

The Flail of Genesis

Genesis is the first of the five Books of Moses of the Old Testament. The writings that constitute the Old Testament were systematically collected around the year 1000 B.C. and are probably based on earlier, in part mythological, sources.

The book of Genesis, which describes the creation of the universe, includes the fatal sentence: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen. 1:28)

Well put! Well put?

It is a lethal statement. By making the Creator into the mouthpiece for this devastating imperative, the authors of Genesis committed an unparalleled historical fraud. The Creator cannot have talked such nonsense; that is the sort of thing people do - people whose critical faculties are even flimsier than the claims of their arrogant ego.

And yet, the notion penetrated into the very bones and marrow of our culture, producing an inner attitude of *naive supremacism*² in those who took it for the literal truth.

Naive supremacism rests on the conviction that man is the crowning achievement of Creation and that the rest of the animate and inanimate world is there to serve him.

It is a product of the same logic that inspired the pigs in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* to their now famous maxim once they had assumed power over all the other animals: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

It is in the spirit of naive supremacism that the weak have perpetually been oppressed, their cultural heritage stolen, their possessions torched and their homes razed. It was the naive supremacist that turned other human beings into slaves, pronouncing them subhuman, declaring them heathens, infidels and unbelievers, and then torturing and killing them. It was the naive supremacism that sent fanatic missionaries to other lands so they could topple the local gods and destroy the native customs and rituals. And it was the naive supremacism that designated anyone who was different - by virtue of race, nation, religion, culture or skin color - fair game.

Naive supremacism is an ideology of interpersonal alienation, cold-blooded dominance, violation and exploitation.

Were it not for this ideology, our planet would never have known religious, national, political or ideological wars; there could have been no Cold War between the Communist nations of the Warsaw Pact and the members of NATO. Without this ideology we would probably have been spared the Gulf War, too.

Were it not for this ideology, Ronald Reagan would not have been able to view the Soviet Union as the "Empire of Evil" only two decades after the momentous meeting between Nixon and Krushchev - during which the two bickered like schoolboys over the advantages and disadvantages of Communist and Capitalist refrigerators.

Were it not for this ideology, the whites would never have robbed the Native Americans of their land, pushing them onto shabby reservations and driving them to the brink of annihilation. Were it not for this ideology they would not have forced the blacks of Africa into slavery and been able to get away with exploiting, humiliating, raping and lynching them.

Were it not for this ideology, the libraries of Alexandria and Constantinople would never have been burned down, colonial wars would not have been fought - and the present environmental disasters would not be occurring. The only reason for these disasters is that naive supremacists treat the earth's resources as objects to be pillaged, and the waters, the air and surface of the earth as their personal garbage dump.

Ideas are dangerous. They can develop formidable virulence. Ultimately they even turn against their own fathers, often after long being a boon to them. The day inevitably comes when every slap in the face rebounds on the person who inflicted it. Every mistaken idea, every idea not adapted to the world, will sooner or later take its revenge on the human race.

But how did human beings ever come up with the concept of naive supremacism so obdurately formulated in the book of Genesis?

There is no definitive answer to that. But there is good reason to believe that the potential to devise this fatal notion was programmed into the human brain, and that, at some point in history, Western culture chose to give functional preference to the dominant over the non-dominant brain hemisphere - contrary to both the purportedly barbarian thinking of so-called primitive cultures and to the conceptual underpinnings of Taoism and Zen Buddhism.

Assuming that this potential is really programmed into the basic structure of the human brain, we must assume that naive supremacism has wrought havoc in all eras and many different cultures. That we find its first explicit formulation in Genesis is no more than a historical coincidence.