

Chapter 1 Questions of Philosophy

Section 1 The Origin of World Theories

1 Language and Universal Violence

* Creatures without language cannot depict "the world" and cannot possess the concept of the "world itself."

Language, in its beginnings, may have originated from practical necessities in human life. But why have humans, beyond that necessity, used language to depict "the world" as a comprehensive picture across time and space? This question has a different essence from the theory of the origin of language in the human world.

* We would like to present a hypothesis: When people first used language, detaching themselves from their daily needs, to describe the world around them, this picture probably emerged as the simplest religious view of world events. Their words must have been rooted in their primal anxiety and awe of the relationship between themselves and the universe around them.

Humans formulated the qualities of their collectivity and sociality through language. Otherwise put, only human beings established collective qualities that could confront the universal principle of violence dominating over the rest of the creatures (animals), i.e., a collectivity based on language. We can envision this hypothesis in mind as the following state of affairs: Wherever war (the principle of violence) manifests itself, all human language efforts are negated and serve only to win and survive. As soon as the battle subsides, humans attempt to restore, through language, daily life and coexistence in all aspects of life

* The primordial effort to construct a collective worldview manifested as a religious one, or perhaps it is more accurate to say that we call this primordial worldview conveyed through language, *religion*.

Allegories, metaphors and riddles form the core of religious narratives about the universe. Just as the anxiety felt by a corporeity of animals plays a central role in their categorization of the world, the collective anxiety of human beings drives them to make sense of world events through religious narratives. These narratives exhibit some typical patterns: the primordial creation of the universe or its origin; the cyclical renewal and transmigration of the world; the genesis of the gods; conflicts and battles among the gods; the creation of mankind; heroes; confusion and wars; the struggles to overcome anarchy and a resulting supremacy; the creation of justice and peace; and the establishment of a state.

* A bold and intrepid hypothesis was put forward by a Romanian historian of religion and philosopher Mircea Eliade, concerning the prime motive behind those various origin myths and typical religious narratives: "For man is the final product of a decision made 'at the beginning of Time': the decision to

kill in order to live..." (Eliade 1978, p.4). While this hypothesis makes sense when considering humanity as a species-being, it should be noted for the moment is that, according to Eliade, the concept of death involved in *killing and being killed* was a crucial impetus for humans to develop their worldview.

* In order for mythical narratives about the universe to emerge, human comprehension of the world must already be equipped and flooded with copious amounts of relational meanings, i.e., different concepts such as potential good and evil, sacred and profane, happiness and unhappiness, fortune and misfortune, toils and conquest. Eliade's hypothesis suggests that the idea of "death" was the origin of such attempts to create various meanings in human events. Awareness of mortality not only gives rise to the notions of circulation, recurrence and transmigration by temporalizing and regionalizing the world, but also to a sense of reverence for nature, which leads to the notions of gods or deities as subjects embodying this reverence for nature and their will and struggles. Furthermore, the act of killing is circumscribed as something special, sanctified, in order to demarcate the illusionary space between the sacred and the profane and to give rise to rites and festivals.

* Georges Bataille also proposes a similar hypothesis in his work *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*.

According to him, the cave paintings of Lascaux do not signify the prospect of a successful hunt, but rather the ritual consciousness of the act of killing and the sense of atonement that has already developed.

This hypothesis rests on the fact that expiation regularly follows upon the killing of an animal among peoples whose way of life is probably similar to that of the cave artists. Its great merit is to suggest a coherent interpretation of the Lascaux pit painting where a dying bison faces the man who has probably killed it and whom the painter shows as a dead man. (Bataille, 1962 p.75)

* Already towards the end of the Old Stone Age, some typical myths about the genesis of the universe, or origin myths, appeared, explaining mankind, wild animals, death and battles. Eliade speaks of the significance of the "primordial murder" in these myths of origin. "It is enough to say that all responsible activities (puberty ceremonies, animal or human sacrifices, cannibalism, funerary ceremonies, etc.) properly speaking constitute a recalling, a 'remembrance' of the primordial murder." (Eliade 1978 p.38) The primordial killing is the killing of animals, but it eventually leads to the killing of humans, who are of the same kind. The concept of death articulates the world order as a temporal (cyclical and recurrent) and spatial (sacred and profane) order. This is because the order of time and the order of space are two crucial factors for human survival and continuity.

