

Ix9 – Changing Ideas of Gods

Dear: My first goal for this chapter is to comment upon another theme contained within *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, namely, its depiction of the changing ideas of gods in Ancient Mesopotamia. Following that, I'll suggest that similar happened in other cultures (e.g., the Hebrew's changing ideas of "the gods", as described in the Bible), but I'll leave details for later chapters in this "Ix-excursion" and for later "excursions" (Qx and Yx). Finally for this chapter, I'll be asking you to begin investigating on your own (as a "homework problem"!) another case of a group of people changing their ideas of gods, namely, the Greeks, by asking you to read two books by Homer. But before getting underway, I should warn you once again about my incompetence.

Maybe an analogy would help. When you visited us when you were ten, perhaps you remember when we were up on "the hill" and you wanted to take "an excursion" to see the bleached bones of the horses and cattle. So, we left the main "road" and headed off on a "side road" leading to the bones. After we got there and you had apparently seen as much as you wanted, you then saw another pile of bones, farther on down a trail. So, we went farther, to see them too. Then, against my advice, you wanted to go still farther down that same trail. We did (silly me), and the trail degenerated to nothing. By that time, we were part-way down the hill, and rather than return the way we came, we cut across the desert to where I knew we would again reach the "main road". Maybe you remember my requiring that you walk behind me across the desert, while I beat the ground and the occasional sage bush with a stick, to try to make sure that the snakes and scorpions wouldn't bite a certain grandchild!

Well, Dear, similarly for this chapter: after my already having shown you (in prior chapters) a number of piles of "skeletons of dead ideas", I'm now proposing to lead you down a trail that becomes more and more difficult to discern. Therefore, Dear, beware: once I get off the beaten path, there are a whole lot of snakes and scorpions – a staggering amount of information (and ideas and opinions) – and not only am I not a registered tour guide, I don't have a big stick to beat the bushes! During my career, I studied topics in mathematics and the physical sciences; I know next to nothing about history (and biology and psychology and law and politics and...). So, Dear, if you doubt some of the stuff that follows, then good! *Caveat Lector!*

But since we're here, and since I know that the main "road" is not too far off, I'll proceed to try to lead you across the desert. Therefore, to begin, let me remind you of the portion of *The Epic* in which Gilga fought with "the Bull of Heaven" (Taurus) and threw its hind quarters (in the form of the Big Dipper) at the goddess Ishtar (Venus). Immediately below is Tablet VI of *The Epic*, quoted it in its entirety as translated by Maureen Gallery Kovacs.¹ For this quotation, as per usual, I've added a few notes in square brackets – and I haven't put all of what follows in quotation marks (because they would just confuse). In what follows, the question marks in parentheses (?), apparently reflect uncertainties in the translation; the ellipses (...) almost certainly represent missing text.

He [Gilgamesh] washed out his marred hair and cleaned up his equipment (?), shaking out his locks down over his back, throwing off his dirty clothes and putting on clean ones. He wrapped himself in regal garments and fastened the sash. When Gilgamesh placed his crown on his head, a princess [goddess] Ishtar raised her eyes to the beauty of Gilgamesh:

"Come along, Gilgamesh, be you my husband; to me grant your lusciousness. Be you my husband, and I will be your wife. I will have harnessed for you a chariot of lapis lazuli ["deep blue gemstones... with golden inclusions of pyrites that shimmer like little stars"] and gold, with wheels of gold and 'horns' of electrum (?). It will be harnessed with great storming mountain mules! Come into our house, with the fragrance of cedar. And when you come into our house the doorpost (?) and throne dais (?) will kiss your feet. Bowed down beneath you will be kings, lords, and princes. The Lullubu people will bring you the produce of the mountains and countryside as tribute. Your she-goats will bear triplets, your ewes twins, your donkey under burden will overtake the mule, your steed at the chariot will be bristling to gallop, your ax at the yoke will have no match."

Gilgamesh addressed Princess [Goddess] Ishtar saying: "What would I have to give you if I married you? Do you need oil or garments for your body? Do you lack anything for food or drink? I would gladly feed you food fit for a god, I would gladly give you wine fit for a king... [But instead, I curse you]...may the street (?) be your home (?), may you be clothed in a garment, and may any lusting man (?) marry you! [For you are]...an oven who... ice, a half-door that keeps out neither breeze nor blast, a palace that crushes down valiant warriors, an elephant who devours its own covering, pitch that blackens the hands of its bearer, a water skin that soaks its bearer through, limestone that buckles out the stone wall, a battering ram that attracts the enemy land, a shoe that bites its owner's feet!"

¹ Dear: Now that her translation has been published (as you can find on the web), it seems to be more difficult to find a "free" version. One is available at <http://www.ishtar temple.org/epic.htm>.

“Where are your bridegrooms that you keep forever?” [Gilgamesh continued.]
“Where is your ‘Little Shepherd’ bird that went up over you? See here now, I will recite the list of your lovers. Of the shoulder (?)... his hand, Tammuz, the lover of your earliest youth, for him you have ordained lamentations year upon year! You loved the colorful ‘Little Shepherd’ bird and then hit him, breaking his wing, so now he stands in the forest crying ‘My Wing’! You loved the supremely mighty lion, yet you dug for him seven and again seven pits. You loved the stallion, famed in battle, yet you ordained for him the whip, the goad, and the lash, ordained for him to gallop for seven and seven hours, ordained for him drinking from muddled waters, you ordained for his mother Silili to wail continually. You loved the Shepherd, the Master Herder, who continually presented you with bread baked in embers, and who daily slaughtered for you a kid. Yet you struck him, and turned him into a wolf, so his own shepherds now chase him and his own dogs snap at his shins. You loved Ishullanu, your father’s date gardener, who continually brought you baskets of dates, and brightened your table daily. You raised your eyes to him, and you went to him: ‘Oh my Ishullanu, let us taste of your strength, stretch out your hand to me, and touch our vulva.’ Ishullanu said to you: ‘Me! What is it you want from me! Has my mother not baked, and have I not eaten that I should now eat food under contempt and curses and that alfalfa grass should be my only cover against the cold?’ As you listened to these his words you struck him, turning him into a dwarf (?), and made him live in the middle of his (garden of) labors, where the mihhu do not go up, nor the bucket of dates (?) down. And now me! It is me you love, and you will ordain for me as for them?!”

When Ishtar heard this, in a fury she went up to the heavens, going to Anu, her father, and crying, going to Anrum, her mother, and weeping: “Father, Gilgamesh has insulted me over and over, Gilgamesh has recounted despicable deeds about me, despicable deeds and curses!”

Anu addressed Princess Ishtar, saying: “What is the matter? Was it not you who provoked King Gilgamesh? So Gilgamesh recounted despicable deeds about you, despicable deeds and curses!”

Ishtar spoke to her father, Anu [the sky god] saying: “Father, give me the Bull of Heaven, so he can kill Gilgamesh in his dwelling. If you do not give me the Bull of Heaven, I will knock down the Gates of the Netherworld, I will smash the door posts, and leave the doors flat down, and will let the dead go up to eat the living! And the dead will outnumber the living!”

Anu addressed princess Ishtar, saying: “If you demand the Bull of Heaven from me, there will be seven years of empty husks for the land of Uruk. Have you collected grain for the people? Have you made grasses grow for the animals?”

Ishtar addressed Anu, her father, saying: “I have heaped grain in the granaries for the people, I made grasses grow for the animals, in order that they might eat in the seven

years of empty husks. I have collected grain for the people, I have made grasses grow for the animals.”²

When Anu heard her words, he placed the nose-rope of the Bull of Heaven in her hand. Ishtar led the Bull of Heaven down to the earth. When it reached Uruk, it climbed down to the Euphrates...

At the snort of the Bull of Heaven, a huge pit opened up, and 100 Young Men of Uruk fell in. At his second snort a huge pit opened up, and 200 Young Men of Uruk fell in. At his third snort a huge pit opened up, and Enkidu fell in up to his waist. Then Enkidu jumped out and seized the Bull of Heaven by its horns. The Bull spewed his spittle in front of him, with his thick tail he flung his dung behind him (?).

Enkidu addressed Gilgamesh, saying: “My friend, we can be bold (?)... How shall we respond... My friend, I saw... And my strength... I will rip out... I and you, we must share (?)... I shall grasp the Bull I will fill my hands (?)... In front... between the nape, the horns, and... thrust your sword.”

Enkidu stalked and hunted down the Bull of Heaven. He grasped it by the thick of its tail and held onto it with both his hands (?), while Gilgamesh, like an expert butcher, boldly and surely approached the Bull of Heaven. Between the nape, the horns, and... he thrust his sword.

After they had killed the Bull of Heaven, they ripped out its heart and presented it to Shamash. They withdrew bowing down humbly to Shamash. Then the brothers sat down together.

Ishtar went up onto the top of the Wall of Uruk-Haven, cast herself into the pose of mourning, and hurled her woeful curse: “Woe unto Gilgamesh who slandered me and killed the Bull of Heaven!”

When Enkidu heard this pronouncement of Ishtar, he wrenched off the Bull’s hindquarter and flung it in her face: “If I could only get at you I would do the same to you! I would drape his innards over your arms!”

