

Rebecca Stanton

Postscript to Plato; Genesis



Nov 11, 2014 5:33 PM

In keeping with our habit of "interleaving" the texts on the syllabus, I'd like to begin class on Thursday with one final discussion of the *Symposium*, revolving around the question I asked at the end of Tuesday's class: **does Alcibiades's drunken entrance and impassioned speech (a) erode the credibility of Diotima's model of "love" as a philosopher's "staircase" to enlightenment (and contemplation of Platonic forms), or (b) strengthen it?** This is a genuine question of interpretation: in other words, it is a question that *doesn't have an obvious answer* (or, indeed, a single "correct" answer) but which is obviously important and compelling, and which can only be answered by analyzing textual evidence.

Here are a few interesting (and diverse) views from the last blog thread:

Erin: Socrates cannot come to love Alcibiades, as he cannot simply love the bodily and physical beauty of one man, but he is open to the love and beauty of all things virtuous. . . . Alcibiades cannot fully grasp this, as he himself is the young and physical lover Socrates had discussed -- the lover who is only beginning his journey to obtain true beauty. Alcibiades admits he seeks wisdom, yet cannot change his ways, proving his immaturity and inability to attain the divinity that Socrates possesses.

Alex S.: Being drunk, Alcibiades feels no inhibitions about what he can and can't say, as seen by his statement, "There's truth in wine when the slaves have left" — and when they're present, too" (217E). But what he does in fact say seems to be the most important truth of the night, that Socrates is chased by many young men for his wisdom and thus has taken up the role of the beloved rather than lover, despite his age and ugliness.

Gabe: When Alcibiades rudely interrupts, it not only provides a comic episode because of his drunken actions, but also provides an opposing force to Socrates' logical philosopher's mind.

Cansu: I think it's very sensible that Alcibiades gets the last words on Love, since he is the one who suffers from it so greatly that in his drunken state, he needs to pour out his thoughts and feelings for Socrates. Alcibiades is the only symposiast who speaks of a concrete stage of Love, as opposed to others whose words are abstract. . . . Since Alcibiades suffered as a victim of Love, he is capable of presenting a true understanding of it.

Tyler: Alcibiades gets to go last because he has the most genuine description of love and that's what Plato wants us to be left with. Alcibiades talks from the heart, speaking of his own love for Socrates, making what he said the best description of love, since he has lived with it. . . . Plato has him [speak] last because that is the [speech] he wants us to remember the most.

Stephanie: Alcibiades gets the last word on Love because he is too drunk to really think logically. Therefore, Alcibiades truly is able to speak from the heart without his mind interfering. He is placed right after Socrates because it increases the contrast between the logic behind Socrates and the true emotion from Alcibiades. . . . Finally, Socrates is the one who is more knowledgeable about love because he can distinguish between real love and love truly just based on thirst for knowledge.

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GENESIS: The other side of the "Western" coin

With Genesis, we leave classical Athens behind at last, and with it (for now) the "Greco-Roman" strand of "western tradition," from which we derive many of our ideas about art, genre, history, and science. Genesis represents our first text from the "Judaean-Christian" strand of the tradition, from which we derive most of our



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ideas about ethics and cosmology. One aspect of the Hebrew texts that creates an immediate contrast with the Greek ones is the nature of the Hebrew God: unlike the Greek Gods, "He" has no backstory, no youth, no history of struggle with previous gods (e.g. Zeus vs. the Titans) or opposing ones (e.g. "pro-Greek" vs. "pro-Trojan" Olympians). In fact, his **only** struggle seems to be with his human creatures. The radicality of this God-concept goes some way to explaining why the Hebrew nation rapidly became incomprehensible to the other tribes/civilizations of the ancient world.

Note that although it is a theological text, Genesis is like the Greek texts we read in that it uses **narrative** (rather than direct preaching or evangelizing) as the vehicle for its message. Because the text contains no outright statement about how it is to be read, its meaning can be accessed **ONLY** through the kinds of strategies of reading and interpretation that we have been developing in this class. Pretty cool, no?

