means literally "posture" or "seat", and *prāṇāyāma*, "breath" or "life force" control, both of which represent a set of physical practices to prepare the mind-body for the more advanced practices of mental attention, awareness and concentration (with which we typically associate with *meditation* proper) which are the subject and topic of the next three limbs of Patañjali's theo-philosophical system.

Asana and *prāṇāyāma* (literally control of breath or "life force", i.e. *prāṇa*) are followed by

- *Pratyāhāra*, which means the withdrawal of the senses from the external world into oneself (form the prefix *prati* which means "towards" and the root verb *ahara* which means "bring near, or "fetch"),
- *Dhāraṇā*, which means concentration or one-pointedness of mind, implying the concentration of the mind on a single physical object, deity or symbol,
- *Dhyāna* which is the steadfast and unwavering concentration on the object of *meditation* and concentration, and then finally
- *samādhi*, where the distinction between the object of *meditation* and the *meditator* falls away and unity, i.e. the direct experience of *Brahman*

While the first and initial phase of *meditation*, *pratyahara*, the practitioner simply "withdraws" the senses from the external world, i.e. literally "brings the focus of attention within". This is just the preliminary step along the road of *meditation* and represents, along with the first four limbs, a preparatory stage or phase as it were that begins to prepare the practitioner, the Yogi, for the more advanced and fully developed stages of *meditation* practice. In the *dhāraṇā* phase the practitioner is *meditating*, but the concentration is still "wavering" so to speak, and is "broken"

⁶⁸⁹ One of the distinguishing characteristics of Yoga that is believed to derive directly from Sāṃkhya philosophy, its precursor, is the belief in the concept of God, or Īśvara. While one could argue that from a metaphysical standpoint the two systems are consistent, one cannot deny the fact that Patañjali speaks to the relevance and importance of the contemplation of God, again Īśvara, within his system – whether or not this concept is considered to be "real" or not by Patañjali is open to interpretation.

or “chunked” in phases of sorts. That is to say, in this stage the concentration is not as unwavering and dedicated – like a candle that is glowing in a windless place - as is reflected in the more advanced stage of meditation practice which is referred to as *dhyāna*. In this stage, the meditator and the object of meditation are unified and connected as it were in the state of concentration itself, in one single field of “awareness” as it were. This stage can be looked upon in contrast to the earlier stage where the “subject” and “object” are still “perceived” as distinct entities.

The final, and penultimate stage of Patañjali’s theo-philosophical system is the experience of the state of *samādhi*, which is the direct perception, or experience, of pure consciousness, or *Puruṣa*, the so-called “ground of existence”. In this state, one does not conceive of themselves in any way as a distinct “being”, but as fully integrated with the underlying ground of *Being* itself, or *reality*. In this state, the concentration itself melts away as it were into a state of *Being* where the *meditation* practice itself, and its related subject and object *dualism*, falls away and is fully synthesized into a single field of “experience”.

It is very important however, and again this message is lost on many of the Western translations of these teachings, that all of these limbs in Patañjali’s system are meant to hang together and be practiced collectively and meant to be constantly reinforced as it were. The physical aspects of Yoga, which are emphasized in most if not all of the Western adaptations of his system, are but a means to the end and not an end in and of themselves, and even these aspects of the system rest on very foundational and basic moral and ethical precepts – both abstentions and active observances – which underpin the entire practice.

Yoga can be looked at as a theo-philosophical pyramid of sorts, where the base or foundation of the pyramid are the *moral* and *ethical* principles upon which the whole system stands, after which physical purification can begin to be practiced and honed, upon which the art of *meditation* as reflected in the system of Yoga which Patañjali teaches, can begin to be practiced and mastered. The final stage, the eight limb which is *samādhi*, represents not just a “goal” or “objective” of the system, as the Western mind likes to look at things as a sort of “conquest” of sorts, but a state of *consciousness*, i.e. *supraconsciousness*, which although from a certain perspective may represent the culmination of the practice as the practitioner comes to a complete *understanding* of the basic reality and theo-philosophical Truth which the system is designed to *reveal*, but also nonetheless reflects, and ultimately stands upon, the foundational practices which are reflected in each and every one of the “eight limbs”.

In other words, the notion of *realization* within Yoga, emphasizes not just the attainment of some sort of goal or objective, or even some state of mind or level of consciousness, but is *understood* as the *effective and consistent practice* of all eight limbs within the entire theo-philosophical system together in conjunction with each other in harmony and balance with each other such

that a state of *being* can be arrived at as it were, or attained if we want to look at the theo-philosophical system through a Western intellectual lens, upon which *Yoga* is *realized*. In this context then, and only through proper understanding of all of the limbs of the system and how they work together, this final state of *realization* is *constructed* upon all of the eight limbs which come together and are fully integrated and synthesized such that the final Truth of the system can be *realized* and/or *revealed* to the *jiva*. Again, the same could also be said of Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path and the state of *nirvana* to which it ascribes as the "end goal" of said system, as understood in Buddhism to be the *cessation of suffering*, i.e. *dukkha-nirodha*.

What Vivekananda (1863 – 1902) laid out for the West however, was a comprehensive and fully synthesized and harmonized view of Indian philosophy which while underscored the importance and relevance of Vedānta and Yoga as "true" theo-philosophical systems for the attainment of the end goal of life, i.e. *mokṣa* or *liberation*, four different aspects of Yoga, or Paths, should be fully understood and practiced by the *jiva*, or Soul, the sum total of which reflect the height and full synthesis, and proper understanding, of Indian philosophy in the modern era.⁶⁹⁰

According to Vivekananda, each of these four pillars of Yoga all reflect different aspects of "Yoga" which are to be practiced together and in harmony with each other. Yoga in this context used by Vivekananda is not to be construed in the more classical Indian philosophical context of Yoga as taught by Patañjali, but "Yoga" in the more broad sense of term which is perhaps best translated as "Union" or "Path". These four Paths as he describes them and calls them are Raja Yoga, as expounded by Patañjali, Jnana Yoga, or the pursuit of knowledge from which the fetters of bondage can be broken intellectually, Karma Yoga, or the practice of selfless action which provides the moral and ethical basis for right living for the spiritual aspirant, and Bhakti Yoga, which is love of the divine which propels aspirant along the path. Each of these was the subject of a number of talks and works which are attributed to Vivekananda and represent the core of his philosophical teachings.⁶⁹¹

To Vivekananda, each of these four paths represented not only different approaches to *mokṣa*, but also fundamentally underpinned Vedānta as a theo-philosophical system in and of itself. While they were treated as distinct approaches and philosophical systems from an intellectual perspective, each true in its own right and in its own terms and underlying philosophical principles and tenets, but at the same time were recast as it were as all different perspectives on

⁶⁹⁰ For a detailed and comprehensive overview of Swami Vivekananda's life, please see *Vivekananda: A Autobiography* by Swami Nikhilananda, published by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, 1953.

⁶⁹¹ See the three books which are in English (not from translation) which synthesize and compile Swami Vivekananda teachings of these different and yet integrally related Paths called *Raja-Yoga*, *Jnana-Yoga*, and *Karma-Yoga and Bhakti-Yoga*, respectively.

the same underlying Truth, a Truth that can be found rooted in the *Vedas*, and each reflecting different paths to the same ultimate goal. Collectively, the four Yogas as Vivekananda teaches them, provide the spiritual aspirant with a more complete and expansive guidebook on the entire landscape of spiritual life, in all its nuances and subtleties, from all different perspectives within the Indian philosophical tradition, all recast and re-interpreted for the modern era in the West.

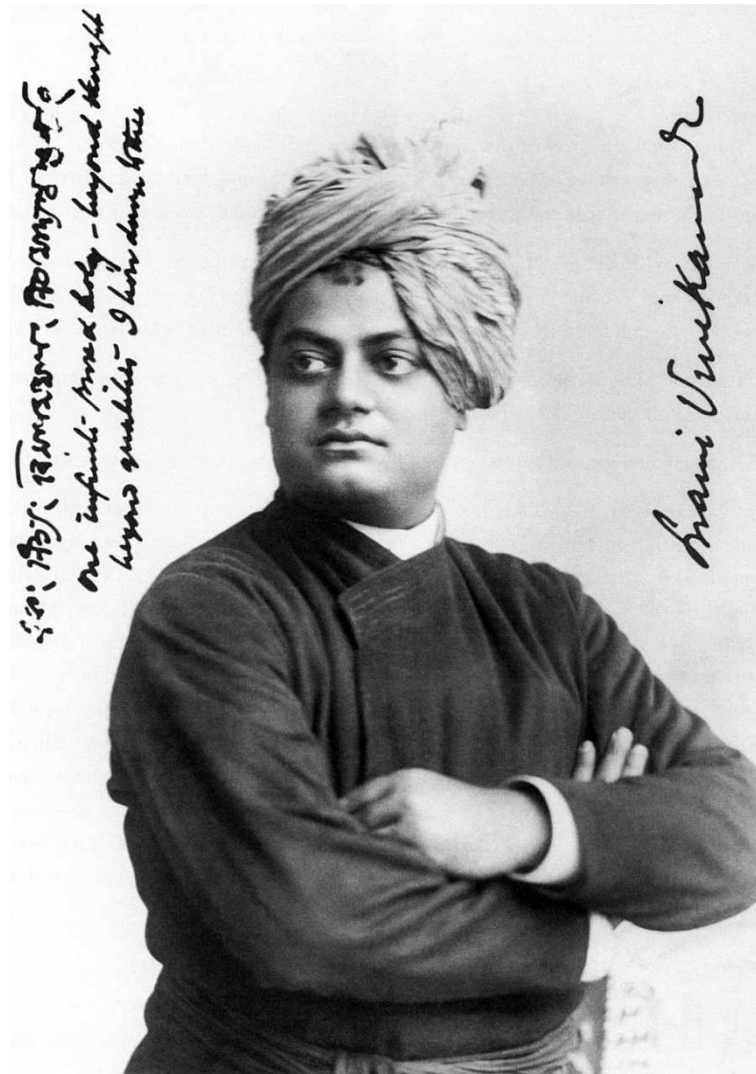


Figure 40: Swami Vivekananda⁶⁹²

⁶⁹² From Wikipedia contributors, 'Swami Vivekananda', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 4 November 2016, 16:58 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Swami_Vivekananda&oldid=747831480> [accessed 4 November 2016]. Image from Dziewa at English Wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia to Commons., Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4310553>.

In this context, Raja Yoga is but one of the four paths, to be integrated and understood within the context of the existence of the three other paths – Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga – each of which brings its own expertise, mindset and underlying philosophical and metaphysical perspectives through which Vedānta, according to Vivekananda, was to be properly understood and “practiced” as a spiritual discipline. Vedānta from Vivekananda’s perspective, was not just as a system of philosophy per se, but should be looked upon and studied as a “practical” guide, intellectually and spiritually, to liberation and freedom of the Soul from bondage and suffering. In fact, Vivekananda coined the term *Raja*, or Royal Yoga, given his perspective on its importance within the four pillars of Yoga that were necessary to lead a balanced and liberated life in what he saw as an overly materialistic and capitalistic culture whose main focus was the betterment of the individual at the expense of the whole.

The whole universe is one. There is only one Self in the universe, only One Existence, and that One Existence, when it passes through the forms of time, space, and causation, is called by different names, Buddhi, fine matter, gross matter, all mental and physical forms. Everything in the universe is that One, appearing in various forms. When a little part of it comes, as it were, into this network of time, space, and causation, it takes forms; take off the network, and it is all one. Therefore in the Advaita philosophy, the whole universe is all one in the Self which is called Brahman. That Self when it appears behind the universe is called God. The same Self when it appears behind this little universe, the body, is the soul. This very soul, therefore, is the Self in man. There is only one Puruṣa, the Brahman of the Vedānta; God and man, analysed, are one in It. The universe is you yourself, the unbroken you; you are throughout the universe. "In all hands you work, through all mouths you eat, through all nostrils you breathe through all minds you think." The whole universe is you; the universe is your body; you are the universe both formed and unformed. You are the soul of the universe and its body also.

You are God, you are the angels, you are man, you are animals, you are the plants, you are the minerals, you are everything; the manifestation of everything is you. Whatever exists is you. You are the Infinite. The Infinite cannot be divided. It can have no parts, for each part would be infinite, and then the part would be identical with the whole, which is absurd. Therefore the idea that you are Mr. So-and-so can never be true; it is a day-dream. Know this and be free. This is the Advaita conclusion. "I am neither the body, nor the organs, nor am I the mind; I am Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss absolute; I am He." This is true knowledge; all reason and intellect, and everything else is ignorance. Where is knowledge for me, for I am knowledge itself! Where is life for me, for I am life itself! I am sure I live, for I am life, the One Being, and nothing exists except through me, and in me, and as me. I am manifested through the elements, but I am the free One.

*Who seeks freedom? Nobody. If you think that you are bound, you remain bound; you make your own bondage. If you know that you are free, you are free this moment. This is knowledge, knowledge of freedom. Freedom is the goal of all nature.*⁶⁹³

From this passage, an excerpt from one of his lectures on Vedānta and Sāṃkhya philosophy, he crystalizes and synthesizes really all of the “orthodox” (again that which rests on the *Vedas* as the hallmark of Truth), one can see not only the very essence of Advaita Vedānta alluded to, but at the same time the importance and recognition of the reality of God (*Brahman*/Īśvara/Viṣṇu) and the Soul (*Ātman*/*jiva*) as well as also true from a certain perspective. The sum total of all the systems, all the theo-philosophical beliefs that underpin all of the different Indian philosophical systems, all of which he integrates into a modern conception of Vedānta that can be understood through the four different paths or approaches - Work (Karma Yoga), Devotion (Bhakti Yoga), Knowledge (Jnana Yoga) and Energy (Raja Yoga) – each of which if properly understood and performed with the proper intention all lead to the same final destination and all ultimately reveal the same eternal and ever-lasting simple truth. That bondage is of the mind and freedom is of the mind as well, and that fundamental nature is one of freedom and limitlessness and pure consciousness itself (*Puruṣa* or *Brahman*).

Vivekananda from this perspective can be viewed not only as the central figure responsible for bringing Yoga to the West, as he most certainly was, but also as a modern and English interpreter and synthesizer of the entire Indian philosophical landscape, a landscape which he ultimately synthesizes under a more expansive and inclusive system which is referred to as Vedānta in that again it does not reject but ultimately accepts the knowledge of the *Vedas*. While Ramakrishna’s life and teachings can be viewed as the illustration of the truth and power of all systems of religion, all merely representing different paths to the same goal (*Truth is one, sages call it various names* as the Upanishadic verse goes), to Vivekananda, life and the universe was a gymnasium for the Soul, and his (re)formulation of Vedānta for the West in the modern era can be seen as his classically “Indian” guidebook for the modern spiritual aspirant put in succinct and clear Western terminology and using a modern Western language, i.e. English.

All great religions speak of mankind’s special place in the universe of creation. In the Eastern tradition specifically, as taught by Ramakrishna and in Tibetan Buddhism for example, the uniqueness of the human life (the *jiva*, or Soul as it is referred to in the Indian philosophical

⁶⁹³ Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume 2, “Practical Vedānta and other lectures”* From https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Complete_Works_of_Swami_Vivekananda/Volume_2/Practical_Vedānta_and_other_lectures/Sāṃkhya_and_Vedānta.

tradition), as an instrument of the direct perception of the divine and the vehicle of liberation is emphasized.

In the Buddhist tradition, there is a wonderful story, a parable, which illustrates this. There is a turtle in a great, vast ocean. And in this vast ocean there is a small ring that floats on its surface somewhere, a ring with a circumference no bigger than a few feet across. This ring bobs and floats in this vast sea carried by currents and storms and waves. In this same ocean, there lives a sea turtle. A turtle which like all turtles must pop his nose above the surface every few minutes in order to breathe and stay alive, even though he lives most of his life under the sea. It is said that to be born in a human, and have the opportunity for liberation and illumination which is unique to our species, is said to be as lucky as fortunate and as improbable as that very same sea turtle, swimming in the vastness of the great ocean of the universe, popping its head up for air and happening to stick his nose through that small ring bobbing and floating on the surface. As Ramakrishna so succinctly puts it, *“He is born in vain, who having attained the human birth, so difficult to get, does not attempt to realize God in this very life.”*

What is it that is so special about the human form? The Yoga tradition specifically calls out this form as a tool for illumination and realization, in a manner that is quite direct. Raja Yoga describes how to perfect and hone this human form to prepare it for illumination, how to harness its energy, outlining a psycho-physiological system to perfect and strengthen the body through the use of various positions and stretches called *āsanas*, designed to leverage and awaken the life force within the body, *prāṇa*, and direct it upward through the spiritual channels that flow through the human form which are said to be concentrated in very specific centers, *chakras*, that run alongside and parallel to the spine, a spiritual channel referred to as the *sushumna* or *nadi*.⁶⁹⁴

This energy is also referred to as *the serpent of kuṇḍalinī* which is implied in the Hindu/Yoga tradition and is explicitly called out in Tantric Yoga as Śakti, the divine force which is associated with the goddess Kālī that underlies all creation. This Śakti, or *kuṇḍalinī*, typically lies latent at the base of the spine of the individual centered around the lower three *chakras* which are associated with the basic, core needs of the human form - eating, sleeping and sexual desire.⁶⁹⁵ Ultimately the theo-philosophical system of Raja Yoga, which is a more modern interpretation of Yoga as outlined in the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, which is inherently *mystical* like all of the Indian

⁶⁹⁴ *Chakra* means literally “wheel”, “circle”, or “cycle” in Sanskrit, an ancient word of Indo-European origin that can be found throughout the Indian theo-philosophical literature, e.g. *Rigvéda*, 1.164 and the notion of the so-called *wheel of dharma*, a prevalent theme in Buddhism (*cakka* in Pāli).

⁶⁹⁵ *Kālī* is the feminine of the Sanskrit word for “black” or “dark colored”, i.e. *kālam*, and becomes a prominent figure in Hindu *mythos* from the Puranic period onwards. *Kālī* can also mean “time” and as such represents the destructive aspect of change that underlines the universe. In this sense it can be seen as a corollary to the Greek *Chronos* and the Chinese *Yi*, from a cosmological and theogonic vantage point, even though of course she takes on a whole new dimension from a Yoga and Tantric standpoint in the Indian theo-philosophical tradition. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Kali', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 3 January 2017, 11:07 UTC, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kali&oldid=758084263>> [accessed 3 January 2017].

theo-philosophical traditions for the most part, is designed to facilitate and support the ultimate liberation, *mokṣa*, or *mukṭi*, of the Soul, or *jīva*.

The doctrine of Yoga as outlined by Patañjali, although it doesn't speak of *kuṇḍalinī* directly, is effectively the art of honing and facilitating the upward movement of this energy, up through the system of *chakras* in the human form as outlined in Tantric systems of Yoga, for the purpose of liberation, or in Patañjali's nomenclature for the purpose of experiencing *samādhi*. Patañjali's system starts with principles that govern what to avoid (*yama*) and what to observe or cultivate (*niyama*), providing for a foundation of *ethics*, *morality* and even the basic notion of worship itself as core principles for anyone wishing to practice Yoga with the intent of liberating oneself from the world of name and form, the endless suffering that is called out so specifically in the Buddhist tradition, which shares a common philosophical parent with Yoga i.e. the *Vedas*.

This practice of Yoga is essentially the conscious practice of awakening the energy or life force within each and every one of us, a notion which is very much aligned with the Christian notion of the Holy Spirit. Tantric Yoga specifically is designed to lift this *kuṇḍalinī*, latent serpent power, to the higher *chakras* located at the region of the heart, the throat, the forehead and ultimately through the *chakra* located at the top of the head, the thousand petalled lotus, which once opened yields the state of *samādhi*.

Once these *chakras* are opened, through the practice of Yoga and other Tantric rituals that leverage *mandalas* (visual symbols) and *mantras* (incantations and sound), the *jīva* experiences unrefined and *unfiltered consciousness*, higher and more subtle realms of reality where the distinction between the observer and the observed gives way to the direct perception of *consciousness itself* – referred to as *samādhi* in the Yoga tradition and as *Satcitānanda*, or Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute, in the *Upanishads*.

In the Yoga tradition, one which has been adopted by the West in the last hundred years or so as an alternative in many respects to the Abrahamic religions that have dominated Western thought for almost two thousand years, the human form is perceived as a bundle of energy, energy that is directly related to the cosmic energy from which it draws its source. Is that not the true meaning behind the notion of mankind being created in God's image which is a core tenet of Christianity, Islam and certainly Judaism from which this notion ultimately derives, i.e. in *Genesis*? The Yoga tradition describes this in more concrete terms though, explaining why we as a species are so special, along with a fairly structured path toward the ultimate *realization*, the quintessential understanding, of this connection between the creator and the created.

This connection between the individual Soul and the universal Soul is essentially what all of the ancient cosmological systems were about, these same mythological stories of the creation of the universe and mankind's place in it which are looked upon today as mere stories of the ignorant

trying to explain that which these ancient peoples did not understand, notions that we now have a “better” grasp on in the age of science, were actually deep and profound mystical truths whose power had been lost throughout the ages as the metaphors had been watered down into stories that found their way into the literature of various religious systems – the *Vedas* of the Hindus, the *Theogony* of Hesiod, the traditions which yielded the cosmologies of the Ancient Egyptians which are found in the *Book of Res-Menu*, the *cosmogony* inherent in the clearly sacred text of the *Derveni Papyrus*, and of course in *Genesis* of the *Old Testament* which sits behind Christianity, Islam and Judaism to which some 4 billion people ascribe to today in some form or another.

In essence, the heart of the Indo-Aryan theo-philosophical tradition, which includes Buddhism, lies in this pursuit of the understanding of the nature of *mind* through various practices, methods and systems of *metaphysics* – what we call the *Science of the mind*. And it is through these practices, and through an understanding of the nature of *mind*, or the Soul, and its relationship to the Absolute, or God, that represents the core of all systems of Yoga despite their focus on the body and health today.⁶⁹⁶ The Western religious traditions had abandoned this notion of direct perception and *realization* of the divine, even though Jesus called it out specifically. Why? Because they were designed to unite an empire, unite a people, and in so doing could only ascribe to one path of worship and were forced to formulate, and legislate, their teachings such that the power of the divine was closely guarded by the select few.

But the Eastern traditions went down a different path, where not only was it believed the individual soul could be liberated from the world of ceaseless suffering, but that this liberation was the *very purpose to existence*, the ultimate goal of the soul as it were, the *eudaimonia* of Aristotle (typically translated as “happiness”) which is the ultimate purpose (*telos*) of the human being and thereby defines its existence to a great extent, much more so than the *material causes* which bring about the existence of the human form which we are so focused on in biology and western medicine today.

The Eastern theo-philosophical traditions of Yoga and Buddhism not only lay out a system of *ethics* and *morality* within which life should be lived, but also lay out a purpose to life which is based upon the goal of, and fundamental belief in, liberation as the ultimate goal of life. This is the ultimate freedom from suffering in the Buddhist tradition, i.e. *nirvana*, and the attainment of *mokṣa* of Patañjali’s Yoga. They all cajole us to go back to the source, to recognize our connection

⁶⁹⁶ In this context, Buddhism is viewed as an alternative philosophical system of Upanashadic philosophy that while does not necessarily look to the Vedic corpus and body of knowledge as the penultimate benchmark of truth, i.e. is not *orthodox*, it still nonetheless (like Jainism) has its roots in Indo-Aryan theo-philosophy and is still nonetheless typically classified as an Indian theo-philosophical system. Buddhism represents an offshoot and child philosophical system of the *Vedas* in much the same way as Islam is an offshoot of Christianity in many respects, while not altogether rejecting all of the basic tenets of its predecessor necessarily, they nonetheless are strongly influenced by them and evolved as counter-cultural theological forces to them and therefore must be seen in this light and context.

with *supreme consciousness, or supraconsciousness*. Not through any specific prophet or message, not espousing one set of beliefs, one God over any other, but the practice of Yoga, *meditation* and living in harmony with our surroundings as well as the people and society within which we live, in order that this illumination, this liberation, this “happiness” can be experienced.

And in this philosophy, the human form is said to be higher than even the forms of the Gods and Angels, for although in the world of the Gods there lie unlimited desires and powers, the prospect and chance of liberation does not exist. This view of the mortal life being so special and unique can be found implicit in Greek mythology as well, where the realm of the gods and the realm of men mixed and coalesced for centuries prior to the advent of the historical record, giving rise to its mythology and the Age of Heroes for which arguably the Greeks are perhaps best known.

So it is up to the *jiva* then, the individual soul, to determine what to do with this great energy that it has access to, this great opportunity for liberation. Vivekananda tells us that all beings, whether cognizant of the fact or not, are moving toward the same goal, either consciously or subconsciously. That the natural flow and path of everything in existence is to get back to its source, whether this is directly perceived or not. A reflection at the microcosmic level of the omnipresent inbreathing and outbreathing of *Brahman*, the process of evolution and devolution of all energy and matter from and back to its source, of which the human being represents its most latently powerful and beautiful form.

Part V: *Metaphysics* in the Quantum Era

The Current Ontological Landscape: A Metaphysical Perspective

From an ontological perspective, a term that was coined only in the last century or two to denote a specific branch of philosophy related to being, or reality itself, in deep antiquity our ancestors simply had myth. Various tales and stories that were handed down from generation to generation, that spoke of topics such as the creation of the world and mankind, stories of great valor and love, and destruction stories too no doubt. These myths, these tales or narratives – what we refer to throughout collectively as a people’s *mythos*, were the means by which ancient man explained the universe and their place in it. In essence, it was their *ontology*.

The Egyptian, Greek, Babylonian and even Christian creation myths, their *cosmogony* or creation *mythos* which provided sometimes fantastic explanations as to how the universe came into existence and in turn how mankind itself was formed, no doubt stemmed from and reflected the socio-political reality of the respective cultures within which these so-called “religious” systems emerged - societies where individuals struggled for access to food and shelter, where the existence of the society itself depended on the seasons and the weather for its survival, and where the coexistence with river valleys and the underlying fertilization of the land in some sense defined their existence.

All of these environmental factors defied rational explanation to these peoples, and so these ancient peoples created tales, i.e. *mythos*, that explained these natural and cosmic mysteries, touching on natural phenomena as well as (what we today would call) “spiritual” or “religious” phenomena. Why did the rivers flood some years and not others? Why did the sun rise every day? Why did the herds that they depended on for food and other utilities of day to day living show up some years and be absent others? What happened to the Soul after death? Was there a Soul? It was these questions that plagued the ancients and that formed their perception of their *reality*, or their world. And their world depended very much on Nature. They lived with Nature and relied on it. This concept of the nurturing and creative force that was inherent to the world around them, Mother Earth as it were, was a core part of their reality upon which their lives depended and their prevailing *mythos*, and their socio-political structures, reflected these beliefs.

To the ancients, the world around them was best described by principles of interdependence and the cyclical nature of the world around them. The ancients had to plant food, had to procreate, had to hunt for meat. They had their religious festivals and rites which essentially were the praying or asking of the divine, the unknown and unseen anthropomorphic hand(s) that guided these mysterious cyclical processes, cyclical processes which at their apex were governed by the process of life and death itself, and so they developed ritualistic practices to pray to these gods upon whom their survival, and the survival of their peoples and societies, depended.

And their *metaphysics*, the intellectual framework that underpinned their understanding of *reality* and the world around them, was entirely integrated and coupled with the human's psyche and how that psyche was shaped by the concepts that gripped the mind of the individual, a psychological framework and connection with the divine which was best described by the creation myths of these ancient peoples, narratives that explained how the universe came to be, how the gods were created, how mankind was created in their image, and established mankind's authority and dominion over the Earth. And you could not separate the struggles and challenges of the individual mind, which very much was shaped by the civilization and day to day activities of that individual, from the connection to the cosmos from which their theo-philosophical systems, i.e. their "religions", were based.

Much changed and evolved as Western civilization, and Western theo-philosophy along with it, developed through antiquity, through the Dark Ages, through the Enlightenment Era which provided the rational foundations for the Scientific Revolution, and up into the modern Quantum Era whose metaphysical and philosophical foundations were wholly based upon science and the underlying importance of the individual psyche, the Soul in fact, had become complete lost and abandoned. While certainly much was gained as Reason supplanted Religion in the West in the last few centuries, nonetheless something was lost as well. The mystery of the connection of the individual with the cosmos became myth really, or at best perhaps simply the domain of Religion, as unscientific a pursuit as there is.

But imbedded in ancient *mythos*, a core tenet as it were, was the principle that the universe and mankind himself, emerged from some primordial source, this cosmic soup from which gods and men and all living creatures came forth, at the hand of God in the Abrahamic religions and at the hand of some non-anthropomorphic principle in the Eastern philosophical systems which have gained some prominence in modern times as Western religious systems in their orthodoxy and irrationality have been for the most part discarded. The ancients saw themselves as integrated with this primordial substance. They were born from it and they would return to it and it was this eternal truth that governed their relationship to the world at large. This idea of the separation of the "physical" world, and the "spiritual" world had not yet arisen. And how could it? There was nothing in the world around them that would indicate this separation. Even *dreams* had their own reality in this world, and different states of consciousness were different reflections, or different perceptions, of reality to them. Empirical Science had not yet been established. There was not a "real" world and then a dream/spiritual world. That distinction had not yet been formulated by human kind.

But with the advent of civilization itself, as it spread throughout the Western world, came the rise of Reason, and the Mind and Intellect as the supreme tools of man to understand the universe, the invention as it were of the Ancient Greek philosophers. Society advanced to the

point where the individual, or at least the individuals who focused on theological and philosophical matters, did not have their lives and thoughts obsessed and focused on survival. They did not have to pray to the gods for their food and clothing, their sustenance, these came from the inventions of mankind and society as it developed, using reason and *logic* as their basis, the first technological advances, by the manipulation of the material and physical world and leveraging the human mind in all its creativity and power, establishing the foundations of modern science, even though they didn't call it that back then (Aristotle's *practical philosophy*). They could spend their time focused on other things, on systems of government for example, and on philosophy and geometry. The bedrock of Western civilization had been laid down.

This advancement of thought, which paralleled the advancement of civilization, was only possible because the basics of life were now present without much effort. Their minds could focus on other things. And so was born Reason, which supplanted myth and faith to a large extent, which was the primary tool which was used to create agriculture, tools, the domestication of animals, the creation of the first city-states, and perhaps most revolutionary the invention of language and writing to support these developments. But if you look at some the hunter-gatherer societies that exists today, this form of society that pre-dated Western civilization for several tens if not hundreds of thousands of years, in the recesses of Alaska, the Amazon basin, or central and eastern Africa, you will find the same belief systems that are based the interconnectedness of all things earthly and spiritual, where a reliance and dependence on the unknown and unknowable creative principle behind the universe is a core part of their worldview that is marked by the cyclical nature of existence – the movement of the stars and sky, the passage of day into night, and the passage of life into death, and the notion of illumination or spiritual rebirth.

Philosophy today has evolved to denote that branch of knowledge that studies such abstract concepts as *existence*, *knowledge*, *values*, and *mind* using reason and *logic* at its basis, and in some cases even *mathematics*, as the source of truth. *Metaphysics* in turn, is that branch of thought that sits between, or atop, philosophy and physics and explores such topics as the nature of *existence* and *reality* itself, or *ontology*, a further abstraction and extension of philosophy in many respects. *Metaphysics* is distinguished from Physics in the sense that it attempts to explain phenomena that could be considered *unreal*, or lacking material substance or verifiability by empirical or scientific methods that are associated with what we call physics today.

Prior to the advent of Science, as marked by its distinguishing characteristics of *empiricism* and *scientific method* as a means for elucidating and discerning truth and reality, Science was referred to as Natural Philosophy, and this in fact was the term that was used by Newton as the title of his great work *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*.

The Eastern philosophical tradition, Vedānta and Buddhism in particular, in antiquity as well as in their modern interpretation, rest less on the supremacy and eternal truths as laid out in their respective scriptures, but more so on the communication, reception, understanding, and ultimate *realization* of the *essence* of the teachings as handed down from teacher to student through time immemorial. This was a core tenet of their belief system, and a core principle that was embedded in their teachings, scripture included, from the very beginning. This is why the core philosophical teachings of Vedānta were called the *Upanishads*, a Sanskrit word which means literally “sitting at the feet of”, implying that the true teachings of the *Vedas* were meant to be transmitted directly from teacher to student through *oral transmission*.

But what makes one belief system more true or “real” than the other? Was it *reason*? Was it the ability to empirically study and test results based upon a certain idea of measurement that man had created? Was our faith in the mystery of the universe and the hand that guided it so far-fetched and so juxtaposed with Science that it needed to be abandoned entirely? After all of the research and progress, with all the fancy instruments, with sending people to space and the study of the heavens with super powerful telescopes, with even the calculation of the origin of the (known) Universe itself as reflected in Big Bang Theory – after all this, at the very boundaries of Science, we still in some sense struggle today with notions of space and time, and *reality* itself in a sense, begging the question as to whether or not Science itself, on its own, can explain everything there is to know, everything that we as a thinking species truly want, or even need, to know.

Even after thousands of years of scientific development and advancement, where we can effectively communicate with each other beyond the boundaries of time and space across the Earth in a way we never would have thought would have been imaginable, where we have an understanding of how the Universe came into being at a level that the ancients at least perhaps would have never dreamed possible, what we can definitively say at this point - based upon empirical evidence and data, that has been proven over and over again through verifiable and repeatable experiments and is supported by extraordinarily advanced *mathematics* - is that:

- *the underlying substratum of physical reality behaved according to fundamentally non-local principles that are inconsistent with Classical Mechanics*: the nature of subatomic reality is *non-local* in the sense that the location and momentum of subatomic “things”, i.e. *corpuscles*, must take into account, and in fact appears to take into account, it’s entire environment – i.e. the so-called “system”.
- *that matter and energy were fundamentally equivalent and could be converted into each other*: at the subatomic level and even macroscopic level, matter and energy exhibited the same properties, and you could formulate theories upon this behavior, which could be “verified” via experiment. That in fact *energy* and *mass* were mathematically equivalent, related by the (assumed constant and fixed) speed of light.

- *that even in Classical Mechanics the principle of Relativity was required in order to provide coherence and consistency at the cosmic scale:* that at the other end of the spectrum, our classical notions of space and time and three-dimensional space must be abandoned in order for Classical Mechanics to be consistent and accurate when viewing the universe at the grand scale, i.e. the cosmos.

Newtonian Mechanics in fact was only an approximation of the behavior of “objects” and “things” when considered at the human scale, and different models must be used to more accurately predict behavior at not only the cosmic scale, but the subatomic scale as well. So with all this advancement in Science in the last few centuries, and all the technological advancements that it has supported, where we were essentially left was that we had two extraordinary powerful and yet fundamentally incompatible, mathematical and theoretical models of how the physical world behaved. That in a nutshell the idea of measurement and reality itself was called into question by Quantum Theory, and that at the cosmic scale all of our measurements, even if we assumed that “objects” and “things” had a physically real existence, their basic properties and qualities were fundamentally “relative” and were only approximations given the scale at which we typically measured things here on Earth.

Modern Science, as it stands today in fact, has yielded great developments and progress in our understanding of the physical world no doubt, standing at the very foundation of “modern progress”. And yet the theoretical principles upon which it stands, - Quantum Mechanics and Classical Mechanics – are fundamentally incompatible mathematically speaking. Furthermore, at the grandest scale, the notion of space and time as discrete, measurable constructs has to be abandoned in order for the underlying models to be complete and accurate. And that, as we looked deep into the very core of physical reality, the so-called “quantum realm”, the notion of mass becomes indiscernible from the notion of energy, and that the universe was connected and correlated in a way that is fundamentally non-Classical in the Newtonian sense, analogous in many respects to Eastern philosophical principles of underlying consciousness.

And this is better, more advanced, richer, and more verifiable Science than the philosophical and theological perspectives of the Ancients, whose principals at their core reflected a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all things animate and inanimate, and the existence of the all-pervading consciousness which breathed life into the world around them. Who intuitively knew that everything was relative and that energy and mass were the same thing, whose only distinction between inanimate and inanimate objects was the existence of the Soul, and all this without anyone having to build massive particle accelerators in the depths of the earth to prove that it was so.

But the basic *ontological* question remains. What is the essential nature of *experience*? With a somewhat revised and expanded metaphysical paradigm - either via the Metaphysics of Quality

offered by Pirsig or the notion of the *implicate order* put forth by Bohm - we at least have a coherent and intellectual sound metaphysical system which does not abandon Science but incorporates it, and yet at the same time has a place for the potential existence of higher orders of *reality* which can in fact be experienced, i.e. our *supraconsciousness*, the very height of the *mystical arts* as it were. States of being, dimensions of *reality* really, which can co-exist somewhat peacefully (intellectually speaking at least) next to or adjacent to the very Western notion of “physical reality” and its *objective realist* and *causal deterministic* presumptions.

From this vantage point, from this extended or expanded *metaphysics*, the direct experience of *supraconsciousness*, as it manifests in the penultimate experience of the *mystic*, the end of the *mystical arts* as it were, represents a higher order *reality*, not one that is more true necessarily than the lower forms or paradigms, but one that is nonetheless higher from an intellectual, and really metaphysical perspective – in the Platonic *idealist* sense at least.

In this intellectual paradigm, one that again does not reject Science but subsumes it, the direct experience of the very ground of existence is not only possible but in some sense is a metaphysical truth from which all other loser forms of truth emanate from and stem from – not just intellectually but also experientially, i.e. psychologically in a sense, as well. In this state of being, again our *supraconsciousness*, the perceiver communes with (i.e. *yoga* in the most literal sense meaning “union”) the source of all things - all subjects, all objects and even the experience of perceiving itself. This *reality* sits beyond the distinctions of subject and object, beyond the notion of perception as a separate and discrete act, and as such must be ontologically superior or primordial to, *subject-object metaphysics* which sits at the very heart of Science and which requires division and separation as presumptive necessities.

An important point to be made here, at least for logical consistencies sake and to counter the arguments of the so-called “orthodox” religious views which tout the sole divine authority of their respective Scripture in fact, is that if you believe in the possibility of revelation - upon which clearly all these orthodox religious beliefs clearly rest as it is the revelatory aspect of the Scripture itself from which its authority ultimately stems from - then you must also acknowledge the *possibility* that direct perception of the divine by a human form. You can’t get around this fact.

This dismissal of the reality of the mystical states, states which, at least from an Eastern theosophical perspective, are effectively the birthright of all mankind and that which ultimately distinguish us as human, is pervasive not only in Scientific community but also in the orthodox religious community as well. While this dismissal is convenient from an intellectual as well as socio-political perspective, granting knowledge of reality to only those that are anointed or properly educated, it simply just does not account for the full complement of human experience either as we as individuals have experienced it - through the experiences of dream and waking states, as well as higher order states of experience which all of us have had to at least some

extent (even though we may not have identified them as such) – or how sages and mystics throughout the millennia of the history of civilized man, as it has been recorded in the scriptures across the world from virtually all religious doctrines, have described it over and over again.

These states of consciousness, this higher order of *reality* that modern Science has such a difficult time explaining in really any capacity at all, can of course be found in virtually all of the Eastern theo-philosophical traditions, most notably in the Indian theo-philosophical tradition of course, but also can be found alluded to even in the Western theo-philosophical traditions as well, e.g. Plato as well as some of the Pre-Socratics, etc. from which the notion of *wisdom*, *sophia*, itself actually derives from to some extent, or at the very least is integrally related to.

While of course the existence or prevalence of these alternative intellectual and metaphysical paradigms do not by any stretch of the imagination make them true, and in fact the pure Scientist would argue that modern conceptions of reality are more true because they are in fact more “Scientific” (circular reasoning but still) and because they are more modern, nonetheless the prevalence of these alternative worldviews, along with the state of Science in regards to its seemingly inherent limitations with respect to being able to describe *reality* in a single, *holistic* model, not to mention its inability to explain or model the notion of consciousness itself, would certainly if nothing else leave open the possibility that some of these alternative worldviews should be (re) considered and that perhaps they may shed light, illuminate as it were, the nature of reality in a way that Science fundamentally cannot.

In searching for an intellectual paradigm that fully explains and incorporates all aspects of *reality* across the entire spectrum of experience - from the pure physical realm as explained by Science, to the “psychological” and *mystical* as explained by Psychology, Cognitive Science and Eastern philosophy, incorporating the notion of *supraconsciousness* - we must first identify the metaphysical and intellectual entity or idea that ties all these realms of experience together. The answer, or at least the best answer, in the spirit of Descartes, is the Self itself: that which rests at the center of any and all forms of experience. From this central metaphysical principle - one which manifests itself in scientific models as the “observer”, in psychological paradigms as the “conscious” self, in Eastern philosophical traditions as the “Self”, and even theological circles as the Soul, or God – one at least is in a position to construct an intellectual model that spans the entire spectrum of experience, providing a comprehensive and cohesive description of *reality* in all its forms and variants.

It is from this vantage point for example that Pirsig arrives at his Metaphysics of Quality, a system of *metaphysics* that expands the field of knowledge from the confining *subject-object metaphysics* which underpins the worldview of the West (and in some respects defines it) to a more expansive model which is based upon the notion of *Quality* as a central, pre-cognitive and all-pervading principle. In this system, one which sits squarely in the domain of *metaphysics*, not

only is subjective experience assimilated and integrated into the very foundations of the model itself (as opposed to relegated to the periphery as is the case with Classical as well as Quantum Mechanics), but also mystical states are incorporated and allowed for as well (even if only alluded to tangentially in Pirsig's work), being represented as direct communal experiences of *Quality* itself in its most pure and unadulterated form - in his model as reflected in the experience of inspiration from which the very heart of Science, i.e. scientific hypothesis themselves, originate from.

This bridging of the intellectual gap as it were, incorporating subjective experience into the intellectual paradigm itself, is an important starting point, and is essentially what Bohm accomplishes as well with his model of *reality* as a series of inter-related, and ultimately hierarchical, models of order, with the physical realm being just one of many and which there exist at least two distinctive realms, each of which is governed by its own model, i.e. reflect its own unique set of ordering principles – the Quantum and the Classical – which both emanate from, or are precluded by, a higher order dimension the so-called *implicate order* which is governed by its own set of rules and principles.

What Pirsig's Metaphysics of Quality fails to incorporate however, but what Bohm at least tries to integrate at some level (even though he, like any philosopher, is constrained by the tools which he must use to perform his trade), is that the very nature of experience itself, given that it is entirely subjective by definition, must take into account the role of the human mind in defining the boundaries of such experience. This role of mind, or the psychological notion of self or "I", is effectively where the intellectual lines are drawn between the fields of Physics, Psychology and Philosophy – Physics being primarily focused on measurement and "*observables*", Psychology being focused on health and well-being of the self rather than on ontological questions per se, and Philosophy, or *metaphysics* really in this context (at least in its most pure and unadulterated form) having the intellectual latitude to be able to focus purely on the abstract, operating in the realm of ideas directly in a very real sense (no pun intended).⁶⁹⁷

Bohm, and his colleague Basil Hiley, definitely make a valiant effort to try and bridge this seemingly impossible chasm, taking *metaphysics* to revolutionary places with their firm grasp of, and wholesale integration with, both Quantum and Classical Mechanics, both the very height of the scientific domain as well as the very source its challenges with respect to *ontology*.

⁶⁹⁷ Such distinctions and varying expertise in these fields of study in fact, all of which are arguably required to be drawn upon to come up with a truly cohesive and comprehensive ontological system, is in fact one of the very reasons why we find most modern conceptions of reality – as defined within each one of these domains – to be lacking. Drawing from all of them, while still staying true to each of them, is a difficult task intellectually to say the least, and one which very few, if any, modern scholars are actively working on.

Hiley, in describing the import and significance of Bohm's *metaphysics*, argues that if *reality* is viewed in terms of process rather than a fixed, discrete "thing" or "object" (or set of "things" or "objects"), as it is so described with the notion of *holomovement* which underpins Bohm's *metaphysics*, subsuming space and time as mental constructs that facilitate the (mathematical) description of physical reality and nothing more, than the two seemingly disparate intellectual domains of Physics and Psychology - the *res extensa* and *res cogitans* of Descartes respectively - can in fact be integrated into one *holistic* intellectual system which integrates both mind and matter:

Our proposal is that in the brain there is a manifest (or physical) side and a subtle (or mental) side acting at various levels. At each level, we can regard one side the manifest or material side, while the other is regarded as subtle or mental side. The material side involves electrochemical processes of various kinds, it involves neuron activity and so on. The mental side involves the subtle or virtual activities that can be actualised by active information mediating between the two side.

*These sides [...] are two aspects of the same process. [...] what is subtle at one level can become what is manifest at the next level and so on. In other words if we look at the mental side, this too can be divided into a relatively stable and manifest side and a yet more subtle side. Thus there is no real division between what is manifest and what is subtle and in consequence there is no real division between mind and matter.*⁶⁹⁸

This description of *reality*, from a Physicist no less, not only represents an interpretation of Quantum Theory as it relates specifically to the concepts of *implicate* and *explicate* orders as described by Bohm, but also embeds within it the notion of *active information* which underpins Bohmian Mechanics and helps "explain" how it is that the fundamental constituents of nature, i.e. subatomic *corpuscles*, can be seen both as *waves* and as *particles* depending upon the perspective of the experiment, and in turn the perspective of the experimenter. By placing greater ontological significance and emphasis on the *process* of experience, i.e. the act of cognition (as does Pirsig to some extent with his *Metaphysics of Quality*, i.e. *Dynamic Quality* versus static *Quality*), an ontological paradigm where mind and matter can in fact be bridged.

This fundamentally philosophical problem is the very one that is confronted by anyone who tries to interpret what Quantum Theory really means, map it at some level to physical reality, where the role of the observer, the role of mind, cannot be completely ignored when trying to

⁶⁹⁸ Basil Hiley: "Quantum mechanics and the relationship between mind and matter", in: P. Pylkkanen, P. Pylkko und Antti Hautamaki (eds.): *Brain, Mind and Physics* (Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence and Applications), IOS Press, 1995, ISBN 978-90-5199-254-0, pp. 37–54, see pp. 51,52. Sourced from Wikipedia contributors, 'Basil Hiley', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 14 November 2016, 09:06 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Basil_Hiley&oldid=749435694> [accessed 14 November 2016]

determine how a final quantum state is *perceived* which must account for the setup and measurement apparatus itself. It's this element of mind, the question of correlation between the relationship of the two individuals who set up the two sides of the EPR Paradox measurement apparatus, that in fact lays at the heart of the final loophole that cannot be theoretically discounted with *Bell's Theorem*, namely in illustrating that the final state of correlation that is observed between two once integrated and seeming classically separated quantum systems cannot be explained by some predefined, predetermined and fundamentally pre-correlated mental state of each of the individuals who (presumably independently but that's the relevant problem at hand) setup and perform the two different but related experiments which reveal the entangled state of the quantum systems, calling into question some of the basic underlying assumptions of Classical Mechanics.

In an altogether different approach, interpretation as it were – of Quantum Mechanics at least - is the view posited by Hugh Everett, where an observable quantum state corresponds to what he refers to in typical physicist/mathematical jargon as the *relative-state formulation* of Quantum Mechanics which posits that a given quantum state exists out of the possibility of all potential observable states (or “realities”, which is a bit of a misnomer but is how his theory has come to be interpreted), all governed by what he refers to as his *Universal Wave Function* which describes the current and all future states of the entire universe.

In this case, Everett's *metatheory* directly incorporates the role of the observer into his model, at least mathematically speaking, as a state machine which can perform some level of deductive reasoning and which has some level of access to prior states, i.e. memory. Again, the notion of the observer, the notion of mind in some aspect or another, is directly incorporated into this *formulation* of Quantum Mechanics, or Interpretation of Quantum Theory as the case may be, thereby circumventing not only the *measurement problem*, which plaques prevailing orthodox interpretations of Quantum Theory, but also rendering the need for *wavefunction collapse* obsolete and unnecessary. But while arguably Everett did not necessarily intend to wade into ontological waters necessarily, his interpretation of the underlying mathematics of Quantum Theory does in fact solve some very basic challenges of the theoretical model, while arguably raising some other ones (like for example the idea that multiple universes, or realities, may exist at any given time which gave rise, and credence to a large extent, to the “multi-verse” idea). The elegance of the *relative-state formulation* idea really, is that it allows for an ontological description of *reality* in fact, even if again it is not necessarily intended to do so.

Contrast this more purist, mathematical approach in interpreting Quantum Theory, one of if not the greatest breakthrough in the realm of Physics in the 20th century, with Bohm's interpretation, what some refer to as Bohmian Mechanics. In Bohm's view, the state of the system within which an observation is performed is said to be governed by a “conditional” *wavefunction*, a

wavefunction that is in some sense a subset of the more holistic *wavefunction* which *includes* the behavior not only of the system that is being measured or observed, but also the apparatus and act of measurement itself, i.e. the observer (be they mechanical or mental/personal). This is how Bohmian Mechanics sidesteps the *measurement problem*, it incorporates the act of measurement into phenomena governed by the same Schrödinger wave equation, except one that is a “superset” in some sense of the conditional *wavefunction* which only defines the behavior of that which is being observed, independent of the mechanism of observation itself.

This idea of the *conditional wavefunction*, combined with the *hidden variables* which are the actual initial positions and momentums of the particles in the initial quantum state which in turn determine the final form of the *wavefunction* after the experiment is performed, is conceptually how *wavefunction collapse* is accounted for in Bohmian Mechanics. Whether or not the *conditional wavefunction* as Bohm (and Hiley) describe it exists as an actual measurable and definable phenomenon, or whether it simply exists as a theoretical construct that must exist in order for Bohmian Mechanics to be fully coherent and consistent, is almost besides the matter. By incorporating the role of mind, i.e. the observer, as well as the act of perception itself, back into the conversation about what is actually going on when a quantum observation is made, Bohmian Mechanics in fact (by design) forces us to consider that the act of perception itself as a first order principle that we should be looking at, from a metaphysical perspective at least, not the specific explicit order which may or may not be applicable to a given domain of experience.

Quantum Theory as interpreted, or explained, in Bohmian Mechanics is theoretically, and mathematically, sound and there is no need (conceptually at least) for any artificially induced *wavefunction collapse*, thereby providing at least the beginnings of a coherent system of *metaphysics*, an ontological foundation even, by which Quantum Theory may be understood. In addition to Bohmian Mechanics then, what Bohm effectively does by introducing the notion of hierarchical orders of *reality* - declaring the existence of an *implicate order* which holds ontological significance over the various *explicate orders* which reflect (various aspects of) the physical domain - is venture into the domain of *ontology* quite directly, provide an explicit (intellectual) bridge between two seemingly contradictory theoretical models of *reality*, systems of *metaphysics*, articulating a reasonable and viable explanation of *reality* itself, albeit from a mechanical perspective, as to how they both (Classical Mechanics and Quantum Mechanics) can be empirically true and valid while at the same time contradicting each other in basic tenets and assumptions (like *locality* for example), and at the same time reflect a higher order notion of *reality* which is fully coherent and consistent, albeit abiding by a completely different set of “laws” so to speak than the “lower” order forms.

In this way, and in fairly courageous fashion one might add, Bohm refuses to yield to the standard *Copenhagen Interpretation* of Quantum Theory which simply posits that the math underlying

Quantum Mechanics is simply a model for solving equations and nothing more and should not be looked upon as having any sort of ontological relevance at all, while at the same time not necessarily venturing into pure idealistic philosophy necessarily, but first *metaphysics* and then *ontology*, all the while staying true to the rational, mechanical and ultimately mathematical models that underpin Classical and Quantum Mechanics, the two grand pillars of modern Physics. He accomplishes this by emphasizing the importance of *metaphysics* in and of itself, in very much the same vein as Aristotle some 2500 years ago (i.e. *first philosophy*), emphasizing not the physical realms themselves which are described by, modelled by Classical and Quantum Mechanics, but – from a higher order perspective - the grounding of existence being a continuous process of *unfolding* of higher order realities into lower, physically manifest, forms of reality governed by distinct and (potentially) separate laws or order, thereby establishing a coherent and logically consistent *ontological* system which incorporates the prevailing mechanistic models of 20th century Physics.

In Bohm's *ontological* framework, it is this concept of *active information*, his notion of *quantum potential*, which represents this *non-local* force in the quantum realm which underpins the *reality* of the subatomic world, and by extension all of physical *reality*. And from his perspective, *reality* at all levels of order or manifestation are more accurately described in terms of the constant process of *unfolding* and *enfolding* of *explicate orders* from and back into higher order realities, i.e. *implicate order(s)*, an unending process which is *perceived* by us as various manifest physical realities in some way. This is Bohm's *undivided universe*, which is best described as a process of constant *unfolding*, what he termed *holomovement*, which incorporates *mind*, which is required for any act of perception to take place, directly (back) into the model as it were, effectively pointing to an all-pervading consciousness which underlies the universe, within which mind is but one (subtler) aspect. In way, at least from an ontological perspective, Bohm ends up in a very similar place as Everett, albeit their approaches – metaphysically at least – are quite different.

Contrasting Bohm's *metaphysics* with Pirsig's *Metaphysics of Quality* which divides the intellectual landscape into two main driving forces, each of which is (at least tangentially) related to the very basic cornerstone notion of *Quality* - the Dynamic and the Static, the former reflecting the more "Eastern" conception of reality, the direct intuitive perception of "truth" or "knowledge", whereas the latter form of *Quality* is, well static, in the sense that it reflects the more foundational intellectual forms of mankind which are more resistant to change and which provide the basis for a well-functioning (global) society, Neither Bohm's *ontology*, nor Pirsig's *metaphysics* (and the two intellectual models no doubt differ in this very fundamental way in terms of scope and intent, one with a focus more on *ontology* – Bohm - and another on *metaphysics* - Pirsig) addresses directly the nature of the very foundation of their respective intellectual models, no doubt preferring to leave that question up to the theologians which is probably the proper domain for such questions. Pirsig claims (rightfully so) that *Quality* itself in

its most pure, unadulterated form (*Dynamic Quality*) rests beyond any intellectual grasp, betrays any form of definition (much like the *Dao* or Brahman in the Eastern philosophical traditions), and Bohm's work focuses more on the underlying descriptive order, or workings, of reality as a continual *process* of change, unfolding and enfolding between different dimensions so to speak (which also betrays characteristically "Eastern" attributes with respect to the notion of change and process being the most ontologically significant aspect of reality), rather than attempting to describe the nature of that which sits behind the process itself, the man behind the machine so to speak.

What we are left with effectively, in the search for an ontological paradigm in the Western intellectual landscape which accounts for the entire spectrum of human experience, across the physical and psychological domains, is a chasm of sorts that relegates questions of the very ground of experience itself, the notion of *supraconsciousness* which rests at the very heart of Eastern philosophy, to *theology*, or at best to philosophy. And perhaps rightfully so, as these intellectual systems of the West, even the most abstract and comprehensive of them, are essentially systems of *metaphysics* more so than ontological frameworks necessarily, and most certainly not theological systems or "spiritual frameworks" per se. They are all products of Enlightenment Era philosophy, and even more so the revolutionary advancements of Science in the 20th century that have given us Relativity and Quantum Theory.

To a certain extent, this gives these systems strength as they are built on these modern Scientific developments. But from another perspective, from the perspective of say an ancient philosopher, these systems – given the context within which they emerged – are quite limited in the domain within which they are applicable. Very strong with respect to explaining physical systems and modern intellectual paradigms that are grounded therein, and quite weak really as we have seen with respect to explaining really anything that does not belong to Science proper. For example, the systems we have looked at throughout this work, and specifically in this Chapter, do not explicitly account for the qualities, or nature, of *Mind* in the true Eastern philosophical sense of the term. Nor, again given that they are systems of *metaphysics* and are natural extensions "mechanical" theories, do they or can they be used to account for, from a "spiritual" perspective, the potential reality of what we have come to refer to in the West as pertaining to, or of the, "Soul" – the Soul as a cognitive and experiential "being" through which not only is the physical realm manifest and experienced, but also through which the mystical realm is experienced as well.

This notion of the Soul in the West equates at a very basic level with the notion of *Mind* from a Buddhist perspective, the *Intellect* from a Neo-Platonist perspective and the *Ātman* of the Indian theo-philosophical tradition, all of which represent – in their own respective theo-philosophical systems – the individual reflection of the cosmic. Man made in the image of God, one of the very

basic tenets and fundamental assumptions really, of all of the Abrahamic traditions. In turn, this notion of the Soul becomes, from a metaphysical perspective, the specific corollary to very fundamental and primordial ordering principle of the Universe, which we find in every cosmogonic and metaphysical conception of the reality in all of the ancient mythological creation narratives of all Eurasian peoples and civilizations in antiquity that we cover in this work in fact. All peoples and civilizations in antiquity it would appear, presume that the Universe is an ordered place and that the greatest power in the Universe, the greatest and the most prolific, is that which provides order to chaos. This is why Zeus is so revered in fact, and all the great gods in antiquity, Yahweh being no exception, played the same very critical role.

And man being in the image of the divine, the ordering principle of man – the Soul – is the analog to the divine in our realm, the realm of Earth and Man. In virtually all of the ancient theo-philosophical systems, the ones in Eurasia that we explore in this work, the Soul plays a fundamental role in the “ordering”, “comprehending” and “realizing” aspect of existence as seen from an individual perspective. And this Soul again has a direct cosmic counterpart, or analog – what penultimately in the West came to be known as *Logos* which more or less becomes equated with God in the Trinity, arguably the very pinnacle of metaphysical and ontological conceptions in the Western theo-philosophical tradition.

From this vantage point at least, the systems of *metaphysics* that we explore in this work, the ones grounded in 20th century Physics, do not cover or deal with this very fundamental and basic metaphysical (and ontological) construct that permeated not just theo-philosophical thought in antiquity, but really all thought in antiquity. In the ancient theo-philosophical traditions, particularly those of Indo-European heritage (the ancient Greeks and Indians basically), the Soul was arguably the defining metaphysical entity or principle upon which the theo-philosophical tradition hung together – the hub upon which all of the various branches of the respective theo-philosophical system sat upon you could say. It was the Soul in the end that defined what it was to exist, what it was to be, and in turn was the filter through which “being” itself was experienced and in turn provided for the fundamental connection to the all-pervading substratum of existence itself.

So in this sense, despite the power and specificity of the systems of *metaphysics* of Bohm, and Everett, and perhaps to a lesser degree Pirsig, they nonetheless lack this cornerstone metaphysical principle upon which any truly comprehensive, complete really, notion of *reality* must rest. To Aristotle and Plato no doubt, the Soul was everything really, the vessel within which all life was to be perceived and/or conceived. To both Plato and Aristotle, despite their differences, the Soul nonetheless provided the very foundation upon which their respective theo-philosophical system was constructed. It was that that which gives us life, that which animates

us (*animus*, i.e. Soul), thereby representing the primary intellectual vehicle, metaphysical principle really, through which experience in all its forms must be viewed or conceived of.

To the ancient philosopher then, this conception of a person, or individual, in any grand philosophical system, being represented by simply some entity or thing that is simply “observing” and taking measurements, would no doubt seem ridiculous. And yet this is the unintended consequence of our progress in the West with Science, that any notion or idea, any principle, that smacks of *theology*, anything that cannot be empirically proven to exist in fact, must thereby fall outside of the domain of Science and as such isn’t included in even the broadening of the intellectual frameworks, the systems of *metaphysics*, that we have looked upon that have been established in the last few decades to address these basic ontological shortcomings of Science. But without the notion of the Soul there is only so far these systems can go, like circling around the problem but never really getting to the heart of it. Because there is no defining principle, no metaphysical or ontological entity or construct, upon which to rest the very pinnacle of experiential reality (what we call *supraconsciousness*) from and out of which – at least according to the Eastern philosophical traditions – all forms of reality and existence emanate and originate from.

The Law of Unintended Consequences: The Death of the Soul

Despite all the technological progress that has been made in the last century or two as humanity has taken over virtually every last inhabitable place on our planet, supported by what can only be referred to as revolutionary advancements in Science, the great discipline made famous by the likes of Newton and Einstein among others, we nonetheless find ourselves – collectively as a species, humanity as a whole - in a position where we are confronted with certain problems and challenges that, in order to be solved effectively to ensure the long term survival of humanity (on Earth anyhow), must be addressed collectively by all of the world's nation states working together.

We're speaking here primarily of course of the environmental crisis that goes by the name of Global Warming, but also referring to other socio-economic and political challenges related to nuclear proliferation and basic access to resources like food, water and energy as the global ice caps melt and climate shifts leave many societies in brutal conflict for said resources, as well as ideological challenges that frame much of the international dialogue between nation states today that fall under the umbrella of Terrorism. One could certainly argue that any one of these challenges taken individually represents one of the gravest and most serious threats to humanity in the history of civilization, and then collectively of course, well that's a problem of a different scope entirely.

The sheer scope and extent of these challenges, and the ideological landscape within which they have arisen, begs the question as to what extent, if at all, are they *caused* by the very intellectual, i.e. "Scientific", breakthroughs that have underpinned the advance of modern civilization in the last century, and then the related question – one which we attempt to address here – to what extent if any can some of the challenges be solved by, or at least be supported by, a similar shift in intellectual paradigm. To borrow a saying from one of, if not the, most influential post-Enlightenment Era scientist Albert Einstein, *"a problem cannot be solved by the same level of consciousness that created it."*

Let's start with the assertion that every rational person (ok maybe almost every rational person) can see the forthcoming danger that lies ahead for us if we continue along this path of immense consumption and expansion, particularly in light of some of the nationalist and populist movements that are sweeping across the globe right now.⁶⁹⁹ While many politicians and economists alike would like to think that *economic growth* in and of itself, may solve many of these global challenges - both at the local, nation-state, and global level - the rising tide that shall

⁶⁹⁹ At the time of this writing, Brexit – the departure of the UK from the EU – was underway and Donald Trump is President of the United States.

carry all boats as it were, this rationale is flawed in many ways. In particular, this approach does not address any of the ideological differences that underpin many of these global challenges. Economics alone, while certainly a tool at the disposal of the leaders of nation-states, i.e. politicians and lawmakers, does not address the root cause of many of the issues humanity as a whole face right now.

Upon reflection, and many throughout the world (outside of the West) no doubt share this view, many of these alarming global trends can at least at some level be directly linked to, and in fact can be seen as a direct result of, the proliferation of *capitalism* as an ideological truth, thinly veiled by this notion of “Western Democratic Values”. Furthermore, it is this very ideological position, the very hallmark of Western society and culture, which is looked upon with disdain by many of the Islamic nation states in the Middle East and North Africa, providing the fuel for the fire if you will for not just anti-Western sentiment but, at the its most extreme, global terrorism in and of itself.

With respect to these global challenges, ideology being the source of at least one of the most alarming, and potentially dangerous, of them – i.e. terrorism and anti-Western sentiment – we also are confronted with the problem of Climate Change, i.e. Global Warming, which along with wealth inequality is also caused by, if only tangentially, by this underlying *ideology* in the West of not just *capitalism*, but *materialism* as well –ideologies that underpin Western culture that value the acquisition of goods and services i.e. wealth, over the public good, or the social good. In this sense, this “Western” ideology, rests on the assumption that the pursuit of wealth and goods by the individual, encapsulated within a social and legal system which promotes such ideology, will eventually serve the public good, and the global good, as individuals pursue their own self-interest.

The importance and significance of these underlying values to American, and in turn Western, society cannot be stated, and arguably rest at the very heart of the United States from its inception, being built on the notion of a free market economy, i.e. the so-called *invisible hand* theory as put forth by the father of modern economics, the Scottish Enlightenment Era philosopher Adam Smith (1723-1790), author of the famous *Wealth of Nations*, one of the most, if not the most, influential economics texts in history.