Now, Dear, if you wonder “What the devil is going on?”, then let me first respond that there appear to be multiple “layers” of stories here.

In the most superficial layer, the story appears to be just a tale in which Gilgamesh rejects the marriage offer of “Princess” Ishtar, who then goes to her mother and father seeking revenge. Subsequently a bull is sent to gore Gilgamesh, but he and his friend Enkidu kill the bull. In the next layer, this

² Incidentally, Dear, you might notice that this idea of storing grain, in preparation for seven lean years, predates – by at least a thousand years! – the idea in the Bible, at *Genesis 41*, which tells of how Joseph allegedly advised the pharaoh similarly and thereby gained power in Egypt.

story is seen as an astro-tale, with Gilgamesh being the constellation that the Greeks called Orion the hunter and the bull being the constellation near Orion that all ancient groups seemed to recognize as (and that we still call) Taurus the bull. During the course of this astro-tale, Gilga's friend (or his "better half") Enkidu rips the hind-quarters off Taurus (in the form of the constellation that we call the Big Dipper), and flings it at Ishtar, who is almost certainly the planet Venus, the goddess of love.

Digging into deeper layers, things get more complicated. In one layer deeper, the whole episode is seen as a god myth, nothing to do with people: Gilga the hero (Orion the hunter) is a god, "like a raging bull", but obviously he's more powerful than "the bull of heaven", Taurus. Also obvious is that the god Gilga is subservient to the Sun god and god of justice, Shamash, for upon killing Taurus, Gilga presented its heart to Shamash. In some ways, then, Gilga (Orion) is represented as "a son of the Sun god". That's consistent with what I quoted in an earlier chapter from Christopher Siren:³

The Dynasty of Erech [Uruk] was founded by Meskiaggasher, who, along with his successors [e.g., Gilgamesh], was termed the 'son of Utu' [or Shamash], the Sun-god.

Further, apparently a major theme is that Gilga not only spurns, he insults the goddess of love, Ishtar (and thereby, insults her father, the sky god Anu).

Still deeper, however, this seems to be an example of the type of astro-tale that I listed in the previous chapter as "2. Myths that use 'snap-shots' of 'stationary' stars to illustrate the story", in particular, "2a. Earth-generated myths 'transported' to the stars." That is, Dear, rather than trying to see "the Big Dipper" as the missing hindquarters of Taurus the bull that Gilga threw at Venus, it's more penetrating to ask: "What was going on, down on Earth, that led people to see this story being played out in the stars? And although in reality, of course no one knows the "correct" answer to that question, yet if you'll search on the internet (or in your library), I expect that you'll soon be astounded not only by the speculations – but that most of them seem to make quite a bit of sense.⁴

³ At www.pubpages.unh.edu/~cbsiren.

⁴ I should add, Dear, that if you dig deep enough (e.g., on the internet), you can find the suggestion that much of the myth about Ishtar (Inanna) may actually be a Type 3 astro-tale, i.e., an interpretation of some event seen "in the heavens". Perhaps a comet passed near Venus (Ishtar/Inanna), perhaps when a volcano's emissions had caused the stratosphere to glow red at dawn and dusk. If so, that may explain why Ishtar is said to have flowing hair (a comet) and why she also became a goddess of war. You dig; you decide!

Below, I'll try to give you a crude sketch of the picture that you can see painted much more clearly and competently elsewhere. First, though, I'd ask you to notice a couple of points, listed below.

- In some ways, it's rather surprising that Gilgamesh spurned the marriage offer from the princess [goddess] Ishtar (and thereby, indirectly insulted her father, the sky god Anu), because as stated by Thackara (already referenced): "We first meet mighty Gilgamesh as Uruk's young and unruly king, known chiefly for having built the walls of that city and its inner sanctuary, the temple of Anu and Ishtar." That is, after building a temple for Anu and Ishtar, why would Gilgamesh then spurn Ishtar?!
- But the entire story of Gilgamesh seems to be, in a major way, about the way he (and therefore his culture) changed. He started out as "an unruly king" (a "bull of a man"), mounting as many women as possible (including being the first to have sex with brides on their wedding night). Then, in response to complaints from the people of Uruk about the lack of justice dispensed by their unruly king Gilga, the mother goddess of creation (Aruru) molds Enkidu (a "natural man") from clay in the images of Anu (the father of the gods) and Ninurta (god of war and agriculture). And then, after being "civilized" by the "temple girl" Shamhat (or "temple prostitute", depending on one's prejudice!), Enkidu (who eventually become Gilgamesh's "better half") confronts and basically begins to civilize Gilgamesh. Consequently, the killing the bull of heaven (Taurus) by Gilgamesh and Enkidu seems to be a metaphor for the killing of the "bullying" ways of Gilgamesh – and the end of an era.

But actually, Dear, still more seems to be behind this astro-tale, dealing with the people's changing ideas of their gods, in turn reflecting their changing culture. To appreciate the resulting picture, however, it's useful to try to gain a more complete historical perspective – and a better "feel" for the enormity of the time-scales involved in such cultural changes.

To that end, let me remind you of the different "ages" that I mentioned in an earlier chapter. These ages are defined by which constellation of the Zodiac begins to appear just before dawn on the first day of spring. If you'll observe the stars this Spring Equinox, Dear, you'll see that Aquarius (the water carrier) will soon appear on the night before the first day of spring.

Thereby, soon (in a few hundred years!) it will be the start of the Age of Aquarius, ending the (Christian) Age of Pisces (the fish).

As I tried to show you in an earlier chapter, the change (in which constellation appears just before dawn on the first day of spring) occurs because of precession of the Earth's rotation axis (and therefore "precession of the Equinoxes"): in one Great Year (~26,000 years), this precession completes one revolution. Thus, 26,000 years from now, Polaris will again be on the Earth's axis of rotation (just as it is now) and will be the star about which all other stars seem to rotate. Correspondingly, with 12 signs of the Zodiac, a different sign will occur just before dawn on the first night of spring roughly every $\sim 26,000 \div 12 = \sim 2200$ years, and therefore, the fabled Christ (symbolized on many bumpers as a fish) was "born" on the first day of the Age of Pisces (the fish) – which is a central feature of the Jesus astro-tale.

Now, to try to organize the ideas that I want to sketch, I'll both use the "astrological ages" and suggest a crude measure for the general "awareness" of most people during each of these "ages". Thereby, one of the ideas I hope you'll appreciate is the astoundingly slow development of the human intellect "over the ages" and the normally astoundingly slow cultural changes. As a crude summary of, first, the "awareness" of people (or, better, the awareness of most people) in these various "ages", I suggest that it's analogous to the awareness of modern people at the different ages of their lives, roughly as shown in the following table.

<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Astrological Age</i>	<i>Awareness Level</i>
<i>Before ~6600 BCE</i>	Before the Age of Gemini	Infants
<i>~6600 - ~4400 BCE</i>	Gemini (the twins)	Preschoolers
<i>~4400 - ~2200 BCE</i>	Taurus (the bull)	Preteens
<i>~2200 - ~0 BCE</i>	Aires (the lamb)	Teenagers
<i>~0 CE - ~2200 CE</i>	Pisces (the fish)	Young Adults
<i>~2200 - ~4400 CE</i>	Aquarius (the water carrier)	Adults

Now, with those "awareness levels" in mind, let me speculate about what people might have "pictured" in the stars, starting during the Age of Gemini (the Twins – or the Age of Adam and Eve), between about 6600 and 4400 BCE (and, actually, during even earlier ages as well). I expect that, then, the

awareness of most people was similar to the awareness of modern-age infants and pre-schoolers. For example, as you know, infants have no conception of time – except that they know when it’s “time” to eat or “time” to have their diapers changed! I expect that similar lack of awareness of time was common before the Age of Gemini. In fact, even young children (corresponding, I assume, to most people during the Age of Gemini) seem to have little appreciation for time; for example, they rarely seem to appreciate when parents announce (usually with relief): “It’s time for bed!”

But somewhere around the age of two (which might provide a crude measure for the awareness of people at the start of the Age of Gemini), children begin to notice the difference between day and night. Somewhere between the ages of two and six, children express a strong preference for day over night (or light over dark), with many children wanting a “night light” and most children at least once being frightened by something during the night. Some children (such as certain grandchildren I could mention) might even sneak out of their bed in the middle of the night to sleep with their parents – where “it’s safe”.

That is, many people before the Age of Taurus (and during more recent ages!) were probably frightened by the nighttime darkness. I expect this fear explains why the Ancient Mesopotamians, for example, identified the Moon as a “good god” and darkness as a “bad god”. In fact, as I tried to show you in an earlier chapter, for many cultures the original “devil” was the dark. Thus, ideas about our culture’s Satan (as the quotation in the previous chapter by Massey suggested) were probably derived from the Egyptian “devil” Set or Sut, pronounced “soot” – with obvious relations to the dark and the source of our word ‘soot’.

As for when people might have first noticed time periods other than day versus night, I leave it for you to guess, based on your own “polluted” experiences! And I call your experiences “polluted”, Dear, because mine were – that is, “polluted” by our culture. Thus, although we were quite poor when I was young and therefore the “annual events” of my getting presents on my birthday and at Christmas don’t stir any earlier memories [☺], I do remember the “annual event” of Halloween, when if I’d just put a sheet over my head and go around knocking on doors, people would give me free candy! Also, I still remember the “annual event” of the first day of school. In your case, I expect that you remember similar “annual events” – and based on my experiences with you, surely you remember the presents you

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received every year at Christmas (i.e., at the time of the celebration of the annual rise of the Sun).