History

The genesis of Genesis (that is, the origins of the text) remain somewhat obscure, not to mention controversial, since the book remains a fundamental devotional text for several major religions. For what it's worth, contemporary scholarship attributes the authorship of Genesis to three main sources, each referred to by an initial letter. In chronological order, these are:

- J (the author who refers to the deity as Yahweh [Jehovah]; working ca. 10th or 9th century B.C.E.)
- E (the author who refers to the deity as Elohim; working about a century after J)
- P (thought to be a committee of Priests, who added the genealogical and legal elements to the stories set down by J and E).

Thus, for example, the first Creation story (Gen. 1:1-2:4) is thought to be the work of P, as are the genealogies in Gen. 5 and the account of the Noahite Covenant in Gen. 9; whereas the remainder of the Primeval Cycle (Gen. 1-11) is thought to be the work of J. In the Patriarchal Cycle (Gen. 12-50), the bulk of the narrative is shared by J and E, with frequent interpolations by P.

Fascinating as these questions of authorship may be, however, they are essentially irrelevant for our purposes, since what we are presented with (and what has been passed down intact for at least two and a half millenia) is an integrated text--not a series of fragments. Your mission is not to speculate on the diversity of authorship evinced in the text, but rather to examine it as a working whole, whose total effect is produced by the collaboration of all its parts.

Structure

What structural devices (patterns, themes, prolepses) can you identify in Genesis? What things unify the text? What things pull it apart (fragment it)? Look for evidence of design: be careful not to explain away contradictions, interruptions ("hiccups"), etc., but rather try to integrate them into your hypotheses about design.

Pay particular attention to **repetition**: J. P. Fokkelman writes, "Repetition is used at practically every level of the [text], from sounds, words, and clauses to stories and groups of stories.... Thus a dialectic game of identity and difference is created which challenges us to compare parallelisms at different levels and to ask questions such as: What has remained unchanged and why? What differences occur and what do they mean?" Ask yourself these questions as you read. Look out for **situational rhyme** (a device in which different "situations" or events are noticeably similar in structure, like rhyming words).

Can you find evidence of **ring composition** in Genesis? What other organizing principles obtain?

Study questions on specific stories

1. **Creation**: How does God create the world? What are his tools/methods? Compare Gen. 1:1-2:4 and the rest of Gen. 2: can these narratives be reconciled? What is the effect of including them both?

2. **Adam and Eve:** Read this story closely, as chances are you're familiar with later versions of it (from later texts such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or from the many many allusions to the story that crop up in poems, novels, films, plays, paintings, sculptures, etc. etc. right up to modern times). Make sure you're not "editing in" details that don't appear until later re-tellings/interpretations of the story. Looking at the original version of the Adam and Eve story as recorded in Genesis, what is accomplished by Adam and Eve's disobedience? Tease out the implications. What would have happened if they'd never eaten from the Tree of Knowledge? What about if they had eaten from the Tree of Life instead? What is the relationship (if any) between Knowledge and Life? Why is God in such a hurry to kick them out? Could this whole situation have been avoided if God had done something differently, and if so, what? Why do you suppose the initial tempter is a snake?
3. **Cain and Abel:** The first ever sibling rivalry. Are there other examples in Genesis? Do they follow a pattern? Are there discrepancies? What are these stories trying to tell us? In what ways is the Cain and Abel story a continuation of Adam and Eve, and in what ways is it a fresh start?
4. **The Flood:** What is accomplished by this story? How does it resonate with what went before, e.g. Gen 1-2?
5. **Babel:** How does this story function here? Consider its placement. What pattern does it follow? What themes does it pick up/initiate/develop/foreshadow?

Says Francesca [REDACTED] at Nov 11, 2014 10:26 PM [Remove this comment](#)

One of the repetitions in Genesis is "And God saw that it was good." After he made man "God saw everything that he made, and beyond, it was very good (1.31)." This repetition makes it seem that the earth is going to be perfect. However, we soon see that even though God "saw that it was good" in the beginning, that doesn't last. His perfect creation, man, in the likeness of himself, is not like himself in its "wickedness" (6.5). Most of the events that have happened so far in Genesis seem to start well, but end badly, like the story of Cain and Abel, the story of man until Noah, even the tower of Babel. I think this is most adequately stated in the story of Adam and Eve, when God says to Adam, "you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (3.19). Phrased this way, Adam's life is just a phase in between being dust, with all of its negative connotations.

