



Of Monsters & Men

How Creation Mythology
Informs Cultural Anthropology

Weekly Prayer

Father, sometimes praying feels like lighting a candle in the dark. A small, awkward thing struggling against our own distractedness and the enormous problems in our world. Yet you have promised that your light will not be overcome by the darkness. Give us light to see, Lord. Give us prayers that will bring your light to those trapped in darkness. And as we pray, show us the path of obedience, one candle at a time, just enough to trust, or act, or wait.

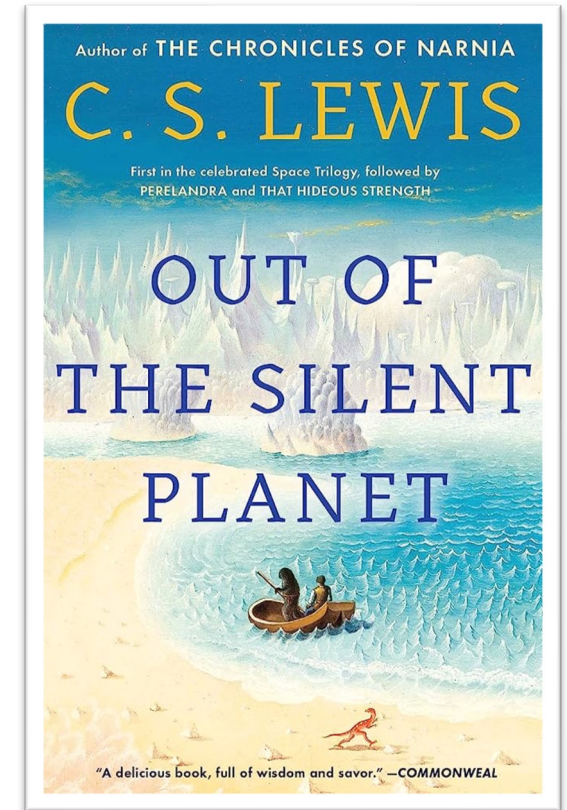
In Jesus' name, Amen.



What is a Human?

“Here... was a species naturally continent, naturally monogamous... At last it dawned on him that it was not [the *hrossa*], but his own species who were the puzzle... How came it that the instincts of the *hrossa* so closely resembled the unattained ideals of that far-divided species Man whose own instincts were so deplorably different? **What was the history of man?**”

C. S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*, p. 77



The Instinct-Ideal Gap



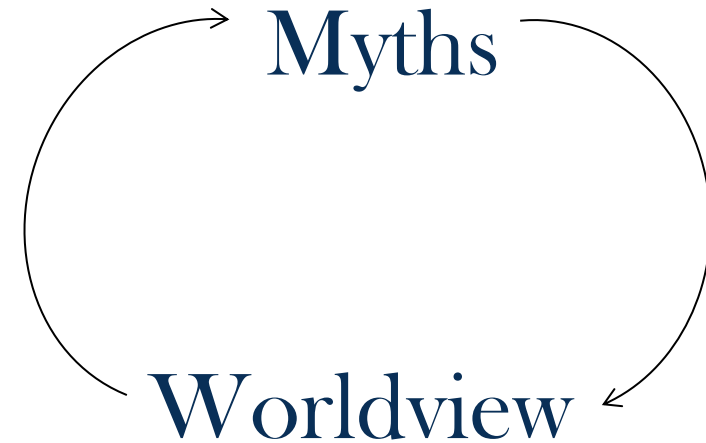
When viewed with fresh eyes, one key human attribute stands out starkly as a strange and surprising thing: the *instinct-ideal gap*.

“The seemingly unbridgeable gap between noble human goals and desires—which tend to be lofty and positive—and instinctive human behavior—which tends to be base and self-serving.”

Once we recognize this phenomenon as something bizarre, we face a natural question: **how did we end up like this?**



The Mythology-Worldview Feedback Loop



Because of the ongoing relationship between myths and culture/worldview, we can “work backward” from a culture’s mythology to their key worldview elements (e.g. anthropology).



Enuma Elish

Enuma Elish is the name given to the Babylonian creation myth, which was written in cuneiform (the earliest known form of writing) on seven stone tablets around the 18th century BC.

The myth tells the story of a theomachy (war between the gods) which results in the creation of the world and concludes with the creation of humanity.

By comparing the Babylonian account of human origins with the apparent Babylonian perception of human nature, we can correlate myths of origin to cultural anthropology.



Genesis 1-3

Since traditional dating of Genesis places it at around 1400 B.C. in the aftermath of the Exodus, it is reasonable to view it against the backdrop of contemporary creation myths like *Enuma Elish*.

How does the story of human origins in Genesis produce a different cultural anthropology among the Hebrews than the account in *Enuma Elish* produces among the Babylonians?



Babylonian vs. Hebrew Anthropology

Babylonian

- Humans are slaves to the gods.
- Hierarchy is natural, with Babylonians at the top.
- War is natural (cause of creation).
- Humans and gods are made of the same “material,” but humans are made from an evil/rebel god.
- **No explanation for instinct/ideal gap.**

Hebrew

- Humans are “viceroys” to God.
- Hierarchy is a consequence of the Fall and a symptom of sin.
- Conflict/war begin after the Fall and have an expiration date.
- Humans are made from dust in the image of God.
- **Instinct–ideal gap explained by the Fall**





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