

HONEST TO THEOS

THEISM IS A SURMOUNTABLE PARADIGM

José María VIGIL

Excerpt, offprint of «Después de Dios»,
«Nuevo Tiempo Axial» series, vol. 3
Koinonia Services 2021



Couldn't be a man... Must to be a god!

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NTA-3
NUEVO TIEMPO AXIAL



DESPUÉS DE DIOS. OTRO MODELO ES POSIBLE.

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Publicado el 30 de marzo de 2021

Editores: José María VIGIL y Santiago VILLAMAYOR

Revisión: Santiago VILLAMAYOR

Diagramación y cubierta: José María VIGIL

Colección «Nuevo Tiempo axial», nº 3, tiempoaxial.org

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Red y Catálogo Internacional de bibliomanager.com

(disponible en: México, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, Argentina, Brasil, Uruguay y España)

Editorial Abyayala, Quito, Ecuador editorial@abyayala.org

SBD Librería Internacional, Perú www.sbs.com.pe/ +511 418 9565

Ozonum Mercado Libre Argentina libros.mercadolibre.com.ar

Mujeres Tabor, California, EEUU mujerestabor@gmail.com

ISBN para esta edición digital: 978-9962-13-679-8

ISBN para la edición impresa: 978-9962-13-681-1

Disponible en formato digital, libre y gratuitamente, a través de:

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Imágenes de dominio público, tomadas de la red. Imagen de cubierta de Ross, *The Newyorker Magazine*, 1989.

Un libro, hermano de éste, aparece simultáneamente en italiano: *Oltre Dio*, en mayo de 2021 por Gabrielli Editori: www.gabriellieditori.it (cfr. p.91).

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Introducción

We want to take the subject of God from its origins, origins that are not so long, nor eternal, as traditional philosophy would lead us to think spontaneously. *Hominids*¹, the genus of which we are a part, have been on this planet for only about 6 million years, and *theos*, god, has been with us, with our species² *sapiens*, for only 6000 years. Religions, only for 4500³. We have lived much longer without god than with god, without religions than with them.

As far as we seem to know today, it is this species of ours that has been left with the flag of evolution of a process of 13,730 My (millions of years), in that "pale blue dot"⁴ or speck of dust that is this planet, in the middle of a cosmic immensity that we have only just opened our eyes to contemplate with our current instruments. We already know that in our solar

¹ This name is now disputed... but we refer in any case to the genus homo.

² With other human species... at present we do not know.

³ This is the antiquity attributed to Hinduism, which is considered the oldest.

⁴ Expression of Carl Sagan.

system there are no beings with intelligent life⁵, but today we believe we are on the verge of discovering beyond it, any day, exo-planets with the presence of life, which, probably, could also be intelligent life.

In this small description of the scenario from which we want to start, it is already clear that we have a very different story from the one contemplated by the eight thousand generations of our species that have preceded us. Without being too pretentious, we could say that they have been totally oblivious to the reality of what they really were. In what for thousands of years has been transmitted from one to another, they gave an account of themselves with a mythological, imaginative explanation, with a really striking fantasy; however, it was with this mythological type of imaginative explanations that our elders, our ancestors, admirably fed themselves inspirationally. To this type of global explanation we can apply the Italian saying: *se non è vero, è ben trovato*. They have been "useful fictions", and very useful, that have managed to make us bio-evolutionarily viable.

In fact, it is only a very short time since our species has had the capacity to objectively record reality through writing (a little less than five thousand years), and it is much less time since this human being that we are has undertaken with his own means a journey backwards, of re-reflection, of return on his own historical steps, to uncover and try to know that past that we were but did not remember... How did we appear? Where did we come from? When, how... or even why? Of those origins, of all that we were and that we lived, obviously, we have inherited nothing documented. Only imaginations, intuitions, suppositions... tricks of our brain, not only to dis-

⁵ We refer to an intelligence such as that of humans, without entering into its conceptualization, knowing that in a profound sense the whole phenomenon of Life is tendentially intelligent, and that there is no break of continuity between our intelligence and that of other beings, although we have called them "inferior".

cover the truth, but also to make it possible for us to survive⁶; our elaborations show a tremendous ignorance, and an admirable wisdom and creativity.

It has only been in recent generations (since the scientific revolution of the 16th century, the spirit of modernity, the Enlightenment of the 18th century...), that we have undertaken an unprecedented "return journey", a revolutionary "reflexion"⁷ towards that past lived but not remembered; at this point in time we have already archaeologically uncovered many aspects (very important, serious, essential, decisive) that we could not even imagine in our pre-historical and pre-scientific history. Here, undoubtedly, it is reality that has surpassed our mythological imagination. In a certain sense, as is popularly said, we did not know where we were standing.

Today we already know⁸ that we have not come to the planet from outside, but from within, and that we have not come from above, but from below. Nor did we "come into this world," nor were we "put into it," as we have been telling ourselves for millennia; but we have sprung up in it, and from it. That we have not appeared on the branch of a tree, nor in the hair of a muse, nor have we been "created by God" in the sense that we have been thinking in many religious traditions, as created directly by Someone different from the world, and from outside of it...; but that we come from the same and unique trunk of Life, which has developed on this privileged planet, well located in the zone of habitability in

⁶ Eduard PUNSET, in Science for all: "The brain does not seek the truth, but to survive": <https://tinyurl.com/yb8c2ls6>

⁷ Not in the plain sense of cognitive and intellectual activity, but in a specular sense, of mirror, of looking at our reflected image, of looking at our past, where we come from, who we are, and of going back as far as possible with knowledge to the origins, to the concrete truth, beyond assumptions, intuitions or imaginations: a cognitively reflective specular reflection, in both senses.

⁸ And we say we "know", scientifically.

relation to the distance to its star. And that we are part of the unique family of Life of this planet, all descended from the first cell, Aries, with all its members united, without break of continuity, by the threads, the *filum* of the same and unique Life⁹. We are primates, we are not simply "descended" from them; we are evolved great apes. A branch that, by the conjunction of complex climatic and genetic factors, underwent an evolution along the lines of greater encephalization and consciential development. A new stage of the phenomenon of Life on this planet "emerged" in it; with the hominids came a set of new potentialities: the liberation of the hands, cranial development, encephalization, the capacity for thought, language, reflection....

We are the first generation to know all this. Two hundred thousand years - its entire existence - it has taken our species to reach this self-knowledge, with all the current limitations, still. A new account, a new perspective, which disables the usefulness and effectiveness of the previous "explanations" - even if it disables their wisdom. Starting from this new scenario, it would no longer be possible to elaborate those magnificent and ingenious mythical elaborations of the past. They no longer fit in the new cognitive coordinates in which we are reinstalled due to the expansion of knowledge itself: we can no longer agree with many of those elaborations that we have built ourselves. We find them strange, unacceptable. We recover them and study them with immense affection, but as when an older adult meets again with his own writings of adolescence or childhood: an abyss stands between the two ways of looking, even if they are the same person. But let's go back to those beginnings.

⁹ Unique, yet enormously biodiverse at the same time.

Intelligence, reflection, sense

We do not know how it was, but the human being developed what we call "intelligence", in a new modality and degree, different from what had been reached until then in other primates. It is a complicated set of multimodal capacities and sensibilities, which includes feeling, perception, intuition, the sense of beauty, emotionality, love, dignity, spiritual fruition of dimensions and values almost beyond comprehension, such as infinite desires, mobilizing dreams, ineffable, ecstatic, mystical experiences, even "modified states of consciousness"... A whole multidimensional "noosphere", complex, impossible to delimit and even less to vivisection, to reduce to all its components and dimensions... We are not specialists nor do we pretend to give a sufficient explanation on the subject; we are simply pointing it out, making it clear.

We must not forget the elementary fact that, at this level of noosphere, the human genus -the successive set of its species-, we have started from zero, from the pure primate, from its animal intelligence, and from its basal ignorance. We have not come with pre-installed software, because we have not even "come" from anywhere, from any factory, nor have we been put on this path by any of the innumerable mythological gods that have created human beings in the most curious and unimaginable ways. We have not "been put", even. There was no specific moment of appearance, much less of creation, as to appear there already "made": "there are the first human beings". We were primates, and we are still primates, which have emerged in a new "emergence" or phase of the Life of this Earth, characterized by that global concept of "intelligence", a multiple concept such as there are few.

Ever since it has emerged, this primate has felt an irresistible need to comprehend, to embrace, to understand reality. Intelligence: *intus-légere*, to read inside, to grasp the interior, to see beyond what is seen on the outside, to reach beyond

the surface of appearances, to discover the causes that lie behind and within. And he had to do it from the beginning, starting from scratch, let's insist. We have started with our fingernails: without tools, neither physical nor mental. We had to make them for ourselves, even from the stones; no, we were not born in an earthly paradise. And since then we have not ceased to think, to rethink, to invent, to rework, to reinvent, to improve, to grow on the main "axis of accumulation" of our species, intelligence and knowledge.

Being intelligent, this primate has needed, as much as air to breathe and water to avoid dehydration, "explanation" and "sense". This would be a very rudimentary classification, but sufficiently expressive, to group two great types of fundamental needs. The "explanation" seeks the reason, the causes, the entity, the practical knowledge, dominating reality, that which I have to know in order to be able to do something that modifies my environment. It is the unfathomable field of knowledge, of knowing, of the sciences, even of philosophy -spoken in current terms, anachronistic for that time-. In any case, the human being needs an explanation, and if it does not exist or cannot be found, he creates or invents it, even with magic, beliefs or myths.

For its part, the need for "meaning" wants to start from the correct explanations, but in reality it does not need them, nor do they necessarily satisfy it: meaning is nourished by "reasons of the heart", inexplicable, unprovable, unreasonable in this sense. It is the need to find meaning in our existence, to have a why, a what for, not to feel empty or forgotten, to feel that the Universe is welcoming, not hostile; to feel a love and a passion that drives us to live, and to live in fullness of meaning and joy; that makes us not feel alone, that makes us feel that our life has meaning, is valuable, full, significant. It seems that from the very first moments, the human being has never been able to live "on bread alone"... but on bread "and

beauty", in the broadest sense imaginable. And it is because the new level of consciousness that has emerged in this primate, with the appearance of its "self-consciousness", has these new and insatiable demands. Now, without "meaning", this new primate cannot subsist; it has to find it, and -also here- if it does not find it, it invents it, imagines it, thinks it can guess it, or finds it "revealed"... and if not, it despairs and takes its own life: without meaning, life becomes literally impossible, unbearable. It needs meaning to live... and a meaning that is so strong... that it even serves to die for it; it is no longer an animal that simply tries to survive, but to survive on that more demanding plane which is that of meaning and inner emotion. These are the consequences of being an animal with self-consciousness, unique at this level of evolution.

The primates, our ancestors, always had their "conscience", like the developed animals, but not "self-consciousness". They lived without explanation or meaning, driven only to survive, in the immense competition of the struggle for life, without "subjective" cognitive-affective and inte-ligent needs. With the emergence of self-consciousness there appears a whole new range of needs, feelings, infinite nostalgias, caverns of the heart... that anxiously claim to be satiated.... This self-consciousness finds a void of meaning, in which the primate always lived in peace, of which he was not even aware. With the new intelligence, this self-consciousness recalls, demands, realizes, becomes anxious, searches, sharpens its numerous senses.... Many anthropological theories have been guided by this vein to explain human "nature", the meaning, the basis, the necessity of the phenomenon of religiosity or religion¹⁰.