* The primordial mythology of genesis is followed by the "battles of the gods", that is, life-and-death struggles (universal conflict) between the gods themselves or the gods and humans, and their sovereignty, legitimacy and rise and fall. The struggles between successive generations of gods are

universally found in various world myths including those of the Greek and the Epic of Gilgamesh. A Hittite origin myth typically tells:

- (1) The gods hide themselves. Crops dry up, love-making stops and the land turns to dessert. Stories of disappearance and return are more dominant than those of death and rebirth.
- (2) Battles of the gods between their successive generations. The story of the killing of the dragon. The battle between Teshub, the god of storms, and Illuyankas the dragon. The storm god loses in the beginning but manages to slay the dragon with the help of humans and the goddess Inaras.

To sum up, all the myths that recount the conflicts between successive generations of gods for the conquest of universal sovereignty justify, on the one hand, the exalted position of the last conquering god and, on the other hand, explain the present structure of the world and the actual condition of humanity. (ibid., p.149)

* Religious mythology can be classified into a few types: the conflict between the agricultural and the hunting models (Cain and Abel); cyclic time (fertility and exhaustion), chaos and order as two opposing states, the myth of the Flood, power and justice and good and evil. As far as the principle of classification of these archetypal religious mythologies is concerned, it is difficult to find anything more convincing than these basic hypotheses of Eliade and Bataille. Specifically, the idea of death, the resulting fear and anxiety, the onset of “universal conflict” due to such anxiety, all these are the source from which the temporal and spatial (areal) division (between the sacred and the profane) of the world and the genesis of the stories of gods and men as the demonstration of the legitimacy of supremacy are born.

What to consider. These primordial narratives about the world and the events in it typically reveal that, for humanity, which separated itself from animal life by “killing to live,” its most fundamental activities were the struggle against and conquest of the “universal violence.” “Universal violence” and “universal war” were first philosophically recognized as fundamental principles of human society by Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century (“war of all against all”). I would entitle them together the “principle of universal conflict.”

* The principle of “universal violence.” This is the source of all the contradictions in human society. Humanity not yet fully accomplished the cardinal task of restraining universal violence. Since the emergence of universal conflict between communities (generally considered to be contemporaneous with food storage, which began in agricultural settlements), humanity has made maximum efforts to contain these terrible calamities, for instance through gifts, barter, marriage and syncretism, all of which would be impossible without “language games.” Nevertheless, all these convention-based efforts have not succeeded in overcoming the principle of violence. The universal conflict among the powerful would almost invariably entail the “principle of hegemony,” in which the strongest rule the others, as was typical of the great despotic empires of antiquity. It is not that Hobbes grasped all the major events

of history, yet he developed the deepest insight into this principle from his study of the history of Britain and Europe of his time.¹

* Universal conflict is the primary principle running through the history of mankind. The primordial attempt to deter war has been followed by numerous similar attempts down to the present day. Its original mode of realization was the establishment of a *communal society centered on common defense*, i.e., a communal “state”. With the establishment of a state, religion ceased to be a mere set of rites, but became an ordered system of narratives about the world and events in it. The core of such narratives was to give potential meaning to the community's struggles and to record them generally *in the form of mythology*.

* Nothing could be simpler and naiver than the prevailing idea that religion is an illusory narrative and the state an illusory institution. Humans detached themselves from animal life by “killing” and thus constituted his worldview around the concept of death, i.e., the *meaning* of the world. Religion is the original and initial narrative they created, in which he put into order the fundamental values that signify the meaning of the world such as sacred and profane and good and evil. The collective sharing of these fundamental values not merely served to build a community life but was also significant in the *primordial confrontation with the principle of violence*, which was incessantly looking for an opportunity to emerge.

