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Conventional “God-religion” originates in the state of mind that characterizes the first three stages of life. Thus, conventional “God-religion” is ego-based—and it serves the functional desire of the egoic (or phenomenal) “self” to be protected, nourished, pleasured, and (ultimately) preserved.

The phenomenal “self”, or egoic (“self”-centered) body-mind-complex, is the source of conventional “God-religion”, as well as all of the other ordinary and extraordinary pursuits of born existence in the first six stages of life. Therefore, it is not Real God but the ego (perhaps gesturing conceptually toward “God”) that is the source and fundamental “subject” of popular (or exoteric) “religion” (as well as higher mysticism). Real Transcendental Spiritual life begins only when the ego (with all of its mind, emotion, desire, and activity) is thoroughly understood and (thereby) transcended. For this reason, only the seventh stage of life directly Serves the process of Most Perfect Real-God-Realization. All other forms of doctrine (or instruction) serve the purposes of the first six stages of life—all of which are founded on the egoic presumption of “self-and-other”. It is the culture of conventional “religion” that promotes conventional ideas about “God”. The principal conventional “God”-idea is that “God” is the “Creator” (or intentional Emanator) of the “worlds” and all beings. Such seems an obvious idea to the bodily ego, trapped in the mechanics of the perceptual mind and the material (or elemental) vision. The ego is identified with embodiment, and the idea of the “Creator-God” is developed to account for this fact, and to provide a conceptual basis (in the form of the idea of the ego as “God-made creature”) for the appeal to “God” to Help the ego in this “world” and in the (yet unknown) afterdeath state.

The difficulty with the “Creator-God” conception is that it identifies “God” with ultimate “causation” and (thus) makes “God” inher-ently responsible for the subsequent “causation” of all “effects”. And, if “God” is responsible for all “effects”, then “God” is clearly a very powerful but also terrible Deity—since conditionally manifested existence tends to work both for and against all “creatures”.

Therefore, in conventional “religious” thinking, the “Creator-God”-idea is commonly coupled with the idea of “God” as “Good” (and, thus, both opposite and opposed to “Evil”). If the “Creator-God” is conceived to be “Good” (or always working to positively “create”, protect, nourish, rightly and pleasurably fulfill, and, ultimately, preserve all of conditional Nature and all “creatures”—insofar as they are rightly aligned to “God”), then the ego is free of the emotional double-bind and the anger and despair that would seem to be justified if “God” is simply the responsible “Creator” of everything (good, bad, or in-between). Therefore, conventional “religious” theology is founded on both the idea of “God” as “Creator” and the idea of “God” as “Good” (or “Good Will”).

However, if “God” is the All-Powerful “Creator” (except for Whose activities not anything has been made), then how did so much obviously negative (or evil) motion and “effect” come into existence? The usual answer is generally organized around one or another mythological story in which powerful creatures (or one powerful creature, such as “Satan”, regarded to personify “Evil”) entered (on the basis of free will) into a pattern of “sin” (or disobedience and conflict in relation to “God”)—which resulted in separation from “God”, and a descent (or fall) into gross (material) bondage, and so forth. Such mythologies are structured in terms of a hierarchical view of conditional Nature, with various planes descending from the “Heaven” of “God”. “Religion” (thus) becomes a “method” of attempting to “return” to “God”.

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Exoteric “religion” (or the “God-religion” of the first three stages of life) is generally based on an appeal to belief, social morality, and magically effective prayer or worship. The “return” to “God” is basically conceived in terms of this “world”—and, therefore, exoteric (or terrestrial) “religion” is actually a process in which “God” returns to the ego and to this “world” (rather than vice versa), and it is believed that “God” will eventually reclaim humankind and the total “world” from the forces of “Evil”. Nevertheless, exoteric “religion” is an “outer cult”, intended for grosser egos and for mass consumption (or the culture of the first three stages of life). The most advanced form of conventional “God-religion” is the esoteric (or “inner”) “cult”—which is a mystical society, open only to those chosen for initiation (and, thus, growth, or development, into the fourth and fifth stages of life). Esoteric “God-religion” is a process of cosmic mysticism, or the “method” of “return” to “God” by ascending as mind (or disembodied “soul”)—back through the route of the original fall into matter and “Evil”—until the “Heaven” (or “Eternal Abode”) of “God” is reached again. This esoteric mystical process goes beyond the conventions of exoteric “religion” to develop the psycho-physical mechanics of mystical flight and “return” to “God” via the hierarchical structures of the nervous system (ascending from the plane of “Evil”, or “Satan”, or the “flesh”, at the bodily base of the nervous system, to the plane of “God”, or the plane of “Good”, or the “Heavenly Abode”, at or above the brain, via the “magic carpet” of the life-force in the nervous system).