¹⁰ No one really knows what religion is, at least no one has yet succeeded in satisfying others with a convincing explanation. See: Robert CRAWFORD, *What is religion?*, Routledge, NY and London 2002, chap. 1.

Religiosity

The evolution of this primate seems to clearly show a change in the axis of evolutionary accumulation. It does not gain in strength to its ancestors, it is neither more robust nor more frightening because of its fangs¹¹, nor because of its claws, nor because of its snout, even in our species it becomes "the naked ape". Comparatively, it is born "unfinished", defenseless, totally incapable of survival. The calf, soon after birth, is able to stand up and raise its head to look for its mother's udder. We have to crawl for a year to be able to stand up. Human gestation has changed its axis and has privileged the brain, which, nevertheless, will be born without completing a sufficient gestation, and can and must be completed in its maturation with the help of language and culture. There are all those issues of the juvenization of the human species, of the cultural and linguistic component of *homo sapiens*. This curious form of apparently incomplete gestation makes *homo sapiens* a species characterized by its indeterminacy, by its lack of fixity for a concrete habitat, and by its flexibility to be completed with culture in a thousand different ways, which creates a peculiar strategy of survival, based on compensating for its deficiencies.

Bio-anthropologists suggest that this is the origin of the striking human capacity for imagination, for creativity, "to see what is not there, what is not given. Its capacity to symbolize and see some things as other things (metaphor), to put order in disorder, to assume nonmeaning in order to conjure it up, transposing it into images, words, concepts: in short, its capa-

¹¹ Precisely our genus has decreased the size of the inherited fangs. Juan Luis ARSUAGA, Evolution of the size of teeth and brain in our ancestors: <https://tinyurl.com/yd8x3tdm>

city for interpretation, which was recognized by Heidegger and Gadamer as the 'way of being' of the human being"¹².

Juan Luis Arsuaga states that what characterizes human beings is that "they saw things that do not exist and believed realities based on myths that are not true, and attributed human qualities to animals. In some way they sacralized nature. Believing this delusion made us the way we are"¹³.

Reality resists: we know nothing about it, nor can it be explained. We need to explain it: to unfold its interiority, its causes, its procedures, its nature, in order to understand it, and thus understand ourselves, "to know where we stand" - an essential element of our own nature. The 'new' primate that we are, just emerging from the darkness of ignorance, naked of physical and mental tools, will spend a long period of its first existence laying the foundations, both for its survival and for the development of its comparative advantage. The experiences of human beings in the conquest of food, fire, the first stone tools (Paleolithic), as well as the conquest of language, thought and the first cultural beginnings remain in the mists of time.... But over time, our species has been successful: with such creative and imaginative faculties, based on effort and time, our species will end up dominating the world, explaining the apparently inexplicable, and even endangering the very viability of Life on the planet.

But we do not know well how the beginnings were. Let's see.

¹² I follow here especially closely Michael MARDER and Luis GARAGALZA, *Evolution, maladaptation and creative pathology*, in BERMEJO, *Pensar después de Darwin. Ciencia filosofía y teología en diálogo*, Comillas-Sal Terrae, 2014, p. 106-128; aquí: 119.

¹³ rtve.es/b/redes/semanal/prg251/entrevista.htm - *Ibíd.*

Recovering our spiritual journey

It seems that in the last 70,000 years of our existence as a species¹⁴ that we have archaeologically dated, we have exhibited a behavior very well accommodated and adapted to our planet (O'MURCHU 1997: 55). We have identified ourselves with it, we have considered it our home (*oikos*), we have accommodated ourselves to its natural rhythms, to those of the animals, to the permanent and mysterious cyclical evolution of the stars, unreachable and always messengers.... We discovered ourselves as part of this one total integral reality: the sky was only the continuation of the ground, the part of the earth that we could not touch, our roof, our shelter, and we have cultivated this earth (even before cultivating it) with veneration and reverence, overwhelmed by the mysteriousness with which it appeared to be clothed. In the beginning, no trait of a specific, differential, distinct, privileged, separate, "sacred", religious dimension emerged.... Nothing was designated as sacred, because everything was; the concept did not even exist; nothing was "religious", nor did that concept exist, which could only appear, by contrast, when something, much later, would come to be considered profane, not sacred.

For tens of thousands of years, we have lived as if in a "cosmic egg", or a mother's womb, a uterus, a holos, a united whole, mysterious and awe-inspiring, admirable and admired, that welcomed us as our home, felt as such, and that nourished us spiritually with the ecstatic contemplation it aroused in us: the holy and divine, holistic, omnipresent. Without dimensions or coordinates with which to mark its limits, which did not exist. [It is the ecstatic admiration of which Einstein would later speak].

¹⁴ Of between 200,000 and 300,00 years, according to the doubt introduced by the latest discoveries in North Africa already in this 21st century.

In that atmosphere of sacredness, in that sacred unified world in which we have taken our first evolutionary steps, this primate homo sapiens creates -or reinvents himself with the creation of- language, that dimension that enables him a new world of projection of himself beyond the limited physical reality. With language he recreates reality, packages it in words, re-expresses it in a thousand forms, communicates it, begins to handle it intellectually, and, as the book of nature remains closed to him and does not freely communicate any of its secrets or its meaning, the human being, above all by means of fiction, of the story, creates the meaning he cannot find, elaborates and reworks it, enriches it, deepens it, shares it, and celebrates it. The natural world is then coated with meanings, which evoke symbols, thoughts, feelings, belonging, identity, devotion, hope for a good future, ideas, names, symbols, concepts, attributions, ethical values, aesthetic values, conveyed by the creations of language. It is a cultural software that is collaborating to forge human evolution; it is that cultural dimension that we were saying that contributes to shape and mature that human brain that is given birth without finishing configuring...

Under the psychic influence of that noosphere, always stand out the best, those who have more interpretative capacity, more penetrating vision, more sense of deep intuition... who can be the seer, the shaman, the poet... who goes ahead, who expresses what others intuit, and who in that sense guides as leader and animator, the cultivation of the veneration of that sacred Reality that already surrounds the human being as an incipient mental, affective, unconscious, group subconscious noosphere (Jung, archetypes...).

Archaeology and cultural anthropology, in a multidisciplinary effort, today seem to agree that during all this first stage of the Paleolithic, the beginning of the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic itself (the Copper Age), we have been able to

evolve, and to do so apparently successfully, creating a soul for the collective, a breathable noosphere for human beings, who have gratefully felt at home, at home, in the womb of a global Reality perceived as maternal and fecund, benevolent and welcoming even in our return journey to the bosom of the earth. These have been millenary decades, neither romantic nor ideal; they have been almost geological epochs of handicap, of poverty or rather of misery, of living permanently harassed in a hostile environment, of illnesses and premature death, of profound ignorance. That incipient sense of sacredness that human beings have exhibited, so evident to today's researchers, cannot hide the limitations, misery and misfortunes of those primitive times. Precisely that striking sense of sacredness of our ancestors can be considered as a resource of the integral biological evolution, to make this small, defenseless creature, hostile by the environment, survive. In spite of their miseries, we can consider them as luminous, evolutionarily fruitful millennia, thanks to that omnipresent global sacredness that, inexplicably, the almost crawling human being has been able to intuit and experience.

From very early on,¹⁵ or from the beginning, we have treated Reality with reverence, with love, with transcendent affection, seeing in it more than what is physically seen. We have seen it as alive, admirable, fruitful, mysterious, inexplicable, sacred, transcendent, incomprehensible... full of Force, of capacity for regeneration and of Mystery, and we have felt moved with reverence and even adoration. But not as an added or different, "religious" attitude: but as an integral human attitude; and not as before a special and separate reality, but as before the total Reality that surrounds us, of which we felt we were participants.

¹⁵ We cannot say "from the beginning", because we do not know what the beginning was.

This whole noosphere of sacredness - or, if you will, of "religiosity" ¹⁶ - did not come from outside, nor did it fall from above. It was not given to human beings, nor was it found miraculously. It has been elaborated by humans, with their creativity, with their unique way of being, inspired by their own deep intuition, beyond the conscious and the unconscious, perhaps from the deep level of the mysterious meta-reality that perhaps moves within, from the depths, the cosmic Reality of which we only see the surface of a minimal part.

Important note: up to this evolutionary moment we are trying to evoke, that is, up to 6,000/5,000 years ago, *theos* has not appeared among us, with that or any other name ¹⁷. Neither god, nor goddess. Neither the word nor the concept exists. Nor is it missing.

Concepts or ideas to handle reality with language have appeared at this point (they do have been elaborated). The mysterious life of the human being, for example, whose principle has been first identified with blood, has led later to think that it is controlled by a "soul", an undefined but more subtle entity, which would keep the human body alive; human beings have a human soul.... Other principles also appear, also subtle and elusive, such as gnomes, goblins, daimons, demiurges, elves, demons, fairies... between mysterious and magical, and an endless series of mysterious realities whose packaging in "words" we often use to pretend to ourselves that we explain what we do not know.

It is therefore very important to realize that, as far as we think we know today, in 97% of its evolutionary development

¹⁶ Not, of course, of religions, which in this period were still thousands of years away from appearing among us.

¹⁷ I am not imitating Yuri Gagarin in space, when he said that he had not "seen" God there.... I am referring to a very concrete and verifiable fact: that today science thinks it knows that, for this time we are talking about, homo sapiens has not yet elaborated such an idea.

time¹⁸ this *homo sapiens* has not encountered Something/Someone in the manner of what it will later call god, and *theos*, nor has it felt its need to live a well-realized life on this planet, wisely attuned to nature, and filled with a sense of sacredness and deep religiosity [we do not say "religion"]. Actually, *theos* turns out to be a newcomer, in geological terms.

The "first" axial time

Towards the end of the Chalcolithic (Copper Age), human evolution undergoes a profound transformation, a true "axial time", probably much deeper than the one to which Karl Jaspers¹⁹ drew attention in the middle of the last 20th century. No one has a full description of such a transformation, nor does he know the ultimate causes, but perhaps only some "antepenultimate" ones. Was it the effect of the agrarian revolution? Was it a kind of natural progress in cognitive development and in the capacity of abstraction? Was it the Kurgan invasions, which seem to have brought from the sub-Siberian steppes an archaic dualistic vision? Many authors point to the Kurgan invasions as the cause of this transformation, but they would be a penultimate or antepenultimate cause: what was it that led the Kurgan peoples to such a cultural evolution in this Euro-Asian area, which made them radiate it over a long period of about 2000 years? Neither the time nor the area is well studied; the area of Old Europe over which the Kurgans mainly projected themselves is well studied (GIMBUTAS

¹⁸ Even if we generously assume 300,000 years of existence for our species, according to the latest news yet to be confirmed, 6,000 years means only 2% of the evolutionary human time already covered.

¹⁹ *Von Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, 1949. Spanish translation: *Origen y meta de la Historia*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid 1980. And it seems that 70 years before Jaspers, Glennie had already presented it, although his contribution was not taken into account, leaving Jaspers' as if it were the first and only one. Eugene HALTON, *From the Axial Age to the Moral Revolution. John-Stuart Glennie, Karl Jaspers and a new understanding of the idea*. Palgrave Macmillan, NY 2014.