Says Alexandra [REDACTED] at Nov 11, 2014 11:13 PM [Remove this comment](#)

The direct implication of Adam and Eve's disobedience is the immediate loss of innocence. After eating the forbidden fruit, "the eyes of both were opened" (3.7), indicating that they were finally able to see the world for what it really was through understanding the difference between right and wrong. Beforehand, they had been ignorant about their nakedness, but after, they are immediately embarrassed because being naked is apparently an inherent wrong. Had they never eaten the fruit, they would have continued to live in Eden in the same blissful state. If they had never become aware of the difference between good and evil, there would generally be no evil in the world at all because they would have never fallen to Earth and produced Cain (the original evil). This indicates that knowing the difference between right and wrong gives people the choice between the two and that some individuals will inherently choose to do wrong. Just the knowledge that evil exists causes people to become evil; were we live in a childlike state our entire lives by ignoring any harsh realities, nothing bad would ever happen because evil is a learned/acquired trait.

Says Brit [REDACTED] at Nov 12, 2014 2:45 AM [Remove this comment](#)

The story of the Tower of Babel is one that never sat very well with me, because it seemed to me unfair that the moment man thought up a spectacular undertaking, one that would have been the pinnacle of human achievement, God felt threatened and shut it down—and the punishment was so severe, to be scattered all around the world and separated by different languages so that men could no longer

understand one another! It reinforced in my mind the conception of a cold and spiteful God, possessing supreme power and yet fearing the power of man. I mean, if he had to come down off his high horse in the Heavens to even see the tower, how high could it have been, and therefore why did it anger him so much? (A different but in my opinion equally intriguing question would be why man thought to build this in the first place. I mean, what would be achieved by building such a tall tower? Once they had built it, what then? Also, why were men concerned, even before God came down to do exactly that, that they would "be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth"? Why did they think a tall tower and a "name for [themselves]" would prevent them from being scattered, when it caused exactly that?)

This is in perfect accordance with the existing theme of hubris—that, here both literally and metaphorically, man built himself up and then took a great fall for it; it also carries on the theme of God feeling threatened by man and expelling him (see the Adam and Eve story). This fits into a larger theme of God having to come and clean up the mess that man has made or show him the error of his ways.

This is the first instance of the people of God (here the Jews) being scattered, which will happen to them God only knows how many times in their history—foreshadowed, conveniently, in the name of the city from whence they were first exiled: Babel = Babylon, who would scatter the Israelites again much later. Structurally the story, although taking up only 9 lines, seems very intentional. For example, the repetition of "Come, let us..." twice by the men, and once by God—as if to say, ha ha, you can toil all you want but in one fell swoop God can cut down all of your efforts. And also, the men are building up while God is coming down, drawing a line of demarcation at which man and God will face off, somewhere between Heaven and earth.

Says Gabriel [REDACTED] at Nov 12, 2014 4:25 PM

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The story of Cain and Abel continues the Adam and Eve story in that it introduces another one of the natural flaws of human nature jealousy. While the Adam and Eve story dealt with human kind's natural desire to seek out knowledge even when it's not to our advantage, the story of Cain and Abel brings forth the concept of desire for recognition that all humans seek and the harmful feelings that can result from being denied that recognition. It is notable that Cain is a "tiller of the ground" and Abel "a keeper of sheep", making the work of Cain seem much more physically taxing than that of Abel. Therefore, Cain does have some justification in being angry when God judges Abel's offering of meat higher than Abel's offering of fruit. Cain's sin is therefore also desire of a reward.

God says, "if you do well, will you not be accepted, and if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door..you must master ." But instead of doing well, Cain murders Abel. When Cain realizes his mistake in in killing his brother, God punishes him not by killing him but by just the opposite prolonging his suffering and not allowing anyone to alleviate his pain through death. Cain's sin is not only killing his brother.