But the annual revenue of every society is always precisely equal to the exchangeable value of the whole annual produce of its industry, or rather is precisely the same thing with that exchangeable value. As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can both to employ his capital in the support of domestic industry, and so to direct that industry that its produce may be of the greatest value, every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is

*promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an **invisible hand** to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was not part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it.*⁷⁰⁰

This basic, core belief in the pursuit of individual self-interest not just as fundamental right then, but as a matter of the public good, rests at the very heart of “Western values”, and despite its merit, sits at the very root of the ideological divide between the West and in particular the Islamic fundamentalist regimes in the Middle East and Northern Africa, the very heart of the global “terrorist” movement. And even while many in the scientific community at least have identified ways for us to avoid, or at least mitigate, some of these global challenges and problems - at least those related to climate change and global warming - we nonetheless find ourselves collectively as a species, as a collection of nation states spread across the Earth, fundamentally unable to change our behavior in any meaningful way, or adapt or adjust our ideological perspective in any meaningful way, to address said challenges. What we have found, is that both sides tend to further dig into their respective ideological positions, while using standard diplomatic tools – the proverbial carrot and stick – that are not effective when dealing with a crisis of ideology necessarily. This challenge, where the standard tools at our disposal are fundamentally unfit for the job at hand, put us in an extremely precarious position as the only path forward seems to be war as both sides act in what they perceive to be in the interest self-preservation.⁷⁰¹

Leaving the social and political solutions to the politicians and lawmakers throughout the world, one is tempted to ask - and in light of the very ideological basis of some of these global challenges in and of themselves one in fact *must* ask - not only to what extent are some of these global challenges and problems a result of a failure of *ideology*, but to what extent if at all can some of these problems and challenges be solved by an *ideological* shift, or at the very least to what extent can a fundamental intellectual paradigm change, one that is akin to what we went through toward the end of the Enlightenment Era, provide at least the rational foundations upon which a more broad set of solutions can be found or constructed upon.

⁷⁰⁰ *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), by Adam Smith. Part IV, Chapter 1. From Wikipedia contributors, 'Invisible hand', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 8 October 2017, 21:09 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Invisible_hand&oldid=804412698> [accessed 29 October 2017].

⁷⁰¹ Example of this are the ongoing conflicts between the West, mostly the United States, and Iran as well as North Korea.

We can all agree for example that intellectual paradigms, what we sometimes refer to as “worldviews”, in and of themselves cannot fix or correct some of these problems or challenges that we are faced with. However it is at the same time quite possible that the current prevailing intellectual paradigms possibly (and in the author’s view in fact do) to a large extent *stand in the way* of finding possible solutions to the aforementioned global challenges, challenges that define our age arguably, as they effectively do not provide any intellectual middle ground between the two (or more than two depending upon how you define the current geo-political intellectual landscape) contrasting, global ideologies.

One can for example look at the current geo-political trends of *nationalism* and *populism* which have spread across not just the West but across the world now as well, reactions to decades of *globalism* and *liberalism* that have been the hallmark of the geo-political landscape since the Cold War – arguably the intellectual driving force of the Arab Spring - as standing on very shaky intellectual, rational even, ground. For example, rationally speaking, how can the pursuit of fundamentally local and self-serving interests, the very definition of *nationalism*, not end up – in the medium or long term - at the very least exacerbating these global challenges that we face at the very worst set off a global chain reaction of socio-political events that will forever change the world we live in.

In other words, if we all dig in and protect our own self-interests, attempting to isolate and quarantine the world’s problems as it were (which is precisely the global trend we are seeing right now), we should expect, and in fact we are seeing, a sort of global backlash from those nation-states that are left “out” of the nation-states that hoard and protect the world’s wealth (e.g. Iran, North Korea, Russia or Syria) as well as a sort of sociological quarantining of the current global refugee crisis, which is a direct result of this ideological conflict in conjunction with changing climates which are a result of Global Warming which in turn result in the depletion of, and greater competition of, limited natural resources. It’s a cycle that promotes and reinforces itself, and while it does much to reinforce the current access to and distribution of wealth and power throughout the world, this approach – which again seems to be the global trend right now – does nothing to address the root cause of any of these problems, hence the only conclusion that can be drawn is that things will only get worse until our approach, our strategy, changes. Again, we are left with the powerful adage from Einstein, “*a problem cannot be solved by the same level of consciousness that created it.*”

But certainly when backed into a corner, when a way of life or ideology itself is threatened or perceived to be threatened as we in the West at least perceive our way of life to be, it is understandable why we collectively, and again this speaks to the global trend of *nationalism* and *populism*, would revert to a more self-preservative mindset – to the heck with the world, we shall only look out for ourselves – when in fact this very mindset, if followed to its own rational

conclusion, will be the very death of that which we hold so dear and are desperately trying to preserve.

And as we look at these challenges that face humanity today, and as we explore the underlying intellectual paradigms and frameworks that of course underpinned and allowed for all of the wonderful and amazing advancements that make our lives so much better and easier in so many ways, we are faced with the somewhat daunting possibility - reality really - that these very same intellectual frameworks which have allowed for this “progress”, also prevent us at some level at least from solving these challenges. But if we take a step back, and look at the current ideological landscape, look at the underlying intellectual foundations of these (respective) ideologies, operating under the premise that an intellectual paradigm shift while it may not necessarily *be* the solution, it may in fact be a requisite step in order that a solution be found (not *necessary and sufficient* per se but at least *necessary*), we may find that that which has yielded, been the intellectual source of, our beloved “progress”, is at the same time the root of the divide that sits between where we are as global community today - fractured and splintered and on the brink of global nuclear conflict – and where we potentially could be, given the technological advancements at our disposal.

In other words what we are suggesting is that perhaps within the context of these intellectual lines, i.e. paradigms and frameworks, that we have drawn throughout this work between East and West, even if they are drawn along theo-philosophical and metaphysical lines ultimately reflecting two very distinct ontological and epistemological paradigms, we may find not only the source, the potential root cause, of some of the underlying challenges that we currently face as a global community, but also in turn perhaps the beginnings or a, or in the best case *the*, requisite ideological solution necessary to provide us with a way forward that avoids conflict and assimilates the worldviews and perspectives of the entire global community. We’re talking about not just an epistemological shift here, but an ontological one as well, which can provide us with an intellectual vantage point from which our differences on the nation-state or socio-political level seem trite and inconsequential relative to the overarching themes and principles which underpin the new intellectual paradigm.

A brief history of this fairly worn out and arguably oversimplified division between East and West is warranted here, given our use of the terminology. This distinction between East and West goes as far back in history to the 1st millennium BCE where the first the Greeks, and then the Romans, viewed their neighbors to the “East”, sometimes (most of the time) with disdain, the Greeks of course having a long and sordid history with the Persians – to the East - which led to many great conflicts, and some great films. To be sure though, to the Greeks, the Persians were “from the East”, as were the Indian cultures that they encountered during the conquests of

Alexander the Great in the 3rd century BCE, the so-called *gymnosophists* that we find in the writings of Herodotus for example. Knowledge of the peoples beyond India to the (even further) East, did not come until centuries later, hence the designation to China as the “Far East”. This view of the “Orient” (the East) and the West are products of the colonial period in (Western) history and most academics, if not all, stay away from these oversimplified divisions for this, and other reasons. There is certainly, and for good reason, movements throughout *academia* to eradicate these somewhat outdated, and even racists, ideological perspective – as if the views of the West were somewhat superior to those of the East.

However, we are intending in fact to perform an inversion of that ideological worldview, and as such this somewhat old-fashioned and outdated distinction between East and West serves us quite well as we look at the ontological and epistemological distinctions between these two intellectual paradigms, at least again from a theo-philosophical perspective which remain even today in stark contrast to each other. For when looked at from a metaphysical perspective rather than a theological one, despite the interdependencies of these disciplines if we may call them such, we find a very perspective, a very different worldview, with respect to the nature of *reality* itself, the nature of existence itself really. While at first glance it might strike the reader as odd as to why or how an underlying ideology might (potentially) be the source of modern era challenges regarding global warming or terrorism, upon reflection it should be quite clear that these struggles, as they play out on the geo-political landscape, are in fact ideological struggles – at least superficially.

Upon peeling back the superficial layers however, what you have essentially is society and culture in the West dominated by *materialism* and *capitalism*, underpinned by the legacy of Scientific Revolution which was largely driven by the twin philosophical Enlightenment Era movements of *empiricism* and *rationalism* – the founding principles of Science – and yet in the East the predominant worldview, even though influenced by the West in the last few centuries undoubtedly, still nonetheless harkened back to a much more ancient and *holistic* mindset – one of the reasons why in fact, during the colonialist era, that the West looked down upon the East, i.e. the Orient, providing of course the rational justification for colonialism itself. And yet this *holistic* versus this *reductionist* perspective is almost precisely the distinction between these two worldviews that we are trying to get at. And while at face value it might appear to be simply a different perspective, a different way of looking at the world – hence the term “worldview” of course – it nonetheless has vast implications with respect to how society should be structured as well as how individuals, as well as the societies within which they live, should behave and treat one another.

We have seen already what the implications are of establishing a definition or perspective on *reality*, i.e. an *ontology*, that has at its core – its starting point as it were – the empirically driven

objective realm of modern day Physics. This is what we refer to throughout as *objective realism*, another one of arguably unintentional byproducts of the Scientific Revolution but one nonetheless that, in the West at least, is so ingrained into our metaphysical and intellectual paradigm, our *ontology*, that we never even think to question it.⁷⁰² But the implications of our almost universally adopted “Scientific” worldview, i.e. *empiricism* really, in the West at least, go beyond simply just relegating *theology* to the study of religious practitioners or, in the best of circumstances (at least intellectually speaking), to those in Comparative Religion departments in *academia*, it yields an intellectual foundation which is entirely bereft not just of any notion of *theology*, i.e. the concept of the Soul, but also bereft of any notion of *ethics* or *morality* as well – again perhaps the *law of unintended consequences*.

This is precisely what Kant argued for (or against depending upon perspective) in his body of work, his solution representing according to most – and for good reason – the very height of Enlightenment philosophy. While his concerns were very much aligned with the topic at hand, with respect to the loss of *ethics* or *morality* at the feet of Science, the death of *theology* in a very real sense, Kant attacks the rational foundations of the Scientific Revolution directly - *empiricism* and *rationalism* specifically – making the case that based upon pure *reason* itself, *morality* and *ethics*, as well as the Soul are not simply ideas that belong in the study of humanities, but are ontological imperatives in the sense that without them, our *objective reality* cannot be held to exist in any real sense. Kant in many respects, was an *idealist* in very much the same tradition as Plato, arguing that material reality depends upon certain metaphysical notions or concepts without which it cannot exist – physically or conceptually in fact. Kant’s *transcendental idealism*, the very appropriate name given to his theo-philosophical system, based upon this notion of the pre-eminence of *ideas* over *things*, provides the intellectual foundations for the existence of *morality* and *ethics*, in and of themselves even without their theological predicates, based upon pure *reason* – to Kant the defining and distinguishing characteristic of *humanity* itself.

While these domains had historically been relegated to *theology* but, with Kant at least, placed back into the rational fold as it were, as they had been in ancient times following the tradition of Plato and Aristotle, among others, for example. In so doing, in placing ontological significance on *reason* as the overarching *truth*, tool as it were, that must be looked upon to establish the boundaries of *knowledge* and the governing principles of human behavior – again in contrast to a more confined, epistemologically speaking at least, *objective realist* or *empiricist* approach which had the perhaps unintended intellectual consequence of relegating *morality* and *ethics*, and again *theology*, to non-scientific, i.e. non-rational, domains.

⁷⁰² A survey of alternative, modern day ontological systems such as Bohmian Mechanics, Hugh Everett’s Universal Wave Function or even Robert Pirsig’s *Metaphysics of Quality* is explored in some detail in the Chapter in this work on Comparative Metaphysics in Part V of this work.

While exploring the landscape of possible ontological frameworks and systems of *metaphysics* that have been offered up by some of the greatest minds in the last century, we have undoubtedly found some drawbacks, some inherent limitations as it were. And at least from our vantage point, a vantage point that is aligned with the very first Western philosophers, we find that these systems – however powerful they are in describing “physical reality”, runs up against a brick wall when it comes to any other reality that may (or may not) exist beyond these physical boundaries. This includes the domain of Psychology as well, and of course the other domain that we are very interested in within the context of this work, the reality of *supraconsciousness*, the heart of Eastern theo-philosophical traditions and the Indian theo-philosophical tradition

The metaphysical landscape, if we may call it that, that we present and explore, consisting of the works of Bohm, Everett, Pirsig and others is extraordinarily powerful and encompassing in their ability to provide a cohesive and comprehensive intellectual framework for almost the entire domain of experience or reality, from a metaphysical point of view at least – from how the “world”, i.e. the physical universe, works, how different models and intellectual frameworks can exist and each be true for their own respective domain while not negating the other, how fundamentally different assumptions about the framework of each domain can be true but still not negate the other, and even how different intellectual frameworks can evolve and grow to form new intellectual paradigms and models – how what is true and evident one day can (possibility) be replaced with a higher order truth or model in the future.

These are all some of the benefits of not just *metaphysics* in general, as it relates to the establishment of a framework of ideas or intellectual constructs that have (potentially) some static as well as dynamic (changing) aspects – like for example Pirsig’s *Metaphysics of Quality* which is modelled after precisely this delineation – but some of the benefits of the specific models we looked at (again Pirsig, Everett, and Bohm primarily) which have been crafted and tailored very specifically toward some of the challenges that we face, intellectually speaking, of the conflicting ontological paradigms that we are confronted by with the verity of both Classical Mechanics AND Quantum Mechanics.. This is arguably one, if not the, metaphysical challenges of our time. How can both of these models be true? How can the Universe be both *local* and *deterministic* and *non-local* and *stochastic* at the same time? Mathematically speaking, its actually not possible – hence the need for *metaphysics* to step in and help us solve the problem.

All of these models are not just dependent on, but in fact originated out of, the need to answer this conundrum, and as such provide quite elegant answers – metaphysically – as to how both of these models and intellectual paradigms could be true in their own domain, at the same time of course. Having said that though, even though these models, these various intellectual paradigms that have been explored and analyzed, these systems of *metaphysics* as we call them, due to the nature of the problem they are attempting to solve must of course go beyond the domain from

which the conundrum itself is sourced, i.e. Physics, given that the two pillars of modern Science – again Classical Mechanics and Quantum Mechanics – effectively can both NOT be true in the same reality, or at least in the reality of the domain in question (the latter conclusion is the one that most Physicists have arrived at, primarily because it is the only one that makes any sense).

What can be said with certainty however though is that all of these various intellectual paradigms that we have looked at, all originating in the West mind you, are in fact defined by the boundaries of the intellectual paradigm within which these (metaphysical) solutions are devised – not by pure Science necessarily, for when we move from Physics to *metaphysics* we are no longer constrained by the various assumptions and methodologies that are specific to the description of “physical” reality – a description mind you that is awash in, and arguably obsessed with (and perhaps by design and by necessity) by measurement quantification – hence the reason why *mathematics* and Physics are so closely aligned. Even when we remove these constraints, when we go up the intellectual food chain as it were to try and establish some sort of intellectual paradigm within which Physics, and the rest of the Sciences really, can all co-exist that not only provides us with a language and model for describing the various domains of knowledge that are encapsulated within it, but also provides a framework for incorporating (hopefully) future models and frameworks that have yet to be discovered. The power in any system of *metaphysics*, just as with any intellectual model really, is its flexibility and adaptability (and in the case of physical mathematical models, accuracy and predictability).

However, even in the systems of *metaphysics* that we have explored, arguably representing the very height of the intellectual landscape in the Quantum Era, they nonetheless carry with them a fundamentally “Western” bias and set of assumptions, in particular ontological assumptions regarding the scope and boundary of *reality*. In other words, generally speaking then, the underlying *ontological* assumptions, be they explicitly stated or simply implicit to the mode itself, effectively dictates the boundaries of the intellectual model. As such, given the Western bias, states of consciousness in general, and *supraconsciousness* more specifically, lays outside the model entirely, no matter how broad and encompassing the model may be. For example, not only are states of consciousness in and of themselves outside the bounds of these metaphysical models that we have touched on, any notion or conception of a Soul – either at the individual or collective level – is also not included or accounted for, given that again it is not a “verifiable” or “measurable” entity or “thing” in the Western, *empirical* sense. And it is through the vehicle of the Soul, as a sensory apparatus of experience, that Eastern theo-philosophical traditions allow for inclusion of these higher states of consciousness not only in their ontological model, their concept of *reality*, but also as an integral part of their epistemological model, their conception of *knowledge*.

This is really the fundamental difference between the Eastern and Western worldviews, at least how we are defining them herein from a theo-philosophical perspective. These respective worldviews incorporate (more implicitly than explicitly) their conception of *reality* as well as their notion of *knowledge*. While it may seem like splitting hairs at first, the underlying assumptions and perspectives along these two seemingly theoretical and philosophical lines, actually has significant implications not just from an epistemological or ontological perspective, but also from a behavioral, psychological and even sociological perspective as well. While most certainly the advancement of Science has all sorts of merits, and arguably its clean and total break from *theology* was not only justified but necessary in order for it to fully flourish into the discipline that it is today, where subjectivity at any level is driven as far away from the practice as possible and reliance on data, results and independent verification of the same represents the very heart of the discipline.

But what was lost when this split between Science and Religion occurred as a result of the Scientific Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment, an unintended consequence as it were, was the understanding that *theology* as domain of study was actually subsumed within *metaphysics*, i.e. that which was to be studied “before” Physics in Aristotle’s curriculum and parlance which was the standard curriculum in the West up until the end of the Middle Ages more or less. Throughout the entire history of *academia* really, since the time of Plato and Aristotle, up until the modern era really, *theology* had always been in fact a *scientific* endeavor – “scientific” in the sense that Aristotle used the word, i.e. as type of *epistêmê* meaning “knowledge” or “understanding”, prior to the term coming into the English lexicon as “science” through the Latin *scientia* which of course has very specific connotations in the modern era and comes with all sorts of assumptions these days.

The point being, *theology* in antiquity was not a separate discipline, nor was the idea of the existence of the Soul. In antiquity, the existence of the divine what we today call God, as well as the existence of the Soul, were considered to be self-evident principle upon which any intellectual paradigm, any system of philosophy (theo-philosophy in our nomenclature) was to be constructed. As such, *theology*, in particular as the study of the origin of all things and/or the *first principle* – Aristotle’s *prime mover* or Plato’s idea of the *Good*, were just as much metaphysical and philosophical constructs as were *virtue* or *courage*. This meant of course that the characteristics of the Soul, such principles again such as courage or *virtue*, were very much a part of “philosophy” – as the ancients saw it, and as it was taught right up through the Middle Ages right up to and until the very end of the Enlightenment. *Ethics* and *morality* were philosophical principles, principles that were based upon reason and rational argument, both from an individual perspective, as well as from a collective or socio-political perspective. In fact, for the majority of the history of Western thought, *ethics*, *morality*, *logic*, *mathematics*, *Astronomy*, *physics* and *metaphysics* were all part of what we might call the “core curriculum”.

Theology was not a separate discipline by any stretch, as the existence of God (the *One*), and the existence of the Soul, was presumed not just as self-evident truths but as final deductions of Reason itself.

This blind spot, if we may call it that, also has the somewhat unexpected consequence of being incapable of integrating the domains of *ethics* or *morality*, relegating these fields of study to at best the humanities (frowned upon by the pure Scientists whether openly or behind closed doors), or perhaps even worse to the domain of *theology* which does not even have a place in *academia* – Comparative Religion does not count. This is definitely not what the original philosophers, our Western forefathers, intended – for Plato and Aristotle, and the Stoics and Peripatetics (the list goes on), *ethics* and *morality*, what they called *arête* (loosely translated as *virtue*) was the essence, if not the underlying purpose of, philosophy as a discipline in and of itself.

One could certainly argue that the reason for this, the intellectual divide as it were, is that modern intellectual paradigms, in the West at least, fundamentally lack, or refuse to identify or acknowledge, the reality of the Soul – arguably the linchpin metaphysical construct which underpins *ethics* or *morality* in any form. For if there is no Soul, and the goal of life is simply to maximize pleasure for the individual (or the inverse, the other side of that coin as it were, to minimize pain for the individual), and no aspect, part of component of the individual persists beyond death – no Heaven or Hell – then one can certainly make the argument, and many have throughout history, that pursuit of the greater good and righteousness in general (the hallmarks of any ethical system or *morality* in general, the very intellectual cornerstone of their doctrines) would be pointless, having no merit in this world of the next.⁷⁰³

This intellectual blind spot, again if we may call it that, this lack of ethical or moral foundation of virtually all modern Western intellectual ontological paradigms, in the discipline of Science and the related “non-humanities” disciplines as they are conceived of, and in turn taught to future generations of students, today all throughout Western society for the most part, has some significant drawbacks as it turns out – not necessarily for the power and strength of the disciplines and fields of study themselves, but for society as a whole who looks upon these disciplines, as they are formulated and crafted in *academia*, the very heart and citadel of Science itself.

⁷⁰³ This is essentially the doctrine of the Epicureans and their closely related cousins the hedonists from antiquity believed, not having much faith in either the existence of the gods or their interest in human affairs.

Into the *Mystic*: The Great Epistemological Divide

Upon reflection then, looking at the broader historical-cultural intellectual landscape in terms of how our worldview has evolved, at least in the West, since the advent of civilization in the 1st millennium BCE up until the modern era, the so-called Quantum Era within which we find ourselves, looking at the intellectual advancements, the revolutionary scientific and technological advancements that have led to the so-called post Enlightenment Era “progress”, it is worth noting that a perhaps *unintended consequence* of this advancement, again this “progress”, is that we have become almost obsessively siloed in terms of expertise and focus within the breadth of the intellectual landscape itself.

This is how *academia* has evolved since the Scientific Revolution in fact, how it has become structured in the modern era, again in the so-called Quantum Era. Specific intellectual domains within *academia* - Physics, Psychology, Biology, Comparative Religion, or any of the Humanities for that matter – have become, as a matter of necessity arguably, have become almost laser focused such that a) competency and mastery of one specific domain is almost at the exclusion of mastery of any of the other intellectual domains or disciplines, and b) cross-disciplinary research is not necessarily frowned upon per se but is certainly not encouraged as advancement in a specific field, discipline or domain of study is a function of research and advancement only within that specific field or discipline.

This laser like focus by discipline, a fundamental characteristic of *academia* in the modern era, a characteristic that is reinforced by the initiation process itself within the Academy, i.e. the creation of independent research along with an associated dissertation where a student must break new ground in their discipline of choice in order to be granted entrance into the Academy, i.e. granted their PhD⁷⁰⁴, while it no doubt serves its purpose in terms of preparing those who are to enter *academia* to ensure they are qualified to enter it, and speak for it at some level, and arguably at the same time contribute to the overall body of knowledge, i.e. *academia* itself, has had the unintended consequence of discouraging, if not outright disallowing, academics to pursue theories along what we might call grander and more broader cross-disciplinary lines as well as arguably discourage the analysis and criticism of the intellectual assumptions and foundations upon which *academia* itself, in its modern conception, rests.

In other words, there is no incentive for anyone pursuing a place within *academia*, pursuing their PhD, to question the very premise and authority, the very intellectual ground as it were, of the

⁷⁰⁴ *Philosophiae Doctor* or Doctor of Philosophy, or PhD, which incidentally betrays its heritage and origins as to the original conception of *philosophy* as put forth by the ancient Hellenes, or Greeks - Aristotle in particular. That is to say, as a correlary for *science* in a broader sense.

Academy itself. This is the reason for example, that Robert Pirsig, the author of the 1970s cult-classic *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* which did precisely that - i.e. call into question and attack the very intellectual foundations of the West as reflected by the teachings of the Academy – had to write, perform his research so to speak, outside of the confines of the Academy.

In fact, Pirsig's research, his insights if we may call them that, which initially began within the Academy itself as a University Professor in Bozeman Montana, effectively not only got him barred from the Academy, from teaching, but given the nature of his "epiphany", driven by his search for the definition of the notion of *Quality*, in fact eventually got him institutionalized. It wasn't until he renounced his so-called epiphany, after undergoing high and frequent doses of electrodynamic currents, effectively "fried" in a literally sense, after which he was finally declared "fixed", after which he "safely" permitted back into society and could be rejoined with (what was left of) his family.⁷⁰⁵ It wasn't until many years later that he wrote of this intellectual journey, retracing his steps as it were, which is basically what the storyline is in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

The point being here of course that illumination in and of itself, the discovery – or *realization* even – of intellectual or supra-intellectual paradigms is not only not encouraged within *academia*, it is actually specifically discouraged. While one can only theorize as to why this is the case, no doubt any intellectual framework upon which an entire socio-political structure is based and formulated – like the Academy – is arguably not going to be very open to ideas which challenge the very foundations of its existence.

Interestingly, and again not surprisingly, despite the far-reaching influence of Pirsig's philosophy, what he refers to as the Metaphysics of Quality, his teachings from either a philosophical perspective or intellectual perspective have yet to find themselves adopted in any sort mainstream way within *academia*, outside of a few classes in various Philosophy departments which focus on his work.⁷⁰⁶ For very similar reasons arguably, at least one can surmise, *academia* barely incorporates Eastern theo-philosophical concepts outside of including Eastern philosophy as a general field of study within Comparative Religion departments necessarily. In fact, one can make the argument, that *knowledge* itself in the West, its boundaries and scope, which domains

⁷⁰⁵ Robert Pirsig (1928-2017) published just two books, the first of which was a cult classic of sorts and a best seller initially published in 1974, entitled *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* and his second work, much less popular and yet in Pirsig's eyes at least much more profound from a philosophical perspective, was entitled *Lila: an Inquiry into Morals* which was initially published in 1991.

⁷⁰⁶ One of which the author actually took within the Philosophy department at Stonybrook University in the Summer of 1993 incidentally.

are to be included and which are excluded, is effectively defined by the curriculum of the Academy itself – the two almost self-supporting each other and reinforcing each other.

And herein lies one of the biggest challenges from an intellectual perspective when looking to tackle some of the world's biggest problems today, problems that as we mention to a large extent have an ideological basis – that is to say in order to provide a rational, intellectual framework that can cross the ideological chasm between the opposing worldviews between East and West as it were, it requires an almost wholesale revision, or at the very least a foundational reconstruction, of the very core of the Western intellectual foundation itself – as promoted, supported and reinforced by *academia*. Our concept of *knowledge* in and of itself must shift in order for us to even be in a position to solve some of these global challenges and problems - again *a problem cannot be solved by the same level of consciousness that created it*.

One can draw a parallel with this type of intellectual revolution if we may call it that, one that is only beginning right now as the Quantum Era begins to take hold of the collective psyche of humanity, crossing Eastern and Western boundaries, as Yoga and Tai chi (*Tàijí*) and alternative forms of medicinal practices and treatment (and by alternative we mean primarily Eastern methods such as Ayurveda, acupuncture, etc.) continue to proliferate in the West, there is shift in worldview, an assimilation of sorts, that is happening. But it is worth noting that a) Yoga was first introduced in the West at the beginning of the 20th century so it's been a long time coming in this regard and b) the institutions and body politic, if we may call it that, have reasons to resist the proliferation and spread of these ideas. Both from an economic perspective, as is the case with Health Care and Big Pharma companies who have a very large vested interest in the status quo and are in no way interested in supporting the proliferation of practices or techniques that, despite the fact that they may in fact have significant health benefits and/or be significantly cheaper than other forms of treatment, yet nonetheless represent a significant threat to their profit engines, or from a political or authoritarian perspective, as is the case with the Academy for example who also has an interest in preserving the status quo from an epistemological perspective.

The Enlightenment philosophers faced very similar challenges in fact, except the authority that they were rebelling against was not intellectual or economical, but more political – as theological institutions in pre-Enlightenment times were just as political, and arguably held just as much influence and power, as the political machines of nation-states in and of themselves. The Enlightenment philosophers, most notably of course Galileo and Copernicus, directly rebelled against the authority of the Church in the name of Science and Reason - risking not just exile and excommunication, from the Church as well as from the Universities that were very closely

affiliated with theological institutions at the time, but in some cases – as was the case with Galileo for example.⁷⁰⁷

Until eventually of course, as a result of the intellectual, social and political advancements and upheavals which ultimately characterize what we now refer to as the Scientific Revolution (circa end of 16th century to end of 17th), followed closely on the heels by the Enlightenment Era, or Age of Enlightenment from circa the end of the 17th well into the 18th century, advancements in not just Science proper as we understand the discipline and field of study today (as a result of the Scientific Revolution no less) but also revolutionary advancements in political and social philosophy as well, advancements which provided the intellectual foundations for the French Revolution in (1789-1799), the English Revolution (1688), as well as the American Revolution (1775-1783).

As a result, of course, not only did the socio-political landscape change forever, but the intellectual landscape did as well, with Religion and Science being to a large extent subsequently entirely split – *theology* not of course dissolving or disappearing in any way, but in terms of both political as well as intellectual influence, the sciences, and humanities or course, were able to pursue their own goals independent of any influence from the Church more or less forever dividing the intellectual landscape between Science and Religion, or *theology*. While perhaps to a much less drastic or lesser extent, the likes of Bohm, Everett and even Pirsig, with respect to their ontological frameworks - their *metaphysical* frameworks really – also attempted, arguably somewhat less successfully than their Enlightenment Era predecessors, to upend or invert the current prevailing (Western) ontological models which are so firmly entrenched in the Academy today. Specifically, we refer to not just the prevailing ontological framework of the West, again the notion of what constitutes *reality*, an intellectual paradigm which is rooted firmly in Classical Mechanics, but also the prevailing epistemological framework of the West, the boundaries of *knowledge* that are officially approved and designated by the Academy itself, i.e. what we refer to as *academia*.

These scientists, Physicists most of them (with the exception of Pirsig who calls himself a *philosophologer*, or one who analyzes or studies philosophy), attempt to reframe the boundaries of and our understanding of *reality*, based upon not just Classical Mechanics but also upon Quantum Mechanics. And yet, despite their efforts, the models that these great minds put forth have nonetheless been effectively banished to the very deepest and least accessible corners of *academia*. In fact, one cannot even find non-orthodox, i.e. non “Copenhagen”, interpretations of Quantum Theory in standard text books on the subject - as if the implications of the Quantum

⁷⁰⁷ Galileo’s heliocentric theories which were deemed heretical in 1616 and he was sentenced to prison in 1633 for the same where he spent the remaining years of his life until 1642.

Theory, and it's now well proven set of axioms and principles which are fundamentally "non-Classical", should have no bearing on our basic understanding of how the world works – be it at the quantum level or not (outside of certain philosophical circles, philosophy of science in particular, which is where one would have to look to find these respective theoretical models).

So to a certain extent, you can argue that these great thinkers of the 20th century, those that dared to attempt to integrate Quantum Theory's fundamentally *non-local* and *non-deterministic* conception of at least the quantum realm into a more broad and encompassing ontological framework that didn't necessarily reject the truth and validity of the so-called "Classical" view of universe - a *reality* that consisted solely of objects and *observables* moving through the continuum of *spacetime*, again what we call *objective realism* - but incorporated it into a more broad and encompassing intellectual, i.e. ontological, framework, have nonetheless been banished just the same. They were not excommunicated from some central religious or intellectual authority necessarily, or imprisoned like Galileo some 300 years ago now⁷⁰⁸, but nonetheless banished in the sense that their ideas have in no way been accepted by *academia* and as such effectively live in the dark corners of the intellectual universe left for authors like myself, who is also not part of the Academy proper, to discover and write about, effectively relegating such teachings, such doctrines and theories, to the intellectual backwaters where a) you have to do your own, fairly rigorous, research to find them, and b) most if not all PhD program will not accept any further research in such non "mainstream" subjects in order to get accredited as a "Doctor of Philosophy".

What we end up with, while most certainly better than where we were prior to the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment with respect to being able to freely pursue ideas and theories wherever they might take us, we have not nonetheless escaped entirely ontological or epistemological bias necessarily. The bias has just morphed from being theological or "religious", into more intellectual or "Scientific, which again implies that anything "un-scientific" - like the realm of the Soul or its close intellectual and metaphysical corollaries like *ethics* or *morality*, or even the (potential) reality of higher states of consciousness – must be dealt with outside of *academia*, despite not just the relative importance of such topics, but the very ontological significance of such topics. This is the very reason for example, that Aristotle taught *metaphysics*, *before* Physics (*meta* in the Greek means "before" or "prior to") and how *metaphysics* in fact came to be known, right up until after the Scientific Revolution in fact, for some two thousand years, as *first philosophy*.

⁷⁰⁸ Although you could argue that Bohm's exile from America in the late 1940s under suspicion of being "communist" does not differ all that much from the exile of some of the early Enlightenment philosophers for some of their work.

This would be just fine except that from an ontological perspective, the world of Science, the physical sciences in particular – Physics really – has become, whether intentionally by design or not, equated with our Western notion of *reality*. That is to say, *ontology* - from a Western philosophical perspective which is where the term originated and therefore its specific domain of reference - is not just predisposed to an *empirical* and *objective realist* disposition, but it's very intellectual foundations rest on these so-called "Scientific" presumptions. And therefore, as a byproduct of this way of thinking which is characteristically and uniquely "Western", one whose intellectual origins at least can be traced back to the Scientific Revolution, our conception of *reality*, is at best limited at worst, ultimately flawed.

This limitation perhaps manifests itself most clearly and prominently in the current gap, chasm even, and all sorts of attempts to bridge said gap, between Science and Religion for example. In the post Enlightenment Era intellectual paradigm in the West, that which is reflected most poignantly in *academia*, Religion has been relegated to the field of *theology* - literally the "study of" God, or gods as it were. It is in the domain of *theology* for example, where *ethics* and *morality* have effectively been relegated for the most part, outside of philosophical circles at least.⁷⁰⁹ As a result of these hard lines that have been drawn between *theology* and Science, the Religion and Science intellectual chasm as it were, that we are effectively confronted with in the Western epistemological landscape, is that these "higher" states of consciousness which hold such ontological significance in the various mystical traditions throughout the world - in particular in the Eastern theo-philosophical traditions, many of which have been around for literally millennia and arguably are rooted, intellectually and theo-philosophically at least, into the heart of human civilization itself – cannot be integrated in any meaningful way into really any aspect of the prevailing Western intellectual paradigm, outside of *theology* really.

These states of consciousness then, what in the East is viewed as the true nature of *reality* itself, ultimately defy not just definition (which the respective traditions within which these states are recognized would also concede for the most part), but also ultimately defy any sort of rational categorization whatsoever as established and promulgated by *academia*, the presider over knowledge in the West. This holds true in fact even in the domain of Psychology where these mystics, if they were to be (and some have) subjected to modern day psychoanalytic methods or techniques, have been and are typically diagnosed with all sorts of psychotic disorders, a challenge outlined in some detail in a recent article in Scientific American in fact.⁷¹⁰ As already

⁷⁰⁹ Enlightenment Era philosophers made various valiant, and arguably quite successful attempts to bridge this gap and include *ethics* and *morality*, as well as God, within various intellectual frameworks that were not theological, or religious, per se – very much in the spirit of the first philosophers, or Aristotle at least. Kant is probably the most notable of these, his work representing to most the very height of Enlightenment philosophy. It is in fact in the works of Kant that the term "Enlightenment Era" comes from.

⁷¹⁰ For a good outline of the challenges distinguishing between higher states of consciousness and mental illness generally, see the article published in Scientific American in December 2016 by Nathaniel P. Morris entitled "How Do You Distinguish between

mentioned, Robert Pirsig himself was diagnosed as having a psychotic breakdown after he experienced what can arguably be called an altered, or “higher” state of consciousness or awareness that, because he himself as well as the people who he was surrounded by had no frame of reference for such experiences or states, led to him being institutionalized and subject to electroshock treatment to “dispel” this awareness from his being so to speak so that he could re-integrate back into “normal” society.

It’s this *mystical* experience really, at least how Pirsig explains it, that drove him to write - in an attempt to find the reason why our culture, i.e. the “West”, seemed to be so devoid of not just enthusiasm, but of *values* in and of themselves. This intellectual journey, where he literally and figuratively retraces his steps to that fateful day where *Quality* itself manifests directly and powerfully throughout his whole being to the point where he could not eat or function in any physical, or of course social, way, ends up leading to the formulation of what he calls a new *metaphysics*, i.e. his Metaphysics of Quality which is his intellectual solution to not only why we as a culture are devoid of Values, but also in a sense also provides an intellectual bridge between Science and Religion by sidestepping theological questions entirely and yet affirming the existing of some sort of ground of existence from which what he calls “intuition” effectively comes from or is the source of.

Of course this intellectual breakthrough that Pirsig had, given its complete divorce from, and abandonment of, any form of rational thought or any inclination toward social norms, stemming in no small measure from a direct communion with the source of Intellect itself, a total and complete comprehension of and absorption with of what he came to refer to as “*Dynamic Quality*” itself in its most pure and unadulterated form, led of course quite directly and efficiently to again him being institutionalized and thereby designated by society as a whole as “crazy”. Subsequently of course, even decades after his book and underlying philosophy has reached readers all across the world, his philosophy is still for the most part not accepted as a significant contribution to the intellectual landscape in the West, again *academia*.

It’s very difficult of course, given the author’s background in Eastern philosophy and mystical practices in general, to not look at the experience that Pirsig had as a direct experience of a very high state of consciousness, akin to the what the Indian theo-philosophical tradition in particular (i.e. Yoga) refers to as *samādhi*, what the Buddhists refer to as *nirvana*, and what we refer to throughout as *supraconsciousness*. Of course, as any seasoned practitioner of the mystical arts will tell you, and what Pirsig unfortunately had to find out (quite painfully as it turned out) on his own, is that the experience of these higher states of consciousness, some of which can be induced

Religious Fervor and Mental Illness” which can be found at <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/mind-guest-blog/how-do-you-distinguish-between-religious-fervor-and-mental-illness/>.

by various means, methods and techniques should a) be done under the guidance of a competent teacher, and b) should be practiced in conjunction with various moral and ethical precepts and conjunctions, and c) hopefully if direct realization of the Absolute is in fact realized, you have the good fortune of not being immediately checked into a mental institution.

Despite the fact that this event, this experience of Pirsig's, had all the hallmark characteristics of true "mystical" experience, there existed no intellectual or social, or even Psychological in fact, foundation for the rest of society, or even his family or friends for that matter, to interpret or understand this experience in any way – how he got there, what he was in fact experiencing, or perhaps better put what experience he had in fact lost himself in.

Furthermore, Pirsig himself, nor again those around him or close to him, had at their disposal any tools or techniques, any methods whatsoever, to facilitate "bringing him back" to a normal state of consciousness so to speak, to the normal physical plane of existence within which all typically live and exist in (all non-mystics at least).⁷¹¹ As a result, as mentioned previously and perhaps not surprisingly, Pirsig was subsequently institutionalized and diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, and then during an extended stay in this facility that was designed for those who were unable to live in society, so-called "psychotics", in order to "fix" him and rid him of his "psychotic" tendencies, where he was treated with, among other things, extensive electroconvulsive therapy.⁷¹²

If we look to the East however, there is no such relegation of experience, no matter what state or level of consciousness we speak of, to the back seat of "empirical reality", the very premise of the *objective realist* modes of thought which underpin not just virtually the entire epistemological landscape of the West, but the ontological landscape as well - Psychology included we may add. In the Indian theo-philosophical tradition in particular however, this couldn't be further from the truth. What we refer throughout as *supraconsciousness* for example, a term we use in order to try and provide some intellectual, primarily Psychological (Freudian), frame of reference for the experience, is not so much an "experience" – a term that in and of itself presumes an *objective realist ontology* – but more a state of *being*, where a larger,

⁷¹¹ If we look at the life of Ramakrishna for example, who was surrounded by people who were trained in the art of mystical techniques and practices, there are many well documented incidents of not only him experiencing such states of what he described as "divine ecstasy", but also of his friends and fellow "mystic" practitioners using certain words or phrases, whispering them in his ear, to "bring him down", or "back" to the "physical" or normal plane of existence.

⁷¹² Parts of the episode are documented in at least some cursory fashion toward the end of his first book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. Some details, all of which are fairly well known and Pirsig himself has been pretty open about, can be found on his Wikipedia page at: See Wikipedia contributors, 'Robert M. Pirsig', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 10 September 2017, 22:32 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Robert_M._Pirsig&oldid=799972066> [accessed 24 October 2017].

or higher, state of consciousness “manifests” around or within an individual persona, or psyche, at a given point in the *spacetime continuum*, using standard 20th century Physicist jargon.

It is for this reason for example, that the term *mysticism* had to be manufactured in the West, coming into prominence in Comparative Religious circles in the last few decades or so, in order to provide at least some sort of intellectual foundation, as well as terminology, for something – really again some state of awareness or consciousness - that defies any sort of rational or intellectual description, something that is arguably not irrational necessarily but, to coin a term, *supra-rational*. *Mysticism* then, provided a nice clean and neat, intellectual, box to place not just the Eastern theo-philosophical systems that recognized the verity and ontological significance of these higher states of awareness, or again consciousness, but also the aboriginal and shaman like practices that Anthropologists and Comparative Religious scholars had encountered all throughout the world, each of them encountering, within dozens if not hundreds socially, theologically and spiritually unique environments and belief systems, and yet at the same time all recognizing, and to a large extent practicing, distinctively *mystical* arts. The discipline then, the sub domain within Comparative Religion really, was established to discuss and explore these states of consciousness in a rationally coherent, and in classical Western modes in contrast and comparison to each other and to *objective realism* itself, manner and to, attempt at least, to provide some sort of frame of reference for what the Eastern theo-philosophical traditions at least consider to be the very ground of *reality* itself.

Again, in virtually all of these so-called “mystical” traditions, the experience which we have come to know or understand as intrinsically *mystical* - in the Western sense that this term is understood as something distinct from “every day” experience and which, by definition really, defies any sort of rational explanation definition, or description - is described in the various traditions as a sort of *communion with a higher state of being* or some sort of *expanded form of consciousness*. As such, given that it clearly expresses an idea, or again an experience, which exists beyond any type of *objective realist* conception of *reality*, it therefore is beyond any sort of intellectual framework that can be conceived by the *mind*, the mind in this sense representing an entirely intellectual construct which is considered to be, primarily again according to the Eastern theo-philosophical/mystical traditions more or less, subservient to, or perhaps better put a lower order manifestation of, the *mystical experience* itself.

This does not mean however that the *mystical experience*, the state of expanded consciousness or awareness, or again what we call *supraconsciousness*, which represent such an integral and fundamental component of the metaphysical and ontological landscape of Eastern theo-philosophy in general and in particular the Indian theo-philosophical tradition, is not described or articulated in any way, shape or form. It, in fact, in these various traditions is associated with certain epithets and assigned various terms or expressions that reflect the true import and weight

of the experience, and in turn reflect the ontological, and theological, significance of, the state of consciousness or being which, at least again according to the Eastern theo-philosophical traditions in particular, is accessible to, or perhaps better put the true essence of, each and every one of us. This is what the Indian theo-philosophical notion of *Satcitānanda* represents, as well as what *Brahman* from an anthropomorphic theo-philosophical perspective at least, also represents. We also find for example, a very extensive and detailed terminology set forth in the *Yoga Sūtras*, where not only are the specific practices to elicit such higher states of consciousness outlined in detail, but also the higher state of consciousness itself, i.e. *samādhi*, is also referred to and explained in some detail as well, even if by analogy and metaphor only.

A consequence of our distinctly Western, *reductionist* and somewhat restrictive worldview, with its respective underlying epistemological assumptions upon which it is constructed, is that since it effectively relies and depends upon Science as a discipline for discerning not just truth from fiction, but also the boundaries of what can actually be defined as well (*empiricism*), we end with a fairly restricted conception of *knowledge* and *reality*, one that holds the physical realm, the realm of the senses, as more ontologically significant than the psychological, or inner, world. This is juxtaposed of course, with the Eastern, again primarily Indian, epistemological frameworks which not only do not restrict the notion of reality only to the physical world or realm, but include a concept of knowledge which distinguishes directly between forms of knowledge across the sensory spectrum, psychological and supra-sensory included.

Where this leaves from a Western academic standpoint at least, is that since these so-called “higher” states of consciousness are, by nature “subjective” and lack empirical verifiability, and as such most certainly cannot be considered as reflective of, or even hinting of, any sort of inclusion in our definition of *reality*, from an empirical perspective of course. And a byproduct of this epistemological exclusion, these topics are effectively left out of *academia* proper, with the exception perhaps of some Comparative Religion courses which may touch on *mysticism* as a purely intellectual endeavor. And yet this notion of the (potential) existence of higher states of consciousness or awareness, *supraconsciousness*, if true, if fundamentally real, which is a core principle and belief of virtually all of the Indian theo-philosophical schools and traditions, would stand our current (Western) conception of reality, one entirely devoid of not just *theology* but even spirituality, entirely on its head – quite literally almost.

Nowhere else is this quite restrictive, *empiricist* and *causally deterministic*, classically Western, ontological worldview, manifest its ontological limitations as in the Standard, aka “Copenhagen”, Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics, where some of the very fundamental premises regarding the nature of the reality underlying the model, the *quantum observables* as they are sometimes called - specifically the principles of *entanglement* and *locality* - sit in stark opposition to the prevailing understanding of how the world basically works, i.e. our Western conception of *reality*

which is based upon the notions of *causal determinism*, *locality* and *objective realism*, i.e. Classical Mechanics. And yet despite this, outside of some fancy mathematical gymnastics that have been employed to try and explain Quantum Mechanics in a fully *deterministic* framework, i.e. the now quite popular *many-worlds interpretation* of Quantum Theory, the idea that the true nature of *reality*, of existence itself, might not be truly *causally deterministic* or even *objective* in any real sense of the term is literally beyond comprehension. It breaks the model, quite literally.

And yet these Eastern theo-philosophical traditions, in particular again the Indian theo-philosophical tradition, have been grounded since inception with the premise, the underlying assumption even, of the ontological superiority of *consciousness*, or *awareness*, over *objective realism*. This has been the case since the very dawn of their respective civilizations within which the theo-philosophical systems themselves emerged, perhaps the very reason why these belief systems persist, a worldview where different levels or domains of *knowledge*, as a theo-philosophical concept, can co-exist and at the same time not contradict each other. What we find in the Indian theo-philosophical tradition in particular, arguably one of its defining features in fact, is that the conception of *knowledge*, the underlying epistemological framework, not only fully integrates what we in the West have now split into the separate and distinct domains which we call “Religion” and “Science”, but also integrates the notion of, the fundamental truth of, higher states of consciousness that exist in a very real sense above or beyond “physical” reality.

By so doing, the theo-philosophical system effectively subsumes *subject-object metaphysics* into their conception of *reality*, i.e. their *ontology*, as well as into their epistemological framework, i.e. their concept of *knowledge* in toto, while at the same time not sacrificing any of verifiable and empirical reality, and underlying predictive and technological power, of *empiricism* or *objective realism* in and of themselves as integral parts, components, of the entire ontological framework as it were. This is accomplished quite elegantly, by distinguishing between higher and lower forms of *knowledge*. The former being classified and understood as existing above or beyond our basic cognitive or intellectual capabilities, and the latter being defined as being bound directly by such intellectual capabilities, the realm of the senses as it were - what in the West is the domain of Science. This epistemological framework in fact, is one of the marked characteristics of the Indian philosophical tradition, which not only allows for a much more broad conception of *knowledge* generally speaking, one which incorporates and integrates the *mystical experience* into it (defined again by such terms as *Satcitānanda* or *Brahman*, constructs which tie more or less directly into the underlying mythological tradition from which they emerge) but also lower forms of knowledge as well which govern not only the world of natural phenomenon but also sociological phenomena such as *ethics*, *morality* and of course the world of name and form within which we as individuals are ultimately bound to and by.

The Indian theo-philosophical tradition provides these various *metaphysical* frameworks, epistemological frameworks really, within which all forms of *knowledge*, both higher and lower forms, can be understood in relation to each other and can be understood within the context of the entire domain of human knowledge of experience which again includes the mystical domain, the physical domain, as well as the sociological and psychological domains.⁷¹³ In a sense this epistemological framework is much more closely aligned with Aristotle, in its breadth and scope as well *ontology*, rather than the epistemological framework of the West in the modern era which again rests upon the very often overlooked, and definitely underestimated, metaphysical assumptions of *objective realism* and *empiricism*.

Nonetheless, in this classically “Eastern” worldview, one which is by nature not *reductionist* or empirical, we find this expanded intellectual, epistemological, paradigm that incorporates what we are calling higher, i.e. mystical, forms of knowledge, which correlate directly to what we are calling *supraconsciousness* which in turn is such an ontologically important principle in the “mystical” traditions. These higher states of awareness, or again higher states of consciousness, are considered to be *verifiable truths* within these (mystical) theo-philosophical traditions in the sense that a) the experiences themselves can be confirmed by other advanced practitioners of these mystical arts, i.e. *mystics* or spiritual “adepts”, b) the experiences conform to the underlying theo-philosophical texts which describe these mystical states in some detail, and c) that the lasting effects of the mystical experience are also verified against the theo-philosophical literature and tradition as well, effects such as moral fortitude, compassion, sympathy for others, and other classically “religious” attributes or qualities.⁷¹⁴

Regardless, in these very ancient belief systems, one’s that existed not only prior to monotheistic *theology*, but also clearly pre-date civilization itself – in the West or East – we find that the necessary qualification of the worldview as “mystical” is not only not necessary, but redundant in a way because the theo-philosophical system reflects the underlying worldview of the people and culture within which it emerged. And in this “Eastern” worldview, an ontological paradigm that is arguably almost a complete inversion of the predominant intellectual paradigm in the West, these lower forms of knowledge are not abandoned for these higher forms (as is the case in the standard Western intellectual paradigms where the truth of these *supraconscious* states is

⁷¹³ Depending upon the Indian philosophical tradition of course, “higher” and “lower” forms of knowledge are given relative degrees of importance. So in Advaita Vedānta, i.e. the *non-dualistic* or *monistic* form of Vedānta, it is the higher form of knowledge that is not only given greater significance, but the lower form of knowledge is denoted as “unreal” or “illusory”, i.e. *Maya*. In the other forms of (orthodox) Indian theo-philosophy, these lower forms of knowledge are given more inherent realistic value, as is represented by what is considered to be the *qualified non-dualistic* interpretation of Vedānta referred to as Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, or in the *dualistic* conception of Vedānta referred to as Dvaita Vedānta.

⁷¹⁴ This last category becomes even more important and relevant with respect to “verification” when the very highest of spiritual states or consciousness are in question, what is described in the Upanishadic literature as *Satcitānanda*, or Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute, or in the Yogic literature as *samādhi*.

rejected on purely Scientific grounds, i.e. the states in and of themselves are purely “subjective” and as such are “unverifiable”) but are viewed as complimentary and supportive of, the basic underlying ground of *reality* itself - a *reality* that is closer to what we in the West like to refer to as *consciousness* or (pure) *awareness* than it is “objective” in any way.

Metaphysics and Morality: Two Paths Converged in a Wood

Throughout this work we have emphasized not just the sheer breadth, depth and influence of Aristotle's work, representing to a large degree not just the foundation of Western philosophy, but in a very real sense the very structure of knowledge itself in the West, his epistemological framework, an intellectual framework which not only provides guidance and strategies for categorizing all the possible different domains of *knowledge* in and of themselves⁷¹⁵ but also a very detailed and comprehensive system for identifying the requisite properties, or characteristics, of a thing that are both *necessary* and *sufficient* to provide the complete picture of what a thing truly is.

While perhaps this may seem like splitting philosophical hairs, Aristotle having lived so long ago and from an era where so little was known about how the world works, the very beginning of rational (literary) discourse really, nonetheless in looking at Aristotle's works, and again his epistemological framework in particular, one cannot discount not just its lasting influence on Western thought, but also its extraordinary persistence in terms of applicability and relevance.

As we've discussed before, Aristotle divided all *knowledge* - or *science* which is the more direct transliteration of the Greek *epistêmê*⁷¹⁶ - into three fundamental and exhaustive branches:

- I. *the theoretical*:: knowledge for knowledge's sake, which included, according to Aristotle, the fields of *mathematics*, *physics* or *natural philosophy*, and *first philosophy* or *metaphysics*,
- II. *the practical*:: which concerns conduct and goodness in action at the individual and socio-political level, i.e. *ethics* and socio-political philosophy and theory, and
- III. *the productive* which aims at the production of useful or beautiful objects and includes such disciplines as the *arts* - e.g. music, theater, etc. – and craftsmanship such as ship building or the construction of homes or tools, as well as the “art” of *rhetoric* as well.

With Aristotle then, we find not only the origins of the word “science” (as derived from *sciencia* which is the Latin translation for the Greek word *epistêmê*, one of the cornerstone terms throughout Aristotle's corpus to which he came to be closely associated with, and from which the philosophical discipline of *epistemology* itself is derived) but also the intellectual framework, approach and terminology, within which it's study in the aggregate was to be approached. For *philosophy*, *philosophia* in the Greek, in all its forms throughout antiquity in the Mediterranean,

⁷¹⁵ See Shields, Christopher, "Aristotle", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/aristotle/>>.

⁷¹⁶ *epistêmê* in the Greek, meaning “knowledge”, and from which our English word “science” actually derives - through the intermediary Latin word *sciencia*, *scire* being the very to “know” or “understand”.

even after the period of Roman influence, was for the most part structured around the framework, and terminology, that was used by Aristotle, despite the significant influence Plato's works had on the Hellenic philosophical tradition.

Furthermore, it is primarily from this (Hellenic) philosophical tradition - in terms of approach, scope, methodology and terminology – that our modern University system in the West is sourced, referred to as *academia*, sometimes even as simply the “Academy”, which of course also traces its source back to the Hellenic philosophical tradition, derived directly from the name of the most famous philosophical school in antiquity, namely the Academy, which was founded by Plato circa 387 BCE, some three years after Aristotle was born. To say that the basic underlying intellectual framework of the West is primarily Hellenic then, despite the 2500 years or so that have gone by since it was first established - by Plato and Aristotle primarily - would in no way be overemphasizing the point. The point is almost impossible to overemphasize in fact. Without the Hellenic philosophical tradition, or even if it had taken a different form or used a different language or even a different set of words to describe certain key terms, our intellectual landscape in the West would be almost unrecognizable.

Having said that however, it is undoubtedly the *theoretical* branch of knowledge for which Aristotle is best known - what included both his *physics* and *metaphysics*, Aristotle's *first philosophy*, which in turn subsumes what we today call *theology*. In antiquity however, the existence of God - or gods as the case may be - was considered to be so self-evident, such an elementary part of *reality* and the universe, that a separate discipline or branch of knowledge for its study was not warranted or even considered really. As such it is in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, as distinguished from *Physics* proper, from which we source Aristotle's *theology* primarily, with *theos*, or God, being represented as the rational deduction of the so-called *first*, or *unmoved mover*.

Aristotle's *metaphysics* in turn is probably best characterized by his *epistemology*, which as outlined above rests quite squarely on this *doctrine of the four causes*. Aristotle's *theory of causality* then, when supplemented with his concept of *being qua being* which underpins his *metaphysics* and his *ontology* - in fact not only defines his *ontology* but establishes the terminology for the discipline itself, i.e. *óntōs* from which “being” comes from in *being qua being* - when combined with his notion of *epistêmê* in terms of not just definition but in terms of its boundaries and scope, effectively comes together to make up Aristotle's *epistemology*, establishing the intellectual framework and language more or less that seeded modern Science, some two thousand years before Newton. One could say even that *ontology* as a discipline begins with Aristotle, although antecedents lay with Plato no doubt. For it is *being* that Aristotle is most concerned with throughout his *Metaphysics*, which in turn inform his *category theory* and establish the boundaries of *existence*, define *knowledge*.

However, one could make a case though, that with respect to *theology* at least, we have a very solid metaphysical foundation established with Aristotle with the notion of God, i.e. *theos*, firmly rooted in not only his *ontology* as it were, but his *epistemology* as well – rooted in the very foundations of his notion of *being qua being* as a logical deduction as it were to his *metaphysics of change*. This is undoubtedly what attracted the Muslim *falṣafa* to his work, with Aristotle's *first mover* fitting quite nicely into their *monistic* theological narrative, the basis for the break with Christianity to a large degree, whose doctrine of the Trinity and their notion of *hypostatic union* of God with Jesus they viewed as being inconsistent with *monism* as an abstract theological principle which they held was more accurately depicted in Muḥammad's *theology* - as depicted in the *Qur'ān* which formed the basis of Islam of course.

Plato's *theology*, in contrast, shows much more *dualistic* tendencies, as we see in the *Timaeus* for example, with *Being* and *Becoming* being presented as the two primordial, eternally existent, intellectual *first principles* - i.e. *arche* - upon which his *metaphysics* (if we may call it that) is constructed primarily. And while his *Demiurge* and *World Soul* provide the theological and metaphysical framework for the Neo-Platonic *Divine Intellect*, or *Nous*, they clearly preferred Plato in a more diluted and synthetic form as he came to be understood in Neo-Platonism, to which again the *falṣafa* clearly felt a great affinity - as reflected in the fact that Plotinus's *Enneads*, representing perhaps the very height of Neo-Platonism, was circulated in Arabic under the title *The Theology of Aristotle* throughout the Islamic Golden Age.

Upon reflection however, one could argue that we can find an intellectual latch as it were to the mystic experience in Aristotle's notion of *being qua being*, as the underlying *potentiality* (pun intended) of *being* in and of itself - not as a descriptive metaphysical principle which is more or less what *being qua being* denotes, but as a direct experience of *being* in its actualized form as it were - in a more Platonic theological sense as *Being* - although non-differentiated or qualified with any of the basic metaphysical *categories* for example that would be necessary conditions as it were of any more materialistic, or to use Aristotle's terminology *substantial, being* or *entity*. This no doubt is how the Neo-Platonists conceived of their concept of the *One*, which although provided the ontological and metaphysical primordial construct from which the universe itself, as seen as a fundamentally intellectual organism as it were, also provided them with a mystical grounding as well, as a principle that not only could be, and should be, conceptualized but one in fact that can be, and again should be, experienced.

This notion of the mystic experience - the experience of the very ground of *being* itself (what in the *Upanishads* is referred to as *Satcitānanda*) is not really alluded to specifically in either the works of Aristotle or Plato, however we do nonetheless find a fairly sophisticated and well thought out conception of God, or *theos*, as an extension to their respective *metaphysics* - even if Plato's account of him - our *Demiurge*, or divine craftsman, in the *Timaeus* - is presented as

more of a myth than a rational explanation necessarily, what he calls a “likely story”. A story which is contrast to the more rational conception of God that we find in Aristotle who argues for the existence of a primordial principle, an *unmoved* or *first mover*, which he equates with God, i.e. *theos*. As he describes in *Metaphysics*, the *unmoved mover* to Aristotle is the penultimate requisite rational deduction as it were, a *necessary condition of existence itself*. Although interestingly, in both the cosmogonic accounts of Plato and Aristotle, despite their fundamental differences in style and determinative strategy, it can be said that God - however one arrives to the requisite conclusion of his existence as it were - is nonetheless motivated by *Love*, i.e. *Eros*, in order to not just bring about the creation of the universe, to set it into *motion* as it were according to Aristotle, but also in its *preservation* as well, as we see reflected in the notion of *emanation* which rests at the heart of Neo-Platonic *theology*, a later development but still fundamentally Platonic.

With respect to identifying a different ontological and epistemological model in order to support a more profound and robust understanding of the universe within which we live, while Aristotle’s philosophy is certainly attractive in many ways, some might have a problem with leaning too much on a system of philosophy that is so old and outdated as it were, and perhaps even in its complexity. And even despite its epistemological flexibility, Aristotle doesn’t weigh in on the *mystical experience* at all really, even Plato only glances on the subject here or there. But clearly there is a mystical thread that runs through the Hellenic philosophical tradition though, as it shows itself with the Gnostics especially and with the Neo-Platonists a little less directly perhaps. But again, we do not find this in Aristotle’s work necessarily, relegating the mystic *wisdom* to the realm beyond *reason*, even if unintentionally. While the author doesn’t necessarily agree with this criticism, we do however see the value in offering at least one other, metaphysical at least, framework as an alternative to what we have termed in this work (following Pirsig) *subject-object metaphysics*, given its inherent limitations that we have explored at length in this work. And that is Pirsig’s *Metaphysics of Quality*, which although has been dealt with in some detail in various Chapters in this work, is worth nonetheless revisiting within the context of summarizing this intellectual journey so to speak.

Upon revisiting Pirsig’s works in preparation for this final chapter, it has (quite interestingly and unexpectedly) come to author’s attention that it would appear that Pirsig himself has not only reached the very same conclusion that the author has, albeit from a somewhat different perspective or approach, but that also the path or intellectual thread as it were that Pirsig follows to construct his argument is very much aligned with the author’s – again in a very direct, and albeit unexpected, way.

Pirsig's first work was *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*. The book, from a philosophical point of view, is an excursion into the reasons, and ultimately a search for a solution, for what he considers to be a fundamental lack of *Value* in the West. The story that he narrates in this book, which is one of non-fiction essentially, follows his journey across the country on a motorcycle with his son along with a couple that he is friends with. A contrast is drawn throughout between his approach to maintaining his motorcycle, one that is characterized by *Quality* (as he defines it toward the end of the book), and the approach his friend takes to maintaining his motorcycle, which is one of carelessness (in Pirsig's terminology *Valuelessness*) more or less.⁷¹⁷

We are told towards the end of the book that the impetus for the book is based upon an "epiphany", or "mushroom" of ideas which came to Pirsig, or the figure of *Phaedrus* in the book, which originated from a seed thought around the basic intuitive, i.e. non-classical or non-empirical, nature of *hypotheses* in and of themselves, despite their importance to the Science, a purely empirical enterprise – a quandary for sure. This epiphany in turn led him to question the very foundations of (classically Western) Science, which of course rests squarely on the ability to conceive of a hypothesis, a fundamentally non-Scientific construct in and of itself, which is then tested for "validity" which in turn one way or another moves Science forward, i.e. the very essence of the notion of *scientific progress*.

What Pirsig found, or what he "realized", was that at the very foundation of *scientific empiricism* sat a non-classical, non-Western (quite Eastern in fact) notion of what can perhaps be best described using the terminology of this work as *divination*, an *intuitive conception* of a given hypothesis that somehow distinguishes itself, or is distinguished or divined as the case may be, out of the potentially infinite number of hypotheses that could potentially form the basis, or starting point, of a given scientific experiment. This "intuitive" or "non-scientific" nature of *hypothesis divination* is illustrated by the Newton and the apple phenomenon. Newton - the father of Classical Mechanics for which the discipline is named in fact, i.e. Newtonian Mechanics - in the tale that surrounds his discovery of *gravity*, is grounded in a fundamentally intuitive epiphany of understanding that quite literally "fell" out of the tree in front of him.

This notion of the intuitive, divinatory quality of hypotheses creation, just sort of sat there outside of Physics, outside of the "citadel of science", as a phenomenon that just "occurred" and yet at the same time was integral to the process and discipline of Science itself. For some reason,

⁷¹⁷ It should be noted that the story of Phaedrus, as it is related by Pirsig himself in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* which follows the story of his journey across the country back to where he used to teach at a University in Montana, following in his own footsteps as it were, is, according to Pirsig at least, based upon fact. Fact in the sense that the journey across country takes place and fact with respect to the ultimate demise of Phaedrus, which again is just an earlier version of Pirsig himself, as he "loses his mind" as it is related at the very end of the book.

before Pirsig at least, no one considered that this was odd and somehow contradictory, or that it reflected a limitation or flaw in the underlying *scientific empiricist* model and conception of the Western intellectual landscape, and was not in fact in need of *integration* or *synthesis* into the very model that it was such an *integral* and *essential* part of.