1979). However, all this knowledge is still under construction, and not without controversy.

The agrarian revolution is considered by many scholars as the true cause; this revolution would be, for many, the most crucial moment that our species has gone through. We ceased to be hunter-gatherers, nomads, and began to settle and live together in small societies to work the land, which meant that we had to reinvent ourselves: we had to rethink our relationship with nature (now of conquest and domination), our relationship of coexistence (now with rules, with rights, family rights, property, belonging, facing the tensions of the division of labor and the conflicts of economic and social inequality...). There are many who say that this transformation was carried out with the support of a new force that was then elaborated and socially articulated: what would later become the religious tradition of identity of each tribe, the "religions" of each people, as an element of unification and amalgamation and control of society itself.

The most recent DNA studies confirm the presence of the genetic heritage of the peoples "of the steppes" (from the north of the Black Sea, southern Russia today), the Yamna (or Yamnaya) culture, also called the Kurgans, which expanded in three great waves well differentiated in time, in all directions, causing great migratory movements. They are peoples who seek lands to conquer for their cattle, and who come with a very elaborated mystique, with a warrior god, conqueror, protector of his people against the other peoples, whom he feels called to subdue. A "god on horseback", as they go, on the horse that they have just domesticated and that has changed their world; a spiritual god, of a second floor; a masculine god, spiritual antipode of Mother Earth; a god that has chosen that people, and has destined them to dominate their neighbors, to conquer violently the lands they need, killing with blood and fire whoever opposes them; a "tribal" god that has

made a choice for his tribe, that always protects it, and even intervenes in its favor in war and violent conquest²⁰.

It was around this time that the myths of the "separation of heaven and earth" emerged throughout the religious-cultural "continuum" that constituted Eastern Europe and the Near East. A new mental configuration emerges, a new conception of reality, a new profound paradigm that spreads and settles in the mentality of these peoples. It is a change of paradigm (of the fundamental "proto-paradigm", in fact), which marks a radical difference, a before and an after: an "axis time", which we should call "the axial time of the end of the Chalcolithic".

The emblematic mythological image of change is that of the myths of "separation of heaven and earth". They appear in Sumer and Egypt. Described here very briefly²¹, only schematically, the fundamental transformations involved would be these:

- The separation of heaven and earth entails the dualization of the world. From now on there are two realities, like "two floors", two levels, very different. (The integral unity and sacred totality of the "cosmic egg", of the "sacred maternal womb", of the holos or united whole in which humanity had hitherto dwelt, for tens of thousands of years, is over). And

²⁰ Karem ARMSTRONG, speaking of the god who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, describes him as follows: "He is a fierce, partial, murderous God: a warrior God whom they will call Yahweh Sebaoth, God of hosts. He is passionately partisan; he has no compassion for anyone but his own favorites; he is simply a tribal divinity." This way of imagining God was not a revelation, nor was it an Israelite invention. Cf. ARMSTRON, Karen, *A History of God*. The 4000 year quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Spanish editoron, Paidós Internacional Barcelona 1995, 521 pp, here 44. By the way, as this book concentrates on the last 4000 years, it stays inside the theistic box, renouncing the essential light shed by the previous 2000 years, which saw the origin, the appearance of theos.

²¹ I refer to the study *Humans, Nature God*, where I explain these changes in more detail, at josemariavigil.academia.edu.

this separation was in fact introduced with the appearance of the archaic concept of theos, the mighty Lord of the heavenly world. Whenever in our spirituality we are somehow referring to a supernatural second floor, we are showing our theistic mental structure coming from this times- even if we were atheists.

- These two floors or levels are not a symmetrical partition, but radically unequal. They are two opposing parts of nature; truly: two worlds, contiguous, but infinitely distant in their nature, earth and heaven. Two axiologically opposed worlds. Whenever we express ourselves in favor of the unattainable purity or 'holiness' of things above, or of the innate evil of the realities below, or of the purification that would entail turning away from this world of nature, we are being theistic.

- They are two worlds, with a profound hierarchical difference. The upper floor is not only superior in position, but in value and in its own being, with an abysmal difference, both axiologically and ontologically. Only the divine being IS; the other beings ARE not, but are graciously and mercifully maintained in being by the Supreme Being. Without any "autonomy", they are absolutely "heteronomous"²²; they are even held in being unilaterally by the Supreme Being, subject to his arcane and unpredictable design. In reality, it can be said that being, Being, what is said to BE, only the Supreme Being IS. The rest IS not, but only hangs on the Supreme Being. Which, strictly speaking, we should not call dualism, but "monistic dualism", an apparent dualism, which at bottom is monopolar, a monism of Being.

- The lower floor is the one in which we humans have moved since the dawn of our times, but which now - as if we

²² This dimension of "heteronomy" will be one of the fundamental axes of the rebellion of Modernity, in the XVII-XVIII centuries. It is also the guiding thread of Roger LENAERS' book, *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream or the End of a Medieval Catholic Church*, Spanish version *Otro cristianismo es posible*, col. Tiempo Axial nº 10, Abyayala, Quito 2008, 244 pp

were removing a blindfold from our eyes - we come to see as a material world, made of "matter" (the gangue of reality), inferior in every sense of the word, "pro-fane" (for the first time this category appears, and it appears because simultaneously the selectively located sacred also appears for the first time; before, everything was sacred, so that there was nothing in which to locate sacredness, to delimit it, to hold it exclusively). Whenever to experience the sacred we need to seclude ourselves in a constructed sacred enclosure, not a natural one; whenever nature seems to us neutral, profane, religiously irrelevant... we continue to be indebted to that desacralization and profanization that theism carried out on cosmic reality, in order to concentrate all sacredness in the Supreme Entity of the supernatural world parallel to our own.

- The second floor, newly appeared, emerges as the abode of a main tenant, the supreme Entity, theos, which is - and for the first time this category appears now - "spiritual", that is, non-material, in-material, "in-visible", pure spirit, non-natural, super-natural, and moreover supremely intelligent. In the myths of separation of heaven and earth there immediately appears that superior, spiritual, supremely intelligent, all-powerful Being, who creates everything with his simple thought, calls it into existence by his creative word, and also with the immediate swiftness of his will heals, punishes, intervenes in this world. Whenever, in our spirituality, especially in our prayer, we are thinking of favor, urgent help, preventive protection, the higher helping hand, or the need to offer sacrifices and present offerings and prayers, we are in the theistic scheme.

- In this new cosmic, dualized reality, the human being will not end up being completely unhappy. Since he is the one who is elaborating this new split worldview, he will end up by self-attributing to himself a participation in the second level. It is true that he is in this world of matter and flesh, profane and sinful, but the human being does not want to recognize

himself simply as nature: he participates in some way in the nature of *theos*.... He himself is dualized: half natural, half supernatural; half earthly material, half divine spiritual. He will end up thinking that he is not truly earthly, but essentially supernatural. He is his "soul" (in the image and likeness of God), and therefore he is a citizen of heaven, a stranger in this world, in a state of pilgrimage, who should not be attached to this world, but always look to the divine heavenly homeland, to the things above.... He will end up thinking that the most essential thing in himself is not his naturalness, but his supernaturalness: as a phrase attributed to Teilhard de Chardin says: "We are not material beings living a spiritual experience, but spiritual beings living a material experience"²³.

- This change of status, of position within the cosmological paradigm (below the profane material natural world; above the supernatural spiritual Theos, supremely intelligent and pure... and in the middle a human being belonging to the supernatural sphere but mysteriously engendered in the profane natural world), will bring a very serious consequence: from the appearance of the new tenant in this second floor just built above us in the mental cosmic scheme, the human being will no longer understand himself as part of nature, as he has felt until now while he has lived in the cosmic paleolithic egg, in that nature all divine and sacred of which he was part, without any second floor. Now it ceases to feel natural: it is no longer Nature, but above nature. It is true that he 'carries' a material-carnal body, but his true self is a spiritual soul, and it is this soul that he will truly take care of. The human being no longer feels himself to be a natural being, he no longer sees Nature as his Motherland, as the maternal womb that engendered him, but as a profane, material, carnal, tempting cosmos... that he despises (*contemptus mundi*), from which it would be better

²³ See: eatwot.academia.edu/JoséMaríaVIGIL/Modernidad-sin-2-pisos

to be far away, to flee if possible (*fuga mundi*). We have just cut the roots that bind us to nature²⁴.

- And more: because he now participates in the supernatural character of God, by his spiritual soul, the human being not only does not feel part of nature, but separate from it, above it, and master of it. "Have dominion over the earth," the Bible later says that God said to them. Theism places nature at the service of the human being. The latter will come to consider it as a feminine nature that must be dominated and violated in order to extract its fruits and secrets (Francis Bacon). Thus, from that circular Reality of the cosmic egg or mother's womb of pre-theistic times, theism reconfigures Reality to make it now "triangular" (a new anthropo-theo-cosmic paradigm²⁵): *Theos* above, and nature below on one side, and at the other vertex, opposite nature, the human being, somewhat elevated towards *Theos*. The splitting of the cosmos has been consummated, the defenestration of nature from its sacred condition, the separation of the human being from nature, and his enthronement as master of nature. This is the great drama of the anti-ecological splitting of the human worldview, brought about by the appearance of *theos*. It is also probably the reason for the anti-ecological orientation of civilizations inspired by theistic - and monotheistic, *a fortiori* - religions and spiritualities.

- The *theos* that emerges in the second story is, for the first time in our spiritual history, masculine. The feminine sacred Maternity of Reality disappeared. The "masculine"

²⁴ "The world is not a problem that is out there, to be solved; it is a living being, to which we belong. The world is part of our being, and we are part of its suffering integrality. Until we go to the root of our image of separation, there can be no healing. And the deepest part of our separation from Nature lies in forgetting its sacred identity, which is also our own sacred nature" (VAUGHAN-LEE 2017: 25-26).

²⁵ VIGIL, *Naturaleza, Humanos, Dios*, *ibid*.

values of strength, power, imposition, supposed rationality, domination of nature (associated with the feminine) are the main values of the newly emerged *Theos*. The male comes to be considered privileged as "image and likeness of God", worthy to represent him, to manage and administer sacred things, while the woman is considered incapable of it, as impure, less intelligent, fickle and unpredictable as nature and flesh.... Whenever our spiritual heart feels that the masculine is closer to the sacred, and the woman is not so worthy, we still drag the consequences of that overturning of the gender paradigm shift that occurred precisely with the advent of the theos model, at the end of the Chalcolithic.

- *Theos* is also Lord and Almighty. Kyrios will be called later. The main requirement is to maintain his honor and glory in maximum (the motto *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, expresses perfectly the essence of the relationship of the human being with him). *Theos* asks for adoration, prostration, kneeling position... Religions have put the human being on his knees: total submission is the religious essence. This conception, of a *theos* that competes with humanity on principle, is unacceptable for modernity, conscious of the rights and dignity of the human being. Whenever we insist on submission, on blind faith before the dogmas decided by the religious institution self-appointed as representative of *theos*, whenever we make of religiosity submission, we drag theistic genes.