Says Bruce [REDACTED] at Nov 12, 2014 5:42 PM

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When man tried to build Babel, his intentions were to "make a name for [themselves]," but God has shown that He requires He be placed at the highest of everyone's priorities. With Adam and Eve, Eve placed her curiosity over God, and Adam placed Eve over Him, which was why He punished them. Because the tallest tower the men were trying to build was for their own sake, he separated them and caused them to speak different languages. What is interesting, however, is God's saying that man would be able to accomplish anything if they continued to have one unified nation with one language. This not only shows the importance of language, but also the potential of man. God made man in His image, but even He fears when men are united.

Says Tiffany [REDACTED] at Nov 12, 2014 6:19 PM

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A characteristic of God throughout the Genesis is his inherent authority overseeing all, judging all and as the narrative suggests, no one will, can, or should question his authority or his judgment. There are moments when I find myself questioning the reasons behind God's feelings. For instance, what was the wickedness of man

that God saw? What made him think that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"(6:5)? Why was Noah favored over all other living before the flood? The lack of details seem to suggest that everything should be taken with a matter-of-fact nature, and not question God.

In the case of Adam and Eve, they committed the ultimate evil by questioning God's instructions, by trusting a serpent over God. I think the serpent's persuasion reveals the reason God becomes angry and punishes Adam and Eve. During God's creation, the sentence "And God saw that it was good" is repeated many times, which seems to emphasize his main role: the judge of good and evil. God is the one and only who gets to see and determine good and evil. Thus, when Adam and Eve eat the fruits of knowledge of good and evil, they are stealing God's role and authority. As the serpent says, "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (3:5). Knowing good and evil makes them equal to God on some level, thus they challenge and threaten God's power. If they did not eat the fruits, they would have been blind individually and only seeing through God. In contrast, Noah follows every instruction that God gives him, and while I am not sure what he did for God to consider him a "righteous man, blameless in his generation" (6:9), Noah lives through the flood blessed by God.

Says Erin [REDACTED] at Nov 12, 2014 7:40 PM

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One of the main characteristics of God and a major motif is creation versus destruction. The beginning chapters discuss God's creation of heaven, earth, man, and all things in the universe. His immense and superior power to create is repeatedly referred to as "good", something not often used to describe man nor his actions. This is one way in which God and man are shown to be different in nature. Then, God's power is used as a force of destruction in the passage about Noah's arc. The destruction is tied to the sin, evil, and perils that man himself has created and tainted God's "good" with. It is written that, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the Earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5). Thus, we see two sets of dichotomies in action here: good and evil, and in response, destruction and creation. These two sets of antithetical traits create a tension and clear distinction that comes to define and separate the spheres of man and God more distinctly. As God is seen as good and one whom creates, man is consequently seen as one who destroys such purity. This is attributed to the original sin of Adam and Eve. An interesting observation and extension of these dichotomies is when man attempts to create a tower and city, thus to "imitate God's power" and he is severely punished for such behavior. Now, man is attempting to be the creator, and through God's punishment we can see how the roles may not be reversed, and the power imbalance between divine and earthly remains in favor of the Lord. Finally, I noted how these dichotomies work in a cyclic pattern/structure, much like the structure of the Genesis itself. Many stanzas and lines are repeated in Genesis, like in the creation story with a cycle of seven days and in the lineage explanations and their format of stating father, son, then years lived over and over. This helps create a rounded and completed feeling to the work. The dichotomies have the same rhetorical effect-as one waxes the other wanes- giving a similarly cyclical, rounded, and completed sense to the work as a whole.

