

Evolution, God, and the Syndrome of Cain

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The development of science has brought us countless benefits — not only in furnishing visions of the future, but also in the form of a retrospective gaze, characteristic of a species with critical judgment and conclusions grounded in empirical evidence.

It is a fact that Neanderthal Man reasoned abstractly, with praise offered to one or more metaphysical entities. The greatest proof is the grave of an infant, adorned with horns and flowers, found in what is today Iraq. From then on there were evolutionary developments that would culminate in the currently dominant species, and consequently in the founding of the first human civilization, theocratic in character: Sumer, located in that same region.

Its theocracy, like all that would arise and are maintained even today, was characterized by raising the will of superior beings to the condition of binding legal norms, followed by the members of the group. In our own day, in some territories — such as Iran and the Vatican itself — it is so.

But in 1789 the French Revolution had already raised secularity to the level of a state principle in the West. And a little after the middle of the nineteenth century, the British naturalist Charles Darwin demonstrated the evolutionism expressed in the second paragraph — which holds, in synthesis, that species are the result of continuous evolution and natural selection, such as gave rise to Neanderthal Man and, in a later turn of continuity, to *Homo sapiens*. And that evolutionism is not compatible with any sacred scripture.

We are faced, then, with a dilemma: if a superior force in the destinies of our species is contradicted by Darwin, and for the majority of scholars, would not political systems the world over have to impose legal orders whose foundations were solely the continuity of *Homo sapiens*, and not metaphysical desires? This is the point at which this author was aiming. Whether under secularity or theocracy, some values converge and are non-negotiable. And the most stubborn proof is governed by the fact that, in every society on the planet, under one or the other of the two foundations, the practice of homicide is severely punished.

For that reason, this being so grave an evil, and one that contaminates social leaders as well, men of profound worth sought to identify its causes and consequences, forewarning us in free individual thought, perfectly and independently of who Darwin was or would come to be — which only reinforces the intellectual superiority of these thinkers.

The most famous saying of Confucius, for example, was the one that determined not to impose on others what you would not wish for yourself. It is the Golden Rule, which gives substance to human relations and launches a shock wave — a butterfly effect — across every social aspect of our species, especially in dealing with public administration. For Confucius there are certain special classes of people who follow that commandment, among them the Sage and the Gentleman, who is obedient to rites presumed good, since they are determined by the empire, bearer of the "Mandate of Heaven" that confers legitimacy. But if the empire does not confer happiness upon the people, the Gentleman would be among those with an undisciplined spirit toward poverty and injustice, fighting so that courage — unhappily used for wickedness — may come to add benefit to the people, especially in the face of a non-

benign "Mandate of Heaven", lost at that moment by the empire through a popular rebellion. The "Mandate of Heaven" was a metaphor from one of the most ancient Chinese dynasties, and that is how Confucius regarded it. He very rarely gave opinions on metaphysical questions, and belief in a superior force was not evident in him at the time. He was a pre-Darwinist, existing some 2,400 years before. He was, above all, a man of worth who did not believe in the divine, and for whom, on that account, men should protect one another for the good of the group and of the species.

The famous Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, at the end of the nineteenth century, expressed his love for the Russian Orthodox Church, believing in — and considering necessary — the absolute supernatural to determine the conduct of men. For him, without God, and especially the Orthodox God, there was no law to follow, since the divine reference capable of dictating rules of conduct, customary and legal, would be absent. He thus saw the prohibition of the sinful crime of homicide more as a divine determination than as an infraction that interrupts the continuity of the species.

Finally, I speak of the most famous writer, also Russian, Leo Tolstoy. He was an extremely spiritualized intellectual, who broke with the Russian Orthodox Church for considering it contaminated by "Western" values and quite corruptible by the rudimentary capitalism then overtaking Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. He lived a modest and ascetic life, fathered more than ten children, and believed that poverty, with the minimum for existence, was the duty of life of a true Christian — and that it fell to Christ to dictate all law on Earth, and not to the Russian Orthodox Church.

One perceives that the same value — do not kill — arises among historical figures who lived long ago, before and after Darwin. One may choose science. One may choose religion. One may even choose the formal Messiah of a religion, independently of following it. There is only one point at which one may not arrive: killing.

Whoever proceeds to it will be subject to the law of men. And, for the religious or the informal followers, to the law of God. One thing is guaranteed, at least for those who believe: if the law of men fails, that of God will not. *Dura lex, sed lex* — the law is harsh, but it is the law.

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