But notice, Dear, that such “awareness” of time periods other than day versus night was instilled in you by our culture; similar stimulations might not have been available for people during the Age of Gemini and earlier. On the other hand, maybe I’m wrong. What I’m remembering is the many “Cowboy and Indian” movies I watched when I was a kid. In these, the “Indians” would identify their ages as so many “summers”. If those Hollywood movies were at all realistic, then maybe people in the Age of Gemini similarly recognized “annual events” stimulated by annual events in nature, and this awareness might then have been transmitted to their children culturally.

In any event, maybe when I was a preschooler and certainly before I was a teenager, I do clearly remember annual “events” stimulated not culturally but by Mother Nature. For example, I clearly remember “the bass are running”: every year, maybe in May, someone who had been down on the pier would notice the bass, the news would spread “like wildfire” among the kids (the run would last only for a few days), we could catch a gunny-sack full of bass in just a few hours of fishing, and then go door-to-door selling them. And, too, I would definitely look forward to swimming every summer, and at least I could hope every year for enough snow, so that we wouldn’t need to go to school (on a “snow day”) and, instead, could ski or skate. In your case, though, I don’t know what “annual events” you might remember that aren’t culturally “polluted”: you went swimming in the winter in heated, indoor pools! To experience snow, you went to the mountains! But you did pick strawberries in the spring.

And actually, thinking more about those annual “bass runs” and my picking strawberries, I expect that people even before the Age of Gemini were keenly aware of time periods other than day and night: hunters would know about annual migrations of herds and birds, and gatherers would know about the annual growth of edible vegetation and berries. Consistently, I suspect that the Bible’s *Genesis* is quite wrong. It contains the statement (even in the “astrologically purged version” of the New English Bible): “Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to separate day from night, and let them serve as signs both for festival and for seasons and years.” This suggests that the “lights in the vault of heaven” were used by primitive people to identify seasons. I expect that, instead, the opposite is closer to what happened:

people identified seasons first (by observing cyclic phenomena in nature) and only later noticed that similar cycles could be deduced from the “lights in the vault of heaven”.

As an example, Dear, I don't remember when I first noticed even the Sun! No doubt I had been told (or quickly learned!) that I should never look at the Sun (looking at any “god”, not just Yahweh, would blind you!), but I don't remember ever noticing that it was higher in the sky during the summer than during the winter. I expect I learned that in school. Of course I noticed that it was warmer during the summer than during the winter (I wasn't that dumb!), but I don't remember relating the air temperature to the location of the Sun! Did you deduce this relationship by yourself – or did you learn about it in school?

But personal anecdotes and speculations aside, data suggest that by ~5,000 BCE, at least some people discovered relationships between nature's cycles and the location of the sun. No one knows how the discovery occurred. Perhaps it was related to the first steps toward the agricultural revolution: I don't know if it was the men who herded the cattle and the women who planted the seeds, but I expect so – and I expect that everyone who lived in what is now Egypt's Nubian Desert (but which 7,000 years ago was probably grassland) would be anxious about the annual rains. Similar anxiety no doubt occurred (and still occurs!) in Asia, waiting for the annual monsoons. That is, farmers always have been (and still are) aware and anxious about relations between the weather and their crops, fully aware of the planting season, the growing season, the harvesting season, and the dormant season. In any event, from recent archeological finds in Egypt's Nubian Desert, we have the first evidence that some brilliant person learned how to relate time to the annual movement of the Sun.

To find information about this archeological find, Dear, type “Nabta Playa” or “Fred Wendorf” in any internet search engine. Similar to the arrangements of stones at Stonehenge, England (which date from ~3,000 BCE, i.e., ~5,000 years ago), stones were arranged on what is now called Egypt's Nubian Desert ~7,000 years ago! As you can find on the internet, the “Nabta Playa site” has stones arranged in a “calendar circle” (of diameter ~4 meters), with pairs of stones marking the north-south and east-west directions, and one pair that indicate the direction of sunrise at the summer solstice. Specifically from the news report that I'm reading: “The centerline

of one slot between the slabs would have picked up the first gleam of the rising sun at the summer solstice.”

Defining the summer solstice may have been especially important for these early people, because that time probably corresponded to the start of their rainy season. On the other hand, maybe the summer solstice was important for these primitive people because, at the summer solstice at their latitude, the midday sun would cast no shadow – which might have been interpreted to mean that one’s soul disappeared! No one knows the reason for the arrangement of the stones at Nabta Playa; the only other data available are that, at this site, there was found “a sculptured rock resembling a standing cow” and “a roofed, clay-lined chamber... that contained a large, ritually killed bull.”

Now, Dear, I have zero data to support speculations about why these primitive people “ritually killed” or “sacrificed” bulls at this site. Maybe it was just their way of preparing for a feast – and a party! Maybe they were trying to appease some god or goddess – so that their shadows (their souls) would reappear. And maybe it was a case of “monkey see; monkey do”. That is, if these people had spent many nights staring at the stars, if they had “connected the dots” and seen Orion (or Osiris) killing Taurus the bull, then maybe by “ritually” killing a bull, they were just mimicking what they saw in the stars – especially since [in spite of what your dictionary (or similar) shows for the dates for each sign of the zodiac (i.e., not corrected for precession)] Taurus the bull would have been the constellation that appeared just before the rise of the sun on the first day of spring 7,000 years ago at this location, and just before dawn at the time of the summer solstice, Taurus would be almost directly overhead.

But I doubt that last speculation – at least I doubt that’s the way it all started. That is, Dear, just as you and I would tell each other what “pictures” we saw in the clouds, primitive people would see in the stars (which, after all, are just a bunch of unorganized “dots”!) only those “pictures” of things and events with which they were familiar. You and I would see a “picture” of a school bus or an airplane in the clouds, but of course, ancient people couldn’t see such pictures. Instead, they saw a man (Orion, Osiris, Gilgamesh) killing a bull (Taurus). That is, killing bulls (no doubt for food) must have been so common that people finally saw a bull being killed in the stars. Then, after the people “saw” this occurring in the stars, maybe bull slaying eventually became a “ritual”, performed as part of their “religion”.

In any event, the Age of Taurus started at about this time (~4400 BCE). During this Age, some amazingly aware individual in Egypt did discover, by himself or herself, a relationship between the Sun, the stars, and the seasons. I assume that it was a single individual who made this discovery, Dear, because that's what commonly happens: some brilliant person (an Archimedes or Newton or Einstein of the age, i.e., the first person who learned how to start a fire, make a wheel, proposed the idea of zero, etc.), makes a discovery, and then the rest of us "mere mortals" profit from mimicking or using the discovery. In particular, based on my own experience as a child, I doubt that, if I had been alive during the Age of Taurus, I would have noticed either that the Sun was higher in the sky during the summer than during the winter or that when the "dog star" Sirius first appeared ("barking"!) that the Nile would soon flood!

Anyway, more generally, it appears that within the different "astrological ages", many groups (at least from Ethiopia to Europe and across to India) had similar cultural developments, experiences, and organizations – roughly as outlined in the following table.

<i>Age</i>	<i>Major Cultural Features</i>	<i>Social Organizations</i>
<i>Earlier</i>	Hunting & Gathering	Tribes, Chiefs, Medicine Men, Force
<i>Gemini</i>	Agricultural Revolution	Villages, Elders, Shamans, Matrilineal
<i>Taurus</i>	Trades & Intercity Warfare	Cities, Kings, Priests, Patriarchal
<i>Aires</i>	Trading & International Wars	Nations, Prophets, Laws, "Justice"
<i>Pisces</i>	Businesses & Imperial Wars	Empires, Churches, Rulers, Sons, "Love"
<i>Aquarius</i>	Global Peace & Prosperity?	Individual Rights & Responsibilities?

Immediately I should add that certainly the scheme suggested in the above tables is crude. For example, some Ancient Greeks, during the Age of Aires (such as Hippocrates, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Archimedes) were more aware than the majority of "modern" adults! But maybe the above scheme will help you begin to appreciate the time durations involved, the backwardness of most people during various earlier ages, and at least a general idea of the evolution of societies through the ages. I should also mention that the above division of continuous history into distinct "Ages" is, of course, artificial: in reality, different changes occurred (generally slowly) in different regions at different times.

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With those caveats in mind and with the goal of trying to understand the above quotation from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (and later, to understand similar stories in other “holy books”), let me now introduce some speculations about the cultural changes behind such stories. My first speculation is that any group’s gods give a general picture (or reflection) of the group – because all your indoctrination notwithstanding, Dear, people created all gods; gods never created any people! As examples:

- If a group’s principal gods were beavers, coyotes, and similar animals, then the group probably lived in an area similar to North America a thousand-and-more years ago,
- If a group’s principal gods were turtles, fish, and similar, then the group probably lived near the ocean where it’s relatively warm, and
- If a group’s principal god was like a periodically erupting volcano, then the group probably lived near a volcano.