Thus, the idea of the “Creator-God” leads to the idea that “God” is “Good” (or “Good Will”), which leads to the idea that “creatures” have free will, which then accounts for the appearance of “sin”, suffering, “Evil”, and loss of “God-consciousness”. And conventional “God-religion” then becomes the means (through structures of belief, sacramental worship, mystical prayer, Yogic or shamanistic ascent, and so forth) for the re-exercise of “creaturely” free will in the direction of “God”, “Good”, the triumph over “Evil” and death in this “world”, and the ascent from material form and consciousness to Spiritual, “Heavenly”, or “Godly” form and consciousness.

All the popular “religious” traditions of humankind and all the mystical Spiritual traditions of humankind tend to be associated with this chain of conceptions (or the characteristic ideas of the first five stages of life). It is only in the sixth stage traditions that these ideas begin to give way to different conceptions. It is only in the sixth stage of life that the egoic basis of the first five stages of life is penetrated.

The theological and general “religious” conceptions I have just Described have always been subject to criticism (or at least simple non-belief) on the part of those who are not persuaded by “religious” and theological arguments. Atheism (or the conception that no “Creator-God”—or any other Greater Reality—exists) has always opposed theism (or “God-religion”). Nevertheless, atheistic ideas are the product of the same fundamental egoic consciousness that otherwise produces theistic (or conventional “religious”) ideas.

Atheism is the product of the ego (or the phenomenal “self”, grounded in elemental perception), and so also is theism. Atheism, like exoteric “God-religion”, extends itself only into the domain of the first three stages of life—whereas esoteric “God-religion” provides a means for entering, mystically and Spiritually, into the developmental processes of the fourth stage of life and the fifth stage of life.

Atheism regularly proposes a “logic” of life that has its own dogmatic features. It does not propose a “God”-idea but, instead, founds itself on and in the perceptual and phenomenal mind alone. Atheism concedes only a universal and ultimately indifferent (or merely lawful) cosmic Nature (not a “God”)—and, so, there is no need

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to create a “religious creation-myth” to account for suffering. (And atheistic thinkers thus generally confine themselves to constructing a cosmology, based on material observations alone, that merely accounts for the apparent workings of the conditionally manifested events of cosmic Nature.)

Indeed, just as conventional “God-religion” (or conventional theism) arises to account for suffering, atheism arises on the basis of the unreserved acknowledgment of suffering. And, if there is no idea of “God”, there is no idea of the human being as “creature” (or, in other words, the human being as the bearer of an immortal, or “God-like”, “inner” part). Nor is there any need to interpret unfortunate or painful events as the “effects” of “Evil”. Therefore, the atheistic “point of view” is characterized by the trend of mind called “realism”, just as the conventional “religious” (or theistic) “point of view” is characterized by the trend of mind called “idealism”—but both atheism and theism arise on the basis of the “self”-contraction (or the ego of phenomenal “self”-consciousness), rather than on the basis of direct Intuition of the Real Self-Nature, Self-Condition, and Self-State That is Prior to separate “self” and its conventions of perception and thought.

The realistic (or atheistic) view is just as much the bearer of a myth (or a merely conceptual interpretation of the “world”) as is the conventional “religious” (or theistic) view. Atheism (or conventional realism) is a state of mind which is based in the phenomenal “self” and which seeks the ultimate protection, nourishment, pleasure, and preservation of the phenomenal “self” (at least in this “world” and, if there should be an afterlife, then also in any other “world”). Therefore, atheism (or conventional realism) is simply a philosophical alternative to theism (or conventional “God-religion”), based on the same principle and consciousness (which is the phenomenal ego), and seeking (by alternative means) to fulfill the conditionally manifested “self” and relieve it of its suffering.

Atheism (or conventional realism) is a state of mind that possesses individuals who are fixed in the first three stages of life. It is a form of “spiritual neurosis” (or ego-possession), as are all of the characteristic mind-states of the first six stages of life. Esoteric “God-religion” provides a basis for certain remarkable individuals to enter the fourth stage of life and the fifth stage of life, but the commonly (or exoterically) “religious” individual is, like the atheist, a relatively adolescent (if not childish, and even infantile) character, fixed in the ego-possessed states characteristic of the first three stages of life.

