



Ancient Gods, Today's Fallacies

*A look at how ancient gods are camouflaged
in today's world.*

by Father Steven Balog



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Introduction

Let's start with an expression:

"There is nothing new under the sun"

Obviously, this expression is flawed if we factor in technology and our enlightened understanding of the world and humanity, so is this a valid statement?

 *Eccl 1:9*

How would you explain Eccl 1:11? What is going on with this statement and is history just irrelevant?

What about technology / advancement in the arts and sciences / enlightenment of humanity, where does it fall into the scheme of the universe?

According to Eccl, all is meaningless. Is our life on earth really that dismal? Is their purpose? How can life under the sun be significant?

 *Eccl 12:1*

 *Eccl 12:13*

 *Jer 29:11*

 *Mat 28:19-20*

 *Rev 21:5*

 *Gen 1:1, 26-31*

Why? What was God's intent? Is there meaning in God's work?

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Questions to Ponder

What are the key elements found in Gen and the narrative of the fall?

Describe your understanding of free will and God's omniscience?

Did man's depravity increase over time? Or was it total the second they tasted the fruit?

Does natural law exist as understood in Catholic theology and is there an inkling of truth / good in our nature? _____

Is it right to put the total blame on Eve? _____

Does satan bear responsibility? Or was he simply the catalyst?

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Questions to Ponder

How do you understand the wrath of God as it pertains to sin and the sinner?

Is the Holy Spirit the only way God is revealed? _____

An Atheist would claim not to believe in God, yet does his argument against the existence of God simply prove God exists?

Science is based on observation, we can't see all that God supposedly does, so how do we know God? _____

Explain the Glory of God? _____

Why would a loving God allow those created by Him in His image to sin?

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Questions to Ponder

What is philosophy? (In your own words, this applies mostly to Dick Cole)

Is the understanding of philosophy important to us common folk?

What is the relationship between philosophy and religion?

Why did blatant idolatry seem to disappear from Jewish worship during the two captivity periods? _____

Describe your understanding of Hellenism?

Name three ancient period philosophers.

Philosophy

At its simplest, philosophy is the study of knowledge, or “thinking about thinking.” The discipline is concerned with questions of how one should live (ethics); what sorts of things exist and what are their essential natures (metaphysics); what counts as genuine knowledge (epistemology); and what are the correct principles of reasoning (logic)?

“Investigation of the nature, causes, or principles of reality, knowledge, or values, based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods.” (American Heritage Dictionary)

“The search for knowledge and truth, especially about the nature of man and his behavior and beliefs.” (Kernerman English Multilingual Dictionary)

As used originally by the ancient Greeks, the term “philosophy” meant the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and comprised ALL areas of speculative thought, including the arts, sciences and religion.

Western Philosophy refers to philosophical thinking in the Western or Occidental¹ world, (beginning with Ancient Greece and Rome, extending through central and western Europe and, since Columbus, the Americas) as opposed to Eastern or Oriental philosophies. Western society strives to find and prove “the truth”. Eastern society accepts the truth as given and is more interested in finding the *balance*. Westerners put more stock in individual rights; Easterners in social responsibility. It has been argued that the essence of the Eastern world view is the awareness of the unity and mutual interrelation of all things, which are inseparable parts of a cosmic whole.

Western Philosophy has strongly influenced and been influenced by Western religion, science, mathematics and politics. As late as the 17th Century, the natural sciences (physics, astronomy, biology) were still referred to as branches of “natural philosophy”.

¹ Occidental: (adj) relating to the western part of the world, especially the countries of Europe and America: occidental cultures; Compare: oriental. Cambridge Dictionary <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/occidental>; September 8, 2021.

It has also influenced (and in turn been influenced by) the teachings of the Abrahamic religions (Jewish philosophy, Christian philosophy, and Islamic philosophy).

Eastern Philosophy refers very broadly to the various philosophies of Asia. Notable among these are:

- Indian Philosophy
- Chinese Philosophy
- Korean Philosophy
- Japanese Philosophy

The term sometimes also includes Middle Eastern traditions of philosophical thought, including:

- Persian Philosophy
- Arabic Philosophy
- Babylonian Philosophy
- Jewish Philosophy

The distinction between Western and Eastern is of course somewhat arbitrary and artificial, and in some respects even misleading. For example, Indian and Chinese philosophies are at least as distinct from each other as they are from Western Philosophy.