* In the course of the several centuries B.C., philosophy emerged in some advanced civilizations as if to take over the religious accounts of the world. What is the significance of this event? We must make some preliminary observations:

First, about a million years ago, humanity achieved a revolution in life in the form of “accumulation of wealth” but this brought down the era of misery with the universal war. Thereafter, the human efforts to survive have been directed primarily to defending themselves against the overwhelming principle of violence, rather than to earning a living from nature. Communities were made to be stronger than ever with their efforts for common defense against the horrible death (which necessitated the creation of states), and accordingly, forced to constantly reinforce their order and rationalize the system of administration and governance.

Second, the sharing of narratives through language made it possible to aggrandize the order and governance of communities. The birth of a powerful community-state, necessarily resulting from the progress of the universal war, generally caused the reduction of the multiplicity of these religious narratives to integrate them repeatedly and finally unify them. In the great empires thus established, world religions with their own account and doctrine emerge and spread over several nations with different languages.

¹ See Takeda's work *The Conditions for Human Freedom* to be translated into English soon, for the details of Hobbes' principle of universal war and its pertaining historical investigations.

* Two points should be noted. Religion serves to promote the sharing of values and meanings of life among people in order to integrate their worldviews, and thus helps them to confront the principle of violence within their community. The historical emergence of world religions is a good indication of this essence inherent in them, as they tend to converge the meanings and values in the world into a single doctrine, thereby deterring universal violence, and to express the ultimate meaning of human life through language, again to confront the principle of universal violence.

2 The origin of philosophy

* Philosophical thought arose around the sixth century B.C. in both Eastern and Western civilizations.

The primordial thought and ideas about the world still inherited and were closely associated with traditional religious narratives and allegorical interpretations. In India, philosophy emerged as a set of reinterpretations of conventional schemes of religious account. Whereas philosophical thought generally takes the form of a special “language game” that attempts to identify some primordial principle by using the faculty of reason, ancient Indian philosophy still preserved the central ideas of the Indian religious worldview such as the theory of transmigration of souls, reincarnation, karma and moksha and Brahman and Atman as the highest universal principles. However, in terms of philosophical approach, those ancient Indian philosophers emphasized the idea of universal primordiality, in which we see some attempt to introduce new imaginations and the rational concept of causality into the conventional religious narratives.

* The teaching of an ancient Upanishad philosopher: in the primeval time, there existed only 'Being' , which sent forth heat, to grow and multiply; the heat in turn wanted to multiply, so it produced water, according to the statement of Uddalaka Aruni in the text of the ancient Upanishadic philosophy, Chandogya Upanishad. The being brings itself into Atman with its three deities (heat, water and food) to produce all kinds of individual things in the world of appearances. What truly exists are only the three Deities –forms– and the name of each thing or matter is merely to be supplemented by words. The ancient materialism typically taught by Uddalaka Aruni shows how philosophy proceeded to disengage itself from the allegorical or anecdotal account of world events in terms of its scheme of assuming some “primordial principle,” on which the basic ideas of genesis and totality of the world were supposed to be based. The same thing happened in the Milesian school of Greek philosophy.

* In China, there were no such unified and powerful mythical narratives as Indian Vedic philosophy, although some kind of primordial world explanation was found only in the thought of Laozi and Zhuangzi. For example, Laozi says: There is a thing confusedly formed, born before heaven and earth, silent and void, and Zhuangzi teaches: All things equal, absolutely no distinction. There is no evidence that philosophy in the sense of rational explanation of the world had any further fruitful development in the history of Chinese thought. Confucianism, which would have developed as a major Chinese

philosophy alongside the thought of Laozi and Zhuangzi, hardly shows such philosophical thinking as the contemplation of the principle of the *beginning* and *totality* of the world.¹

* When the human faculty of inference moves freely about the primordial principle of the world, philosophical thought breaks away from the traditional narrative account of things and proceeds to the autonomous development of concepts. While religious worldviews never forget their “instinct” for social integration, philosophy makes the free development of inference its own end and builds itself into the theory or doctrine of more elaborate and sophisticated explanation, unless forbidden by some authority. Philosophy thus tends to produce a magnificent system of such theories of explanation, the starting point of which is always the question of how to expound the original principle of the world.