- Whenever in our spiritual intimacy we are thinking of, addressing ourselves to, supposing a Supreme Thou, an Alter, a supreme Other... whenever there is this "otherness" between me, or us, and that Supreme Alter, we are in the theistic scheme. We only overcome theism when we discover and make our own the conviction that sacredness and divinity are not outside, are not alter, are not expatriated from this world in an upper floor, but in this same and only floor, Reality, that is, when there is no supreme sacred You. Therefore, when in the sacred there is no otherness for us or for the world, when

sacredness embraces us and permeates us in such a way that Everything is sacred, all of we are sacred. When sacredness is so intimate and profound in Reality that I cannot consider it in otherness, not even in the second person, but in identity, in identification, when I can only say: You are This²⁶ and me too. The otherness of sacredness is an essential feature of *theos*.

It is important to realize the profound change of coordinates, the change of paradigm, with which humanity transforms, in the course of a relatively short time, its vision of reality, with the irruption of the *theos* model. It goes without saying, even in passing, that all this is a simplification, because we are schematizing the elaboration of an euristic figure, a model, which is still an abstraction... In reality everything is much more complex, because it coexists with many other dimensions: the previous animism, which persists and has nothing to do with *theos*; the influence and penetration of the *oriental religions*, so paradigmatically different; the singular current of the *religions of the Mysteries*, which place their accent less on *theos* and more on the spiritual experience; the irresistible attraction of *magic*, *manticism*, *superstitions*, etc.

- Since that transformation, the coordinates have changed: humanity no longer lives in a cosmic egg, in an undivided and sacred whole (*holos*), but on two levels. The world has been dualized and split.

- Matter, profanity, the feminine, remain on the lower level, in the underworld, as the corner to which they are now relegated. The contempt of matter, of the flesh and of the feminine, the flight from the world, the obsession for a post-earthly heavenly salvation, have full entry and citizenship in the new worldview.

- And the spirit, the spiritual, the supernatural, the unearthly and unnatural, which is at the same time the most

²⁶ In the manner of Nisagardatta: "I am that," *I'm that*, Acorn Press, North Carolina 1973.

intelligent, and the source of all power, migrate to their own home, to the world above, the empyrean heaven where God, masculine by the way, reigns. Spiritualism, patriarchalism, purity, flight from the world, from matter, from the flesh... and the undervaluation and submission of women are logical consequences that spring from the entrails of the new worldview.

This dualism invaded everything: not only cosmology (heaven and earth), but ontology (Being a se, and being merely by granted participation, heteronomous and contingent...), anthropology (a merely material and carnal body, and a spiritual soul seat of intelligence), and the soteriological global vision of reality (this natural, sinful and perishable earthly world, and heaven, the other spiritual, divine world, the definitive homeland towards which we make our pilgrimage, protecting us from this earthly and treacherous world from which we strive to flee).

This is the new cosmovisional framework of the human being at the end of this perhaps "first axial time" that humanity has lived through, which, it seems to us, is much more radical than the one Karl Jaspers highlighted which will take place several millennia later. This last one, is radically different from the one that for tens of millennia we patiently nurtured and elaborated in that "noosphere" of ours, as we are now calling it *avant la lettre*.

And attention, if there is a central piece in this cosmovisional transformation, it is that of God, the thundering Jupiter of the second floor. God functions there as the absolute reference that sustains and holds the whole building, as the keystone that holds the vault. All this architecture of perception and thought postulates the presence of a supreme tenant that inhabits it and gives it meaning. And vice versa: if a supremely intelligent, powerful and unique Spirit is recognized, it is impossible not to accommodate our head to that new dua-

listic and monistic paradigmatic architecture that it implies, to which we have just referred.

This is why the question of god - *theos* will later be called by the Greeks, who inherited the concept - is not "a" local, concrete, delimited question... however important it may be, but "the" question, the keystone that holds the vault, and the center that, if activated, necessarily relocates everything else with its magnetism, placing it at its service. Theism is not "a" theo-logical question... it is the central question. Because *theos* is equivalent to center. Theism or non-theism is equivalent to Reality considered centered, or without center, which is a capital disjunctive.

"God is the central metaphor of the worldview in the West" (McFAGUE 1987: 77). And the famous words of Martin Buber: "The word 'God' is the most loaded of all human words"²⁷.

From this historical moment (unfortunately rather pre-historical), a stage in the history of mankind opens up, characterized by an endless adventure "around and around with God "²⁸.

Post-calcolithic

Once the threshold of this radical transformation has been crossed, the demands and needs of the self-consciousness of human beings enter other coordinates on which to deploy and launch their creativity: an entirely new scenario (due to a radically new basic paradigm, or proto-paradigm). Now, "spiritual beings" -non-natural, supernatural, anti-mundane in principle- proliferate in the particular noosphere of each people, of each culture, while still developing within common

²⁷ M. BUBER, *Gottesfinsternis*, in *Werke*, I, München 1962, 509.

²⁸ ZAHRT, Heinz, *A vueltas con Dios. La teología protestante en el siglo XX*. Ed. Hechos y Dichos, Zaragoza 1972.

patterns in very broad geographic-cultural zones. Since the end of the 20th century, anthropologists, paleontologists and archaeologists have been saying that, for example, the whole of Europe and the Near East form a religious-cultural *continuum*, which means that their religious elaborations, their texts, their Scriptures, their rites, their divinities... belong to a common religious universe²⁹... Many divinities are present in most of the peoples, with similar characteristics and even with the same names; many of them mix and "contaminate" each other, assuming and sharing the characteristics of neighboring divinities. It is a process that we know today with dated evidence³⁰.

The ebullition that occurs at this time in the human self-consciousness, its deep and indefinable nostalgias, its existential questions, its most sincere and unanswered searches... everything is expressed in its exuberant religious creations. Gods proliferate (DEL OLMO 2002) throughout this region that we have chosen as a case study. Already at the "dawn of history" -which has been said to have begun in Sumer-, in that Mesopotamia scenario where the first empires and civilizations begin to emerge and pass, we see thousands of gods and goddesses emerge, and we have recorded their names, their

²⁹ Other parallels can be traced in various fields, especially in religion. Current biblical research, especially since the decade of the [19]70s - after having considered the religion of Israel for centuries as fundamentally different from other religions because it is a divine revelation - tends to recognize practically unanimously that an in-depth study of this religion is not possible without paying attention to the cultural framework in which it is inserted, that is, to the sphere of the cultures of the Ancient Middle East in the broad sense, including Anatolia. In particular, the relatively late emergence of monotheism in ancient Israel, which would have developed gradually in a northwestern Semitic context and thanks to decisive impulses from the surrounding religions, is becoming increasingly evident. GARCÍA TRABAZO, José Virgilio, *Textos religiosos hititas. Mitos, plegarias y rituales*. Trotta, Madrid 2002, p. 46.

³⁰ *Ibíd.*, p. 35.

striking "personalities", the rites with which they were worshipped, the sacred texts of the sacrifices offered to them, and the "Scriptures" that those gods revealed to their peoples. We are the humanity that, at the height of our generation, enjoys the unimaginable privilege of having been able to retrace its steps, to look back at its past, which has been totally forgotten and unknown for thousands of years, and that today we are recovering and re-knowing quite clearly. We have discovered and recomposed a large set of (lost) languages of that time; we have unearthed tens of thousands of documents, clay tablets³¹ above all, entire libraries³², archives of royal palaces, state diplomatic archives³³, even alphabets³⁴ to make our task easier.... and we have studied them (and continue to do so), bringing to light our own past, recovering our own history, sometimes discovering that a rite or text that we thought was very "ours", of our most particular tradition, belongs to another family, has another origin, or perhaps has simply been inspired by another previous source, or simply copied and transferred. The religiosity of the peoples who preceded us -from whom we descend- is not only a whole *continuum* -as we have already said- but it is the same human religious *filum*, the same spiritual *noosphere*, where everything is in communication with almost everything, where everything meets, links, mutually inter-fuses, where everything reacts with everything and makes possible a greater effervescence of the greatest imaginable religious creativity.

³¹ Edward CHIERA, *They Wrote On Clay. The Babilonian tablets speak today*. University Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1966, original of 1938.

³² Del OLMO, Gregorio, *Les Bibliothèques de L'Antiquité, de la Chrétienté et du Judaïsme*, in «*Studia Monástica*» vol 49/2 (2007) 377-401.

³³ Tel El Amarna, in Egypt. MORAN, William, *The Amarna Letters*, Johns Hopkins University, 1992 (original: 1987, *Les Lettres de El'Amarna*, Cerf, Paris 1987), 441 pp.

³⁴ On Ugarit, for example, YON, Marguerite, *The City of UGARIT at Tell Ras Shamra*. Eisenbrauns 2006, cap. 3, p. 123ss.

Limitations and errors

We also know the limitations of this unbridled and enthusiastic religiosity. We know to some extent what euristic capacities those peoples had (and did not have), their incipient arts of reasoning, the rigor and/or lack of rigor of their conceptualizations and arguments, the fundamental role of creativity, the supremely narrative imaginative sense... of the religious "intuitions" of those peoples, our ancestors in religiosity, of whose intuitions and creations we see today vestiges in our religiosity (and even irreligiosity).

We know the unconscious epistemological mechanism that the human noosphere has to exercise its control over the social group that shares it, consisting in the attribution to God of our own creations. Already Hamurabi had himself represented in the upper part of the stele of his Code, in attitude of receiving it from the Divinity. Of Moses we are not told that he "wrote" the Ten Commandments, but that he miraculously received them on the two stone tablets, obviously sculpted by God himself. In all religions - that is, in all societies - we find the same procedure: it is the gods created by us who dictate to us the message that we put into their mouths. It is a socio-religious mechanism known in cultural anthropology: the attribution to god is the way (at that time) to seal, to coat with authority, to absolutize therefore, even the rules of conduct that we establish for our society. It is not a characteristic of some religion: it is a social mechanism of the religious universal world. And it is very logical and obvious, although until recently it has gone unnoticed.

Today, when we have already lost that innocence, naivety or religious credulity, thanks to which every so often the priests read us new "words of God", we cannot but read with understanding benevolence that authoritarian, absolute, indubitable, dogmatic and quasi-apodictic language of most of the religious Scriptures of the peoples. It is a limitation to which we cannot close our eyes today.

And we also know a whole reverse side of the history of religiosity. Along with the incredible heights and sublime peaks of religious intuition, we also know the immense presence of practices that today seem to us not only incomprehensible, but absurd and unacceptable: magical practices, magnetics, the easy credulity to recognize the presence of divine prodigies everywhere, divine oracles readily available to the public, healings on religious demand, divination, extispition³⁵, hepatoscopy, lecanomancy, astrology, revelatory interpretation of dreams³⁶.... And we know that the epistemological conditions of the human groups that are capable of performing with fervor these millenary mantic practices are the same as when they practice religious reflection, prayer to the divinity, their invocations and their moral observance....

That, all this, is there. It is not speculation. It is shown, evidenced and attested by archaeology, both physical and cognitive. We come from there, from all of it. Even if we ignore it, even if we continue to ignore it, even if we don't like to know it or look at it. But it is only by taking it into account and starting again and again from this basis that we will be able to reflect at the level of the demands of this moment in history. A reflection that speaks of "god" while ignoring all these perspectives, will no longer be listened to by those who feel they are members of today's knowledge society.

But Greece, and Israel...?