Similarly, agricultural groups during the Age of Gemini generally concocted various gods of fertility, city dwellers during the Age of Taurus had gods of their cities, and during the Age of Aires, nations (e.g., Hammurabi’s Babylon) had their god of laws and (later in this same Age) empires with their supreme rulers, for example, the Egyptian, Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires typically had a single, all-powerful, “universal” god of justice (e.g., the gods concocted by Zoroaster and by Ezra et al.), who was concocted in the image (or extension) of the ruling emperor.

My next speculation is that, as any group changed, normally so would its gods. An illustration, which I’ll outline in the “excursion” Yx, is the evolution of “the god” described in the Bible, evolving from Abraham’s alleged “protector god” (like a shepherd of his flock), to Moses’ (or Ezra’s) “god of laws”, to Isaiah’s “god of justice”, and to Paul’s “god of (his distorted idea) of love”. Similarly, relative to the cultural changes that are speculated to be behind Tablet VI of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, there seems to have been a major change in the principal gods of the culture, as it evolved first from hunter gathers (before the Age of Gemini), next to farmers and herders (during the Age of Gemini), and then to city dwellers (during the Age of Taurus). And actually, since the most-quoted version of *The Epic*

was written (by Sin-leqe-unnini) in about 1600 BCE, then *The Epic* also reflects changes during the start of the Age of Aires.

To outline what I mean, let me begin with some speculations on how some aspects of life must have changed before and during the Age of Gemini – and correspondingly how the people’s gods changed. Thus, before the Age of Gemini, it appears that many if not all hunter-gather groups worshiped gods who (in some manner or other) represented the environment: from gods that were (or who had the “spirits” of) various animals to thunder and mountain gods (such as the god of the early part of the Old Testament). Then during the Age of Gemini, when groups became more dependent on agriculture, their gods increasingly became more representative of the aspects and features of their new environment: gods of planting, harvesting, rejuvenation, rebirth, and so on.

Moreover, whereas hunter-gather groups probably relied on the strength of males not only for hunting but also for protection against dangerous animals, whereas agricultural groups probably depended most on the experience of women during the hunter-gatherer era and possibly on the work of women in the fields (and, besides, women, themselves, are more involved in rebirth, rejuvenation, and nourishing), therefore, generally the agricultural-based groups “worshipped” goddesses. That is, during the Age of Gemini, I expect that many of “mother gods”, “daughter gods”, “mother-nature gods”, “fertility gods”, and so on, were “worshipped” as the dominant gods (or, more accurately) goddesses. Thus, in spite of other reasons that have been suggested to explain the findings of so many “female fertility statuettes” (or “Venuses”) from this period, I suspect that the simplest explanation is correct: that they were symbols of female fertility.

As with the planting and growth of seed crops and the breeding of animals, so, too, with human sexuality. That is, with intellects of children and bodies of adults, the people probably felt few constraints on sexual interactions, save the constraint on sex between close relatives (which is almost certainly coded in our genes by natural selection, in turn derived from the relative difficulty viruses have “cracking” significantly modified genetic codes; i.e., genetically, there’s survival value in not having sex with close relatives). Otherwise, for people during the Gemini Age, their adult bodies no doubt provided them with sexual pleasure – and they might have been oblivious to the possibility that sex led to children! (Today, many ignorant teenagers and adults behave similarly.) It’s then consistent with this emphasis on planting,

* Go to other chapters *via*

breeding, and “love making”, that substantial evidence has been found, from many ancient groups, both of various love and fertility goddesses (and their male consorts) as well as various statues and symbols of the male and female reproductive organs.

Reflecting what we would now call “such promiscuity”, people in the Gemini era concocted various goddesses of love, sexuality, and fertility, known in Mesopotamia as Inanna to the Sumerians and Ishtar (or Ishara or Irnini) to later inhabitants (such as the Babylonians), in Egypt as Isis, in Greece as Aphrodite, and in Rome as Venus. You can find a list of more than 200 such goddesses of love (along with some “gods of love”, as well) at <http://wuzzle.org/cave/lovegods.html> – including the Germanic goddess of love, Freya, whom we still “honor” every Friday. If you search on the internet for “goddesses of love”, you’ll learn plenty about them – possibly more than your parents would want you to know! ⁵

Let me quote a little from a few such websites, identified below [and with some notes added in “square brackets”] to give you some additional ideas about such goddesses.

<http://www.sacredgroundscafe.com/events/ritualtheatre.03.html>:

The main goddess [of the Sumerians] is Inanna, queen of Heaven, queen of Earth; she combines the attributes of both later [Greek/Roman] goddesses Athena/Minerva (wisdom, warrior) and Aphrodite/Venus (beauty, sensuality, desire); she becomes the Babylonian Goddess Ishtar and the Assyrian one Astarte [and therefore the pseudo-Christian goddess of love, “Easter”!]

<http://www.ishartemple.org/history.htm>:

[Excerpted from *Sacred Sexuality* by A T Mann and Jane Lyle]

The history of the Temple of Ishtar

In Her Temples in many lands from Egypt to Assyria to Babylon to Crete to India, in Rome and Greece and many Celtic lands, Her Temples had Sacred Priestesses who were also called Prostitutes by those of “body-denial” religions [such as Judaism, Christianity, and Mormonism]. Her worship was in the arms of the Priestess who embodied and represented The Goddess(s). These worshipers are sometimes known as pagans.

⁵ By the way, Dear, if you should want to learn more about these goddesses, then search on the internet or you might want to read the book that I gave to your mother entitled *When God Was a Woman*. In a way, remnants of ideas about these goddesses are retained today in our ideas about “Mother Nature”.

A fundamental difference in the concept of worship is important to note: In the Temples of the old ways, people would go to the temple TO BE WORSHIPPED not to worship. Women would go to the temple to serve the Goddess to embody Her, to represent Her, to be worshipped as Her. Women would spend a day, or a week, or a year serving at the Temple as a priestess, as a sacred Prostitute, as a whore in service to the Goddess. There, they would be worshipped as the incarnation of the Goddess, as The Goddess Herself.

Men would come to Her Temple TO BE WORSHIPPED. Men would be welcomed and served by the Priestesses, and men would represent the divine male principal, the Horned One, the Sacred Bull, The God. Men would come to the temple to give their love and passion to The Goddess, and would receive the passion, love, and affection of The Goddess.

But some three millennia ago there came monotheists who refused Her Worship preferring instead to be diminished in body and spirit. They called Her [in the Bible] “The Whore of Babylon, who leads men into fornication.” They called our sacred sexuality “sin”, and cast shame on Her sacred Priestesses. They held up a “virgin” as the ideal that women should imitate instead of the sacred Goddess that they had always held as the most sacred image of Woman. This is essentially the state of things in the modern world...

Traces of Sumerian religion survive today and are reflected in writings of the Bible. As late as Ezekiel, there is mention of a Sumerian deity. In *Ezekiel 8: 14*, the prophet sees women of Israel weeping for [the Sumerian God] Tammuz (Dumuzi) [Inanna’s “consort”] during a drought.

<http://www.atheists.org/Atheism/fisher2.html>:

[A book review by Earl Doherty]

With this novel, Vardis Fisher’s TESTAMENT OF MAN enters an evolutionary stage and a mode of thinking which we can recognize as the childhood of our own. The long period of women’s supremacy over people’s beliefs and mores has given way to the ascent of men’s. Once men came to realize their role in producing children (which most cultural historians place some time between the ninth and sixth millennia BCE, resulting from observations which came with the domestication of animals), human society underwent a dramatic change. The creative powers of nature became symbolized in the human and animal sexual organs, and especially the male phallus. The latter became an object of worship, as did the sex act itself. The primacy of female spirits like the Moon gave way to that of those perceived as male; the latter took on heightened characteristics to reach the status of the first true gods.

Actually, during this Age of Gemini, children may not have known who their fathers were, as illustrated by the following, written by Alan G. Hefner for *Encyclopedia Mythica*.⁶

The fly was a predominant soul-symbol within many ancient religions. Many primitives believed that flies possessed souls of deceased persons, and by swallowing a fly the women conceived and bear children. Virgin mothers of Celtic heroes – Etain, Cuchulainn – conceived this way. The Greeks similarly believed that souls traveled from one life to the next in insect form; their very word for soul, psyche, meant a butterfly. As in the Middle East, Baal-Zebub or Beelzebub was “Lord of Flies”, because he was a psychopomp, his title really meant “Lord of Souls”. Such ideas and images indicate a very archaic mode of thought, which predates the discovery of fatherhood. Women thought they conceived by themselves. Both men and women were attempting to imagine methods by which the fetus entered the woman’s body.

Actually, though, I question the reliability of the assessment immediately above. As suggested by the second-to-last quotation above, since humans had domestic animals for thousands of years, it’s hard to imagine that they didn’t conceive that there was some connection between sexual intercourse and conception!

Be that as it may be, there’s evidence (which you can find on the internet; some of which I’ll show you later) that mothers rather than fathers probably worked and “owned” the lands and controlled inheritances. With fertility worshiped, and the most important gods female, societies were probably “matriarchal” (i.e., mother dominated, rather than, for example, the Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and Mormon father-dominated or “patriarchal” societies) – although it might be more appropriate to describe Gemini societies as just “matrilineal” (i.e., children “belonged” to their mothers – who possibly didn’t know who the fathers were – but the mothers didn’t exert overt “power”).