Parallel to this journey across the country on motorcycles, Pirsig intersperses *philosophology* (a term that Pirsig uses in his second book *Lila: An Inquiry Into Morals* to describe his inquiry and study of philosophy itself, i.e. literally “the study of” philosophy) with the story of a character who he introduces as Phaedrus⁷¹⁸, a name that is taken from Plato’s Dialogue of the same name, and who as the reader sees over the course of the narrative is actually an earlier version of Pirsig himself. In this context, Pirsig sets the stage for the ultimate problem he is trying to get to the bottom of, one which he again he perceives to fall along the Eastern and Western worldview divide as well, and one which gets to the very root of what he perceives to be a fundamental drawback, and limitation, of Western *empiricism* which is reflective more or less of the Western worldview, at least as how it is conceived by Pirsig – a worldview which he believes sits at the very heart of the problem of the lack of what he refers to as *Value* in the West – hence the subtitle of the work, i.e. *An Inquiry into Values*.

One the one hand, his friends approach and mindset with respect to their motorcycle is purely “objective”, or again “utilitarian” - i.e. Western - and they see no need to look after their motorcycle as they would a pet or a child for example. On the other hand, Pirsig himself cannot understand this and approaches the maintenance of his motorcycle from a more “holistic” or “integral” mindset where the motorcycle is not simply an “object” that serves a particular function only, but more as an extension of himself and one that, in order that his “relationship” with the motorcycle is “harmonious” or “genuine” for lack of a better terminology (Pirsig of course uses *Quality* to describe it but in this context that word comes to have greater significance and meaning), must be looked after and “maintained” just as he would a plant for example.

This dichotomy of approach to maintaining this “thing”, i.e. the motorcycle, becomes the very catalyst for what Pirsig sees as the basic problem underlying the Western (vs. Eastern again)

⁷¹⁸ *Phaedrus* is the Latinized form of the Greek *Phaidros*, who was a fairly well known Greek philosopher of the 5th century BCE and whose name was used as one of Plato’s most influential Middle *dialogues*, i.e. the *Phaedrus*. The word literally means “bright” in Greek, although Pirsig provides an alternative translation as “wolf”. *Phaedrus*, explores the nature of Love, Divine Madness and Inspiration, as well as the practice and mastery of Art, all topics that are relevant and pertinent to the intellectual and metaphysical journey that is followed through the eyes of Pirsig/Phaedrus throughout *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. For details on Plato’s *Phaedrus* on the topics of Love, Rhetoric, Poetry and Divine Inspiration specifically see Griswold, Charles L., “Plato on Rhetoric and Poetry”, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/plato-rhetoric/>, Reeve, C. D. C., “Plato on Friendship and Eros”, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/plato-friendship/>. For an overview of the dialogue in toto, see Wikipedia contributors, ‘Phaedrus (dialogue)’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 15 December 2016, 15:36 UTC, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Phaedrus_\(dialogue\)&oldid=754978473](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Phaedrus_(dialogue)&oldid=754978473)> [accessed 15 December 2016].

worldview and is reflective of the very basic lack of what he calls *Value* in Western society. This dichotomy that Pirsig outlines, fits quite well with one of the major themes of this work the “Western” fundamental conception of *reality*, *objective realism*, lacks something very basic and fundamental regarding the true nature, or description, of reality, a worldview that is juxtaposed with the “Eastern”, or *holistic*, worldview, which to a certain degree (at least at the very, philosophical, top) really lacks definition. Hence Pirsig’s search for a model which captures both and “bridges the gap” as it were, which ultimately runs directly analogous with one of the major themes of this work - although we draw the lines around *mysticism*, *epistemology* and *ontology* primarily whereas Pirsig draws them around *metaphysics*, *value* and *morality* essentially.⁷¹⁹

Pirsig ends up deciding on the word *Quality*, to crystalize this distinction in mindset, from which his Metaphysic of Quality is derived of course. The definition Pirsig gives for *Quality*, one that he presents as he is pressed by his colleagues to give one (he was a teacher of Rhetoric at the time at the University of Bozeman when his initial seed thoughts related to his so-called epiphany germinated):

Any philosophic explanation of Quality is going to be both false and true precisely because it is a philosophic explanation. The process of philosophic explanation is an analytic process, a process of breaking something down into subjects and predicates. What I mean (and everybody else means) by the word quality cannot be broken down into subjects and predicates. This is not because Quality is so mysterious but because Quality is so simple, immediate and direct.

“The easiest intellectual analogue of pure Quality that people in our environment [academia] can understand is that ‘Quality is the response of an organism to its environment’ [he used this example because his chief questioners seemed to see things in terms of stimulus-response behavior theory]. An amoeba, placed on a plate of water with a drip of dilute sulfuric acid placed nearby, will pull away from the acid (I think). If it could speak, the amoeba, without knowing anything about sulfuric acid, could say ‘This environment has poor quality’. If it had a nervous system it would act in a much more complex way to overcome the poor quality of the environment. It would seek analogues, that is, images and symbols from its previous experience, to define the unpleasant nature of its new environment and thus ‘understand’ it.”⁷²⁰

So here we find that *Quality* then to Pirsig, is an undefinable “thing”, and yet at the same time, is a very “real” thing. This notion of *Quality*, can be understood as aligning, epistemologically at least, with Plato’s *theory of forms*, as reflected in the idea that for example that it is self-evident

⁷¹⁹ Note that the Western vs. Eastern delineation is more the author’s than Pirsig’s although he arguably implies this delineation throughout much of his work. Pirsig uses the term “square”, to describe this Western, objective based mindset.

⁷²⁰ See *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* by, Robert Pirsig, published by William Morrow & Company, Inc. New York. Second printing, 1999 (original printing, 1974), pgs. 250-251.

that pure *beauty*, *virtue*, or *goodness* or *badness* – or even “chairness” or “tableness” are in fact “real” things, even if they defy explanation or definition and even if they do not necessarily exist in the “objective” or “empirical” sense.

It is from this notion of the inherent *reality* or these *forms* or *ideas* in fact, that not only provide the metaphysical foundations of Plato’s *idealism*, but also provide the foundations of Plato’s *epistemology* - his *theory of knowledge* - as *knowledge* to Plato, as outlined in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* but also to a lesser extent in the *Phaedrus*, is viewed as a form of *recollection*, or *anamnesis*, which arises upon the contemplation or understanding of any thought, idea or object. In fact, at one point Pirsig even maps the notion of *Quality* to the *Dao*, running through the initial verses of the *Dao De Jing* and replacing the word *Dao* with either “Romantic Quality”, “Classic Quality”, or simply *Quality* at various points, noting the quite perfect fit that his Metaphysics of Quality has with the fairly opaque notion of the *Dao* which rests at the very heart of the Chinese philosophical tradition.⁷²¹

And from this initial notion, and relevance and importance, of *Quality*, Pirsig then derives his Metaphysics of Quality, which in its original conception in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is a trinity of sorts - with *Quality* as the basic and ontological primordial concept sitting at the top of the metaphysical hierarchy as it were, and under it resting two different aspects, or types, of *Quality* - the first is the notion of what he refers to as Romantic Quality, or *preintellectual reality*, which is “non-intellectual”, or “right brained” is perhaps a better term for it. It includes the domains of the arts for example, and is the domain from which direct experience of things such as *beauty*, *virtue* or *justice* would emanate, or originate from. The second aspect of this *Quality*, is what he terms Classic Quality which corresponds to what he calls *intellectual reality*. This is the framework, or aspect of *Quality*, under which classically “Western” analytical models fall under and which he further delineates into two different kinds - one which he calls *subjective reality*, or *mind*, and another which he refers to as *objective reality*, or *matter*.⁷²²

After much of Pirsig’s *philosophology* is complete in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, and after he has effectively described Metaphysics of Quality as an alternative model, i.e. *metaphysics*, that can (and in his view of course, should) supplant *subject-object metaphysics* as the predominant intellectual model in the West such that *Values*, or *Value*, can become an integral and fully synthesized aspect of a more expanded description of *reality* rather than as an

⁷²¹ See *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* by, Robert Pirsig, published by William Morrow & Company, Inc. New York. Second printing, 1999 (original printing, 1974), pgs. 249ff.

⁷²² For a full description of this model of Classic and Romantic Quality and the various subdivisions thereof, see *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* by, Robert Pirsig, published by William Morrow & Company, Inc. New York. Second printing, 1999 (original printing, 1974), pgs. 249ff.

entity, a concept, that rests “outside” of the “Western” worldview as it was in the classic Western worldview as reflected in *subject-object metaphysics*, he follows the journey of this figure Phaedrus toward his ultimate demise as it were.

As Phaedrus struggles to articulate and explain *Quality* to his peers in *academia* - defending his Metaphysics of Quality as it were against various critics from the University establishment - he is confronted with the difficulty of trying to distinguish between, and establish the relative importance of, *rhetoric* versus *dialectic*, in the context of the way these two terms and ideas are presented in Plato’s *Phaedrus* as reflective of two very important philosophical and intellectual constructs in Hellenic philosophy. As he deeply contemplates the problem, he ends up quite literally losing his mind in some sort of wave of thought, ending up completely catatonic in a hotel room for several days without even the ability to control his bodily functions - after which perhaps not surprisingly, he is institutionalized and, as we find out later in his second book, ultimately subjected to electroshock therapy such that his “sanity” can be restored.⁷²³

Pirsig’s journey then in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, both intellectually as well as physically, ends up culminating in the creation of the Metaphysics of Quality - as it is initially conceived as a solution to his problem of the lack of *Value* in modern Western society - as an alternative “way” of looking at the world, an alternative perspective or worldview, a *metaphysics* as it were, that integrated this notion of *Quality* directly into the intellectual paradigm as opposed to it resting “squarely” outside of it, thereby supporting and reinforcing this notion of *Value* as an integral part of the world. But he’s not done yet as it turns out, and despite the success of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* as a “cult classic”, it is some time before he revisits the topic again in his second work, entitled *Lila: An Inquiry into Morals* first published in 1991. With *Lila*, and its subtitle as “*An Inquiry into Morals*”, Pirsig looks to further elaborate upon his Metaphysics of Quality as a practical, intellectual, tool and expand it to encompass not just *Values*, but arguably the broader notion of *Morality*. In *Lila*, Pirsig narrates his journey on a boat down the Hudson River where he picks up a travel companion, a woman named Lila who is of what we might call “loose” moral character.

As he looks to defend his notion of *Quality*, and in turn attempt to answer the question as to whether or not Lila has *Quality*, he is thrust into the world of *morality* and *ethics* generally speaking. In doing so, he morphs his *Quality* that he established in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* from Romantic and Classic into static (lower case) and Dynamic *Quality*. In this new model, Dynamic *Quality* is the very *ground of existence*, and represented a *precognitive state of awareness* before any “intellectualizing” or any sort of intellectual map of the world is applied to

⁷²³ See *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* by, Robert Pirsig, published by William Morrow & Company, Inc. New York. Second printing, 1999 (original printing, 1974), pgs. 382ff.

an “experience”. Static *Quality* on the other hand as the basic underlying intellectual patterns that ground our existence in a rational, organized way that allow us to subsist and evolve as individuals and as a society as a whole. These static patterns, static domains of *Quality* as it were, he sees as spread across four, dependent and hierarchical domains – *inorganic*, *biological*, *social* and *intellectual*. They all build off each other and to a certain extent feed off, or build off, of the lower forms.

He provides the analogy of a computer system to explain how these four domains of static *Quality* work together and coexist, where at the lowest level you have electrical circuitry, where 0s and 1s effectively tell the computer “what to do”, and at a level just higher than this you have the mother board where basic machine level instructions, what used to be referred to as *assembly language*, is compiled and given to the lower level electrical circuitry from the higher level language that sat above it. At this higher level, was the *operating system*, the software that controls the hardware end to end and sits behind all of the software programs that run on the computer, translating these higher-level instructions from these programs into machine code which is then translated into electrical circuitry (1s and 0s) which tell the machine “wat to do”. In this model at the highest level, we have programs and software, which interfaces at the operating system level, and provides the actual *intelligence* of the machine. It is the *software* and programs that we interface with that give the machine practical value, but this is only possible because it builds off of, and out of, the lower level *interfaces* and *modules* that do all the translational, lower level work, i.e. the static patterns of *Quality*.⁷²⁴

Static *Quality* works in the same way, where these inorganic domains provide the *ground of existence* and the *intellectual* and *foundational* building blocks for the organic world, and the organic world provides the framework for the social, and the social provides the groundwork for the intellectual. But in his model, “higher” levels of static patterns, i.e. higher levels of static *Quality*, represent more evolved and more mature, more *moral* states of being, and as such represent greater, or more significant and higher patterns of *Value*. This is why for example that a Doctor is *morally* obligated to kill germs or bacteria that threaten the life of a human being, because we *value* the human organism more so than we do the bacteria that is threatening its existence.⁷²⁵ The same can be said of social patterns *Quality*, individual lives can be - and in his model should be - sacrificed for the good of a society or nation. And in turn a society should be sacrificed for the good of intellectual principles, which of course provides the justification, the rational justification, for revolutions and in particular for the migration toward more democratic forms of government across the globe in the last century or so.

⁷²⁴ *Lila: An Inquiry Into Morals* by Robert Pirsig. Published by Bantam Books, 1991 pgs. 150-152.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid* pg. 159.

Pirsig believes this intellectual framework of coexistent, somewhat mutually exclusive but at the same time exhaustive categorization of static *Quality* patterns, or elements of *Being* as it were in the Platonic sense, answers and solves many modern intellectual dilemmas – like *mind-body dualism*, Fate vs Free Will, and others.⁷²⁶ The entire framework is driven by *Value*, or at the highest level of his *metaphysics*, *Quality* - i.e. what is of the highest *Value*, that which is most “good”, is that which survives, but the alignment the system provides, quite elegantly we might point out, for making *moral* judgments is extraordinary to say the least.

Perhaps the most poignant example he gives of how this intellectual framework is different from, and more powerful than, *subject-object metaphysics* is that it helps to explain Darwin’s notion of *survival of the fittest*, what has come to be known as *natural selection*. To Pirsig, this mechanism as it were defies explanation to a large extent – what is it that makes something more “fit” to survive? In his model however, the more advanced version of Metaphysics of Quality (Metaphysics of Quality 2.0 we might call it) he finds again a much more rational and elegant explanation. As organisms evolve, using Dynamic *Quality* as the driving force primarily, that which is the “life force” behind mutation itself at the biological and genetic level, give rise to these genetic mutations, fundamentally Dynamic *Quality* driven “events” as it were, which then are integrated into the biological static *Quality* patterns of existence which in turn provide the stability and structure, the underlying static pattern of *order*, within which these various “mutations” will either drive and evolve the species forward, or they will be discarded as non-useful.

In Pirsig’s model – and this is where we find ourselves back in Hellenic philosophical land (again) - it is the *good* mutations that survive or persist in that they facilitate the survival of the species, facilitate reproduction in some way, whilst the *bad* mutations ones are rejected by the relevant static order pattern. And while Pirsig does not point it out as such, this is almost eerily akin to Plato’s notion of the *Good*, as the basic principle which underpins and *form*, the basic building block of matter - in Plato’s *idealistic metaphysics* at least. As such, Pirsig’s Metaphysics of Quality 2.0 as it has evolved in *Lila*, is a *moral* framework as well, moving beyond just *Value* as an organizing principle or theme as it were, as powerful and strong a metaphysical concept as that is in and of itself, into the domain of *morality* of *ethics*, almost by accident, or perhaps better put as a natural byproduct of, an extension, of *Value*. For *morality* is most certainly a *Value* based framework - at least from a metaphysical point of view - just one that is conditioned, or structured, along specific socio-political, and perhaps even religious (and again ultimately metaphysical, as in Kant’s *metaphysics of morals* for example) grounds.

⁷²⁶ *ibid* pgs. 153-157.

In other words, to progress at any level of the static *Quality* continuum is a *value judgment* in an absolutely *moral* sense. So the idea of *morality*, which is representative of a fundamentally static *Quality* pattern at the biological (human) level of existence, can now be extended to all forms of biological life – as *the ultimate driving force of natural selection* in and of itself and therefore is applied toward not just *biological* static *Quality* patterns, but also can now in turn be expanded to apply to *inorganic* ones as well, to social and political frameworks and even to intellectual ones, with the whole continuum of static *Quality* patterns resting and building off of each other in a modular way (again the computer system analogy) but all governed by the same principle – not just *Value* or *Quality*, but *morality*, our Platonic *Good* or *Best*.⁷²⁷

Now that he has fully explored the Metaphysics of Quality 2.0 in many respects, that the notion of Dynamic *Quality* and static *Quality* have been fully defined and explained, and the latent power of the model, the new *metaphysics* as it were, is understood in particular with reference to, and illustrated by, its extension from not just *Value*, but also *morality*, he then goes on to attempt to provide some sort of reference point to his notion of *Quality*, what is it “like” so that ultimately no doubt its readers could better understand it. And this is where things get, and got, a little weird - a serious *déjà vu* moment you might say, although Jung would call it *synchronicity* or Fate rather than any type of coincidence.

Pirsig equates his notion of *Quality* with *arête*, a word that is typically translated as *virtue* and represents one of the very fundamental principles in the Hellenic philosophical tradition with respect to not only *ethics* and *morality*, but also socio-political philosophy as well - that is to say, a society and/or nation built on *virtue*, or *excellence*, at the individual as well as social level. He then follows this word back etymologically along the Indo-European philological path (and here is part of the strange and eerie part as he uses the same intellectual breadcrumbs that we do, except we are approaching the topic from a theological, philosophical, and metaphysical perspective from the bottom up you might say, while Pirsig uses a top down approach) to Sanskrit, the oldest of the Indo-European languages that runs closest to its theoretical parent Proto-Indo-European, and lands on the principle – again primarily using *etymology* and *philology* as his guide - *Rta*, which means “cosmic order” or “truth” and is one of the very fundamental and grounding principles of Upanishadic philosophy in fact.

Rta however is a somewhat more generic and more primordial theological principle than the Greek *arête*, evolving in the later more mature Indian philosophical tradition into the notion of *dharma*, which of course is a key principle in both Buddhism as well as traditional Hinduism, and carries significant *moral* and *ethical* connotations with it, as well as a connection to, an implicit

⁷²⁷ *Ibid* pgs. 139-144. Pirsig also uses the law of *gravity* as well as the *second law of thermodynamics* as other examples of static patterns of *Quality* that are effectively superseded or overcome as it were by higher forms of static patterns of existence in one form or another, representing not only *Value* judgments, but effectively *moral* judgments as well.

assumption of, a cosmic ordering or balancing principle. And this is precisely what Pirsig is getting at with his concept of *Quality* - his etymological journey that starts with *arête* that takes him through *Rta* to *dharma* roots his *Quality* right at the very heart of the Indo-European (intellectual) family tree as it were. He had already provided his direct analogy of *Quality* with *Dao* in his first work⁷²⁸, establishing the grounds of the principle in the Chinese philosophical tradition, and now he grounds the principle in the Western philosophical (really Indo-European) tradition as well, having followed philological and etymological lines, through *arête* to *Rta*.

But given the scope of this work, we can extend Pirsig's metaphysical, really philological argument, not just to the Indo-European theo-philosophical landscape, but to the Egyptian, Persian/Indo-Iranian, and again even the Chinese, theo-philosophical landscape as well. We have the *Ma'at* of the Egyptians for example, which equates to not just the *arête* of the Hellenic philosophical tradition, but to *Nómos* as well which is a metaphysical offshoot of the Greek god *Chronos*, or Time, in their mythological tradition which is outlined most eloquently by our beloved Hesiod. *Nómos* in turn has a direct corollary in the Jewish Wisdom tradition as the Torah, which is not only the name given to their scripture, but also is more generally translated as "Law", aligning again very neatly to the Indian philosophical *Rta*.

We even find a corollary in the ancient Indo-Iranian *mythos*, where we find the Zoroastrian *Aša* which to the ancient Persians signified universal, or cosmic (and essentially theological) law as well. And as we have already mentioned, we see the same principle in ancient Chinese philosophy as *Dao*, which if we reach further back into ancient Chinese *mythos* corresponds more or less to *Tiān*, from which for example we find the idea of the so-called "Will of Heaven", or "Mandate of Heaven" – *Tiānmìng* - which underpins not only Chinese philosophy, but also underpins their political establishment and authority for pretty much the entire duration of Chinese history as well.

All of these ancient cultures in fact had a notion of cosmic or heavenly *order* that not only provided the basic grounding principles and structure which brought the universe into existence, as reflected in the *cosmogonies* and *theogonies* of all of these ancient civilizations really, but also provided the rational justification for moral order on the human plane of existence - the feather of *judgment* in the Egyptian *mythos* which determines the path of the Soul after death or the Judeo-Christian concept of Judgement which primarily rests on *morality*, or philosophically speaking *ethics*, in order for the final determination of the Soul to be made.

Once we follow Pirsig's intellectual parallel down through the chain of intellectual historical and evolutionary existence to the root of Indo-European culture as it were, we – through this work –

⁷²⁸ *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry Into Values* by Robert Pirsig published by William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1974, 1999. Pgs. 252-254.

can find it across all ancient civilizations in Eurasia as a, if not *the*, governing principle of the universe, a principle which essentially provides the intellectual lever in the West for the pivot from *mythos* to *Logos*, the latter principle which is equated to the very rational, and divine or cosmic, basis, upon which all of the ancient theo-philosophical systems more or less rested as they evolved away from *mythos* to philosophy and *theology*.

This of course leads Pirsig to the conclusion that his notion of *Quality* is not necessarily a revolutionary idea of “order” as such, but in fact one of the very oldest and primordial intellectual notions and principles of man – *Quality* is the modern corollary to cosmic order, balance or harmony which underpins all of existence. So Pirsig basically states that he has effectively translated the very ancient and primordial Indo-European, and by extension with this work, ancient Eurasian, *cosmological* and *theological* principles and construct of *order* into modern Western intellectual, i.e. metaphysical, parlance. Pirsig effectively reaches the same conclusion that we do except he establishes his Metaphysics of *Quality* as a top down solution to a modern problem in the West of a society that lacks the notion of *Values* and *morality* and any sort of rational basis for *ethics* really.

The author conversely sees the same problem but approaches the solution from the bottom up as it were, looking at how the ancients viewed the world – before this problem of *Value*, *morality* and *ethics* manifests – and seeing where we in the West went astray. But we both in fact reach the same conclusion, or at least follow the same thread, Pirsig comes up with a new intellectual framework whereas the author looks back to the ancient intellectual frameworks, in particular those of Plato and Aristotle, as a way to overcome the very same problem which is a byproduct of *subject-object metaphysics*, the predominant worldview of the West which underpins the belief of the power of *mathematics* as the “language of God” as it were which underpins modern Physics (Classical and Quantum) and which was the driving force behind the Scientific Revolution which in turn drove a wedge between Religion and Science that philosophers such as Kant, Pirsig, myself and others have attempted to bridge ever since.

So, while Dynamic *Quality* defies definition and lays outside of these static *Quality* intellectual patterns, these static *Quality* intellectual patterns rely on Dynamic *Quality* to evolve and continue to persist, for they would die out if it were not for the Dynamic *Quality* element, that which gives the fuel to the fire of static *Quality* patterns as it were. Dynamic *Quality* in Pirsig’s Metaphysics of *Quality* then represents the very ground of existence, the source of *reality* and *existence* itself - that which moves the whole framework of natural existence forward, and he as such equates it not just with precognition, but also with the mystical experience as well. Dynamic *Quality* works in conjunction with these static *Quality* patterns as a sort of *Yin-Yáng* counterbalancing and complementary, again intellectual, framework even though this is a relatively loose analogy.

But *mysticism* can at least be mapped, or intellectually equated to, a principle in Pirsig's *ontology*, i.e. *Quality* as understood within the context of his Metaphysics of Quality - in this context understood as the very ground of *preintellectual existence* itself, *Dynamic Quality*, which can be viewed as Plato's *Being* in its most pure and essential form as it were, as understood in Upanishadic philosophy as *Satcitānanda*.

In perhaps a great irony however, despite the revolutionary metaphysical and philosophical work that Pirsig accomplishes with his Metaphysics of Quality, Pirsig falls short of establishing a metaphysical, or epistemological, grounding of the *mystical experience* in and of itself - an epistemological grounding, some sort of rational explanation, the experience that Phaedrus has in that hotel room which he describes as a sort of intellectual drowning, from which the Metaphysics of Quality more or less was born. However, and Pirsig readily admits this, while *Dynamic Quality* can be equated with the experience of pure awareness or consciousness that is such a hallmark of the Eastern, mystical theo-philosophical systems - the very forefront of existence, pure intuitive awareness, before any sort of intellectual paradigm is applied - he readily points out that in modern Western culture there is no way to really discern between madness and psychotic illness (as he was diagnosed with of course) and the reality of, or state of, pure awareness which is the hallmark of the mystical experience as represented again primarily in the Eastern theo-philosophical systems . In both cases there is simply one person who behaves or believes such a thing and as such the states themselves are almost entirely subjective - as soon as more than one person, or a group of people believe or practice a thing, then it becomes a "social" or "cultural" phenomenon – what's typically referred to as a cult in most cases.⁷²⁹

Pirsig does however suggest that his system of static hierarchy, i.e. static *Quality*, provides an intellectual framework wherein the insane and the mystic can in fact be distinguished from each other. That is to say, the two states can be distinguished in terms of *value*, or *morality* - the state which provides a greater intellectual *value* would in turn be deemed to be held of higher *moral* or *ethical* significance than prior intellectual patterns. This *value judgment* in turn would be in juxtaposition to the determination of *value* with respect to the experience of one who is mentally ill, an experience that would not be deemed intellectual significant in any way and therefore of no inherent intellectual *value* in and of itself. Regardless however, Pirsig leaves out this last metaphysical missing link as it were - either by design or perhaps because he felt that he was on too unsure ground to tackle the subject – leaving the topic as it were for the present author to (attempt) to complete, establishing the last link in the chain of reality to allow for the very ground of existence itself to be incorporated back into the ontological, metaphysical and ultimately

⁷²⁹ As a further illustration of this "dilemma", see the article on this very topic published by Scientific American in December 2016 authored by Nathaniel P. Morris available on line here: <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/mind-guest-blog/how-do-you-distinguish-between-religious-fervor-and-mental-illness/>.

theological model as it were, as it had in fact been for thousands of years prior to the introduction of philosophy which flung it asunder so to speak.

While *morality* and *ethics*, and even the notion of God, can be subsumed under Reason - as is reflected in the theo-philosophical systems of Pirsig, Kant, and Aristotle to name but a few of the most influential of these systems - these models still nonetheless have significant limitations with respect to *metaphysics*, *ontology* and the study of *Being* itself which invariably leads to the classic Western intellectual domains of *theology* and *mysticism*, two seemingly irreconcilable domains.

When we look at Platonic, Upanishadic or Pirsig's philosophy, really theo-philosophy, we find that they have a metaphysical advantage over their standard Western counterparts (i.e. *subject-object metaphysics* within which modern Psychology, and in particular Freudian psychology, squarely rests) in that despite their lack of specificity with respect to theological matters, they do not reject mystical experience as false or outside of the domain of *knowledge* necessarily. They, like any theo-philosophical system in the history of man that does not deny the supranatural, suggest that the domain of the *mystic* is beyond any sort of intellectual paradigm and as such is beyond definition - linguistically speaking. This is in fact consistent with every mystical tradition of the East where instead of these traditions refusing to define it, they - like Plato in fact - describe what it is "like", provide analogies as it were. And these analogies are effectively aligned with, and in many cases equivalent to, the *mythos* from antiquity.⁷³⁰

And herein provides the link to, and ultimate purpose and true meaning behind, ancient *mythos*, the very ancient narratives and tales of gods and men and the creation of the world that ending up transforming and evolving into philosophy. These were at their core systems of *analogy* and *metaphor*, designed to facilitate the understanding of the supranatural, the realm of gods and spirit, even if it was recognized that the truth of these realms was beyond the intellects ability to fully define it. Like the story of creation in the *Timaeus*, they related a likely story of sorts, for all sorts of things, that not just facilitated (at some level) understanding of the mystery of creation and the mystery of nature and the mystery of life and existence really - from whence our word mystical is derived of course - but also at another level bound a people and a culture together. How a people, a culture or society answered the great and most important questions regarding the mystery of the universe and the creation of man on Earth in many ways determined who you were, which tribe you belonged to. This is the true meaning and import, and ultimately metaphysical and ontological power, behind these very ancient words that were thought up at the very beginning of (their respective) civilization to capture and explain this mystery, the greatest mystery - words like *Satcitānanda*, *Brahman*, *Tiān*, and *Dao*, and in the Hellenic

730

philosophical tradition *Logos* which effectively represents the ordering and creative principle of God in the Judeo-Christian *theology*.

While these terms defy definition, and in many cases are described or explained only in the most esoteric verses of very ancient texts – the *Upanishads*, the *Dao De Jing*, the *Yijing* for example – they nonetheless give us an inkling, a hint, a metaphor and analogy for the true nature of *Being* which rests beyond not just the physical domain but even the intellectual domain itself - *cosmogony* and *theology* as brothers in arms as it were rather than one subsuming or replacing the other. The same can also be said of *Logos* and *mythos*, they should be seen to complement each other rather than one subsuming the other which is typically how they are viewed, again at least in the West.

The Crisis of our Time: Back to the Beginning

In many respects, one can consider the age that we live in, the Quantum Era, as one of intense intellectual crisis and turmoil, very much analogous to the crisis that the intellectuals faced during the Enlightenment Era after the world had almost literally been turned upside down. We see clear indications of this crisis, manifestations as it were, on the world stage with

- i. *increasing wealth inequality*: leading to general unrest and broad class inequality even within wealthy nations, also starting to take root between nations as well,
- ii. *the rise of nationalism*: aka populism that is sweeping through Western democracies like a cancer almost, Brexit and the rise of Trumpism in the United States as perhaps the most glaring examples,
- iii. *rise of radical extremism*: aka terrorism, which primarily is looked at through an Islamic lens but runs deeper than that and is not necessarily a fundamentally religious problem much less an Islamic one, and
- iv. *global warming*: a threat on a scale that we as a global community have ever faced before and has the potential for devastating consequences, some of which are already starting to see. Changing climate leading to shortages of and lack of food and water, large scale people unrest and movement leading to further political instability.

All of these socio-political trends, if we can group them all together under that fairly large and generic umbrella, all are happening on a global scale, and all of them, to at least some degree (and we would argue to a large degree) are a function of, a direct result of, the proliferation of Western ideology throughout the world which rests on not so much *democracy* and freedom (although this is what our leaders would have us believe), but more so on *capitalism* and *materialism*, which are precisely the hot buttons for the radical extremists. These problems, while manifesting of course on the material or physical plane, if not addressed *ideologically*, are fundamentally unsolvable – each of them potentially having devastating effects to the global community and all of them together representing arguably the greatest threat mankind has ever faced, certainly modern man.

More concretely, we see the same fundamental ideological problem in Physics, manifesting as the challenge of the search for a so-called *Unified Field Theory*, a quest first outlined by Einstein after the advancements of Quantum Theory - a theoretical framework which although extraordinarily powerful leading to all sorts of amazing and revolutionary scientific advancements, nonetheless forces us to look very hard and close at the principles of *causal determinism* and *objective realism* not just as underlying theories for Physics, but also as theoretical assumptions regarding the nature of the world we live in.

Since then we have been exposed to a variety of intellectual paradigms intended to explain how these seemingly contradictory worlds, Classical Mechanics and Quantum Theory, can both exist and both be true at the same time – the *many worlds interpretation* for example, or Bohmian Mechanics which has given us this notion of *holomovement* and the *implicate* - with perhaps the *many-worlds interpretation* being the most outrageous of these (which universe am I in right now as I write this?). Furthermore, these developments in Physics have led to many proponents of Eastern philosophy to look at some of the underlying foundational precepts of Quantum Theory – *locality* being perhaps the most significant – as consistent with their *ontology*, the world as an expression of *divine consciousness*.

We also have at the same time, due in no small measure to globalization and technological advancements, ever since the beginning of the 20th century really, Eastern philosophical traditions, mostly in the form of Yoga, have spread throughout the world, beyond the classically “Eastern” borders, and have now become almost ubiquitous in the West. While the driver of this spread is primarily the materialistic and physical obsession with health and the body which is characteristically Western no doubt, the philosophical as well as theological implications of this diffusion of worldviews is significant. For one, the Eastern worldview is not foreign to most people in the West now as it was say at the beginning of the Quantum Era before WWII.

Also, while Religion had challenges before, now with the proliferation of Yoga and Buddhism and other forms of Eastern philosophy, which incorporate *theology* and *metaphysics*, along with very specific spiritual practices like *meditation* in order that their penultimate metaphysical construct can be fully *actualized* (to use Aristotle’s terminology), Religion – at least in the West - is becoming not only an endangered species but is looked upon almost as barbaric in a way, as we see for example in how Islam is viewed in particular. These trends have not only theological implications, but also *moral* and *ethical* ones as well. A further attack on the religious establishment while superficially many may not have a problem with, calls into question again as to what the *moral* or *ethical* guiding principles should be, or where they should come from - not only for individuals, but for nation-states as well.

The problem effectively runs across a variety of intellectual lines but – like alcoholism or drug addiction – the first step to solving said problem is recognizing that there is in fact a problem. It’s not clear that we as a global community have reached that conclusion yet – not just for each of the individual problems we have laid out, but even the level of crisis that we are at given the scope of all of the problems put together. Having said that certainly a step in the right direction is to try and establish the proper and appropriate intellectual landscape out of which the solutions of these problems – each of them individually and then taken as a whole – can at least be potentially solved. Because while these problems are on a scale that we have yet to encounter in the history of mankind, they still nonetheless require action at the individual level in order for

us to at least have a fighting chance. Politics is local as they say. Furthermore, structures need to be established, that again have the appropriate intellectual paradigm or worldview in place, such that the problems can be attacked and addressed at the nation-state and global level – a two-pronged approach as it were.

From the author's point of view at least, in order to establish the proper and appropriate intellectual framework we must truly recognize – truly in the sense of *epistemology* – that the underlying ground of existence, what we have called *supraconsciousness*, is not just some ethereal thing that a few crazy mystics or sages have experienced and some folks have written a book about. That this whole “the kingdom of God is within” message from the son of a carpenter some two thousand years ago, and the countless other messages from saints and prophets throughout the ages, is not just a bunch of hog wash.

God – if he does indeed exist - needs to be placed on former, more realistic, footing such that *morality* and the social good in and of itself is not a “liberal” or philosophical idea, but is the most practical of rational deductions that is based upon the basic understanding of the interconnectedness of all living beings - again not on just an intellectual or ethereal level, but on a practical and very grounded level as reflected in the “mystical” experience as it is understood by the Eastern philosophical traditions. And if he does not exist, well then off he goes into the intellectual and metaphysical trashbin, forcing us to construct an intellectual paradigm based on need within the context of the crises of our time rather than due to any theological certainty. Either path represents a necessary condition for us to make it successfully through the crisis of our time and move beyond it – at the scale that these problems are confronting us.

To get there, in terms of providing and informing the rest of the disciplines that will need to be brought to bear on these problems, we must start with Philosophy – determining to what extent if at all can these mystical frameworks that are buried into the collective *mythos* of man can be laid out in a pure rational model, as required by Philosophy as a discipline in and of itself in modern *academia*. As opposed to starting with the assumption that there exists a divine being, i.e. God, from which the universe – and us – have been created which is no doubt fraught with problems. But the problem is more difficult than it appears, the decks are stacked against as it were, because even the very description of the problem is tainted with the problem. We live in a fundamentally dualistic world where that which is perceived and the perceiver are forever separated by a veneer of *objectivity*. The *subject-object-metaphysical* presumption of reality, as expressed in the full range of epistemological solutions that have been provided over the millennia, is baked into the very semantics of our language making it almost impossible to move away from. This is why Pirsig had to come up with an almost indefinable word, a word indefinable by nature, that sits above the whole intellectual paradigm, in order to try and capture it in some way, i.e. *Quality*.

As an example, if look at *ontology* as a Philosophical discipline, one of the dominant undercurrent themes of this work in fact, and one of the more active and thriving fields within Philosophy today - we find implicit within the word, the discipline, itself, this same objective paradigm of existence. *Ontology* is the science of, or study of, *being* or *reality* – but by whom? If there is a verb, there must be an actor against it, and presumably - although less restrictively - an object as well.

This is in fact an Indo-European construct - subject verb object - providing a tremendously powerful linguistic tool through which we can not only explore our reality, our world - describe it, articulate it, improve upon it, etc. - but persist information itself so that the sum total of knowledge, really in this sense information, continues to increase. Almost relentlessly. *Subject-object-metaphysics* then is built into our linguistic framework as much as it is in our mental framework, a classical chick and egg problem as it were. Once that invention is applied, we are then confronted with the fact that our worldview must be *reductionist*, it has to be, because that is the only way we can express anything, in any Indo-European language really, the language family that that has provided the linguistic, and effectively the intellectual, foundations of the West. Every time you try and solve it you go further down the rabbit hole as it were.

This is why in order to solve the problem, bridge this intellectual divide as it were, one is almost forced to revert back to the initial theo-philosophical solutions that were presented by the very first philosophers in the West (Plato, Aristotle, etc.) and in the *Upanishads* in the Indian tradition, which although are still hamstrung with this subject-object-metaphysical worldview that is baked into their language nonetheless made provisions for this fundamental unified, *holistic*, *monistic*, *mystical*, supra-intellectual, *supraconscious* construct, to be described somehow. This was the *Being* of the early Hellenic philosophical tradition (Plato primarily), the *One* of the Neo-Platonists, and the *Satcitānanda* (or somewhat anthropomorphized *Brahman*) of the *Upanishads*.

So linguistically then, we are almost forced to go back to the very foundations of *theology*, *metaphysics* really, in order to connect this very ancient notion of God as an integral aspect of his creation - God is everything, God is in everything and as such is the ground of all experience and in turn is the grounding of experience in and of itself. This is essentially what we find in Upanishadic philosophy in the notion of *Satcitānanda* which in the West is reflected perhaps most eloquently in the Neo-Platonic *One*. Where although the words were established that provided the semantic foundations of Western thought, of Science, they nonetheless did not carry the same sort of *reductionist* emphasis that we find in them today as they are seen reflected in the mirror of Science as it were, after Philosophy as a discipline split between *natural* and *theoretical* lines.

This takes us to the ancient Hellenes once again, with Plato primarily as the perhaps the first metaphysician and theologian, although certainly not the first philosopher. Despite his rational bent, he still nonetheless captured in a way that ancient mystical quality that is characteristic of

the Paleolithic religions throughout Eurasia which preceded him - what we refer to quite broadly as *shamanism*. This mystic quality is again best captured in the Platonic philosophy of Plotinus, the quintessential Neo-Platonist, with his doctrine of the *One* which manifests itself, via *emanation* of sorts, into the many by way of the *Divine Intellect*, or *Nous*.

Neo-Platonism from a mystical and theological standpoint in fact is eerily similar to its Indo-European brother on the Indian subcontinent, the philosophy we find implicit to the *Upanishads* which forms the basis of Vedānta. Here we find the notion of the single, divine principle as well, referred to as *Brahman*, a metaphysical abstraction of Brahṃā, the creator of the universe in the Vedic *mythos* (minus the numerological significant inherent to the Neo-Platonic *One* of course, one of the distinctive features of Hellenic philosophy). Then, through the cosmic ordering principle of *Ṛta*, which comes to be understood in the later Indian philosophical tradition - and Buddhism - as *dharma*, the cosmos is brought into existence, corresponding quite elegantly to the Neo-Platonic *Nous*, a sort of *Divine Intellect* that is rational, i.e. reflects a sense of order, but at the same time is *intelligent* in the sense that it reflects a *being* of some kind, something that is “alive”. Furthermore, in both Neo-Platonism as well as with Upanishadic philosophy (as well as with Christianity as well in fact) we find this all-pervading cosmic principle reflected in the individual in the notion of the Soul, the last of the great triad of metaphysical and theological constructs in Plotinus’s interpretation of Plato which corresponds again quite neatly to the Upanishadic Ātman, the individual manifestation of *Brahman* through which his (or her) creation is experienced. Implicit in this characteristically Indo-European theo-philosophy is that man is created, or exists, in the image of God - one of the fundamental Indo-European theological tenets in fact and one which we can see implicit in the *Upanishads*, but in virtually all of Hellenic philosophy as well and in turn forms the basis of much of Judeo-Christian *theology*.

In the Chinese tradition, they are somewhat less hamstrung, and came up with the notion of *Dao*, which is more process (change really) based than it is any sort of subject, object, or experience. It’s a way, a path, an experiential process “living”, “being”. The *metaphysics* of the *Yijing* supports this as the *Dao*, as a theo-philosophical principle or tenet, runs almost orthogonal to the *Yijing* as a metaphysical document, as a way of not only describing Fate but of coaxing out of it potential futures given a) a totality of possible states of “being”, and b) knowledge of the relationship of these states to one another, and c) an identification of the current state of “being” that best describes the current “situation” as it relates to the total possible set of states of possible existence. This is the power of the Chinese theo-philosophical framework, it doesn’t try and solve an epistemological “problem”, or even a metaphysical one, but it does present (at least one possible) ontological solution, as well as - quite ingeniously - a means by which one can have dialogue with It. “It” in this case being the primordial ontological system itself within which you as an experiential, process and change based entity that sits within the Earth-Heaven-Man paradigm of universal order exist.

This is why the Eastern philosophical systems in particular have become so appealing, because - in their inherent language which reflects their worldview - the *reductionist ontology* is effaced entirely, it has no room to exist. The entire vocabulary of the systems in question require you to abandon it. And it is with the language, the vocabulary itself, that the solution really shows itself - manifests as it were. Along these lines we look through the philosophical systems that they created, to the very origins of philosophy in ancient times because as we have stated earlier – it is at the very beginning of the establishment of the philosophical tradition that we have our best chance – in terms of vocabulary and model, to re-integrate really, that which was lost when we went down the *reductionist* and *materialist* path through and via Science.

But these ancient philosophical systems, which are just as much theological as they are philosophical of course, despite their power in integrating the so-called *mystical* directly into the philosophical framework as it were, nonetheless are lacking in terms of – given the time period within which they emerged and were developed – integrating the last millennia or so of intellectual developments in the West in particular, as reflected specifically for example in the domain of Science, i.e. Physics as it has evolved through the Copernican revolution, Newtonian Mechanics and then most recently with Quantum Mechanics. They also of course do not address the philosophical advancements that have run in parallel to these advancements on the empirical side as reflected most poignantly by Kant, whose work effectively integrates the empiricist (materialist) and rationalist (idealists) philosophical schools that had evolved and countered each other since the very dawn of philosophy, civilization really, in the West.

Kant gets us a little closer from a metaphysical standpoint, directly integrating experience into philosophy as the very ground of *epistemology*. But God in Kant's philosophy is an intellectual construct, a necessary condition of his *Metaphysics of Morals* but nonetheless not the ontological penultimate principle in any way. To Kant, it is *reason* that is the benchmark of truth, reason an abstract construct that exists within, and is ultimately bound and defined by, mankind's ability to perceive or understand anything really. Kant's *epistemology* is fundamentally Psychological, and therefore his *metaphysics* is Psychological just as much as it is rational.

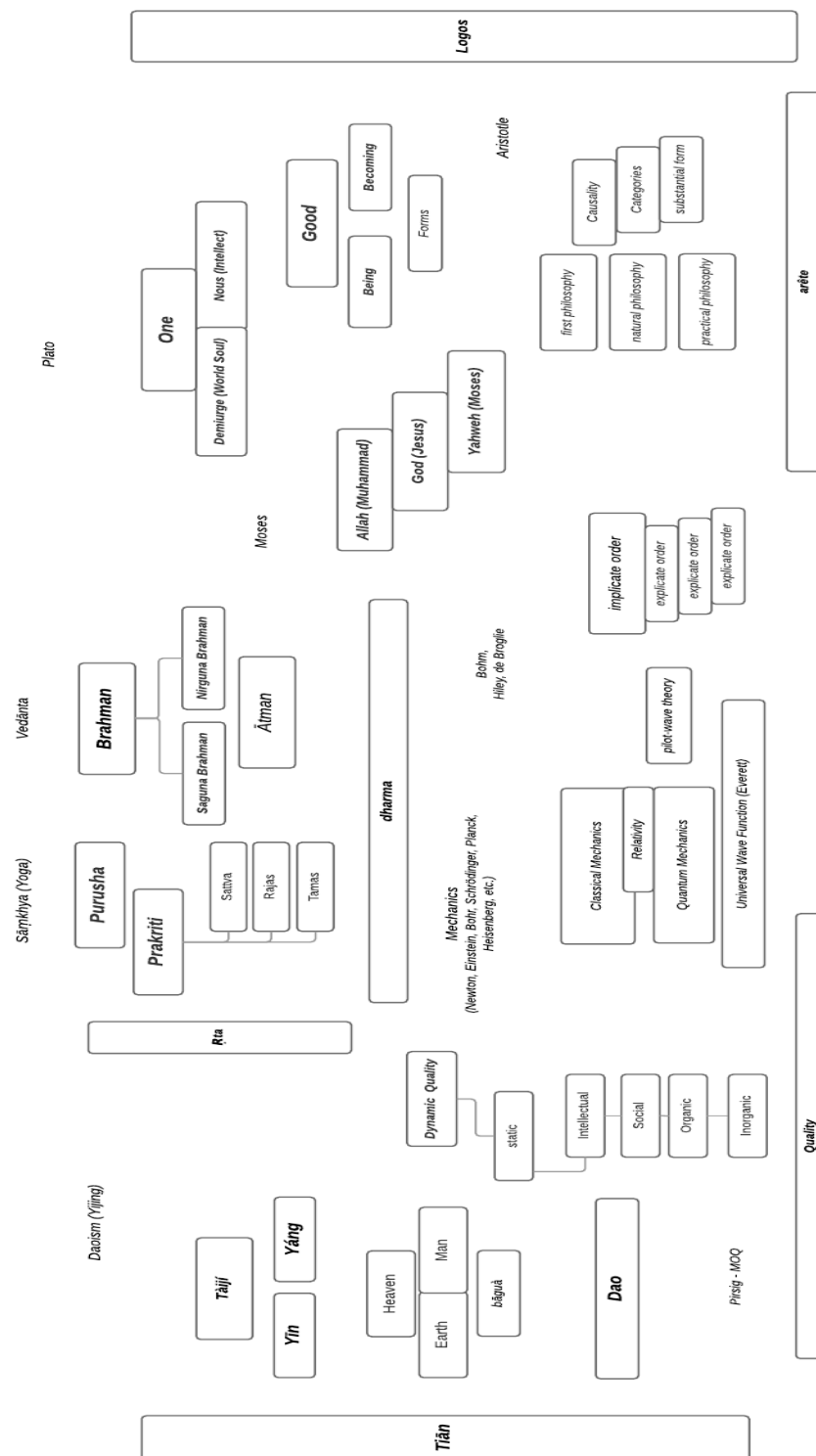


Figure 41: Neo-Metaphysics: A Modern, Synthetic Theo-Philosophical Perspective

At first the work was an attempt to define a new *metaphysics*, but in order to do this successfully, a new epistemological framework is required - a new model with new semantics that integrates the notion of the direct experience of God essentially a firm element of truth from which in fact all *truth*, all *knowledge*, stems from. While Pirsig's *Metaphysics of Quality* hints at a new *ontology*, his new paradigm based upon the metaphysical notion of *Quality* doesn't truly integrate the mystical experience in a meaningful way. While it's present, it's almost an afterthought given the focus of his work on the *metaphysics* of *value* really, from which a broader and more encompassing system of *morality* can effectively be inferred. But while it's an extraordinarily powerful model no doubt, arguably revolutionizing *metaphysics* and philosophy, it's an altogether Western paradigm from a theological standpoint, even if it is not *reductionist* – or at least partially *reductionist* in its hierarchical structure.

Looking at the problem from a further level of abstraction as it were, it would seem that a requisite step along the path toward a resolution, or at least an amelioration, of some of these issues that are reflective of the proliferation of this characteristically Western ideology taken to the extreme (not *sufficient* but *necessary*) would be to try and establish a more firm metaphysical ground, if possible, within which this characteristically Eastern philosophical notion of *mysticism* could be integrated with Western philosophy, with *reason* really. In other words, it would seem that what we have is a *philosophical* problem, in the sense that there must be something fundamentally missing from our basic core intellectual paradigm through which not only individual decisions are being made, but also on a wider scale at the sociological as well as political level in that decisions are being made, such that we are ending up with problems on the massive, global scale that we have today, continually reinforcing the issues that effectively define the current era of crisis that we are in – the so-called Quantum Era.

Furthermore, at a more detailed level staying within the domain of Philosophy, it's an ontological problem in the sense that it is some higher order of *reality* that is required in order to explain the full range of phenomenon - phenomenon in this sense as not just physical phenomenon (*objective reality*), not just psychological phenomenon (*subjective reality*), and not just experiential reality, but a reality within which experience itself can take place as a phenomenon in itself. It's an epistemological problem in the sense that our current notions of *knowledge* - how a thing can be known as well as the inverse which is effectively how we define "the world", or at least "the world that can be known" - are again wholly inadequate for the job at hand.

To put it succinctly, what we need here is an epistemological paradigm that contains within it the full range of phenomenon, the expansion of the notion of phenomenon in fact, to include not just the physical (the *objective reality* of the *materialists* and the *empiricists* like Aristotle, Epicurus, Bacon and Locke among others), and not just the rational (the idealistic and rationalistic

reality Plato, Descartes and Leibniz for example), and not just the psychological or experiential which subsumes both (like Kant for example - or even Freud or Jung), but a reality that describes all of the above within a paradigm that is

- a) *philosophical* in the sense that it is fully rational,
- b) *metaphysical* in the sense that it is supra-physical and supra-rational and covers the range of phenomena which includes things and ideas,
- c) *theological* in the sense that *first principles, arche*, are fully integrated (rather than left outside of it as defining attributes or characteristics like *categories* for example in the philosophy of Aristotle and Kant)

If this is possible, if we can maintain consistency, rationality and coherence and still achieve these three goals, we can achieve much in terms of establishing philosophy, and more specifically again *metaphysics*, on much broader firm ground and increasing its applicability beyond just the domain of Philosophy.

A Quantum *Ontology*: The *Metaphysics of Awareness*

Thankfully we do not have to recreate the wheel to in order to try and formulate a more global and *holistic* intellectual paradigm through which we at least have a chance to address some of these persistent and global problems that are so characteristics of our time, i.e. the so-called “Quantum Era”. Most of the groundwork, thankfully, has been put in place already by Kant, although his framework stops just short of what we need.

Kant’s philosophy is revolutionary in the sense that he is able to integrate the reality of the *rationalists* and *empiricists* in one metaphysical system, and he does this by inverting the classical ontological paradigm, declaring that knowledge is only how we may perceive it through our cognitive faculties and that no other definition of it – either empirically or rationally – stands to *reason*, quite literally. In his own words (translated from the German of course)

*If we take away the subject (Humans), or even only the subjective constitution of our senses in general, then not only the nature and relations of objects in space and time, but even space and time themselves disappear; and that these, as appearances, cannot exist in themselves, but only in us. What may be the nature of objects considered as things in themselves and without reference to the receptivity of our sensibility is quite unknown to us. ... not only are the raindrops mere appearances, but even their circular form, nay, the space itself through which they fall, is nothing in itself, but both are mere modifications or fundamental dispositions of our sensible intuition, whilst the transcendental object remains for us utterly unknown.*⁷³¹

This is his *Copernican revolution of philosophy*, that objective phenomenon and their relations, and even *space* and time themselves, are fundamentally psychological phenomenon and they do not exist in and of themselves. To this extent, Kant and Pirsig follow similar lines, going back to the beginning as it were, where *reason* is considered to be the primordial and most fundamental principle under which all domains of knowledge should be conceived and as such establish their respective systems of *metaphysics* on the basis of this principle alone – i.e. *reason*. *Reason* in this sense is not only considered to be *the* distinguishing characteristic of man, that which separates it from the rest of the species on the planet, but one which, according to virtually every theo-philosophical tradition that has been created since civilized man has existed on Earth, is the very connecting or linking principle which is the common thread between man and the divine. It is *reason* that is the means by which man is created in God’s image as is expressed so eloquently

⁷³¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. From <http://www.spaceandmotion.com/books/philosophy-book-immanuel-kant.htm>.

in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and it is of course implied in the Eastern theo-philosophical traditions in toto as it is this belief in the fundamental unity of man as a spiritual being, as a rational being, that gives it the unique disposition and capability to experience the divine directly.

But Kant is effectively the de facto standard in Western philosophy today, and as such let's begin there – taking his philosophy, his *metaphysics*, as a given rather than starting from scratch and/or immediately irritating all of our Kantian philosophers out there (and I would expect there are many). Taking Kant's *metaphysics* as our starting point then, his ontological *first principle* is *mind*, an entity that Kant effectively equates with a cognitive engine of sorts through which all *knowledge* of any sort is gained - *a priori knowledge* being a specific type of knowledge that is unique to this cognitive entity, like *time* and *space*, which represent not basic objective or rational phenomena that exist in and of themselves, but phenomena that exist as a function of the *mind* and its cognitive capabilities.⁷³²

Following Kant's *metaphysics*, *mind* basically has three functions more or less, and while we start with Kant's framework, we adopt a more modern psychological description herein for each of the three faculties that should be easier to understand (no pun intended), slightly adapting the terminology that Kant uses which is translated from the German over 200 years ago. In his mental cognitive framework, there are basically three distinct faculties which in aggregate make up the total function of *mind* as a cognitive entity:

- i. *perception* (Kant's *sensibility*): that aspect of *mind* that directly interfaces with and/or perceives the sensible realm, i.e. the physical world,
- ii. *comprehension* (Kant's *understanding* and *imagination*): that aspect of *mind* which works with the faculty of *perception* to make sense of that which is being experienced. While it is a rational faculty, it does not operate on the same level of rational abstraction as *understanding*,
- iii. *understanding* (Kant's *judgment* or *reason*): that faculty of *mind* that is capable of fully intellectually absorbing the *meaning* of an experience, applying various higher level intellectual paradigms – sociological, philological, biological, etc. – to an experience through which a deeper level of meaning, or *purpose*, relative to *comprehension* certainly, can be acquired.

⁷³² Kantian philosophy heavily influences the more modern discipline of Cognitive Science, establishing the rational and metaphysical framework of *mind* as a neurological map that is not independent of either one's physical environment or one's intellectual environment (which is inclusive of one's socio-political environment) - but includes and incorporates, is fully integrated with both. In Cognitive Science, *mind* is a sort of *state machine*, a Computer Science term that represents the theoretical abstraction of a computer system, the system in this case being *mind* seen as a psycho-physiological system, taking inputs from the physical and intellectual spheres and processing them through the cognitive faculties - *perception*, *comprehension* and *understanding*.

According to Kant at least, it is through these cognitive faculties that man is able to make sense of anything, integrating sensory input with *mind* in its various cognitive faculties from which not only does Kant construct his *practical philosophy*, his so-called *Metaphysics of Morals*, but also from which he establishes the requisite existence of God, and its close corollary the immortality of the Soul, as deduced preconditions of mankind as a function of him (or her) being a rational being as it were. Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* certainly solves many, if not all, of the questions and issues that were of concern during the Enlightenment Era with respect to the radical forms of both *empiricism* and *rationalism* that were prevalent, as well as the very shaky ground that *theology* in general was on, begging some serious questions regarding the justification for *morality* or *ethics* at all.

What Kant leaves out however, and this is not surprising given the problem(s) he is looking to solve - a different Era no doubt, where the relevance of Eastern philosophy and more generally *mysticism*, were not questions that were of concern in Philosophy at that time - is from what metaphysical or ontological ground is this experience occurring, or are these cognitive faculties working? From what principle are the cognitive faculties, *man* and *mind* essentially, derived from? In other words, if we apply Kantian *judgment* to his *Metaphysics of Morals* (which is essentially a derivative of Aristotle's teleological epistemological framework) we are left with a pretty large burning hole right in the middle, really on the top or underneath, of the whole system of *metaphysics*. To put it succinctly, what is the source or intellectual ground of Kant's cognitive framework? From whence it came and from whence does its cognitive capabilities, its *reasoning* capacity really, originate or derive from?

What we are left with, from a pure metaphysical perspective in fact, is the quite elementary conclusion that there must be some ground for the process of cognition itself, from which it derives its *intelligence* and from which its cognitive capabilities are sourced from, and to which the *cognitive act* is defined relative to. For again to speak of cognition as the defining feature of man, to construct an epistemological framework that is mind driven rather than reality driven so to speak, we must have some sort of metaphysical ground within which this cognitive engine, this rational entity, exists and/or to which this act of cognition exists relative to.

Once the need for a requisite metaphysical principle within which Kant's epistemological framework, again *mind*, has been established, we then must determine what qualities it should, or must, have - but first, we shall give it a name. We shall call this primordial metaphysical principle upon which both Kant's *theoretical* and *practical philosophy* rests "awareness", alluding to the fact that this entity, even if it is a metaphysical or philosophical one primarily, nonetheless requires some sort of *consciousness* or other quality of *being* such that the cognitive process itself is *active*, *alive* and essentially *aware*. *Awareness* is the necessary precognitive metaphysical entity or being from which cognition in any form must rest in in order for it, the act of cognition,

to have any epistemological validity at all. *Awareness* is not a cognitive faculty, it's the necessary condition of cognition itself – lying in a sense underneath, or ontologically prior to, these faculties of the *mind* which facilitate, bound really, *knowledge* of any kind through the process of cognition.

In other words, our knowledge of anything at all is not just as a result of cognition alone, as Kant professes, but as a result of the entire metaphysical, ontological and epistemological framework upon which both the knowledge of said thing depends, and the cognitive framework within which said knowledge is gained, or acquired as the case may be. This underlying intellectual structure or paradigms is effectively baked into the cognitive process, working at a level that is much grander and global than *understanding*, which is a “local” construct in the sense that it is bound by the individual *psyche* or conscious *mind* of the person undergoing the experience. *Awareness* operates at a much broader metaphysical perspective and vantage point, not only providing the ground of the cognitive experience, but also bringing to bear certain global, larger order intellectual constructs upon the experience itself, contributing to the knowledge that is gained as part of the cognitive process in a way that is more profound than *understanding*.

Borrowing Cognitive Science and Computer Science terminology, if we think of Kant's *mind*, the *psyche*, as a *state machine* of sorts (a theoretical construct akin to the Turing machine in Computer Science which is a theoretical model for any computer system) we can think of the faculties of *understanding* and *comprehension* as providing analytical, synthesizing, categorizing or any other type of process based functional algorithm capabilities to the cognitive process, relying on attributes or qualities that are specific to the individual entity or being – as conceived of through *perception* - that is the subject of the act of cognition or experience.

Awareness however, does more than just provide the metaphysical grounding of the experience - even though this in and of itself is absolutely critical to the cognitive process, to the extent that cognition, or again more generally experience, would not occur without it - it acts as a global aggregate construct that aggregates, encapsulates, the experience from a psychological perspective, a collective frame of reference within which *experience*, the act of cognition, is processed through which the result of cognition, knowledge, is realized – or using Aristotle's terminology the *actualizing* principle of knowledge. *Understanding* and *awareness* then, similar to the faculties of *perception* and *comprehension*, work together to provide the psychological grounding of the experience.

Awareness then, rounds out Kant's *metaphysics*, providing it with the metaphysical and psychological infrastructure for cognition as a knowledge creating, or acquiring, process. With *awareness* added to Kant's metaphysical, and ultimately epistemological, framework, we now have a new *metaphysical* paradigm, a *Metaphysics of Awareness*, which although rests upon Kantian philosophical foundations, provides us with a more complete intellectual paradigm

within which *mind*, as an ontological entity through which *knowledge* is gained or acquired, can be more fully understood.

The *Metaphysics of Awareness* suggests, requires really, that there must be a ground of *being* or *awareness*, that must exist in order for any experience or act of cognition, and in turn any form of *knowledge* which is a function of said experience or act of cognition, to occur or be arrived at. As such, this *awareness* must be a real thing, an epistemological entity in the sense that without it, the cognitive process from which *knowledge* in any form is derived, is incomplete. Therefore, as a prerequisite component of the process by which *knowledge* is gained or arrived at, *awareness* must in turn be an ontological entity in and of itself, a fundamental component of the cognitive process by which *knowledge* is bound or defined in the abstract, metaphysical sense. The *Metaphysics of Awareness* then, can and should be understood as a logical extension of Kant's *metaphysics* which establishes *mind* as the ontological primordial principle within which *knowledge* must be defined in relation to, providing the metaphysical ground for *reason* itself, as reflected in the cognitive process, something Kant does not account for in any meaningful way.

Furthermore, *Awareness* provides a collective, aggregate metaphysical construct to the cognitive process that not only provides a global context to experience, it also *informs* the cognitive process itself, reflecting a feedback loop of sorts that connects the discrete *experience* with the *psyche* as an abstract and continuous entity or being, defined as the aggregate or sum total of all experiences that it has undergone since its inception. In this context, we can understand *awareness* as Pirsig's Dynamic *Quality* - what he calls "pure awareness" which represents the very forefront of experience, in its most "raw" form prior to the application of any sort of intellectual paradigm, or any act of cognition to blend Kant's and Pirsig's *metaphysics* – the latter process being understood as Pirsig's static *Quality* which provides the intellectual paradigm through which experience is processed and ultimately "understood".

Awareness is not a purely rational faculty however, in fact it's not really a faculty per se as it sits orthogonal to the process of cognition, while again *informing* it and providing the metaphysical ground for the experience to occur. In this context, *Awareness* is supra-rational, working with symbols and levels of abstraction – Platonic *forms* almost – that do not have the linear, black and white qualities that are characteristic of the faculties of *comprehension* or *understanding* for example, cognitive faculties that apply – again using our Cognitive and Computer Science analogy - more linear algorithms of grouping, sorting, attribute and quality determination, etc. *Awareness* provides the supra-rational ground as it were, through which the act of cognition, experience, occurs through which *knowledge* is manifest or defined.

Awareness as a complementary component of the cognitive process provides the symbolic ground within which experience, i.e. *knowledge*, is absorbed – aggregated and crystallized you might say - provide psychological contextual framework and infrastructure within which the

cognitive process can elicit meaning from some sensory or rational inputs above and beyond the fairly straightforward process of categorization or classification which is the mainstay of *comprehension* and *understanding* primarily. In this sense, we have now established within the metaphysical model itself, i.e. the *Metaphysics of Awareness*, a psychological repository as it were for not just intellectual paradigms – social or linguistic frameworks for example – but for Jungian *archetypes*, a sort of *a priori knowledge* that while it is not tied to any object or rational paradigm necessarily, is nonetheless social or human focused in its content and shape.

