

# The human nature in the face of God

By Timo Schmitz, *Philosopher*

In my article “The dilemma of natural law in an organised society”, I showed that the primary ethics which I introduced two years ago in my series “Individualism between Moral and Virtues, Government and Religion” are not only derived from religion, but that religion itself derived it from early mythology, and under the aspect of early civilisation, I showed that there are certain rules that survived the last 5000 years in all folk tales, mythological traditions, religions and all kind of states, whether it was feudalism, bourgeois imperialism or whether it is modern Western democracy, every society prohibits arbitrary killings (and in all theological discourses killing of human-beings is a general taboo, though there always were backdoors), stealing, lying, harming disabled, dishonesty and injustice (however the latter was defined differently through the centuries). I grouped them into three categories (physical inviolability, human inviolability, and social rights) and showed that together with ‘given diversity’ they are part of the natural law. Anyways, the dilemma of finding guaranteed rights that stand above positive law does not end here. Indeed, we cannot grasp natural law deeper, and nowadays all states build up their laws on natural law, which is a problem, as natural law is as deep as a sea and just the qualities of natural law, so to say, the law which is inevitable and too obvious shines on the surface, while everything else lies in the dark, since we never encountered the state of nature. As a result, the states build their law on something they only know on the surface and risk that they drown in the morass, such as feudalist ruler never thought that their system will go down one day, or Romans never thought that their Empire will go to an end. However, the primary ethics give us the chance to find secondary ethics that can be subsumed out of the primary ethics. To be able to do so, we have to understand the human nature. Hannah Arendt classifies the human nature into three parts: animal, homo, and persona. The first category describes the animalistic behavior of human-beings, the basic desires. Human-beings need nourishment, sleep, have sexual desires, etc. just as animals have it. Thus, the animalistic category faces **survival**<sup>1</sup>. The second category addresses the characteristics which make humans be human, or in other words **what human beings have to do**<sup>2</sup>. The third category addresses the uniqueness of human-beings, as every human-being has an own **personality** or nativity.

Thus, one can classify the three categories as such:

animal – laborans = force (which is identified with the BODY)

homo – faber = end in itself (things that human-beings do for themselves, but not because they have to; which is identified by MATERIALISM)

persona – agens = the attributes which make a person unique, UNIQUENESS (every individual just exists one; which is identified with ACTION)

To use the term "agens" attributed to persona makes sense here, since "the judgmental gaze of others is what confers meaning upon action and which provides a sense of the persona of the agent", as only people equal to oneself can say who one is <sup>3</sup>.

As a result, I can say as a conclusion of my own (so we leave Hannah Arendt's path now) that all people are forced by their physical needs to survive, by their desire to work for their own achievement and by their nativity which results in action, as humans always have to act, and the stage of acting is interaction. People have no other choice then to act in some way, whether it is acting in the sense of taking a (sincere) action, or whether it is acting like a puppet (insincere action), however, no matter how we choose, if we look through Sartre's glasses now, we always act freely as "l'homme est condamné à être libre [...] il est responsable de tout ce qu'il fait" <sup>4</sup>. This again leads to the conclusion that one cannot hide behind a God, since one always acts independently, and as a result, God comes even after the Human-Being and is made by humans, as Sartre puts it in the formula: *l'existence précède l'essence*. As I stated in *Individualism between Moral and Virtues, Government and Religion*:

*"In the old philosophical view, God (the essence) creates man (the existence), building up a relation between both since both are conditioned to each other. Sartre however suggested that existence is present before there is essence, which means that there can be no god (because man (existence) precedes/ creates god (essence)). [...] This means that man is fully responsible for himself, and he cannot argue with divine values, since both the Supreme Being and the value are a product of man, which means at the same time that values are not fully objective, but something which is felt subjectively. If man is completely responsible for himself then he is condemned to be free."* <sup>5</sup>

However, shall we just kill religion and force people to believe in a strong rationality in which they cannot hold to a God, where they cannot seek refuge in an almighty, perfect Being that

listens to their worries and forgives their flaws? Oh, no, if we kill religion, we are in trouble! Indeed, religion does not satisfy us, since it leaves still a place for the unknown. Who tells me that heaven really exists? Who tells me that the revelation really happened? And even if all this is true, I still can't get over theodicy. However,

*"the killing of religion as such, might lead to a problem, as people strive for a place of certainty (such as a paradise in after-life), and therefore taking away their religion – or in other words 'killing God' – does not only solve problems, but also creates new problems [...]. Therefore, atheism as such does not create a new 'ultimate truth'."*<sup>6</sup>

Humans quarrel that their God is the true one, because they mainly just know their own religious community. However, we can find a lot of similarities in all religions. Let's take three presumptions: 1) God is everywhere (omnipresent), 2) God is all knowing (omniscient), 3) God is all powerful (omnipotent).