In any event and in general, these early agricultural periods were probably quite harmonious times. That is, in general, enough virgin and productive agricultural land was probably available to keep the people well fed. Consequently, there would have been relatively little cause for conflicts among different farming groups, and therefore, when goddesses were “supreme”, probably the people were generally quite happy and cooperative.

⁶ At <http://www.pantheon.org/>.

I'd even go so far as to suggest that, during the first few thousand years (!!)

of the agriculture era in any region, it was an almost idyllic time: a real "Garden of Eden", a real "paradise"! When people first settled in river valleys, probably there was little-to-no population pressure on the resources, i.e., there was ample food (from crops and domesticated animals). Further, constructing shelter was probably relatively easy (especially in the relatively warm climates of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and India). And notice, Dear, that this "paradise" was derived from an amazing scientific discovery: without understanding the details of how it occurred (e.g., as I'll show you later, even ~5,000 years later, "Saint" Paul demonstrated that he didn't understand how it occurred!), yet people had the essential knowledge that things grew from planted seeds.

I therefore speculate that it must have been close to being in "paradise" – at least for males! – during the Age of Gemini. As far as the men were concerned, women controlled two prime sources of pleasure: food and sex! Simultaneously, perhaps many women held the view that men controlled substantial pleasure for women: not only meat, but witness Ishtar's (Inanna's) assessment and statement:

When Gilgamesh placed his crown on his head, a princess [or Goddess] Ishtar raised her eyes to the beauty of Gilgamesh. "Come along, Gilgamesh, be you my husband; to me grant your lusciousness. Be you my husband, and I will be your wife..."

Further, when Gilgamesh refused Ishtar, he then recounted her exploits with her other lovers; as an example, there's his:

"You loved Ishullanu, your father's date gardener, who continually brought you baskets of dates, and brightened your table daily. You raised your eyes to him, and you went to him: 'Oh my Ishullanu, let us taste of your strength, stretch out your hand to me, and touch our vulva'..."

Insults to women, similar to those slung at Ishtar by Gilga, can be found in the Bible's cursing of women, e.g., those who "set upon" men.

Yet immediately I should add, Dear, that it's my own speculation (and reflects my own idea) that the Age of Gemini was "paradise"! Be skeptical of what follows; if you're interested, dig into details by yourself. And I admit that I probably exaggerate (for maybe it actually wouldn't have been "paradise" for a man to have essentially nothing to do!), but I expect that all modern men would want to at least experience such a paradise for awhile:

women (probably the original gatherers) probably did most of the work (in the new agricultural enterprises), while the men occasionally went fishing, herded some cattle, did a little hunting, and provided the women with “seeds” to have children!

This “paradise” probably persisted for thousands of years (yes, Dear, thousands of years!), perhaps slowly drawing to a close (because of overpopulation) by about 4,000 BCE (of course depending on location). And actually, during the enormous period of time “in Paradise”, the men were probably quite bored! During hot days, when the women were out in the fields working and after the men tended a little to their herds, they probably experimented with various hallucinatory drugs (from various plants and fungi, such as mushrooms, and from various “trees of life”, details of which I’ll describe in a later chapter). During the cooler evening and nights (with no TV to watch! and after providing whatever “stud services” were desired by the women), idle men apparently began staring at, wondering about, and telling stories about the stars.

And actually (as you can find on the internet and in many books), there are many suggestions that the agricultural revolution had a profound influence, not only on “domesticating” plants and animals but also on domesticating men! Earlier, during the “hunter-gather phase” of humanity, men probably dominated women, because the relative strength of men was needed to hunt animals and to protect the community from predators (including men from other tribes). Thus, men probably used their strength to rule women, based on the “law of the jungle”: might makes right. But during the first few thousand years or so of the agricultural revolution, during the Age of Gemini, when probably there were few constraints on resources caused by population pressures, men became almost superfluous.

Then, however, “troubles” apparently developed in “Paradise” (in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and India) roughly around 4,000 BCE (near the end of the Age of Gemini and the start of the Age of Taurus the bull). With increasing population in the river valleys, agricultural resources (especially good soil and water) became strained (and therefore, for example, irrigation canals were dug – which then led to more problems, with salinization of the soil). Such problems, you may recall, were suggested by the Sumerian clerics to be the reasons why “the gods” caused the flood, and in a simplistic way, the clerics were right: so many people died in the floods because there were so many people!

But more significantly (and with no influence from any gods), too many people straining resources probably caused friction and fights among farmers, feuds and conflicts among tribes, and later to wars between city “states”. In addition, in time, wandering herders (such as the Hebrew shepherds) and other nomadic tribes (probably still in the hunting and gathering era) migrated into the agriculturally productive areas. As a consequence of resulting conflicts, again the strength of the men (and city walls) were relied on for protection against “the invaders”.

As a result, the women who worked and owned the land, finally found “something useful” for the men to do, besides for occasional “stud services”, namely, for waging wars. In time, consistently, gods of war were concocted. Yet in some cases, the people just “assigned” new jobs for their existing gods; thus the Sumerian goddess of love, Inanna, became not only the Babylonian god of love, Ishtar – but Ishtar was also the goddess of war! In addition, though (at least, so I speculate), more male gods (e.g., of war) were concocted, and feuds were fought among followers of different gods.

Thereby, if a society had ever experienced the “paradise” of the Age of Gemini, probably this idyllic time evolved into the Age of Taurus, with a “bull of a man” protecting “his” land, “his” family, or “his” city. That is, the women probably sought support from stronger men, to once again apply the “judicial principle” of might makes right. As this evolved, so did the societies and their principal gods: some fertility goddesses also took on the role of goddesses of war (such as Ishtar), the leaders of the community were male warriors (such as Gilgamesh in Mesopotamia), families became patriarchal [i.e., literally, “men rule”], and women became second-class citizens.

That is, rather than continue to recognize women as representatives of the goddess of fertility, women were treated like soil – like dirt – into which men planted their seeds. That “scientific model” of reproduction, with women perceived to be no more than fertile dirt, persisted through Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Mormonism. There is, however, a curious variation on that theme in Judaism, namely, that similar to what probably occurred during the Age of Gemini, Jewish people still claim their “Jewishness” matrilineal (i.e., if your mother is Jewish, then so are you – regardless of who your father is). Maybe that continues to reflect husbands’ doubts about the faithfulness of their wives – another insult to women!

Meanwhile, as for how all such speculated changes might end up as a “story in the stars”, recall the suggestions about how all such astro-tales developed. First comes some observation on Earth: people die, giving birth to children is painful for women, snakes slough-off their skin (and thereby seem to be immortal), some herbs and fruits and “moldy stuff” can put people in trances, killing bulls provides good meat, the moon disappears for three days every month, the seasons change, the sun’s elevation changes... whatever! Next comes questions of “why”, and someone proposes an answer, in the form of a myth. The “best explanation”, the most “entertaining” myth wins – the myth endures, adopted as part of the culture. It’s repeated so many times, the story is “seen” in a bunch of dots in the sky! And thus the evolution and endurance of astrological tales. Similar, it appears, was the origin of this part of the Gilgamesh astro-tale dealing with Ishtar.

There is, however, a major additional complication in interpreting *The Epic* (and similarly, in interpreting the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon!) derived from when the stories were written and by whom. Never forget, Dear, that history is always written by the winners! In the case of the “holy books” listed, I’ll show you some of the (huge) complications later, especially in Yx (dealing with “Your Indoctrination in the Mountainous God Lie”). In the simpler case of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, however, we know that the most-quoted version was written in about 1600 BCE by the Babylonian priest Sin-leqe-unnini.

Stated differently, a major complication in trying to understand *The Epic* (and other “holy books”) is that the stories were NOT written by “historians” (concerned with faithfully determining and recording what actually occurred). Instead, the authors were “partisans”, promoting their particular “world views” and “political agendas” (i.e., their religions) – and usually doing so with what can generously be called “artistic license” and what is more accurately described as “priestly fabrications.” In fact, as I’ll show you in later chapters, even “the world’s first historian” (Herodotus, c.485 – c.425 BCE), even though he didn’t seem to be particularly religious and even though he claimed to give “honest” report, left us with some totally ridiculous stories claiming them to be “historical”.

Consequently, Dear, when trying to understand *The Epic*, it’s imperative that one’s interpretation be consistent with the perspective of a Babylonian priest living not during the Age of Gemini, nor even during the Age of Taurus, but

~600 years into the Age of Aires. Readers of *The Epic* should therefore expect that the author was looking back at “ages past” with disdain – even with disgust. I therefore speculate that Sin-leqe-unnini was writing his story to tell his audience, basically:

“Look how far we advanced Babylonians have come compared with the diabolical, dark days of the past. In the (Gemini) days of Ishtar, all women were whores, like Ishtar: she took her lovers and then just spat them out. The ways of women destroyed paradise. In the (Taurus) days of young Gilga, men were like beasts, like bulls, slaves to their sexual passions: there was no justice and no law – other than the law of the jungle (“might makes right”). But now, in the advanced days of our glorious Babylonian Empire, with Taurus the bull slaughtered, with it’s heart given to Shamash (the god of justice), we are like the mature Gilga: we have our laws, and nothing is more important to us than justice, the love of our family, and the love of our fellow men.”

