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Hearken to the Voices of Varied Traditions Speaking of Our Human Beginnings

Hinduism

Man, according to theVedas, is the result of the Gods' sacrifice of the divine primordial form of man. In a concept also found among many other peoples, the parts of this first being became the various living creatures, including man. The Puranas speak of Manu, progenitor of our race.

The Rig Vedastates, "thousand-headed is the Man with a thousand eyes, a thousand feet; encompassing the Earth on all sides, he exceeded it by ten fingers' breath. That Man, indeed, is this All, what has been and what is to be, the Lord of the immortal spheres which he surpasses by consuming food. Such is the measure of his might, and greater still than this is Man. All beings are a fourth of him, three-fourths are the immortal in heaven. Using the Man as their oblation, the Gods performed the sacrifice. This evolved Man, then first born, they besprinkled on the sacred grass. With him the Gods performed the sacrifice, as did also the heavenly beings and seers. From this sacrifice, fully accomplished, were born the hymns and the melodies; from this were born the sacrificial formulas. When they divided up the Man, his mouth became the brahmin; his

arms became the warrior-prince, his legs the common man who plies his trade. The lowly serf was born from his feet. The Moon was born from his mind; the Sun came into being from his eye; from his mouth came Indra and Agni, while from his breath the Wind was born.

In the Siva Purana,Brahma said, "Dharma, the means for achievement of everything, born of me, assumed the form of Manu at my bidding. I created from the different parts of my body innumerable sons. I was then prompted by Siva present within me and hence I split myself into two, one had the form of a woman and the other half that of a man. That man was Svayambhuva Manu, the greatest of the means of creation. The woman was Satarupa, a yogini, an ascetic woman. Together they created beings. Their sons and progeny are spread over the world both mobile and immobile."

American Indian

The Omaha tribe live in the American Midwest. Their stories emphasize the oneness of man and nature.

At the beginning all things were in the mind of Wakonda. All creatures, including man, were spirits. They moved about in space between the earth and the stars (the heavens). The were seeking a place where they could come into bodily existence. They ascended to the sun, but the sun was not fitted for their abode. They moved on to the moon and found that it also was not good for their home. Then they descended to the earth. They saw it was covered with water. They floated

through the air to the north, the east, the south and the west, and found no dry land. They were sorely grieved. Suddenly from the midst of the water uprose a great rock. It burst into flames and the waters floated into the air in clouds. Dry land appeared; the grasses and the trees grew. The hosts of the spirits descended and became flesh and blood. They fed on the seeds of the grasses and the fruits of the trees, and the land vibrated with their expressions of joy and gratitude to Wakonda, the maker of all things.

Mayan

The Popol Vuh is nearly the only surviving text of the Central American Mayans. It tells their story of creation.

Admirable is the account of the time in which it came to pass that all was formed in heaven and upon earth as was spoken by the Creator and Maker, the Mother, the Father of life and of all existence, that One by whom all move and breathe, Father and Sustainer of the peace of peoples, by Whose wisdom was premediated the excellence of all that doth exist in the heavens, upon the earth, in lake and sea. Lo, all was in suspense, all was calm and silent; all was motionless, all was quiet, and wide was the immensity of the skies. Lo, the first word and the first discourse. There was not yet a man, not an animal; only the sky existed. The face of the earth was not yet to be seen; only the peaceful sea and the expanse of the heavens. Alone was the Creator, the Maker, Tepeu, the Lord, and Gucumatz, the Plumed Serpent, those who engender, those who give being, alone upon the waters like a growing light. They spoke, 'Let it be thus done. Let the waters retire

and cease to obstruct, to the end that earth exist here, that it harden itself and show its surface, to the end that it be sown, and that the light of day shine in the heavens and upon the earth; for we shall receive neither glory nor honor from all that we have created and formed until human beings exist, endowed with sentience.

Abrahamic Religions

The Hebrews, Christians and Muslims all hold more or less to the creation story given in the Bible's first chapter.

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. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. ... And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air,

and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Chinese

The Chinese story of the original man Pangu parallels that of the Hindu creation.