In Christianity, the omnipresence of God can be found for instance in the following citations:

*"But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?"* (KJB 2 Chron 2:6)

*"But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!"* (KJB 2 Chron 6:18)

*"Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?"* (KJB Isa 66:1)

The omniscience can be found for instance in the following passages:

*"O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand*

*upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*" (KJB Ps 139:1-6)

The omnipotence of God can be found for instance in the following passages:

*"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."* (KJB Gen 17:1)

*"And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins"* (KJB Gen 35:11)

In Islam, the three attributes might be found in the Qur'an at the following passages: Surah al-An'am 6:59 and Surah Mujadila 58:7, as well as Surah Al 'Imran 3:26, 3:189.

In Hinduism the omniscience of God can be found in Bg 7.26:

*"Krishna says: O Arjuna, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, I know everything that has happened in the past, all that is happening in the present, and all things that are yet to come. I also know all living entities; but Me no one knows."*<sup>7</sup>

In general, Hinduism is rather monotheistic than polytheistic and "In Vedic Hinduism, there were 33 devas, which later became exaggerated to 330 million devas. In fact, all the devas are themselves regarded as more mundane manifestations of the One and the Supreme Brahman (God) for devotional worship. The Hindus do not literally worship 330 million separate gods. The Sanskrit word for 'ten million' also means 'group', and '330 million devas' originally meant '33 types of divine manifestation'. [...] 'There is only one God, not the second; not at all, not at all, not in the least bit.' [Brahma Sutra] But it is true that in practice, Hindus worship the Almighty in several different forms."<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Hindu God also fulfills the conditions of the Abrahamic God. In Neoplatonism, the Highest Principle was 'the One'. It was rather a metaphysical principle being unconscious as such and like most religions in East Asia, it just followed its nature, unlike in Hinduism and the Abrahamic religions, where God is conscious of what he does. God exists in the minds of the people, and as Anselm of Canterbury said, God must exist because there is nothing higher that can be imagined than God. However, if nothing higher can be imagined than God then nothing higher might exist.

However, the nature of God in most religions is the same, though not identical. This means that we cannot ignore their belief, when we search ethics. At the same time, we cannot explain everything with the will of God. If we assume that God exists, then God used his almighty knowledge to give the world to human-beings, so that they develop it themselves, so to say: God created everything for us, now we have to use it wisely. If we reject the existence of God, we even further have a strong need for ethics, since with the rejection of God and his divine values, we suddenly have a vacuum. Moral philosophers tried to fill this vacuum, but no moral philosopher really satisfied me. To satisfy my need for ethics we have to find something universal, which we can subsume out of the primary ethics, which, as I have shown before, can be found in all religions and mythological beliefs.

***The human nature is the opposite of God: we are not almighty, all knowing and in everywhere!***

However, people seek for might, they want to know everything, achieve everything and go to all places. Thus, whoever the One is, He is the hope for many people. If we destroy God, we take away the hopes of over three billion people in the world. On the other hand, there are enough people who turn away from God, who mistrust the revelation. It does not mean that they turn away from the One in general, but they see what other people do. And they feel that the church does not suit them anymore. They find God in the nature, in the trees, mountains and seas, which is legitimate since it is all created by God.

But even still, if someone turns away from all divinely and says that everything is godless, we shall not judge the people. At first, let's see all religious people as brothers, they all have something in common with your religion and even if their heaven looks differently, most religions contain common ideas, but show different ways and paths. And to those who are not religious, don't see them as less worthy, as long as they accept you, you ought to accept them, because even when you are not brothers in faith, you all go back to the same natural law, no matter who created it and where it comes from.