Now, Dear, of course I don’t know if the above speculations are correct, but if you re-read *The Epic* from the perspective suggested, I’m sure that you’ll see its many episodes differently.

For example, consider the episode in which Gilga and his “better half” Enkidu go to the forest to get timber for the city gate – but to do that, they needed to kill the forest god Humbaba. Rather than seeing the story simply as their quest to get timber, the episode can be interpreted as Gilga gaining control of his sexual passions. Thus, whereas you can find on the internet that most groups in similar time periods considered the forest to be the epitome of fertility, it seems particularly appropriate that Enkidu and Gilgamesh would attack and kill the god of the forest, Humbaba (surely one of the “lovers” of the fertility goddess Ishtar/ Inanna) and cut down his towering cedar trees (surely a symbol of male fertility, i.e., a “phallic symbol” – a representation of an erect penis). Then, there’s the amazing episode (quoted at the beginning of this chapter) in which Gilgamesh is propositioned by the goddess of fertility, Ishtar (Inanna), and he rejects her. You may want to read it again and then search on the internet to get additional details about her many lovers – although beware, some of the stories may be “X-rated”!

One thing is for sure. If you do dig deeper, I can essentially guarantee you that you’ll be astounded by the depth of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. As a brief

summary, the version of the Epic by Sin-leqe-unnini was probably written ~600 years into the Age of Aires. It summarizes more than 4,000 years (four thousand years!) of history in a single astro-tale (written on a single Tablet!). It seems to portray people rejecting both the ways of the Age of Gemini (“free-love”, with women in control) and the Age of Taurus (“might makes right”, ruled by bull-like men), and instead, portrays people seeking “law and order”, “justice”, “friendship”, and even “love” – and in those senses, a more natural, yet civilized, life (as exemplified by Enkidu) ushering in at least a dream for the Age of Aires (and later ages).

Thus it seems that, in Sin-leqe-unnini’s view, the “setting” for *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is near the start of the transition from dominance of the nature, fertility, daughter goddess Inanna (but called Ishtar by the Babylonians), along with an entourage of gods that included the moon god, Sin, to dominance by male gods of power, war, and justice, including the god of justice, Shamash (the sun god and the son of the moon), Enlil (the god of soldiers), and Ninurta (the god of war). Correspondingly, at the start of *The Epic*, Enkidu is introduced as a “pure” man of nature, and during the course of the story, he becomes civilized by a priestess (or “temple prostitute”) of the goddess Ishtar; later, Enkidu also becomes a warrior. Similarly, at the start of *The Epic*, Gilgamesh is the epitome of male fertility (“like a wild bull”), and during the course of the story, he abandons his “sinful ways” (which, however, weren’t “sinful” in the eyes of the followers of the goddess of fertility, such as the temple girl Shamhat). Subsequently, consistent with his role during the Age of Taurus, Gilgamesh becomes the epitome of male aggression. But then, near the end of the story, he evolves into a thoughtful, peaceful fellow, with love of friend and justice – as Sin-leqe-unnini probably considered appropriate for his own Age of Aires.

Maybe more amazing still, Sin-leqe-unnini told the entire story in metaphors:

- With the help of his friend Enkidu, Gilga overcame his sexual drives: he defeated the forest god Humababa;
- With the help of his friend Enkidu, Gilga overcame his bull-like ways: he killed Taurus and gave its heart to the god of justice, Shamash (which for Sin-leqe-unnini was the sign of the end of the Age of Taurus); and

- With the help of his friend Enkidu, Gilga rejected the siren call of the (wicked!) love-god Ishtar (Inanna): he ripped off Taurus's hind quarters and tossed it (in the form of the Big Dipper) at Venus/Ishtar/Inanna.

And while I'm here, let me once again lament that your education was so sadly rudimentary: if you had watched not only all episodes of not only *Star Trek* but also of *Star Trek, the Next Generation* (STNG), I could now usefully point out to you an episode in STNG in which Captain Picard was forced to try to communicate with humanoid who thought and spoke only in terms of myths – a 24th Century (CE) Sin-leqe-unnini!

I would go even further to suggest that Sin-leqe-unnini saw something that will probably always be true: smashing the excesses of any age seems necessary to provide the building blocks to construct the next age. You can see that same theme running through the “holy books” of our culture (of course including the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon) – which, in case you thought I was entirely lost (!) is of course one of the main reasons why I've spent so much time, here, on *The Epic*.

In later “excursions” (Qx and Yx), I'll show you details; here let me just provide a brief outline.

- When Ezra and co-authors were in Babylon and assembled to write “the history” (cough, cough) of the Hebrews, they “played the same game” as did Sin-leqe-unnini: to create the Old Testament, they weaved together tidbits of ancient myths (many of them “borrowed” from the Mesopotamians!) to “tell a story” about how “their god” (who actually was the god of their Persian “masters”, as concocted by Zoroaster) “evolved” from Abraham's personal “protector god” to an all-powerful, “universal god of justice” (similar to the Persian emperor!), a god who, in the processes of evolving, quite unjustly and impossibly (!) killed all the other gods.
- When the various Jewish astrologer-clerics concocted their Jesus-god, a god who would reign during the new Age of Pisces, also they followed Sin-leqe-unnini's lead: to create the “gospels” (a small fraction of which now form the New Testament) they weaved together stories and myths both from the Old Testament and from a large variety of other “pagan” sources (from Egyptian, Greek, Persian, and Indian “mythology”) with

the aim of showing how, when sons would break free from the tyranny of their fathers (ending the age of the patriarchs) it wouldn't be "the letter of the law" (as mythologized in "the father god") that would rule, but it would be the "spirit of the law", to be represented by the new "son of god" (Jesus), who would reign supreme during the new Age of Pisces.

- When the followers of the (historical figure!) Muhammad decided to write the Koran, to unite the "pagan" tribes of Arabia under a single ruler (who, of course, would be a cleric!), they felt it was necessary to weave a tale of grandeur about the merchant, turned bandit, turned soldier, turned statesman, turned prophet Muhammad. Undoubtedly Muhammad was successful, and given the ignorance of the clerics, undoubtedly they attributed Muhammad's success to guidance from a supreme god. Not having one of their own, they adopted the Jewish-Christian supreme god, along with most of the crazy myths concocted by the Jewish and Christian clerics, and voila: the Koran!
- And though the result is pathetic compared with the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Koran, next there's Sidney Rigdon and his silly Book of Mormon. Convinced that a small offshoot branch of the Baptists (called "The Disciples of Christ") had "the correct" version of the Jesus story and convinced that the world was definitely in its "latter days", Rigdon stole a fictitious story about how America was founded by "the lost tribes of Israel", ruthlessly and shamelessly plagiarized the Bible, added his Baptist nonsense, and with the help of the well-known, convicted con artist and "money digger" Joseph Smith, he foisted off the Book of Mormon on his deceived parishioners – and the Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) was on its way to pollute the lives of my grandchildren (as well as the lives of millions of other children).

And now, Dear, with the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, maybe all humans will soon be finally able to put all such stupidity behind them. Maybe most humans will soon see that there "ain't no gods" – and there never were: there's only we humans, and if we're to solve our problems, we'll need to do it by ourselves, working together. Amazingly, many Ancient Greeks already saw that, and what I want to begin to do now is start toward showing you some of the ideas of these people, to whom most of the advances in our culture can be traced.

Again, Dear, the Ancient Greeks were amazing – and provide a stark contrast to the Ancient Hebrews. Let me try to summarize my opinions this way. Dear, of course you should read the Bible, to learn more details about your indoctrination; in later chapters (especially in **Qx**), I'll try to lead you through reading not only the Bible but also the Koran and the Book of Mormon. But to enlighten yourself, Dear, please read all the ancient Greek literature that you can find (e.g., from the internet), that you can fathom (!), and that you have time for (without significantly distracting from the many other important aspects of your maturing). If you will do this, then I expect that, the more you read, the more you'll become disgusted with all “holy books” and “sacred scripture” and the more you'll appreciate the amazing accomplishments of the ancient Greeks (especially in philosophy, science, government, ethics, and other fields). As Goethe said: “Of all peoples, the Greeks dreamt the dream of life best.”

In later chapters, I'll provide more details, but to summarize here (so that maybe you'll be sufficiently impressed to learn more!), let me just list the following.

- About 100 years before Ezra and co-conspirators put together the Old Testament, preaching about the need to put faith in their immortal god, the Greek mathematician Pythagoras (c.582 – c.500 BCE) stated: “Reason is immortal, all else mortal.”
- About 100 years before Ezra and co-conspirators wrote that their “almighty” warrior god would protect the Israelites and “smite” her enemies, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (c. 540 – c. 480 BCE) wrote:

It is wise to agree that all things are one... Combinations, wholes and not-wholes, conjunction and separation, harmony and discord – out of all things comes One, and out of One all things.

- About 50 years before Ezra and co-conspirators preached that their god knew all and judged all, the Greek philosopher Protagoras (c. 485 – c. 410 BCE) wrote: “Man is the measure of all things” and “Respecting the gods, I am unable to know whether they exist or do not exist”, and he is said to have written (the Greek clerics burned his books) that “gods are figments of people's imagination.”