Says Adam [REDACTED] at Nov 12, 2014 8:24 PM

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The story of Babel is very interesting with respect that it explores the reoccurring theme of creations and decimation. Just as Man figured out good and evil, God makes them restart from scratch. In chapter 11, "the whole earth had one language and few words" (11.1). Man decides to build a "tower" in order to make a name for themselves (11.5). More importantly, they have no struggles as there is no confusion. Even God notes: "nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (11.6). So, God decides to "confuse their language" in order to create a new form of creation (11.7). God constantly causes end of life and then creation. Throughout the whole of Genesis, there is a constant theme of recreation. As Man begins to understand life and is able to beat all impossibilities, God interjects and causes unrest until there is a new form of creation. Following the confusion of language, there is an extensive list of the descendants of Shem. These descendants are the result of the confusion. They are the new creation. This same

theme can be applied to the stories of Noah's Ark and Adam and Eve. In Noah's Ark, God kills all living beings on earth in order to rid of all their "evils." Noah's Ark follows the same theme of creation as the story lists the descendants of Noah. These descendants create new evils and God is forced to recreate.

Says Tyler [REDACTED] at Nov 12, 2014 9:35 PM [Remove this comment](#)

The second creation of the earth seems to be more focused on just the creation of man, as if the earth and seas were already there, and all god did was make mankind. For that reason it does seem that both of these creations could have reconciled because they both could have happened without contradicting each other. I think both are included in order to go into greater detail about the creation of mankind because that is the most important creation.

Says Richard [REDACTED] at Nov 12, 2014 11:23 PM [Remove this comment](#)

The story of the Flood accomplishes a contrast between what had happened before in Genesis Chapters 1-2. The Flood is about destruction while the first two chapters were about the creation of life. However, the story of the Flood is not just about destruction. The perseverance of life through Noah and the pairs of animals that are able to stay with him shows that God was not just about trying to destroy all life and restarting completely. God wanted to have the Earth replenished by preserving the minimum life required to repopulate the Earth. God could have easily cleared the Earth of all humans and life but he allowed the core life he created to stay to perhaps rebuild into a better form. It is stated that "God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark" (Genesis 8). The fact that "God remembered" the life he started shows that he may have had the belief that even though the life he created resulted in violence, the original values instilled in life were still good. This is why God decides to choose Noah who is a "righteous man, blameless in his generation" (Genesis 6:9). He needs someone who is pure to lead life back to what it once was. This also creates the difference between good and evil as Noah can be seen as someone who embodies good while humanity seemed to be turning evil when God realized that "The earth was corrupt" (Genesis 6:11). Corruption and being blameless seems to establish the motif of good versus evil.

Says David [REDACTED] at Nov 12, 2014 11:26 PM [Remove this comment](#)

I don't think I've ever read the actual text of the Creation story before. It's honestly one of the most startling pieces of literature I've ever read. It's mesmerizing: the reader is hypnotized by a looping of 'And God..'s that repeat and repeat. The effect this has is that we remain in a seemingly stagnant state of reading whilst all around us the work is unfolding. Is this effect mimetic of the speed and scale with which God works? Another thing that strikes me is how the story has no beginning. 'In the beginning' we already have a God and a seeming chaos of unintelligible darkness which God separates. The whole scene is dream-like: it lacks specificity, it has no beginning. Perhaps the author describes the Creation in this way to differentiate the times before and after God. The idea of something focused emerging from obscurity repeats itself throughout the Bible, most notably in the eating of the tree of knowledge. By subjecting the reader to this writing style - where a more tangible description forms in front of us through a series of 'And God..'s - it is like a wave of knowledge is washing through us. Is this the sensation of the tree of knowledge's fruit?

Says Cansu [REDACTED] at Nov 12, 2014 11:32 PM [Remove this comment](#)

The reason why I am bothered by the story of Eve's deception by the serpent is that the deception is so very avoidable. First of all, God has created the entire universe, the earth and every creature on it including Adam and Eve, and on the sixth day he saw that it was good, as he did so on the previous five days. Yet, if He is the omnipotent creator, why didn't he not create the serpent, or create it without the deceitful traits? Or why did He place the Tree of Knowledge in the middle of the Garden of Eden, if he didn't want it to be touched or it's fruit eaten? These

questions cause holes in the plot of the narration of the creation. Furthermore, I question why God didn't cloth Adam and Eve in the first place, if he had the knowledge that nakedness was shameful. It surprises me that God doesn't use the knowledge already present to him to avoid disobedience from His subjects and that he created the humans in the first place if they were going to cause all the problems He would have to deal with.