The West, let's say Western culture, has been walking under the Greco-Christian heritage for 25/20 centuries. And

³⁵ The extispition: examination of the viscera of sacrificed animals to "read" in them the revelation of the will of the gods, is a practice profusely practiced by the peoples of the region, not only at the popular level but with all official solemnity at the royal or state level.

³⁶ Mircea ELÍADE, *Historia de las creencias religiosas*, vol. 1, Paidós, México 1978, p. 120-121.

because Christianity carries in its bosom Judaism, therefore also the religious heritage of the West carries the heritage of Israel. We have all been trained in the idea that the world of thought began in fact with Greece, and that of true religiosity began in Israel. Christianity would be the soul of the West, and Greece and Israel would be its roots, the beginnings of the West. Even today, it is difficult to find among us books that do not start from this assumption: philosophy, the mature thought of humanity, would have begun with the Greek thinkers, with Greece, not before; and mature and true religiosity, would have begun with Israel, and not before or outside Israel. All the above, in one field and in another, would have been nothing but prolegomena, attempts, approaches, trials... nothing worth remembering once the full figures of Greece and Israel arrived.

We are talking about the second half of the first century B.C.E. By then, it was already several thousand years ago that the new "anthropo-theo-cosmic proto-paradigm"³⁷ began to spread from the end of the Chalcolithic, due to -we have said- the profound transformation produced by the agrarian revolution, and by the new religious cosmovision brought by the three waves of kurgan invasions³⁸. This new worldview was imposed by fire and horseback, spread widely, and became deeply implanted, to the point that, in fact, it totally eradicated the previous worldview. No trace was left of that previous holistic vision of Nature as a sacred maternal womb: nature - as we have said - was stripped of its sacred character; woman was degraded from the consideration and roles

³⁷ Cfr *Humanos, Naturaleza, Dios, 2.0. Renovar el paradigma central de nuestra cosmovisión*. Ibid.

³⁸ Among the Kurgans, it was specifically the Dorians who arrived in Greece, and the parallel Semitic invasions coming from Arabia reached Canaan, which specialists relate to the biblical world of southern Israel. The first wave would be from the years 4300-4200 BCE; the second around 3400-3200, and the third around 3000-2800 BCE. Cfr EISLER: 1991, 50-51.

she had previously enjoyed in that vanished holistic-matristic world; all minds and subjectivities turned their gaze upwards, towards heaven, a new, celestial earth, where the new tenant and center of Reality, God, dwells.

Well: Israel and Greece arise already in this post-Chalcolithic environment with a separation of heaven and earth fully installed, stabilized and ratified. The memory of the past of unified coexistence in the nourishing placenta of the cosmic egg of the Paleolithic era had been entirely lost, several millennia ago. There was no trace left in memory, so there was no single point on which to draw a comparison. What Israel and Greece breathed spiritually was the only thing at hand: the recent new post-calcolithic "anthropo-theocosmic proto-paradigm," which they believed to be the first, the original, the "everlasting," eternal, and unique.

Israel and Greece were born fully within this new dualistic proto-paradigm, split, and firmly centered on the God of Heaven, a god (a-natural, super-natural, in-material, masculine, supremely intelligent, creator by the word...) of the second floor. They had no other horizon. And, indeed, they gave no sign of doubt, of hesitation, of critical examination towards this proto-paradigm. It seemed obvious to them. They were not even aware of it as such - the obvious is not even mentioned, it is not possible to debate about it, it is often not even perceived. They were not able to take their heads out of that cognitive epistemological "box" in which they were born. On the contrary: Greece brought the idea of god to its peak: it elaborated the concept of theos; it did not create it, it came from ancient times, but it perfected it -even, in the so-called "Greek Enlightenment", it subjected it to merciless criticism-. And Israel, for its part, not only did not overcome the idea of god -it did not even glimpse the pre-Chalcolithic memory that was not within its reach- but polished and extralimited its theism until it became one of the most emblematic monotheisms in the whole history of religions.

The biblical scholar Tomas Römer, making use of the scientific findings of the so-called New Archaeology³⁹, with the interdisciplinary help of other sciences as widely as possible, has expressed himself forcefully in his book, entitled "The Invention of God". And he defends the audacity of such a title, explaining that, certainly, it was not some Bedouins, who, in an oasis, had gathered on some occasion to invent a god at their convenience, but that it was certainly in a long, very elaborate process, largely subconscious, historical and with the conditions of the moment, how they "built" the god of Israel, with an itinerary difficult to reconstruct entirely, but whose fundamental features we can already take for known and recognized today. And its meaning also⁴⁰ seems known to us.

Within the Christian tradition in particular, we have supreme, almost insurmountable difficulties in perceiving all this -and much more in digesting and recognizing it-. First, because these findings of "re-flection", of discovery and unearthing of the past (its past, which is our past), are very recent findings. Still, in these years, most theologians and clerics have not heard about them, in many seminaries these topics are not studied, and many of the older biblical scholars and "biblical archaeologists", when they hear about them, react with a visceral rejection: they cannot accept the change of worldview that they entail. Even a good part of liberation theology, supposedly already critical and enlightened (second enlightenment!) has difficulties with the subject, because it is a subject "on the way out", which takes them out of the placidity of theological self-referentiality....

³⁹ Not the classical "biblical archaeology", which, because it is "biblical" - in the sense that it was "biblical" - cannot be scientific.

⁴⁰ I was especially impressed by Römer's conclusion about the meaning of Yahweh's name. After a lifetime of listening to the most diverse theologies about the abyss of wisdom that this verbal form - which no one really knows how it could be translated - would enclose, this specialist of the highest level fearlessly concludes that the attention paid to this name must be deflated. RÖMER, Th., *L'invention de Dieu*, Seuil, Paris 2014.

Our millenary traditional historical-religious-theological "story" is closed to any possibility of change of protoparadigm, and, above all, it takes for granted that what we have inherited is a truism, it is evident, it is totally certain, indubitable, absolute. And it is also "revelation". In this regard it should be noted that, when we think that the concept of "god" cannot be touched, "because it is revelation", we are still under the effects of the shielding that the cultures of that time (of all those times) made to perpetuate theism: to attribute it to God, to consider it revealed, being reinforced later by the Greek philosophers, assumed gratuitously by Hellenized Christianity and then endorsed by the imperial apparatus of Constantine when he decided to configure a Church and a theology (Nicea, Chalcedon....) that could serve as a basis for a Church that could serve as the official state religion, replacing the decadent *Roman religio*. The current negationists do not realize that they refuse to enter into discernment simply out of closed-mindedness, out of a supposedly irrational "faith in spite of everything" - that of one who does not dare to know, *sápere aude*, but prefers to trust in what has been transmitted to them - perhaps out of a voluntaristic self-affirmation of his own identity, which they see as endangered.

Current epistemology and our "evidence".

This last point is important: we have had this anthropo-theo-theo-cosmic, dualistic-theocentric proto-paradigm, which we have been analyzing, for perhaps 6000 years, since the end of the Copper Age. As the paradigm that it is, we would say that it is formed by the articulation of several axioms (division of reality, radical asymmetry of such division, hierarchization of the parts, radical heteronomy of the visible reality, theism of supreme intelligence and spirituality of the invisible reality, masculine and supremely intelligent upper floor... what has

already been said). These various axioms, we say, combined, form the proto-paradigm, which does not cease to be an "axiomatic" set, that is: (apparently) "evident". Current epistemology is back to that assumption that axiomata are really «postulates».

Let us apply it to the case. The theistic, or theocentric, or dualistic, post-Chalcolithic proto-paradigm - which in any of these ways could be called by any of its various "proper" names - took such root in the post-Chalcolithic culture that, from the Iron Age onwards, there was no trace left that "another proto-paradigm was possible", the previous proto-paradigm. No one was able to think and rethink it. Neither Greece. Nor the Bible. Nor Jesus of Nazareth. They all remained "with their heads inside the box", enclosed in the supposed axiomatic "evidence" of such a proto-paradigm, an unquestionable evidence, sacralized for many centuries, practically until today in the Churches.

Neither did Plato, who identified himself with it to such an extent that he recreated it, in such a brilliant and beautiful way, that he would engrave it by fire in the Western soul, for more than 25 centuries, until today, when it is still in force in most of the Western popular mentality. All the western philosophy was marked by fire and caught by the post-Chalcolithic proto-paradigm, passed now by the beautiful forms in which Plato dressed it. The nascent Christianity fell on its face before it, admiring Platonism and its later reeditions and revivals (various Neoplatonisms). Already in the 19th century Nietzsche will say that Christianity has been "Platonism for the masses"... and in the 20th century Whitehead will say that the history of Western thought is reduced to "footnotes to Plato" (CUPITT: 1997, 62). Descartes will repeat, 2000 years after Plato and Aristotle, that there are two kinds of things: the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*. The Chalcedonian creed had already taken it up earlier: creator.... "of all that is *visible and invisible*", the two kinds of things, the two floors, the reality torn from top to bottom. Roger Lenaers, who only a

few years ago published his groundbreaking book *Another Christianity is Possible*⁴¹, remains thoughtful, as if musing in admiration: "It seems that there is something in human nature, or in his subconscious, that postulates the need for this second superior level; otherwise," he says, "one cannot explain the profound need that popular religiosity shows for this human construct"⁴².

Aristotle's contribution was different from Plato's⁴³, and of lesser importance. Fully installed in the same proto-paradigm, neither did Aristotle manage to grasp its contingency, the possibility of there being another way of thinking. Rather, he reinforced it philosophically with the principle of teleology, the axiom that everything that happens is directed to a certain end, and that the whole cosmos is the result of a previous plan established by the Supreme Intelligence... from a second level... not only celestial but also meta-physical, ontic.

The formal religions, which appear around this time, are born with this same proto-paradigm in their collective mind and in the "revelation" provided by their gods. The three great religions, admired by the beauty of the Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy, made it their own, assumed it little by little, even believed it to be providential, and thoroughly combined the basic principles of Aristotle's philosophy with their religious conception of the Universe, thus transforming those physical and cosmological concepts into dogmas of faith. Aristotle's physical doctrine was accepted as dogma for sixty generations.... No other figure in the history of science, and very

⁴¹ In many popular communities that have studied this book in Spain, they call it "the book of the two floors", the book that opens our eyes to see that we are facing a world divided into two floors.

⁴² Roger LENAERS, *Otro cristianismo es posible*, cfr *supra*.

⁴³ "Platonic philosophy believed in the prophetic ecstasy, while Aristotle, with his scientific spirit, was very suspicious of the various procedures of mysticism". Raymond BLOCH, *Los prodigios en la Antigüedad clásica*. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1963, p. 21.

few in the entire course of human culture, exerted such a profound and lasting influence on later thought⁴⁴. Still in the 19th century, the Catholic Church proclaimed its daughter, the neo-scholastic, Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy, as the "perennial philosophy"⁴⁵...

What about us?