To name a few examples: two realities, [purusa \(consciousness\)](#) and [prakrti \(matter\)](#) according to the Samkhya school of the middle Upanishadic philosophy; six orthodox categories (substance, quality, activity, generality, particularity and inherence) according to the Vaisheshika school; the principle of the monistic Absolute in Vedanta philosophy. Buddhist philosophy in ancient India inherited this logical thinking to establish a grandiose architecture of multi-grade, multi-term linguistic system.

3 Multi-term World System

* The peculiar quality of the Indian multiterm philosophy is already seen in the Vedic scriptures, where there are thirty-three Deities (referred to as 3360 Deities in the hymns of worship dedicated to the Deities). The 33 are: Eight [Vasus](#), Eleven [Rudras](#), and Twelve [Ādityas](#) as well as Indra and the Creator. The eight Vasus are fire, earth, wind, atmosphere, sun, sky, moon and stars, which inhabit all living beings in the world. Rudras are the gods of the ten qualities of man, which are mortal, as well as Atman. Adityas are the twelve months of the year which encompass everything in the universe. Indra is the god of thunder and lightning.

* The world principles of the Samkhya philosophy

- (1) The principle of mind ([purusa](#)) and the principle of matter ([prakrti](#))
- (2) The undeveloped matter (pure sattiva) and the developed
- (3) Matter consists of *rajas* (something active or passionate) and *tamas* (something dark or negative)
- (4) Self-consciousness is divided into eleven organs including organs for thinking, perceiving and acting, which are further divided into many items.
- (5) Matter is divided into five elements: sound, feeling, color, taste and smell. The principles of specialization are emptiness, wind, fire, water and earth. The organ of thinking thinks about perceived objects, self-consciousness relates the perceived and thought object to the self, and reason makes a decision about the object. The minute organism as the subject of rebirth has as its cause the enjoyment

¹ Hegel judges negatively about Confucius's teachings, saying that although they are useful moral teachings, they are merely "practical wisdom," and that Cicero's moral treatise "On Duties" is more beneficial than all of Confucius's works. (Hegel: *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Vol. I)

of objects, which is the purpose of mind and is brought into existence in connection with the body under the circumstance of virtues and sins as the motives of rebirth and the resultant gods, humans and animals.

The element of mind or intellect inhabits the body created as gods, humans, animals and plants and suffers the sufferings arising from aging and death as long as the minute organism is subject to rebirth. Therefore, suffering is inevitable for physical existence. The creative activity to be performed by the primordial matter aims at liberating the mind element from the cycle of rebirth. The element of mind attains the state of decisive and ultimate independence when it is separated from the body and the primordial matter ceases to act; its purpose having been accomplished.

* The middle Upanishad philosophy has six schools, [Nyāyā](#), [Vaiśeṣika](#), [Sāṃkhya](#), [Yoga](#), [Mīmāṃsā](#), and [Vedānta](#), each of which has its own, more elaborate, multi-term, multi-sectional architectonic system.

This method of multi-term architectonic scheme is also manifest in Buddhist philosophy which emerged more or less in rivalry with the Upanishadic philosophy. While Buddhism spread as a popular religion was based on Buddha's salvation teachings, it evolved into elaborate doctrines not far removed from the Upanishad philosophy as the religious communities organized by his disciples began to develop their own creeds and theories. The Buddhist philosophy thus developed produced a grand linguistic architecture of Abhidhamma, which provides, for example, the universal philosophical doctrine centered on the [Sarvāstivāda](#) (dharmas exist in all three times: past, present and future). In this or other schools of early Buddhist philosophy, all the phenomena of the universe including temporal beings, physical spheres and mental principles were basically organized in terms of the principle of *pratītya-samutpāda* (all *dharmas* ("phenomena") arise in dependence upon other *dharmas*), which is unique to Buddhism, thus unfolding the multi-grade, multi-term classification with the utmost sophistication that could exceed that of the Upanishadic philosophy (five dharmas, five groups, twelve gates, eighteen species, etc.) Every refined philosophical system necessarily involves the opposition of different theories or doctrines, as long as the the political authorities of the time allow some tolerance for religious or philosophical.