Says Stephanie [REDACTED] at Nov 13, 2014 12:07 AM [Remove this comment](#)

From the story of Cain and Abel, we understand that jealousy is a large driving force in our actions. It always shows how our outward actions reflect our inward thoughts and feelings. For example, while Cain's "countenance fell" because God "had no regard" for Cain's offerings of fruit, he also struck back physically against his brother and committed the first murder (3). This is a continuation of Adam and Eve in that Cain displays disobedience as well. However, it is a new start because he has introduced violence. In addition, this story also teaches us that we are punished for our sins. For example, God places a curse upon Cain so that "if anyone slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold" (4). This is particularly interesting because it seems that though immortality of Cain is a curse. This can be related to a separate book Grendel where the monster Grendel has Cain's curse and lives a life of boredom and misery since nothing is a risk anymore. Therefore, the story of Cain and Abel shows how life is precious and our mortality is a necessary part of who we are.

Says Kang [REDACTED] at Nov 13, 2014 12:25 AM [Remove this comment](#)

Just as the clumsy fake dichotomy between creation and destruction seem to lie at the center of Genesis, so too does the theme of justice and divine retribution. The entirety of Genesis revolves around God as a figure that doles out universal punishment and judgment. Because he possesses the power in determining punishment, he is also the creator of moral standards. Destruction is seen as a form of his divine punishment for that which he deems to be in violation of the moral code that he has created. This is seen in the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Flood, as well as Babel. Strangely enough, the story of the Flood is effective in highlighting God's hypocrisy when it comes to his divine code. At the beginning of Genesis, God "created man in his own image" (1.27), indicating that God desires that man be a reflection of himself. Later instances of divine punishment for immoral actions that man commits highlight the idea that man desires that man be not only a reflection of himself physically, but also mentally. There is however, a strange contradiction that occurs in the story of the flood. God indicates his rationale for the flood when he states "I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold. I will destroy them with the earth" (6:13). Hypocrisy is deeply embedded within this statement. God finds violence abhorrent and yet commits the most comprehensive act of violence (literally eradicating almost every living creature) of all in order to stop the violence. However, in doing so, he exponentially outweighs any sort of violence that mankind himself could have committed as a group.

Says Thomas [REDACTED] at Nov 13, 2014 1:24 AM [Remove this comment](#)

In response to Cansu, it is my understanding that the tree and serpent were all a test of mankind to see if they would actually follow his rule. Since he created mankind with free will it was their choice to eat the apple or not. That being said I agree that God should have known they would have failed because he is omnipotent and knows everything that will happen. I don't really know why he didn't cloth them, possibly because it wasn't his intention for nakedness to be shameful but once they ate from the tree, humans thought differently. All through out the bible there are holes in the plot, a huge one being with reproduction. If Adam and Eve were the only two people on earth, how could they possibly populate all of man kind? Also, Cain gets married, but to whom? His sister? It all just doesn't make sense.

Says Alexander [REDACTED] at Nov 13, 2014 1:33 AM [Remove this comment](#)

Initially, when looking at Eve and her exchange with the serpent, we feel quick to blame her. However, there is little reason to blame her without blaming Adam as well. He chooses to consume the fruit, and there is no proof that he was not present at the exchange between Eve and the serpent. And through their ignorance, they introduce a human evil that God recognizes as sin and evil. Eventually, when their sons have an exchange, the sin that their parents introduced into the world follows them, which is shown in the actions of Cain when he brashly kills his brother out of jealousy. Because Cain only offered God crops as an offering while Abel offered cattle and animals, God saw value in the sacrifice of blood. The value of blood is shown in the exchange, as only an offering that is the life of a living creature was seen to be valuable in the eyes of God. However, despite Adam and Eve's actions that bring evil to the world, God sees that there is still hope in the world. When God decides to kill humankind, he specifically chooses to spare one of his most devoted and kindhearted followers, Noah. This shows that there is still going to always be hope in the eyes of God, for if there could still be devoted followers of God's word after Adam and Eve introduced the evils into the world, then forever there is hope. Perhaps God recognizes this, and later on through the development of civilization there still remains holistic innocence.