And today? The Catholic Church, for example, officially "does not know/does not answer". Nor does it ask itself, nor does it admit that it is asked. Not even a shadow of a doubt -which would obviously be a "doubt of faith", against faith, and therefore sinful-. Everything for her is theistic, and moreover omni-mono-theocentric. From the beginning (*in nómine Patris...*) to the end, *in sécula seculorum*. And that, that we are writing/reading in 2021, more than five years after *Laudato Si'*, which despite all its courageous novelty, at the paradigmatic level is also plunged squarely into the box of the post-Calcolithic proto-paradigm: God above, us below, Him (with the masculine in tow) on a supremely intelligent, celestial second floor, from whence emerges the arcane design of His Eternal Plan of Salvation, and the History of Salvation and Redemption in response to the guilt of "man" (more precisely, to quote the Bible, the guilt of Eve, who seduced Adam, who comes out finally responsible for both of them....). On this fifth anniversary I published a reflection⁴⁶ on this clear belonging of the vision of *Laudato Si'* to the post-Chalcolithic proto-paradigmatic vision and, consequently, the astronomical distance that still separates it from what today could be

⁴⁴ S. SAMBURSKY, *El mundo físico de los griegos*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid 1990 (original: 1962), Madrid 1990, p. 104-105. Original: *The Physical World of the Greeks*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956 y 1987.

⁴⁵ LEÓN XIII, Encíclica *Aeterni Patris*, August 4, 1879.

⁴⁶ VIGIL, JM, «*Laudato Si'*: also starting point». *Meta-pastoral notes, to go beyond Laudato Si'* [Oikocentric Paradigm]. En: <https://eatwot.academia.edu/JoséMaríaVIGIL/Ecocentrismo>

a minimum of intuition and openness towards what science, and many lucid minds already with it, are testifying regarding the overcoming of that proto-paradigm, which not only seems already obsolete, but that every day we see more clearly as harmful and oppressive.

2020-2021 are also the years of the covid pandemic. During this pandemic we have all listened to theologian-philosophers and some theologian-biblical scholars⁴⁷, elaborating consoling theological reflections on how God, although it would seem impotent before the pandemic, is not, because he is all-powerful; but that, mysteriously, he does not act, precisely because he respects our freedom, and for that reason he is not unjust, nor does he stop being good, although he does not free us as he could.... That is to say: *theos* continues to reign undaunted in the post-Chalcolithic theological empyrean heaven, without a shadow of a doubt, without the slightest hint of critical questioning. Everything continues to be seen through the post-Chalcolithic paradigm of the two floors, of the upper floor, of the all-powerful, superintelligent and mysteriously provident spiritual *theos*, the paradigm from which everything is explained. (The only essential note that has been successfully removed from the classical *theos* is that of its original masculinity; it was a last-minute achievement, which shows that it was not such an "essential" note, as other notes could also cease to be so without the world sinking -although the "sky" would sink-).

More than five millennia, and we have not managed to get out of it. Beyond these conjunctural theological comments on the pandemic, Christian theologies as a whole and their ecclesiastical institutions, all continue to take *theos* for granted, until today: look at any text you have at hand, look

⁴⁷ As long as feminism stays inside the biblical box, it will be a half-way feminism, unable to get to the roots and to speak to today's truly modern and postmodern women (and men).

for yourself. You will see that *theos* (that is, the hierarchical 'monistic' ontological dualism, the dualization of reality...) is the great axiom, the great "uncritical and unconscious assumption" of theology and of popular and even institutional religiosity until today, the "Great Belief"; and Big History, the great absentee. But today's modern and knowledge society can no longer support beliefs.

Epistemological check: what status⁴⁸ does theism have?

It has the same status as the proto-paradigm, of which it is the core.

Current "cognitive archeology" discovers theism as one more phase -still in progress- of the evolution of our cognitive development. A phase whose beginning -only now better known, archeologically, in the last sixty years- is relatively very recent, with respect to the global history of our species. *Theos*, in any case, is a human creation -not a "celestial apparition", a "revelation", much less a scientific deduction-. It is a "cultural creation"⁴⁹ self-elaborated *ad hoc*, for ourselves, in a difficult phase of our own evolution. And, like all human knowledge, the new epistemology tells us that it is nothing but a "modula-

⁴⁸ We do not say "ontological" status, because we are in a post-metaphysical society, and we would incur in contradiction; today we could say, with advantage, "status of reality".

⁴⁹ José Antonio MARINA calls it with benevolent grace a "cultural product," like science and poetry, infinitesimal calculus or analytical geometry. "It is an invention that, starting from the visible world, tries to find the other half of the symbol, of the broken coin. It turns the sun into a king, narrates the appearance of the worlds or the domestic stories of the gods or the confrontation between Good and Evil, the eschatological war. In this kind of continuous poetization, in this eagerness to transfigure all things with a new meaning, he surrounds the most everyday events with rituals that save them from their intranscendence and make them transcendent. A poetics of the everyday is invented, which religiously underlines daily events, as if we had enhanced the prose of life with a phosphorescent marker". Opinion on God. Anagrama, Barcelona 2002, p. 21ff.

tion" that our brain makes to understand/represent reality. We never have a certain vision of it, much less a definitive one; but we do not close ourselves to the "hope" that human cognitive development, without being strictly linear, is ascending, rising to ever deeper, more secure and clearer positions. [Here radical agnosticism, and also numerous supporters of non-duality... who think that Dharma or Braman cannot be known at all, and that it is a mere illusion to think that we advance in the knowledge of Reality, no matter how much time passes and our wisdom improves].

The epistemological status of theism is, a fortiori, the epistemological status of *theos* itself. *Theos*, like theism, is a step in our evolution; we have arrived at it at a certain moment in our evolution and, obviously, the moment will come when it will fall short and become obsolete. Everything seems to indicate, as we have said, that we are in a new axial time, deeper than the one pointed out by Jaspers⁵⁰, and parallel to that other first axial time at the end of the Chalcolithic. To discover/recognize this can be a traumatic experience, if we do not give ourselves the time and the necessary tests, but it is inevitable to face it, and it is not insurmountable. A good part of the society of knowledge and science is decidedly entering this new post-theistic path. *Theos*, and the anthropo-theistic-cosmic protoparadigm it entails, no longer fit in the current modern worldview. It is not possible to be a person of today, that is to say, a "modern" person, with a head furnished according to Modernity, who has dared to think for himself, and who has rejected the proto-paradigm that was forged more than 5,000 years ago, and still want to include *Theos* in our worldview. This is basically the phenomenon of atheism and the current massive abandonment of religions in the West (the only cultural zone with sufficient penetration of Modernity).

⁵⁰ Karl JASPERS, *op.cit.*

What is happening is therefore - among other things - an epistemological transformation. It is not "the end of the world", but it is the end of a world. It is the end of the world as we have been thinking about it for 5 millennia. It is not that God is "dying" (what we have traditionally understood by God, *theos*), nor that there has been "God" or that there is no longer "God" (someone *out there, up there*). It is not something realistic, or ontological, that is happening, but epistemological. It is above all an epistemological transformation. It is the discovery that we are making of the epistemological status of *theos* (and of all our knowledge, we have just referred to it) and, consequently, of the non-realistic character of *theos* on the ontological level, and the awareness of the serious consequences that both things entail concretely in the religious symbolic heritage of religions -theistic, but also non-theistic. Let us refer to it more concretely, let us see.

We have said that "the myths of separation of heaven and earth" expressed in the culture of the time the tearing of the cosmic reality, until then united, unitary, unique, total (holistic). The material, natural reality (and with it the carnal and sexual reality) was confined to the first floor; and a strictly spiritual, immaterial reality, a non-natural, non-material, non-terrestrial, non-carnal, non-sexual, purely rational reality, ascended to heaven....

The architecture of the world was reconverted into two worlds, two levels, "two floors" of reality, radically different and diametrically opposed. We have already said: not a world of two floors symmetrically and peacefully ordered, but always in struggle because of the rebelliousness of matter, nature, flesh, the world; the peace and order that could be achieved in that divided world, only obeys to the empire of the force of the superior world over the inferior, which obviously comes mainly from Theos -the key of the vault, we said-, from whom everything ultimately comes.

This (metaphorical) "separation of heaven and earth" that was installed in the human cosmovision five millennia ago, was not an ontological change of the cosmos -as it would not be today if we decided to unite in our knowledge what was separated-. It was not that the world was effectively torn apart. It was the human world, its noosphere, the human mental and cultural world, the cosmic paradigm that until then humanity had carried inscribed in its mental-cultural genes. Likewise, there arose there, as a necessary keystone of that new human cultural mental vault, *theos*, the key piece of that new cosmovision, of that new proto-paradigm. Also in this, it is not that *theos* "ontologically emerged", it is not that it came into being, but that it simply came to occupy the central position of that new mental worldview. Nothing ontological, no transformation of being, no ontic, realistic event. Simply, an epistemological recomposition within the human noosphere, obviously provoked by some infrastructural transformative events. The emergence of *theos* in that transformation was not an ontic event, not even an ontological one, but an epistemological one. *Theos* is, by historical definition, the centerpiece of a model of representation of the world, originated all those millennia ago, which opened a new historical stage for human consensual, cognitive and material development, and which has entered into crisis but has not been entirely displaced, far from it.

Are we heading towards nihilism?

Some readers may wonder. Well... there is no reason to suppose it. We are saying that the appearance of *theos*, a newly appeared tenant on that upper floor that was built above the terrestrial world, was but one element of that great epistemological change that was registered in human consciousness in this region of the world to which we are referring. An epistemological event; not an ontic one. Not that something new

came into existence,⁵¹ nor anything that ceased to exist. None of this epistemological transformation to which we are referring included an ontic event. Whatever there was, whatever there was, whatever the Reality of that time really was, had to continue to be, and today it will be. Epistemology has no ontic correspondence. (We are, obviously, in a new epistemology).

Again: are we heading towards nihilism? Obviously not. The discovery that the transformation of human consciousness is something epistemological and not ontological; it is an epistemological transformation of our mind that "de-realizes" our noetic and consciousness affirmations, but does not deny the reality of real reality -external to our mental reality-.

No nihilism: whatever Reality is "ontically" -let us put it this way, even with a certain impropriety- continues and will continue to be so without being affected at all by the modulations that our intelligence permanently elaborates and reelaborates in order to try to grasp, interpret and know it. But also: no cognitive dogmatism: our knowledge does not create reality... but only modulations, "entities of reason", hermeneutic tools, "useful fictions". And also, a certain dose of agnosticism: it is always good to distrust our capacity to know, and our own affirmations.

Theos and divinity

According to this, to consider that theos is a cognitive reality, a cultural human creation, and that its appearance is an epistemological event, does not imply affirming that there is no such thing as Divinity⁵². The world, the cosmos, reality...

⁵¹ To exist, from ex-sistere, to have "sistence outside of"; or as has been said: "to become outside of causes and nothingness."

⁵² Divinity, here, and as long as it does not say otherwise, is not a common noun, it is not a synonym for god (as for example in "the divinities of Egypt," which obviously refers to "the gods" of Egypt). Divinity is used in its most direct grammatical sense: an abstract noun, which

can be divine, can have divinity, or sacredness, mysteriousness.... Realizing that it is we humans who have constructed *theos* (and not the other way around), does not necessarily entail falling into atheism: I can come to the conviction that *theos* is a simple concept of ours, and that it has no support in the real ontic⁵³, cosmic Reality... (that is, to think that it is not an Entity, nor a Lord, Spiritual, Supremely intelligent, Omnipotent, Provident, Transcendent, Separate, Personal, Revealing, Ab-solute, "absolutely autonomous" before which everything is heteronomous and relative and contingent....), and yet I can think that the world is "divine", that the cosmos breathes "divinity" on all four sides, that it is sacred, that it is/is ineffably inhabited by Mystery... and I can adore and venerate that divinity, that sacredness, reverently, to the point of ecstasy like a mystic: this world and this cosmos are truly divine...! I can perceive, feel in my own way, think, conclude, consciously decide to "believe" in all this, which many may well call God, without being a theist: I can not believe in *theos* and be deeply religious and spiritual.