What we are doing here to Kant's cognitive process, his epistemological framework, is effectively *quantizing* it. That is to say the *Metaphysics of Awareness* is a metaphysical paradigm that is arrived at via the process of applying quantum like principles or features to the prevailing epistemological paradigm in Philosophy, a paradigm that is intrinsically "Classical" – in the sense that modern Western philosophy, as established by Kant primarily, considers *knowledge* to be a fundamentally "classical" concept - i.e. it's a discrete, measurable and quantifiable entity that is the result of a very specific and well defined cognitive process. With the *Metaphysics of Awareness*, we've added a metaphysical construct to Kant's epistemological framework, *Awareness*, that brings fundamentally quantum like features to into the model, after which *knowledge* can be conceived of both as an individualized and discrete "thing" in and of itself, *and* also at the same time be defined more holistically as a result of the (mental) processes of *perception*, *comprehension* and *understanding* complemented or augmented by *Awareness* which brings "non-local" attributes and qualities to the experience by and through its grounding function in the cognitive framework itself.⁷³³

In other words, now that *Awareness* has been added as an ontological primordial metaphysical principle to Kant's epistemological framework, we have effectively *quantized* the model in that now *knowledge* is no longer just a discrete metaphysical or intellectual construct that is the result of a well-defined, linear process, but it can be (more properly and completely) conceived of as a kaleidoscope of information that while undoubtedly is rooted in the sensory or rational phenomenon which "triggers" the experience or act of cognition, but at the same time is informed by supra-psychological attributes (Jungian *archetypes* and collective intellectual

⁷³³ We use the term "quantized" here in a very specific, and technical manner. In Physics, the term *quantization* has evolved in the Quantum Era to refer specifically to the process of transitioning from a Classical theoretical model of something (like Newtonian Mechanics for example), to a "quantum" understanding. This is precisely what we are doing here, quantizing Kant's epistemological framework, his theory of cognition, effectively doing that here with *Awareness*, taking the current "Classical" epistemological framework in modern Philosophy that deals with discrete phenomena (in this case its a metaphysical construct, i.e. knowledge or cognition) as put forward by Kant at the end of the 18th century and transitioning this cognitive framework, or again more broadly really epistemological framework, to a "quantum" model (i.e. *quantizing* it) so that it can support quantum specific features like *locality*, *complementarity*, and other distinctive "quantum" features (features that are inherent to Quantum Theory) that are fundamentally non-Classical.

paradigms/themes) that reflect the society or even humanity as a whole and are not necessarily associated with the individual psyche in any sort of physical, or even neurological way.

At an even broader conceptual - and fundamentally (Jungian) Psychological level - *Awareness* represents that supra-physical and supra-psyche ground of *being* where the aggregate human storehouse of experience resides, the defining characteristic of *humanity* as an organism in and of itself. As an integral part of the feedback loop for individual acts of cognition, *Awareness* then comes to serve not only the defining attributes of the individual, but also the defining attributes of the collective, seen as an aggregate psycho-physiological organism as it were. Here we have these attributes of *Awareness* that align it quite nicely, from an intellectual and metaphysical perspective, to Quantum Theory.

For just as with Quantum Theory, if we extrapolate its theoretical foundations to *metaphysics*, within the *Metaphysics of Awareness knowledge* is both individual state based - emerging from a specific act of cognition related to a specific event, object or thought - and also at the same time is *informed* by both the totality of the intellectual landscape and paradigm of the *mind* through which cognition takes place. This experience through which *knowledge* is created as described or modelled in the *Metaphysics of Awareness* is akin to the way *quanta*, as a particle-wave, is *informed*, or implicitly *aware*, of its environment - by which for example the *quanta* knows about the slits in the famous *double-slit experiment* and can navigate its way through them as needed, according to the stochastic models that underpin Quantum Theory.

In this metaphysical framework, *knowledge* exists both as a discrete product as it were of the individual *psyche*, and at the same time exists as part of a composite whole - *knowledge* manifesting both as it emerges within the individual *psyche* and also participating in and contributing to - again through a constant information feedback loop of sorts - *collective knowledge* as it is stored and captured within *Awareness* which functions across the entire human cognitive landscape. Furthermore, like Quantum Theory, in *Metaphysics of Awareness* is fundamentally *non-local*, as understood from an epistemological perspective again, in that *knowledge* is a function of not only the “object” of cognition – be it a rational formula or some result of *perception* or a synthetic of the two – but also a function of the overarching intellectual and ontological ground of *knowledge* itself, i.e. *Awareness*. In this way, we can look at the *Metaphysics of Awareness* as a *quantum revolution of philosophy* in much the same way as Kant’s philosophy reflected a so-called *Copernican revolution of philosophy* - with his inversion of the epistemological foundation effectively being analogous to our quantizing of his *metaphysics*.

Also, as we have hinted at already, now that we have extended Kant’s *metaphysics* to include a ground of the cognitive, knowledge acquisition, process, and established *Awareness* as a metaphysical and ontological principle, we have the opportunity to fully integrate Psychology into the cognitive process, taking advantage of the advancements in this field since Kant

established his *Metaphysics of Morals* at the end of the Enlightenment. Given the *quantized* nature of the *Metaphysics of Awareness* though, we lean less on Freudian psychology and its behavioristic, really mechanistic, conception of *mind*, but more Jungian psychology given its more *holistic* approach to the understanding of human, individual behavior as (at least partially) as a function of or as it relates to the vast reservoir of *ideas*, *mythos*, and *archetypes*, from what he called the *collective unconscious*.

In this context, we shall establish what we will call the *interconnectedness principle* which is derived from the fact that *Awareness* provides the metaphysical connection for not just individual consciousness or cognition, but for all *beings*, all *existence* (all beings that are capable of cognition essentially), effectively linking all of these sentient beings that leverage and utilize this collective, aggregate, metaphysical, and psychological principle of *Awareness* for cognition - a rational deduction as it were from our *Metaphysics of Awareness* as we have described it thus far. In this context, this *interconnectedness principle* can also be seen as the driving force behind Jung's concept of *individuation*, the process by which the *psyche* merges with and assimilates to *archetypes* in the *collective unconscious* and thereby psychologically becomes fully formed or complete, i.e. *individualized*.

With respect to Freudian psychology, we can understand his notion of *desire* as the driving force of behavior, a construct which underpins his psychological theoretical framework more or less, as a mechanical and behavioristic reflection of a more fundamental human *desire* to be unified with *Awareness*, the very ground of experience itself. It is the very fundamental *desire* to be whole again. This is the very same principle, the same motivating force - i.e. *desire* - that we find in Hellenic *mythos* as *Eros*, one of the primordial deities which not only brings the *kosmos* into existence, but also – according to both Plato and Aristotle in fact – is responsible at some level for keeping it together, as the motivating principle behind *order* and *reason*, i.e. *Logos*.

Furthermore, with this principle of *Awareness* that sits at the very heart of our new *metaphysics*, we now have established an intellectual bridge not only for Eastern philosophy into Western philosophical, but also a metaphysical ground for *mysticism* as a Psychological experience - as *Awareness* represents, is the metaphysical and ontological equivalent of, the penultimate ontological principle of Eastern philosophy, i.e. what is variously referred to as *samādhi* in Yoga, *nirvana* in the Buddhist tradition, and *Satcitānanda* in the *Upanishads*.

Satcitānanda is probably the most fitting term within the context of *Metaphysics of Awareness* given that the word is a composite in the Sanskrit of almost all of the underlying philosophical, and really intellectual, paradigms that come together with and under *Awareness* as an ontological *first principle* - *sat*, “being” or “existing”, *cit*, “to perceive”, “understand” or “know”, and *ananda*, “happiness”, “pleasure”, or “bliss”. The most common translation of this esoteric, and fundamentally mystical, concept is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute, vocabulary which has

clear alignment with the Western philosophical, epistemological, ontological, psychological and of course theological theoretical frameworks (bliss, *ananda*, having clear Freudian connotations, and then *sat* with almost a direct line of site into the Greek *óntōs* from which the discipline of *ontology* gets its name) that we are bringing together under the *Metaphysics of Awareness*. In Upanishadic philosophy, *Satcitānanda* is equated with the source of *knowledge*, the very ground of *being* itself as a theological and metaphysical principle. In this sense, *Satcitānanda* is *Awareness* - simply resting in a different metaphysical, cultural, and linguistic framework (albeit still Indo-European).

In the words of Max Planck, one of the greatest Physicists of the 20th century by any measure (words which you won't find in any Physics textbook mind you):

*All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.*⁷³⁴

Once it has been established that the penultimate ontological *first principle* of Eastern philosophy (primarily Indian philosophy but also in the Chinese philosophical tradition as well with the *Dao* perhaps representing the best example) is in fact *Awareness*, we not only have established a metaphysical bridge between Eastern and Western philosophy, but also by combining the discipline of Psychology directly into the intellectual architecture as it were, we establish *Awareness* as not just an epistemological and ontological entity, a requisite metaphysical truth, but as an *experiential reality*. In other words, in the *Metaphysics of Awareness*, *Awareness* is not only the necessary precondition for all *knowledge* as it is conceived in Kant's cognitive framework as the very ground of *existence* and *knowledge*, it can also be established through the longstanding *mystical* practices and disciplines that are a hallmark of the Eastern philosophical traditions, as a Psychological phenomenon in and of itself.

Awareness in this capacity, from a Psychological perspective, can be viewed as the fulfillment of the ultimate *desire*, that which forms the basis of humanity in a way, i.e. the direct and complete integration of the *psyche* with *Awareness* - or perhaps better put as the dissolution of the *psyche*, the *mind*, into the state of pure, unadulterated *Awareness*, which is what we have called throughout *supraconsciousness*. *Desire* fulfillment then, in this mystical context which is so fundamental to Eastern philosophy, is preserved but *desire* is understood as a *theological imperative*, one that has been expressed for millennia as reflected by the cosmogonic *mythos* of

⁷³⁴ Max Planck, Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers.

ancient man, with universal creation being conceived as, from a mystical standpoint at least, the journey back up the metaphysical paradigm as it were straight through to *Awareness* itself where *individuation*, in its absolution, is fully realized.

This Psychological interpretation of experience, which in turn provides the basis for *knowledge* and *truth*, is an integral aspect of the *Metaphysics of Awareness*, one of its defining features in fact. This Psychological bent if we may call it that, allows for (and in a way is being pursued within the more modern discipline of Cognitive Science which is very much influenced by Philosophy, and in particular Kantian philosophy) what we might call the *Science of the mind* to be established as an interdisciplinary practice as it were - where Psychology, Philosophy *theology* and *mysticism* can at the very least be looked upon as somewhat inter-related disciplines. To say this in a different way, in the Quantum Era any complete map of *reality*, a description of the totality of *being* in all its forms, should be required to incorporate the full depiction of the nature of *mind* as it is understood not just in the (Western) Psychological sense, but also in the sense of the Eastern theo-philosophical traditions as well - a longstanding tradition which reaches back into the very depths of antiquity which posit *mind* not just as a mechanistic and biochemical and neurological “system”, but as a reflection of the eternal and ever present *substratum of existence* itself.

This Psychological reality, this *metaphysics of mind*, forces us to recast our epistemological position, as this ground of *being* – *Awareness* - is not only conceived of as a “real” thing in and of itself and as such reflects a certain kind of higher order *knowledge*, but also represents the very foundations of *knowledge* itself from which all forms of *knowledge*, all reality even, is based. This is the fundamental divide between Eastern and Western philosophy and arguably represents the very heart of the divide between Religion and Science, from an epistemological perspective at least, and yet we can and do effectively close this gap once we adopt the *Metaphysics of Awareness* as our ontological and epistemological framework. In other words, in order to establish a full and complete intellectual system which covers all aspects of *reality*, establishing the grounds for a more comprehensive and complete *ontology*, the prototypical *reductionist* Western worldview and the *holistic* worldview that is characteristic of the East should be looked at as complementary and orthogonal domains of knowledge, different perspectives on the same reality, not as alternative mutually exclusive domains of truth which unfortunately they are typically conceived as.

This integrated framework then opens all sorts of doors to understanding – and incorporating and synthesizing – all sorts and kinds of theological and metaphysical conceptions of reality that have been put forth through the ages since the dawn of civilization. From a Western *metaphysics* perspective for example, we can see Bohm’s conception of the *implicate order* and *explicate order* as an analogy here, where the realm of God, i.e. *theology*, is reflective of the *implicate order*

that underlies the physical universe and the underlying *explicate order* realities that are described in Physics – one for Classical Mechanics and another for Quantum Mechanics - and even another *explicate*, albeit higher order, of *reason* itself which is the domain of *philosophy* and *metaphysics*.

Metaphysics of Awareness can also be used to contemplate and understand various forms of ancient *theology* and *metaphysics* in fact. For example, the Stoic notion of *corporealism*, the notion that everything is “alive” and “animated” and is permeated with *divine consciousness*, from which the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit is derived, through the Stoic *pneuma*, can now be seen as a theological and philosophical (and classically Hellenic) description of *Awareness* as it is viewed in the *Metaphysics of Awareness*.

Furthermore, we can come to a better understanding of the Indian philosophical conception of *knowledge*, which holds that there exists a “higher” form of *knowledge*, the direct experience of *Satcitānanda* or *Brahman*, from which lower forms of *knowledge*, like for example *objective realism* or even Quantum Mechanics, becomes tenable. The *Metaphysics of Awareness* is in a sense a *mystic metaphysics* that provides a cognitive and rational intellectual paradigm through which we can come to a greater understanding of the Neo-Platonic *One* for example, as well as its close corollaries the *Divine Intellect* and the Soul, which – like the Christian Trinity – can be viewed as a triad of theological principles through which *Awareness* at both the individual and collective level is explained.

Perhaps most importantly however, we now have a framework within which *theology* and *metaphysics* - Religion and Science – are established on common intellectual ground as it were, bound together with this notion of *Awareness* which is both *local* and specific to the individual *psyche* or *mind* (as is presumed and reflected in the domain of Science) and at the same time *non-local* and reflective of Jung’s *collective unconscious*, the repository of human *archetypes* and *mythos* (which is reflected in Religion more or less). Once this connection is established, this further abstraction of *metaphysics* which provides a grounding for cognition, i.e. *Awareness*, we now have the metaphysical and ontological basis for both Western philosophy, which now includes Psychology, and Eastern philosophy, which includes *mysticism*. *Morality* now is not just a rational deduction, a characteristic of man as a rational being as Kant establishes in his philosophy as a metaphysical deduction as it were, but now is even further established as a logical conclusion based upon the metaphysical and ontological interconnectedness of all *beings* whose existence both depends and relies on *Awareness*, which provides the ground of both individual existence and collective existence more broadly.

If we change perspectives here for a minute, and delve into the quite crowded and oft analyzed and criticized realm of the *ontological argument*, where the existence of God is (attempted to

be) established based upon pure *reason* as it were - a topic that is front and center in Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* for example – we can summarize our *Metaphysics of Awareness* in pure “ontological” terms as something like the following:

- i. *existence* is a real thing, i.e. an epistemological reality,
- ii. if anything exists, it is “I”, from which the notion of existence in and of itself is defined,
- iii. I am a thinking, cognitive *being*,
- iv. *thought* is a characteristic of existence, i.e. *being* itself (*ontology*),
- v. *ideas* exist (Plato, Aristotle)
- vi. the universe is inherently *rational* (Physics, *cosmogony*, *Logos*, *Nous*, etc.)
- vii. The rational ground of the universe is what we call *metaphysics*, i.e. Philosophy,
- viii. there must exist a metaphysical ground of *thought*, i.e. *Awareness*,
- ix. *Awareness* is the primordial ontological *first principle*, i.e. *arche*,
- x. The primordial *first principle*, again *arche*, equates to the Abrahamic conception of God, establishing the grounds for *theology*

While Kant is certainly right in pointing out that the existence of God as the penultimate intellectual idealistic abstraction, the *unmoved mover* as it were, is predicated upon the assertion that *I*, and its corollary *thought*, exist - it nonetheless can also be held to be true that if anything at all exists, it would be *I* as a contemplative, reflective *being*. Yes, the argument is circular, and Kant is surely right from an epistemological and ontological standpoint that all existence, all *knowledge*, must be viewed within the context of this “thinking thing” - as reflected in Kant's cognitive *epistemology* - but nonetheless, and as Kant himself argues, once this is established, then God - or more broadly *theology* - becomes *a necessary condition of existence*, an epistemological truth, even if only as a rational byproduct of existence itself, which as we point out also in and of itself must exist if we take the existence of *I* as a fundamental postulate.

Another way of saying this would be that if Physics *true*, if *metaphysics* is *true*, if *mathematics* is *true*, if *logic* is *true*, then we must yield that *truth* does in fact exist - be it a subjective, cognitive property of *mind* (according to Kant) or an empirical or rational truth that exists independently of any act of cognition or human agency. And therefore, there must be an *ideological* basis for its existence which ultimately, no matter what we decide or want to call it, effectively equates with THE penultimate principle, or *first principle*, upon which *truth* itself in all its forms rests. This is God.

In summary then, what we have with *Metaphysics of Awareness* is the following very real and practical considerations of the following conclusions:

- ✓ ground of the cognitive experience established as *Awareness*, a psycho-physiological construct that provides the ground, consciousness, through which all experience - and in turn all *knowledge* – is established
- ✓ this *Awareness* is equivalent to Jung's *collective unconscious*, the storehouse of *archetypes* and *mythos* not just for the individual, but for the "collective" – i.e. society, culture, humanity – as a whole
- ✓ *Awareness* then is established as an *interconnectedness principle* upon which the ground of all existence, all *being* (*ontology*) is based.
- ✓ *morality* now is further reinforced by this *interconnectedness principle*, "others" – beings that exist outside of yourself, no longer have any metaphysical or philosophical significance. Everything is connected in a ground of *Awareness*.
- ✓ *morality* is expanded upon to include all forms of life, as well as the planet which is effectively a biological organism that is grounded in the same *Awareness* upon which our consciousness rests. This *interconnectedness principle* then allows for an expansion of *morality* into areas beyond human affairs– given their mutual interdependency and connectedness in this ground of *Awareness*,
- ✓ Philosophy and Psychology are integrated within *Metaphysics of Awareness* as complimentary disciplines resting upon the concept of *Awareness*, a reflection of Jung's *collective unconscious* – storehouse for *archetypes* and *mythos*
- ✓ Eastern and Western philosophy, as well as the more modern discipline of *mysticism*, are also integrated with *Metaphysics of Awareness*, again all connected via the principle of *Awareness* that rests not only as the ground of the cognition by the human *mind*, but as an ontological *first principle* upon which *Metaphysics of Awareness* fundamentally rests. *Supraconsciousness* is *Awareness*.

Awareness is that which is required for *being* and *cognition*, effectively connecting the two not just from a metaphysical perspective but also ontologically as well. And, with respect to the distinctively Eastern philosophical and mystical aspects of *Metaphysics of Awareness*, *Awareness* itself is an ontological construct, existing as an entity – a *being* - in and of itself that can be experienced directly, undiluted by cognition so to speak. On this basis, with this extension to Kant's philosophy, we are able to integrate not just Eastern philosophy and Western philosophy, arguably a monumental philosophical feat in and of itself, but also *mysticism* as well in the broadest sense as the direct experience of the ground of existence, the ground of *being*, i.e. *Awareness*, which viewed through the intellectual lens of *theology* is equivalent to God.

The paradigm shift that we make here with the *Metaphysics of Awareness*, is that *reality*, *being* in its most essential form, is not *reductionist*, even though this type of thinking may be

extraordinarily powerful as it relates to Science. Or to say it differently, the *reductionist* worldview that is such a fundamental characteristic of Science and Western philosophy in general represents *truth* at a sort of lower order level of existence or reality - using Bohm's conceptual framework of *implicate and explicate order* from an epistemological perspective - but at the same time there exists, at another level or dimension or reality or existence, ontologically prior as it were – prior in the sense that it from this higher form of knowledge and existence from which lower forms of knowledge and existence depend or are predicated upon.

In the *holistic* perspective of the world, this true ontological perspective of *being*, it is change or process that is primary - at least from a physical standpoint, and the physical reality that we can see and touch, the foundation of empirical reality as defined by the empiricists - this is the *holomovement* of Bohm as well, and the *yi* of the ancient Chinese which underpins the *Yijing* and in turn forms the basis of Chinese philosophy. *Awareness* is not a thing outside of the universal order and nature - outside of us, outside the world, it permeates all of creation – a truth that was self-evident to the first philosophers in antiquity as it is reflected in virtually all of the major philosophical traditions that we have covered in this work – Hellenic, Chinese and Indian primarily.

This is in fact how these typically *reductionist* versus *holistic* worldviews were once conceived at the very beginning of the philosophical journey as it were - by the likes of Plato and Aristotle for example, or on the Eastern front by Lǎozǐ or Śaṅkara, or even earlier as conceived by the authors of the *Upanishads*, the so-called *rishis*, or in the Far East as reflected in the *Yijing*, all being representative from a philosophical standpoint of both *reductionist and holistic* ontologies at the same time. But this was back when mankind's relationship with *truth* and *knowledge* was symbolic, as again was reflected in the underlying *mythos* of these ancient peoples which represented to them *knowledge* and *truth* despite its allegorical approach to conveying said truth (*allegoresis*), in the days before philosophy emerged, *reason* really, as the dominant intellectual paradigm through which these epistemological realities are viewed today.

Implicit in mankind's intellectual journey from *symbolism*, *metaphor*, and *myth* to linguistic specificity of the written word where *reason* is looked upon as the benchmark of *knowledge* and *truth*, was the loss of the mystery of creation, which by its very nature does not lend itself to a *reductionist, objective realist*, framework of understanding. Words to thoughts to *ideas* to... to what Pirsig and so many other sages and prophets in the history of mankind, be they considered to be true *mystics* or not, have experienced which provide us not only with the grounds for Religion, as a prophetic revelation, but also (and this is oft overlooked) but also the grounds for the very height of philosophy - at least as to how it was conceived in Hellenic antiquity which was considered to be not just an exercise in *reason*, but an exercise in *wisdom*, i.e. *sophia*, as well which at its summit merged with the source of creation itself.

This notion of *Awareness* then, which in Hellenic antiquity was referred to primarily as *being* in and of itself, i.e. Platonic *Being*, was not only considered to be an *experiential phenomenon*, but also understood as the very ground of *thought*, the ground of *ideas* in and of themselves as abstract concepts, as well as the ground of existence from an ontological perspective, at least in the Platonic tradition. From this vantage point, again from an epistemological perspective, *ideas* are understood as higher order constructs that simply facilitate an understanding of the universal order which rests in a ground of *Awareness* - with things, objects (physical reality) being reflective of a lower order construct than *ideas*, which metaphysically rest in the ground of *Awareness*. In a sense then, the *Metaphysics of Awareness* can be seen as *idealistic* - again in the Platonic sense - but its inherent *idealism* is not as an epistemological imperative, but an ontological paradigm.

This is what the Neo-Platonists had right, and the Gnostics as well, from which we have the notion of *Nous*, *Logos*, and the *Divine Intellect* - each representing that primordial *ordering* force which underpinned, and was the source of, universal creation, and at the same time *permeates* it and binds it together in a sense - at least from an intellectual or ontological perspective. Although that which truly binds it, what the Stoics and even the Christians had right in this sense, is not an intellectual construct, even though it may, and no doubt does, reflect a fundamentally divine sense of *order*, but is “spiritual” in a sense, because the totality of *being*, the universe, is fundamentally *alive*, i.e. is “aware”. This very fundamental metaphysical, ontological and theological idea goes back to the early Indo-Europeans, from which we have inherited the notion of divine and its relationship with *breath*, or *spirit* - Holy Spirit, *pneuma*, *prāṇa*, etc.- aligning directly to *Awareness* as the primordial *first principle* in the *Metaphysics of Awareness*.

While this fundamentally linguistic phenomenon, the written word in its Indo-European variant, arguably represents one of the greatest and most influential of all human inventions, it nonetheless carries with it this implicit *reductionist*, i.e. *objective realist*, perspective on the nature of the world. So while the written word no doubt represents the most significant technological innovation of ancient man that provides the intellectual architecture, the building blocks really, of philosophy in antiquity which in turn forms the basis of Philosophy and Science in the post Enlightenment Era, a fundamental source of much of its expressive and intellectual power as it were, it nonetheless limits our understanding to a large degree of the bigger picture.

In this sense, if we look at Religion and Science not as separate domains of *knowledge* (with never the two shall meet so to speak) but if we see them as different perspectives on the world order through this lens of *holistic* versus *reductionist ontologies*, as again is reflected and captured in the *Metaphysics of Awareness*, we see a much more complete picture of the world where the Eastern and Western vantage points serve as *complimentary* intellectual domains, two parts and perspectives on the *entire domain of knowledge* for the *entire human experience* - the *Yīn-Yáng*

of the entire expanse of human knowledge as it were rather than again looked upon as mutually exclusive domains of truth.

Metaphysics of Awareness then, is a sort of metaphysical synthetic that in a way reaches back into the very origins of philosophy, i.e. *philosophia*, and *theology* prior to the clean division between East and West which characterizes the philosophical landscape today, relying on a more broad and *holistic* conception of the universal world order - before *ontology*, *epistemology*, *theology* or *metaphysics* even existed as intellectual constructs much less specific domains of knowledge in and of themselves - where *holistic* perspectives dominate the worldview (of antiquity) and *reductionist* perspectives, again baked into the very language (Into-European) have yet to take over the intellectual landscape and as such the concept of unity and emanation are still present at least to some degree.

Arguably, this *Metaphysics of Awareness* is nothing new, having been established from within the Physics community itself with the introduction of *pilot-wave theory* in its fullest and most mature form as Bohmian Mechanics, or *de Broglie-Bohm theory* - the *mathematics* of which was firmly established to be consistent with both Quantum Mechanics and Classical Mechanics by David Bohm decades ago. Nonetheless, given the state of affairs in the global community at present, it is well worth a new consideration, especially given the proliferation of Eastern philosophy and *mysticism* as we move well into the 21st century. While this specific *interpretation*, really *formulation*, of Quantum Mechanics, does not necessarily change its fundamental characteristics and/or mathematical foundations, it nonetheless adds the notion of *quantum potential* to its mathematical foundations, placing it on *deterministic* foundations even if it relaxes the notion of *locality* which is so fundamental to Classical Mechanics. One could certainly make the argument, and Bohm himself does to a certain degree, that Bohmian Mechanics adds the notion of *Awareness* into the very heart of Quantum Mechanics, as the metaphysical and ontological ground to his conception of *undivided wholeness*.

This is the *Metaphysics of Awareness*, a Philosophical rendition of Bohm's *undivided wholeness* as it were, a new *metaphysics* for the Quantum Era whereby the very height of Western philosophy is integrated with the very height of Eastern philosophy. Where the *dualism* of Kant and the *non-dualism* of Śaṅkara becomes (finally) fully integrated within a single *metaphysical* and *epistemological* paradigm which provides the rational foundations for not only Philosophy and Psychology, but for *theology* and *mysticism* as well, establishing the rational foundations for God as a necessary condition to existence and aligning Philosophy with ancient *mythos* as it has been conceived since the very origins of civilization, with *Awareness* established as a Psychological and Philosophical imperative that provides the foundation for all of *existence*, for all *knowledge*. For the Age of Reason is now officially behind us, and we must, desperately, usher in a new Era – the Quantum Era. And let it be ushered in properly not by Physics, Psychology or

Religion - but by Philosophy, like every Era should be. Whereby we may finally establish the verity of *Awareness* as the metaphysical ground of existence itself, a new epistemological framework that is grounded not just in Philosophy, but in Physics as well - i.e. *mathematics*, the holy grail of philosophy and *theology* since the very dawn of civilization in the West.

Index of Key Terms

A

<i>a posteriori</i>		Academy.....	304
<i>a priori</i> knowledge	511	<i>academia</i>	405, 749
<i>empiricism</i>	510	Aristotle	412
<i>epistemology</i>	511	Damaskios.....	143
Euclid	510	Hellenic philosophy.....	763
<i>mathematics</i>	511	Kant.....	506
<i>a priori</i>	314	<i>mysticism</i>	7
<i>a posteriori</i> knowledge	511	Neo-Platonism	143
<i>categories</i>	516	Plato	300, 406
<i>Copernican revolution</i>	512	<i>skepticism</i>	319, 432
<i>epistemology</i>	511	Stoicism.....	431, 436, 438
Euclid	510	Zeno of Citium.....	431
<i>ideas</i>	315	Achaemenid Empire	
Kant	513, 517	Ahura Mazda.....	115
<i>mathematics</i>	510	Cyrus the Great	121
<i>metaphysics</i>	513	Darius the Great.....	115
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	793	<i>Dēnkard</i>	122
<i>mind</i>	789	Heraclitus	288
<i>rationalism</i>	510	<i>Magi</i>	288
<i>academia</i>	436, 749, 768	Old Persian	393
Academy.....	405, 749, 750	Persia	122
citadel of Science.....	748	Persian Empire	402
colonialism.....	743	Pre-Socratic philosophy	404
Eastern philosophy	750	Xerxes.....	115
<i>empiricism</i>	744	Zoroastrianism	115, 122, 289
<i>epistemology</i>	751, 752, 754	<i>active imagination</i>	703
Hellenic philosophy	203, 378, 763	<i>dreams</i>	613
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	22	Jung	613, 703
Metaphysics of Quality	750	Psychology	613
<i>mysticism</i>	758, 781	<i>Red Book</i>	612, 613
Newtonian Mechanics.....	527	<i>supraconsciousness</i>	704
<i>Ockham's razor</i>	580	Tantra Yoga	702
<i>ontology</i>	584, 752, 753	<i>active information</i>	731
Philosophy	506	<i>holomovement</i>	731
Pirsig.....	755	<i>mind</i>	604
<i>Quality</i>	770	<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	601
Quantum Era	749	<i>ontology</i>	734
Quantum Theory	584	<i>quantum potential</i>	597
Scientific Revolution	521	Adam and Eve.....	84, 193, 483
<i>theology</i>	747, 748, 754	Egypt	103
<i>Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance</i>	750	<i>adharma</i>	
Academic Skepticism	902	<i>Vedas</i>	161
Chrysippus	439	Adiswarananda, Swami	9
Stoicism	430, 435, 439	Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center.....	11
Zeno of Citium	431	Advaita Vedānta	649, 676
		<i>Ātman</i>	646, 647
		<i>Brahman</i>	646

<i>dualism</i>	670	Aristotle	412
Kālī	680	<i>alchemy</i>	160
<i>Maya</i>	646	<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>	501
<i>monism</i>	645	Hermes Trismegistus	501
<i>non-dualism</i>	43, 646, 647, 680	Hermeticism	501
Ramakrishna	663, 676	Jung	501, 611, 613
Sāṃkhya	710	Newton	501
<i>saṃsāra</i>	709	<i>philosopher's stone</i>	501
Śaṅkara	650, 691, 710	Psychology	613
Tantra Yoga	680	Alcibiades	116
Totapuri	679, 680	Athens	296
Vedānta	645	Hermes	296
Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta	647	Persia	296
Vivekananda	717	Socrates	296
<i>Aegyptiaca</i>	90	<i>alêtheia</i>	325
<i>Aeneid</i>	450	Alexander the Great	69, 398, 404, 448, 454
Afro-Asiatic	391	Aristotle	405, 411
Hebrew	81	Egypt	88
<i>Agamas</i>	271	Library of Alexandria	448
Age of Enlightenment	553, 752	Alexandria	455, 465, 469, 473, 484
<i>natural law</i>	526	Christianity	186, 399
<i>sciencia</i>	526	Damaskios	143
<i>theology</i>	616, 747	Egypt	448
Age of Reason	See Enlightenment Era	Gnosticism	457, 465, 473, 476
Quantum Era	803	Hellenic philosophy	448, 453
Ages of Man	See Four Ages	<i>Mo'at</i>	104
Agni	154, 156, 256	Al-Fārābī	406, 486
<i>Brahman</i>	262	Avicenna	487
Indra	640	Eastern philosophy	375
<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	261	<i>ethics</i>	486
<i>mythos</i>	261	Hellenic philosophy	486
Vāyu	256	Neo-Platonism	486
<i>yajña</i>	640	<i>The Virtuous City</i>	486
<i>ahamkara</i>	710	<i>theology</i>	486
<i>ahimsā</i>	711	<i>algebra</i>	577
Ahriman	116, 119, 120	<i>Rhind Mathematical Papyrus</i>	289
Ahura Mazda	116, 119, 120, 179	<i>Śulbasūtras</i>	289
Achaemenid Empire	115	Al-Kindi	406, 484, 485
Angra Mainyu	103	Hellenic philosophy	485
Darius the Great	115	Muslim philosophy	485
Ohrmazd	116	Allāh	
Persian Empire	121	Avicenna	487
Zarathustra	288	<i>first cause</i>	422
Zeus	116	<i>first mover</i>	56, 764
<i>aitia</i>		<i>ḥikmah</i>	484
Aristotle	420	Indo-European	397
Akkadian	75, 105, 107, 166, 391, 402, 575	Islam	480, 489
Apsū	109	Muḥammad	483
Behistun Inscription	115	Pirsig	626
<i>akousmatika</i>	292	<i>prime mover</i>	486, 487
Al Fārābī		<i>tawḥīd</i>	482

Trinity	84, 482	<i>mythos</i>	197
<i>allegoresis</i>	445, 447	Apep	
Chinese philosophy	346	Hades	104
Christian Church Fathers	446	<i>Isfet</i>	103
Christianity	346	<i>Ma'at</i>	104
Hellenic philosophy	346, 446, 454	Apollo	
<i>mythos</i>	346, 437, 801	<i>esotericism</i>	132
Philo Judaeus	453	Hesiod	126
Stoicism	437, 445	<i>mysticism</i>	132
Allegory of the Cave	306, 309, 322, 441, 470, 570	<i>mythos</i>	132
Pirsig	626	Orpheus	132, 133
Plato	367	Ra 96	
<i>theory of forms</i>	306, 417	Temple at Delphi	409
American Revolution	752	Apology	
Ames, Roger T.	215	Socrates	201, 297
Chinese philosophy	225	Apsû	108, 109, 112, 638
<i>Dazhuan</i>	225	Indian philosophy	650
Amon-Ra	179, 196	<i>mythos</i>	197
Amun	102	Aquinas, Thomas	
Ogdoad	98, 102	Avicenna	487
<i>Analects</i>		Socrates	296
Chinese philosophy	218, 340, 375, 410	Arabic philosophy	10, 406, 484
<i>Tiān</i>	227	Al-Fârâbî	486
Warring States period	226	Aristotle	411
<i>analogy of the divided line</i>	321	Avicenna	487
Plato	320, 367	<i>falṣafa</i>	406
<i>anamnesis</i>	315, 769	Hellenic philosophy	461
<i>anātman</i>	276, 277, 278, 280, 710	Islam	406
Buddhism	279	Aramaic	81, 391, 402, 455, 575
<i>anattā</i>	276, 277, 278, 710	Hebrew	81
Buddhism	279	<i>Ketuvim</i>	85
Anaxagoras	292, 316, 416	Pahlavi	200
<i>Derveni Papyrus</i>	138	Āranyakas	640, 641
<i>intellect</i>	489	<i>Upanishads</i>	642
Plato	301	<i>archai</i>	
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283	Stoicism	438
Anaximander		<i>arche</i>	16, 17, 124, 127, 401
<i>first principles</i>	124	Aristotle	291
Pre-Socratic philosophy	401	<i>Becoming</i>	764
Pythagoras	292	<i>Being</i>	764
Anaximenes		<i>first principles</i>	125, 799
Pre-Socratic philosophy	401	Hellenic philosophy	16, 400
Angra Mainyu		Indian philosophy	160
Ahura Mazda	103	Jung	124
<i>anicca</i>	276, 277, 278, 279	<i>meditation</i>	38
<i>animus</i>	313	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	787
<i>anitya</i>	276	<i>ontological argument</i>	799
Anra Mainyu	116, 119	Plato	764
Hades	116	Pre-Socratic philosophy	38
<i>āpas</i>	151, 153, 638	Pythagoras	291
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	257	Stoicism	438

<i>theology</i>	799	<i>being qua being</i>	415, 421, 763
<i>Timaeus</i>	764	<i>categories</i>	417, 516
<i>Arche</i>		<i>Categories</i>	526
<i>etymology</i>	124	<i>category theory</i>	418
<i>archetypes</i>	124, 613	<i>causal determinism</i>	420
<i>Awareness</i>	793, 795, 800	<i>causality</i> . 54, 56, 327, 365, 413, 420, 421, 422, 429, 582	
<i>collective unconscious</i>	800	<i>Chinese philosophy</i>	176, 332
<i>individuation</i>	702	<i>Christianity</i>	410
<i>interconnectedness principle</i>	795	<i>Corpus Aristotelicum</i>	414
<i>Jung</i>	612, 613	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	346
<i>Jungian psychology</i>	702, 795	<i>Daoism</i>	179
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	793, 795, 798, 800	<i>De Philosophia</i>	135
<i>archetypes</i>	793	<i>Descartes</i>	492
<i>Psychology</i>	612, 613	<i>Eastern philosophy</i>	378, 780
<i>Red Book</i>	612	<i>efficient cause</i>	423
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	704	<i>empiricism</i>	510
<i>synchronicity</i>	614	<i>epistêmê</i>	53, 54, 414, 762
<i>theology</i>	613	<i>epistemology</i> 50, 52, 53, 54, 412, 415, 417, 524, 582,	
<i>Yijing</i>	613	762, 763	
<i>arête</i>		<i>Eros</i>	425, 428
<i>academia</i>	748	<i>ethics</i>	374, 415
<i>Aristotle</i>	374	<i>Eudemus</i>	143
<i>Daoism</i>	347	<i>falsafa</i>	764
<i>dharma</i>	773	<i>final cause</i>	316, 422, 424, 436
<i>ethics</i>	420	<i>first cause</i>	422
<i>Hellenic philosophy</i>		<i>first philosophy</i>	291, 415, 491, 527, 528
<i>arête</i>	409	<i>first principles</i>	124, 291
<i>Indian philosophy</i>	773	<i>First Teacher</i>	411, 480, 486
<i>Metaphysics of Quality</i>	773	<i>geometry</i>	428
<i>Mohism</i>	228	<i>Hellenic philosophy</i>	406, 407, 763
<i>Plato</i>	396	<i>Heraclitus</i>	285
<i>Quality</i>	773, 774	<i>Hesiod</i>	125
<i>rén</i>	212	<i>Homer</i>	408
<i>Republic</i>	298	<i>Huainanzi</i>	177
<i>Rta</i>	773, 774	<i>hylomorphism</i>	421
<i>Stoicism</i>	443	<i>idealism</i>	429
<i>virtue</i>	298	<i>Indian philosophy</i>	760
<i>Aristophanes</i>		<i>influence of</i>	490
<i>Clouds</i>	297	<i>Islam</i>	484
<i>Socrates</i>	297	<i>Kant</i>	510, 514, 516, 754
<i>Aristotle</i>	436, 672, 708	<i>logic</i>	417
<i>academia</i>	763	<i>Logos</i>	427, 428
<i>Academy</i>	763	<i>materialism</i>	306, 510
<i>aitia</i>	420	<i>mathematics</i>	428
<i>Alexander the Great</i>	405, 411	<i>metaphysics</i>	44, 52, 415, 416, 420, 582, 753, 763
<i>Al-Fârâbî</i>	486	<i>Metaphysics</i>	53, 485, 488
<i>arche</i>	124	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	801
<i>Avicenna</i>	487	<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	790
<i>awareness</i>	791	<i>metaphysics:</i>	415
<i>Becoming</i>	327	<i>monism</i>	764
<i>Being</i>	327	<i>mysticism</i>	764, 765

<i>natural philosophy</i>	413, 414
Neo-Platonism	411, 460
Newton	527
<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	374
<i>On the Heavens</i>	488
<i>On the Pythagoreans</i>	292
<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>ontology</i>	50, 417, 424, 429, 763
<i>óntōs</i>	16, 49
opinion	202
<i>Organon</i>	407, 417, 690
Orpheus	135, 145
Orphism	135, 136, 138, 145
<i>ousia</i>	419
<i>philosophia</i>	411, 413
philosophy	304, 412, 749
Physics	53, 488, 525, 578
Plato	78, 236, 286, 299, 300, 301, 314, 327, 356, 411, 412, 416, 424, 430
Plato influence	304
Platonism	285, 413, 416
political philosophy	299
<i>Politics</i>	159, 299
<i>Posterior Analytics</i>	488
<i>practical knowledge</i>	762
<i>practical philosophy</i>	415, 523
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283, 285, 399, 400, 401, 404
<i>productive knowledge</i>	762
<i>productive sciences</i>	415
Psychology	795
Pythagoras	286, 287, 290, 291, 294
<i>Qur'ān</i>	461
Ramakrishna	689
<i>reality</i>	54
Scholasticism	417, 491
Science	406, 414
Scientific Revolution	505
Socrates	296, 297
Socrates influence	552
Soul	56, 424, 443
Sparta	298
Stoicism	444
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	617, 782
<i>substance</i>	418, 419
<i>substantial form</i>	423, 569
<i>teleology</i>	581
<i>telos</i>	44, 436
<i>theology</i>	411, 421, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 747, 763, 764, 765
<i>theoretical knowledge</i>	762
<i>theoretical philosophy</i>	763
<i>theoretical sciences</i>	415
<i>theory of forms</i>	424
<i>theos</i>	763, 765
<i>transcendental idealism</i>	744
<i>unmoved mover</i>	425, 765
Vedānta	650
Western philosophy	378, 411, 582
Zoroastrianism	116
Aristotle <i>causality</i>	421
Aristotle Quantum Era	583
Aristoxenus	
<i>first principles</i>	78
<i>numerology</i>	78
Plato	78
<i>arithmeticology</i>	232
Pythagoras	289
Arjuna	
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	643, 644
<i>dharma</i>	644
Īśvara	644
Krishna	644
Aśa	120
<i>cosmogony</i>	381
<i>Dao</i>	774
Eurasia	381
<i>Mā'at</i>	119
<i>Nómos</i>	17, 119, 774
<i>Quality</i>	774
<i>Rta</i>	119
<i>āsanas</i>	706, 712
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	39
Raja Yoga	718
Yoga philosophy	711
<i>ashtanga</i>	35, 710, 711
Ashtanga Yoga	35, 711
Assyrian Empire	107, 401
Astronomy	259, 260, 288, 289, 378, 401, 404, 406, 407, 410, 415, 456, 485, 486, 487, 498, 500, 504, 528, 554, 747
<i>Asūryas</i>	157, 254
<i>mythos</i>	257
<i>Atharvaveda</i>	640
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	256
<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	258
<i>atheism</i>	
Scientific Revolution	525
Athena	
Dionysus	143
<i>Sophia</i>	22
Athens	187, 303, 304, 405
<i>academia</i>	405

Academy	143, 319, 406	<i>theology</i>	607
Alcibiades	296	Atomic Theory	536, 538
Alexander the Great	398	Hellenic philosophy	536
Aristophanes	297	Atum	196
Damaskios	143	Egypt	88
<i>democracy</i>	299	Ennead	98, 99
Hellenic philosophy	23, 201, 448	Heliopolis	99
<i>mythos</i>	201	Helios	101
Onomakritos	135	<i>mythos</i>	99
Peloponnesian War	298	Atum-Ra	
Pesistratos	135	Egypt	88
<i>philosophia</i>	413	Augustine of Hippo	465
Plato	300	Augustus	187, 192, 293
Pre-Socratic philosophy	399	<i>autonomy</i>	
Socrates	201, 296, 297, 298	<i>ethics</i>	518
Sparta	298	Kant	515
Stoicism	431	Avalon, Arthur	
Zeno of Citium	431	<i>Śakti</i>	681
Ātman	261, 266, 365, 366, 367, 710	Tantra Yoga	681
Advaita Vedānta	646, 647, 710	Averroes	406
<i>Atmavidyā</i>	253	<i>faḷṣafa</i>	487
<i>Brahman</i>	264, 641, 642	Hellenic philosophy	489
Buddhism	280	Averroism	
Cosmic Soul	149	<i>faḷṣafa</i>	487
Daoism	348	Hellenic philosophy	489
Hinduism	372	<i>Avesta</i>	116, 118, 119, 149, 393, 574, 640
Indian philosophy	395, 641	Ahura Mazda	288
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	256	Avestan	199, 393
<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	263	<i>Dēnkard</i>	119
<i>mokṣa</i>	646	Eastern philosophy	378
<i>monism</i>	646	<i>Gathas</i>	116
Neo-Platonism	783	Indo-Iranian	199
Śaṅkara	646	Indra	640
Sanskrit	420	<i>lyric poetry</i>	183, 214
Stoicism	447	<i>mythos</i>	199
Upanishadic philosophy	151	<i>oral transmission</i>	31, 214
<i>Upanishads</i>	253, 265, 642	Orphism	140
Vedānta	649	Pahlavi	575
<i>Vedas</i>	150, 264	Persia	200
Vedic philosophy	253	<i>Upanishads</i>	642
<i>vidyā</i>	258	<i>Vedas</i>	199, 289
Vivekananda	717	<i>Yasna</i>	640
<i>Atmavidyā</i>		<i>ymnos</i>	117
<i>Upanishads</i>	253, 642	Zarathustra	288
atom	536, 537, 538, 539, 547, 550	Zoroastrianism	119, 199
Atomic Theory	536	Avestan	86, 116, 117, 119, 393, 402
Bohr	536	<i>Avesta</i>	199, 214
<i>double-slit experiment</i>	545	<i>haoma</i>	200
Epicureanism	536	<i>mythos</i>	200
Schrödinger's cat	562	Pahlavi	200
size	536	Persia	200

<i>philology</i>	199
Pre-Socratic philosophy	398
<i>yasna</i>	200
<i>Yasna</i>	200
Zoroastrianism	199
Avicenna	406
Al-Fârâbî	487
Al-Kindi	485
Aristotle	487
<i>Book of Healing</i>	487
Christianity	487
philosophy	487
<i>avidyā</i>	258
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	257
Awakened One.....	270, 271
<i>awareness</i>	
<i>epistemology</i>	792
<i>metaphysics</i>	790, 792
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	791, 792
<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	790, 791
<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>ontology</i>	792
Psychology	791
<i>quantum potential</i>	599
<i>understanding</i>	791
Awareness.....	792
<i>a priori knowledge</i>	793
Bohmian Mechanics	803
Chinese philosophy.....	801
Christianity	798
<i>collective unconscious</i>	800
Eastern philosophy	795, 796, 797, 800
<i>epistemology</i>	796, 797
<i>Eros</i>	795
<i>experience</i>	791
<i>first principles</i>	795, 799, 802
Freudian psychology.....	795
Hellenic philosophy	795, 801, 802
Holy Spirit	802
<i>ideas</i>	802
Indian philosophy	801
<i>individuation</i>	797
<i>interconnectedness principle</i>	795, 800
Jung	792
Jungian psychology	794
<i>metaphysics</i>	795, 798
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	792, 794, 798, 800
mind	796
<i>morality</i>	800
<i>mysticism</i>	800
<i>mythos</i>	803

Neo-Platonism	798
<i>ontology</i>	800
Planck.....	796
Plato	802
<i>pneuma</i>	802
<i>prāṇa</i>	802
Psychology	792, 794, 795, 796, 797, 800
<i>quantization</i>	793
<i>quantized</i>	793
Quantum Mechanics.....	803
Religion	798
<i>Satcitānanda</i>	796
Science	798
Stoicism	798
supraconsciousness	796, 800
<i>theology</i>	798, 799, 800
Western philosophy	22, 797, 800
Axial Age.....	45, 332
Chinese philosophy	36
Eurasia.....	381, 382, 383, 384
Eurasian philosophy	19, 47, 382, 383, 384
<i>human migration</i>	383
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	45
<i>logos</i>	381, 382, 384
<i>monotheism</i>	8
<i>mythos</i>	382
philosophy.....	394
Proto-Indo-European	384

B

<i>Bâ</i>	
Hellenic philosophy	91
<i>mythos</i>	91
Ptah.....	100
Ra 97	
<i>Weighing of the heart</i>	97
Bacchus	
Orphism	134
Bacon, Francis	491, 492
<i>empiricism</i>	491
Enlightenment Era	491, 504
Kant	509
<i>theology</i>	492
<i>bāguà</i>	237, 238, 239, 242, 243, 247, 248
arrangements.....	239, 251, 252
Before-the-World Arrangement	247
Chinese philosophy	38
Earlier Heaven Sequence ..	131, 239, 242, 243, 244, 245, 247, 248, 249, 251, 252
Fu Xi	181, 238

hexagram	240	<i>mysticism</i>	764, 778
Inner World arrangement	249, 250	<i>nirvana</i>	281
Inner World Arrangement	244	<i>objective realism</i>	57
Later Heaven Sequence	131, 239, 242, 243, 244, 249, 250, 251, 252	<i>ontology</i>	50
<i>numerology</i>	252	<i>óntōs</i>	49
Primal Arrangement	244	<i>ousia</i>	419
<i>Shuogua</i>	242, 249	Parmenides	326
Thunder	131	Plato	324, 330
<i>Yijing</i>	225, 239, 242	Psychology	607
<i>Yin-Yáng</i>	225, 240	<i>Quality</i>	772, 776
Basilides	465, 473, 474, 476	<i>reason</i>	328
Baynes, Cary	52, 237, 244, 247, 248, 249, 250	<i>samādhi</i>	713
<i>bāguà</i>	247	Stoicism	444
<i>Bayt al-Hikma</i>	484	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782
<i>Becoming</i>	324, 325, 370	<i>substantial form</i>	420
Aristotle	327, 525	<i>Timaeus</i>	324
<i>Being</i>	328	Yoga philosophy	713
Buddhism	281	<i>being qua being</i>	53, 365, 526, 569
<i>causality</i>	327	Aristotle	413, 415, 424, 763
Chinese philosophy	635	<i>Bâ</i> 91	
<i>cosmogony</i>	326, 328, 329	<i>causality</i>	421
<i>cosmolog</i>	328	Chinese philosophy	636
<i>dualism</i>	764	<i>mysticism</i>	764
Dyad	471	<i>óntōs</i>	49, 763
<i>epistemology</i>	330, 524	Plato	327
<i>gnosis</i>	471	<i>theology</i>	764
<i>metaphysics</i>	326	Bell, John Stewart	595, 598, 599
<i>opinion</i>	328	Bohm	596
<i>ousia</i>	419	Bohmian Mechanics	597, 598
Parmenides	326	<i>hidden variables</i>	564
Plato	330	<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	564, 565, 566, 595, 598
Psychology	607	Bohmian Mechanics	585, 598
Stoicism	444	<i>hidden variables</i>	565, 580
<i>Timaeus</i>	323, 324	<i>ontology</i>	732
Behistun Inscription	115	Quantum Mechanics	566
<i>Being</i>	325, 526	Belur Math	663
Aristotle	327, 525	Benigni, Helen	
<i>Awareness</i>	802	<i>The Mythology of Venus</i>	67
<i>Becoming</i>	328	Betegh, Gábor	
Buddhism	281	Damaskios	145
Chinese philosophy	635	<i>The Derveni Papyrus</i>	139
<i>cosmogony</i>	326, 328	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	147, 159, 634, 643, 647, 649, 665, 691
<i>dualism</i>	764	Indian philosophy	35
Dyad	471	Krishna	644
<i>epistemology</i>	330	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	643
Eurasian philosophy	383	<i>meditation</i>	35
<i>gnosis</i>	471	<i>mokṣa</i>	649
Gnosticism	471	Nikhilananda	11
<i>metaphysics</i>	326	<i>oral transmission</i>	37
Metaphysics of Quality	777	<i>Song of the Lord</i>	643
		Tantra Yoga	680

Bhairavi Brahmani.....	676, 684	Hiley	585, 731
<i>bhakti</i>		<i>holomovement</i>	731
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	644	<i>implicate order</i>	601, 602, 604, 730
Dvaita Vedānta	648	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	594
Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta	647, 649	<i>metaphysics</i>	594, 602, 603, 730, 733
Bhakti Yoga	670, 716, 717	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	797, 801, 803
Ramakrishna	43, 676, 680, 683, 702	<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	598, 600, 601
Vivekananda	714	<i>ontology</i>	57, 583, 594, 730, 732, 733, 734
Yoga philosophy	706	<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	13, 594, 595, 597, 598
<i>Bhavamukha</i>	665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 671	PirSIG.....	620, 734
<i>hapax legomenon</i>	665	Quantum Mechanics	599
Indian philosophy	665, 669	<i>quantum potential</i>	597, 599, 604
Kālī	666	Quantum Theory.....	581, 594
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	665, 670	<i>synchronicity</i>	614
<i>nirvikalpa samādhi</i>	675	<i>uncertainty principle</i>	594
Ramakrishna	667	<i>undivided universe</i>	734
Saradananda	667, 670, 671	<i>Undivided Universe</i>	585, 594
Vedānta	667	<i>undivided wholeness</i>	594, 618
<i>bhikkhus</i>	274	von Neumann.....	595
Bible	80, 86, 267, 271, 341, 344, 463, 466, 474, 553, 554	<i>wave-particle duality</i>	731
Canonical Gospels.....	420	<i>Wholeness and the Implicate Order</i>	596, 600
Chinese philosophy.....	218	Bohmian Mechanics	599
Gnostic Gospel.....	451	<i>Awareness</i>	803
Gnosticism	461	Bell	597
Gospels	271, 450, 451, 462, 466, 467, 469, 470, 471, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 483, 552	<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	598
Hebrew	74, 86, 455	<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	585
<i>katharos</i>	137	Bohm.....	584
<i>Pentateuch</i>	82	<i>causal determinism</i>	596
Spinoza	497	<i>Causal Interpretation</i>	585, 596
Synoptic Gospels	420, 451	Classical Mechanics	594
<i>Tanakh</i>	81	<i>conditional wavefunction</i>	733
Trinity		<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	597, 600
<i>homousios</i>	479	<i>de Broglie-Bohm theory</i>	585
Big Bang theory.....	572	<i>determinism</i>	580, 585, 594, 598
Big Bang Theory	534, 572	EPR Paradox	585
<i>ontology</i>	726	<i>hidden variables</i>	580, 585, 598
<i>theology</i>	558	<i>holomovement</i>	731
Birrell, Anne	169	<i>locality</i>	585, 594, 599
<i>black body radiation</i>	541	<i>measurement problem</i>	733
<i>bodhisattvas</i>	271	<i>metaphysics</i>	585, 599, 733
Bohm, David.....	20, 596, 616, 728, 733	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	803
<i>Awareness</i>	803	<i>objective realism</i>	585
Bell.....	598	<i>Ockham's razor</i>	580
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565	of Quantum Theory.....	585
Bohmian Mechanics	584, 585	Ontological Interpretation	565, 585
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	594	<i>ontology</i>	585, 600, 732, 733, 744
de Broglie.....	594, 596	<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	585, 595, 597
Einstein	594	Quantum Era	780
EPR Paradox.....	598	Quantum Mechanics	585, 599
<i>hidden variables</i>	594, 595, 596	<i>quantum potential</i>	585, 597, 599
		Quantum Theory.....	585, 594, 599

<i>wavefunction</i>	733	Indo-European	397
<i>wavefunction collapse</i>	733	Indra	640
<i>wave-particle duality</i>	731	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	261
Bohr, Niels.....	538, 578	<i>monotheism</i>	162
<i>atom</i>	537, 538	<i>mythos</i>	162
Atomic Theory	536	Prajāpati.....	260
<i>complementarity</i>	587	<i>rishis</i>	639
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	585, 586, 587	Shàngdì	162
Einstein	587	Stoicism	447
<i>epistemology</i>	587	<i>Trimurti</i>	260
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	589	<i>Vedas</i>	260
<i>ontology</i>	586	<i>Brahmā Sūtras</i>	634, 643, 647, 649, 691
Quantum Theory	566, 581, 587	<i>mokṣa</i>	649
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	593	Vedānta.....	644
<i>Book of Changes</i>	222, 225, 226, 235, 237, 241, 242, 335, 336, 630	Vyasa.....	643
<i>yi</i>	225	<i>brahmacārya</i>	
<i>Book of Documents</i>	163, 164, 220, 222, 630	Yoga philosophy	711
Guodian Chu Slips.....	171	<i>Brahman</i>	
<i>Shujing</i>	336	Advaita Vedānta.....	645, 646, 647, 710
<i>Book of Odes</i>	336	Ātman	264, 642
<i>Book of Res-Menu</i>	720	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	644
<i>Book of Rites</i>	222, 336, 630, 631	Brahmā.....	158
Guodian Chu Slips.....	171	<i>Brahmavidyā</i>	9, 253, 260, 265
<i>Book of Songs</i>	336, 630	Buddhism	280
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	100	Chinese philosophy	377
<i>Bâ 97</i>		Cosmic Soul	149, 265
Book of Coming Forth by Day	91	Daoism	348
Egyptian	91	<i>Demiurge</i>	260
Hellenic philosophy	101	Dvaita Vedānta.....	647, 648
hieratic.....	91	Eastern philosophy.....	572, 721
hieroglyphs	90, 91	<i>epistemology</i>	348
Ma'at	97	Eurasian philosophy	383
<i>mythos</i>	91, 93, 101	<i>first mover</i>	377
<i>oral transmission</i>	31	Hinduism	371, 372, 377
Ptolemaic Period	91	<i>Hiraṇyagarbha</i>	147
<i>Pyramid Texts</i>	103	Indian philosophy.....	395, 641, 650
<i>Coffin Texts</i>	103	Indo-Aryan	637
<i>theology</i>	92	Indo-European	397
<i>Weighing of the heart</i>	92	<i>jñāna</i>	646
<i>Book of Wisdom</i>	455, 456, 472	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	261, 262, 263, 264
Judaism	456	<i>Maya</i>	646
<i>Old Testament</i>	456	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798
Born, Max	548	<i>mokṣa</i>	149, 646, 647
Quantum Mechanics	548	<i>monism</i>	645, 646
Brahmā	153, 158, 691	<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	258, 260
<i>Brahman</i>	158, 260, 783	<i>mysticism</i>	758, 777
<i>Brahmavidyā</i>	260	Neo-Platonism	783
Chinese philosophy.....	377	<i>non-dualism</i>	646, 647, 648
<i>cosmic egg</i>	161	Pirsig.....	626
<i>Hiraṇyagarbha</i>	161	<i>Puruṣa</i>	147
		<i>qualified non-dualism</i>	647

<i>Quality</i>	735	Hinduism	268, 651
Ramanuja	647	<i>impermanence</i>	279
<i>rishis</i>	643	<i>incarnation</i>	652
<i>samādhi</i>	712	Life of	268, 273
Śaṅkara	646, 650	Mara	278
Sanskrit	420	<i>meditation</i>	14
Stoicism	447	<i>metaphysics</i>	281
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782	Middle Way	276
Supreme Self	712	<i>nirvana</i>	26
<i>tapas</i>	261	<i>Pāli Canon</i>	270
Upanishadic philosophy	151, 264, 783	philosophy	268, 271, 272
<i>Upanishads</i>	253, 262, 642	Ramakrishna	703
Vedānta	641, 649, 650	<i>rishis</i>	373
<i>Vedas</i>	150, 264	Siddhārtha	150
Vedic philosophy	253	Siddhārtha Gautama	270
<i>vidyā</i>	258	suffering	278
Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta	647	<i>Tripitaka</i>	270
Vivekananda	717	Vedic philosophy	280
<i>World Soul</i>	260, 642	<i>vidyā</i>	266
<i>Brāhmaṇas</i>	161, 639, 641, 642	<i>Buddha Dharma</i>	270
<i>Brahmavidyā</i>	260, 648	Buddha Nature	270
<i>Brahman</i>	253, 260	<i>buddhi</i>	
Daoism	353	Stoicism	447
<i>mysticism</i>	9	Buddhism	
<i>sophia</i>	348	<i>anātman</i>	279, 280, 710
<i>Upanishads</i>	253, 265, 642	Awareness	795
Brāhmī script		<i>Being</i>	281
Phoenician alphabet	200, 575	Buddha	272
<i>Vedas</i>	214, 575	China	69
Vedic Sanskrit	199	Chinese philosophy	333, 377
Bronze Age	68, 165, 168, 217, 232, 233, 237	Chinese philosophy	281
Assyrian Empire	107	Christianity	465
China	183	cyclical	572
Egypt	93	<i>Dhammapada</i>	276
<i>mythos</i>	206	<i>dharma</i>	773
<i>naturalism</i>	65	Eastern philosophy	379, 720, 726
Neolithic Era	67	Eightfold Noble Path	277
Shāng Dynasty	219	<i>enlightenment</i>	26, 271, 272
Zarathustra	118	Eurasian philosophy	371
Zoroastrianism	118	Four Noble Truths	270, 277
Bronze script	166, 210, 217	Hinduism	268, 372, 639, 650, 651
<i>Tiān</i>	222	<i>impermanence</i>	278, 280
<i>Brownian motion</i>	530	Indian	720
Buddha	651	Indian philosophy	40, 41, 641
Awakened One	270	Indo-Aryan	153, 266, 267, 637, 651
Bodhi tree	269	Indo-European	45
<i>Buddha Dharma</i>	270	influence of	267
Clement of Alexandria	386	<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	45
<i>Dhammapada</i>	277	Mahayana	271, 272
<i>enlightenment</i>	26, 270, 271, 273	<i>marks of existence</i>	278
Eurasia	279	<i>metaphysics</i>	279, 707

<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795
Middle Way	40, 272, 273
Mind	735
<i>monism</i>	281
<i>nirvana</i>	280
<i>non-dualism</i>	281
Pāli	271
<i>Pāli Canon</i>	272, 273, 277
Persia	273
philosophy	275, 276, 278, 408
Platonism	281
Quantum Era	780
<i>Rta</i>	783
<i>Science of the mind</i>	720
Shàngdì	167
Siddhārtha	40
Siddhārtha Gautama	266
<i>soteriology</i>	280
Spinoza	496
<i>Sūtra Pitaka</i>	273
<i>tapas</i>	261
<i>theology</i>	279
theo-philosophy	150
Theravada	271, 273
<i>three marks of existence</i>	276, 277
Tibetan	271, 717
turtle in ocean parable	718
<i>Upanishads</i>	265
Vedānta influence	150, 267, 650, 720
<i>Vedas</i>	41
Vedic philosophy	253, 266, 379
<i>vidyā</i>	266
<i>Way of Dharma</i>	276
<i>wheel of dharma</i>	694, 718
Yoga philosophy	719
<i>Yoga Sūtras</i>	40
Zen	271, 621
Zoroastrianism	115
<i>Bundahishn</i>	119
Burkert, Walter	17, 360, 388, 404
Prehistory of Presocratic Philosophy in an Orientalizing Context	46
Burning of the Books	170, 209, 236, 335
Eastern philosophy	630
Byzantine Empire	398, 406, 407, 466, 480, 484, 552

C

<i>calculus</i>	
<i>analytic geometry</i>	554
<i>differential</i>	576

<i>Hilbert space</i>	577
<i>integral</i>	576
Leibniz	500
Newton	500
<i>three laws of motion</i>	576
<i>Caliph</i>	484
Campbell, Joseph	58, 125
<i>Hero with a Thousand Faces</i>	125
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	638
<i>capitalism</i>	739
Enlightenment Era	502
<i>ethics</i>	502
<i>materialism</i>	556
<i>morality</i>	502
Newtonian Mechanics	526
Quantum Era	779
Quantum Theory	557
Scientific Revolution	743
<i>Cartesian coordinate system</i>	492, 554
<i>categorical imperatives</i>	
Kant	518
<i>categories</i>	
Aristotle	418, 516
Kant	516
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	787
<i>ontological predicates</i>	516
<i>Categories</i>	
<i>epistemology</i>	417
<i>ontology</i>	417
<i>Organon</i>	417
<i>category theory</i>	
Aristotle	516
<i>being qua being</i>	763
<i>Categories</i>	417
Kant	516
<i>ousia</i>	418
<i>substance</i>	418
Western philosophy	418
<i>causal determinism</i>	
Aristotle	54, 570
<i>Being</i>	57
Bohmian Mechanics	596
<i>causality</i>	413, 420
Classical Mechanics	759
<i>empiricism</i>	509
Enlightenment Era	505
<i>ethics</i>	514
Freud	609, 610
Kant	514, 523
<i>morality</i>	514
<i>ontology</i>	19, 20, 55, 56, 728, 758, 759