Says Andres [REDACTED] at Nov 13, 2014 1:37 AM

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For 1:1 to 2:4 the story goes like this:

First day, God creates the heavens and the earth, and light/Day and darkness/Night

Second day, God creates a separate Heaven

Third day, God creates land, sea, and plants

Fourth day, God creates the sun, the moon, and stars

Fifth day, he creates birds and fish

Sixth day, he creates cattle, "creeping things", beasts, and humans

Seventh day he rests

For the remainder of chapter 2, however, we seem to get a wholly different story, with a very different order. In Chapter 2, the author(s) says "In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens," referring to the first day. But he continues, "then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground," without changing the day, so it contradicts the progression presented earlier in that it claims man was made on the first day. In fact, the order is changed completely. In this second version, man comes before plants, which come before beasts, which come before the first woman. This is a prime example of a serious discontinuity, and I wonder if it is fixed later. Perhaps I am being nit-picky but this at least shows a lack of organization by the authors and how low clarity is as a priority. I wonder what the higher priorities are.

Says Omid [REDACTED] at Nov 13, 2014 2:18 AM

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Because God "created man in his own image," He gave man all of the same privileges that he had, one of which being free will (1.27). If God created man without "his own image", and therefore without free will, man would not have been any different from the animals that God created. God wanted man to be more special, to hold "dominion over the fish... birds... cattle... and... earth," so He elevated man's position by providing him with ethical dilemmas in order to test his morality and allow him to strive for goodness (1.26). Additionally, because God is objectively righteous and made man in His image, then man must also be objectively righteous. This is not the case, however, considering that Eve and Adam gave into temptation and disobeyed their creator. This introduces evilness as part of the nature of man, which leads to the struggle of man's desire to be righteous in order to become more Godly, which much of the rest of the bible explores.

Says Luis [REDACTED] at Nov 13, 2014 4:47 AM

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Even though I had previously heard many of these stories, I had never actually read the Genesis before. Something that I perceived from the reading of it that I had never gotten from listening to most of these stories before was how God seems to be a certain issue with the power of the human race. After reading the story of Adam and Eve, I wasn't sure whether God had punished them specifically because

they had not followed his command or whether the fact that they were going to “be like God, knowing good and evil” had something to do with it. This, in my opinion, is kind of contradictory to an idea presented at the very beginning of the Genesis. If God initially “created man in his own image,” why does he punish Adam and Eve when they start adapting some of his other traits?

Says Yasmeen [REDACTED] at Nov 13, 2014 7:33 AM [Remove this comment](#)

In Genesis, when the creation is detailed, it is unclear whether God is creating the earth out of nothing, or fashioning it out of already existing material. If He is creating it out of nothing, then the fact that He can completely defy the laws of logic and create something out of nothing provides a further contrast between the Judeo-Christian God and Greek gods, who, although they are not governed by the same rules that govern us, still to a degree are limited to doing things that we can logically conceive of. The Judeo-Christian God in contrast, creates the ‘heavens and the earth’ ‘in the beginning’ (1:1) when ‘the earth was without form or void’ (1:2). However, as the creation story goes on it becomes unclear whether or not God crafted a world out of existing matter, or whether he did so out of nothing. The repetition of the word ‘Let’, such as in “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered”, “Let there be light”, and “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures”, suggests that the former is true. It implies that God is taking a passive role in creation, allowing things that already exist in concept simply to materialise. Furthermore, God is described as having ‘formed man of dust from the ground’ (2:7), and having ‘separat[ed] the waters from the waters’ (1:6), implying that the waters and the dust already existed before creation. Perhaps the tension between God who creates out of nothing and God who crafts out of existing material can be attributed to the fact that the first five books of Genesis were written by several different priests, as opposed to an individual.