* See how the multi-layered, multi-item classification was presented in the *Analysis of Being* or *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya* written by the Indian Buddhist scholar Vasubandhu in the 3rd-4th centuries AD.

- (1) Three ways to Nirvana, Space and two annihilations
- (2) Two kinds of color and form
- (3) Twenty kinds of the gate to false knowledge
- (4) Eight kinds of sound
- (5) Six kinds of taste, four kinds of odor, eleven kinds of feel
- (6) Four elements: earth, water, fire and wind

* In Mahayana Buddhism, the major two schools, Mādhyamika and Vijñapti-mātra(tā), developed their own doctrines to compile different grand systems for the expositions of world events, including those of Yogācāra, Sautrantika, Svacittā and Prasāṅgika. Such multi-item, multi-division dispositions are the most typical and fundamental methods for constructing the schemes of religious or philosophical teachings. The more they are accumulated through history, the more their individual materials of “architecture” become enriched. When philosophy is aligned with any power or authority in order to satisfy its requirements, the doctrines of religion are required to build themselves as a grandiose architectural system.

* Even the philosophy of India, as it developed into the ultimate form of free thinking or reasoning, would give rise to such opposing views unique to philosophical thought as monism vs. pluralism, materialism vs. idealism, sensationalism vs. substantialism and universalism vs. relativism. Such arguments about the fundamental principles of the world, which are primarily characteristic of philosophy, certainly serve to advance the philosophical way of thinking. Notwithstanding, in Indian philosophy, it is difficult to say that such oppositions made those thinkers seriously contemplate the “riddle of knowledge” to consciously cultivate the argument about the universality of knowledge. The point to be made here is that the doctrinal legitimacy of each school of Indian philosophy has been asserted against other schools by demonstrating the complexity and precision of its multi-unit classification and the splendor and magnificence of its architecture.

4 Nagarjuna

* It was Nagarjuna, founder of the Mādhyamika school, who first presented the important epistemological argument against the aggravating conflict between different schools.

As suggested by Eliade, however, Nagarjuna's philosophy was strongly motivated by his intention to revive the Buddha's teachings for religious salvation and therefore failed to inspire Indian philosophers to pursue epistemological questions at all. This is evident in the development of the Buddhist philosophy of the Mādhyamika school. The dispute between this school and the Yogacara philosophers did not lead to any further epistemological pursuit. Nagarjuna himself used the negative quality of the method of reduction-to-absurdity to criticize the overly meticulous and proliferating system of Theravada philosophy, thus introducing the way of questioning the basis of validity of arguments into Indian philosophy. However, it was not Nagarjuna's main intention to unfold the logic of relativism: his thought can be seen as an autonomous ontology with which he pursued the revival of Buddha's original ideal. In any event, his thought of “emptiness” initiated the assertion of anti-substantialism in Indian philosophy on the one hand, and contributed to the development of the systematic doctrine of Yogacara's unconscious-oriented worldview on the other. Neither of them in any authentic way raised philosophical questions about the validity and foundation of knowledge itself, i.e., the “question of knowledge” and the “question of language.”

* Indian philosophy has two main streams, Upanishad and Buddhism. Looking across these two great traditions, we find in them a conspicuous tendency to philosophical thinking with concepts and principles which could have been replaced by religious allegorical, narrative account of world events. Nevertheless, the predominance of religious point of view is here undeniable. In Indian philosophy, the religious account of world events was overwhelmingly dominant, both in terms of motivation and doctrine, and its central themes were the way to secure salvation and nirvana (liberation from the wheel of life), about which the idea of the sacred showed its various aspects. Greek philosophy, on the other hand, freed itself from religious worldviews from the very beginning when it attempted to give an account of world and human events. Of course, this does not immediately imply the excellence of Western thought in terms of quality and rationality. However, the overview of the history of Western and Eastern philosophy seems to make us certain that the difference in the basic and initial conditions of Greek philosophy from its Oriental counterpart allowed it to bring forth the unique and distinguished quality of philosophical pursuit.