Atheism proposes a myth and a “method” for ego-fulfillment that is based on phenomenal realism, rather than “religious” idealism (or the culture of the conventional “God”-idea). Therefore, atheism is traditionally associated with the philosophy of materialism—just as theism is associated with “Creationism”, and “Emanationism”, and conventional (or mystical, or fourth and fifth stage) Spirituality. And the realistic (or atheistic) view tends to be the foundation for all kinds of political, social, and technological movements, since its orientation is toward the investigation and manipulation of material Nature.

Atheism is realism and materialism. It is about the acquisition of “knowledge” about conditional Nature and the exploitation of that “knowledge” to command (or gain power over) conditional Nature. And it is this scheme of “knowledge” and power (expressed as political and technological means of all kinds) that is the basis of the mythology and quasi-“religion” of atheism. The atheistic (or non-theistic) view of life is egobased, organized relative to conditional Nature as an elemental (or grossly perceived) process, and committed to “knowledge”

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and power as the means of “salvation” (or material fulfillment of egoity). In this “late-time” (or “dark” epoch), the materialistic, realistic, and non-theistic philosophy of egofulfillment is represented by the global culture of scientific, technological, and political materialism. The entire race of humankind is now being organized by the cultural movement of scientific materialism—which counters (and even seeks to suppress) the alternative cultures of exoteric “religion”, esoteric mysticism, Transcendental Self-Realization, and Divine Enlightenment. Scientism (or the culture of realistic or materialistic “knowledge”) and its two arms of power (technology and political order) are the primary forces in global culture of the present time. And humanity at large is (thus) tending to be reduced to the robotic acculturations of orderly egoism in the limited terms represented by humanity’s functional development in the first three stages of life.

Conventional and popular human culture has historically been limited to the conflicts and alternatives represented by theism and atheism, or egoic idealism and egoic realism. And the large-scale ordering of humankind has always tended to be dominated by the politics of materialistic “knowledge” and power. It is simply that, in the “late-time” (or “dark” epoch), the materialistic culture is approaching the status of a worldwide mass-culture in which all individuals will be controlled by a powerful and materialistically oriented system of political and technological restriction.

The usual (or most commonly remarked) criticism of theism (or conventional “God-religion”) is based on the evidence of suffering and material limitation. Therefore, the common arguments against theism are generally those proposed by the “point of view” of atheism. Likewise, the common arguments against atheism are generally those proposed by theism (which are based on an egoic appeal to the evidence of “religious” history, cultic revelation, mystical psychology, and psychic “experience”). For this reason, there may seem to be only two basic cultural alternatives: atheism and theism.

Theism and conventional “God-religion” are, at base, an expression of egoity in the first three stages of life—just as is the case with atheism and conventional materialism. Therefore, whenever theism (or conventional “God-religion”) becomes the base for political and social order, it inevitably becomes the base for “knowledge” and power in the material “world”. And exoterically theistic regimes have historically been equally as aggressive in the manipulation and suppression of humanity as have atheistic regimes. Exoteric theism is, at its base, egoic and fitted to “worldly” concerns. Therefore, when it achieves “worldly” power, it simply adopts the same general materialistic means that are adopted by atheism. “Knowledge” and power are the common tools of egoity, not merely the tools of atheism. In its esoteric forms, theism (or conventional “God-religion”) can, via the exercises and attainments of Saints and mystics, apply “knowledge” and power to purposes that extend beyond the first three stages of life. However, in the terms of the first three stages of life (or the common and practical social order), theism (or conventional “Godreligion”) is inclined to make the same demands for social consciousness—and to apply fundamentally the same kind of political and authoritarian “techniques” for achieving obedience and order—as atheism and scientism. And the more important esoteric matters of Spiritual Wisdom, mystical “knowledge”, and the transformative power of Sainthood or Adeptship are as much in doubt and disrepute in the common “religious” circles of theism as they are in scientific and atheistic circles.

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All of this is to indicate that conventional “God-religion” (or theism)—and even all “religious”, “Spiritual”, and “Transcendental” pursuits of the first six stages of life—share a “root”-error (or limitation) with atheism and “worldly” culture. That error (or limitation) is the ego itself, or the presumptions and the seeking that are most basic to the conception of an independent phenomenal “self” in a (less than hospitable) phenomenal “world”. Thus, what is ultimately to be criticized in conventional “God-religion” (or theism) is the same limit that is to be criticized in atheism and materialism. It is the ego, the phenomenal “self”-base—from which people tend to derive their conceptions of “God”, cosmic Nature, life, and destiny.