Psychology	609, 610	<i>first principles</i>	131
Quantum Theory	588, 779	Hesiod	131
Ramakrishna	56, 693	Indian philosophy	650
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	590	Orphism	144
Scientific Revolution	19	Ovid	189
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	52	<i>theogony</i>	131
<i>Causal Interpretation</i>		Chinese philosophy	216, 276, 341, 342
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565	<i>Analects</i>	340
<i>determinism</i>	585	<i>arche</i>	16
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	596	<i>Aśa</i>	774
Quantum Theory	596	<i>Awareness</i>	796, 801
<i>The Undivided Universe</i>	585	Axial Age	332
<i>causality</i>	569	<i>bāguà</i>	252
<i>aitia</i>	420	Buddhism	377
Aristotle	44, 327, 365, 413, 421, 422, 427, 569	<i>change</i>	51, 194, 366
<i>being qua being</i>	421, 763	Confucianism	334, 377
Buddhism.....	278, 280	Confucius	230, 334, 338, 340
<i>causal determinism</i>	420	<i>cosmogony</i>	178, 216, 381
<i>epistemology</i>	54	cyclical.....	572
Kant	510	<i>Dao</i>	345, 632
<i>metaphysics</i>	582	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	345
Plato	327	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	214, 345, 349
Quantum Theory	596	Daoism	377
Stoicism	432	<i>Dhammapada</i>	276
<i>theology</i>	424, 425, 427	<i>dualism</i>	241, 377
<i>theory of forms</i>	424	Eastern philosophy.....	375, 629, 630
Western philosophy	54	Egypt	163
Cave art.....	62	<i>epistemology</i>	351, 783
Eurasia	47	<i>ethics</i>	633
<i>human migration</i>	60	Eurasia.....	381, 395
language	67	<i>first principles</i>	16
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	47	<i>Five Classics</i>	229
Megaliths	65	Hellenic philosophy 9, 202, 231, 332, 356, 375, 376, 632	
Neolithic Era	47	Indian philosophy	356, 632
sacred spaces.....	61	Indo-European	356, 395, 396
Venus.....	62	<i>jing</i>	335
Cerberus	361	<i>jingzu</i>	377
Chaitanya	373, 652	Mawangdui Silk Texts.....	214
<i>rishis</i>	373	<i>meditation</i>	36
<i>chakras</i>		<i>metaphysics</i>	252, 376
etymology.....	718	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	796, 801
<i>kuṇḍalinī</i>	719	Metaphysics of Quality	774
Kuṇḍalinī Yoga	420	Mohism	227, 228
Raja Yoga	718	<i>monism</i>	783
Tantra Yoga.....	718	Mozi	228
Yoga philosophy	719	<i>mythos</i>	231, 634
<i>Chaldean Oracles</i>	143, 478	<i>naturalism</i>	167, 224, 227
Chaldeans	69, 286, 288, 386, 403, 448	Neolithic Era.....	377
Pythagoras	289	<i>Nómos</i>	774
<i>Chāndogyo Upanishad</i>	161	<i>phonemes</i>	218
Chaos	124, 126, 127, 128, 144, 188, 189	Pirsig.....	774

<i>practical philosophy</i>	632, 633	Hebrew	87
<i>qì</i> 38		<i>heliocentrism</i>	498
<i>Quality</i>	769, 774	Hellenic philosophy ...	124, 379, 406, 407, 410, 450, 463, 652, 670
<i>rén</i>	338	Hinduism	379
<i>Shàngdì</i>	231	Holy Spirit.....	462
<i>shén</i>	230, 396	<i>homoeousios</i>	462
<i>Sīmǎ Qiǎn</i>	183	<i>hypostasis</i>	462
<i>Soul</i>	396	Indo-Aryan	372
<i>Ten Wings</i>	232	Irenaeus	470
<i>Theobald</i>	343	Islam.....	406, 480, 482, 483, 488, 764
<i>theogony</i>	179	Jesus.....	190, 459
<i>theology</i>	224	Judaism	87, 268, 454, 457
<i>Tiān</i>	163, 167, 184, 223, 224, 225	<i>judgment</i>	774
<i>Tiānmìng</i>	774	Justin Martyr	467, 468
Upanishadic philosophy.....	377	<i>katharos</i>	137
Valdez	10	<i>Logos</i>	267, 408, 427, 453
Warring States period.....	223	<i>LXX</i>	449
<i>Xùn</i>	38	<i>Ma'at</i>	104
Yellow Emperor	175	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798
<i>yi</i> 225		<i>monotheism</i>	8, 201
<i>Yijing</i>	169, 233, 242	<i>mythos</i>	97, 201
<i>Yīn-Yáng</i>	157, 241, 377	Neo-Platonism	9, 140, 144, 460, 466, 783
Christian Church Fathers 268, 408, 452, 457, 461, 462, 464, 465, 475, 476, 576		Nicene Creed.....	399, 464
<i>allegoresis</i>	437	<i>Old Testament</i>	341
Hellenic philosophy	406, 576	<i>ontology</i>	802
Islam	406	Orphism	144
<i>Timaeus</i>	576	Ovid.....	192
Christianity.....	80, 120, 455, 465, 469, 482, 720	Philo Judaeus	452
<i>allegoresis</i>	346	philosophy.....	408
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	92	Plato	330
Christian Church Fathers	465	<i>pneuma</i>	442
Church Fathers	464	<i>qì</i> 178	
<i>City of God</i>	465	Ramakrishna	676, 680
<i>Confessions</i>	465	<i>reason</i>	789
Confucianism	631	Roman Empire.....	399
Copernicus.....	498	Romans	186, 399
<i>corporealism</i>	798	Satan	103
<i>cosmogony</i>	381, 720	Scholasticism.....	491
<i>Cunctos populus</i>	399	Scientific Revolution	19
<i>Cunctus populus</i>	186	<i>Septuagint</i>	449
development	462	<i>Shàngdì</i>	377
Eastern philosophy	379, 629, 630, 635	Spinoza.....	497
Edict of Milan.....	186, 399	St Paul	467
Edict of Thessalonica	186	St. Augustine	465
Egypt.....	97, 101	Stoicism.....	430, 434, 435, 438, 442, 445
Eurasian philosophy.....	379	Temple at Delphi.....	409
<i>geometry</i>	428	<i>theology</i>	373, 448, 452, 485
Gnosticism	461, 464, 465, 472, 476	<i>Tiān</i>	229
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	467	Trinity.....	450, 462, 463
Gospels	466	Upanishadic philosophy	783

Vedānta	651	Epicureanism.....	509
<i>Weighing of the heart</i>	92	<i>implicate order</i>	600, 601
Western philosophy	629	<i>local realism</i>	562, 565, 566, 604
Wisdom tradition.....	455	<i>locality</i>	563, 564, 577, 583, 595, 596, 599, 803
Yoga philosophy	719	<i>Lorentz invariance</i>	564
Zoroastrianism.....	115, 119, 121, 122	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	588
<i>Chronos</i>	127, 128, 129, 571	<i>mathematics</i>	551
Gaia.....	131	<i>metaphysics</i>	599
Hesiod.....	126	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798, 803
Kālī.....	718	Newton	576, 619
Orphism	142, 144	Newtonian Mechanics	522
<i>Quality</i>	774	<i>objective realism</i>	13, 551
Rhea.....	143, 144	Ontological Interpretation	565, 601
Zeus	143, 144	<i>ontology</i>	20, 50, 600, 745, 746, 752, 759
Chrysippus	433	<i>photon</i>	539
<i>cosmogony</i>	439	Pirsig.....	766
Diogenes Laertius	434	Quantum Era	780
Stoicism	432, 439	Quantum Mechanics.....	20, 545, 564, 577, 589, 600, 727
<i>Chu Ci</i>	175	<i>quantum potential</i>	596, 597
<i>Heavenly Questions</i>	172	Quantum Theory.....	557, 584, 585, 587, 600
Cicero	124, 186, 393	Relativity Theory	531, 727
<i>natural law</i>	446	Scientific Revolution	505
<i>On the Laws</i>	446	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	623
<i>On the Republic</i>	446	<i>three laws of motion</i>	522, 576
Stoicism	434, 446	Classical Sanskrit	151, 153
citadel of science	655, 657, 658, 696, 697, 701	Cleanthes.....	433
<i>mysticism</i>	690	<i>allegoresis</i>	437
Pirsig	766	Diogenes Laertius.....	434
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	696	Stoicism	432
citadel of Science		Clement of Alexandria.....	386, 387, 469, 477
<i>academia</i>	748	Alexandria	449
<i>citta</i>	26	<i>allegoresis</i>	346, 446
<i>City of God</i>	465	Christian Church Fathers	576
<i>Classic of Changes</i>	233, 709	Christianity	465
<i>dualism</i>	377	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	467
Ovid	294	Hellenic philosophy	386, 406
Pre-Socratic philosophy.....	194	hieratic	89, 575
<i>Classic of Poetry</i>	222, 336	<i>le miracle grec</i>	387
Classical Chinese	209, 219, 271	<i>Miscellanies</i>	386
Chinese philosophy.....	632	Pre-Socratic philosophy	283
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	344	<i>The Stromota</i>	386
<i>Tiān</i>	223	Clerical script.....	209, 210
Classical Latin	393	Clerical Script.....	217
Classical Mechanics..	13, 535, 539, 541, 542, 544, 546, 548, 549, 550, 559, 560, 566, 618, 626	<i>Coffin Texts</i>	91, 92
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565	<i>Book of the Dead</i>	92, 103
Bohmian Mechanics	565, 594, 598, 599	<i>Isfet</i>	103
<i>determinism</i>	585	<i>Pyramid Texts</i>	103
Einstein	532, 560	Sumer-Babylonian.....	107
<i>electrodynamics</i>	532	<i>cogito ergo sum</i>	317, 493
<i>entanglement</i>	563, 565	Eastern philosophy.....	375
		Quantum Theory.....	551

<i>cognates</i>	389, 390	<i>mind</i>	789
Cognitive Science	700	<i>perception</i>	791
Artificial Intelligence	700	<i>quantization</i>	793
<i>awareness</i>	791	Computer Science	
<i>Awareness</i>	792	<i>Awareness</i>	792
Computer Science	789	Cognitive Science	789, 791
Freudian psychology	700	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	589
Kant	789	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	792
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	791, 792	Quantum Theory	588
<i>mysticism</i>	729	<i>state machine</i>	789
<i>perception</i>	791	<i>Confessions</i>	465
Psychology	797	<i>conflagration</i>	442
<i>state machine</i>	700	Stoicism	442
<i>collective unconscious</i>	125, 798	Yoga philosophy	447
<i>alchemy</i>	611	Confucian philosophy	
<i>Awareness</i>	795, 800	Soul	396
Freud	612	Confucianism	
<i>individuation</i>	705	Buddhism	281
<i>interconnectedness principle</i>	795	Chinese philosophy	333, 376, 377, 631, 632
Jung	611, 612, 613	Christianity	230, 631
Jungian psychology	702, 795	<i>Dao</i>	632
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	49, 638	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	347, 349, 354
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795, 800	Daoism	346, 351, 354, 633
<i>mythos</i>	46	Eastern philosophy	631
<i>persona</i>	613	<i>ethics</i>	170, 333
<i>philology</i>	46	Han Dynasty	166, 217, 222, 335, 631
<i>pleasure principle</i>	612	<i>Huainanzi</i>	176
Psychology	612, 613	Hundred Schools of Thought	222
<i>Puruṣa</i>	702	<i>Mencius</i>	631
Ramakrishna	704	Mohism	227, 228
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	704	philosophy	341, 409
<i>unconscious</i>	612	<i>rén</i>	211, 339
Comparative Religion	33, 655, 676	<i>Rújiā</i>	337, 343
<i>academia</i>	749	Shàngdì	167
Ramakrishna	653	<i>shén</i>	340, 396
<i>samādhi</i>	686	<i>Shiji</i>	334
<i>theology</i>	748	<i>skepticism</i>	346
<i>complementarity</i>	19	<i>Ten Wings</i>	233
Bohmian Mechanics	598	<i>theology</i>	230
Bohr	587	<i>Tiān</i>	223, 229, 339
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	586, 587	Western philosophy	634
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	793	<i>Yijing</i>	227, 233, 336
<i>ontology</i>	584	Zhuangzi	350
Quantum Mechanics	589	Confucius	336, 631
Quantum Theory	586	<i>Analects</i>	227, 333, 334, 338, 339, 340, 341, 376, 631
<i>uncertainty principle</i>	586	Chinese philosophy ...	167, 230, 332, 334, 340, 346, 410, 632
<i>wavefunction collapse</i>	587	influence	341
<i>comprehension</i>		<i>jīng</i>	335
<i>Awareness</i>	792, 793	Lǎozǐ	334, 343
Cognitive Science	789, 791	lǐ	227
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	789, 791		

Moses	341	<i>Brahman</i>	447
philosophy	333	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798
Plato	332	Spinoza	494
<i>rén</i>	339	<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>	
<i>Rújiā</i>	336, 337, 338	<i>alchemy</i>	501
<i>Tiān</i>	224, 227	Hermeticism	452
<i>virtue</i>	227	Nag Hammadi Library	452
<i>Yijing</i>	233	<i>corpuscle</i>	535, 537, 544, 545, 546, 547
Zhuangzi	349	Bohm	731
conscious		<i>double-slit experiment</i>	544
Freud	609	<i>corpuscles</i>	548, 726
Jung	611	<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	595
<i>mind</i>	611	<i>cosmic egg</i>	161
<i>preconscious</i>	609	Brahmā	161
Psychology	611	<i>Chāndogyo Upanishad</i>	161
<i>unconscious</i>	609	Chinese philosophy	178
consciousness		<i>cosmogony</i>	380
<i>awareness</i>	790	Egypt	205
Kant	516	Eurasia	196, 204, 380
Constantine		<i>first principles</i>	204
Christianity	124	Hellenic philosophy	144
Gnosticism	464	<i>Hiranyagarbha</i>	147, 161
Constitution of Medina	481	<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	257
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>		<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	17, 204
Bohm	594, 733	<i>Laws of Manu</i>	205
Bohmian Mechanics	594, 597	<i>mythos</i>	169, 204, 205, 380
Bohr	585, 586, 587	Ogdoad	205
<i>complementarity</i>	586	Orphism	142, 144, 204
Heisenberg	585	Pángǔ	144, 169, 205
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	588, 589	Phanes	204, 428
<i>ontology</i>	585	<i>theogony</i>	204
Quantum Mechanics	585, 586	<i>Upanishads</i>	161
Quantum Theory	584, 585, 600	Witzel	161
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	589, 591	Yīn-Yáng	205
<i>wavefunction collapse</i>	587	<i>cosmogony</i>	123, 150, 170, 176, 242, 428, 473, 474
<i>Copernican revolution</i>		Anaxagoras	489
Kant	512, 514	Chinese	172, 179, 196, 205, 206, 224, 251
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	788, 794	Chinese philosophy	177, 225
philosophy	520	Christianity	119, 410
<i>practical philosophy</i>	517	<i>cosmic egg</i>	204
Copernicus, Nicolaus	497, 498, 499, 522, 554, 577	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	170, 214, 216
<i>De revolutionibus orbium coelestium</i>	490, 498	<i>Dao's Origins</i>	176
Enlightenment Era	553, 751	Daoism	170, 175, 176, 178, 179, 343, 350
<i>heliocentrism</i>	498, 504	<i>Daoyuan</i>	176
<i>On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres</i>	490, 498	<i>Derveni Papyrus</i>	720
Ptolemy	498	Eastern philosophy	379, 630
Scientific Revolution	504	Egypt	97, 98, 100, 102
Coptic		Einstein	534
Demotic	90	<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	107
<i>corporealism</i>		Epicurus	430
Aristotle	426	<i>Eros</i>	428

etymology.....	123
Eurasia	12, 47, 112, 196, 197, 204, 205, 380, 381
Eurasian philosophy.....	19, 379, 382, 383
<i>faḷṣafa</i>	486
<i>first principles</i>	125, 291
<i>geometry</i>	428
Gnosticism	473, 476
Greco-Roman.....	147
Greek	124, 371
Hellenic	251
Hellenic philosophy	201, 410, 427
Hesiod.....	127
Hinduism	158, 637
<i>Huainanzi</i>	177
<i>Hymns of Orpheus</i>	204
Indo-Aryan.....	148, 150, 156, 162, 372
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	45, 204
<i>Laws of Manu</i>	205
<i>logos</i>	379, 382
<i>Logos</i>	201, 427
<i>Ma'at</i>	97, 104
<i>mathematics</i>	428
Mawangdui Silk Texts	176
meaning.....	123
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	15
<i>mythos</i>	45, 101, 112, 114, 197, 205, 206, 372, 379, 380, 774
Nile River	101
Nu 104	
Orphism	143, 205
Pángǔ.....	205
Peripatetic	442
<i>philosophy</i>	21, 204
Plato	323, 325, 326, 438, 442
Pre-Socratic philosophy.....	400, 401
Ptah	100
Pythagoras.....	294
Roman Empire	185
Sīmǎ Qiān.....	183
Stoicism	430, 431, 433, 434, 436, 438, 439, 441, 442
Sumer-Babylonian	107, 109, 112, 114
<i>theogony</i>	112, 379, 380
<i>theology</i>	778
Witzel.....	98
<i>Yijing</i>	234
<i>Yīn-Yáng</i>	179
Yoga philosophy	707
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	175, 350
Zoroastrianism.....	119
Cosmogony	540
Council of Nicaea	462

Cratylus	
Plato	301
<i>Critias</i>	
Plato	302
<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>	
<i>ethics</i>	515
<i>Three Critiques</i>	519
<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>	
<i>epistemology</i>	508
Hume.....	513
<i>metaphysics</i>	508, 513
<i>Crito</i>	302
<i>Cunctus populus</i>	186
cuneiform	71, 105
Behistun Inscription	115
hieroglyphs.....	106
<i>logograms</i>	106
Cyrus the Great	121

D

Dakshineswar Temple	666, 676, 680
Ramakrishna	683
<i>sādhana</i>	679
Damaskios	144, 145
Academy	143
<i>De principiis</i>	143
Neo-Platonism	143
Orphism	144, 145
Plato	143
Platonism	143
<i>theogony</i>	144
<i>Dao</i>	
<i>Analects</i>	340
Chinese philosophy	395
Confucianism	339, 347, 351
Confucius	340
<i>cosmogony</i>	343, 381
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	345, 346
Daoism	344, 633
<i>Daoist sage</i>	353
<i>desire</i>	348
<i>Dhammapada</i>	276
<i>ethics</i>	353, 633
Eurasia.....	381
Eurasian philosophy	383
Hellenic philosophy.....	348
<i>idealism</i>	570
Lǎozǐ	345, 348, 351
<i>metaphysics</i>	783
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	796

<i>monism</i>	783	<i>Way of Virtue</i>	348
<i>morality</i>	353	<i>wu wei</i>	351
<i>mysticism</i>	777	<i>Zhuangzi</i>	349, 350
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	38	Daoism	150
<i>Nómos</i>	17	<i>Brahmavidyā</i>	353
<i>numerology</i>	170	Buddhism	281
<i>practical philosophy</i>	632	Chinese philosophy	18, 333, 343, 376, 377
<i>Quality</i>	735, 769, 774	Confucianism	346, 633
<i>rén</i>	339	<i>Yijing</i>	334
<i>Rta</i>	774	<i>cosmogony</i>	170, 175, 350
<i>Rújiā</i>	347	<i>Dao</i>	344, 632
<i>Tàiyī Shēngshuǐ</i>	172	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	173, 214, 332, 343, 344
<i>theory of forms</i>	347	<i>Daojiā</i>	343, 351
<i>Tiān</i>	229, 339	<i>dualism</i>	179
Torah	774	Eastern philosophy	379, 627
Upanishadic philosophy	348	<i>epistemology</i>	352, 353
<i>virtue</i>	179	<i>esotericism</i>	332
<i>wànwù</i>	347	<i>ethics</i>	170, 353
<i>wu wei</i>	351	Hellenic philosophy	347, 353
<i>Yijing</i>	241	<i>Huainanzi</i>	176
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	349, 350, 351	Hundred Schools of Thought	222
<i>Dao De Jing</i>		<i>idealism</i>	570
Chinese philosophy... 213, 216, 218, 334, 343, 349, 354, 375, 410		Indian philosophy	353
Classical Chinese	344	<i>Inward Training</i>	36
Confucianism	354	Jung	613
<i>cosmogony</i>	170, 214, 343	Lǎozǐ	334, 347
<i>Dao</i>	345	<i>meditation</i>	39
Daoism	332, 334	<i>metaphysics</i>	707
<i>Daozang</i>	343	Mohism	353
<i>desire</i>	348	<i>morality</i>	353
<i>epistemology</i>	352	<i>mysticism</i>	332
Guodian Chu Slips	171, 215	<i>naturalism</i>	351
Hellenic philosophy	356	<i>objective realism</i>	635
Henricks	215	philosophy	409
influence	344	Plato	352
<i>Inward Training</i>	36	Platonism	348
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	45, 48	<i>practical philosophy</i>	633
Legge	347	Psychology	613
<i>lyric poetry</i>	174	<i>qì</i> 38, 178, 377	
Mawangdui Silk Texts	175, 214	Shàngdì	167
<i>mysticism</i>	354, 778	<i>Shiji</i>	334
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	37	<i>skepticism</i>	346, 347, 352
<i>oral transmission</i>	30	<i>sophia</i>	352
Platonism	348	<i>Tàiyī Shēngshuǐ</i>	172
<i>Quality</i>	769	<i>Ten Wings</i>	343
<i>skepticism</i>	347	<i>theory of forms</i>	348
<i>Tàiyī Shēngshuǐ</i>	172	Upanishadic philosophy	258
<i>Tao Te Ching</i>	213	<i>Upanishads</i>	353
<i>theory of forms</i>	348	<i>Way of Virtue</i>	354
<i>virtue</i>	170, 348	Western philosophy	634
		<i>wu wei</i>	351

Yellow Emperor	175	Scientific Revolution	504
<i>Yijing</i>	233, 343	Demeter	129, 131, 134
<i>Yīn-Yáng</i>	157, 240	Dionysus.....	143
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	173, 332, 343, 349	Isis.....	133
<i>Daoist sage</i>		Orphism	134
Daoism.....	354	Rhea	143
ethics	354	<i>Demiurge</i>	
morality	354	Aristotle	424
wu wei	353	Big Bang Theory	558
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	353, 354	<i>Brahman</i>	260
<i>Daojiā</i>		etymology	323
Daoism.....	351	Gnosticism	475, 477
ontology.....	570	Hellenic philosophy	323
<i>Daozang</i>		Neo-Platonism	460, 764
Daoism.....	343	Orphism	142
Darius the Great.....	115	Ovid.....	192
Dark Ages	13, 494, 553, 724	Plato	323
Christianity	410	<i>pneuma</i>	442
Scientific Revolution	502	<i>prime mover</i>	224
theology.....	374	Ptah.....	101
Dark Energy.....	540, 624	<i>Puruṣa</i>	147, 155
Dark Matter	540, 624	Stoicism.....	438
Darwin, Charles		theogony	140
Freud	609	theology	427, 764
Freudian psychology.....	699	<i>Tiān</i>	224
<i>Origin of Species</i>	609	Yahweh	472
Psychology	609	<i>democracy</i>	
<i>Quality</i>	772	Athens.....	299
<i>Dazhuan</i>	237, 238, 240, 242	Enlightenment Era	504
Ames.....	225	Newtonian Mechanics	526
hexagram.....	240	Quantum Era	779
<i>Yijing</i>	241	Quantum Theory.....	557
<i>Yīn-Yáng</i>	240	Democritus	292
de Broglie, Louis.....	20, 541, 546, 578	Atomic Theory.....	536
Bohm	594, 596	Epicurus.....	430
Bohmian Mechanics	585, 595	materialism	306, 509, 510
electron.....	545	Physics.....	578
hidden variables	595, 596	Pre-Socratic philosophy	283
photon	541	demotic	
pilot-wave theory.....	13, 595	hieratic	89
Quantum Theory	547, 566	Demotic	75
The wave nature of the electron	546, 547	Coptic	90
<i>de Broglie-Bohm theory</i>	20	Egypt	89
Bell.....	597	Greek alphabet	90
Causal Interpretation	585	<i>Dēnkard</i>	119, 122
determinism.....	580	<i>Derveni Papyrus</i>	139
hidden variables	580	Anaxagoras.....	138, 489
Metaphysics of Awareness	803	cosmogony	720
Quantum Theory	580	Orpheus	138
<i>De principiis</i>	143	Orphism	139, 145
<i>De revolutionibus orbium coelestium</i>		theogony	138

Descartes, René	493	Quantum Mechanics	550, 560, 618, 745, 759, 803
Aristotle	492	Quantum Theory	544, 557, 566, 580, 585, 594, 595, 596, 753
<i>Cartesian coordinate system</i>	492	<i>relative-state formulation</i>	590, 591
<i>Discourse on Method</i>	493	Science	13
<i>dualism</i>	494	Spinoza	495, 497
Eastern philosophy	375, 634	Stoicism	434
Enlightenment Era	491, 504, 553	<i>theology</i>	551
<i>epistemology</i>	493	Deutsch, David	
<i>geometry</i>	532, 554	<i>double-slit experiment</i>	592
Hellenic philosophy	494	Everett	589, 592
<i>logic</i>	493	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	589
<i>mathematics</i>	492, 493, 494	<i>The Many-Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics</i>	589
<i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>	492, 493	Dewitt, Bryce	
<i>ontological argument</i>	799	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	589
Plato	317, 494	<i>dharmma</i>	
Psychology	731	Buddhism	276
Quantum Mechanics	618	<i>dharmma</i>	276
Quantum Theory	551, 565	<i>Dhammapada</i>	276
<i>rationalism</i>	508	Buddha	277
<i>reason</i>	493	Buddhism	276, 277
Socrates	296	Pāli	276
Spinoza	494, 496	<i>dhāraṇā</i>	712
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	618	<i>dhyāna</i>	26
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	729	<i>meditation</i>	712
<i>desire</i>		Yoga philosophy	711
<i>Awareness</i>	795	<i>dharmma</i>	
<i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</i>	610	Arjuna	644
<i>Eros</i>	795	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	644
Freudian psychology	610, 678, 702, 795	<i>dharmma</i>	276
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795	<i>Laws of Manu</i>	159
<i>mythos</i>	795	Metaphysics of Quality	773
Psychology	795	Mohism	353
Ramakrishna	687, 702	<i>natural law</i>	447
Tantra Yoga	678	<i>Quality</i>	773, 774
<i>determinism</i>	535, 540, 550, 569	<i>Rta</i>	773, 783
Al-Fārābī	486	<i>Upanishads</i>	642
Bacon	491	<i>Vedas</i>	161
Bohmian Mechanics	580, 585, 594, 595, 598	<i>Dharmacakrapravartanasūtram</i>	273, 275
<i>Causal Interpretation</i>	585	<i>dhyāna</i>	25, 712
Classical Mechanics	549, 566	<i>dhāraṇā</i>	26
Cognitive Science	700	<i>meditation</i>	40, 713
Einstein	495, 525, 560	<i>samādhi</i>	26
Enlightenment Era	490, 502	Yoga Sūtras	26
Freud	609	<i>dialectic</i>	
Freudian psychology	700	<i>analogy of the divided line</i>	321
Hawking	525	Aristotle	300, 394, 417, 690
<i>locality</i>	564, 598	Chinese philosophy	376
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	803	Parmenides	326
Newton	525	Plato	302, 303, 304, 305, 314, 318, 319, 449
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	598		
Psychology	609		

Platonism	417	Deutsch	592
Scholasticism	491	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	592
Stoicism	436, 439	<i>mathematics</i>	545
Diogenes Laertius	124, 285, 286	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	794
Chrysippus	432	<i>photon</i>	544
Descartes	493	Quantum Mechanics	542, 544
Egypt	96	Young	544
Epicureanism	448, 450	<i>dreams</i>	
Epicurus	431	<i>active imagination</i>	613
Hellenic philosophy	386, 387	Freud	608, 609
Heraclitus	287, 400	<i>Interpretation of Dreams</i>	608
Ionian philosophy	288, 324	Jung	613
Italian philosophy	288, 324	<i>mythos</i>	724
<i>le miracle grec</i>	387	Psychology	608, 609, 615
<i>Magi</i>	288	<i>Quality</i>	622
Parmenides	324	<i>theology</i>	610
Persia	288	<i>dualism</i>	
Plato	300	Chinese philosophy	241, 377
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283	Confucianism	248
Pythagoras	288	Daoism	179
Stoicism	431, 434, 438, 439, 448	Descartes	494
Zeno of Citium	435	Dvaita Vedānta	647, 648
Dionysus	134, 138, 142, 144	Eastern philosophy	375
Bacchus	134	Indo-Aryan	682
Herodotus	133	<i>Kālī's Child</i>	682
<i>mystery cults</i>	117, 139, 143	<i>meditation</i>	713
<i>mysticism</i>	143	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	803
Orpheus	134, 135	<i>mind-body</i>	494, 495, 772
Orphism	134, 138, 143	<i>mythos</i>	682
Plato	305	Pirsig	772
<i>divination</i> 152, 167, 209, 219, 222, 233, 234, 236, 241, 244, 245, 335, 336, 377, 574		Plato	764
hypotheses	766	Ramakrishna	43
Jung	52	Sāṃkhya	669, 710
<i>Magi</i>	288	Spinoza	494
<i>shamanism</i>	166	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	624, 625
yarrow stalks	226, 235, 236	Tantra Yoga	43, 669, 680, 682
<i>Yijing</i>	224, 235	Vedānta	648, 649, 669, 670
<i>Divine Intellect</i>		<i>Vedas</i>	682
Logos	460	Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta	760
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	22, 798, 802	<i>Yijing</i>	245
Neo-Platonism	764	Yīn-Yáng	179, 241, 377
<i>One</i>	460	Duat	
<i>Ṛta</i>	783	Hades	104
Saradananda	670	Isfet	103
<i>Sophia</i>	22	Ra 96	
Stoicism	438	<i>duḥkha</i>	275, 276, 280
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	783	Dui	243, 245, 247, 248, 249, 251
<i>doctrine of the four causes</i>	See Aristotle: causality	<i>dukkha</i>	275, 276, 277, 279
<i>double-slit experiment</i>	543, 548	<i>dukkha-nirodha</i>	714
<i>corpuscle</i>	545	Dvaita Vedānta	648
		<i>bhakti</i>	648

<i>Brahman</i>	648
<i>dualism</i>	647
<i>jiva</i>	648
philosophy	647
Supreme Self	648
Vedānta	645
Viṣṇu	647, 648
Dyad	
<i>gnosis</i>	471

E

Earlier Heaven Sequence	244
Eastern philosophy	150, 153, 379, 628, 675, 780
<i>Awareness</i>	795, 796, 797, 798
Bohm	594
Buddhism	717
Christianity	379
<i>cosmogony</i>	379
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	344
<i>dualism</i>	375
Enlightenment Era	790
<i>ethics</i>	374, 720
Eurasian philosophy	47
<i>first principles</i>	796
Hellenic philosophy	378
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	258
Jung	613, 702
<i>Laws of Manu</i>	159
<i>meditation</i>	14
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	22, 795, 796, 800, 803
<i>mind</i>	375, 797
Mind	735
<i>mysticism</i>	35, 696, 729, 754, 757, 776, 781, 786, 796, 800
<i>natural philosophy</i>	550
<i>ontology</i>	726, 735, 759
Pirsig	755
Psychology	613, 796, 797
<i>Quality</i>	620, 735
Quantum Era	557, 780
Quantum Theory	594
Ramakrishna	689
<i>reason</i>	789
<i>reductionist</i>	784
Stoicism	447
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	619
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	688, 704, 745
<i>theology</i>	372, 781
Vedānta	254
<i>Vedas</i>	378

Western philosophy	786, 796
Eastern philosophy <i>mysticism</i>	12
Edict of Milan	186, 399
Edict of Thessalonica	186, 399
<i>efficient cause</i>	
Aristotle	423
<i>epistemology</i>	55
<i>theory of forms</i>	423
<i>ego</i>	
Freud	610, 611
<i>id</i> 610	
Psychology	610, 611
<i>super-ego</i>	610
Egypt	100, 382
Alexander the Great	88, 398
Alexandria	448
Atum	88
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	90, 100
Chinese philosophy	163, 376
Coptic	90
<i>cosmic egg</i>	205
<i>cosmogony</i>	98, 100, 102, 381, 720
Eastern philosophy	629
<i>ethics</i>	97
Eurasia	381
Garden of Eden	103
Greek	93
Hellenic philosophy	101, 607
Herodotus	132
hieratic	89
hieroglyphs	89
Indo-Aryan	637
Indo-European	774
Judaism	454, 456
<i>judgment</i>	774
Lower Egypt	101
<i>Ma'at</i>	97, 102, 104, 774
Manetho	90
Memphis	101
<i>morality</i>	97
Moses	83, 454
<i>mythos</i>	88, 91, 95, 98, 100, 132, 202, 205, 723
Nile River	88, 96, 101, 637
<i>nu</i> 638	
Persia	88
Plato	305
Pre-Socratic philosophy	398
Pythagoras	286
Ra 96	
Satan	103
Sumer-Babylonian	107, 110, 111, 112

Thebes	101	<i>spooky action at a distance</i>	560
<i>theogony</i>	98, 205	<i>theology</i>	554
<i>theology</i>	90, 92	<i>Unified Field Theory</i>	779
Upper Egypt.....	101	<i>wave-particle duality</i>	541
Upper Neolithic	88	<i>ekpyrôsis</i>	442
<i>eidôos</i>	569	<i>electrodynamics</i>	528, 532
<i>ideas</i>	306	<i>electromagnetic radiation</i>	538, 540, 541
Plato	302, 326, 395	<i>electromagnetism</i>	528, 531, 537, 538
Stoicism	430	Einstein	528, 530
Xenophanes.....	302	<i>photon</i>	530
Eightfold Noble Path.....	275, 277	Physics.....	530
<i>Yoga Sūtras</i>	706	Psychology	609
Einstein, Albert		<i>theology</i>	550
<i>Annus Mirabilis</i>	530	<i>electron</i>	537, 538, 539, 541, 546, 547
atom bomb.....	530	Atomic Theory.....	536
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565	de Broglie	545
Bohm	594	<i>double- slit experiment</i>	544
Bohmian Mechanics	599	<i>double-slit experiment</i>	543, 545
Classical Mechanics	560	<i>photon</i>	539
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	594	size	536
<i>cosmogony</i>	534	Thompson	537
Dark Energy	624	Eleusinian mysteries.....	14
<i>determinism</i>	495, 525, 550	Alcibiades.....	296
<i>differential geometry</i>	577	<i>mysticism</i>	9
<i>electromagnetism</i>	530, 531	Plato	305
Galileo.....	532	Eleusinian Mysteries	
<i>gravity</i>	529, 534, 535, 540, 618	<i>mysticism</i>	629
<i>hidden variables</i>	559, 560	Eliade, Mircea	
<i>local realism</i>	563	<i>A History of Religious Ideas</i>	67
<i>locality</i>	560, 564	<i>shamanism</i>	66
Manhattan Project	530	Elohim	86
<i>mass-energy equivalence</i>	529	<i>pneuma</i>	442
<i>mathematics</i>	551	<i>emanation</i>	
Newton.....	528	Al-Fârâbî.....	486
Newtonian Mechanics.....	539	Enlightenment Era	502
<i>On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies</i>	531, 532	Hinduism	638
<i>ontology</i>	566	Neo-Platonism	426, 460, 765
philosophy	529	Plato	397
<i>photoelectric effect</i>	530, 541	Plotinus	783
<i>photoelectrons</i>	530	Saradananda	670
<i>photon</i>	541, 542	Emperor Wu	176, 221, 334
Physics	529, 578	<i>empiricism</i>	522, 553, 569, 744
Planck	531, 541	<i>a posteriori knowledge</i>	510
Quantum Era	529	Aristotle	408
Quantum Mechanics	529, 531, 558	<i>autonomy</i>	515
Quantum Theory 530, 538, 547, 560, 565, 566, 581, 618		Bacon	491
Relativity Theory.....	13, 528, 540, 577, 618	Enlightenment Era	490, 502, 524, 554, 692, 743
Schrödinger	561	<i>epistemology</i>	509, 513, 516, 744, 758, 760
Schrödinger's cat	561	Euclid.....	510
Science.....	530	Hellenic philosophy	509, 510
<i>spacetime</i>	528, 531, 558	Hume.....	508

Kant	508, 513, 523, 690, 744
Kepler	500
<i>materialism</i>	509, 510, 516
<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	790
<i>ontology</i>	754, 758, 759
philosophy	416
Pirsig	767
<i>rationalism</i>	509
Science.....	414, 522, 523, 619, 725
Scientific Revolution	505
<i>Empiricism</i>	617
<i>enlightenment</i>	
Buddha	26, 270
Buddhism.....	272
Chinese philosophy.....	18
Eastern philosophy	557
Hellenic philosophy	266
Indian philosophy	637
Mara	278
<i>marks of existence</i>	278
Middle Way	273
<i>nirvana</i>	272
Siddhārtha Gautama.....	270
Enlightenment Era ...	13, 490, 491, 501, 522, 527, 553, 554, 701, 724, 740, 743, 752
<i>academia</i>	749, 754
Age of Reason.....	505
Astronomy	500
<i>atheism</i>	524
Bacon.....	491
Christianity	410
<i>cogito ergo sum</i>	551
Eastern philosophy	627
<i>empiricism</i>	502
Epicureanism	509
<i>ethics</i>	505
Freud	610
Hellenic philosophy	203, 404, 503
Indo-European.....	802
Kant	506, 507, 510, 521, 523, 754
<i>mathematics</i>	522, 576, 579
<i>mechanism</i>	502
<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	790
<i>monotheism</i>	8, 490
<i>morality</i>	505
<i>natural law</i>	526
Newton	527
<i>Ockham's razor</i>	580, 697
philosophy	10, 491, 751, 754
Philosophy	22
Plato	303
Quantum Era	779
<i>rationalism</i>	502
Science	414, 415, 523
Scientific Revolution	503, 504, 524
Spinoza.....	494, 497
<i>theology</i>	505, 555, 752
Western philosophy	504, 510, 692
Ennead	
Atum	99
Egypt	99, 101
Heliopolis	98
<i>mythos</i>	99
Ogdoad.....	99
Old Kingdom	99
Ptah.....	100
<i>Enneads</i>	485
Aristotle	764
<i>entanglement</i>	19, 559
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565
Bohmian Mechanics.....	598
<i>local realism</i>	563
<i>locality</i>	563
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	593
<i>ontology</i>	584, 758
Quantum Mechanics.....	563, 566
Quantum Theory.....	566, 580
Schrödinger	563
Schrödinger's cat.....	563
<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	74, 114, 150, 151, 179, 186, 188, 196, 574
Apsû	109
Chinese philosophy	183
<i>Genesis</i>	111
Hesiod	111, 112
Marduk.....	109
<i>mythos</i>	66, 107, 108, 112
<i>oral transmission</i>	31
<i>Purāṇas</i>	112
Sumer-Babylonian.....	106
<i>theogony</i>	111, 112, 131
Tiamat	109
<i>Vedas</i>	112
Ephesus	286
Heraclitus	400
<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>	
<i>Genesis</i>	86
<i>mythos</i>	198
<i>Torah</i>	86
Epicureanism	319, 332, 628
<i>atom</i>	536
Atomic Theory.....	536
Bacon	491

Diogenes Laertius	431, 448, 450	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	589
Eastern philosophy	378	<i>materialism</i>	510
<i>empiricism</i>	510	<i>metaphysics</i>	51, 790
Hellenic philosophy	431, 509	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	786, 792, 794, 803, 804
<i>materialism</i>	509, 510	<i>mysticism</i>	19
Psychology	606, 607	<i>mythos</i>	801
Roman Empire	448	<i>nationalism</i>	742
Stoicism	431, 434, 435	<i>objective realism</i>	52, 756
<i>theology</i>	374, 607	<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>Vedas</i>	260	<i>ontology</i>	20, 49, 50, 57
Virgil	450	origin	414
Epicurus	430	Parmenides	325
Epicureanism	430	philosophy.....	395
Hellenic philosophy	407	Physics.....	20
<i>materialism</i>	306	Pirsig.....	768
<i>epistêmê</i>	53, 319, 526, 552	Plato	51, 313, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 348, 367, 416, 423, 524, 769
<i>academia</i>	527	Plato).....	524
Aristotle	414, 762, 763	Pre-Socratic philosophy	400
Chinese philosophy.....	636	Psychology	797
Eastern philosophy	635	<i>quantization</i>	793
<i>epistemology</i>	54, 414, 582, 762	Quantum Era	9
Newton	527	Quantum Theory.....	51, 583, 587, 589, 793, 794
<i>philosophia</i>	300	Ramakrishna	55, 56
Quantum Era	616	<i>rationalism</i>	508, 509
Science.....	54	Science	19, 582
<i>sciencia</i>	526, 527	Stoicism	430, 434, 436, 439, 447
<i>theology</i>	747	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	52, 759
<i>epistemology</i>	13, 319, 332, 526, 743, 784	<i>supraconsciousness</i>	746, 781
<i>a posteriori knowledge</i>	511	<i>teleology</i>	54
<i>a priori knowledge</i>	511	<i>theology</i>	51, 427, 582
<i>academia</i>	751	Western philosophy	50
Aristotle ...	44, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 413, 414, 416, 422, 423, 762, 763, 764	<i>Epistles of Paul</i>	477
<i>awareness</i>	792	<i>EPR Paper</i>	
Awareness	796, 797	Bohmian Mechanics	598, 599
<i>Becoming</i>	51	Einstein	558
<i>Being</i>	51	EPR Paradox	558
<i>being qua being</i>	51	<i>hidden variables</i>	580
<i>category theory</i>	418	Quantum Theory.....	580
Chinese philosophy.....	351, 783	Schrödinger's cat.....	561
Daoism.....	346, 352, 353	EPR Paradox	559
Descartes	492, 493	Bell	564
Deutsch.....	589	Bohmian Mechanics	585, 599
<i>empiricism</i>	509	<i>EPR Paper</i>	558
Hellenic philosophy	202	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	593
Hume	508	<i>ontology</i>	732
<i>idealism</i>	802	Quantum Mechanics.....	566
<i>ideas</i>	802	Erebus	126, 127
Indian philosophy	760	Eriкеpaios	144
Kant	508, 513, 514, 515, 516, 784	<i>Eros</i>	127, 128, 142, 144, 153
<i>knowledge</i>	50, 51	Aristotle	425, 428, 765

<i>cosmogony</i>	428	<i>empiricism</i>	744
<i>desire</i>	795	Enlightenment Era	502, 505, 523, 754
Freud	609	Epicureanism	409
<i>Good</i>	425	<i>Eros</i>	428
<i>interconnectedness principle</i>	795	<i>eudaimonia</i>	409
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	257	Eurasia	97
Plato	428, 765	Hellenic philosophy	374, 400, 410, 420, 489, 607
Psychology	609, 795	Hume	508
<i>Theogony</i>	428	<i>ideas</i>	523
<i>theology</i>	428, 765	Indian philosophy	759
<i>theos</i>	765	Indo-European	396
<i>unmoved mover</i>	425	Judaism	81
<i>esotericism</i>		Kant ... 446, 508, 510, 511, 514, 515, 517, 518, 519, 521, 616, 744	
Apollo	132	<i>logos</i>	444
Daoism	333	<i>materialism</i>	556
Gnosticism	470, 471, 476	<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	790
Hermeticism	133	Metaphysics of Quality	772, 775
Jung	613	Mohism	228, 229, 353
Kripal	655	<i>mysticism</i>	776, 777
<i>mystery cults</i>	139	<i>natural law</i>	526
Neo-Platonism	460	Newton	525, 527
Orphism	139	Newtonian Mechanics	526
<i>Vedas</i>	162	Patañjali	374
<i>essentia</i>		Philo Judaeus	452
<i>ousia</i>	419, 524	<i>philosophy</i>	575, 747
<i>ethics</i>		Pirsig	624, 625, 775
Abrahamic religion	374	Plato	300, 302, 306, 319, 330, 367, 368, 370
<i>academia</i>	748	Psychology	606, 607
Academic Skepticism	436	<i>Quality</i>	770, 774
Al-Fârâbî	486	Quantum Era	557, 780
Al-Kindi	485	<i>reason</i>	517
<i>arête</i>	773	Religion	374
Aristotle	300, 374, 413, 415, 424, 583, 762	Royal Yoga	374
<i>autonomy</i>	518	Science	523, 753
Bacon	491	Scientific Revolution	503
<i>capitalism</i>	502	Shàngdì	230
Chinese philosophy ... 167, 170, 224, 227, 229, 231, 334, 377, 410, 633		Socrates	296, 301
Christianity	449, 774	Spinoza	494, 496
Cicero	446	Stoicism	430, 431, 433, 434, 435, 440, 443, 444, 447
Confucianism	227, 333, 336	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	775
<i>cosmogony</i>	206, 381	<i>supraconsciousness</i>	50
<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>	514	<i>teleology</i>	582
<i>Dao</i>	354	<i>theology</i>	527, 607, 744, 748, 754, 780
Daoism	353, 354	<i>Tiān</i>	184, 222
<i>Daoist sage</i>	354	<i>transcendental idealism</i>	20, 744
Descartes	494	<i>universality</i>	518
<i>dharma</i>	773	<i>unmoved mover</i>	425
Eastern philosophy	374, 720	Vedic philosophy	372
Eastern Philosophy	374	Western philosophy	748
Egypt	97	<i>Will of Heaven</i>	228

<i>yamas</i>	711
Yoga philosophy	711, 713, 719
<i>Ethics</i>	
Spinoza	495
Euclid	407, 484, 546, 554
<i>Elements</i>	407
<i>geometry</i>	532
Quantum Theory	565
Relativity Theory	577
<i>eudaimonia</i>	408, 436, 720
Daoism	179, 347
Hellenic philosophy	266, 400, 409
Psychology	606
<i>Republic</i>	306
Spinoza	496
Stoicism	442
Eudemus	144
Aristotle	143
Orphism	143
Eurasia	61, 65, 68, 389, 638
<i>arche</i>	17
Axial Age	19, 381, 382
Bronze Age	67
Buddhism	279
Cave art	47, 62
<i>cosmic egg</i>	204
<i>cosmogony</i>	380, 381, 383
Eastern philosophy	47, 378
<i>ethics</i>	97
Eurasian philosophy	19, 47, 378, 379, 382, 383
Four Ages	198
Great Flood	198
<i>homo sapiens</i>	29, 382
<i>human migration</i>	207, 382
Indo-European	390, 395
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i> ...	18, 22, 45, 47, 58, 198, 204, 207
<i>logos</i>	11, 19, 380, 381, 382, 383
<i>lyric poetry</i>	32, 380
Megaliths	65
<i>morality</i>	97
<i>mysticism</i>	382
<i>mythos</i>	11, 19, 22, 67, 97, 112, 197, 203, 204, 206, 207, 379, 382, 383, 408
Neolithic Era	66
Neolithic Revolution	29, 64
<i>oral transmission</i>	29, 32
Persia	203
<i>philosophy</i>	22, 203, 394, 408
<i>practical philosophy</i>	203
Proto-Indo-European	46, 384
<i>shamanism</i>	183, 783
<i>theogony</i>	112, 380, 383
<i>theology</i>	22, 427, 574
<i>theos</i>	380, 383
Vedic philosophy	379
Venus figurines	63
Western philosophy	47
Witzel	638
writing	67
Eurasian philosophy	21, 22
Axial Age	19, 47, 382, 383, 384
<i>Being</i>	383
<i>Brahman</i>	383
<i>cosmogony</i>	19, 379, 382, 383
<i>Dao</i>	383
Eastern philosophy	47, 378, 379
Eurasia	19, 382, 383
<i>human migration</i>	382
Indo-Aryan	379
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	19
<i>logos</i>	19, 379, 382, 383
<i>metaphysics</i>	379
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	15
<i>mysticism</i>	382
<i>mythos</i>	19, 379, 381, 382, 383
Neolithic Era	47, 382
<i>oral transmission</i>	382
Proto-Indo-European	380, 383
<i>theogony</i>	19, 379, 382, 383
<i>theology</i>	379
<i>theos</i>	382, 383
Upanishadic philosophy	380
<i>Vedas</i>	378, 380
Vedic philosophy	379, 380
Western philosophy	47
Eurasian Philosophy	
Axial Age	382
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	382
<i>logos</i>	382
<i>mythos</i>	382
Eurydice	133, 134
Orpheus	135
Everett, Hugh	20, 592
Bohm	734
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	589, 594
Deutsch	589
Dewitt	589
<i>implicate order</i>	603
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	588, 589, 591, 592, 593, 594
<i>metatheory</i>	591, 594, 732
<i>mind</i>	593, 603

<i>ontology</i>	591, 732
Quantum Theory	590
<i>relative-state formulation</i> ...	13, 589, 590, 591, 593, 732
<i>The Theory of the Universal Wave Function</i>	588
<i>Theory of the Universal Wave Function</i>	588
<i>uncertainty principle</i>	593
<i>Universal Wave Function</i>	20, 588, 590, 591
Wheeler	588
<i>exegesis</i>	453, 459, 466
Judaism	457
Philo Judaeus	9, 452
Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute	760, 795
Ramakrishna	695
<i>Satcitānanda</i>	420
Yoga philosophy	719
<i>Exodus</i>	82, 83, 84
<i>explicate order</i>	20, 620, 623
<i>implicate order</i>	601
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	797
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	602, 603
<i>synchronicity</i>	614

F

<i>falṣafa</i>	406, 484, 487, 576
Al-Kindi	485
Arabic philosophy	406
Aristotle	411, 412, 764
Averroes	487
<i>first mover</i>	764
Hellenic philosophy	411, 461, 503
Muslim philosophy	484
Neo-Platonism	461, 764
<i>philosophia</i>	411, 484
Fate	
Buddhism.....	280
Chinese	251
Chinese philosophy.....	225
Pirsig	772
Psychology	606
Stoicism	443
<i>Yijing</i>	175, 233, 241, 246, 783
Fertile Crescent.....	63
Neolithic Revolution	63
<i>final cause</i>	423
Aristotle	422, 423, 427, 429
<i>epistemology</i>	55
Soul.....	56
<i>theology</i>	427, 429
<i>unmoved mover</i>	425
<i>first cause</i>	

Al-Fârâbî.....	486
<i>first mover</i>	
Allāh	764
Aristotle	426
<i>Brahman</i>	377
<i>epistemology</i>	56
<i>falṣafa</i>	764
<i>theology</i>	765
<i>theos</i>	763
<i>first philosophy</i>	
Aristotle	53, 415, 762, 763
<i>being qua being</i>	415
Bohm.....	594, 734
Descartes	492, 494
Eastern philosophy.....	635
Hellenic philosophy.....	407
<i>implicate order</i>	604
Kant	514
<i>metaphysics</i>	528, 753, 763
<i>mysticism</i>	690
<i>ontology</i>	55
Quantum Theory.....	579
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	50
<i>teleology</i>	581, 582
Western philosophy	378
<i>First philosophy</i>	
Quantum Era	616
<i>first principles</i>	
Academic Skepticism.....	435
<i>arche</i>	125, 799
Aristotle	291
Aristoxenus	78
<i>Awareness</i>	795, 799, 802
Chinese philosophy	16
<i>cosmogony</i>	291
Eastern philosophy.....	796
<i>Genesis</i>	151
<i>Good</i>	78, 747
Hellenic philosophy	16, 124
Hesiod	128
Kant	789
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	787, 795, 796, 800
<i>mind</i>	789
Neo-Platonism	124
<i>numerology</i>	78
<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>ontology</i>	78
Orphism	143
Ovid	294
Plato	78, 321, 764
Pre-Socratic philosophy	124

<i>prime mover</i>	747	Newtonian Mechanics	526
<i>Puruṣa</i>	707	Philo Judaeus	452
Pythagoras.....	291	Pirsig.....	772
<i>theogony</i>	131	Psychology	606
<i>theology</i>	799	Spinoza	494, 495
<i>Vedas</i>	707	Stoicism	443
<i>Yīn-Yáng</i>	205	French Revolution	752
<i>First Teacher</i>		Freud, Sigmund	
Al-Fârâbî	486	<i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</i>	609, 610
Aristotle	412, 480	<i>causal determinism</i>	609
<i>Five Books of Moses</i>		<i>collective unconscious</i>	612
Chinese philosophy.....	183	Darwin.....	609
Gnosticism	461	<i>defense mechanisms</i>	610
Great Flood.....	107	<i>desire</i>	610
Hellenic philosophy	82	<i>determinism</i>	609
Judaism	454	<i>dreams</i>	609
<i>Ketuvim</i>	85	<i>ego</i>	610
Moses	85, 454	Enlightenment Era	610
<i>Old Testament</i>	454	<i>Eros</i>	609
<i>Pentateuch</i>	82	<i>fixation</i>	610
<i>Tanakh</i>	81	<i>id</i> 610	
<i>Five Classics</i>	220, 335, 338, 341, 631	<i>Interpretation of Dreams</i>	608
Chinese philosophy.....	229, 334, 376	Jung	611, 612
Eastern philosophy	630	<i>mind</i>	608, 609
Five Classics (Confucian)	336	<i>natural law</i>	609
Five Emperors	163, 179, 180	<i>naturalism</i>	611
Chinese philosophy.....	175	<i>neurosis</i>	610
<i>formal cause</i>		<i>Oedipal complex</i>	609
Aristotle	422, 423	Plato	610
<i>epistemology</i>	55	psychoanalysis	609
Four Ages		Psychology	20, 608, 610, 612, 615
Eurasia	198	<i>reason</i>	610
<i>Genesis</i>	198	<i>repression</i>	610
Hesiod.....	198	<i>sublimation</i>	610
Indo-Aryan.....	198	<i>superconscious</i>	695
<i>Laws of Manu</i>	198, 205	<i>super-ego</i>	610
<i>lyric poetry</i>	380	<i>supraconsciousness</i>	704
<i>mythos</i>	198, 380	<i>Thanatos</i>	609
Ovid	198	<i>The Ego and the Id</i>	610
<i>Purāṇas</i>	198	<i>theology</i>	610, 612, 613
<i>Yugas</i>	198	<i>theory of dreams</i>	608
Four Books (Confucian).....	631	<i>therapy</i>	609
<i>four causes</i>	See causality: Aristotle	<i>unconscious</i>	608
Four Noble Truths	270, 272, 273, 275, 276, 277	Valdez.....	678
<i>marks of existence</i>	278	Freudian psychology	615, 698, 704
Fowler, Harold North	301, 310, 311, 314, 315, 355, 362, 363, 368, 611	<i>Awareness</i>	795
Free Will		Biology	611
Buddhism.....	280	<i>causal determinism</i>	609
Kant	518	Cognitive Science	700
Newton	525	<i>desire</i>	678
		<i>determinism</i>	699

Eastern philosophy	688
<i>epistemology</i>	55
<i>id</i> 610	
Indian philosophy	693
Jung	611
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	688, 700, 701, 703, 704
Kripal	682, 700
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795
<i>nirvikalpa samādhi</i>	693
Ramakrishna	658, 675, 678, 682, 683, 687, 699, 704
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	777
Tantra Yoga	658
theory	698
Valdez	703
Fu Xi	164, 168
<i>bāguà</i>	180, 242, 243, 245, 247, 248
<i>Shiji</i>	181
Sima Zhen	181
Sovereign	169
<i>Yijing</i>	175, 238
<i>Yīn-Yáng</i>	175

G

Gaia	127, 129, 142
<i>theogony</i>	131
Galileo	498, 499, 501, 522
Copernicus	498
<i>Discourses Concerning the Two New Sciences</i>	499
Einstein	532
<i>electromagnetism</i>	531
Enlightenment Era	553, 751
<i>geometry</i>	532
<i>heliocentrism</i>	504
Kepler	499, 500
<i>natural philosophy</i>	498
Science	498
Scientific Revolution	504
Garden of Eden	84, 193, 454, 457
Egypt	103
Four Ages	198
Sumer-Babylonian	86, 87
<i>Gathas</i>	116, 118, 393
<i>Avesta</i>	116
<i>mythos</i>	199
<i>Vedas</i>	198
Zarathustra	115
Gathic Avestan	393
Gayomard	120
Geb	
Ennead	99

<i>Gèn</i>	243, 245, 247, 248, 250, 251
General Relativity	532, 533
<i>Genesis</i>	74, 84, 147, 148, 152, 451, 720
<i>cosmogony</i>	370
<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>	86
<i>first principles</i>	151
<i>Five Books of Moses</i>	454
Four Ages	198
Great Flood	198
Hellenic philosophy	453
<i>homooousios</i>	478
<i>mythos</i>	198
Nu 103	
Ovid	192, 194
<i>Pentateuch</i>	82
Philo Judaeus	9
<i>pneuma</i>	442
Scientific Revolution	576
Sumer-Babylonian	86, 87
<i>theogony</i>	111
<i>Timaeus</i>	397
<i>Vedas</i>	161
Yoga philosophy	719
Genographic Project	48, 59
<i>geocentrism</i>	498
Newton	500
Scientific Revolution	505
<i>geometry</i>	233, 292, 725
<i>analogy of the divided line</i>	322
<i>analytic</i>	554
Aristotle	413
<i>arithmology</i>	289
Descartes	492
<i>differential</i>	577
Enlightenment Era	576
Euclid	554, 576, 577
Greek	554
<i>Hilbert space</i>	577, 590
<i>intelligibles</i>	322
<i>Logos</i>	428
Minkowski	532
<i>ontology</i>	578
Physics	578
Plato	322
Pre-Socratic philosophy	404
Pythagoras	289, 290
Quantum Mechanics	549, 577, 590
<i>rationalism</i>	509
<i>Rhind Mathematical Papyrus</i>	289
Scientific Revolution	576
<i>Śulbasūtras</i>	289

<i>theology</i>	428
<i>three laws of motion</i>	576
<i>Vedas</i>	289
<i>globalism</i>	741
Glorious Revolution	
Enlightenment Era.....	504
<i>gnosis</i>	461, 470, 472, 473, 476
Gnosticism.....	464, 472
Gnostic	
Jesus.....	472
Gnosticism.....	451, 452, 466, 476, 477
<i>Apocryphon of John</i>	475
Apostles.....	476
Basilides.....	473
Christianity.....	461, 462, 464, 465, 472, 478
Church.....	478
Constantine.....	464
<i>cosmogony</i>	476
Eastern philosophy.....	629
<i>esotericism</i>	471, 476
<i>geometry</i>	428
<i>gnosis</i>	461, 464, 467, 471
<i>Gospel of John</i>	467
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	467, 474, 475
<i>Gospel of Truth</i>	470, 472
Hermeticism.....	452
Irenaeus.....	470, 473
Jesus.....	457, 459, 471, 474
Judaism.....	457
<i>Logos</i>	471
<i>metaphysics</i>	471
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	802
<i>mystery cults</i>	464, 476, 478
<i>mysticism</i>	470, 471, 765
Nag Hammadi Library.....	452, 467
<i>Pistis Sophia</i>	476
Plato.....	471, 475
sects.....	477
<i>sophia</i>	457
<i>Sophia</i>	473, 476
Stoicism.....	430
Golden Age.....	192, 340
Good.....	472
Allegory of the Cave.....	308
<i>anaology of the divided line</i>	322
Aristotle.....	426
<i>causality</i>	421
<i>cosmogony</i>	328, 329
<i>Dao</i>	348
Descartes.....	494
<i>emanation</i>	460

<i>Eros</i>	425
<i>first principles</i>	78, 747
<i>gnosis</i>	471
Hellenic philosophy.....	395
<i>idealism</i>	317, 570
Indo-European.....	397
<i>intelligibles</i>	317
Kant.....	515
Middle Period.....	302
<i>morality</i>	773
Pirsig.....	772
Plato.....	331
Psychology.....	607
<i>Quality</i>	773
Stoicism.....	438
<i>theology</i>	427
<i>theory of forms</i>	306
<i>Timaeus</i>	323
Vedānta.....	648
Goodwin, William W.	441, 443, 444
<i>Gospel of John</i>	420, 450
<i>geometry</i>	428
Gnosticism.....	459, 467
Gospels.....	451
<i>Logos</i>	446
<i>Gospel of Śrī Ramakrishna</i>	
Mahendranath Gupta.....	11
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	474, 475
<i>Gospel of Truth</i>	470
Gospels	
Gnosticism.....	461
Hellenic philosophy.....	449, 450
<i>graphemes</i>	574
<i>gravity</i>	551
Einstein.....	529, 535, 540, 618
General Relativity.....	534
<i>geometry</i>	577
<i>morality</i>	773
Newton.....	500, 528
<i>ontology</i>	19
Pirsig.....	773
<i>Principia</i>	525
Relativity Theory.....	534
<i>scientific method</i>	619
<i>spacetime</i>	534, 577, 578
<i>theology</i>	550
<i>Value</i>	773
<i>Great Commentary</i>	225, 238, 239, 240, 242
Great Flood.....	165, 192
Chinese philosophy.....	221
<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	107

<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>	192
Four Ages	198, 380
<i>Genesis</i>	192
Judaism	86
<i>Laws of Manu</i>	205
<i>mythos</i>	198, 205, 380
<i>Old Testament</i>	107
Ovid	192, 198
Pángǔ	205
Sumer-Babylonian	107
<i>Great Treatise</i>	242
<i>Greater Yáng</i>	240, 244
<i>Greater Yīn</i>	240
Greek alphabet	72, 90, 105, 394, 575
Phoenician alphabet	639
Griffith, Ralph	152, 153, 156, 257, 708
<i>Yajurveda</i>	256
<i>guà</i>	233, 235
<i>Guanzi</i>	
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	37
<i>gunas</i>	
<i>arche</i>	16
Guodian Chu Slips	171, 215
<i>gymnosophists</i>	69, 448

H

Hades	98, 129, 305, 361
Anra Mainyu	116
Duat	104
Orpheus	133, 134
Set103	

H

<i>Ḥadīth</i>	481, 482, 488, 489
<i>Talmud</i>	481

H

Hahm, David E.	433
<i>Origins of Stoic Cosmogony</i>	439
Hall, David L.	215
<i>hamsa</i>	691
Advaita Vedānta	691
Han dynasty	
<i>Record of the Warring States</i>	222
Han Dynasty	164, 176, 222, 236, 335, 338
Chinese philosophy	223
Confucianism	166, 167, 217, 631
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	344

Daoism	351
Hellenic philosophy	356
<i>Huainanzi</i>	177
<i>Records of the Grand Historian</i>	343
<i>Shiji</i>	163
<i>haoma</i>	
Avestan	200
<i>soma</i>	200
<i>hapax legomenon</i>	665
Hatha Yoga	711, 712
Hawking, Stephen	501
<i>Heavenly Questions</i>	173
<i>oral transmission</i>	30
<i>Rigvéda</i>	172
<i>skepticism</i>	174
<i>Songs of Chu</i>	172
Hebrew. 71, 74, 75, 76, 81, 82, 86, 113, 144, 190, 454, 455, 459	
Aramaic	81, 575
English	419
Indo-European	81
Judaism	87, 454
<i>Ketuvim</i>	85
<i>Nómos</i>	80
<i>Pentateuch</i>	82
Phoenician alphabet	200
Pre-Socratic philosophy	398
Sumer-Babylonian	111
<i>Torah</i>	79, 85
Hebrew alphabet	72
<i>hêgemonikon</i>	436
Heisenberg, Werner	578
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	585
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	589
<i>quantum potential</i>	597
Quantum Theory	585
<i>uncertainty principle</i>	547, 548, 559
Helenic philosophy	
Orpheus	137
<i>heliocentrism</i>	498
Copernicus	498
Galileo	752
<i>mathematics</i>	498, 499
Newton	522
Scientific Revolution	19
Heliopolis	
Atum	98
<i>cosmogony</i>	98
<i>Ma'at</i>	104
Memphis	101
<i>mythos</i>	98, 101