So we showed that:

- 1) People need to fulfill their bodily needs. (animalistic)
- 2) People need to work for themselves. (materialistic)
- 3) Every individual is unique! (individualistic)
- 4) Everybody believes in something! (faithful)

- 5) People seek to get closer to God or their Highest Being, as it has all the attributes that human-beings don't have! (perfectional)
- 6) People seek to grasp certainty in an uncertain world. (hopeful)
- 7) People have to take responsibility for their deeds (conscious/ reasonable)
- 8) Disrespect against another group never solves problems. (plural/ diverse)

To put it in one formula: **Human-beings are animalistic, materialistic, individualistic, faithful, striving for perfection, seeking hope, conscious, and pluralistic.**

To be able that everyone can reach his or her dreams, we have to ensure *equality of opportunity for everyone*. To be able to work for ourselves and our dreams we have to *abolish large-commerced private means of production* since it is the exploitation by a few, and the masses have to accept the exploitation to fulfill their bodily needs as well as basic materialism. In an ideal society, the materialistic needs are fulfilled though working for oneself as the surplus is given away to fulfill the world's bodily needs through fair trade. It also means that *private property has to be protected*, since everybody has a right for ownership. We can derive it through the rule not to steal or to take away other people's property. The equality of opportunity has to be ensured to avoid injustice and for the equality of human-beings in general (no human-being is worthier than another!). The strong people have to defend the weak people and therefore *support for the disabled and old people to have the same living standard than the rest of the society* has to be ensured. We can derive it from primary ethics, but also from religious traditions. In all religious traditions, the rich and powerful people have to support the poor and show human compassion. People always seek for perfection and power and therefore, we have to remember them of their duty to give a share, as in this way, they can get closer to God, or take responsibility. As primary ethics forbids to steal and ensures individualism *political awareness of a peaceful world, accepting different viewpoints in politics, religion and society* has to be encouraged.

As I pointed out in *Individualism between Moral and Virtues, Government and Religion*:

*"Still in nowadays societies, people are born in good or bad circumstances which decides whether they have the possibility to get good education, support for creating talents, even being accepted or not – and whether they have to work or not. Some people are born in even that poor circumstances that they need money for education, and if there is no money then*

*there is no education. Some other people are born in rich families, where they don't have to work to be a boss, but instead it's their legacy, and sometimes they are so rich that they even don't have to work at all anymore. This phenomena only appears since there are large-scale means of production accumulated in the hands of a few. But even worse, it's the fault of capitalism. [...] As long as capitalism exists, rich people should pay for the poor, but that is not enough, since the final step should be the complete abolition of capitalism, because when taxes decide about solidarity, it is still the money that rules the people and the rich people probably flee into other countries where they can keep their wealth.”<sup>9</sup>*

Now, we finally found the secondary ethics. However, there is still a gap between ethics and religion which I want to close. As shown above, in many modern religions God has three attributes and is a conscious Being. However, I also showed that there are religions where God is rather a natural force. Indeed, when religions developed, God was at first thought to be a force that from time to time evolved more and more with human attributes. Even in the very early Greek tales, gods were conscious beings that acted with forces to the Earth and only had partly human attributes. People mirrored their wishes on God, and thus God became more and more. However, if God is not a force, then why are human beings not allowed to paint images of God? Are they afraid that everyone has an own image of God? Indeed, God is the sum of all individual thoughts about God.

We can make the idea of God clearly when we take a look into Korean Daoism:

*“Interessant ist das Verständnis des Wuji in der koreanischen Kultur. Dort spricht man neben Mugŭk (무극) vom Hanŭl (한울). Ersterer Begriff ist die sino-koreanische Aussprache des Wortes Wuji und bezieht sich auf das aus China stammende Prinzip. Der zweite Begriff dagegen entstammt dem Koreanischen und ist sowohl im koreanischen Daoismus, als auch im allgemeinen koreanischen Verständnis fest verankert. Es kann als das „All-Umfassende“ bezeichnet werden aus dem Yin- und Yang (auf Koreanisch: 음양, Ŭm-yang) und die Fünf Elemente hervorgegangen sind.”<sup>10</sup>*

In Daoist belief, everything evolves out of emptiness (Wuji) – compare Buddhist shunyata (kong) – while the Highest principle is its opposite the Taiji. The term Wuji itself already reveals that emptiness means ‘nothing’. Everything comes out of nothingness and at the same time it embodies everything. Everything which exists is evolved out of it and born through Yin and Yang and the Five Elements. The Korean also call the Wuji as ‘Haneul’, which is the

