

EDUCATION or INDOCTRINATION?

The ‘being’, whom I have learned (been indoctrinated) to refer to as god, exists in my thoughts and therefore in my physical brain; that is if thoughts need a physical brain to exist—I assume that thoughts cannot exist or just float around in what is called the external world, which is the world I see with my eyes (or perhaps more accurately, which my sense organs have been programmed by nature and nurture to perceive as external) and in which I, and I assume you, move around.

The above sentence already raises a myriad of questions. For instance, what is the relationship between the external and the internal world? Can one exist without the other? In my thoughts either possibility can. For most people this seems to be hardly an issue: the external world is the real world, where, in order to survive, you can conduct objective scientific experiments and live your daily lives with a reasonable degree of predictability and control; the effects of atom bombs are surely undeniable, as are those of medical science.

Broadly speaking, it seems to me that, at its present stage of development, in our Western European ‘civilisation’ at least, the acceptance of ‘external reality’ in practice determines the rules of human behaviour: they are predominantly based on materialism. ‘To have’ and to control that possession, and the means to grow it, are accepted as the ultimate aim of human life; greed is good and should be promoted. Finders keepers, losers weepers. Pragmatic (and economic) rationalism. Winners and losers. The winner takes all and makes the rules for the losers who become their slaves. The degree to which the slaves are kept under control depends on the controllers’ success in managing the ‘trickle-down’ economics, and the clever assessment and manipulation of the slaves’ wants and aspirations. The gambling industry is based on intermittent reinforcement: the very occasional big win being the reinforcement out of slavery. For the rest, keeping the masses happy and distracted is done by their sponsorship of blood sports and glitzy entertainment events and the denial of enlightening education, which is kept affordable only to the ruling classes. Nothing new, it’s all been said before; Karl Marx. Elon Musk and co. via Trump are the current proponents. *You* might call them villains. To maintain my aim of objectivity, and perhaps in the footsteps of Erasmus, *I* did not call them that. The idea of a world created and controlled by one or more gods seems to have been relegated to epi-phenomenon status of ignorance (whether wilful or not) and/or intellectual laziness or just wishful thinking. Only yesterday I read that outgoing president Joe Biden warned America is in danger of becoming an oligarchy; as if it wasn’t that already.

Perhaps it is a ‘reductio ad absurdum’, but the current concerns about the perils or otherwise of Artificial Intelligence¹ could lead to the conclusion that our world is an out of control ‘scientific’ experiment. You may well ask who the experimenter could be: some, perhaps clever-dick or over-ambitious or hapless, scientist? The Devil? The God of the Muslims, Christians or Jews? Note my use of the subjunctive.

However, no matter who it was, going by the evidence so far, I think it is doubtful whether this would or could make much difference to the predominant way humans interact with each other and their environment. Why should this interaction always be one of exploitation and battle? Type that into your search engine and see what comes out. Most likely complicated godbledygook in the guise of convoluted socio-political research papers.

If the god of my thoughts had any say in it, he/she/it (perhaps even a ‘woke’ *they*) would not reward blind worship and desperate prayers for a better world, in the manner expected of a benevolent (or malevolent) dictator or monarch à la medieval feudal system, where the noblesse was expected to be obliging if it suited them.

¹ Intelligence here means ‘credible information’, like that gathered by spies, which is rather different from what Psychologists mean by intelligence. A machine such as a computer can accumulate enormous amounts of such information and it can even be programmed to make decisions based upon this information. But the ‘wisdom’ of the decision depends on the word ‘credible’. Bullshit in, bullshit out, as they say. So, be very wary of the controllers of the media, especially the so-called “social” type. By all means pick their brain, but make sure your brain stays in charge! Would you trust a calculator that says 2+2=5?

The god of my thoughts is more like Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hassidim* idea of god.² If you have been (un)lucky enough to have read some of my previous 'pieces'³ you will also have come across Lucretius and Spinoza. You may also wish to have a look at rationalist/atheist philosophers for further background information. Just 'godgle' a bit and up come a very large list of famous and infamous ones of them.

My early education was based on Christian religious grounds. You could say I was 'indoctrinated' (brainwashed) from birth. I went to a primary "School with the Bible". My secondary and later tertiary education taught me to question ever more intensely. Even now I am still 'unlearning'. One of my secondary school teachers once said: the first 21 or so years of your life you send learning things, the rest unlearning those things. That has proved quite exhilarating, exciting, but also unsettling and often frightening.

My friend Franz was brought up without religion, in a basically atheist tradition, rather à la early pragmatic communist principles. We approach life's great questions from seemingly opposite perspectives, but usually seem to end up with remarkably similar positions.

It seems to me that the exploration of either perspective must ultimately lead at least to the serious consideration of the other, and also an exploration of rationalist 'free will' and religion-based 'pre-destination', as well as an examination of communism versus capitalism, not to mention democracy, autocracy, oligarchy etc., with conclusions left blowing in the wind.

How to translate all this into an educative system that is conducive to a way of life, a society, that ensures a 'healthy' environment for the survival of (y)our world? An environment where all can thrive.

What could be an alternative to the cynical Musk-Trump free-for-all bully-winners/losers-mentality? And in the Australian context: how can we educate the people who, in the footsteps of Musk/Trump, our alternative Prime Minister (Peter Dutton), seems to deliberately want to confuse by exploiting their presumed ignorance of the words "education" and "indoctrination"? Such a mentality leads to autocratic dictatorship, whether secular or religious, left-wing or right-wing.

What could be a creditable alternative to a system which is so regulated and government-controlled that just about all individual enterprise is stifled?

Perhaps a kind of social democracy which, rather than being based on the unlimited right to exploit for profit, is based on, dare I say it? an inner sense of morality and trust.

Inevitably I godgled 'cynical antonym', which along with 'trustful' also came up with 'gullible'.

Draw your own conclusion from that!

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January 2025

² The relevant tale is called "When it is good to deny the existence of God." The tale means to show that the ability to deny the existence of god itself has a purpose. In the specific case of the tale - the person who, instead of praying for someone just helps - the Rabbi suggests we act *as if* we alone can help. So, his acts are based on an inner sense of morality.

³ e.g.:

<http://danandkatinaspages.com/Thoughts/Thoughts.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A139%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C104%2C779%2C0%5D>