

Idea of God

Did We Think Up the Idea of God?

Imagining God

Atheism – militant or otherwise – ‘Humanism’, agnosticism, and other deity-denying faiths, depend ultimately, it seems to me, on the notion that the *idea* of god is of purely-human origin.

Voltaire is supposed to have said words to the effect that ‘If god did not exist, he would have to be invented’; there are three things here, I fancy (in addition to the idea that god *does* exist) namely: the suggestion that god might well not exist, and also that humans are/were capable of imagining the idea unaided, alone, in the first place (thirdly, the suggestion that humans might want there to be a god which they may be ultimately answerable to, which I deny completely). I am utterly sceptical of the notion that the idea of god could be man-originated, since nothing whatever in human experience could have suggested such a thing, and which is entirely without any common similarity in everyday life – the world, nature – or in the experience of the body (the physical appetites and the processes of living, reproducing, ageing, and dying).

Of course (referring to nature), there is the idea that ‘primitive’ people took thunder and lightning as a sign that something above and beyond themselves existed (an angry something, obviously); I am sceptical about this notion also. Do we *know* (we are told often enough) that early people inferred such a being from thunder, and if so how do we know?

What is probably the case is that such ideas were formed and promoted by people who had a need of some kind to encourage such belief, such as those who believed in ‘original innocence’, the Noble Savage, in other words non-theists of the so-called Enlightenment period (the 18th century). Obviously, thunder would suggest something very powerful, above and beyond humankind – but *god*? The original creator and sustainer? I wonder ...

No, I’m convinced humans would have been incapable of originating the idea of god unaided, unless, that is, *god* had actually put it there in the first place. God has put the notion of god’s existence “in our hearts”, we are told in the Bible, and that is quite another thing.

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