- Approximately when Ezra and co-conspirators were putting together the Old Testament, with its racist claims that the Israelites were “God’s chosen people” and that all “contamination” by foreign blood (i.e., all foreign wives and their children) should be cast aside, Socrates (c. 469 – 399 BCE) said: “I am not an Athenian or a Greek, but a citizen of the world.”
- While Ezra and co-conspirators wrote the Old Testament, promoting their opinions about the “glory” of “belief” and “faith”, the first great Greek scientist and “father of modern medicine”, Hippocrates (c. 460 – 400 BCE) wrote: “There are in fact two things, science and opinion: the former begets knowledge, the latter, ignorance.”
- And approximately 50 years after Ezra and co-conspirators had finished polishing the Old Testament, the clerics were stumped by questions posed by Epicurus (341 – 270 BCE):

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent.

Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent.

Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil?

Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?

In fact, all clerics of today are still stumped by such questions, answering only: “God works in mysterious ways.” [Translation: “I dunno.”]

For almost a thousand years, the brilliance of the Ancient Greeks almost succeeded in lighting the way for humanity out of the darkness of religious superstition, but eventually the clerics won again (this time the Christian clerics), dragging the western world into the Dark Ages. Then, approximately 500 years ago, thanks to the Muslims (whose culture at that time was not yet strangled by Islamic clerics), the Greek ideas were rekindled, leading at least some people out of the darkness and into the light of science – though even today the poor Islamic people continue to be trapped by their clerics in the Islamic version of the Dark Ages.

But those are separate stories, outlines of which I’ll sketch in later chapters. For now, I want to examine the obvious question: what was it about the culture or other characteristics of the Ancient Greeks that led to their amazing achievements, while neighboring cultures (particularly the Egyptians, Israelites, and Mesopotamians – but probably not the Phoenicians

and the Romans) remained mired in their silly myths? The short response to that question is that, almost certainly, we'll never know the correct answer.

Of course, speculations abound. For example, maybe the Ancient Greeks achieved so much more than their neighbors because

- 1) The Greeks traveled more (because, as with the Phoenicians, the limited natural resources of their land forced them to trade); thereby, they were exposed to many different ideas from many different cultures, and/or
- 2) Individual traders became wealthy and could afford the luxury of taking time to think and of hiring other-than-clerics to educate their children; thereby, some people became “free thinkers”, and/or
- 3) The Greek priests didn't become so wealthy and powerful as the priests in Egypt, Israel, and Mesopotamia (because the Greek priests couldn't feed off the wealth provided by the land); thereby, try as the priests did (e.g., by burning books and by stimulating political leaders to restrict the “dissidents and atheists” with arrest, with exile, and with death), yet the priests failed to maintain their preferred *status quo*, and/or
- 4) The Greeks had Homer!

And if you're asking “What does ‘The Greeks had Homer’ mean?”, then I'd respond: funny you should ask, because I was just going to get to that! But once again, Dear, I need to request your patience, because before I turn to Homer (and ask you to read Homer's two relatively small books), I want to provide you with a little “background material”.

As for who Homer was, next to nothing is known. In various places, you'll find reference to “the blind poet Homer” or even to “the uneducated, blind poet Homer”, but as far as I can make out, no one knows for sure. In one of his books (*The ODYSSEY*, Chapter XII), Homer writes:

The famous bard Demodocus, whom the muse had dearly loved, but to whom she had given both good and evil, for though she had endowed him with a divine gift of song, she had robbed him of his eyesight.

Perhaps this is Homer describing himself: a blind bard who earned food and shelter telling (or singing) his stories while strumming on his lyre.

As for how Homer's stories were eventually written (in about 800 BCE, becoming the world's first "novels"), the only clue I found was the following. In "ENDNOTE 3" to his book *Against Apion*, the Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus (37 - 95? CE) wrote:

The preservation of Homer's Poems by memory, and not by his own writing them down, and that thence they were styled Rhapsodies, as sung by him, like ballads, by parts, and not composed and connected together in complete works, are opinions well known from the ancient commentators; though such supposal seems to myself, as well as to Fabricius Biblioth... and to others, highly improbable.

Stated differently, Dear, it appears that we'll never know how humanity came to possess Homer's amazing books.

These two books, *The ILIAD* and *The ODYSSEY*, deal with the Trojan War and its aftermath, and to cloud the issue even further, when (or even if) the Trojan War occurred and where Troy was (if it existed) is still under debate, as you can find on the internet. Yet, the preponderance of opinion seems to be that Troy was on the coast of Asia Minor and the Trojan War occurred in about 1200 BCE, roughly the time when Moses allegedly led the Israelites out of Egypt.

Thus, Dear, to summarize: maybe one of the main reasons why Greeks made such amazing advances was because they had some possibly fictitious stories by some unknown, uneducated, and blind author, who (I hope you'll come to agree) saw farther than any story teller has ever seen – with the possible exception of the author of the most famous version of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Sin-leqe-uninni, and a similarly unknown and rather poorly educated author by the name of William Shakespeare!

But before turning to Homer's books, I should add a little more about "the culture setting" for his stories. The Greek civilization developed slowly – with many setbacks – in, near, and associated with what is modern-day Greece. Now, Dear, there's "no way" that I can describe in a few paragraphs the history of the development of the Greek civilization; therefore, if it interests you, I encourage you to explore on the internet – where you'll find enough to keep you very busy for months, if not years, if

not the rest of your life! Here, let me just mention a few points that I'll want to use, mainly taken from the book *Antiquity Online* by Frank E. Smitha.⁷

There is substantial evidence to support the idea that the Ancient Greeks started off pretty much the same as other people in the Middle East. Archeological data reveal that farming occurred in Greece as long ago as 6,000 BCE, roughly the same time as farming was established in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Then, roughly 4,000 years later (!), in about 2,000 BCE (roughly the time suggested for when the Hebrews migrated into Mesopotamia from the mountainous headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates River), a new group of people moved south into Greece (possibly also from the Black Sea area). These people are now known as the Mycenae Greeks.

Certainly the developments of the Mycenae Greeks depended on earlier accomplishments by others. In particular, the developments in Greece were strongly impacted by the developments of a sea-faring people, the Minoans (who lived on the island of Crete and from whom the Greeks learned writing and shipbuilding) and by the developments in Egypt (which in turn were influenced by those in Mesopotamia). Yet, without large river valleys, such as in Egypt and Mesopotamia, apparently no large cities developed in Greece until about the time of Moses (~1200 BCE) – if he ever existed.

Similar to other Indo-Europeans, the Mycenae Greeks had a huge number of gods and a corresponding huge number of myths “explaining” relations between cause and effect. Perhaps as a result of this invasion of the original inhabitants of Greece by the Mycenae Greeks (with their “new gods”), the genesis myths of the Greeks describe the “overthrow” of the old gods (the Titans) by a new groups of gods (who were said to live on Mount Olympus), with the “chief god” of the Olympian gods being Zeus, a “father god” of the sky. Thus again, in Greece as elsewhere, there were changing ideas of “the gods.”

Now, Dear, though I don't plan to review the genesis, flood, and similar myths of the Ancient Greeks, yet I would encourage you to explore some of them by yourself. The reason why I encourage you is not, of course, because I think there's any truth to any of these silly stories, but because (as with the Bible's myths), these stories are a part of our culture, and it will help you to know some of the details about what other people might

⁷ Available at <http://fsmitha.com/h1/>.

mention. For example, when someone says, “that’s his Nemesis”, or “he has an Oedipus complex”, or “like Icarus, he flew too high”, then it would be good if, when you were about the age you are now (!), you had gone to the internet, searched for “Nemesis”, Oedipus”, and “Icarus”, and had read the original Greek myths.

If you want to explore further, then go to www.perseus.tufts.edu (where, of course, “Perseus” is another famous Greek god, already mentioned in association with “Pandora’s Box” – another Greek myth). At the Perseus website, you’ll find Hesiod’s book entitled *Theogony* (from which, in earlier chapters, I already took a few quotations). This book is one of the world’s first books (written ~700 BCE, when paper became quite-readily available); the title, *Theogony*, is derived from the Greek word for ‘god’, *theo*, and the Greek word *gonia* “meaning to be born”; thus, *theogony* literally means “the birth (or genealogy) of the gods”. In this book, Hesiod summarized existing myths about the gods (and probably added some of his own “coloring” to existing myths). And if you do explore this website, Dear, I hope you’ll pause for a minute to thank all the humans who made it possible for you to have a 2700-year-old book appear before you almost instantaneously, translated and in perfect condition, at a total effort to you of only a few clicks of your mouse!

As you can find, Hesiod began his description of the Greek genesis myth as follows:

In truth [which is a rather loose use of the word “truth” – but Hesiod was a mystic!] at first Chaos came to be, but next wide-bosomed Gaia [Earth], the ever-sure foundation of all the deathless ones who hold the peaks of snowy Olympus, and dim Tartarus in the depth of the wide-pathed Earth, and Eros (Love), fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them.

Thus, Dear (in case you missed the details in Hesiod’s long sentence!), according to the Greeks, at first there were three self-made “gods”: Chaos, Earth, and Love. In addition, there was Tartarus, but later the myth will suggest that this is a place beneath the Earth, rather than another god. From then on, the story becomes complicated, as you can read for yourself.