The vast majority - almost the totality - of current theology, and of ecclesiastical institutions, still do not enter into this distinction. Let us see. Fifty years ago, clearly as a result of Vatican II among Catholics and other similar events among Protestants, the theme of "the images of God"⁵⁴ emerged

comes to mean "the divine character that something has", as friendship is the character of friend that a person has for me, or disease is the unhealthy character that something has. Many times, the plural of the abstracts reveals that we have turned the word into a common noun. For example: I have many "friendships"... is a figure of speech; to speak more properly (more concretely), what we would have to say would be that I have many "friends".

⁵³ «Aunque no haya un dios ahí arriba», de LENAERS, Abyayala, Quito 2013, freely available in the Koinonía Services extension: <https://tinyurl.com/ServiciosKoinonia2>

⁵⁴ An emblematic monument of the pastoral concern of that time is the book "El Dios en quien no creo", by Juan ARIAS, which is still being reprinted (Sígueme, Salamanca 2004), and which has been transla-

with force, practically unknown until then in pastoral ministry. In the decades that followed, we strove to "purify the image of God," rejecting and even denying... his inadequate or even "false" "images," which in no way led us to atheism. On the contrary, we considered the approach of overcoming inadequate and false images of God to be an opportune and effective pastoral means of fostering dialogue with those who denied God-without-anymore. Most of today's theology is still anchored in that perspective: it continues to be concerned with cleaning and recovering the clarity of the face of God, against his bad images, but... it does not realize that another stronger and deeper wave is coming, which in some places/sectors of the population is already advancing like a tsunami.

To that discovery of fifty years ago, that the images of God were a big problem, has happened today the discovery that the problem is below the images; it is in God himself. In the very concept of God (*Theos*). It is no longer that our contemporaries do not accept a God who is sadistic⁵⁵, violent, controller... (and a thousand other inadequate adjectivations or images); rather it is *Theos* itself that they now deny: they deny that Entity, Lord, Almighty, external, intervening, separate, spiritual, supremely intelligent special subjectivity, with no other foundation than our intelligent and imaginative creativity to construct unattainable explanations. That theos, initiated 5000 years ago, and improved and polished conceptually by the Greeks, and with which Christians blindly identified themselves to the point of displacing Yahweh, and theism itself, are no longer acceptable in the society that is coming to stay.

ted into ten languages. See: Juan ARIAS, "El Dios en quien no creo. Más de 40 años después", *Agenda Latinoamericana Mundial* 2011, pp. 42-43, available in the digital archive of the *Agenda Latinoamericana*.

⁵⁵ François Varone, *El Dios sádico. ¿Ama Dios el sufrimiento?*, Sal Terrae 1988.

Fifty years ago we took an important leap forward when we interpreted that the problem was not with God himself, but with his images. Today, at the height of the evolution of our culture, those images appear as a minor problem, of second order, and it is clear that the root problem is the very concept of *theos*: its historical origin, its elaboration, its human authorship, its epistemological status... everything we have been saying. It becomes clear that the pastoral of the "purification of the images of God" is no longer enough, and that it is somehow superseded. What is urgent now is to overcome something more profound and paradigmatic, a model of interpretation of the profound reality that today is obsolete, as well as harmful⁵⁶: *Theos* itself.

The question is therefore *theos*, not the Divinity⁵⁷. Discovering the epistemological status of *theos*, its mythological genesis, despite its later Greek philosophical recovery, as well as the evidence of its unfeasibility in an adult, emancipated, scientific and post-mythical society, does not lead us to atheism, but simply to post-theism or, to put it even more aseptically, to non-theism. Non-theism is in itself neither atheistic, nor nihilistic, nor materialistic-reductionist, nor closed to the Mystery, to sacredness, nor to divinity; it simply disengages itself critically and consciously from an "evolutionary product" created by human beings, a "useful fiction" of which they avai-

⁵⁶ Harmful today, perhaps not in the evolutionary process. In fact, the anthro-ptheo-theo-cosmic paradigm post-Calcolithic was a way in which biology managed to make us viable.... It has served its function, but its perpetuation seems already harmful. Like our knowledge in general, it has been a "useful fiction," but it is now past its expiration date.

⁵⁷ With this abstract noun, which so often acts as a synonym for "god" and "gods" in the plural, I refer to the distilled substance of what for millennia we have called "god," but stripped of all the impure elements that today we know are simply a model of knowledge, our modulation for dealing with reality. All those determinations that we have been saying are "constituents" of the model *theos*, and that are no longer acceptable.

led themselves at a given moment in the development of their culture and their means of material infrastructure; an element whose origin, ontological and epistemological status we have only recently come to know, and which is now clearly revealed as belonging to an outdated historical stage, unjustified, obsolete, anachronistic (out of its time, already outdated) and responsible for negative implications (even for the planet). And, for all these reasons, a concept of harmful use.

That nineteenth-century reductionist materialistic atheism which, in rejecting *theos*, believed it necessary to reject also the sacredness of life, the Mystery of the cosmos, and the numinosity of reality... has practically disappeared; it has been gradually abandoned by today's scientific society. In that historical confrontation between ('scientific') atheism and Christianity, both the one and the other erred, confusing *Theos* with the Mystery of Reality, with the divinity of Reality. Atheism, by its blindness before the supramaterial dimensions of reality, and by its overwhelming nihilistic attitude before any reality that was not merely material. And Christianity erred because of its blindness before the contradictions of the cultural-philosophical image of its own *theos*, taking it for the very indisputable face of the ineffable Mystery. That is why, beyond those "Dialogues between Christianity and atheism" of the last century, today there are voices that declare the inanity of that dialogue of the deaf who wanted to convince each other: both were wrong, and both were right. Roger Lenaers argues in one of his latest books (LENAERS 2013: last chapter) that Christianity and atheism have to be reconciled, because both are right, and together they can bring to humanity a new vision, free from that confusion.

I believe in God, but he is not *theos*. Post-theistic "Divinity"⁵⁸...

Can we continue to say "god", in the post-theism? Well, yes, clearly, but, under certain conditions, and with much lucidity, so as not to continue perpetuating the damage done and still in progress.

Although the translation of *theos* is, obviously, "god", it is very clear at this point that in this study we are postulating the need to distinguish very clearly two very different senses or meanings in that word "god". The vulgar meaning, in use for millennia, is the one that understands it as *theos*, whose "essential notes" we have already listed and commented extensively above. The technical meaning would be that which by "God" understands the "Ultimate Reality", or -perhaps better- the "Ultimacy of Reality", outside of all those "notes" that correspond to *theos*. Thus, he may not believe in god (*theos*), and yet he still has the need and the duty to "bet"⁵⁹ on Ultimate Reality, on the search for the Ultimacy of Reality, without compromising with myth, with mythology, with irresponsible religious imagination, with "beliefs" that are transmuted into gratuitous dogmas, nor with the childish "faith of the charcoal burner", or with the oppressive dogmas of the mind imposed by the authoritarianism of the religious institution. Obviously,

⁵⁸ I have eradicated from my vocabulary the word divinity as a concrete noun, which in this case would be synonymous with god, *theos*. When I say divinity, I use the word in its own direct semantic condition, as an abstract noun. These are two totally different senses, which cannot be confused, as I indicated above.

⁵⁹ I have addressed in several texts my conviction that "it is no longer a matter of believing." The need for faith - one of the three queens among the virtues (not in vain theo-logical) - without which it would be impossible to please *Theos*, seems to disappear also with the disappearance or overcoming of *Theos*, who played hide and seek, creating us and calling us to life, but not letting himself be seen and demanding "belief" in his existence.... It is no longer plausible.

this attitude of "betting on the Ultimacy of Reality"⁶⁰ should not be reduced to the formal avoidance of a few words; the post-theistic attitude implies not only the abandonment of the concept *theos*, but the abandonment of all that *theos* entails, all that of which *theos* is its cause and center (theo-centrism). In traditional theology, for example, all its branches are theistic, and theocentric; a Christianity free of *theos* will then need a totally new theology, not theistic, nor theocentric. Also, a new mysticism, also new, not theistic nor theocentric⁶¹. This is how serious is the metamorphosis that we postulate.

A post-theistic Christianity already exists, since there are many post-theistic Christians; but, of course, these Christians find themselves out in the open, surrounded by a millenary religious symbolic patrimony that they feel obsolete, even hostile. Another Christianity is possible, and urgent, and it is posttheistic!

Should we banish, or eradicate, the word "god"? No, logically. What we do need to do is to redefine it, to redefine its meaning, declaring explicitly overcome (when we use the term) the concept that gave rise to it. Words, like concepts, are born, grow, get sick, die... and sometimes resurrect. The word god, in the sense of *theos*, should never be used in the

⁶⁰ "Believing in God" seems to me to be equivocal and dangerous at this point, and I believe that this "betting on the ultimacy of Reality" expresses perfectly today what in theistic language we used to call "believing in God".

⁶¹ Traditional mysticism is at a low ebb. It consoles itself with the renewed spiritual interest of a society that is leaving religion because it cannot accept a *theos* up there/out there, but all the traditional language of mysticism is weighed down by theism, by that spiritual Thou, spouse of the soul, mundane, cosmic, superpersonal, invisible friend, and often still enclosed in the scriptural box of its respective religion. However, and without that name, the return to mysticism, integral, cosmic, 'non-spiritual', oikocentric, holistic... is proliferating everywhere. And now free from the confinement in the box of Scripture, he meditates and contemplates on "the first book"... without Kirios, without Lords or husbands.

historical-mythical sense of *theos*, a God *up there, out there*, external, Lord, intervener, "he"... Any use in this sense is harmful, it perpetuates the damage it has done to us.

Shall we then ban the word "god"? Tillich proposed a moratorium on the word: not to use it for a hundred years. Personally, I believe that this would do us good, to force us to resignify a word-concept that today hurts us, but at all, it should not be forbidden, because it also offers a good service to whoever knows how to use it: if I use it as a "symbol of the Ultimacy of Reality", of the Mystery, of the "divinity of reality", as a symbolization of it to evoke it, as a trope of language to address it... can be very useful, because it keeps the connotation of ultimacy, so difficult to encapsulate in a new word. I can use the term "god", as long as no one is going to understand it as *theos*, that is, only where my interlocutors are already clear that there is *no lord up there, out there*, and that I am not talking about anything resembling the mythical gods of the post-Chalcolithic, neolithic, and modern peoples. We cannot be conniving with such confusion, which delays human evolution, hinders humanity's ability to take flight towards a new epoch of intelligence of Reality. But having clearly avoided this grave danger, we can add to our vocabulary this now renewed word so charged with mysticism and energy⁶², we can use it with art and with all the games and tropes of language, *free of all theism*, and applied now as one more name of that ultimacy of Reality that we continue to try to evoke and even to invoke non-personally.