Witzel.....	98
Helios	
Egypt.....	101
Heliopolis.....	101
<i>mythos</i>	257
<i>Sūrya</i>	257
<i>Vedas</i>	257
Hellenic philosophy.....	13, 16, 95, 266, 268, 276, 319, 341, 459, 651, 708
<i>a posteriori</i>	510
<i>a priori</i>	510
<i>academia</i>	763
Academy.....	763
Al-Fārābī.....	486
Al-Kindi.....	485
<i>allegoresis</i>	346, 446, 454
Arabic.....	461
Arabic philosophy.....	411, 461, 485
<i>arche</i>	16
<i>arête</i>	774
Aristotle.....	400, 411, 763
Atomic Theory.....	536
Awareness.....	795, 801
<i>Bâ</i> 91	
<i>change</i>	51
Chinese.....	233
Chinese philosophy.....	9, 177, 202, 231, 332, 356, 375, 376, 409, 632, 635
Christian Church Fathers.....	576
Christianity.....	379, 406, 407, 450, 459, 460, 463, 651, 652
Clement of Alexandria.....	386
<i>cosmogony</i>	201, 381, 410
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	346
Daoism.....	174, 346, 348, 352
<i>Demiurge</i>	224, 323
Descartes.....	494
Diogenes Laertius.....	386, 387, 435
Egypt.....	101
<i>empiricism</i>	509, 510
Enlightenment Era.....	404, 503
Epicureanism.....	409
<i>epistemology</i>	202
<i>ethics</i>	374, 489
<i>eudaimonia</i>	266
Eurasia.....	381, 395
<i>exegesis</i>	453
<i>falṣafa</i>	411, 576
<i>first principles</i>	16, 124
<i>Five Books of Moses</i>	82
<i>geometry</i>	428
Gnosticism.....	471, 474, 476

Gospels.....	449, 450
<i>gymnosophists</i>	448
Hesiod.....	201
Hinduism.....	378
Homer.....	201
<i>Huainanzi</i>	177
<i>idealism</i>	318
<i>ideas</i>	100
Indian philosophy.....	356, 368, 369
Indo-Aryan.....	637
Indo-European.....	396, 401, 783
Islam.....	406, 480, 483, 484, 485
Judaism.....	456, 457
Kant.....	506
<i>kosmos</i>	427
Kripal.....	670
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	45
<i>logic</i>	427, 428
<i>logos</i>	12
<i>Logos</i>	100, 224, 408, 427, 428, 460, 778
<i>LXX</i>	455
<i>Ma'at</i>	97
<i>mathematics</i>	428
McEvilley.....	356
<i>metaphysics</i>	569
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795
Metaphysics of Quality.....	773
Miletus.....	401
<i>monotheism</i>	201
Moses.....	453
Muslim philosophy.....	484, 486, 489
<i>mystery cults</i>	42, 117, 407
<i>mysticism</i>	42, 765
<i>mythos</i>	12, 201, 202, 224, 801
Neo-Platonism.....	411, 460
<i>New Testament</i>	454
<i>Nómos</i>	79, 774
<i>numerology</i>	783
<i>Old Testament</i>	449
<i>ontology</i>	50, 584
<i>óntōs</i>	15, 49
<i>Organon</i>	407
origins.....	386
Orphism.....	139, 143, 145
Parmenides.....	324
<i>Pentateuch</i>	82
Persia.....	398, 404
Philo Judaeus.....	449, 452, 453
<i>philosophia</i>	202, 413, 749
<i>phronēsis</i>	316
PirSIG.....	770, 772

Plato	236, 319, 330, 406, 411, 763
Pre-Socratic philosophy	399, 400, 401, 576
Psychology	606, 607
Puruṣa	155
Pythagoras	202, 286
<i>Quality</i>	772, 773
Quantum Theory	584
<i>rationalism</i>	510
<i>reason</i>	305, 405
Science	406
Scientific Revolution	19
Socrates	201
<i>sophia</i>	201, 801
<i>Sophia</i>	22
Soul	368, 396
Stoicism	430, 439, 444, 445
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	617, 782
<i>theogony</i>	201
<i>theology</i>	201
<i>theory of forms</i>	318, 395
<i>Torah</i>	79, 456
Upanishadic philosophy	356, 358, 359
Valdez	10
<i>Vedas</i>	260
West	356
Western philosophy	201, 629
<i>wisdom</i>	201, 365, 453, 801
writing	394
<i>ymnos</i>	200
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	174
Zoroastrianism	115
Heraclitus	285, 287, 341, 359
<i>change</i>	194
<i>conflagration</i>	438, 442
Diogenes Laertius	288
Ephesus	286
Homer	408
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	48
<i>On Nature</i>	400
Persia	288
<i>Phaedo</i>	314
Plato	301, 305, 314, 356
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283
Pythagoras	287
Upanishadic philosophy	258
Hermes	
Alcibiades	296
Hermeticism	97
Marduk	110
Thoth	97, 101, 133
Hermes Trismegistus	
<i>alchemy</i>	501
<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>	501
Hermeticism	9, 133
Middle Ages	133
Hermeticism	
<i>alchemy</i>	501
<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>	452
Eastern philosophy	629
Egypt	98
<i>esotericism</i>	133
Gnosticism	452
Hermes	98
Hermes Trismegistus	133
Jung	501
<i>mysticism</i>	9, 133, 629
Nag Hammadi Library	452
Thoth	98
Hermopolis	
<i>cosmic egg</i>	205
Khmun	98
<i>mythos</i>	205
Ogdoad	98
<i>theogony</i>	205
Herodotus	69, 95, 334, 407
Dionysus	133
Egypt	90, 93, 96, 132, 133
<i>Histories</i>	221
<i>Magi</i>	403
<i>mythos</i>	132
Orpheus	135, 136
Orphism	135, 138
Persia	135
Pythagoras	287
<i>Shiji</i>	163
Zoroastrianism	116
Hesiod	71, 95, 113, 136, 305, 376, 394, 575, 720
<i>allegoresis</i>	437
<i>arche</i>	127
Aristotle	425
<i>Chronos</i>	774
<i>cosmogony</i>	124, 126
<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	112
<i>Eros</i>	428
<i>first principles</i>	124, 127
Four Ages	198
Hellenic philosophy	201, 404
Marduk	110
Muses	125, 126
<i>mythos</i>	17, 112, 201, 373
<i>Nómos</i>	774
<i>oral transmission</i>	30, 214

Orpheus	133, 135, 138, 145
Orphism	139, 143, 145
Ovid	187, 194
Parmenides	326
Plato	305
Pre-Socratic philosophy	398, 400
<i>Purāṇas</i>	157
<i>theogony</i>	112, 124, 131, 145, 189, 204
<i>Theogony</i>	74, 95, 125, 127, 132, 147, 148, 150, 186, 196, 407, 720
<i>Upanishads</i>	642
<i>ymnos</i>	200
<i>Yugas</i>	198
<i>Hetu</i>	237
hexagram	211
<i>bāguà</i>	239, 240, 242
Confucianism	240
<i>cosmogony</i>	241
<i>divination</i>	235, 236
Fu Xi	181
<i>guà</i>	235
<i>metaphysics</i>	237
trigram	225
<i>yi</i>	226
<i>Yijing</i>	210, 239
Hicks, R. D.	387, 435
<i>hidden variables</i>	
Bell	564
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565, 595
Bohm	594, 596
Bohmian Mechanics	580, 585, 594, 598, 599, 733
<i>determinism</i>	580, 599
Einstein	559, 560
<i>EPR Paper</i>	580
EPR Paradox	564
<i>locality</i>	595
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	596, 601
<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	595, 596
Quantum Theory	564, 580
von Neumann	595
hieratic	
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	91
Clement of Alexandria	89
Egypt	89
hieroglyphics	575
hieroglyphs	89
hieroglyphics	575
hieratic	575
hieroglyphs	71, 72, 75, 76, 166
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	91
cuneiform	106

demotic	89
Egypt	89
Greek	100
hieratic	89
<i>highest good</i>	
<i>categorical imperative</i>	518
Kant	518

H

<i>ḥikmah</i>	484
---------------------	-----

H

<i>Hilbert space</i>	577
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	590
Hiley, Basil	731, 733
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565
Bohm	585
<i>implicate order</i>	604, 730
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	594
<i>metaphysics</i>	731
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	601
Hinduism	150, 151, 197, 266, 639, 646, 650, 651
Advaita Vedānta	646
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	643
<i>Brahman</i>	371, 377
Buddhism	268
Chinese philosophy	377
Christianity	379
Cosmic Soul	149
<i>dharma</i>	773
Eastern philosophy	372, 379
Eurasia	379
Hellenic philosophy	378
Indian philosophy	650
Indo-Aryan	148, 634, 637
Indra	640
Indus Valley	148, 637
Īśvara	254, 646
<i>Mahābhārata</i>	643
<i>mystery cults</i>	372
<i>mythos</i>	147, 161, 371
pantheism	377
Ramakrishna	676, 680, 702
<i>Rigvéda</i>	379
<i>rishis</i>	373
Tantra Yoga	680
<i>tapas</i>	261
Vedānta	641, 651
<i>Vedas</i>	372, 373, 682

Vedic philosophy	373
Yoga philosophy	374
Yugas	572
Zoroastrianism	115, 199, 200
<i>Hiranyagarbha</i>	161
<i>Brahman</i>	147
<i>cosmic egg</i>	147, 205
<i>Eros</i>	257
<i>Historical Records of the Three Sovereign Divinities and the</i>	
<i>Five Gods</i>	168, 169
<i>Histories</i>	116, 132, 136, 287
Hittite	105
<i>holomovement</i>	20, 623
<i>implicate order</i>	602
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	801
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	600
<i>ontology</i>	731, 734
Quantum Era	780
Holy Mother	662, 663, 665, 674, 687
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	674
Holy Spirit	
Christianity	462
<i>homooousios</i>	478
<i>kuṇḍalinī</i>	719
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798, 802
<i>monotheism</i>	462
<i>pneuma</i>	442, 445
<i>qì</i> 178	
Stoicism	445
Trinity	461
<i>World Soul</i>	460
Homer	71, 95, 136, 305, 376, 394, 575
<i>allegoresis</i>	437
Hellenic philosophy	201, 404
Hesiod	125
<i>Iliad</i>	186
<i>mythos</i>	201
<i>Odyssey</i>	186
<i>oral transmission</i>	214
Orpheus	133, 135, 137, 138
Ovid	187
Parmenides	326
Plato	305
Pre-Socratic philosophy	398, 400
<i>Purāṇas</i>	157
Simā Qiān	183
<i>Upanishads</i>	642
<i>ymnos</i>	200
<i>homo sapiens</i>	21, 28, 32, 47
Eurasia	29, 382
<i>human migration</i>	59, 382

<i>mysticism</i>	25
<i>mythos</i>	382
<i>oral transmission</i>	27, 28, 29
<i>homooousios</i>	
Trinity	478
Horus	102, 129, 130
Marduk	110
<i>Huainanzi</i>	176, 177
Chinese philosophy	176
<i>cosmogony</i>	177
Hellenic philosophy	177
<i>Republic</i>	177
Huangdi	163, 180, 221, 334
<i>human migration</i>	21, 60
bottleneck	59
Cave art	60
Eurasia	59, 382, 383
Eurasian philosophy	382, 383
<i>homo sapiens</i>	59, 382
human genome	59
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	49, 59, 206, 638
<i>logos</i>	383
<i>mythos</i>	21, 59
<i>philosophy</i>	21
<i>theos</i>	383
Venus figurines	60
Witzel	638
<i>humanism</i>	636
Hume, David	
Kant	508, 509, 513
Hundred Schools of Thought	221
<i>hylomorphism</i>	416, 569, 689
Aristotle	421, 423, 424
<i>ousia</i>	419
Stoicism	444
<i>hymnos</i>	305
<i>Hymns of Orpheus</i>	204
<i>hypostasis</i>	
Islam	764

I

<i>I Ching</i>	See Yijing
Iamblichus	285, 292
<i>akousmatika</i>	292
<i>Life of Pythagoras</i>	292
Neo-Platonism	670
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283
Pythagoras	291, 292
<i>Ibn Sīnā</i>	487
<i>logic</i>	487

<i>id</i>		
<i>ego</i>	610	
Freud	610	
Psychology	610	
unconscious	610	
<i>idealism</i>	332	
Aristotle	429, 510	
Daoism.....	570	
epistemology	802	
Hellenic philosophy	318, 510	
Kant	510, 516, 744	
Laurasian hypothesis	48	
materialism.....	516	
Metaphysics of Awareness	802	
monotheism.....	397	
ontology.....	728, 802	
Plato	302, 306, 311, 424, 570, 689, 769	
Platonism	417	
rationalism.....	510	
theology.....	427	
theory of forms	306, 317	
transcendental idealism	744	
Vedānta	650	
Western philosophy	318	
<i>ideas</i>		
<i>a priori</i> knowledge	314, 315	
Allegory of the Cave	308	
<i>arche</i>	125	
Awareness	802	
Classical Chinese	633	
<i>Dao</i>	348	
Daoism.....	347	
<i>eidōs</i>	306	
epistemology	802	
<i>first principles</i>	125	
Hellenic philosophy	100	
<i>intelligibles</i>	310	
Kant	519	
<i>Logos</i>	100	
Metaphysics of Awareness	795, 801, 802	
ontological argument	799	
oral transmission	30, 37	
Plato	306, 307, 367, 395	
Psychology	607	
Saradananda	670	
Stoicism	435	
theology.....	427	
theory of forms	314, 626	
<i>ideogram</i>		
Chinese philosophy.....	632	
Classical Chinese	632	
<i>ideograms</i>	71, 210	
cuneiform.....	106	
hieroglyphs.....	89	
<i>Iliad</i>		
<i>Mahābhārata</i>	643	
oral transmission.....	30	
<i>impermanence</i>	194, 265, 266, 277, 278, 279, 280	
Buddhism	278, 280	
<i>implicate order</i>	20, 620, 623, 625, 728	
<i>Being</i>	57	
Classical Mechanics	601	
<i>first philosophy</i>	604	
holomovement	602	
metaphysics	602, 604	
Metaphysics of Awareness.....	797, 801	
mind	604	
Ontological Interpretation	600, 602, 603	
ontology	57, 604, 730, 733, 734	
<i>pre-space</i>	601	
Psychology	614	
Quantum Era	780	
Quantum Mechanics	601	
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	603	
synchronicity	614	
theology	797	
Indian philosophy	386, 649, 720	
Advaita Vedānta	680, 760	
<i>arche</i>	160	
Ātman	396	
Awareness.....	801	
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	35, 643, 644	
<i>Bhavamukha</i>	665	
<i>Brahman</i>	759	
Buddhism	40, 280	
Chinese philosophy	356, 632	
Daoism	353	
<i>Dhammapada</i>	276	
<i>dharma</i>	159, 276	
Dvaita Vedānta.....	760	
Eastern philosophy.....	629	
enlightenment.....	637	
epistemology.....	759, 760, 798	
Eurasia.....	395	
gymnosophists	448	
Hellenic philosophy	356, 368	
heterodox.....	40, 641	
Indo-Aryan	27, 253, 634, 637	
Indo-European	397	
<i>jiva</i>	717	
Kālī	718	
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	674, 683	

Kripal655, 670
kuṇḍalinī681
Mahābhārata643
 McEvilley46, 356
meditation26, 35, 41
metaphysics760
Metaphysics of Awareness796
Metaphysics of Quality773
 Mohism353
mokṣa149
mysticism35, 42, 719, 757, 758
mythos254
Nei-yeh38, 39
 Neo-Platonism783
nirvikalpa samādhi693, 695
Nómos774
ontology395, 759
oral transmission37
 orthodox641
Patañjali21, 35
 Pirsig755
 Plato369
Quality773
 Ramakrishna42, 653, 667, 670, 671, 680, 696
rishis39
Ṛta783
sādhaka669, 677
Śakti681
samādhi666, 694
Sāṃkhya706
Śāṅkara645
 Sanskrit420
Satcitānanda758, 759
 Soul368, 396
Śramaṇa266
subject-object metaphysics782
supraconsciousness745, 756
 Tantra Yoga43, 680, 681, 682, 683
 Torah774
 translation420
upanishad642
 Upanishadic philosophy380
Upanishads253
 Vedānta20
Vedas39, 682
 Vedic philosophy380
Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta760
 Vivekananda11, 21, 673, 714, 717
 West356
 Yoga36
 Yoga philosophy706

individuation651, 704
active imagination703
archetypes702
Awareness795
interconnectedness principle795
 Jung612
 Jungian psychology702
mandalas702
meditation703
Metaphysics of Awareness795, 797
 Psychology612
Red Book612
 Tantra Yoga702
theology372, 613
 Indo-Aryan
arithmetic289
 Brahmins149
 Buddhism266, 267
 Chinese637
 Chinese philosophy376
 civilization266, 627, 637
cosmic egg196, 205
cosmogony156, 205, 372, 379, 381, 638
 Eastern philosophy150, 378
 Eurasia19, 381
 Eurasian philosophy19, 371, 379
 Greek influence403
 Hellenic philosophy369
 Hinduism197, 650
 Indian philosophy253, 641, 649, 682
 Indo-European27, 359, 360
 Indo-Iranian199, 393
 Indra640
 Indus Valley148, 637
Laurasian hypothesis45, 48
Laws of Manu158, 159, 641
mathematics289
monotheism162
mythos147, 161, 197, 199, 205, 253, 371, 372
oral transmission214, 642
 Orphism144
 Persians198
philology147, 199
 philosophy9, 16, 150, 152, 153, 634, 638, 649
 Pre-Socratic philosophy359, 398, 404
 Proto-Indo-European198
Purāṇas157, 198
 Puruṣa154
qì 377
Rigvéda152, 640
rishis154, 358

<i>Science of the mind</i>	720	Vedic Sanskrit.....	27
Shàngdì	230	Vulgar Latin	390
Tantra Yoga.....	682	Indo-Iranian.....	149, 361, 402, 574
<i>theology</i>	641, 651	<i>Avesta</i>	199
<i>Upanishads</i>	150, 358	<i>cosmogony</i>	381
Vedānta	148, 254, 639	Eastern philosophy.....	378
<i>Vedas</i>	27, 149, 199, 574, 639, 641, 642	Eurasia.....	19, 381
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	45	Eurasian philosophy	19
Vedic period	256, 641	Indo-Aryan	199
Vedic Sanskrit	87	Indo-European	393
<i>vidyā</i>	266	Indra	640
<i>yajña</i>	200	language.....	639
<i>ymnos</i>	201	<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	48
Indo-European	575	<i>mythos</i>	199
Buddhism.....	280	<i>oral transmission</i>	214, 642
Chinese philosophy.....	345, 356, 396	Pāli	271
<i>cognates</i>	389	Persia	199, 393
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	346	<i>philology</i>	46, 147, 199
<i>eidōs</i>	302	Proto-Indo-European	198
Greek	393	Zoroastrianism	103
Hebrew	81	Indra	154, 156
Hellenic philosophy	401	<i>Brahman</i>	262
<i>ideas</i>	302	Hinduism	640
Indo-Iranian	147, 393	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	261
Indus Valley	148	<i>Rigvéda</i>	640
language	16, 360, 391, 393, 419, 637, 639	<i>Vedas</i>	640
languages.....	46	Zeus.....	640
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	17, 45, 46, 48	Indus River	
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	802, 803	Alexander the Great.....	398
<i>Metaphysics of Quality</i>	773	Indus River Pre-Socratic philosophy.....	398
<i>monotheism</i>	397	Indus Valley	118, 148, 200, 637, 640
<i>mysticism</i>	34	Indo-Aryan	197
Neo-Platonism	783	<i>mythos</i>	148
Pāli	271	Information Age	21
Persia	393	Eurasian philosophy	383
<i>philology</i>	27, 46, 390, 395	Quantum Era	383
philosophical	774	<i>intelligibles</i>	
philosophy	359, 360, 366, 395, 396, 575, 626, 668	<i>analogy of the divided line</i>	320, 322
Pirsig	774, 775	Aristotle	444
Plato	356, 396	<i>Being</i>	323, 330
Proto-Indo-European.....	390, 391, 395	<i>epistemology</i>	322, 330
<i>Quality</i>	773	<i>geometry</i>	322
<i>reductionist</i>	782, 802	<i>Good</i>	317
<i>Satcitānanda</i>	796	Kant.....	515, 519
Sino-Tibetan	389	<i>Phaedrus</i>	315
<i>skepticism</i>	319	Plato	310, 316, 317, 321, 348, 606
Soul.....	369	Psychology	606
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782	<i>Republic</i>	320
<i>theology</i>	783	<i>Timaeus</i>	323
<i>theory of forms</i>	302	<i>interconnectedness principle</i>	800
Vedānta	11	<i>Awareness</i>	795, 800

<i>individuation</i>	795
Jung	795
Jungian psychology	795
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	800
<i>morality</i>	800
Psychology	795
<i>Interpretation of Dreams</i>	
Psychology	608
<i>invisible hand</i>	739
<i>Inward Training</i>	903
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	37
Ionian philosophy	288
Irenaeus	469, 470, 475, 477
<i>Against Heresies</i>	470, 473, 475
Gnosticism	473
Isfet	
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	103
Duat	103
Ma'at	102, 104
Satan	103
<i>isha</i>	254
<i>Isha</i>	254
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	254, 256
<i>Isha Upanishad</i>	257
Isis 129, 130, 456, 472	
Ennead	99
Gnosticism	466, 472
Judaism	456
Osiris	102, 133
<i>Sophia</i>	473
Islam	80, 483, 484, 488, 489
Aristotle	764
Christianity	373, 480, 482, 488
<i>cosmogony</i>	720
Eastern philosophy	629, 635
Enlightenment Era	490
Eurasian philosophy	379
Hellenic philosophy	406, 652, 670
Hinduism	379
Indo-Aryan	372
Judaism	87, 480, 481
Last Judgment	482
meaning	481
<i>monism</i>	764
<i>monotheism</i>	201
Muḥammad	406, 480, 481
Muslim philosophy	484
Neo-Platonism	460
<i>Old Testament</i>	482, 483
philosophy	408
Quantum Era	780

Ramakrishna	676, 680
Scientific Revolution	19
<i>sophia</i>	484
Stoicism	445
<i>tawḥīd</i>	482
<i>theology</i>	482
<i>Tiān</i>	229
Vedānta	651
Vedic philosophy	372
<i>wisdom</i>	484
Yoga philosophy	719
Zoroastrianism	119, 122
Islamic Golden Age	
Aristotle	764
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	254, 256
Eastern philosophy	258
Īśvara	158, 646, 665
Advaita Vedānta	646
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	644
<i>Brahman</i>	264
Indian philosophy	641
<i>isha</i>	254
Patañjali	712
Ramakrishna	695
<i>sādhaka</i>	670
<i>samādhi</i>	695
Sāṃkhya	709
Śaṅkara	646
Vivekananda	717
Yoga philosophy	695, 712
Italian philosophy	288

J

Jagadananda, Swami	662
<i>Srī Ramakrishna, The Great Master</i>	662
Jainism	266
Hinduism	639, 650
Indian	720
Vedānta influence	267
Jason and the Argonauts	134, 188
Jesus	
Buddha	268, 270, 271, 274
Christianity	190, 267, 374, 465
<i>ethics</i>	374
<i>gnosis</i>	470, 472
Gnosticism 457, 459, 464, 471, 472, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478	
Gospel	267
<i>Gospel of John</i>	451
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	467, 474

<i>Gospel of Truth</i>	470	Christianity	80, 268, 372, 457, 463
Gospels	466, 467, 471	<i>cosmogony</i>	381, 720
Hellenic philosophy	449, 450	Eastern philosophy	629, 635
Irenaeus	477	Eurasia	381
Islam	480, 482, 483, 764	<i>Five Books of Moses</i>	454
Josephus	457	Gnosticism	457
Judaism	454	Great Flood	86
Justin Martyr	468	Hebrew	87
<i>Logos</i>	267, 408, 452, 469, 472	Hellenic philosophy	455, 456
<i>Magi</i>	116, 288	Indo-Aryan	372
<i>monotheism</i>	552	Islam	480, 481, 482, 488
<i>New Testament</i>	455	Josephus	457
Nicene Creed	462	<i>Ketuvim</i>	85
Orphism	134	<i>monotheism</i>	87, 201
Persia	80	Moses	82, 87, 454
<i>Pistis Sophia</i>	476	<i>Nómos</i>	80
<i>Qur'ān</i>	80	<i>Old Testament</i>	81, 454
Ramakrishna	686, 703, 704	Philo Judaeus	454
<i>Science of the mind</i>	720	<i>sophia</i>	457
Socrates	552	Spinoza	495
<i>sophia</i>	457	Sumer-Babylonian	86
St. Paul	466, 467	<i>Torah</i>	81
teachings	455	<i>Vedas</i>	86
Wisdom tradition	455	Vedic philosophy	372
<i>jing</i>	335	Wisdom tradition	456
<i>Jingzu</i>		Yoga philosophy	719
Chinese philosophy	377	Zoroastrianism	115, 119, 121, 122
<i>jiva</i>	646, 647, 708, 709, 710	<i>judgment</i>	516
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	644	<i>autonomy</i>	515
Eastern philosophy	717, 721	Kant	517, 519
Indian philosophy	719	<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	790
<i>mokṣa</i>	714	<i>mind</i>	789
Raja Yoga	711	<i>teleology</i>	519
<i>samādhi</i>	695	<i>understanding</i>	519, 789
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	704	Julius Caesar	188, 192, 293
Tantra Yoga	719	Jung, Carl	58
Vivekananda	717	<i>active imagination</i>	613, 703
Yoga philosophy	695, 714	<i>alchemy</i>	501, 611, 613, 705
<i>jnana</i>	647, 649	<i>arche</i>	124
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	644	<i>archetypes</i>	612, 613
<i>Brahman</i>	646	<i>collective unconscious</i>	58, 703
Hellenic philosophy	489	<i>dreams</i>	613
Jnana Yoga	670, 716, 717	Eastern philosophy	613, 702
Hellenic philosophy	489	Freud	611, 612
Vivekananda	714	Freud	614
Josephus	81, 457	Freudian psychology	611
<i>Against Apion</i>	457	Hermeticism	501
<i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>	457	<i>I Ching</i>	705
Judaism	457	<i>individuation</i>	612, 702, 703
Judaism	121, 482, 483	Kripal	703
<i>Book of Wisdom</i>	456	<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	638

<i>mandalas</i>	702
<i>meditation</i>	702, 705
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	800
<i>metaprinciple</i>	613
<i>mysticism</i>	705
Neo-Platonism	611
<i>occult</i>	612
<i>On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena</i>	612
Pauli	614
<i>persona</i>	613
<i>pleasure principle</i>	612
Psychology	20, 608, 611, 612, 615
<i>Psychology and Alchemy</i>	613
<i>Psychology of the Unconscious</i>	612
<i>psychotherapy</i>	613
Ramakrishna	702
<i>Red Book</i>	612, 613, 703, 705
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	704, 705
<i>Symbols of Transformation</i>	612
<i>synchronicity</i>	614
Tantra Yoga	702
<i>theology</i>	612, 613
<i>unconscious</i>	612
<i>Yijing</i>	613, 614
Jungian psychology	704
<i>archetypes</i>	702
<i>Awareness</i>	794
<i>collective unconscious</i>	702
Freudian psychology	698
<i>interconnectedness principle</i>	795
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	703
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795
Ramakrishna	702, 704
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	705
Valdez	703
<i>jūnzǐ</i>	
<i>Analects</i>	339
<i>Rújiā</i>	338
Jupiter	196
Orphism	140, 142
Ovid	192
Shàngdì	376
Justin Martyr	467, 468, 473
Christianity	465
<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>	468
<i>Logos</i>	469

K

Kālī	683
------------	-----

Advaita Vedānta	679
<i>Bhavamukha</i>	667
etymology	718
Hinduism	682
Ramakrishna	665, 666, 675, 676, 681, 686
Śakti	683
Śiva	666
Tantra Yoga	681, 718
<i>Vedas</i>	682
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	653, 666, 699
American Academy of Religion	656
argument	675
<i>Bhavamukha</i>	666, 669, 670, 675
citadel of science	690
criticism	656
<i>evidence</i>	658
flaws	668
Freudian psychology	678, 693, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704
<i>Gospel of Śrī Ramakrishna</i>	660
hidden secrets	655
Hindu unconscious	698
homoeotericism	661, 693
Indian philosophy	674, 683
<i>Interpreting Ramakrishna</i>	656
Jungian psychology	698, 703, 704
Kālī	667
Kripal	655, 657
monastic teachings	674, 675
<i>nirvikalpa samādhi</i>	675
Psychology	704
Ram Chandra Datta	659
Ramakrishna	658, 687, 688
<i>sādhana</i>	658, 678
Sāṃkhya	670, 683
Sarada Devi	673, 674
Saradananda	663, 668, 672, 673
scandalous	665
secrets	659
sources	665, 675, 687
<i>Śrī Śrī Ramakrishna Kathāmrita</i>	659
<i>Śrī Śrī Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga</i>	660, 661
<i>superconscious</i>	695
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	689
Tantra Yoga	659, 670, 675, 678, 679, 681, 688
title	655
Vivekananda	673
Western philosophy	692
<i>Kān</i>	243, 245, 247, 248, 250, 251
Kant, Immanuel	517, 784
<i>a posteriori knowledge</i>	511

<i>a priori knowledge</i>	511, 513
Albertina	507
Aristotle	510, 514, 516
<i>autonomy</i>	515, 517
<i>Awareness</i>	796, 798
<i>categorical imperative</i>	518
<i>category theory</i>	516
Cognitive Science	789
<i>Copernican revolution</i>	512
<i>Critique of Judgement</i>	508
<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>	446, 514, 517
<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>	446, 507, 511, 512, 513, 514, 517, 617
<i>Critique of the Power of Judgment</i>	519
Descartes	617
Eastern philosophy	634
<i>empiricism</i>	508, 511
Enlightenment Era	491, 506, 554, 754
<i>epistemology</i>	511, 512, 744
<i>ethics</i>	446, 517, 744
Euclid	510
<i>first principles</i>	789
Germany	507
Hellenic philosophy	506
<i>highest good</i>	447, 518
Hume	508, 513
Hume	617
<i>idealism</i>	510
<i>judgment</i>	519
Life of	617
<i>metaphysics</i>	513
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	15, 800, 803
<i>metaphysics of morals</i>	514
<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	517
<i>mind</i>	799
<i>morality</i>	447, 510, 521
<i>noumenon</i>	517
<i>objective realism</i>	513
<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>ontological predicates</i>	516
<i>ontology</i>	13, 20
<i>perception</i>	516, 519
<i>phenomenon</i>	517
<i>philosophia</i>	506
Philosophy	508
Pirsig	620
Plato	515, 519
<i>practical philosophy</i>	446
Prussia	507
Psychology	789
publishing	507

Quantum Era	788
<i>rationalism</i>	508, 511
<i>reason</i>	521, 788
Religion	521
Science	521
Scientific Revolution	523
<i>sensibility</i>	516
<i>skepticism</i>	521
Socrates	296
Stoicism	446, 518
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	617
<i>teleology</i>	519
<i>theology</i>	446, 508, 515, 519, 521, 616, 784
<i>Third Critique</i>	519
<i>Three Critiques</i>	513
<i>transcendental idealism</i>	520, 690, 744
<i>understanding</i>	514, 516, 519
<i>universality</i>	518
<i>What is Enlightenment</i>	506
Kapila	
Sāṃkhya	709
karma	
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	644
Buddhism	280
Karma Yoga	670, 716, 717
Vivekananda	714
Yoga philosophy	706
<i>Katha Upanishad</i>	361, 364, 365, 626
<i>katharoi</i>	137
<i>meditation</i>	36
Nachiketa	137, 355
Orpheus	137
Plato	355
Yama	137
Yoga	36
<i>katharoi</i>	137
Orphism	137, 145
<i>katharos</i>	137
Orphism	137
<i>Katha-Upanishad</i>	366, 367
<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	261
Kepler, Johannes	498, 499, 500
Enlightenment Era	553
Galileo	499
<i>mathematics</i>	499
<i>theology</i>	500
<i>three laws of planetary motion</i>	499
<i>Ketuvim</i>	82, 455
Judaism	84
<i>Torah</i>	85
<i>khandas</i>	261, 262, 264

King Menes	89
King Wen	
<i>bāguà</i>	242, 243, 249
<i>kosmos</i>	123, 571
<i>cosmic egg</i>	428
Hellenic philosophy	410
Judaism	456
<i>mythos</i>	203
<i>philosophia</i>	413
Plato	330
Stoicism	438
<i>theology</i>	427
<i>Timaeus</i>	323
Kripal, Jeffrey	
background	654, 655
Bengali	655
citadel of science	658
Comparative Religion	676
<i>desire</i>	679
Freudian psychology	658, 683, 698, 700
<i>Gospel of Srī Ramakrishna</i>	660
<i>hapax legomenon</i>	665
Hellenic philosophy	670
Indian philosophy	655, 670
Jungian psychology	703
Kālī	683
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	653, 656
<i>mysticism</i>	696
publications	656
Ramakrishna	671, 680, 682, 686, 696
Ramakrishna Order	659
<i>samādhi</i>	695
sources	656, 679
<i>superconscious</i>	696
Tantra Yoga	682
Krishna	158, 373, 651, 652, 691
Arjuna	644
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	643, 644
<i>dharma</i>	644
Īśvara	644
<i>mokṣa</i>	644
Ramakrishna	703
<i>rishis</i>	373
Kuan Tzu	
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	37
<i>Kūn</i>	243, 245, 247, 248, 249
<i>kuṇḍalinī</i>	
Indian philosophy	681
Śakti	718
Tantra Yoga	718, 719
Yoga philosophy	719

Kuṇḍalinī Yoga	711
<i>chakras</i>	420
Kurukshetra War	
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	643

L

Lao-tzu	See Lǎozǐ
Lǎozǐ	
Aristotle	332
Chinese philosophy	214, 332, 334, 343, 346
Confucius	334, 343
<i>Dao</i>	348
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	334, 345, 347
Daoism	347
Guodian Chu Slips	215
Lao-tzu	213
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	801
<i>Records of the Grand Historian</i>	343
<i>Tàiyī Shēngshuǐ</i>	172
Zhuangzi	349, 350, 351
Last Judgement	
<i>cosmogony</i>	381
Last Judgment	
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	92
Islam	482
Zoroastrianism	121
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	69, 359
<i>collective unconscious</i>	49, 58
<i>cosmic egg</i>	48, 204
<i>cosmogony</i>	204
Eurasia	12, 18, 32, 47, 48, 49, 59, 198, 204, 206
Eurasian philosophy	19, 382
human genome	59
<i>human migration</i>	48, 49, 206
Indo-European	17, 48
<i>logos</i>	19, 22, 382
<i>mythos</i>	12, 16, 19, 22, 47, 58, 68, 198, 204
<i>philosophy</i>	22, 49
<i>theogony</i>	206
<i>theology</i>	22, 48
theo-philosophy	48, 51, 68
Upper Paleolithic	47
Witzel	12, 47, 58, 206
Laws	
Hellenic philosophy	410
Plato	302
political philosophy	319
<i>Laws of Manu</i> ..	150, 158, 159, 160, 162, 197, 205, 634, 641
<i>cosmic egg</i>	205
<i>cosmogony</i>	205

<i>ethics</i>	410	EPR Paradox	564
Four Ages	198, 205	EPR Paradox	564
Great Flood	205	<i>hidden variables</i>	595, 598
<i>Republic</i>	205	<i>implicate order</i>	602
<i>le miracle grec</i>	387, 388	<i>metaphysics</i>	583
Legalism	176, 222, 334	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	793, 794, 798
Legge, James	353	<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	596, 598, 601
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	347	<i>ontology</i>	604, 758
<i>I Ching</i>	237	philosophy	726
<i>Tao Te Ching</i>	347, 351	Quantum Mechanics	577, 745, 803
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	350, 352	<i>quantum potential</i>	596, 597
Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm		Quantum Theory	565, 585, 604, 753
<i>calculus</i>	500	<i>relative-state formulation</i>	590
Newton	500	Science	726
<i>rationalism</i>	508	<i>spacetime</i>	563
<i>Yijing</i>	234	Locke, John	
<i>Lesser Yang</i>	240	<i>empiricism</i>	509
<i>Lesser Yin</i>	240, 244	Enlightenment Era	504
Leucippus	283	<i>logic</i>	378, 569
<i>lex parsimoniae</i>	580	Academic Skepticism	436
<i>Lí</i> 243, 245, 247, 248, 249, 251		Al-Fârâbî	487
<i>lǐ</i> 340		<i>analogy of the divided line</i>	321
<i>Analects</i>	339	Aristotle	407, 413, 417, 439, 582
Confucianism	227	Avicenna	487
Confucius	340	Chinese philosophy	376
Library of Alexandria	448	Descartes	493, 494
<i>Liji</i> 222, 336, 630		Hellenic philosophy	202, 378, 405, 406, 407, 428, 439
Guodian Chu Slips	171	<i>Logos</i>	428
Literary Chinese	209, 219	<i>mythos</i>	202
<i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>	286, 288, 435, 448	<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>le miracle grec</i>	387	<i>Organon</i>	407, 417
Stoicism	432, 434	Parmenides	326
<i>local determinism</i>	560	<i>philosophia</i>	202
<i>local realism</i>		philosophy	747
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565	Plato	303, 304, 330
Bohmian Mechanics	599	Socrates	300
Classical Mechanics	566	Stoicism	434, 435, 436, 439
<i>entanglement</i>	563	<i>theology</i>	427, 500
<i>locality</i>	564	<i>logical positivism</i>	620, 621
<i>metaphysics</i>	567	Pirsig	620
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	599, 601	Platypus	621
<i>ontology</i>	19	<i>logograms</i>	71, 209, 210, 574
Quantum Theory	566, 588, 601, 604	cuneiform	106
Schrödinger's cat	563	hieroglyphs	89
<i>locality</i>		<i>logograph</i>	
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	564, 598	Chinese philosophy	632
Bohm	596	Classical Chinese	632
Bohmian Mechanics	585, 595, 598, 599	<i>logos</i>	
Classical Mechanics	566, 577, 595, 759	<i>analogy of the divided line</i>	321
Eastern philosophy	780	Axial Age	381, 382
Einstein	560	Epicureanism	409

Eurasia	11, 380, 381, 382
Eurasian philosophy.....	19, 379, 380, 382, 383
Eurasian Philosophy.....	381, 382
<i>Good</i>	321, 425
<i>hêgemonikon</i>	436
Hellenic philosophy	12
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	19, 22, 382
<i>metaphysics</i>	379
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	15
<i>mythos</i>	19, 22, 380, 382, 383
<i>philosophia</i>	408
Plato	301, 302, 304, 305, 312, 319, 326, 329
<i>sophia</i>	313
Stoicism	431, 436, 438, 444, 445
<i>theology</i>	379
<i>theory of forms</i>	315
<i>theos</i>	380, 383
Logos	
Aristotle	427
<i>Being</i>	324
Buddhism.....	278
Christianity	443, 450, 452, 460, 468
<i>cosmogony</i>	201
<i>Eros</i>	795
<i>first principles</i>	125
<i>geometry</i>	428
Gnosticism	471, 472, 474, 477, 478
<i>Gospel of John</i>	446, 451
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	467
Hellenic	201
Hellenic philosophy ..	100, 201, 378, 407, 408, 427, 428, 460
<i>ideas</i>	100
Jesus	267, 450, 472
Judaism.....	452
Justin Martyr	467, 468, 469
<i>Ma'at</i>	97
<i>mathematics</i>	428
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	802
<i>mythos</i>	124, 224, 407, 408, 778
<i>mythos</i>	201
<i>natural law</i>	446
Neo-Platonism	460
<i>Old Testament</i>	467
<i>ontology</i>	736
Philo Judaeus	446, 452, 453, 467
philosophy	408, 575
Plato	369, 427
<i>pneuma</i>	440, 441, 445
Psychology	795
<i>Quality</i>	775

<i>Sophia</i>	473, 476
Stoicism	438, 442, 460
<i>theogony</i>	201
<i>theology</i>	201
Trinity	452
Western philosophy	634
<i>wisdom</i>	365
Wisdom tradition	469
<i>Lorentz invariance</i>	564
Luoshu	237
<i>LXX</i>	79, 449, 455
Hebrew	79
lyric poetry	
<i>Avesta</i>	214
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	30, 174, 214
<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	31
<i>Heavenly Questions</i>	30
Hellenic	131
Hesiod	30
<i>Iliad</i>	30
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	32
<i>mnemonic devices</i>	30
<i>mysticism</i>	33
<i>mythos</i>	30, 380
<i>Odyssey</i>	30
<i>oral transmission</i>	27, 30, 214, 380
Ovid	187
Parmenides	324, 400
<i>Rigvéda</i>	153, 640
<i>Theogony</i>	30
<i>Vedas</i>	27, 214

M

<i>Ma'at</i>	80
<i>Aša</i>	119
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	97, 103
Chinese philosophy	376
<i>Chronos</i>	131
<i>cosmogony</i>	97, 381
Egypt	97, 98, 102, 104
Eurasia.....	381
Hades	98
Hellenic philosophy	97
Isfet	102
Judaism	456
<i>Logos</i>	97
Marduk.....	110
<i>morality</i>	97
<i>mythos</i>	97, 98, 102
<i>Nómos</i>	17, 79

Nu 104	
<i>Quality</i>	774
Ra 98	
Thoth	97, 98
<i>Torah</i>	79
<i>Weighing of the heart</i>	92
Macedonian Empire	448, 454
<i>Magi</i>	69, 116, 121, 122, 149, 289, 386
Astronomy	288
Jesus	288
Persia	288
Pythagoras	288
Zoroastrianism	402
<i>Mahābhārata</i>	147, 158, 161, 634, 643, 691
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	35, 643
Vyasa	643
<i>Mahayana</i>	271
Mahayana Buddhism	271
Mahendranath Gupta	11, 659, 660, 663, 664, 672, 679
<i>Gospel of Srī Ramakrishna</i>	660
Life of	660
M 660	
<i>Srī Srī Ramakrishna Kathāmrita</i>	659
<i>The Nectar of Srī Ramakrishna's Words</i>	659
Yogananda	660
<i>manas</i>	
<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	261
<i>mandalas</i>	
Jung	702
Tantra Yoga	702, 719
Mandate of Heaven	17, 221, 224, 237
<i>Analects</i>	340
Chinese philosophy	217
<i>Dao</i>	179
<i>mythos</i>	197
<i>Tiān</i>	222, 224
Manetho	
Egypt	90, 93
Herodotus	90
Manichaeism	465, 466
<i>mantra</i>	
Tantra Yoga	719
<i>Vedas</i>	639
<i>yajña</i>	150, 200
<i>yasna</i>	200
Manu	
Adam	158
Four Ages	198
<i>Manusmṛiti</i>	158, 205, 634, 641
Four Ages	198
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	

Bohm	594
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	588, 589
Deutsch	589
Dewitt	589
DeWitt	594
<i>entanglement</i>	593
Everett	588, 589, 592
<i>many-minds</i>	593
<i>ontology</i>	585, 759
Quantum Era	780
Quantum Mechanics	592
Quantum Theory	585, 588, 759
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	588, 591, 603
<i>uncertainty principle</i>	593
<i>Universal Wave Function</i>	588, 591, 593
<i>wavefunction</i>	588
Marcus Aurelius	186, 393, 445, 450
<i>Meditations</i>	432, 445
Stoicism	434
Marduk	107, 109, 110, 113, 179, 196
<i>cosmogony</i>	381
<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	66
Eurasia	381
Hermes	110
<i>Ma'at</i>	110
Shàngdì	376
<i>theogony</i>	112
Zeus	131
<i>marks of existence</i>	276, 278
<i>material cause</i>	
Aristotle	422, 423
<i>epistemology</i>	55
<i>materialism</i>	535, 569, 616, 628, 739
Aristotle	510, 570
Bacon	491
<i>capitalism</i>	556
Eastern philosophy	557, 634
<i>empiricism</i>	509, 510
Enlightenment Era	502
Epicureanism	409, 607
Hellenic philosophy	509, 510
<i>idealism</i>	306, 516
Kant	523
Newton	525
Newtonian Mechanics	525
<i>ousia</i>	419
Quantum Era	583, 779
Quantum Theory	557
Ramakrishna	56
Scientific Revolution	525, 743
Stoicism	431, 434

<i>teleology</i>	581
<i>mathematics</i>	
Al-Kindi	485
Aristotle	413, 762
<i>arithmology</i>	289
Astronomy	500
Avicenna	487
Bohm	594
Bohmian Mechanics	598
<i>calculus</i>	500, 576
Classical Mechanics	551
Copernicus	498
Descartes	492, 493, 494
<i>double slit experiment</i>	545
Enlightenment Era	494, 524, 576
<i>epistemology</i>	804
Eurasia	574
<i>falṣafa</i>	487
<i>first philosophy</i>	594
Galileo	499
<i>heliocentrism</i>	498, 499
Hellenic philosophy	406, 407
Indo-Aryan	404
Kant	517
Kepler	499
<i>Logos</i>	428
Mawangdui Silk Texts	175
<i>metaphysics</i>	578
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	803, 804
Muslim philosophy	486
<i>natural philosophy</i>	527
Newton	500, 502, 527
<i>objective realism</i>	555
<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>ontology</i>	578, 604
philosophy	725, 747
Physics	578, 746
<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	803
Plato	322, 330
Pre-Socratic philosophy	404
Pythagoras	287, 289, 290
Quantum Era	555
Quantum Mechanics	529, 560, 566, 589
Quantum Theory	579, 596, 600
<i>rationalism</i>	509
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	591
Relativity Theory	533, 549, 551, 577
<i>Rhind Mathematical Papyrus</i>	289
Science	500, 726
Scientific Revolution	525, 576
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	616, 775

<i>Śulbasūtras</i>	289
<i>theology</i>	428, 494, 500, 522, 525, 579
<i>three laws of motion</i>	522, 576
<i>three laws of planetary motion</i>	499
<i>Vedas</i>	260
von Neumann	595
<i>wavefunction</i>	545
Western philosophy	378, 804
<i>mathematikoi</i>	292
Mawangdui Silk Texts	237, 242
<i>cosmogony</i>	175
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	214
Daoism	175
Maxwell, James Clerk	528, 531, 537
<i>Maxwell's equations</i>	528, 531
Maxwell's Equations	537
<i>Maya</i>	
Advaita Vedānta	645, 646, 760
<i>Brahman</i>	646
<i>non-dualism</i>	646
Plato	322
<i>saṃsāra</i>	709
Śaṅkara	646
McEvilley, Thomas	17, 357, 360, 369, 388
Hellenic philosophy	356
<i>phronēsis</i>	316
<i>The Shape of Ancient Thought</i>	46, 356, 357, 388
<i>measurement problem</i>	19, 559, 586
Bohmian Mechanics	733
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	596
Quantum Theory	591
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	591, 732
<i>Universal Wave Function</i>	591
<i>mechanism</i>	564, 629
Eastern philosophy	688
Enlightenment Era	502
<i>mind</i>	610
Newton	525
Psychology	610
<i>meditation</i>	626
<i>Being</i>	713
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	35
Buddha	270
Chinese philosophy	36, 37
Daoism	39
<i>dhāraṇā</i>	712
<i>dhyaṇa</i>	25, 26, 35, 712
<i>dualism</i>	713
Eastern philosophy	721, 780
Indian philosophy	26, 35, 40, 41, 42
<i>individuation</i>	703

Indo-Aryan	33	<i>category theory</i>	418
Jung	702	<i>causality</i>	421, 582
<i>mysticism</i>	25, 35, 41, 42	Chinese.....	233, 252
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	37, 39	Chinese philosophy	18, 376, 633
<i>ontology</i>	41, 50	Christianity	460
<i>pratyahara</i>	712	Classical Mechanics.....	599
<i>Quality</i>	621, 622, 623	<i>Copernican revolution</i>	515
Ramakrishna	42	Descartes	492, 493
<i>samādhi</i>	712	<i>dhyāna</i>	26
<i>Science of the mind</i>	41	Eastern philosophy.....	634, 635, 780
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	621	<i>epistemology</i>	583
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	14	Eurasian philosophy	379, 382
Upanishadic philosophy.....	36	<i>first philosophy</i>	415, 528, 582, 753, 763
<i>Upanishads</i>	36, 355, 365	Hellenic philosophy	410, 503
vital energy	38	Hiley	731
Yoga philosophy	375, 706, 711, 712, 713	Hinduism	371
<i>Yoga Sūtras</i>	40	<i>holomovement</i>	731
<i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>	492, 493	Hume.....	508
<i>ontological argument</i>	799	<i>implicate order</i>	602, 603, 733
Megaliths	65	Indian philosophy.....	681, 760
Upper Paleolithic	65	Indo-Aryan	372
Memphis		<i>judgment</i>	519
Egypt.....	101	Kant.....	508, 511, 513, 515, 517, 521, 617
<i>Ma'at</i>	104	<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	48
<i>mythos</i>	100, 101	<i>locality</i>	583
Ptah	100, 101	<i>logos</i>	382
Witzel.....	98	<i>mathematics</i>	578
Mencius	335, 631	<i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>	492
Confucius	333, 334	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i> ..21, 786, 789, 791, 792, 797, 798, 803	
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	334	Metaphysics of Quality 13, 729, 755, 769, 770, 773, 777	
Menes	88, 90, 163	<i>mind</i>	789, 790, 797
Mesopotamia.....	105, 371	<i>morality</i>	517
<i>mythos</i>	147, 149	<i>mysticism</i>	798
<i>metaphysics</i>	20, 617, 787	<i>mythos</i>	58
<i>a priori knowledge</i>	513	<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>academia</i>	582	<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	602, 603
Age of Enlightenment	616	<i>ontology</i>	728, 735, 737, 745, 746, 752
antiquity	724	<i>ousia</i>	418, 419
Aristotle.44, 56, 300, 411, 413, 415, 416, 420, 421, 527, 582, 762, 763, 764		Parmenides	326
Avicenna	487	philosophy.....	416, 725, 747, 798
<i>awareness</i>	790, 792	Physics.....	725
<i>Awareness</i>	795, 798	Pirsig.....	619, 626, 734, 768, 772
Bacon.....	491	Plato	317, 330, 419, 423, 424, 764
<i>being qua being</i>	415, 763	Psychology	606, 614, 730, 784, 797
Bohm	20, 594, 730, 734	<i>Quality</i>	619, 623, 729, 773
Bohmian Mechanics	585, 599, 733	Quantum Era.....	22, 616, 803
<i>Book of Changes</i>	225	Quantum Mechanics.....	599, 745
Buddha	281	Quantum Theory.....	567, 579, 594
Buddhism.....	279, 280	<i>reason</i>	788
<i>categories</i>	516	<i>relative-state formulation</i>	591

Scholasticism	417
Science.....	416, 746
Scientific Revolution	558
Socrates	297
Soul.....	736
Spinoza	494, 497
Stoicism	431, 438, 445
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782
<i>substance</i>	418
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	50
<i>synchronicity</i>	614
<i>teleology</i>	581, 582, 790
<i>Ten Wings</i>	225
<i>theology</i>	582, 747, 763, 764
Trinity	452
<i>undivided wholeness</i>	803
Upanishadic philosophy.....	380
<i>value</i>	786
Vedānta	645, 651
Vedic philosophy	380
<i>vidyā</i>	266
Western philosophy	378
<i>Yijing</i>	232, 239, 783
Yoga philosophy	707
<i>Metaphysics</i>	
Aristotle	413, 415
<i>Categories</i>	417
<i>first philosophy</i>	582
<i>Huainanzi</i>	177
<i>Logos</i>	427
<i>ontology</i>	763
Plato	411
<i>theology</i>	416, 424, 763
<i>theos</i>	765
<i>unmoved mover</i>	765
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	21, 795, 796, 800, 802
<i>awareness</i>	792
<i>Awareness</i>	800
Bohm	800, 803
Bohmian Mechanics	803
Christianity	802
Classical Mechanics	803
<i>corporealism</i>	798
<i>de Broglie-Bohm theory</i>	803
<i>double-slit experiment</i>	794
Eastern philosophy	795, 800, 802
<i>epistemology</i>	792, 794, 796, 797, 803
Eurasian philosophy.....	15
<i>first principles</i>	800
Freudian psychology.....	795
<i>holistic</i>	803
<i>idealism</i>	802
<i>ideas</i>	802
Indo-European	803
<i>interconnectedness principle</i>	795, 800
Jung	800
Jungian psychology	795
Kant.....	791
<i>locality</i>	803
<i>mathematics</i>	803
<i>metaphysics</i>	12, 803
<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	792
<i>morality</i>	799, 800
<i>mysticism</i>	796, 798, 803
<i>mythos</i>	802
<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>ontology</i>	797, 800, 802
<i>philosophia</i>	803
Philosophy.....	800, 803
Physics.....	803
<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	803
Plato	802
Psychology	795, 797, 800, 803
<i>quantization</i>	793
Quantum Era.....	22, 803
Quantum Mechanics.....	803
<i>quantum potential</i>	803
<i>quantum revolution of philosophy</i>	794
Quantum Theory.....	794
<i>reductionist</i>	800
Stoicism.....	798, 802
<i>theology</i>	803
<i>theory of forms</i>	792
<i>undivided wholeness</i>	803
Valdez.....	15
Western philosophy	802, 803
<i>Yin-Yáng</i>	802
<i>metaphysics of morals</i>	
Kant.....	514
<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	
<i>awareness</i>	791
Kant.....	517, 519
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	790
<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>teleology</i>	790
<i>theology</i>	784
<i>Metaphysics of Quality</i>	13, 620, 621, 624, 697, 698, 727, 770
<i>academia</i>	750, 770
<i>Dao</i>	769
Darwin.....	772
<i>dharma</i>	773

Dynamic Quality	775	Anaximander	286
Eastern philosophy	786	Anaximenes.....	286
Good	773	Milesian School	286
Indo-European	773	Pre-Socratic philosophy	401
Kant	772	Thales.....	286
Lila	617	mind	696
meditation	622, 623	<i>a priori</i> knowledge	789
metaphysics.....	729, 730, 755	awareness.....	790, 792
morality	772	Awareness.....	796
mysticism	776	Cognitive Science	789
natural selection	772	comprehension.....	789
ontology.....	731, 734, 744, 745	conscious.....	611
Plato	773	cosmogony.....	381
Quality	768, 769, 770, 773	desire.....	678
Ṛta	773	dreams	608
Satcitānanda	776	Eastern philosophy.....	375, 797
Science.....	617	empiricism.....	510
subject-object metaphysics.....	624, 688, 765	Eurasia.....	383
theology.....	775	Eurasian philosophy	383
Value.....	772	Everett	593
metaprinciple		<i>first principles</i>	789
Jung	613	Freud.....	608, 609, 610
Psychology	613	Freudian psychology	678
metatheory		<i>id</i> 610	
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	592	<i>implicate order</i>	604
Quantum Theory	589	Jung	611, 613
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	591	Jungian psychology	611
metempsychosis.....	288	Kant.....	517, 789
Pythagoras.....	293	Kripal.....	696
Metis		<i>locality</i>	798
Phanes	144	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	593
Middle Ages	407, 480, 488, 494, 522	<i>mechanism</i>	610
Aristotle	413	<i>metaphysics</i>	614, 790
<i>heliocentrism</i>	498	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	789, 792, 795, 797, 800
Hellenic philosophy	503	<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	790
Hermeticism	133	<i>ontological argument</i>	799
philosophy	747	<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	602
Plato	330	ontology	791, 797
Ptolemy	498	<i>perception</i>	789
Scholasticism	488, 527	philosophy.....	725
<i>sciencia</i>	526	Physics.....	609
theology.....	747	Planck.....	605, 796
Middle Platonism		Psychology	20, 606, 612, 613, 614, 789
<i>allegoresis</i>	437	Quantum Theory.....	593, 602, 794
Christianity	450	<i>relative-state formulation</i>	
Hellenic philosophy	450	<i>mind</i>	603
<i>mythos</i>	437	<i>Science of the mind</i>	797
Middle Way.....	272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 280	<i>state machine</i>	789, 791
Milesian School		<i>synchronicity</i>	614
Miletus.....	286	theology	610
Miletus.....	286, 292, 401, 403	unconscious.....	610, 611, 612

<i>understanding</i>	789	Indo-European	397
<i>mind-body dualism</i>	<i>See dualism: mind-body</i>	Islam.....	80, 201, 482
Minkowski, Hermann		Judaism	87, 201, 454
Einstein	532	<i>logos</i>	12
Quantum Theory	565	Mohism	229
Mithraism	465	<i>mythos</i>	12
<i>mnemonic devices</i>	30	Neo-Platonism	460
Mohism		Scientific Revolution	502
Chinese philosophy.....	227	Shàngdì	230, 377
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	354	<i>Tiān</i>	230
Daoism.....	353, 354	<i>morality</i>	
<i>dharma</i>	353	<i>academia</i>	748
<i>ethics</i>	228, 353	Al-Fârâbî.....	486
Hundred Schools of Thought	222	<i>arête</i>	773
Indian philosophy	353	Aristotle	413, 415
<i>morality</i>	353	<i>autonomy</i>	518
Mozi.....	228	<i>Awareness</i>	798, 800
<i>Shiji</i>	334	<i>capitalism</i>	502
<i>Tiān</i>	229	Chinese philosophy	224, 227, 229, 377
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	350	Christianity	774
<i>mokṣa</i>	149, 267, 709, 710	Confucianism	227, 336
Advaita Vedānta	646, 647, 691	<i>cosmogony</i>	206, 381
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	644	<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>	446, 514, 517
<i>Brahman</i>	149, 647	Daoism	353, 354
Eastern philosophy	720	<i>Daoist sage</i>	354
Hellenic philosophy	266	<i>dharma</i>	773
Indian philosophy	637, 694, 719	<i>dialogues</i>	302
Krishna.....	644	Eastern philosophy.....	374, 720
<i>mukti</i>	719	Eastern Philosophy.....	374
Vedānta	649	Egypt	97, 774
Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta	647	<i>empiricism</i>	744
Vivekananda	670, 714	Enlightenment Era	502, 505, 523, 754
Yoga philosophy	706	Epicureanism.....	409
Monad		Eurasia.....	97
<i>gnosis</i>	471	<i>gravity</i>	773
Gnosticism	476	Hellenic philosophy	400, 489
Orphism	142	Hume.....	508
<i>monism</i>		<i>ideas</i>	523
Advaita Vedānta	646, 760	Indian philosophy.....	759
Aristotle	764	Kant	446, 508, 510, 511, 514, 515, 518, 521, 616, 744
Buddhism.....	281	<i>Ma'at</i>	97
Islam	764	<i>materialism</i>	556
Spinoza	495	<i>metaphysics</i>	517, 521, 772
Stoicism	442	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	800
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782	<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	790
Vedānta	646	Metaphysics of Quality	772, 773, 775, 786
<i>monotheism</i>	8, 462, 490, 552, 554, 625	Mohism	228, 229, 353
Christianity	80, 201	<i>mysticism</i>	776, 777
Enlightenment Era	490	<i>natural law</i>	446, 526
Hellenic philosophy	201, 395	Newton	527
Indo-Aryan	162	Newtonian Mechanics	526

<i>philosophy</i>	575, 747	Islam.....	406, 480
Pirsig	625, 768, 772, 773, 775	Life of	481
Plato	302, 368	<i>monism</i>	764
<i>Quality</i>	770, 773	Muslim philosophy.....	484
Quantum Era	780	Neo-Platonism	461
<i>reason</i>	447, 517, 518	<i>Qur'ān</i>	85, 481
Religion	374	Ramakrishna	703
Royal Yoga	374	<i>mukti</i>	
Science.....	523, 753	<i>mokṣa</i>	719
Scientific Revolution	503	Müller, Max	
<i>sentimentalism</i>	508	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	263
Socrates	301	<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	259
Spinoza	494	<i>Upanishads</i>	256, 355
Stoicism	434	Vedic philosophy.....	253
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	775	<i>multi-verses</i>	<i>See many-worlds interpretation</i>
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	50	<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	258, 259
<i>teleology</i>	582	Muses	45, 136
<i>theology</i>	521, 527, 744, 748, 754, 780, 781	Herodotus	135
<i>Tiān</i>	184, 222	Hesiod	125, 126, 131
<i>transcendental idealism</i>	20, 744	<i>mystery cults</i>	125, 131
<i>Value</i>	772	<i>mythos</i>	125
Vedic philosophy	372	Orpheus	135
Western philosophy	748	Zeus.....	125
<i>Will of Heaven</i>	228	Muslim Empire	485
<i>yamas</i>	711	Muslim philosophy	485, 488
Yoga philosophy	711, 713, 719	Al-Fârâbî.....	486
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	354	Al-Kindi.....	485
<i>morphemes</i>	210, 574	Arabic philosophy	406
Moses	82, 84, 113, 118, 148, 456, 459, 468, 481, 482	Avicenna.....	487
Confucius	341	Eastern philosophy.....	375
Egypt.....	83	<i>Enneads</i>	411
<i>Five Books of Moses</i>	85, 454	<i>first cause</i>	422
Hebrew	85	<i>first mover</i>	56
Hellenic philosophy	453	Hellenic philosophy.....	411, 461, 670
Islam	480	Indo-European	397
Judaism	82, 87, 454	<i>intellect</i>	489
<i>Old Testament</i>	85	<i>Theology of Aristotle</i>	411
Orpheus	135	<i>wisdom</i>	484, 486
<i>Pentateuch</i>	83, 85	Mycenaeans	393
Philo Judaeus	452	<i>mystery cults</i>	117
Ramakrishna	703	Burkert	404
Sumer-Babylonian	86	Christianity	629
<i>Torah</i>	79, 80, 81, 86	<i>Derveni Papyrus</i>	139
Zarathustra	115	Dionysus.....	139, 143, 305
Mozi		Eastern philosophy.....	629
<i>ethics</i>	228	Gnosticism	464, 476, 478
Mohism.....	228	Hellenic philosophy.....	42, 117, 407
<i>morality</i>	228	Hinduism	372
<i>Tiān</i>	228	Muses.....	125, 131
Muḥammad	482, 483, 484, 488, 489	<i>mythos</i>	139
Allāh.....	481, 483	Orpheus	136, 137, 139

Orphism	137, 139, 143, 305	Platonism	431
Plato	305	Platypus.....	621
Pythagoras.....	294	Plotinus	783
Stoicism	430	Pre-Socratic philosophy	305
<i>ymnos</i>	200	Psychology	615, 696, 729, 795, 796
<i>mystical</i>		<i>Quality</i>	776
Yoga philosophy	718	<i>Quality</i>	786
<i>mysticism</i>	13, 34, 41, 42, 465	Ramakrishna	21, 42, 43, 666, 690, 756
<i>academia</i>	757, 758	<i>samādhi</i>	666
Academy.....	7	Science	19, 583
Afro-Asiatic	34	<i>Science of the mind</i>	42
<i>alchemy</i>	705	<i>shamanism</i>	382, 629, 757
Apollo	132	<i>sophia</i>	801
Aristotle	764, 765	<i>Sophia</i>	22
<i>awareness</i>	798	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	621, 782
Awareness	800	<i>supraconsciousness</i>	760
Christianity	629	Tantra Yoga	681, 718
Comparative Religion	653	<i>theology</i>	25
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	355	Vedānta.....	650
Daoism.....	332	<i>Vedas</i>	642
<i>desire</i>	796	Western philosophy	786
Eastern philosophy	12, 33, 56, 375, 757, 758, 776	<i>wisdom</i>	801
Enlightenment Era	790	<i>Yoga Sūtras</i>	718
<i>epistemology</i>	19, 20, 760	<i>mythos</i>	113, 114
Eurasia	382, 383	Agni	261
Eurasian philosophy.....	382, 383	<i>allegoresis</i>	346, 437, 801
Gnostic.....	470, 471	antiquity.....	723
Gnosticism	472	Apollo	132
Hellenic philosophy	305	Avesta	199
Hermeticism	133	Avestan	200
<i>homo sapiens</i>	25	Awareness.....	800
<i>human migration</i>	382	Axial Age	382, 383
Indian philosophy	25, 40, 43, 56	<i>Bâ 97</i>	
insanity	776	<i>Being</i>	383
Jung	705	<i>Book of the Dead</i>	91, 101
Kripal	655, 696	Brahmā.....	162
<i>logical positivism</i>	621	<i>Brahman</i>	383
<i>meditation</i>	25, 33, 35, 42	Buddhism	278
<i>metaphysics</i>	12	Chinese.....	17, 131, 169, 180, 205, 346, 774
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	15, 21, 795, 796, 800, 803	Chinese philosophy	346, 634
Metaphysics of Quality	776, 777	Christianity	97, 198, 201, 410
<i>mythos</i>	383, 777, 781	<i>Coffin Texts</i>	91
Neolithic Era	382	<i>collective unconscious</i>	612, 638, 800
Neo-Platonism	460	<i>cosmic egg</i>	169, 204
<i>objective realism</i>	19	<i>cosmogony</i> .. 12, 101, 114, 192, 203, 206, 372, 380, 381,	
<i>ontological argument</i>	797	724	
<i>ontology</i>	41, 50, 754, 757, 776	creation	723
Orpheus.....	133	<i>Dao</i>	383
philosophy	33, 777	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	170
Pirsig	620, 755, 768, 776	<i>desire</i>	795
Plato	304, 305, 313, 471	<i>dualism</i>	682