In the beginning was a huge egg containing chaos, a mixture of yin-yang--female-male, passive-active, cold-heat, dark-light and wet-dry. Within this yin-yang was Pangu, that which was not yet anything but which broke forth from the egg as the giant who separated chaos into the many opposites, including earth and sky. Each day for 18,000 years Pangu grew ten feet between the sky, which was raised ten feet and the earth, which grew by ten feet. So it is that heaven and earth are now separated by 30,000 miles. Pangu was covered with hair; horns sprang from his head and tusks from his mouth. With a great chisel and a huge mallet, he carved out the mountains, valleys, rivers and oceans. During his 18,000 years, he also made the sun, moon and stars. He created all knowledge. All was suffused by the great primal principles of the original chaos, yin and yang. When Pangu finally died, his skull became the top of the sky, his breath the wind, his voice thunder, his legs and arms the four directions, his flesh the soil, his blood the rivers and so forth. The people say that the fleas in his hair became human beings. Everything that is is Pangu, and everything that Pangu is is yin-yang. With Pangu's death a vacuum was created, and within this vacuum pain and sin were able to flourish.

Africa

The Bantu people live in Equatorial and Southern Africa. Their story includes the introduction of death to people.

In the beginning there was only one man on earth, and he was called Kintu; the daughter of the sky saw him and fell in love with him, and persuaded her father to make him her husband. Kintu was summoned to the sky, and such were the magic powers of the daughter of the sky that he emerged successful from the ordeals imposed on him by the great God. He then returned to earth with his divine companion, who brought to him as her dowry domestic animals and useful plants. As he bade them farewell, the great God advised the newly weds not to return to the sky. He feared that they might have incurred the anger of one of his sons, Death, who had not been informed of the marriage, as he had been absent at the time. On his way to earth, Kintu realized that he had forgotten to bring grain. In spite of his wife's supplications, he went back up to the sky. By then the God of Death was there. He followed in the man's footsteps as he returned to earth, hid near his home and killed all the children who were eventually born to Kintu and the daughter of the sky.

Ancient Egypt

This creation story is recorded in The Book of Overthrowing Apophis, an ancient Egyptian text in hieroglyphics.

The Lord of All, after having come into being, says: I am he who came into being as Khepri,the Becoming One. When I came into being, the beings came into being, all the beings came into being after I became. Numerous are those who became, who came out of my mouth, before heaven ever existed, nor earth came into being, nor the worms, nor snakes were created in this place. I, being in weariness, was bound to them in the Watery Abyss. I found no place to stand. I thought in my heart, I planned in myself, I made all forms being alone, before I ejected Shu, before I spat out Tefnut I before any other who was in me had become.

Then I planned in my own heart, and many forms of beings came into being as forms of children, as forms of their children. I ejected Shu, I spat out Tefnut. After having become one God, there were now three Gods in me. When I came into being in this land, Shu and Tefnut jubilated in the Watery Abyss in which they were. I wept over them, and men came into being out of the tears which came out of my eyes. I created all that came into being with them. Shu and Tefnut produced Geb and Nut; Geb and Nut produced out of a single body Osiris, Horus the Eyeless one Seth, Isis, and Nephthys, one after the other among them. Their children are numerous in this land.

Creation According to Modern Science

The following descriptions are assembled from the statements of several eminent scientists.

The universe was created ex nihilo[out of nothing]. At a particular instant roughly 15 billion years ago, all the matter and energy we can observe, concentrated in a region smaller than a dime, began to expand and cool at an incredibly rapid rate. This knowledge comes from decades of innovative experiments and theories. This theory is known as the big bang cosmology. Yet many fundamental mysteries remain [such as] what was the universe like before it was expanding? Life developed spontaneously on Earth and slowly developed into more and more complex organisms through a process of natural selection. When the environment changes, individuals bearing traits that provide the best adaptation to the new environment meet with the greatest reproductive success.

Science holds that without supernatural intervention, spontaneous interaction of the relatively simple molecules dissolved in the lakes or oceans of the prebiotic world yielded life's last common ancestor. Man has evolved by natural selection from earlier species. Our most recent ancestors are the primates. Evolution does not mean progress defined to render the appearance of something like human consciousness either virtually inevitable or at least predictable. We must come to entertain the strong possibility that Homa sapiens is but a tiny, late-arising twig on life's enormously arborescent bush--a small bud that would almost surely not appear a second time if we could replant the bush from seed and let it grow again.