Ancient Babylonian philosophy can be considered Eastern in some ways, but it almost certainly had a strong influence on Greek, particularly Hellenistic, philosophy. It can be argued that Persian, Arabic and Jewish philosophies are much closer in nature to Western philosophy than Eastern, and the geographical and historical links are much closer.²

- ◇ Assyrians 721, 10 northern tribes taken into exile
- ◇ Babylonian captivity, 597- 581
- ◇ 539 - Babylon fall to Persia
- ◇ 537 -Return
- ◇ 507 - 380 Greco - Persian conflict (Socrates, Plato, Diogenes, Aristotle)
- ◇ 334 - Alex (Diogenes, Aristotle)

Classical period brings philosophy to answer many question but common folk

²<https://www.philosophybasics.com/historical.html>

Hellenism and Philosophy

CYNICISM

One of the first Hellenistic schools to emerge which emphasized denying established conventions and following one's natural inclinations. Cynic philosophers taught through deliberately shocking speech and action, thereby conveying their condemnation of traditional social values such as wealth, reputation, pleasure, property, family duties, and religion.

EPICUREANISM

The founder and namesake of the Epicurean school was Epicurus (341–270 BCE). Happiness is achieved through pleasure. Atoms, the Slight Swerve, and Free Will. The most influential aspect of Epicurus' philosophy is his view that morality is intimately linked with pleasure, and that our life's goal should be to minimize pain and maximize pleasure.

The gods exist in a special realm between worlds, and in that state they are happy and completely unaware of our existence. Thus, the gods are irrelevant to what happens in our lives and we should just set this worry aside.

STOICISM

Stoicism had the largest number of followers, and was often contrasted with Epicureanism, its closest rival. Stoicism held that the cosmos is governed by an overarching fatalistic law, and we best achieve happiness when we resign ourselves to fate.

The Stoics teach that God is unity, and that he is called Mind, and Fate, and Jupiter, and by many other names besides. As he was in the beginning by himself, he turned into water, the whole substance which pervaded the air. Just as the seed is contained in the fruit, so too, he being the seminal principle of the world, remained behind in moisture, making matter fit to be employed by himself in the production of those things which were to come after. Then he made the four elements, fire, water, air, and earth. . . . [The Stoics] say that all things are produced by fate. Fate is the connecting cause of existing things, or the reason according to which the world is regulated. [Diogenes Laertius, Lives, Zeno, 68, 74]

The most prominent feature of their physics, as reflected in the above passage, is

their notion of fate: everything in the world is determined according to the principle of divine law. Also, as the above indicates, they variously describe their notion of fate as God, fire, destiny, and, perhaps most significantly, logos, the Greek term for “order” first used by the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus.

The central theme of Stoic ethics is to live according to nature and resign oneself to what is fated in the world around us.

SKEPTICISM

A fourth major philosophical school of the Hellenistic period was skepticism, which, as its name implies, emphasized doubting everything, specifically as a means of becoming tranquil and happy. We should suspend judgment on every matter. This basic definition provides all the ingredients of how skeptics approach knowledge, truth, and even life itself. The starting point is recognizing that there are always two or more conflicting ways of perceiving anything. I say something looks red, you say it looks blue. I say something is good, you say it is bad. Every assessment that I make can conflict with a rival assessment. How, then, should we decide such issues? The answer is that we should not make a decision either way and instead just suspend our judgment.

NEOPLATONISM

Emerged during Roman times well after the Hellenistic period, but was still very Greek-like and developed in the context of Hellenistic thought. Neoplatonism holds that there is a single source of all reality from which every existing thing radiates, like light rays emitted from the sun.

- ◇ 4bc - 26ad Christ
- ◇ 26 - 90ish ad Apostles and initial spread of Christianity

Hellenistic worship

People continued to worship the Greek gods and to practise the same rites as in Classical Greece.

- Pluralism with addition of new religions
- Magic, oracles, charms, astrology
- Hero worship, leader worship
- Hellenistic Judaism
- Goddesses

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Questions to Ponder

Galatians 4:4-7 why is this passage so significant and what exactly does it mean?

What Roman accomplishments do you see as the most significant?

Rome had a unique approach to expansion why was it so effective?

What is your understanding of persecution during the empire of Rome?

Why did Rome fall?

For Doug Chambers: why were the dark ages so dark?

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Questions to Ponder

Both France and our nation had revolutions, what is the difference between the two?

What is Deism? _____

Is Progressivism good? _____

When do you believe culture and society became the foundation for truth and current philosophy? _____

How did the church fail in maintaining foundational standards in our world?

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Questions to Ponder

What does the bible say about slavery?

Where in bible is democracy outlined? _____

Is capitalism addressed in scripture? _____

Jesus taught redistribution of wealth, true or false?

Is the bible a work of justice? _____