Duat	96
Eastern philosophy	630
Egypt.....	88, 91, 93, 95, 96, 97, 100, 101, 102, 111, 132, 133, 151, 183, 196, 472, 774
Ennead.....	100
<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	66, 107, 108, 114
<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>	198
<i>epistemology</i>	801
Eurasia	11, 12, 18, 22, 97, 112, 196, 202, 203, 379, 380, 382, 408
Eurasian	12
Eurasian philosophy.....	18, 19, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383
<i>first principles</i>	125
Four Ages.....	198, 380
Garden of Eden.....	87, 192
<i>Gathas</i>	199
<i>Genesis</i>	86, 198
Great Flood.....	192, 198, 380
Greco-Roman.....	147, 251, 572
Greek	169, 394
Hebrew	86
Helios.....	101, 257
Hellenic.....	97, 101, 201, 301
Hellenic philosophy	12, 201, 202, 203, 305
Hermes	97
Herodotus.....	132
Hindu	147, 266, 718
Hinduism	161, 162, 193, 260, 637, 682
<i>human migration</i>	21, 59, 382
Indo-Aryan ...	17, 147, 148, 157, 199, 253, 254, 371, 650, 682
Indo-Iranian	199, 774
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	256
Judaism.....	87, 115, 198
Judeo-Christian	121
Judgement	97
Jung	612
Kālī.....	682
<i>kosmos</i>	203
Laurasian	17
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	17, 19, 22, 45, 59, 68, 198, 382, 638
<i>logos</i>	19, 380, 382, 383
<i>Logos</i>	124, 224, 407, 408, 778
<i>lyric poetry</i>	380
<i>Ma'at</i>	97, 102
Mandate of Heaven	197
Marduk	109
<i>metaphysics</i>	58
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	15, 795, 798, 800, 801
Middle Platonism.....	437

Muses.....	125
<i>mystery cults</i>	372
<i>mysticism</i>	34, 383, 777, 781
Neolithic Era.....	382
Neo-Platonism	783
Nile River	96, 101
<i>ontology</i>	723
<i>oral transmission</i>	380
Origen of Alexandria	437
Orpheus	132, 134, 139
Orphism	145, 400
Ovid	189, 193, 294
Pángǔ	205
Persia	199
Phanes.....	204
Philo Judaeus	437
<i>philosophia</i>	202, 408
<i>philosophy</i>	22, 203, 372, 408, 575
Philosophy.....	803
<i>Prakṛti</i>	682
Pre-Socratic philosophy	400
Psychology	612
Ptah.....	100
<i>Puruṣa</i>	682
<i>Pyramid Texts</i>	91
<i>Quality</i>	775
Quantum Era	8
Ra	96, 97
<i>rishis</i>	371
Roman.....	186, 189
<i>shamanism</i>	382
Shāng Dynasty.....	183, 206
Shàngdī	230
<i>Shiji</i>	180
Socrates	203
<i>Sophia</i>	473
Stoicism.....	201, 434, 437
Sumer-Babylonian.....	87, 107, 109, 111, 113, 114, 151
<i>Sūrya</i>	257
Tantra Yoga	682
<i>theogony</i>	112, 203, 380
<i>theology</i>	22, 201, 202
<i>theos</i>	382, 383
Tree of Life	193
Vedānta.....	254
<i>Vedas</i>	161, 199, 379, 682
Vedic philosophy.....	372, 379
Vedic Sanskrit.....	200
<i>vidyā</i>	258
Western philosophy	346
Witzel	206, 638

<i>Yasna</i>	199
Yellow Emperor	180
<i>ymnos</i>	200
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	175
Zoroastrianism	115, 119

N

Nachiketa	361, 362
Nag Hammadi Library	467, 470, 474, 475
<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>	452
Gnosticism	452, 475
Hermeticism	452
Narmer	See Menes
<i>nationalism</i>	701, 741
<i>natural law</i>	
Cicero	432
Eastern philosophy	447
Enlightenment Era	526
Freud	609
<i>living according to the laws of Nature</i>	446
<i>Logos</i>	446
<i>morality</i>	446
Stoicism	446
<i>natural philosophy</i>	522, 523, 553
Aristotle	762
Bacon	491
<i>causality</i>	423
Eastern philosophy	635
Enlightenment Era	523
<i>first philosophy</i>	582
Galileo	499
Hellenic philosophy	503
Kant	515, 517
Kepler	500
<i>mathematics</i>	527
<i>metaphysics</i>	581
Newton	527
philosophy	416
Physics	500
Plato	316
Quantum Era	616
<i>reason</i>	517
Science	416, 523
<i>teleology</i>	582
Western philosophy	378
<i>natural selection</i>	238
Freudian psychology	699
Metaphysics of Quality	773
<i>morality</i>	773
<i>oral transmission</i>	28, 29

<i>philology</i>	389
<i>Quality</i>	772, 773
<i>theology</i>	558
<i>naturalism</i>	
Chinese philosophy	167, 177, 224, 634, 636
Confucianism	227
Daoism	351
Enlightenment Era	524
Eurasia	65
<i>Huainanzi</i>	177
Orphism	139
Spinoza	494, 496, 497
Naunet	101
Ogdoad	98
Tiamat	112
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	
<i>Daoism</i>	36, 37
<i>Guanzi</i>	37
<i>meditation</i>	37, 38
Old Chinese	37
Yoga	37
Yoga philosophy	38
Neolithic Era	65, 382
Cave art	47
Chinese philosophy	377
Eliade	67
Eurasia	381
Eurasian philosophy	47, 381
Fertile Crescent	65
<i>jingzu</i>	377
<i>logos</i>	381
<i>mythos</i>	382
<i>oral transmission</i>	31
<i>shamanism</i>	382
writing	67
Neolithic Revolution	32, 63
Bronze Age	67
Eurasia	64
Fertile Crescent	63
<i>mysticism</i>	34
<i>oral transmission</i>	28, 29
Yellow River	63
Neo-Platonism	186, 291, 292, 459, 466, 628, 651
Al-Fârâbî	486
<i>allegoresis</i>	346
Christianity	144, 460, 461, 485
Damaskios	143
<i>Divine Intellect</i>	460
<i>emanation</i>	426
<i>Enneads</i>	411
<i>falṣafa</i>	764

<i>first principles</i>	124	Galileo	499
Hellenic philosophy	411, 503	<i>geometry</i>	576
<i>Intellect</i>	735	<i>gravity</i>	500, 501, 522, 525, 528, 618
Islam	764	Leibniz	500
Jung	611	Life of	501
<i>metaphysics</i>	452	<i>local realism</i>	562
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798, 802	<i>Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy</i>	490, 523, 525
<i>monism</i>	782	<i>mathematics</i>	500, 527, 551
<i>mysticism</i>	9, 460, 765	<i>natural philosophy</i>	527
<i>Nous</i>	764	<i>Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica</i> .	490, 500, 523, 525, 527, 725
<i>One</i>	764	philosophy.....	725
Orphism	140, 143, 145, 146	Physics.....	525
Plato	460	Pirsig.....	766
Platonism.....	670	Quantum Mechanics.....	545
Plotinus.....	783	<i>quantum potential</i>	597
Pythagoras.....	289, 292	Quantum Theory.....	547, 551
Socrates	296	<i>scientific method</i>	619
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782	Scientific Revolution	505
<i>theogony</i>	146	Socrates	296
<i>theology</i>	374, 765	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	617
<i>Theology of Aristotle</i>	764	<i>theology</i>	501, 550
Trinity	461	<i>three laws of motion</i>	500, 522, 525, 576
<i>unwritten teachings</i>	460	<i>universal gravitation</i>	499
Upanishadic philosophy.....	783	Valdez.....	500
<i>World Soul</i>	460	Newtonian Mechanics.....	527, 539, 542, 546, 549, 550, 554, 577, 624, 784
Zoroastrianism.....	119	Einstein	528, 539
<i>neutron</i>	538, 539	<i>local realism</i>	563
<i>Nevi'im</i>	82, 84	<i>locality</i>	564
<i>Ketuvim</i>	85	<i>materialism</i>	525
<i>New Testament</i>	271, 450, 452, 455, 466, 469, 471	Physics.....	522
Einstein	525	Pirsig.....	766
Gnosticism	461	Quantum Mechanics.....	558
<i>Gospel of John</i>	420, 451	Science	8, 500, 727
Hellenic philosophy	454	<i>spacetime</i>	531
Judaism	454	<i>three laws of motion</i>	522
<i>katharos</i>	137	Nicene Creed	399, 462, 463, 464
<i>Magi</i>	116, 121	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	
Moses	85	Hellenic philosophy	410
<i>pneuma</i>	442, 445	Nikhilananda, Swami	11, 637
St. Paul.....	467	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	35
Newton, Sir Isaac ...	494, 498, 499, 501, 522, 527, 541, 546, 550	<i>Gospel of Śrī Ramakrishna</i>	11, 659, 660
<i>alchemy</i>	500, 501, 502	<i>Katha Upanishad</i>	36
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	263
<i>calculus</i>	500	<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	259
<i>determinism</i>	525, 550	Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center.....	11
Einstein	528	Sarada Devi	11
<i>electromagnetism</i>	531	<i>Śrī Śrī Ramakrishna Kathāmrita</i>	11
Enlightenment Era	553	<i>Śvetāśvatara Upanishad</i>	36
Epicureanism	509		
Euclid	577		

<i>Upanishads</i>	256
Vedic philosophy	254
Vivekananda	714
Nile River.....	96, 102, 197, 637
Egypt.....	95, 96
Indus Valley	148
<i>mythos</i>	88, 96, 101
Ra 96	
<i>theogony</i>	98
Upper Neolithic	88
<i>Nirguna Brahman</i>	669
<i>nirvana</i>	280
<i>Awareness</i>	795
<i>Being</i>	281
Buddha	26
Buddhism.....	280
Chinese philosophy.....	18
Eastern philosophy	720
<i>enlightenment</i>	273
Hellenic philosophy	266
<i>impermanence</i>	278
Indian philosophy	637, 694
<i>marks of existence</i>	278
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795
<i>samādhi</i>	41
<i>samsāra</i>	275
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	755
Wheel of Dharma	272
Yoga philosophy	714
<i>nirvikalpa samādhi</i>	
<i>Bhavamukha</i>	666, 667
Comparative Religion	686
Freudian psychology.....	693
Indian philosophy	693, 695
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	675
Patañjali.....	695
Raja Yoga	695
Ramakrishna	666, 667, 695
Yoga philosophy	695
<i>niyama</i>	712
Yoga philosophy	719
Noble Eightfold Path.....	270, 272, 273, 275, 276, 710
Yoga philosophy	714
<i>Nómos</i>	
<i>cosmogony</i>	381
Eurasia	381
<i>Nómos</i>	17, 79, 80
<i>Aśa</i>	119
Hebrew	80
Judaism	456
<i>Ma'at</i>	79

Orphism	79
<i>Quality</i>	774
<i>Torah</i>	79, 80, 456, 774
<i>non-dualism</i>	
Advaita Vedānta.....	43, 646, 648, 679, 680, 760
Buddhism	281
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	803
Ramakrishna	680
Śaṅkara	43, 645
Totapuri.....	680
Vedānta.....	645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 669, 670
<i>noumenon</i>	
Kant.....	517
<i>Nous</i>	
<i>Being</i>	324
<i>Logos</i>	460
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	802
Neo-Platonism	764
<i>One</i>	460
<i>Rta</i>	783
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	783
<i>wisdom</i>	365
<i>nu</i>	
Egypt	638
<i>mythos</i>	197
Nu 101, 102	
Apsû	112
Ennead	98
<i>Genesis</i>	103
Indian philosophy.....	650
<i>Ma'at</i>	104
Ogdoad.....	98
<i>nucleus</i>	536, 537, 538
<i>numerology</i>	232
<i>bāguà</i>	252
Chinese philosophy	241
Daoism	170
Hellenic philosophy	783
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	48
Plato	78
Pythagoras	58, 289, 291
<i>Yijing</i>	241
Nun	
Ennead	98, 99

O

<i>objective determinism</i>	
Quantum Mechanics.....	577
<i>objective realism</i>	540, 544, 550, 620, 628, 698
Aristotle	52, 54

<i>Being</i>	57	<i>Gathas</i>	115
Bohm	623	Hebrew	87
Bohmian Mechanics	585	Vedic Sanskrit.....	199
Classical Mechanics	549, 759	Old Babylonian	75, 107
Eastern philosophy	634, 688, 759	Old Chinese	209, 212, 219, 376
<i>empiricism</i>	509	cuneiform.....	106
Enlightenment Era	505, 524, 692	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	344, 345
<i>epistemology</i>	52, 511, 744, 756, 760	<i>Nei-yeh</i>	37
<i>ethics</i>	514	Old Kingdom.....	91, 101, 130
Indo-European.....	802	Ennead	99
<i>Kant</i>	512, 513, 514, 516, 519, 744	Ogdoad.....	98
<i>mathematics</i>	555	<i>Pyramid Texts</i>	92
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798	Old Persian	105, 393, 402, 404
<i>mysticism</i>	19, 757	Behistun Inscription	115
Newton.....	525	<i>Old Testament</i>	75, 80, 81, 82, 86, 89, 121, 152, 251, 449, 450, 455, 459, 467, 471, 473, 474, 477, 483, 720
<i>ontology</i>	19, 20, 55, 56, 728, 744, 753, 754, 756, 759	Alexandria	448
philosophy	416	<i>allegoresis</i>	438, 445
Pirsig	768	<i>Analects</i>	341
<i>Quality</i>	625	Christian Church Fathers	576
Quantum Mechanics	577	<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	107
Quantum Theory	551, 584, 585, 587, 779	<i>Five Books of Moses</i>	85, 454
Science.....	13, 52	Gnosticism	461, 466, 472
Scientific Revolution	19	Great Flood	107
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	52	Hellenic philosophy.....	457
<i>teleology</i>	581	Islam.....	482, 483
<i>theology</i>	551	Judaism	81, 454, 457
<i>objectivism</i>	583	<i>oral transmission</i>	85
<i>empiricism</i>	617	<i>Pentateuch</i>	82
Quantum Era	583	Philo Judaeus	445, 452, 454
<i>observables</i>	584, 730, 753, 758	<i>Pistis Sophia</i>	476
<i>quantum potential</i>	597	<i>pneuma</i>	442
Quantum Theory	581, 586	<i>sophia</i>	457
Ockham, William.....	580	<i>Sophia</i>	472
<i>Ockham's razor</i>	580, 697	<i>Tanakh</i>	81
Bohmian Mechanics	580	<i>Upanishads</i>	642
<i>Odyssey</i>		Vedic philosophy.....	373
<i>Mahābhārata</i>	643	<i>wisdom</i>	453, 456, 472
<i>oral transmission</i>	30	Wisdom tradition	472
<i>Oedipus complex</i>		<i>On the Pythagoreans</i>	286
Freud	608	<i>One</i>	
<i>Of Isis and Osiris</i>	437	Al-Fârâbî.....	486
Ogdoad		<i>Brahman</i>	783
<i>cosmic egg</i>	205	Daoism	170
Egypt.....	101	<i>emanation</i>	460
Ennead.....	99	<i>gnosis</i>	471
Hermopolis	98, 101	Gnosticism	471
<i>mythos</i>	205	<i>homooousios</i>	479
Old Kingdom	98	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798
<i>theogony</i>	205	<i>monism</i>	782
Ohrmazd	116, 119, 120	<i>mysticism</i>	764
Old Avestan.....	116, 119		

Neo-Platonism	466	Indian philosophy	760, 797
Orphism	142	Indo-European	396
<i>Satcitānanda</i>	782	<i>locality</i>	604
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782, 783	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	585
<i>Tàijí</i>		<i>mathematics</i>	578
<i>Yijing</i>	241	<i>meaning</i>	15
<i>theology</i>	748	<i>meditation</i>	41
Onomakritos	135, 136	<i>metaphysics</i>	736, 746
<i>ontological argument</i>		<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	796, 800, 803
<i>Descartes</i>	798	<i>Metaphysics of Quality</i>	777, 786
<i>epistemology</i>	799	<i>mysticism</i>	42, 56
<i>first principles</i>	799	<i>mythos</i>	723
Kant	799	<i>nationalism</i>	742
<i>metaphysics</i>	799	<i>objective realism</i>	13, 744, 756
Philosophy	799	<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>reason</i>	798	<i>óntōs</i>	15, 763
<i>theology</i>	799	<i>ousia</i>	429
<i>unmoved mover</i>	799	philosophy	395, 725
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	598, 601	Pirsig	727, 752, 768, 776
<i>active information</i>	601	Plato	78, 569
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565	Quantum Era	780
Bohm	598	Quantum Theory. 20, 551, 566, 567, 578, 581, 583, 584, 591, 594, 596, 600, 604, 759	
Bohmian Mechanics	585, 599	<i>reductionist</i>	784, 802
<i>Causal Interpretation</i>	596	<i>relative-state formulation</i>	591, 600
Descartes	600	Relativity Theory	581
<i>locality</i>	596	Religion	802
Quantum Theory	585, 596, 598, 600	<i>Satcitānanda</i>	796
<i>ontological predicates</i>		Science	19, 743, 802
Kant	516	Shakespeare	15
<i>ontology</i>	743, 754	Soul	396
Aristotle ...53, 54, 55, 411, 413, 416, 423, 424, 429, 569, 763, 764		<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	759, 782
<i>awareness</i>	791, 792	<i>substance</i>	429
<i>Awareness</i>	796, 800	<i>supraconsciousness</i>	56, 746
<i>Being</i>	57	<i>teleology</i>	582
Bohm	57, 583, 594, 730, 734, 752	<i>theology</i>	427, 734, 735
Bohmian Mechanics	585, 600, 744	<i>theory of forms</i>	429
Bohr	586	<i>undivided wholeness</i>	604
<i>Categories</i>	417	<i>Yīn-Yáng</i>	802
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	585	<i>óntōs</i>	49
Daoism	346	Aristotle	16, 763
definition	49	<i>being qua being</i>	763
Eastern philosophy	55	etymology	15
Einstein	566	Hellenic philosophy	15
<i>epistemology</i>	49, 50	<i>ontology</i>	16
etymology	49	Plato	16
Everett	732, 752	<i>Satcitānanda</i>	796
<i>geometry</i>	578	Oracle Bone script	166, 209, 210, 217, 219
Hellenic philosophy	14, 570, 583	<i>Tiān</i>	222
<i>idealism</i>	802	<i>oral tradition</i>	<i>See oral transmission</i>
<i>implicate order</i>	604, 733	<i>oral transmission</i>	

<i>Avesta</i>	214	<i>katharoi</i>	137
Chinese philosophy	37	Moses	135
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	214	mysteries	139
Eastern philosophy	726	<i>mystery cults</i>	137
Eurasia	29, 32, 203	<i>mythos</i>	132, 134, 139
Hesiod	214	Onomakritos	135
Homer	214	<i>Orphic hymns</i>	139
<i>homo sapiens</i>	27, 28	<i>Orphic Theogony</i>	145
<i>ideas</i>	30	philosophy	138
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	31, 32	Proclus	140
<i>lyric poetry</i>	30, 214	<i>Rhapsodies</i>	133, 145
<i>mnemonic devices</i>	30	Sodom and Gomorrah	133
<i>mysticism</i>	33	<i>theogony</i>	124, 132, 137, 140, 142, 145
<i>mythos</i>	203, 214, 380, 629	Thrace	135
Native Americans	30	<i>ymnos</i>	200
<i>natural selection</i>	28	<i>Orphic Theogony</i>	143
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	37	<i>theogony</i>	145
Neolithic Revolution	29	Orphism	134, 311, 369
<i>Old Testament</i>	85	<i>Avesta</i>	139
<i>Rigvéda</i>	153	Bacchus	139
<i>shamanism</i>	30	Christianity	144, 629
Upper Paleolithic	31	<i>Chronos</i>	143, 144
<i>Vedas</i>	27, 214, 639, 642, 726	<i>cosmic egg</i>	144, 196, 204
writing	71	<i>cosmogony</i>	138, 142
<i>Organon</i>	417	Daoism	174
Aristotle	413	<i>Derveni Papyrus</i>	139, 145
Scholasticism	417	Dionysus	134, 138, 139
Western philosophy	417, 419	<i>Eros</i>	428
Origen of Alexandria	449	<i>esotericism</i>	139
Alexandria	449	<i>first principles</i>	143
<i>allegoresis</i>	346, 438, 446	Hellenic philosophy	143, 145
Christian Church Fathers	465, 576	Herodotus	138
Christianity	465	Hesiod	139, 145
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	467	<i>Hymns of Orpheus</i>	204
Hellenic philosophy	406, 446	<i>Katha Upanishad</i>	137
Middle Platonism	438	<i>katharoi</i>	145
<i>mythos</i>	438	<i>katharos</i>	137
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283	Moses	135
<i>Origin of the World's Mythologies</i>	47	<i>mystery cults</i>	117, 139, 143
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	47	<i>mysticism</i>	14, 407
Orpheus	86, 135, 136, 138, 305	<i>mythos</i>	145
Apollo	132, 134	<i>Nómos</i>	80
Aristotle	138	<i>Orphic Rhapsodies</i>	145
<i>Derveni Papyrus</i>	138	Parmenides	325
Dionysus	134, 143	Phanes	139, 142, 204
Eurydice	133, 135	Plato	140, 305
<i>first principles</i>	124	Protogonus	139, 204
Hellenic philosophy	404	<i>Rhapsodic Theogony</i>	143, 145
Herodotus	136	<i>Rhapsodies</i>	135, 143, 145
Hesiod	133, 145	<i>theogony</i>	138, 139, 140, 142, 146
Ibycus	136	Theogony	144

<i>Vedas</i>	139
Osiris	110, 129, 130
Dionysus	133
Ennead.....	99
Isis.....	102
Thoth	97
Ouranos	142
<i>ousia</i>	
Aristotle	419, 424, 524
<i>category theory</i>	516
<i>essentia</i>	419
<i>hylomorphism</i>	421
<i>substance</i>	419
<i>substantia</i>	419
<i>substantial form</i>	423, 569
Ovid.....	113, 187, 188, 190
Adam and Eve.....	192
<i>arche</i>	189
Augustus.....	192
<i>change</i>	194
Christianity	192
Classical Latin.....	393
<i>cosmogony</i>	189, 192, 194
<i>Demiurge</i>	190
<i>first principles</i>	294
Four Ages.....	198
Garden of Eden.....	192
<i>Genesis</i>	191, 192
Golden Age	192
Great Flood.....	192, 198
Hebrew	190
Hesiod.....	193
Julius Caesar	192
Manu	193
<i>Metamorphoses</i> .. 95, 147, 148, 150, 186, 187, 188, 189,	
194, 196, 293	
<i>Metamorphoses</i>	190
Moses	191
<i>mythos</i>	17, 294, 373
<i>naturalism</i>	189
<i>Purāṇas</i>	157
Pythagoras.....	292, 293, 294
Roman Empire	187
Simā Qiān.....	183
<i>theogony</i>	191
<i>Yijing</i>	294
<i>Yugas</i>	198

P

Pahlavi	116, 575
---------------	----------

Aramaic	200
Avestan	200
Persia	200
Paine, Thomas	
Spinoza.....	497
Paleolithic	
<i>shamanism</i>	783
Pāli.....	271
<i>Dhammapada</i>	276
<i>Pāli Canon</i>	271, 272, 273
<i>Dhammapada</i>	277
Pángǔ	168, 169, 178
Chinese philosophy	172
<i>cosmic egg</i>	144, 205
<i>cosmogony</i>	172
<i>mythos</i>	205
Orphism	144
Phanes.....	205
Paramananda, Swami.....	657
<i>Paramhansa</i>	50, 691
Advaita Vedānta.....	691
Ramakrishna	692
Sanskrit	692
Parmenides	292, 324, 325, 341, 359, 376
Eastern philosophy.....	258
Hellenic philosophy.....	325
<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	264
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	48
<i>lyric poetry</i>	324
<i>metaphysics</i>	326
<i>On Nature</i>	400
<i>ontology</i>	50
<i>óntōs</i>	49
Plato	301, 324, 325, 326, 356
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283, 285
Upanishadic philosophy	258
Valdez.....	400
<i>particulars</i>	
Aristotle	444
Patañjali.....	710
Indian philosophy.....	21, 706
Kapila	707
<i>meditation</i>	35, 713
<i>mokṣa</i>	706
<i>nirvikalpa samādhi</i>	695
Raja Yoga.....	714
<i>samādhi</i>	695, 711
Vivekananda.....	714
Yoga philosophy	374, 695, 706, 711, 713, 719
Pauli, Wolfgang	
Jung	614

Psychology	614	Indo-Aryan	637
<i>synchronicity</i>	614	Indo-European	393
<i>Pax Romana</i>	187	Indo-Iranian.....	46, 199, 393
Peloponnesian War	298	Jesus	80
Athens	299	<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	45
Socrates	296, 298	<i>Magi</i>	288
<i>Pentateuch</i>	9, 84, 86, 118, 452	<i>mythos</i>	199, 203
<i>Five Books of Moses</i>	82, 454	Near East	45
Gnosticism	461	Onomakritos	136
Hellenic philosophy	82	Pahlavi.....	575
Moses	85	Pesistratos.....	135
<i>perception</i>		Pre-Socratic philosophy	288, 398
<i>autonomy</i>	515	Pythagoras	286, 288
Cognitive Science.....	789, 791	Roman Empire.....	288
<i>comprehension</i>	789, 791	Xerxes.....	136
<i>judgment</i>	519	Zarathustra.....	118
Kant	516, 517, 519	Zoroastrianism	103, 115, 122, 288
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	789, 791	Persian Empire	357, 403, 448
<i>mind</i>	789	Achaemenid Empire	402
<i>quantization</i>	793	Ahura Mazda	121
Peripatetic		Hellenic philosophy	356
Aristotle	406	<i>persona</i>	
Bacon	491	<i>collective unconscious</i>	613
Gnosticism	466, 468	Jung	613
Hellenic philosophy	400	Psychology	613
<i>Logos</i>	452	Pesistratos.....	135, 136
<i>materialism</i>	510	<i>Phaedo</i>	362
Psychology	606	Soul	369
school	431	<i>theory of forms</i>	306, 318, 319
Stoicism	432, 433, 448	Upanishadic philosophy	355
Persephone	134	<i>Phaedrus</i>	
Dionysus	143	<i>Eros</i>	428
Orpheus	134	Freud	610
Orphism	134	Hellenic philosophy	767
Persia	382	<i>Middle dialogues</i>	767
Achaemenid Empire	122	<i>Phaidros</i>	767
Ahura Mazda	288	Plato	767
Akkadian	574	Psychology	610
Alcibiades	296	Phanes.....	142, 143, 144
<i>Aša</i>	17	<i>cosmic egg</i>	204
<i>Avesta</i>	200	<i>cosmogony</i>	204
Avestan	200	<i>Eros</i>	428
Axial Age	332	<i>Hymns of Orpheus</i>	204
Buddhism.....	273	Metis	144
<i>cosmogony</i>	381	<i>mythos</i>	204
Damaskios	143	Orphism	142, 143, 144
Diogenes Laertius	288	<i>theogony</i>	140
Eastern philosophy	378	Zeus	143
Egypt.....	88, 95	<i>phenomenon</i>	
Eurasia	203, 381, 574	Kant	517
Hellenic philosophy	398, 400, 404, 607	Philo Judaeus.....	406, 452, 455, 459

Alexandria.....	449, 453	Chinese philosophy	218
<i>allegoresis</i>	346, 438, 446	<i>photoelectric effect</i>	530, 541
Christian Church Fathers	465, 576	Quantum Theory.....	530
Christianity	448	<i>photoelectrons</i>	530
<i>exegesis</i>	9	<i>photon</i>	539, 541, 542, 543, 544
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	467	<i>double-slit experiment</i>	543, 544, 545
Hellenic philosophy	406, 453	Einstein	530
Judaism	454, 457	<i>electron</i>	539
<i>Logos</i>	446, 460, 468	<i>phronēsis</i>	
<i>mythos</i>	438	Hellenic philosophy.....	316
<i>Old Testament</i>	454, 467	Plato	316
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283	<i>sophia</i>	313
Stoicism	445	<i>Physics</i>	
<i>wisdom</i>	453	Aristotle	415
<i>philology</i>		<i>Categories</i>	417
Avestan.....	199	<i>causality</i>	421, 422
Avicenna	487	<i>Metaphysics</i>	582
Indo-Aryan	147, 199	Physics.....	525
Indo-European	27, 46	<i>theology</i>	427
Indo-Iranian	199	<i>unmoved mover</i>	425
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	21	<i>pictograms</i>	71, 209, 574
<i>natural selection</i>	389	<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	20
Pirsig	773	Bell	598
Proto-Indo-European.....	395	<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	598
<i>Quality</i>	773	Bohm.....	595, 596
Vedic Sanskrit	199	Bohmian Mechanics.....	594, 595, 597
<i>philosophia</i>		de Broglie	595
Aristotle	411, 413, 762	EPR Paradox	598
<i>falṣafa</i>	406, 411, 484	<i>hidden variables</i>	580, 595, 596
Greek	411	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	803
Hellenic philosophy	202, 300, 407, 413, 607	Quantum Theory.....	13, 580, 585
Kant	506	von Neumann.....	595
<i>logos</i>	408	Pinyin.....	209, 212, 213, 232
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	803	Wade-Giles.....	213
<i>mythos</i>	202, 408	Pirsig, Robert	617, 620, 698, 728
Psychology	607	<i>academia</i>	750
Pythagoras.....	202	<i>arête</i>	773
Socrates	296	Bohm.....	620, 623, 734
<i>sophia</i>	202	citadel of science.....	658
<i>wisdom</i>	202	<i>Dao</i>	769
<i>Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica</i>	500, 525	Darwin.....	772
Scientific Revolution	505	<i>dialectic</i>	770
Phoenician alphabet	72, 73, 81, 105, 394	<i>dualism</i>	772
Aramaic.....	200, 575	<i>ethics</i>	768
Brāhmī script	199, 200, 575, 639	Freudian psychology	701
Greek	200	<i>Good</i>	772
Greek alphabet	575	<i>gravity</i>	773
Hebrew	200	<i>hypotheses</i>	767
Sanskrit	200	<i>hypothesis</i>	619, 625
Phoenician Alphabet.....	211	Indo-European	775
<i>phonemes</i>	574	Jung	622

Kant	619	Aristotle	299, 327, 411, 412
<i>Lila</i>	617, 698, 767, 770, 771	Athens	300
<i>LILA</i>	623	<i>Awareness</i>	802
<i>matter</i>	769	<i>Becoming</i>	330
<i>metaphysics</i>	621, 626, 734	<i>Being</i>	324, 330
Metaphysics of Quality 13, 688, 697, 698, 765, 769, 770		<i>causality</i>	421
<i>mind</i>	769	Chinese philosophy	176, 332, 635
<i>morality</i>	768	Christianity	410, 468
<i>mysticism</i>	755, 768, 776	<i>cosmogony</i>	328, 330, 438
<i>ontology</i>	13	<i>Cratylus</i>	302, 314
Phaedrus	766, 767	<i>Crito</i>	297, 303
<i>philology</i>	773	Damaskios	143
<i>philosophology</i>	767	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	346, 355
philosophy	620	Daoism	174, 348, 352
Physics	578	Descartes	494
Plato	772	<i>dialectic</i>	302, 303, 304, 318, 330
Platypus	620, 621, 698	<i>dialogues</i>	301, 302
<i>practical philosophy</i>	625	<i>dualism</i>	764
<i>Quality</i>	619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 768	Eastern philosophy	375, 378
<i>reason</i>	788	<i>eidôs</i>	302
<i>rhetoric</i>	770	Eleusinian mysteries	305
<i>scientific method</i>	619	Enlightenment Era	303
Static Quality	623	<i>epistemology</i>	50, 307, 314, 318, 320, 324, 330, 348
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i> . 50, 617, 619, 623, 696, 697, 698, 775, 781		<i>Eros</i>	428
<i>Value</i>	767, 768, 770	<i>ethics</i>	302, 368, 370
<i>Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance</i> 617, 620, 697, 766, 768, 769, 770, 774		Freud	610
<i>Pistis Sophia</i>	476	<i>geometry</i>	428, 573
Planck postulate	540	<i>gnosis</i>	471
Planck, Max	539, 540, 542	Gnosticism	452, 471, 475
<i>Awareness</i>	796	<i>Good</i>	308, 331
<i>black body radiation</i>	541	Hellenic philosophy	305, 330, 395, 406
Einstein	531, 541	Heraclitus	314, 324
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	796	Hesiod	125
<i>mind</i>	605, 796	<i>Huainanzi</i>	177
<i>photon</i>	541	<i>hylomorphism</i>	421
<i>quanta</i>	542	<i>idealism</i>	306, 311, 318, 367
<i>quantization</i>	537	<i>ideas</i>	302, 306, 307, 363, 441
Quantum Mechanics	540	Indian philosophy	369
Quantum Theory	540, 566	Indo-European	356, 397
<i>Planck's constant</i>	541, 545	influence of	490
Plato 136, 303, 305, 310, 311, 317, 324, 325, 357, 362, 364, 365, 708, 782, 802		<i>intelligibles</i>	310, 317, 323
<i>academia</i>	405	Islam	484, 764
Academy	763	Justin Martyr	468
Allegory of the Cave	309	Kant	515, 519
<i>analogy of the divided line</i>	320, 321	<i>Katha Upanishad</i>	355
<i>animus</i>	313	<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	48
<i>Apology</i>	136, 300, 303	<i>Laws</i>	302
Aristophanes	297	Lecture on the Good	78
		<i>logos</i>	303, 312, 330, 364
		<i>Logos</i>	427, 428
		<i>mathematics</i>	428

<i>Maya</i>	322
<i>meditation</i>	14
<i>metaphysics</i>	303, 330, 420
<i>Metaphysics</i>	411
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	801, 802
<i>Metaphysics of Quality</i>	773
<i>Middle Period</i>	302
<i>monism</i>	764
<i>morality</i>	302
<i>mystery cults</i>	305
<i>mysticism</i>	729, 764, 765, 777
<i>mythos</i>	305
<i>Neo-Platonism</i>	411, 460
<i>ontological argument</i>	799
<i>ontology</i>	50, 429, 763
<i>óntōs</i>	16, 49
<i>opinion</i>	202
<i>Orpheus</i>	137
<i>Orphism</i>	136, 138, 140
<i>Parmenides</i>	324, 325, 326, 328
<i>Phaedo</i>	300, 302, 305, 306, 310, 313, 314, 317, 319, 320, 323, 357, 361, 365
<i>Phaedrus</i>	76, 78, 302, 310, 311, 315, 368, 626, 767, 770
<i>philosophia</i>	411, 413
<i>philosophy</i>	286, 303, 304, 369, 394, 411, 412
<i>phronēsis</i>	313, 316
<i>Physics</i>	525, 578
<i>Pirsig</i>	772
<i>political philosophy</i>	299
<i>practical philosophy</i>	415
<i>Pre-Socratic philosophy</i>	283, 285, 359, 399, 400, 401, 404
<i>Plato</i>	305
<i>Psychology</i>	606, 607, 795
<i>Pythagoras</i>	286, 287, 292
<i>Ramakrishna</i>	689
<i>rationalism</i>	509, 510
<i>reason</i>	303, 330
<i>Republic</i>	159, 298, 302, 305, 306, 307, 322, 323, 415, 424, 475, 486, 570
<i>Scholasticism</i>	303
<i>Seventh Letter</i>	9, 77, 672
<i>shamanism</i>	782
<i>skepticism</i>	174
<i>Socrates</i>	296, 297, 298, 300, 301, 302, 303, 305, 314
<i>Socrates influence</i>	319, 552
<i>Socratic dialogue</i>	297, 449
<i>Socratic method</i>	297
<i>sophia</i>	311, 364
<i>Sparta</i>	298
<i>Stoicism</i>	435, 438, 444
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782
<i>theology</i>	330, 369, 424, 427, 428, 747, 764
<i>theory of forms</i>	315, 424, 570
<i>theos</i>	765
<i>Timaeus</i>	305, 319, 323
<i>transcendental idealism</i>	744
<i>unwritten teachings</i>	9, 77, 78, 236, 460, 672
<i>Upanishadic philosophy</i>	355
<i>Vedic philosophy</i>	322, 424
<i>virtue</i>	302
<i>Western philosophy</i>	378
<i>wisdom</i>	313
Platonism	
<i>Al-Fârâbî</i>	486
<i>Aristotle</i>	285, 413, 416, 417
<i>Buddhism</i>	281
<i>Dao</i>	348
<i>Daoism</i>	346, 347
<i>Kripal</i>	670
<i>mathematics</i>	322
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	802
<i>Neo-Platonism</i>	670
<i>Plato</i>	304
<i>Psychology</i>	607
<i>Saradananda</i>	670
<i>Scholasticism</i>	417
<i>sophia</i>	348
<i>Stoicism</i>	431
<i>Upanishadic philosophy</i>	348
<i>Yijing</i>	238
pleasure principle	
<i>collective unconscious</i>	612
<i>Freud</i>	612
<i>Psychology</i>	612
Plotinus	485
<i>mysticism</i>	783
<i>Neo-Platonism</i>	411, 461, 466, 670
<i>Trinity</i>	461
Plutarch	124, 283, 334, 409, 434, 441
<i>allegoresis</i>	437
<i>Egypt</i>	96
<i>Middle Platonism</i>	437
<i>Moralia</i>	314, 409
<i>mythos</i>	437
<i>Of Isis and Osiris</i>	437
<i>On Nature</i>	441
<i>Parallel Lives</i>	334, 409
<i>Stoicism</i>	434, 442, 444, 448
<i>Temple at Delphi</i>	437
pneuma	330
<i>Aristotle</i>	440

<i>Logos</i>	445	<i>conscious</i>	609
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798, 802	Freud	608, 609
<i>prāṇa</i>	447	<i>unconscious</i>	609
Stoicism	439	Pre-Socratic philosophy	68, 71, 283, 284, 285, 286, 360, 398, 400, 405, 575
<i>substantial form</i>	440	<i>arche</i>	38
<i>Pneuma</i>		Atomic Theory	536
Stoicism	439	Christian Church Fathers	283
<i>Politeia</i>	See Republic	<i>epistemology</i>	50
<i>Politics</i>		<i>first principles</i>	124
Hellenic philosophy	410	Hellenic philosophy	386, 387, 400, 401, 404, 413
<i>Huainanzi</i>	176	Indo-Aryan	359
Porphyry	285, 292	<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	48
Neo-Platonism	411, 461, 670	<i>Magi</i>	288
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283	Milesian School	401
<i>Posterior Analytics</i>		Miletus	286, 401
<i>Organon</i>	417	<i>mysticism</i>	729
<i>practical philosophy</i>		Orphism	400
Aristotle	762	Parmenides	324
<i>autonomy</i>	517	Persia	288, 404
Chinese philosophy	632	<i>philosophia</i>	413
<i>Dao</i>	632	philosophy	400
Daoist	633	Plato	305, 356, 404
Eastern philosophy	635	Platonism	417
Eurasia	203	Pythagoras	286
<i>judgment</i>	519	Socrates	296, 400, 404
Kant	514, 515, 517, 518	sources	283
<i>mythos</i>	203	Stoicism	438
Newton	527	Upanishadic philosophy	356, 357
Pirsig	625	Western philosophy	629
<i>reason</i>	517	<i>pre-space</i>	601
<i>Prajāpati</i>	205	<i>prime mover</i>	
Brahmā	260	Al-Fārābī	486
<i>Prakṛti</i>	157, 669, 708	Allāh	487
<i>dualism</i>	682	<i>Demiurge</i>	224
<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	261	<i>epistemology</i>	56
Neo-Platonism	670	<i>first principles</i>	747
Sāṃkhya	670, 708, 709	<i>theology</i>	427
<i>prāṇa</i>	153, 310, 712	<i>Tiān</i>	224
Chinese philosophy	377	<i>Prior Analytics</i>	
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	256	Aristotle	417
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	802	<i>Organon</i>	417
<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	261	<i>Proclus</i>	
<i>pneuma</i>		<i>Elements of Theology</i>	485
<i>pneuma</i>	447	Heraclitus	287
<i>qì</i> 38, 178, 377		Neo-Platonism	461, 466, 670
Raja Yoga	718	Orphism	142
<i>prāṇāyāma</i>	706, 712	<i>Timaeus</i>	140
Yoga philosophy	711	Protagoras	142, 204
<i>pratyahara</i>	712	<i>cosmic egg</i>	204
Plato	313	Orphism	144
<i>preconscious</i>			

Proto-Indo-European	391	<i>Red Book</i>	613
Eurasia	46	Science	606
Eurasian philosophy.....	380, 383	Socrates	296
Indo-Aryan	198	Soul	606, 607
Indo-European	27, 390, 395	Stoicism	606
Indo-Iranian	198	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	777
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	21	<i>super-ego</i>	610
Metaphysics of Quality	773	<i>supraconsciousness</i>	705, 745
<i>philology</i>	46, 390, 395	<i>synchronicity</i>	614
philosophy	46	<i>Thanatos</i>	609
<i>Quality</i>	773	<i>theology</i>	606, 613
<i>theology</i>	46	<i>Yijing</i>	613
<i>Vedas</i>	380	<i>psychotherapy</i>	
<i>protons</i>	537, 538	Jung	613
Psychology	22, 52, 698	Ptah	196
<i>academia</i>	749	<i>Bâ 100</i>	
<i>active imagination</i>	613	<i>cosmogony</i>	100
<i>alchemy</i>	613	<i>Demiurge</i>	101
<i>awareness</i>	791	Ennead	100
<i>Awareness</i>	797, 798	Memphis	100, 101
<i>causal determinism</i>	610	<i>mythos</i>	100
<i>collective unconscious</i>	613	Ptolemaic Period	
Daoism.....	613	<i>Book of the Dead</i>	91
Descartes	731	Hermes.....	97
<i>dreams</i>	609	Hermeticism.....	97
<i>ego</i>	610	<i>mythos</i>	101
Epicureanism	606	Thoth.....	97
<i>epistemology</i>	55, 784, 794, 797	Ptolemy	522, 554
<i>Eros</i>	609	Al-Fârâbî.....	486
<i>ethics</i>	607	Copernicus	498
<i>eudaimonia</i>	606	Gnosticism	476
Freud	20, 52, 608, 611, 612	<i>heliocentrism</i>	498
Hellenic philosophy	606, 607	Scientific Revolution	505
<i>id</i> 610		<i>Purāṇas</i>	147, 150, 157, 158, 161, 371, 634, 641, 691
<i>implicate order</i>	614	<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	112
Jung	20, 52, 611, 612	Four Ages	198
<i>Logos</i>	795	Indra	640
<i>metaphysics</i>	797	Īśvara.....	264
<i>metaphysics</i>	606, 614, 730	<i>mythos</i>	112, 197, 198
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	796, 797, 800	Tantra Yoga	680
<i>mind</i>	607, 614	<i>theogony</i>	112
<i>mysticism</i>	696, 729, 754	<i>Puruṣa</i>	151, 154, 156, 157, 169, 366, 669, 708
<i>objective realism</i>	756	<i>Being</i>	713
<i>ontological argument</i>	797	<i>collective unconscious</i>	702
<i>persona</i>	613	<i>Demiurge</i>	155
Philosophy	730, 800	<i>dualism</i>	682
Physics	730	<i>first principles</i>	707
Plato	330, 606	Indo-European	397
<i>psyche</i>	606	Neo-Platonism	670
Quantum Theory	614	<i>Rigvéda</i>	708
Ramakrishna	21, 55, 704	<i>samādhi</i>	713

Sāṃkhya	670, 709, 710
Vedas	147, 156
Vivekananda	717
Pushan	
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	257
Pyramid Texts	91, 130, 574
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	101, 103
<i>Coffin Texts</i>	103
Ennead	98
mythos	92
oral transmission	31
Sumer-Babylonian	107
Pythagoras	285, 286, 290, 291, 292, 293, 341, 359, 405
Aristotle	287, 290, 294
arithmetic	289
Egypt	286, 305
first principles	291
geometry	428
Golden Verses	289, 292
Hellenic philosophy	202
Heraclitus	287
Herodotus	287
Italy	288
kosmos	123
Logos	427
Magi	287, 288, 289
mathematics	428
mathematikoi	292
metempsychosis	287
mystery cults	294
mysticism	9
Near East	286
numerology	58, 291
Orpheus	137
Ovid	194, 292, 293, 294
Parmenides	324
Persia	286
philosophia	202, 573
philosophy	188, 189, 232, 286, 287, 290, 291, 293, 369, 573
Physics	578
Plato	305
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283, 285, 400
rationalism	509, 510
references	287
Republic	287
Rhind Mathematical Papyrus	289
Socrates	297
symbola	292
Yijing	293
Zeno of Citium	431

Q

qì

Chinese philosophy	377
Christianity	178
Daoism	178
Holy Spirit	178
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	38
<i>prāṇa</i>	38, 178
yarrow stalks	235
<i>Qián</i>	243, 245, 247, 248, 249
Qin Dynasty	170, 209, 217, 221, 228, 334, 335
Burning of the Books	236
Confucianism	167
Eastern philosophy	630
qualified non-dualism	
Vedānta	647, 648, 649, 669, 670
Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta	647, 760
Quality	
academia	750, 770
Allāh	625
archetypes	792
arête	773
Awareness	792
Being	776
biological	771
Bohm	734
Brahman	625
Buddha Nature	625
Classic Quality	769
computer science	771
Dao	625, 769, 774
Darwin	772
definition	768
dharma	773, 774
Dynamic	622, 770, 772, 775
ethics	770
God	625
Good	772, 773
gravity	773
Great Spirit	625
Indo-European	773
inorganic	771
intellectual	771
Lila	770
meditation	623
metaphysics	619, 623, 729
Metaphysics of Awareness	792
Metaphysics of Quality	768
morality	771, 773
mysticism	755, 775, 776

<i>natural selection</i>	772	<i>determinism</i>	759
<i>ontology</i>	731, 734, 776, 786	<i>double-slit experiment</i>	544
Pirsig	619, 621, 624, 625, 767	Einstein	529, 531
Plato	768	<i>entanglement</i>	563
Romantic Quality	769	EPR Paradox	564
<i>Ṛta</i>	773	Everett	589, 590, 732
<i>Satcitānanda</i>	776	<i>geometry</i>	577, 590
<i>social</i>	771	<i>hidden variables</i>	560
static	771, 772	<i>Hilbert space</i>	577
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	623, 781	<i>Hilbert-space</i>	590
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	730	<i>implicate order</i>	600, 601, 602
Upanishadic philosophy.....	776	interpretation.....	20, 626
<i>Value</i>	771, 772, 773	<i>local realism</i>	562
<i>Values</i>	766	<i>locality</i>	599
<i>Yīn-Yáng</i>	775	<i>Lorentz invariance</i>	564
<i>quanta</i>	541, 542, 585	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	585, 588
<i>quantization</i>	537, 538, 539, 540, 559, 623, 793	<i>mathematics</i>	566
<i>Awareness</i>	793	<i>metaphysics</i>	599
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	793	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798, 803
Quantum Era.....	7, 10, 12, 14, 522, 557, 616, 724, 751	<i>mind</i>	603
<i>academia</i>	749	<i>objective realism</i>	13, 577
Age of Reason	803	Ontological Interpretation	565, 596, 601
Eastern philosophy	627, 780	<i>ontology</i>	20, 50, 56, 592, 732, 745, 746, 752, 758
Einstein	529	Physics.....	538, 578
Eurasian philosophy.....	383	<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	595, 596
Information Age.....	21, 383	Pirsig.....	626
Kant	788	Planck.....	540
<i>mathematics</i>	555	Quantum Era	557
<i>metaphysics</i>	22, 793, 803	<i>quantum potential</i>	597
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	15, 779, 803	<i>relative-state formulation</i> ...	13, 584, 588, 589, 590, 591, 732
Philosophy	583, 803	Relativity Theory	531, 532
Physics	803	Schrödinger	561
<i>quantization</i>	793	<i>Schrödinger equation</i>	545
Quantum Theory	580	Schrödinger's cat.....	562
<i>reductionist</i>	8	Schrödinger's cat.....	562
<i>teleology</i>	581	Scientific Revolution	505
<i>theology</i>	550	transistors	554
Quantum Mechanics 13, 535, 539, 540, 542, 546, 548, 550,		<i>Universal Wave Function</i>	588
554, 555, 558, 559, 577, 588, 589, 595, 598, 599, 618,		<i>wavefunction</i>	558
784		<i>wavefunction collapse</i>	588
atom	537	Quantum Mechanics.....	586
<i>Awareness</i>	803	<i>wave-particle duality</i>	618
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	564, 598	<i>quantum potential</i>	598
Bohm	734	Bohmian Mechanics.....	585, 597, 598, 599
Bohmian Mechanics	565, 585, 598, 599, 803	<i>Causal Interpretation</i>	597
Born	548	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	803
<i>causal determinism</i>	759	<i>mind</i>	604
Classical Mechanics	20, 564, 589, 600, 727	<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	596, 601
<i>completeness</i>	558	<i>ontology</i>	734
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	586, 594		
de Broglie.....	547		

Quantum Theory	13, 14, 535, 538, 541, 542, 547, 549, 556, 557, 558, 561, 565, 571, 578, 617, 626, 732
<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565, 566
Bohm	594, 596, 733
Bohmian Mechanics	580, 584, 585, 594, 598, 599, 733
Bohr	586
Born	548
<i>causal determinism</i>	590
<i>Causal Interpretation</i>	585, 596
<i>causality</i>	596
Chinese philosophy	636
Classical Mechanics	587, 600
<i>complementarity</i>	586, 587
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	584, 585, 586, 589, 594, 600
Bohr	587
<i>de Broglie-Bohm theory</i>	580, 585
<i>determinism</i>	580, 585, 753
Einstein	525, 529, 530, 560, 618
<i>entanglement</i>	566
<i>epistemology</i>	551, 579, 583, 587, 793
<i>EPR Paper</i>	580
EPR Paradox	558, 564
Everett	591
<i>hidden variables</i>	564, 580, 585
<i>holomovement</i>	731
<i>interpretation</i>	20, 588
<i>local realism</i>	562, 566, 604
<i>locality</i>	564, 590, 596, 604, 753
<i>Lorentz invariance</i>	564
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	585, 588, 589, 591, 592, 593
<i>mathematics</i>	551, 579, 600
<i>measurement problem</i>	591
<i>metaphysics</i>	13, 567
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	794
<i>metatheory</i>	589
<i>mind</i>	593, 602, 604, 614
Newton	551
<i>objective realism</i>	551, 584, 587
<i>observables</i>	586
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	585, 596, 598, 599, 600, 601
<i>ontology</i>	19, 20, 49, 551, 566, 567, 578, 581, 583, 584, 594, 596, 604, 731, 732, 735, 752
<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	580, 595
Planck	540
Psychology	614
<i>Quality</i>	624
<i>quantization</i>	793
Quantum Era	780
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	589, 590, 591, 593, 603, 732
Relativity	13

Relativity Theory	618
Schrödinger's cat	561, 562
Science	8, 727
Scientific Revolution	19
<i>teleology</i>	581, 583
<i>uncertainty principle</i>	587
<i>Unified Field Theory</i>	779
<i>Universal Wave Function</i>	589, 591
<i>wavefunction collapse</i>	590
Western philosophy	605
<i>Qur'ān</i>	75, 80, 341, 482, 483, 487, 488, 554
Aristotle	461, 764
Chinese philosophy	218
<i>hikmah</i>	484
Indo-European	397
Islam	406
Muhammad	481, 483
<i>oral transmission</i>	85
<i>Tanakh</i>	481
Vedic philosophy	373
<i>wisdom</i>	484

R

Ra	102
Apep	103
Apollo	96
Atum	101
<i>Bâ</i>	97
<i>cosmic egg</i>	205
Duat	96
Egypt	96
<i>Ma'at</i>	98, 102
<i>mythos</i>	102, 205
Ogdoad	205
Pushan	257
<i>Sūrya</i>	257
Raja Yoga	670, 711, 716, 717, 718
<i>nirvikalpa samādhi</i>	695
Tantra Yoga	718
Vivekananda	714
Yoga philosophy	695, 706
Ram Chandra Datta	659, 663, 664, 672, 679
chemistry	656
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	659
<i>Srī Srī Ramakrishna Paramahamsadeva jīvanvrittanta</i>	656
Rāma	691
Ramakrishna Math	657
Ramakrishna Order	651, 653, 657, 658, 662, 686, 687, 690
Belur Math	663

<i>Kālī's Child</i>	674	<i>sādhana</i>	658, 659, 660, 661, 663, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 683, 685, 686, 690, 693, 696, 702
Kripal	659	Śakti	683
Tyagananda	657	<i>samādhi</i>	694
<i>Udbodhan</i>	662	Sarada Devi	11, 662, 665, 673, 674
Vivekananda	672, 673	Saradananda	663, 664, 665, 668, 671, 673
Ramakrishna, Paramhansa ...	673, 686, 687, 688, 689, 691, 692, 696, 698, 701, 703	<i>Satcitānanda</i>	667, 676, 695
Advaita Vedānta	43, 676, 680, 693	Schrödinger's Cat	685
Bhakti Yoga	683	<i>Śrī Śrī Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga</i>	661
<i>Bhavamukha</i>	665, 666, 667, 668, 669	<i>superconscious</i>	696
biographies	655, 658, 661	<i>supraconsciousness</i>	704
biography	656	Supreme Self	694
<i>Brahman</i>	676	Tantra Yoga	658, 667, 678, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685
Buddhism	718	teaching	672, 674
<i>collective unconscious</i>	704	Totapuri	679, 693
Comparative Religion	686	Vedānta	657, 667, 669, 680, 685
Dakshineswar Temple	683	<i>Vedas</i>	682
Eastern philosophy	687, 688, 689, 694, 717	Vedic philosophy	683
<i>epistemology</i>	55	Vivekananda	11, 14, 26, 657, 687, 717
<i>final cause</i>	56	Western philosophy	692
Freudian psychology. 658, 675, 678, 687, 692, 693, 699, 700, 701, 703, 704		Yoga philosophy	695
<i>Gospel of Śrī Ramakrishna</i>	660	Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center	9
Hinduism	682, 702	Ramanuja	647
homoeotericism	693	Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta	645
<i>incarnation</i>	652	<i>Ramayana</i>	161, 691
Indian philosophy	43, 664, 667, 670, 674, 693, 694	<i>rationalism</i>	522, 553
interpretation 14, 21, 653, 657, 658, 665, 667, 668, 669, 671, 673, 676, 677, 685, 689, 690, 692		<i>a priori knowledge</i>	510
Īśvara	695	<i>autonomy</i>	515
Jungian psychology	702	Descartes	508
Kālī	681, 683	Enlightenment Era	502, 524, 743
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	653, 659, 675, 693	<i>epistemology</i>	508, 509, 513, 516
Kripal	670, 682, 686	Euclid	510
Mahendranath Gupta	659, 660	Hellenic philosophy	510
monastic disciples	668	<i>idealism</i>	516
<i>mysticism</i>	25, 42, 653, 666, 690, 756	Kant	508, 523, 744
<i>nirvikalpa samādhi</i>	695	Kepler	500
<i>non-dualism</i>	43, 680	Leibniz	508
<i>ontology</i>	25	<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	790
<i>Paramhansa</i>	50, 692	Plato	509, 510
Platypus	698	Pythagoras	509
Psychology	704	Science	414, 523
Quantum Theory	686	Scientific Revolution	505
Ram Chandra Datta	659	Spinoza	495, 496
Ramakrishna Order	673	<i>transcendental idealism</i>	508
renunciate	665	Western philosophy	509
<i>rishis</i>	373	<i>Records of the Grand Historian</i> 163, 164, 180, 221, 222, 334	
<i>sādhaka</i>	682, 685	Lāozǐ	343
		<i>Red Book</i>	612
		<i>active imagination</i>	703
		Psychology	613

<i>reductionist</i>	627, 628, 743, 758, 760, 786, 797, 801
Indo-European	802
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	800, 801, 802, 803
<i>ontology</i>	784, 802
Philosophy	782
Quantum Era	8
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	591
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	589, 600
Everett	590, 593, 732
<i>implicate order</i>	603
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	588
<i>measurement problem</i>	591, 732
<i>mind</i>	603
<i>ontology</i>	600, 732
Quantum Mechanics	13, 588, 590
Quantum Theory	584, 589
<i>Universal Wave Function</i>	589, 591
<i>wavefunction</i>	591
<i>wavefunction collapse</i>	590, 591, 732
Relativity Theory	19, 528, 529, 534, 535, 539, 540, 542, 546, 549, 550, 551, 554, 559, 565
Classical Mechanics	531
Dark Energy	540
Dark Matter	540
Einstein	528, 529, 560
<i>electromagnetism</i>	532
<i>epistemology</i>	579
Euclid	577
Galileo	532
General case	529, 532, 533, 534, 577, 578
<i>hidden variables</i>	580
<i>length contraction</i>	534
<i>local realism</i>	563
<i>locality</i>	564, 599
<i>Lorentz invariance</i>	564
<i>mathematics</i>	579
<i>ontology</i>	581
Physics	577, 578
<i>Quality</i>	624
Quantum Era	557
Quantum Mechanics	531, 532, 558
Quantum Theory	13, 618
Science	531, 727
Scientific Revolution	8, 19
<i>spacetime</i>	577, 618
Special case	529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534
speed of light	532
<i>teleology</i>	581
<i>theology</i>	550
<i>time dilation</i>	534
<i>rén</i>	338, 340
<i>Analects</i>	339
<i>arête</i>	211
Confucianism	211
<i>Rújiā</i>	338
<i>Tiān</i>	222
Renaissance	553
Scholasticism	488
<i>repression</i>	610
Freud	610
Psychology	610
<i>Republic</i>	417
Allegory of the Cave	417
<i>analogy of the divided line</i>	320
<i>arête</i>	298
Athens	299
Chinese philosophy	221
Hellenic philosophy	410
<i>Huainanzi</i>	176, 177
<i>Laws of Manu</i>	205
Middle Period	302
Plato	298
political philosophy	319
Pythagoras	287
Socrates	298
<i>theory of forms</i>	306, 318, 367
<i>virtue</i>	298
<i>res cogitans</i>	600
<i>implicate order</i>	600
Psychology	731
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	618
<i>res extensa</i>	600
<i>implicate order</i>	600
Psychology	731
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	618
<i>Rhapsodies</i>	133
Rhea	126, 128, 129
<i>Chronos</i>	143, 144
Dionysus	143
<i>Rhind Mathematical Papyrus</i>	289
<i>Rigvéda</i> ... 147, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 157, 160, 169, 361, 371, 639, 640, 641, 708	
<i>cosmic egg</i>	161, 205
<i>cosmogony</i>	150, 153, 379
Daoism	174
Eurasian philosophy	379
<i>Gathas</i>	198
<i>Heavenly Questions</i>	172
Hinduism	150
<i>Hiranyagarbha</i>	205
Indo-Aryan	148

<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	256
<i>lyric poetry</i>	640
<i>meditation</i>	40
<i>mythos</i>	148, 205, 379
<i>oral transmission</i>	27
<i>Ṛta</i>	119
<i>skepticism</i>	174
<i>soma</i>	200
<i>Sūrya</i>	257
<i>Tiānwèn</i>	172
<i>Vedas</i>	27
Vedic Sanskrit	199, 393
Viṣṇu	377
<i>Yasna</i>	198
<i>ymnos</i>	117
<i>rishis</i>	
Hinduism	371, 373, 652
Indo-Aryan	154, 651
<i>Laws of Manu</i>	158
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	801
<i>mythos</i>	371
Ramakrishna	670
<i>r̥ṣi</i> 373	
<i>Upanishads</i>	358, 643
<i>Vedas</i>	39, 153, 639, 643, 649
<i>vidyā</i>	266
Roman alphabet	394
Roman Empire 186, 187, 190, 393, 399, 403, 406, 480, 489, 552	
Alexander the Great	404
Augustus	187
Christianity	124, 186
Christianity	399
<i>cosmogony</i>	185
<i>Cunctos populus</i>	399
Han Dynasty	631
Indo-European	390
Persia	288, 398
philosophy	409
Scientific Revolution	502
Temple at Delphi	409
<i>theogony</i>	185
<i>theology</i>	373
Vulgar Latin	390, 393
Zoroastrianism	115
Rosetta Stone	75
Behistun Inscription	115
Roth, Howard	
<i>Original Tao</i>	37, 38
Royal Yoga	374, 716, See Raja Yoga

R

R̥ṣi 153

Ṛta

<i>arête</i>	774
<i>Aśa</i>	119
Chinese philosophy	376
<i>cosmogony</i>	381
<i>dharma</i>	773
etymology	119
Eurasia	381
<i>Nómos</i>	17, 774
<i>Quality</i>	773
Torah	774
Upanishadic philosophy	783

R

<i>Rújīā</i>	337
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	347
Eastern philosophy	630
<i>ontology</i>	570
<i>rén</i>	338
<i>Ten Wings</i>	343
Rutherford, Ernest	537, 538
<i>atom</i>	538
Rutherford-Bohr model	538
Rutt, Richard	237, 240
<i>Zhou Yi</i>	247

S

<i>sādhaka</i>	669, 677, 690
<i>mokṣa</i>	670
Ramakrishna	682, 683
<i>sādhana</i>	677
Vedānta	670
<i>sādhana</i>	658, 677
Ramakrishna	658, 659, 671, 677, 696
<i>sādhaka</i>	677
Tantra Yoga	675, 685
<i>sādhū</i>	677
<i>Saguna Brahman</i>	669
Dvaita Vedānta	648
Śakti	669
Avalon	681
Kālī	683
<i>kuṇḍalinī</i>	681, 718
Ramakrishna	674
Śiva	669, 681
Tantra Yoga	681, 682, 718