Rather than my continuing to quote the details from Hesiod, let me quote from <http://www.classicsunveiled.com/mythnet/html/titan.html>, where subsequent (wild!) events are summarized [to which I’ve added a few notes]:

Gaea [or Gaia] was Mother Earth. She mated with her son Uranus to produce the remaining Titans [i.e., the first gods]. Gaea seemed to have started as a Neolithic [New Stone Age] earth-mother worshipped before the Indo-European [Mycenae] invasion that eventually led to the Hellenistic civilization.

Uranus was the sky god and first ruler. He was the son of Gaea, who created him without help. He then became the husband of Gaea [the gods apparently had no trouble with incestuous relations!], and together they had many offspring, including the Cyclopes, the Hecatoncheires, and twelve of the Titans...

Cronus [Time] was the ruling Titan who came to power by castrating his Father Uranus [a real great son!]. His wife was Rhea. Their offspring were the first of the Olympians. To insure his safety, Cronus ate each of the children as they were born. [Nice father!] This worked until Rhea, unhappy at the loss of her children, tricked Cronus into swallowing a rock, instead of Zeus. [A better mother than wife!] When he grew up, Zeus would revolt against Cronus and the other Titans, defeat them, and banish them to Tartarus in the underworld. Cronus managed to escape to Italy, where he ruled as Saturn. The period of his rule was said to be the golden age on earth, a time of peace and happiness that was honored by the Saturnalia feast. During the golden age, the people of the time had no need for laws or rules; everyone did right and as such, there was no need.

So, Dear, if you have any desire to keep track of all this silliness [although to those Greeks who bought this stuff, it was, of course, very serious business – just as all religions are still sold today!], there's Saturn again, now as the original Titan Cronus (Time), whom you still "honor" every Saturday!

On the internet you can find, for yourself, "genealogy" (or "theogony") charts of the hundreds of Greek gods and also, possibly thousands of Greek myths – about how humans were first created, about a world-wide flood and the repopulation of the Earth, etc. I don't want to go into the genesis and floods myths, here, and I don't encourage you to read them, Dear, because they're just as silly as the Egyptian, the Mesopotamian, and therefore the Hebrew genesis and flood myths – and no one "in his right mind" takes any of these myths seriously! Yet, I do continue to encourage you to read other Greek myths (e.g., about Nemesis, Oedipus, Icarus, and others that continue to be referenced in our culture) – and I especially want you to read the mythical stories related to the Trojan war that were written by Homer.

The (possible mythical) setting for the Trojan war is the following. At about the time (~1200 BCE), when Moses and his group reportedly left Egypt, Greeks from a number of cities (including Athens and Sparta), led by each

city's king (including Agamemnon, Achilles, Menelaus, and Ulysses) launched an armada of 1,000 ships across the Adriatic Sea to invade the city of Troy. Ostensibly, their mission was to rescue Helen ("the face that raised a thousand ships"), who was wife of the king of Sparta (Menelaus); she may have been abducted by a fellow by the name of Paris of Troy – but she may have gone willingly, and meanwhile, apparently these early Greeks needed little incentive to raid a city for its "booty", which included the taking of women and other slaves.⁸

In any event, the invasion of Troy was the "stuff of legends", and the stories about it were apparently recited for centuries, no doubt growing in fancifulness with each retelling (just as the stories about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt were undoubtedly "embellished" with each retelling). Finally, in about 700 BCE, about the time when the first stories of the Bible were recorded, the Greek story was recorded in two "epic poems", *The ILAYD* and *The ODDESSY*.⁹

Now, Dear, if you wonder why I went into all that detail (and note that I plan to go into much more detail in the next chapter!), let me summarize my response this way: I think it would be an enormous advance for our culture if we permitted no one to read the Bible until after reading *The ILAYD* and *The ODYSSEY*, for although these books may seem silly to us, they are the first books written in our culture, and reading them before reading the Bible provides the best way to gain perspective on the stories in the Bible. And besides, they sure are a lot more fun! I therefore wish, Dear, that soon you'll take a break from reading this book, and read both of Homer's books, each of which will take you about a day to read. You can find them at many locations on the internet; just type in "Homer" or the book titles in one of the internet "search engines"; for example, they're at www.mit.edu/classics.

⁸ Actually, Dear, there's more here that you might want to explore. It seems clear that, as each group emerged from the "hunter-gatherer" stage, the hunters tried to continue their old ways. When hunters encounter some "prey", they consider it "theirs for the taking". Similarly, it appears that, throughout the world, when groups of people encountered other groups, a common reaction (maybe even a dominant reaction) was to treat the other group as "prey". Thus, the Greeks (Israelites, Vikings, and so many others) seemed to be totally oblivious to the concept that the raided groups were also human, apparently considering the raided groups as racial inferiors. Such horror continued for hundreds if not thousands of years.

⁹ Dear: I've typed the titles of these two books, *The ILAYD* and *The ODDESSY*, in capital letters, because otherwise, if typed as *The Ilayd* and *The Oddessy*, the word *Ilayd* is hard to pronounce – as if it starts with two capital i's or two lower case l's!

And I said “soon”, Dear, because there’s one more point that I want to mention, which may simplify a potential complication, namely, the most readily-available translation of Homer’s books is by Samuel Butler, who apparently translated not from a Greek version but from a Roman version (i.e., written in Latin) and who kept the Roman names of all the gods (the Romans adopted essentially all the Greek gods, but gave them different names). Thus, in Butler’s translation, the principal god doesn’t have his Greek name, Zeus, but his Roman name Jove (whom others Roman authors call Jupiter). And though, “by Jove”, that might be annoying to the Greeks and to many historians, I trust that it won’t be much of a distraction to you. Incidentally, another potential distraction is that Butler used the Latin name for the principal character of the second book, (i.e., *The ODYSSEY*), namely, Ulysses, whereas his Greek name is Odysseus (and therefore the name of the book and the origin of the English word ‘odyssey’, meaning “a long series of travels and adventures”).

But a potential complication, which may bother you, is Homer’s identification of so many gods! Therefore, let me list here the names and “jurisdictions” of the principal gods (taken from various websites).¹⁰ In this list I’ve tried to identify all the gods with both with their Greek and Roman names (taken from other websites, because you certainly would have a safe bet if you wagered that I don’t know all this stuff!).

- Zeus (the Roman god Jove or Jupiter) was the head of the gods, and the spiritual father of all the other gods and people.
- Hera (the Roman goddess Juno) was Zeus's (or Jove's) wife, and also the queen of heaven and the guardian of marriage.
- Hephaestus (also written Hephaistos; the Roman god Vulcan) was god of fire and metalworkers.
- Athena (also Athene; the Roman goddess Minerva) was the goddess of wisdom and war and official patron of the city named after her, i.e., Athens.
- Apollo (also called Apollo by the Romans) was “son of god” (i.e., son of Zeus) and was the god of light (a sun god as well as a son god!), poetry, prophecy, and music.
- Artemis (the Roman goddess Diana) was the goddess of wildlife and the moon.
- Ares (the Roman god Mars) was the god of war.

¹⁰ See, especially, http://www.windows.ucar.edu/cgi-bin/tour_def/mythology/myths.html.

- Aphrodite (the Roman goddess Venus) was the goddess of love.
- Hesti (also Hestia; the Roman goddess Vesta) was the goddess of the earth.
- Hermes (the Roman god Mercury) was the messenger of the gods and ruler of science and invention.
- Poseidon (the Roman god Neptune) was the ruler of the sea who, with his wife Amphitrite (also called Amphitrite by the Romans), led a group of less important sea gods, such as the Nereids and Tritons.
- Demeter (the Roman goddess Ceres), the goddess of agriculture, was associated with the earth.
- Hades (the Roman god Pluto) an important god but not generally considered an Olympian, ruled the underworld, where he lived with his wife, Persephone (the Roman goddess Proserperina). The underworld was a dark and mournful place located at the center of the earth, populated by the souls of the dead.
- Dionysus (the Roman god Bacchus) was the god of wine and pleasure, and as a result was one of the most popular gods. Unsurprisingly, there were many festivals devoted to him. Dionysus was accompanied by a host of creatures called satyrs (creatures with the legs of a goat and the upper body of a monkey or human), centaurs (the head and torso of a man and the body of a horse), and nymphs (beautiful young fairy-like women).

In case you do plan to embark, now, on reading Homer, Dear, let me add a few other comments that I hope will help you. First, don't forget that, in large measure, I'm inviting you to read Homer for the fun of it! Therefore, don't worry that someone will be testing you on your reading assignment! Further, don't let the huge number of characters in his stories bother you: if the person is important to the story, Homer will mention his name again – and again, and again! In fact, even if you hardly remember any of the names, it doesn't really matter – just “go with the flow”, maybe reading more carefully only where the story interests you. And while reading Homer's books, Dear, please don't forget that they were written ~300 years before all the “books” of the Old Testament were assembled, and ~1,000 years before the “gospels” of the New Testament were written!

Moreover, there's this. Arguably, the three greatest writers in “the Western world” were Sin-leqe-unnini, Homer, and Shakespeare. Therefore, after you get some exercise, I strongly encourage you to read Homer.

* Go to other chapters *via*