Korean name for God, thus God is a product of emptiness. In Buddhism, emptiness is called *shunyata*, and teaches that everything is in movement and thus, nothing is permanent as everything comes and goes, and we cannot be sure of anything. However, Amidists say that one can seek refuge to go to a Pure Land after life, which comes close to Heaven. In the Primordial Buddha, all knowledge, wisdom and everything is encompassed, and thus fulfills the three premises. Even in the Abrahamic religions, they admit that there was nothing before God and everything was empty until God created it, and since God is the creator he is the one who decides about his creation and thus nothing is certain in this world, but only paradise is eternal. In Hinduism, emptiness equals the non-existence of knowledge. Emptiness is also transmitted into Judaism, where it plays a role in mysticism. It is no surprise that people talk about a Holy Spirit in Abrahamic religions, though spirits are attributed to forces. The word *spiritus* simply means 'breath'. To find the nature of God and its creation in Western tradition, I want to go back to Alcinous: "Alcinous (Ἀλκίνοῦς) clarified the three principles as such, that there is a 'first god', the ideas (which are the thoughts of the 'first god') and matter. Therefore, one could say that the first god had a plan in mind (an idea, a form) how to create and then created after this plan, where the universe is just an imperfect copy of this idea in mind, and the result is matter." <sup>11</sup>. The first god represents a kind of force which created everything, whether it is a physical force or a conscious force, we cannot say, since it is beyond us, and equals Plato's "The Good". However, everything is created after this first god, whether it was a natural force or the plan of a creator and they are manifested as his forms (which equals Plato's Idea of the Good). In the end, these forms become matter.

However, how can we grasp the Bible and explain God rationally without imposing the people to strictly believe in him if they do not wish to do so?

*"Philon is using the allegorical method in which he believes that all characters in the Bible are only symbols and allegories for behavior. For instance, they present duties, wisdom, perception, desire, knowledge, development, etc. In a Philonian view, Adam represents the 'nous' [reason], so to say the head [...], and Eve represents perception (aisthesis). We can thus assume that they have to be coined to the situation and shouldn't be understood literally. However, when it goes to perception, Philo advocates that the kosmos noetos (the 'purely mental world') and the kosmos aisthetos (the 'perceptual world') should be fully distinguished and not brought together. As a result, the mental can just be conceived through the mental and the perceptual just through the perceptual, which makes grasping God totally impossible for human-beings. If we see it in such a strict sense it is evident that if we*

*cannot conceive rationally and perceive at the same time, then we cannot perceive that God is there, while at the same time conceiving God through our mental reasoning. Even the idea that God can appear to human-beings is thus impossible. [...] As we cannot grasp God, according to Philon, and as the cosmos is strictly differentiated in subgroups (cosmos - Being - psyche - mortal/ immortal), there is a need for the solution of how God and the world can interact anyways. He therefore proposes the 'dynameis' (forces), so we cannot perceive God, but his force."*<sup>12</sup>

As a conclusion, we can say when God created the world, he installed natural law, but he did not make it visible to us, and whenever he thinks that something in the world has to be changed, he uses his force and intervenes. And if God does not exist, then physical force formed the earth and natural law existed out of itself, and the natural forces intervene.

However, since societal organisation replaced the natural law which is only valid in the state of nature, the primary ethics which can be subsumed out of the natural law remain valid for all of us. The secondary ethics which were introduced above are necessary in itself, since primary ethics demands for human solidarity and compassion, which means that we have to find a minimum to use our abilities wisely to support each other.

However, as Sartre explained correctly, human beings are responsible for what they do on this planet. I would say we cannot hope that God creates a second earth for us, after we destroyed the first. Thus, we cannot hide behind God, but we are never driven by God in our actions, we are responsible for our actions on our own. North Korean Juche philosophy teaches us that man is master of everything and shapes his destiny on its own through using creativity, consciousness and independence. Indeed, these three basic natures of man can be found everywhere. We are not animals, since we are conscious, we can do deeds according to our reason. We are creative, in arts as well in all kinds of production. It was not God who built the manufactures and fabrics, and we are independent Beings, thus we can act independently. This is why basic ethics is so important and why we should follow it and fight for it!



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**Notes:**

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12. *ibid.*