<i>Salam</i>	481
<i>samādhi</i>	694, 712, 719
<i>Awareness</i>	795
<i>Being</i>	713
<i>dhāraṇā</i>	26
<i>dhyāna</i>	26
English	420
Indian philosophy	694
meaning	706
<i>meditation</i>	26, 711
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795
<i>mysticism</i>	666, 758
<i>nirvana</i>	41
<i>nirvikalpa</i>	695
Patañjali	374
<i>Puruṣa</i>	713
Ramakrishna	654
Sanskrit	420
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	713, 755, 760
Vyasa	706
Yoga philosophy	670, 695, 706, 711, 713, 719
<i>Yoga Sūtras</i>	706
<i>Samaveda</i>	640
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	254
<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	261
<i>vidyā</i>	258
Sāṃkhya	
<i>arche</i>	16
<i>atheism</i>	709
Buddhism	710
<i>dualism</i>	669, 670, 682, 707
<i>gunas</i>	708
Indian philosophy	267
Īśvara	712
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	682, 683
Kapila	707
<i>metaphysics</i>	708
<i>mokṣa</i>	710
Neo-Platonism	670
philosophy	710
<i>Prakṛti</i>	261, 708, 710
<i>Puruṣa</i>	702, 707, 708, 710
<i>saṃsāra</i>	709
Tantra Yoga	681, 682
Vedic	157
Vivekananda	717
Yoga philosophy	706, 707, 712
<i>Yoga Sūtras</i>	707, 710
<i>saṃsāra</i>	709, 710
Buddhism	275
<i>mokṣa</i>	149

Sāṃkhya	709
<i>Samyutta Nikaya</i>	273, 278
Śaṅkara, Ādi	
Advaita Vedānta	645, 650, 679, 691, 710
<i>Ātma-bōdha</i>	710
<i>Brahman</i>	645
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	801, 803
<i>monism</i>	645
<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	259
<i>non-dualism</i>	43, 647
Ramakrishna	676
<i>upanishad</i>	642
Vedānta	261, 645
<i>Vivekachudamani</i>	646, 650
<i>Sanwu liji</i>	168
Sarada Devi	662, 674, 687
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	673, 674
Nikhilananda	11
Ramakrishna	665, 673, 674
Saradananda, Swami	673
<i>Bhavamukha</i>	666, 669, 670, 671, 675
Holy Mother	663
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	664, 667
philosophy	671
Plato	670
Platonism	670
Ramakrishna	662, 663, 664, 665, 667, 668, 669, 671, 672, 673, 675, 676, 680, 685
Sarada Devi	662, 665
<i>Srī Srī Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga</i>	660, 661, 662
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	704
<i>The Divine Play of Srī Ramakrishna</i>	661, 662
Totapuri	667
Vedānta	669
Sassanian Empire	
Zoroastrianism	289
Satan	
Angra Mainyu	103
<i>Satcitānanda</i>	
<i>Awareness</i>	795
<i>epistemology</i>	798
<i>metaphysics</i>	798
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795, 796
Metaphysics of Quality	776
<i>mysticism</i>	758, 764, 777
<i>One</i>	782
<i>Quality</i>	776
Ramakrishna	667, 695
Sanskrit	420
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	760

Yoga philosophy	719	Bacon	491
<i>satya</i>	711	Christianity	410
<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	261	<i>empiricism</i>	508, 743
Scholasticism	553	Enlightenment Era	503, 504
Aristotle	417	<i>epistemology</i>	414
Bacon	491	<i>first philosophy</i>	753
<i>falṣafa</i>	488	Freud	611
Medieval Europe	491	Hellenic philosophy	19, 407
Plato	303, 330	Kant	690
<i>scientia</i>	527	<i>materialism</i>	523
School of Ru	337	<i>mathematics</i>	524, 576
<i>Schrödinger equation</i>	545	<i>objective realism</i>	13
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	596	<i>ontology</i>	754
Schrödinger, Erwin	578	Physics	504, 505
Bohmian Mechanics	733	Quantum Era	581
<i>entanglement</i>	563	Quantum Mechanics	550
<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	595	<i>rationalism</i>	508
<i>quantum potential</i>	597	Religion	558
Quantum Theory	566	Science	8, 504, 523
<i>Schrödinger equation</i>	545	Spinoza	494
Schrödinger's cat	561, 563	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	775
<i>wavefunction</i>	548, 561	<i>theology</i>	528, 747
Schrödinger's cat	562	Seal script	209, 210, 217
Einstein	561	Guodian Chu Slips	215
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	593	<i>Tiān</i>	222
Quantum Theory	561	<i>Second Teacher</i>	
<i>Science of the mind</i>	41, 42, 797	Al-Fârâbî	486
Indo-Aryan	720	Aristotle	412
<i>ontology</i>	14	Seneca	393, 450
<i>scientia</i>	526	Stoicism	434
Aristotle	54, 527	<i>sensibility</i>	
<i>epistêmê</i>	414, 526, 762	<i>judgment</i>	519
<i>scientific empiricism</i>	766	Kant	514, 516, 517
<i>scientific method</i>	374, 414, 416	<i>mind</i>	789
Aristotle	414	<i>sentimentalism</i>	508
Bacon	491	<i>Septuagint</i>	79, 81, 449, 455
<i>dualism</i>	375	Eastern philosophy	629
Eastern philosophy	375	Judaism	79
<i>empiricism</i>	509	Set110, 130	
Enlightenment Era	554	Ennead	99
<i>epistemology</i>	53	Hades	103
Newton	500	<i>Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Dharma</i>	273
Pirsig	619	<i>Shalom</i>	481
Science	725	<i>shamanism</i>	59, 64, 166
Scientific Revolution	505	Chinese philosophy	219, 229
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	619	Eastern philosophy	375, 630
Scientific Revolution 13, 414, 490, 497, 502, 521, 522, 553, 554, 571, 628, 724, 752, 753		Eliade	66
<i>academia</i>	521, 749	Eurasian philosophy	382
Aristotle	414, 415, 583	<i>mysticism</i>	17, 629, 757
<i>Astronomy</i>	504	Neolithic Era	66
		<i>oral transmission</i>	30

Orpheus	133	Sima Zhen.....	180
Orphism	139	<i>Shijing</i>	222, 336, 630
Shàngdì	230	Shor's algorithm	
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	783	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	592
<i>theology</i>	33	<i>Shujing</i>	163, 164, 220, 222, 336, 630
Upper Paleolithic	183	Guodian Chu Slips	171
Zarathustra	118	<i>Shuogua</i>	237, 245, 246, 247, 250
Zoroastrianism	117, 118	<i>bāguà</i>	242, 249
Shāng Dynasty.....	164, 165, 217, 219	<i>Yijing</i>	241
Bronze Age	219	Siddhārtha Gautama	150, 268
Chinese philosophy.....	221	Buddha	270
Mandate of Heaven	221, 224	Buddhism	266
<i>mythos</i>	206	<i>enlightenment</i>	270
Oracle bone script	219	influence of	271
Shàngdì	163, 167, 183, 223	Life of	267, 269
<i>Shujing</i>	336	Simǎ Qiān	164, 221, 334
<i>theogony</i>	206	Chinese philosophy	183
<i>Tiān</i>	229	<i>Records of the Grand Historian</i>	163
Xia Dynasty	219	<i>Shiji</i>	163
Yellow Emperor	180	Sima Zhen.....	180, 181
<i>Yijing</i>	225	Chinese philosophy	183
Shàngdì		Fu Xi	181
Brahmā	162	Simplicius	283
Bronze Age	219	Sino-Tibetan	217, 389
Chinese philosophy.....	167, 183, 221, 230, 377	<i>Sīra</i>	481, 488, 489
Christianity	377	<i>Torah</i>	481
Confucianism	166	<i>Sishū</i>	631
Marduk	376	<i>Śiva</i>	669
<i>monotheism</i>	377	Indra	640
<i>mythos</i>	230	Kālī	666, 683
Shāng Dynasty	163, 167, 183, 219, 223	<i>Purāṇas</i>	157
<i>shén</i>	167	Ramakrishna	674
<i>Tiān</i>	163, 183, 223, 229, 230	Śakti	669, 681
Traditional Chinese.....	163	Tantra Yoga	681
<i>Vedas</i>	156	<i>Trimurti</i>	260
Yellow Emperor	163	<i>skepticism</i>	319, 553
<i>Yijing</i>	237	Academy	432
Zhou Dynasty	166	Aristotle	510
Shell script	209	Chinese philosophy	172, 174, 352
<i>shén</i>		<i>Dao De Jing</i>	347
<i>Analects</i>	340	Daoism	174, 346, 347
Chinese philosophy.....	230, 396	Daoist	352
Confucianism	340, 396	<i>Heavenly Questions</i>	174
Shàngdì	167	Kant.....	521, 617
translation	396	<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	48
<i>Shiji</i>	164, 180, 221, 222, 334	Plato	151, 319, 435
Han Dynasty.....	163	<i>rationalism</i>	510
Herodotus.....	163	Vedic	152
Lǎozǐ.....	343	<i>Zhuangzi</i>	174
<i>Records of the Grand Historian</i>	163	Smith, Adam	
Simǎ Qiān.....	163	<i>invisible hand</i>	740

<i>Wealth of Nations</i>	739	Hellenic philosophy.....	201
<i>Snow Cone Diaries</i>	9, 13, 45	Islam.....	484
Bohm	614	<i>mysticism</i>	313, 729, 801
Information Age.....	21	<i>mythos</i>	202, 801
<i>synchronicity</i>	614	<i>Old Testament</i>	457
Socrates	77, 298, 303, 306, 310, 316, 317, 319, 323, 362, 405, 552, 553	<i>philosophia</i>	202, 573
Allegory of the Cave	309	<i>phronēsis</i>	313
<i>Apology</i>	201, 297	Plato	302, 311, 319
Aristophanes.....	297	Stoicism.....	435, 443
Aristotle	297	<i>virtue</i>	306
Athens	201, 296	<i>wisdom</i>	201
Christianity	468	Yahweh	457
<i>Crito</i>	297	<i>Sophia</i>	
<i>dialogues</i>	302	Athena.....	22
Hellenic philosophy	201, 203	Gnosticism	472, 473, 476
Ionian philosophy	288	Isis.....	473
<i>mythos</i>	203	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	22
<i>Phaedo</i>	310, 317	<i>mysticism</i>	22
Plato ..	201, 296, 297, 298, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 449	<i>Pistis Sophia</i>	476
Pre-Socratic philosophy.....	285, 400, 404	<i>Sophistical Refutations</i>	
<i>rationalism</i>	510	<i>Organon</i>	417
<i>Republic</i>	298	Sophists	117, 336
<i>Socratic dialogue</i>	297	<i>soteriology</i>	149, 280
Temple at Delphi	409	<i>spacetime</i>	535, 540, 549, 550, 551, 578
<i>theory of forms</i>	314, 316	<i>Bell's Theorem</i>	565
Western philosophy	296	Classical Mechanics.....	618
Xenophon	296, 297, 298	Einstein	528, 531, 618
<i>Socratic dialogue</i>		EPR Paradox	559
Plato	297, 449	<i>geometry</i>	577
<i>Republic</i>	298	<i>gravity</i>	534, 577
<i>Socratic method</i>	297	<i>local realism</i>	563
<i>Socratic Dialogue</i>		<i>locality</i>	563
Plato	411	<i>Lorentz invariance</i>	564
<i>Socratic method</i>		<i>mathematics</i>	577
Plato	394	Minkowski.....	532
Platonism.....	417	Quantum Mechanics.....	545
<i>Socratic dialogue</i>	297	Quantum Theory.....	547
Sodom and Gomorrah	133	Relativity Theory	529, 577
<i>soma</i>		Sparta	299
<i>haoma</i>	200	Alcibiades	296
<i>Song of the Lord</i>	643, 691	Athens.....	298
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	643	Peloponnesian War	298
<i>Songs of Chu</i>		Socrates	298
<i>Heavenly Questions</i>	172	Special Relativity	529, 532, 533
<i>sophia</i>	311, 325, 455, 469, 477, 573	<i>specialization</i>	64, 94
Aristotle	415	Spinoza, Baruch	
<i>Brahmavidyā</i>	348	<i>Bible</i>	497
Daoism.....	352	Buddhism	496
Gnosticism	457, 466, 472, 476	Christianity	494, 497
		<i>corporealism</i>	494
		Descartes	495

<i>determinism</i>	495	Descartes	493
Einstein	525	Diogenes Laertius.....	434, 448
Enlightenment Era	491, 494	Eastern philosophy.....	378, 447
<i>ethics</i>	496	<i>empiricism</i>	510
Free Will	494	Epicureanism.....	431
Judaism	495	<i>epistemology</i>	430, 439
<i>metaphysics</i>	497	<i>ethics</i>	434, 443, 447
<i>monism</i>	495	<i>eudaimonia</i>	436
<i>naturalism</i>	494, 496	<i>hêgemonikon</i>	440, 443
Paine.....	497	Hellenic philosophy.....	407, 435, 439, 450
<i>rationalism</i>	495	Kant.....	446, 518
Stoicism	494, 496	Late Stoa	432
<i>theology</i>	495, 497	<i>logic</i>	436, 439
<i>spooky action at a distance</i>	560, 564	<i>logos</i>	444
Bohmian Mechanics	599	<i>Logos</i>	427
Einstein	560	Marcus Aurelius	432, 450
<i>Spring and Autumn Annals</i>	222, 336, 630	<i>metaphysics</i>	438, 441
Spring and Autumn period.....	221, 344	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798
<i>Śramaṇa</i>	266, 267	<i>mythos</i>	201, 437
Indian philosophy	41	<i>natural law</i>	446, 526
meaning.....	41	Old Stoa.....	432, 434, 437
St. Augustine		<i>ontology</i>	802
Christian Church Fathers	576	origins	447
Christianity	465	Philo Judaeus	445
St. Paul	466, 467	philosophy.....	432, 434, 445
<i>Epistles of Paul</i>	467	Plato	329
<i>Pauline Epistles</i>	467	Plutarch	448
Staal, Frits		<i>pneuma</i>	433, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 445, 447
<i>geometry</i>	289, 404	<i>qì</i> 178	
Greek and Vedic Geometry	289, 388, 404	<i>psychology</i>	444
<i>le miracle grec</i>	388	Psychology	606, 607
<i>Śulbasūtras</i>	388	Pythagoras	431
<i>state machine</i>		<i>qì</i> 178	
Cognitive Science.....	700, 789	Roman Empire.....	448
Computer Science.....	789	sage	439, 444
<i>mind</i>	789, 791	Seneca.....	432, 450
Stoicism.....	319, 332, 431, 433, 434, 441, 496, 708	Skepticism	441
Academic Skepticism	436	Spinoza.....	494
Academy	432	<i>stoa poikilê</i>	431
Al-Fârâbî	487	<i>Stoic sage</i>	435
Al-Kindi	485	<i>substantial form</i>	432
<i>allegoresis</i>	437	<i>sugkatathesis</i>	444
<i>causa continens</i>	440	<i>synektikon aition</i>	440
<i>causality</i>	432	<i>theology</i>	374, 438, 442
Christianity	435, 445, 450	<i>Vedas</i>	260
Chrysippus	432	<i>wisdom</i>	435
Cicero.....	432, 446	Zeno	431
Cleanthes.....	432	Stone Age	
<i>conflagration</i>	442	Eliade	67
<i>corporealism</i>	431, 439, 440, 442, 443	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	618, 620, 623, 625, 626, 688, 698, 728, 729, 781
<i>cosmogony</i>	438, 439, 442		

<i>causal determinism</i>	765
Eastern philosophy	619, 634, 688
<i>ethics</i>	775
Indo-European	782
<i>mathematics</i>	616
<i>meditation</i>	621, 623
Metaphysics of Quality	617, 688, 769
<i>mysticism</i>	621, 623, 777
<i>objective realism</i>	52, 765
<i>ontology</i>	50, 54, 759, 782
Pirsig	619, 624
Platypus	621
<i>Quality</i>	623, 624, 625, 772
Science.....	617
<i>Value</i>	770
<i>substance</i>	
Aristotle	424
<i>category theory</i>	419
<i>causality</i>	421
<i>hylomorphism</i>	421
<i>substantial form</i>	440, 569, 690
Aristotle	44, 423, 424
<i>Becoming</i>	327
<i>Being</i>	327, 420
<i>empiricism</i>	408
<i>hylomorphism</i>	421
Kant	510, 515
<i>ontology</i>	429
Plato	327
Stoicism	432
<i>theology</i>	427
<i>Śulbasūtras</i>	289
Staal	388
Sumer-Babylonian	
Chinese philosophy.....	376
<i>cosmogony</i>	381
Egypt.....	112
Eurasia	381
Garden of Eden.....	86, 87
<i>Genesis</i>	86
Great Flood	198
Judaism	86
Moses	86
<i>mythos</i>	109, 111, 202
Pre-Socratic philosophy	398
Tigris-Euphrates	112
<i>super-ego</i>	
<i>ego</i>	610
Freud	610, 611
Psychology	610, 611
<i>unconscious</i>	610
<i>superposition</i>	562
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	
<i>Awareness</i>	796, 800
<i>Being</i>	50
Eastern philosophy.....	688, 721
<i>epistemology</i>	760, 781
Indian philosophy.....	50, 756
<i>jiva</i>	704
<i>metaphysics</i>	746
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	796, 800
<i>mind</i>	796
<i>mysticism</i>	14, 50, 729, 757, 758, 760
<i>ontology</i>	50, 56, 728, 735, 737
Pirsig.....	755, 756
Psychology	21, 745
Quantum Era	781
Ramakrishna	50, 689, 704
<i>samādhi</i>	713
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782
Yoga philosophy	713
Supreme Self	
Dvaita Vedānta.....	648
Īśvara.....	712
Neo-Platonism	670
Ramakrishna	694
Upanishadic philosophy	712
<i>Sūrya</i>	157, 361
Helios	257
<i>mythos</i>	257
Ra	257
<i>sushumna</i>	718
<i>sūtra</i>	335
Vedānta.....	254
Yoga Sūtras	706
<i>Sūtra Pitaka</i>	276
<i>Sūtra Pitaka</i>	273
<i>Sūtra Pitaka</i>	278
<i>Śvetāśvatara Upanishad</i>	
Yoga	36
<i>symbola</i>	292
<i>Symposium</i>	
<i>Eros</i>	428
<i>synchronicity</i>	
<i>archetypes</i>	614
Bohm.....	614
<i>explicate order</i>	614
<i>implicate order</i>	614
Jung.....	614
<i>metaphysics</i>	614
Metaphysics of Quality	773
Pauli	614

Psychology	614
Quantum Theory	614
Yijing	614

T

tabula rasa

Bacon	491
<i>empiricism</i>	509
Kant	517
Locke	509
<i>Tàijí</i>	
Yijing	240, 241
Yīn-Yáng	249
<i>Tàijítú</i>	249
<i>Tàiyī Shēngshuǐ</i>	
Daoism	172
Guodian Chu Slips	171
Yīn-Yáng	172
Talmud	76, 81, 82
Ḥadīth	481
Tanakh	81, 82, 455
Qur'ān	481
Tantra Yoga	678
<i>active imagination</i>	702
Advaita Vedānta	680
Avalon	681
Buddhism	680
<i>desire</i>	678, 687
<i>dualism</i>	669, 680, 681, 683
Freudian psychology	658
Hinduism	680
Indian philosophy	680, 681, 682, 683
<i>individuation</i>	702
Jung	702
Kālī	667, 681, 718
<i>Kālī's Child</i>	675, 679
<i>kuṇḍalinī</i>	681, 719
<i>mandalas</i>	719
<i>mantra</i>	719
<i>mysticism</i>	681
Raja Yoga	718
Ramakrishna	43, 658, 659, 661, 663, 666, 668, 669, 670, 671, 673, 674, 675, 676, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 702
Śakti	681, 683, 718
Sanskrit	680
Saradananda	671
Śiva	681, 683
Vedānta	680
Vedic philosophy	680, 682

Yoga philosophy	681
<i>Tao Te Ching</i>	See <i>Dao De Jing</i>
<i>tapas</i>	712
<i>Brahman</i>	261
<i>Upanishads</i>	265
Vedānta	261
Tartarus	126, 127
Titans	104
<i>tat tvam asi</i>	
Eastern philosophy	635
<i>tawḥīd</i>	482
Taylor, Thomas	139
<i>Hymns of Orpheus</i>	204
Tefnut	102
Ennead	99
<i>teleology</i>	423
<i>Critique of the Power of Judgment</i>	519
<i>epistemology</i>	55
<i>ethics</i>	582
Kant	517, 519, 521
<i>metaphysics</i>	581, 582
<i>morality</i>	582
<i>natural philosophy</i>	582
<i>ontology</i>	55, 582
Quantum Era	581
Quantum Theory	581, 583
Relativity Theory	581
<i>telos</i>	720
Aristotle	44
Chinese philosophy	376
<i>definition</i>	423
<i>final cause</i>	423
Hellenic philosophy	376
Temple at Delphi	409, 434
Orpheus	132
Plutarch	437, 448
Socrates	409
Temple of Heaven	167
Ten Commandments	84, 454
<i>ten thousand things</i>	178, 238, 252
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	347
<i>wànwù</i>	247
<i>Ten Wings</i>	225, 232, 233, 235, 236, 237, 242, 336
<i>bāguà</i>	247
Chinese philosophy	229, 343
Confucianism	233, 343
Daoism	343
Fu Xi	181
Jung	52
<i>numerology</i>	58
Yijing	241

<i>Tetractys</i>		<i>oral transmission</i>	30
<i>numerology</i>	58	<i>theology</i>	13, 41, 42, 114, 494, 553, 576, 617
<i>theology</i>	428	Abrahamic	372
Thales		<i>academia</i>	582, 747, 748, 754
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283, 401	Al-Fârâbî.....	486, 487
<i>Thanatos</i>		<i>allegoresis</i>	446
Freud	609	<i>arche</i>	799
Psychology	609	Aristotle	300, 411, 413, 415, 416, 424, 426, 427, 428, 429, 528, 763, 764
<i>The Great One Gave Birth to Water</i>		Avicenna.....	487
Guodian Chu Slips.....	171	<i>Awareness</i>	799
<i>The Laws of Manu</i>	147, 371	Bacon	491
The Thirty		<i>Book of the Dead</i>	92
Alcibiades	296	Buddha	281
Thebes		Buddhism	279, 280
Alexander the Great	398	Chinese philosophy	166
Egypt.....	101	Christianity	406, 448, 460, 462, 498
<i>Ma'at</i>	104	Confucianism	230
Witzel.....	98	<i>cosmogony</i>	778
Theobald, Ulrich		Dark Ages	374
Chinese philosophy.....	343	Descartes	492, 493, 494
<i>theogony</i>	147, 189	Eastern philosophy.....	379, 630, 780
Chinese	167, 206, 224	Egypt	90, 92
<i>cosmic egg</i>	204	<i>empiricism</i>	744
<i>cosmogony</i>	112, 380	Enlightenment Era	505, 522, 555
Damaskios	143, 145	<i>epistemology</i>	427, 582
Egypt.....	98, 102, 205	<i>Eros</i>	428
<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	111	<i>ethics</i>	505, 527, 744, 754
etymology.....	123	Eurasia.....	382
Eurasia	12, 112, 196, 204, 205, 380	Eurasian philosophy	379, 382
Eurasian philosophy.....	19, 379, 382, 383	<i>first cause</i>	422
<i>first principles</i>	125, 131	<i>first philosophy</i>	415
Hellenic philosophy	125, 201	<i>first principles</i>	747, 799
Hesiod.....	111, 123, 127, 132, 145	Freud.....	610, 613
Hinduism	147	<i>geometry</i>	428
<i>logos</i>	382	Gnosticism	473
<i>Logos</i>	201	Hellenic	409
meaning.....	123	Hellenic philosophy	201, 202, 203, 407
<i>metaphysics</i>	379	Hinduism	147, 371, 373
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	15	<i>hypostasis</i>	764
<i>mythos</i>	112, 205, 206, 380, 774	<i>idealism</i>	427
Orpheus	145	<i>ideas</i>	523
Orphism	124, 138, 139, 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 204	Indian philosophy.....	681
philosophy	204	<i>individuation</i>	372
Proclus	140	Indo-Aryan	372
Roman Empire	185	Indo-European	783
Simā Qiān.....	183	Islam.....	406, 482
Sumer-Babylonian	111, 112, 131	Judaism	455
<i>theology</i>	379	Jung	612, 613
<i>Theogony</i>		Kant	508, 510, 515, 519, 521, 616, 744
Aristotle	425	Kepler	500
<i>Eros</i>	428		

<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	22, 48, 49
<i>Logos</i>	201, 427, 778
<i>materilaism</i>	557
<i>mathematics</i>	428, 500, 804
<i>meditation</i>	41
<i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>	492
<i>metaphysics</i>	12, 382, 582, 747, 763, 764
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i> ..	15, 797, 798, 800, 803, 804
<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>	790
<i>Metaphysics of Quality</i>	777
<i>mind</i>	610
<i>monotheism</i>	397
<i>morality</i>	521
<i>Muḥammad</i>	764
<i>mysticism</i>	33, 760
<i>mythology</i>	68
<i>mythos</i>	22, 201, 202, 775
<i>Neo-Platonism</i>	765
<i>Newton</i>	550
<i>objective realism</i>	550
<i>ontological argument</i>	797, 799
<i>ontology</i>	50, 734, 735, 737
<i>Orphism</i>	137
<i>Ovid</i>	294
<i>Persia</i>	288
<i>Persian</i>	289
<i>philosophy</i>	22, 748
<i>Pirsig</i>	624
<i>Plato</i>	330, 369, 419, 427, 428, 764
<i>pneuma</i>	330
<i>Psychology</i>	606, 613, 796
<i>Pythagoras</i>	294
<i>Quality</i>	775
<i>Ramakrishna</i>	55
<i>Relativity Theory</i>	550
<i>Roman Empire</i>	373
<i>samādhi</i>	686
<i>Scholasticism</i>	491
<i>Science</i>	558
<i>Scientific Revolution</i>	558, 752
<i>Spinoza</i>	495
<i>Stoicism</i>	433, 447
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782
<i>substantial form</i>	427
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	50, 754
<i>teleology</i>	582
<i>Timaeus</i>	323
<i>transcendental idealism</i>	744
<i>Upanishadic philosophy</i>	380
<i>Vedānta</i>	645
<i>Vedas</i>	372, 639
<i>Vedic</i>	150
<i>Vedic philosophy</i>	373, 380
<i>Weighing of the heart</i>	92
<i>Western philosophy</i>	378, 692
<i>Zoroastrianism</i>	115, 121, 288
<i>Theology of Aristotle</i>	
Aristotle	764
<i>Theopompus</i>	116
<i>theoretical philosophy</i>	
Aristotle	762, 763
<i>autonomy</i>	518
<i>category theory</i>	418
Kant	517, 521
<i>Theoretical Physics</i>	531, 535, 538, 565, 616
<i>theoretical science</i>	
<i>category theory</i>	418
Kant.....	514
<i>ousia</i>	418
<i>theory of forms</i> . 76, 100, 151, 306, 307, 319, 322, 325, 357, 362, 363, 424, 430, 471, 570, 626	
Allegory of the Cave	309
Aristotle	416, 424, 525
Avicenna.....	487
<i>Awareness</i>	792
<i>Bâ 91</i>	
<i>causality</i>	422
Classical Chinese	633
<i>cosmogony</i>	328
Daoism	347
Descartes	494
<i>efficient cause</i>	423
<i>eidôs</i>	302
<i>epistemology</i>	318, 348
<i>ethics</i>	368
<i>formal cause</i>	422
<i>Good</i>	308
Hellenic philosophy	318, 395
<i>hylomorphism</i>	423
<i>idealism</i>	306, 317, 318
<i>ideas</i>	302
<i>intelligibles</i>	310, 316
Kant	515, 519
<i>logos</i>	312
<i>metaphysics</i>	317
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	792
<i>One</i>	460
<i>Phaedrus</i>	302
Pirsig.....	626, 772
Plato	302, 306, 314, 315, 319, 330, 367
Platonism	417
Psychology	607

<i>Quality</i>	768, 769	<i>Analects</i>	340
<i>Republic</i>	367	Chinese philosophy	167, 184, 221, 223, 224, 225, 376
<i>Soul</i>	316, 318	Christianity	229
<i>Stoicism</i>	430, 438	Confucianism	339
<i>theology</i>	427	Confucius	340
<i>Timaeus</i>	323	<i>Demiurge</i>	224
<i>Vedānta</i>	648	Eurasia.....	196
<i>vidēre</i>	302	<i>monotheism</i>	229
<i>Yijing</i>	238	<i>mysticism</i>	777
<i>theos</i>		<i>Nómos</i>	17
Aristotle	426, 763, 764, 765	<i>Quality</i>	774
Eurasia	380	<i>rén</i>	223
Eurasian philosophy.....	383	Seal script.....	223
<i>logos</i>	380, 382, 383	Shàngdì	166, 183, 223, 230
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	15	Traditional Chinese	222
<i>mythos</i>	383	<i>tiānmìng</i>	237
Theravada Buddhism	271, 273	<i>Analects</i>	340
<i>Theraveda</i>	271	<i>Tiānmìng</i>	
<i>Third Critique</i>		<i>Dao</i>	774
<i>autonomy</i>	515	<i>Quality</i>	774
Thompson, Sir Joseph John (J.J.)	537	<i>Rta</i>	774
<i>Thoth</i>		<i>Tiānwèn</i>	
Hermes	101, 133	<i>Rigvéda</i>	172
Hermeticism	133	<i>Tianzhi</i>	
<i>Ma'at</i>	97, 98, 102	<i>Dao</i>	229
Osiris.....	97	<i>Tianzi</i>	167, 224
<i>Three Critiques</i>		Tibetan Buddhism	717
<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>	514	Tigris-Euphrates	112, 197
<i>Critique of the Power of Judgment</i>	519	Indus Valley.....	148
<i>Critique of the Pure Reason</i>	514	<i>mythos</i>	637
Kant	513, 521	Nile River	637
<i>three laws of motion</i>		Pre-Socratic philosophy	398
Classical Mechanics	522	Sumer-Babylonian	107
Enlightenment Era	576	<i>tilakkhaṇa</i>	276, 277
<i>geocentrism</i>	500	<i>Timaeus</i>	
<i>mathematics</i>	522	Al-Kindi.....	485
Newton	500	<i>Becoming</i>	323, 324
Newtonian Mechanics	522	<i>Being</i>	323, 324
Physics	577	<i>causality</i>	421
<i>Principia</i>	500, 525	Christian Church Fathers	576
<i>three laws of planetary motion</i>		Cosmic Soul	328, 329
<i>heliocentrism</i>	499	<i>cosmogony</i>	325, 326, 328
<i>mathematics</i>	499	<i>Demiurge</i>	323, 328, 438
<i>three marks of existence</i>		<i>dialectic</i>	323
Buddhism.....	277	<i>dualism</i>	764
<i>tilakkhaṇa</i>	277	<i>epistemology</i>	324
Three Sovereigns	169, 179, 183	<i>Eros</i>	425
Sima Zhen	180	<i>Genesis</i>	397
Thucydides	334	<i>geometry</i>	292, 428, 573
Tiamat.....	108, 109, 110, 112, 131	<i>Huainanzi</i>	177
<i>Tiān</i>	18, 163, 167, 219, 223, 632	<i>kosmos</i>	323, 328

likely story	323
<i>logos</i>	323, 329
<i>Logos</i>	427
<i>mathematics</i>	428
<i>metaphysics</i>	324
<i>mythos</i>	777
<i>Nous</i>	323
<i>One</i>	460
Orphism	140
Ovid	190
Parmenides	324, 326
Plato	302, 323, 327, 329
Proclus	140
Receptacle	442
Stoicism	438
<i>theology</i>	419, 424, 764
<i>theory of forms</i>	317, 319, 323
<i>World Soul</i>	460
<i>time dilation</i>	618
Titans	127, 130, 131, 143, 144
Dionysus	143
Metis	144
Zeus	104
<i>to eon</i>	258, 325
<i>Topics</i>	
Aristotle	417
<i>Organon</i>	417
<i>Torah</i>	71, 72, 75, 76, 82, 84, 86, 454, 455, 456, 482
<i>cosmogony</i>	381
<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>	86
Eurasia	381
Hebrew	79, 80, 85
Hellenic philosophy	79, 456
Judaism	81, 454
<i>Ketuvim</i>	85
<i>Ma'at</i>	79
<i>Nómos</i>	17, 79, 80, 456, 774
<i>Pentateuch</i>	82
<i>Quality</i>	774
<i>Sira</i>	481
<i>Tanakh</i>	81
Totapuri	671, 676, 679, 680
Advaita Vedānta	676
Traditional Chinese	210, 217, 222, 232, 237, 243
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	347
<i>rén</i>	211, 223
<i>Shàngdì</i>	163
<i>Tàijí</i>	249
<i>wànwù</i>	247
<i>transcendental idealism</i>	690
Kant	520, 523, 744

<i>ontology</i>	20
<i>rationalism</i>	508
Valdez	523
Tree of Knowledge	490, 497
Tree of Life	87, 193
Assyrian	193, 194
Egypt	103
<i>Genesis</i>	193
Judaism	193
Safirotic	193
trigram	242, 243, 245, 246, 248, 249, 251, 252
<i>bāguà</i>	131, 239, 240
<i>cosmogony</i>	241
Fu Xi	180, 181, 238
<i>metaphysics</i>	237
<i>Yīn-Yáng</i>	240
<i>Trimurti</i>	260
Trinity	84, 120, 373, 408, 450, 452, 469, 472
<i>homousios</i>	478
Islam	482, 764
<i>Logos</i>	452
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	798
Neo-Platonism	461, 466
Wisdom tradition	455
Zoroastrianism	121
<i>Tripitaka</i>	271, 273
Turing machine	791
Tyagananda, Swami	657

U

<i>Udbodhan</i>	662
<i>uncertainty principle</i>	19, 547, 548, 559
Bohm	594
Bohmian Mechanics	598
Bohr	587
<i>complementarity</i>	586
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	587
<i>entanglement</i>	566
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	593
<i>ontology</i>	584
Quantum Mechanics	589, 618
<i>quantum potential</i>	597
Quantum Theory	566
Schrödinger's cat	563
<i>wavefunction collapse</i>	587
<i>unconscious</i>	
<i>collective unconscious</i>	612
<i>conscious</i>	609
<i>desire</i>	610
<i>dreams</i>	608

Freud	608, 609, 610, 612	Plato	460
<i>id</i>	610	Upanishadic philosophy ...	14, 151, 265, 266, 311, 357, 358, 359, 360, 720
Jung	611, 612	<i>Ātman</i>	642
Metaphysics of Quality	622	<i>Brahman</i>	263, 642
<i>mind</i>	611, 612	Chinese philosophy	377
<i>preconscious</i>	609	<i>Dao</i>	348
Psychology	611, 612	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	355
Ramakrishna	704	Daoism	348
<i>super-ego</i>	610	<i>epistemology</i>	348
<i>understanding</i>		Eurasia	395
<i>autonomy</i>	515	Eurasian philosophy	380
<i>awareness</i>	791	Hellenic philosophy	356, 358, 369
<i>Awareness</i>	792, 793	Indo-Aryan	9, 358
Cognitive Science	789, 791	<i>Īśvara</i>	712
<i>comprehension</i>	789	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	262, 263
<i>judgment</i>	519, 789	<i>meditation</i>	36
Kant	514, 516, 517, 519	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	796
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	789	Metaphysics of Quality	773
<i>mind</i>	789	<i>monism</i>	782
<i>quantization</i>	793	Neo-Platonism	783
<i>undivided wholeness</i>		Platonism	348
Bohm	594	<i>prāṇa</i>	377
<i>metaphysics</i>	803	Pre-Socratic philosophy	357
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	803	<i>Quality</i>	773, 776
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	604	Ramakrishna	670
Quantum Mechanics	618	Soul	396
Unified Field Theory	551	<i>vidyā</i>	258
Quantum Era	779	<i>wisdom</i>	365
<i>Universal Wave Function</i>	588, 591	Yoga	36
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	591	<i>Upanishads</i>	236, 357, 358, 360, 364, 366, 639, 641, 643, 647, 649, 691
<i>ontology</i>	591, 744	<i>Āranyakas</i>	642
Quantum Theory	593	<i>Ātman</i>	264, 265
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	589, 591, 732	<i>Awareness</i>	795
<i>wavefunction</i>	591	<i>Brahman</i>	260, 264, 265, 371
<i>wavefunction collapse</i>	590	Chinese philosophy	356
<i>universality</i>		<i>cosmic egg</i>	161
<i>categorical imperative</i>	518	Cosmic Soul	265
<i>ethics</i>	518	<i>Dao</i>	348
Kant	518	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	346
<i>universals</i>		Daoism	264, 353
Kant	510	Eastern philosophy	726
<i>unmoved mover</i>		<i>epistemology</i>	348
Aristotle	425, 429, 765	Hellenic philosophy	369, 783
<i>ontological argument</i>	799	Indian philosophy	395
<i>theology</i>	765	Indo-Aryan	358, 634, 637
<i>theos</i>	763	Indo-European	45, 397
<i>unwritten teachings</i>		<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	256
<i>first principles</i>	78	<i>Īśvara</i>	264
Hellenic philosophy	236	Judaism	86
Neo-Platonism	460		
<i>ontology</i>	78		

<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	262, 264
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	45
<i>Laws of Manu</i>	158
<i>meditation</i>	14, 35
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795, 801
<i>mokṣa</i>	649
<i>mysticism</i>	9, 764, 778
<i>mythos</i>	253
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	38
Nikhilananda	11
<i>oral transmission</i>	37, 642
Parmenides	264
<i>prāṇāyāma</i>	36
<i>Rishi</i>	643
<i>rishis</i>	358, 643
<i>Satcitānanda</i>	695
Siddhārtha Gautama	266
Soul	368
<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782
Tantra Yoga	680, 681
<i>tapas</i>	261
<i>upanishad</i>	253, 642
Upanishadic philosophy	783
Vedānta	254, 265, 642, 644
<i>Vedas</i>	27, 150, 253, 265, 642
<i>vidyā</i>	266
Yoga	36
Yoga philosophy	719
Upper Neolithic	89
Egypt	88
Upper Paleolithic	68, 232
Cave art	62
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	48
Megaliths	65
<i>mythos</i>	206
Neolithic Revolution	65
<i>oral transmission</i>	31
<i>philosophy</i>	21
<i>shamanism</i>	183
universal mother	63
Venus figurines	63
Uranus	127, 129

V

Vaishnavism	377
Valdez, Juan	
<i>Numerology and Arithmology in Pythagorean</i>	
<i>Philosophy and the Yijing</i>	58
<i>Philosophy in Antiquity: The Far East</i>	10
<i>Philosophy in Antiquity: The Greeks</i>	10

Pythagoras	573
Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center	11
<i>Snow Cone Diaries</i>	9, 44
Valentinus	465, 469, 470, 473, 476
<i>Gospel of Truth</i>	470
<i>Varna</i>	65, 267
Vāyu	156
<i>Brahman</i>	262
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	256
<i>Kena Upanishad</i>	261
vital energy	38
<i>vēda</i>	639
Vedānta .. 149, 151, 153, 371, 572, 639, 642, 643, 650, 651,	
657, 671, 687, 691, 710, 716	
Advaita Vedānta	760
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	35, 644
<i>Bhavamukha</i>	667
<i>Brahman</i>	641, 650
<i>dualism</i>	648, 670
Dvaita Vedānta	647, 648
Eastern philosophy	254, 627, 726
Eurasian philosophy	371
<i>Good</i>	648
Hellenic philosophy	369, 489
Hinduism	641, 643, 651
Indian philosophy	20, 649, 650, 706
Indo-Aryan	148, 153, 162, 637, 642
Indo-European	11
Judaism	86
<i>metaphysics</i>	651
<i>mokṣa</i>	649, 714
<i>monism</i>	645
<i>mythos</i>	149
Neo-Platonism	783
<i>non-dualism</i>	670
<i>objective realism</i>	635
philosophy	11, 648, 651, 669
Ramakrishna	667, 680, 685, 702
Ramanuja	647
<i>Rigvéda</i>	379
Śaṅkara	261, 645
Saradananda	671
Stoicism	447
<i>sūtra</i>	254
Tantra Yoga	680, 681
<i>theory of forms</i>	648
three schools	644
Totapuri	679
Upanishadic philosophy	783
<i>Upanishads</i>	254, 642, 644
<i>Vedas</i>	642

Vedic philosophy	253
Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta	647
Vivekananda	11, 20, 671, 673, 687, 714, 717
<i>Vedānta Sūtras</i>	643
<i>Vedas</i> 27, 149, 151, 154, 157, 160, 236, 266, 269, 341, 358, 393, 574, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 650, 652, 671, 691, 715, 720	
<i>Āranyakas</i>	642
<i>Avesta</i>	199, 289
<i>Brahmā</i>	260
<i>Brahman</i>	260
Brāhmī script	575
Buddhism	40
Chinese philosophy	377
Christianity	652
<i>cosmogony</i>	162
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	346
Daoism	174
<i>dharma</i>	161, 642
<i>dualism</i>	682
Eastern philosophy	378
<i>Enûma Eliš</i>	112
Eurasia	31
Eurasian philosophy	378, 380
<i>first principles</i>	707
<i>Gathas</i>	198
<i>Genesis</i>	161
Hellenic philosophy	260, 369
Hinduism	373, 634, 682
<i>Hiranyagarbha</i>	147
Indian philosophy	39, 641, 682, 706
Indo-Aryan ...27, 148, 161, 199, 358, 634, 637, 639, 642, 649	
Indra	640
Indus Valley	200
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	256
Īśvara	264
Jainism	266
Judaism	86
Kālī	682
<i>Laws of Manu</i>	158
<i>lyric poetry</i>	183, 214
<i>Mahābhārata</i>	161
<i>meditation</i>	35, 36, 40
<i>mythos</i>	112, 149, 161, 197, 199, 253
Neolithic Revolution	29
<i>oral transmission</i>	31, 214, 639, 726
Orphism	140
<i>Prakṛti</i>	682
Proto-Indo-European	380
<i>Puruṣa</i>	147, 156, 682, 707

<i>Rigvéda</i>	27
<i>rishis</i>	39, 153, 154, 373, 639, 643, 649
<i>Ṛta</i>	119
Sāṃkhya	707, 708
Sanskrit	393
<i>shamanism</i>	118
Shàngdì	156
Soul	368
Tantra Yoga	680, 681, 682
<i>theogony</i>	112
Trimurti	262
Upanishadic philosophy	380, 642
<i>Upanishads</i>	27, 150, 253, 254, 642, 644
Vedānta	644
Vedic philosophy	380
Vedic Sanskrit	27, 199
<i>vidyā</i>	260, 266
Vivekananda	717
<i>wisdom</i>	639
<i>yajña</i>	640
Yoga philosophy	374, 719
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	174
Zoroastrianism	115
Vedic philosophy	267, 268, 643, 676
Buddhism	267, 277, 280, 379
Daoism	346
<i>dualism</i>	157, 424, 682
Eurasian philosophy	371, 379, 380
Hinduism	373
<i>mythos</i>	372
Nikhilananda	11
Plato	322
<i>Prakṛti</i>	682
<i>Puruṣa</i>	682
<i>qì</i> 178	
Tantra Yoga	680, 682
<i>Upanishads</i>	253
Vedic Sanskrit	27, 119, 149, 150, 151, 393, 639, 640
Brāhmī script	199
Hebrew	87
Indo-Aryan	393
<i>mythos</i>	200
Old Avestan	199
Persia	378
<i>philology</i>	199
<i>Rigvéda</i>	199
Venus figurines	
<i>human migration</i>	60
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	47
Upper Paleolithic	63
<i>vidēre</i>	257

<i>vidyā</i>		<i>Trimurti</i>	260
<i>Ātman</i>	258	Vivekananda	717
<i>Brahman</i>	258	<i>Vivekachudamani</i>	
Indo-Aryan	266	Śaṅkara	650
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	257	Vivekananda, Swami	628, 651, 657, 658, 673, 687, 701, 710, 717
meaning	257	<i>Brahman</i>	717
<i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i>	258	Eastern philosophy	721
<i>theory of forms</i>	302	Indian philosophy	11, 714, 717
<i>Upanishads</i>	265	Jnana Yoga	489
<i>vidēre</i>	302	<i>Kālī's Child</i>	674
<i>Vinaya Pitaka</i>	273	<i>mokṣa</i>	714
<i>Vinyāsa Yoga</i>	35	<i>mysticism</i>	690
Virgil	450	philosophy	670, 671
<i>virtue</i>	396, 400, 415, 433, 443, 518, 631, 697, 747, 769	<i>Puruṣa</i>	717
<i>arête</i>	298, 420, 748, 773	Raja Yoga	695, 711, 714, 716
Aristotle	374	Ram Chandra Datta	656
Chinese philosophy	227	Ramakrishna ... 14, 26, 56, 668, 669, 671, 673, 677, 685, 687, 690	
Confucianism	227	Ramakrishna Order	653, 672
<i>Dao</i>	179	Royal Yoga	695
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	170, 348	Royal Yoga philosophy	374
Daoism	170, 179, 347	Sāṃkhya	709
Eastern Philosophy	374	<i>supraconsciousness</i>	704
<i>Eros</i>	428	Upanishadic philosophy	14
Hellenic philosophy	420	Vedānta	11, 671, 714, 716, 717
<i>lǐ</i> 227		Vedic philosophy	253
<i>Mā'at</i>	102	works	714
Metaphysics of Quality	769	Yoga philosophy	21, 50, 687, 695, 714, 717
Mohism	228	von Neumann, John	595
Plato	300, 302, 367, 370	Bohm	595, 596
<i>Quality</i>	773	<i>hidden variables</i>	595
<i>rén</i>	211	<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	589
<i>Republic</i>	298	<i>quantum potential</i>	597
Scientific Revolution	503	Vulgar Latin	390, 393
Shàngdì	230	Vyasa	86, 158, 643
Socrates	297	<i>Yoga Sūtras</i>	706
<i>sophia</i>	306		
Spinoza	496		
<i>theology</i>	747		
<i>Tiān</i>	224, 227		
Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta	647, 648, 649		
<i>Brahman</i>	647		
<i>qualified non-dualism</i>	647		
Ramanuja	647		
<i>Saguna Brahman</i>	647		
Supreme Self	648		
Vedānta	645		
Viṣṇu	158, 377, 647, 691		
Dvaita Vedānta	648		
Indra	640		
<i>Purāṇas</i>	157		
<i>Rigvéda</i>	377		

W

Wade-Giles	212, 213
Pinyin	213
wànwù	178, 238, 247, 252
Chinese philosophy	346
<i>Dao De Jing</i>	347
Warring States period	209, 217, 221, 335
<i>Analects</i>	226
Chinese philosophy	223, 343, 633
Guodian Chu Slips	171
<i>lǐ</i> 227	
<i>Record of the Warring States</i>	222

Warring States Period		Chinese philosophy	375
Chinese philosophy	36	Eastern philosophy	786
Confucius	333	<i>empiricism</i>	509
Guodian Chu Slips	215	Enlightenment Era	490, 504, 510
<i>Heavenly Questions</i>	172	<i>epistemology</i>	50
Old Chinese	37	<i>ethics</i>	582
<i>wavefunction</i>	548, 549, 559	Eurasian philosophy	47
Bohmian Mechanics	598, 732, 733	Hellenic philosophy	201, 378
Born	548	<i>hylomorphism</i>	418
<i>corpuscle</i>	545	<i>idealism</i>	318
Einstein	560	Kant	506, 510, 521, 690, 789
EPR Paradox	558	<i>local realism</i>	604
<i>hidden variables</i>	598	<i>logic</i>	582
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	588	<i>mathematics</i>	322
<i>mathematics</i>	545	<i>metaphysics</i>	582
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	596, 598, 601	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	22, 795, 800, 801, 803
<i>ontology</i>	733	Metaphysics of Quality	774
<i>pilot-wave theory</i>	585, 595	<i>mysticism</i>	729, 786, 795, 800
<i>quantum potential</i>	597	<i>mythos</i>	724
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	591, 603	<i>Organon</i>	419
Schrödinger	561	Plato	318, 322
<i>Schrödinger equation</i>	545	Psychology	797
<i>Universal Wave Function</i>	591	<i>Quality</i>	774
<i>wavefunction collapse</i>	596	<i>quantization</i>	793
Bohmian Mechanics	598, 733	Ramakrishna	692
<i>complementarity</i>	587	<i>rationalism</i>	509
<i>Copenhagen Interpretation</i>	586, 587, 588	Sāṃkhya	708
Einstein	560	Socrates	296
<i>many-worlds interpretation</i>	588	<i>subject-object metaphysics</i>	782
<i>Ontological Interpretation</i>	596	<i>substantial form</i>	420
Quantum Mechanics	586	<i>supraconsciousness</i>	745
<i>quantum potential</i>	597	<i>wisdom</i>	56
Quantum Theory	587	Western Philosophy	
<i>relative-state formulation</i>	590, 591, 732	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	22
<i>uncertainty principle</i>	587	<i>wheel of dharma</i>	
<i>Universal Wave Function</i>	588, 590	Buddhism	694
<i>wave-particle duality</i>	541, 543, 547, 549, 555, 618	<i>chakras</i>	718
Quantum Mechanics	618	Wheel of Dharma	272, 275
<i>quantum potential</i>	597	Wheeler, John	588
<i>Way of Dharma</i>	276	Whitehead, Alfred N	
<i>Way of Virtue</i>	334	Hellenic philosophy	404
<i>Weighing of the heart</i>	92	Wilhelm, Richard	52, 237, 244, 247, 248, 249, 250
Book of the Dead	92, 97	<i>bāguà</i>	247
West, M. L.	17, 357, 360, 388	<i>Will of Heaven</i>	
<i>Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient</i>	46, 356, 357, 388	Chinese philosophy	228
Hellenic philosophy	356	<i>Dao</i>	229
Western philosophy	634	<i>wisdom</i>	383
<i>allegoresis</i>	346	Ahura Mazda	119
Aristotle	420, 582, 762	Arabic	484
<i>Awareness</i>	797, 798	<i>Brahmavidyā</i>	348
<i>category theory</i>	418	Christianity	472

Eastern philosophy	56
Egypt.....	97
Eurasia	8, 382, 383
Eurasian philosophy.....	383
<i>gnosis</i>	470
Gnosticism	472
Hellenic philosophy	201, 365, 801
Hermes	97
<i>hikmah</i>	484
Islam	484
Judaism	456, 457
<i>logos</i>	382
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	22
<i>mind</i>	383
Muslim philosophy	484, 486
<i>mysticism</i>	729, 765, 801
<i>mythos</i>	202, 383, 801
<i>Old Testament</i>	453, 456, 472
Philo Judaeus	453
<i>philosophia</i>	202, 573
<i>phronēsis</i>	313
Plato	311, 313, 365
Platonism.....	348
<i>Qur'ān</i>	484
<i>rishis</i>	39
<i>sophia</i>	201, 313
<i>Sophia</i>	22, 472
Thoth	97
Upanishadic philosophy.....	348
<i>Vedas</i>	639
Zoroastrianism.....	119
<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>	472
Judaism	456
Wisdom tradition.....	455, 456, 469, 472, 473
Christianity	463
Judaism	456
<i>Sophia</i>	472
Witzel, Michael	16, 17, 18, 151
<i>cosmic egg</i>	205
<i>cosmogony</i>	98
Egypt.....	98
<i>human migration</i>	59
<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	32, 58, 59, 68, 206, 638
<i>mythos</i>	59, 206
<i>philosophy</i>	21
<i>The Origins of the Worlds Mythologies</i>	58
<i>World Soul</i>	366, 441
<i>Brahman</i>	260, 642
Neo-Platonism	460, 764
<i>Wū Jīng</i>	335
Eastern philosophy	630

<i>wu wei</i>	
<i>Dao</i>	351
Daoism	351, 353
<i>Daoist sage</i>	353
<i>ethics</i>	353
<i>morality</i>	353

X

<i>Xan</i>	247
Xenophanes.....	283, 292
Socrates	300
Xenophon	
Socrates	296, 297, 298
<i>Socratic dialogue</i>	297
Xerxes.....	106, 115, 136, 387
Xia Dynasty	164, 165, 209, 217, 221
Bronze Age	219
Five Emperors	163
Shāng Dynasty	219
<i>Shujing</i>	336
Yellow Emperor.....	180
Yu the Great	219
<i>Xici zhuan</i>	242
Xu Zheng.....	168, 169
Xùn	243, 245, 247, 248, 249
<i>bāguà</i>	38
Xunzi.....	335

Y

Yahweh.....	82, 84, 86, 155
Gnosticism	472, 475
Indo-European	397
Judaism	454
Ovid	192
<i>pneuma</i>	442
<i>Puruṣa</i>	147
<i>sophia</i>	457
<i>Tiān</i>	229
Vedic philosophy.....	253
<i>yajña</i>	117, 118, 640
Agni	261, 640
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	256
Sanskrit	200
<i>Vedas</i>	149
<i>yasna</i>	200, 640
<i>ymnos</i>	200
<i>Yajurveda</i>	361, 640
<i>yama</i>	
Yoga philosophy	719

Yama	361	Fu Xi	180, 181, 238
<i>Katha Upanishad</i>	355	<i>Great Commentary</i>	238
yamas	711	<i>Great Treatise</i>	238
yáo	235, 243, 245	hexagram	210, 233
yarrow stalks	235, 236	<i>I Ching</i>	213
<i>divination</i>	224, 226	Jung	52, 613
yasna	117, 118	<i>Laurasian hypothesis</i>	45, 48
Avestan	200	Mawangdui Silk Texts	176
yajña	640	<i>metaphysics</i>	58, 234, 239, 783
ymnos	200	<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	801
Zoroastrianism	200	<i>mysticism</i>	778
Yasna	119	<i>mythos</i>	175
Avesta	640	<i>numerology</i>	232
Avestan	200	<i>ontology</i>	226
<i>Gathas</i>	116	<i>oral transmission</i>	30
<i>mythos</i>	199	Ovid	294
<i>Rigvéda</i>	198	Platonism	238
Younger Avestan	116	Pre-Socratic philosophy	194
Zoroastrianism	116	Psychology	613, 614
Yellow Emperor	164, 179, 180, 221, 334	Rutt	247
Chinese philosophy	175	Shàngdì	167, 237
Five Emperors	175	<i>synchronicity</i>	614
Shàngdì	163	<i>Ten Wings</i>	233
Yellow River	197, 219, 221, 232	<i>theory of forms</i>	238
Indus Valley	148	<i>Tiān</i>	229
Neolithic Revolution	63	<i>yi</i> 225	
yi 235, 236, 241, 242, 251, 340		Yīn-Yáng	175, 225, 334
<i>Analects</i>	339	Yizhuan	233
<i>Book of Changes</i>	226	Zhou Yi	241
Chinese philosophy	225	Yīn-Yáng	205, 222, 248, 334, 571
Confucius	340	<i>bāguà</i>	225, 240
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	801	Buddhism	281
Yijing	225	Chinese philosophy	18, 241, 377
Yi		<i>cosmogony</i>	179
Kālī	718	Daoism	240
samsāra	709	<i>dualism</i>	179, 241
Yijing .68, 210, 222, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239,		Jung	614
242, 244, 245, 246, 247, 251, 252, 314, 335, 572, 630,		<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	802
709		<i>mythos</i>	175, 205
<i>archetypes</i>	613	<i>Quality</i>	620, 775
<i>bāguà</i>	38, 131, 225	<i>Tàijí</i>	241, 249
<i>Book of Changes</i>	336	<i>Tàiyī Shēngshuǐ</i>	172
Chinese philosophy	18, 169, 229, 233, 343, 375	Yijing	175, 225, 240, 334
Confucianism	227	Yizhuan	233
Confucius	233	Confucianism	233
Daoism	233, 332, 334	ymnos	117
Dazhuan	238	Hellenic philosophy	200
<i>divination</i>	224, 235, 241	Hesiod	200
<i>dualism</i>	377	Homer	200
Fate	783	<i>mystery cults</i>	200
<i>Five Classics</i>	229	<i>mythos</i>	200

<i>yajña</i>	200
<i>yasna</i>	200
Yoga philosophy	11, 628, 651, 657, 670, 710, 713, 719
<i>ahimsā</i>	711
<i>āsanas</i>	706
Awareness	795
<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	644
<i>brahmacārya</i>	711
<i>chakras</i>	719
Christianity	719
<i>dhyāna</i>	26
Eastern philosophy	627, 720
<i>ethics</i>	711, 713
Eurasian philosophy	371
Indian philosophy	20, 27, 267, 706
Indo-Aryan	148
<i>Īśo Upanishad</i>	256
Īśvara	712
<i>jiva</i>	695, 711
Kuṇḍalinī Yoga	711
<i>meditation</i>	25, 36, 706, 713
<i>metaphysics</i>	707
<i>Metaphysics of Awareness</i>	795
<i>morality</i>	711, 713
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	39
<i>nirvikalpa samādhi</i>	695
<i>niyama</i>	712
<i>objective realism</i>	635
Patañjali	374, 719
Plato	313
<i>prāṇāyāma</i>	706, 712
Quantum Era	557, 780
Raja Yoga	711, 718
Ramakrishna	695, 702
<i>samādhi</i>	695, 713
Sāṃkhya	707, 712
Sanskrit	420
<i>Science of the mind</i>	720
Stoicism	447
<i>supraconsciousness</i>	713
<i>Śvetāśvatara Upanishad</i>	36
Tantra Yoga	681, 718
<i>Vedas</i>	374
Vedic	157
Vivekananda	21, 50, 670, 673, 687, 711, 714, 717
<i>yamas</i>	711
Yoga Sūtras	27
Yoga Sūtras	374, 710
<i>dhyāna</i>	26
Indian philosophy	706
<i>meditation</i>	35, 36, 40

<i>mysticism</i>	718, 758
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	38
Patañjali	26, 706
Raja Yoga	718
<i>samādhi</i>	420, 695
Sāṃkhya	707
Tantra Yoga	681, 718
Vyasa	706
Yoga	26
Yoga philosophy	706
<i>yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ</i>	26
Yogananda, Paramhansa	660
<i>Autobiography of a Yogi</i>	660
<i>yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ</i>	26, 710
<i>Nei-yeh</i>	38
Young, Thomas	
<i>double-slit experiment</i>	544
Younger Avesta	120
Younger Avestan	116, 119
Yu the Great	164, 165, 168, 217, 219, 221
<i>Shujing</i>	336
Yugas	
Eastern philosophy	572
Four Ages	198
Stoicism	447
<i>yǔzhòu</i>	178

Z

Zarathustra	86, 116, 118
Achaemenid Empire	121
Ahura Mazda	288
Bronze Age	118
<i>Gathas</i>	115, 116
Moses	115
Ramakrishna	703
Zoroaster	115
Zoroastrianism	118
<i>Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance</i>	750
<i>academia</i>	750
<i>Lila</i>	770
Metaphysics of Quality	698, 769
<i>Phaedrus</i>	767
<i>Quality</i>	769
<i>Values</i>	766
Zen Buddhism	271, 621
Zeno of Citium	406, 430, 439
Academic Skepticism	431
<i>allegoresis</i>	437
Cleanthes	432
<i>conflagration</i>	442

Diogenes Laertius	434, 435	Confucius	343
<i>natural law</i>	446	<i>cosmogony</i>	350
Pre-Socratic philosophy	283, 438	<i>Dao</i>	350
Stoicism	431, 436	<i>Dao De Jing</i>	349, 350
Zeus.. 110, 128, 129, 130, 131, 134, 144, 179, 186, 196, 325		Daoism	173, 332, 349
Ahura Mazda	116	<i>Daoist sage</i>	353
Brahmā	162	<i>Daozang</i>	343
<i>Chronos</i>	143, 144	<i>epistemology</i>	352
<i>cosmogony</i>	381	<i>Inward Training</i>	36
Dionysus	143	Lǎozǐ	343, 351
Eurasia	381	Legge	350
Hesiod	126	<i>mythos</i>	175
Indo-European	397	<i>Zhuangzi</i>	349
Indra	640	Zoroaster	115, 116, 118
<i>Ma'at</i>	104	Zoroastrianism	116, 118, 119, 120, 121, 179
Marduk	131	Achaemenid Empire	115, 121
Muses	125	Ahura Mazda	115, 288
Orpheus	134	<i>andarz</i>	289
Orphism	140, 142	Anra Mainyu	116
Ovid	192	Aristotle	116
Phanes	143	<i>Avesta</i>	119, 199, 642
Rhea	144	Avestan	199, 393
Shàngdì	376	Christianity	80, 115, 119, 121, 122, 465
<i>theogony</i>	112	<i>cosmogony</i>	119, 381
Titans	143	<i>Dēnkard</i>	119, 122
Vedic philosophy	253	Egypt	103
Zhèn	131, 243, 245, 247, 248, 249, 251	Hellenic philosophy	115
Zhou Dynasty	165, 209, 217, 221, 233, 236, 237, 336	Herodotus	116
<i>Analects</i>	340	Hinduism	199, 200
<i>Book of Changes</i>	226	Islam	487
Chinese philosophy	221	Judaism	87
Confucianism	167	<i>Ma'at</i>	104
Confucius	334	<i>Magi</i>	402
Guodian Chu Slips	171	<i>mystery cults</i>	118
<i>Heavenly Questions</i>	172	Ohrmazd	116
<i>lǐ</i> 227		Persia	122, 288
Mandate of Heaven	221	philosophy	16
Shàngdì	166, 183	Plato	370
<i>Shujing</i>	336	Pythagoras	289
<i>Tiān</i>	163, 223, 224	<i>shamanism</i>	117
<i>Yijing</i>	225, 336	Theopompus	116
Zhou Yi	233, 237, 335, 336, 574	<i>Vedas</i>	115, 198
Chinese philosophy	229	<i>yasna</i>	200, 640
<i>Yijing</i>	241	<i>Yasna</i>	116
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	376	Zarathustra	118
Chinese philosophy	334, 343, 354, 375		

Sources & Bibliography

While this work in its entirety is an original creation of the author, like all scholarly academic works it rests upon the shoulders of other academics, particularly in the fields of ancient Greek (Hellenic), Chinese, and Indian philosophy to which we have drawn on the painstaking work of many scholars over centuries for the translation of many of these archaic and ancient texts into readable English. The author has the luxury of having readily available translations of ancient manuscripts, many of which are available directly via the Internet, and which can now be analyzed within the context of the latest developments in archeology, linguistics and even genetics as is specifically called out in the Prologue of this work.

While many sources were used to construct the material in this work, special consideration is given to the following on-line, digital and electronically (and freely) available invaluable resources, three of which provide readily accessible translations (and the source language in most cases) for many of the ancient texts referred to and cited herein:

- *Wikipedia* (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>), which not only a good starting point for many of the terms, concepts and interrelationships of the topics covered herein, but also an invaluable resource in and of itself,
- *Perseus 4.0*, also known as the *Perseus Hopper* (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>), Gregory R. Crane, Editor in chief, Tufts University for their on-line translations of many of the Hellenic philosophical texts, in particle those of Aristotle and Plato in particular that are leveraged throughout this work,
- *The Chinese Text Project* (ctext.org) which includes detailed translations and the underlying Traditional Chinese of many of the earlier Chinese theo-philosophical works that are used throughout this work, and
- *The Plato Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (plato.stanford.edu), an invaluable resource for (primarily Western) philosophy throughout not just antiquity but into the modern era as well which was used extensively in the research for this work and is quoted and referenced throughout.
- *Internet Sacred Text Archive* (<http://www.sacred-texts.com>) which among other things includes very valuable electronic editions of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* that were used and referenced throughout this work, as well as other valuable translations of ancient texts across a broad and far reaching range of social, cultural and linguistic heritage.

In addition to these resources, we have drawn on a fairly extensive library as well, which we list below divided into two sections which denote the relative priority and influence of the work in question with respect to the work herein:

- *Primary Sources* being reflective of core analytical works (rather than textual translations of manuscripts from antiquity per se) that are heavily leaned upon throughout this work and
- *Secondary Sources* which are those works that were used to provide the intellectual basis and understanding of many of the topics and areas covered herein but were not necessarily directly applicable to the analysis and conclusions that we draw.

Both sets of material are recommended for anyone who wants to learn more about any of the topics covered in this work.

Please note that scholarly articles that appear in journals and/or Internet based translations and works (specifically in the digital archives listed above) are not listed below and are cited directly in the text as references and footnotes to various passages.

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