In God without God: in the Mystery, without Theos

A conclusion that we can derive from all that has been said is that "believing in God", what has always been, in our

⁶² Cfr. above, the quotation from Martin Buber.

millenary known Christian history, the first article of faith, the minimum basis for recognizing ourselves within Christianity, without which we could no longer dialogue about anything, is no longer what it was. We can no longer ask anyone, as the first article of faith of the religiosity of our religious community, to believe that *there is a Lord up there*. Belief in God is no longer that first *sine qua non* requirement. You can not believe in God, you can be an atheist, and still be a Christian. A great novelty, a qualitative leap, of consciousness, of understanding, of paradigm.

I can dialogue with atheists and tell them: I no longer believe in God either; I recognize that I insisted on something unnecessary; I mistook the ultimate background for a simple way of imagining it, of modeling it, of making it accessible to our mythical mind. And I understand your refusal to accept that image, myth, model, form, epistemological mediation. I do not believe it to be necessary, nor adequate, nor innocuous anymore... I apologize for the misunderstanding. I also prefer to dispense with that image and/or concept that today seems to me already obsolete.

I can dialogue with the critic youngs who tell me that they "do not believe in God", and not adopt a paternal attitude to supposedly "evangelize" them, urging them not to stop "believing" in God.... I can tell them: tell me why you do not believe in *theos*, because I suspect that I also share those reasons, I also do not believe in that God-*theos* that you reject. I presume I do not believe in that god that even young people like you feel the need to reject, not to believe in. Do not believe in it, because you are not obliged to, but do not cease to be complete people, reverent seekers of the ultimacy of Reality. Let us not believe. Let us seek the truth of Reality, its sacredness, and live according to it, according to our felt spiritual conviction.

Definitely, we can say that it is no longer a matter of "believing"... Before, everything was about believing, about submitting to doctrines and paradigms, even if I did not understand them or they did not convince me; it was about submitting. Now we believe that the human being is not called to submit, to "believe", to renounce his reason and blindly accept the beliefs demanded by an institution, nor to.... "to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by this to save his soul". With the emancipated modern human being, the "principle and foundation" of Ignatius López de Loyola⁶³ is left without foundation, and from that point on, it no longer seems to be a good "principle" either; we must begin in another way⁶⁴.

In this new post-theistic stage of the human vision, it is not a matter of believing but of reflecting, studying, discerning, deciding... and of taking a personal risk, betting, "opting", for the perceived meaning, with autonomy, with freedom, emancipated from all minority of age, from all fear and all mythology.

I can dialogue with all religions, that is, with all spiritual convictions - including that of atheism - and I can propose to them to remove this name ("god") from our vocabulary, because it confuses, because it limits our spiritual freedom, because it is irretrievably lost under the weight of a tradition stained with mythology, oppression, inquisition, even death. I can propose that we abandon this name, God, and any other name we have given him, not because "he cannot be named" (out

⁶³ *Ejercicios espirituales*, Sal Terrae 2014, p. 18.

⁶⁴ After modernity, one can no longer begin purely and simply by the pure and hard theistic affirmation, in its maximum and stark rigor. That is a slab (even if it serves as a keystone of the post-Chalcolithic vault), which weighs unacceptably on the "modern" human being, emancipated from fear, from feudal subjugation. Agustín Udías (sj) reports on the Big History movement, increasingly accepted by a growing number of universities, as a new framework for all science. Cf. "Big History and the Anthropocene: Two New Approaches to the Past and Present", at: servicioskoinonia.org/relat/454.htm

of respect, out of ineffability, as a sign of respect through the humble recognition of our incapacity), but because by naming him we deteriorate him, we destroy him, we turn him into something, into otherness, into an object, or at least into an Entity, as practically all religious people have always thought. Religions, very neat in their official theology, have generally compromised with popular religiosity directed to an imagined Entity.

Only freed from the seductive mirage, from that "invisible friend", from that Almighty Lord God who attracted our gaze and sequestered our attention towards the empyrean heaven, outside the world, already in the eschatological future of "other" new, different heavens and earth; only freed from that mirage will we be able to return our gaze to matter, to the Earth and to the real cosmos, to Reality.

Only liberated from a *theos* that abducts and captures in itself the Divinity of Reality and takes it expatriated to a heaven separated from the earth, will we be able to turn our eyes to the profound divinity of Reality, to the divinity of everything, of the All.

Buddhism is not theistic, it does not believe in *theos* at all, it does not believe that there are gods. But no one will dispute its spiritual and religious depth. They have been so for several millennia in their laborious spiritual history. This would explain, by antithetical parallelism, what happens for example in the Christian world, where this approach of overcoming the model of theism, raises blisters and seems impossible to those who have spent their whole life and history centered on *theos*: to speak of non-theism may seem absurd, a catastrophe, the rupture of the meaning of spiritual life. These people also claim the "personal character" of *theos* as something essential and indispensable. Without *theos* up there as an "invisible friend" always ready for the direct contact of intimate prayer, not only prayer, but spirituality would be impossible for them. They would not be fit for Buddhists. And the fact is that we

have been in this theistic model for millennia, and it is not something from which one can voluntarily detach oneself, if one does not follow a path of analysis, reflection, deconstruction and education of a new sense to perceive and savor the non-theistic sacredness of the holistic Reality. Nowadays there are countless people who abandon theistic spirituality (often due to insurmountable difficulties in coping with its obsolete cosmological theoretical implications, in today's cultured society) and open themselves more and more to spiritualities and religiosity without *theos*.

The world is not ending; it is simply ending a world, a world of representations -not of realities- that we believed to be immovable and irreplaceable -because we could not imagine any other, and because we had armored it by enthroning it, revealed by the *theos* itself, our own creation-. That world is coming to an end, and yes, it is a frightening thing, but one that must be faced with courage and bravery. In the end, it is undoubtedly a liberation, and an evolutionary leap forward. Pos-theism is welcome.

This study has focused on delimiting a technical concept of theism (not of "god") and on showing the convenience for humanity to detach itself from the boat with which it has already crossed the sea, or from the ladder with which it has already reached a higher stage; it can abandon the boat and the ladder, which have already fulfilled their task, and continue walking, without fear, with complete freedom, towards much broader horizons⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ In this text, by the way, I have not addressed the immense and excellent perspectives of non-theistic spirituality, spirituality "after *theos*". I have dealt with it in several other studies, to which I refer, in: eatwot.academia.edu/JoséMaríaVIGIL/Ecocentrismo See concretely: VIGIL, JM., Ante la catástrofe climática, una nueva visión y una nueva espiritualidad, Paper at the 12th Enuentro Internacional del CETR November 2017.

Postscript: It is time to overcome our mythological heritage, confronting once and for all our theology with science.

Just as today we know archeologically that there was no historical Exodus (no plagues, no Passover supper in Egypt, no Red Sea parted, no wandering through the desert, and therefore no burning bush, no tablets of the Law sculpted by sparkling lightning, no Ten Commandments...), and that Yahweh was also represented and worshipped in early times in the form of a calf or young bull - as in the religions of the neighboring peoples -, and that he had a consort divinity venerated even in the Temple of Jerusalem, whose traces were later erased from the biblical text, and we can continue to be "believers", without credulity, lucidly, with a "new ingenuity",

In the same way, today we know that *theos* is not a revelation to the people of Israel (still non-existent at that time), nor a "revelation" to the Kurgan peoples of the steppes... Today we believe we know when and where *theos* appeared, simultaneously in various places; we intuit its factors and cultural conditioning factors, and we see clearly traceable and recognizable the political repercussions of the primordial theism of these peoples, and the colonization and domination they exercised over their neighbors.

It is not that all this content that we are referring to is already proven scientific material, peacefully possessed, far from it; there is still a long way to go on this path. But to look the other way, to disregard what we already know today, and to continue busy elaborating and reworking new rehashes with the same multi-millennarian beliefs and myths, "new proposals on the same unaltered presuppositions", inaccessible to any criticism, can give reason to those who say that theology is a monument to logic, on a false and obsolete pedestal. On the other hand, to think that science endangers "faith" is a

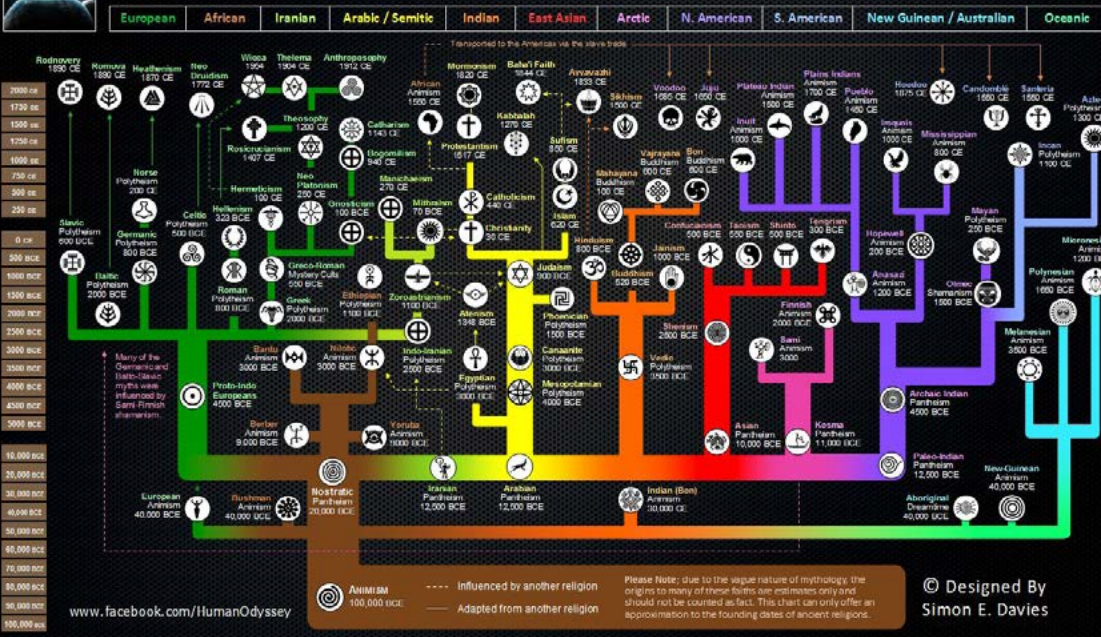
mistake: it is this fear of science that has been destroying religious faith for several centuries, while the most lucid people abandon - today massively - the sinking ship. It is time to take archaeology, cultural anthropology, the sciences of religion, and all the other sciences, seriously, and very seriously. Here too, we must get out of self-referentiality: theology on the way out.

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You say that you do not consider yourself a Christian because you stopped believing in God, and why? Who told you that it was necessary to believe in God in order to be a Christian?

Times have changed; do you know that there are Christians who do not believe in God but feel they are Christians?

This book wants to clarify a fundamental and multi-millennial misunderstanding. About 6000 years ago we humans underwent a very important cultural change, which made us think that there is a parallel world, a superior world (we have called it heaven, eternal life...) where a super-powerful, masculine and spiritual Being appeared, up there, out there. At that time it seems that we needed such a story to evolve. And each people elaborated it, brilliantly, with the coolest religious mythologies. And we branded it with blood and fire (literally) in the minds and hearts: it was not convenient for anyone to doubt, and that it lasted. In fact, six thousand years later, even we carry that mark in our cultural DNA.

This book wants to clarify what theos (god) was, how it came about, how it affects us, and how it is a "model" of understanding reality, debatable and improvable. Another model is possible. Five authors share their personal experience and insights on this with you.



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