It is only when the egoic “root” of one’s functional, “worldly”, and “religious” or “Spiritual” life is inspected, understood, and transcended that “self”, and “world”, and Real God are seen in Truth. Therefore, it is necessary to understand your own egoic activity. It is necessary to aspire to Wisdom, Truth, and Enlightenment. All occupations derived from the ego-base are (necessarily) limited to egoity, and all conceptions that feed such egoic occupations are (necessarily) bereft of a right view of “self”, “world”, and Real God (Which Is the Acausal Divine Reality and Truth).

When the mechanics of egoity are transcended in “self”-understanding, then it becomes obvious that life (or conditionally manifested phenomenal existence) is simply a “play” of opposites. Neither “Good” (or “creation” and preservation) nor “Evil” (or destruction) finally wins. Conditional Nature, in all its planes, is inherently a dynamic. The “play” of conditional Nature, in all its forms and beings and processes, is not merely (or exclusively and finally) seeking the apparent “Good” of “self”-preservation (or the preservation and fulfillment of any particular form, “world”, or being), nor is it merely (or exclusively and finally) seeking the apparent “Evil” of “self”-destruction (or the dissolution of any particular form, “world”, or being). Rather, the “play” in conditional Nature is always in the direction of perpetuating the dynamics of the “play” itself— and, therefore, polarity, opposition, struggle, alternation, death, and cyclic repetition tend to be perpetuated as the characteristics of phenomenal existence. Therefore, the “play” of conditional Nature is always alternating between the appearance of dominance by one or the other of its two basic extremes. And the sign of this is in the inherent struggle that involves every conditionally apparent form, being, and process. The struggle is this dynamic “play” of opposites, but the import of it is not the absolute triumph of either half. Things and beings and processes arise, they move, they are transformed, and they disappear. No conditionally apparent thing or being or process is ultimately preserved—nor, by contrast, is there any absolute destruction. Cosmic Nature is a transformer—not merely a “creator” or a “destroyer”. To the ego (or present temporary form of being), “self”-preservation may seem to be the inevitable motive of being. Therefore, a struggle develops to destroy or escape the dynamic of conditional Nature by dominating “Evil” (or death) with “Good” (or immortality). This ideal gets expressed in the generally exoteric and Occidental (or more materialistic) efforts to conquer conditional Nature via “worldly knowledge” and power. However, it also gets expressed in the generally esoteric and Oriental (or more mystical) efforts to escape the plane of conditional Nature by ascent from materiality (or the “Evil” of the flesh) to “Heaven” (the “Good God” above the realm of conditional Nature).

When the ego (or “self”-contraction) is understood and transcended, then conditional Nature is seen in the Light of Reality Itself. And, in that case, the egoic struggle in conditional Nature or against conditional Nature is also understood and transcended. Then life ceases to be founded on the need to defeat the dynamic of conditional Nature via conventional “knowledge”, power, immortality, or mystical escape. The “world” is no

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longer conceived as a drama of warfare between “Good” and “Evil”. The righteousness of the search for the “Good” as a means of “self”-preservation disappears along with the “self”-indulgent and “self”-destructive negativity of possession by “Evil”. In place of this dilemma of opposites, an ego-transcending and “world”-transcending (or cosmic-Nature-transcending) equanimity appears. In that equanimity, there is an Inherent Self-Radiance That Transcends the egoic dualities of “Good” and “Evil” (or the conventional polarities of the separate “self” in conditional Nature). That Self-Radiance Is the Free Radiance of egoless Love. In That Free Radiance, energy and attention are inherently free of the ego-bond, or the “self”-contraction, or the “gravitational effect” of phenomenal “self”-awareness. Therefore, dynamic equanimity, or the free disposition of egoless Love (rather than the egoic disposition in the modes of “Good” or “Evil”), is the “window” through which Real (Acausal) God may be “seen” (or intuited)—not in the conventional mode of “Creator”, the “Good”, the “Other”, or the “Heavenly Place”, but as the Real (or Reality Itself), the Self-Evidently Divine Self-Nature, Self-Condition, and Self-State of all-and-All.

The ultimate moment in the “play” of conditional Nature is not the moment of egoic success (or the temporary achievement of the apparently positive, or “Good”, “effect”). The ultimate moment is beyond contradiction (or the dynamics of polarized opposites). It is the moment of equanimity, the still point (or “eye”) in the midst of the wheel of Nature’s motions and all the motivations of the born “self”. The Truth—and the Real Self-Nature, Self-Condition, and Self-State—of “self” and cosmic Nature is Revealed only in that equanimity, beyond all stress and bondage of energy and attention. – F. Jones