

The Noval Trilogy

∞ A Prospectus ∞

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I NEOSCIENCE: BEYOND NATURAL PHILOSOPHY

II REINVENTING THE SPECIES: BEYOND CHRISTIANITY

III THE GLOBAL FAMILY: BEYOND THE NATION STATE

In late 2002 I published *Jehovah and Hyperspace*, the theme of which was described by the subtitle, *Exploring the Future of Science, Religion and Society*. The title was chosen to bring into sharp focus that religion and science as we have known them are now passing away, and that a new global culture must be built on the foundations of a new kind of religion and a new kind of science. The word *Jehovah* was used as a kind of shorthand for the ancient concept of an ultimate reality that is at the heart of western religion and of Islam, and *hyperspace* was used similarly to indicate an emerging new science which escapes the limits of conventional three-dimensional reality, the *res extensa* by which René Descartes defined the boundaries of science. The Jehovah-concept was once the mainspring of Jewish, Christian and Moslem cultures but no longer meets the emotional, spiritual and intellectual needs of modern man, and natural science, more especially quantum physics and cosmology is pressing up against the world view of solid objects moving in a three-dimensioned void, which is how the pioneers of science imagined physical reality.

Jehovah is the old English form of Jahweh, who was the god of the Hebrews, and is worshipped under that name in hymns such as “Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah!”. Jahweh had, in fact been worshipped over a large area of the Middle East as one of the sons of the supreme god El for many centuries before the tribe of Hebrews adopted him as their particular protector, but the Jews then created a tribal and then a national identity by turning their own history inside out and claiming that Jahweh had adopted them as his “particular treasure”, then by elevating him from a secondary divinity to the most important of the gods, and finally by proclaiming him as the only god, completely forgetting in the process that it was the high God El who had given the tribe to Jahweh in the first place, as recorded in the Old Testament. Belief in the oneness of their God, and the truth of this intuition, became the core of their defining identity and gave them their sense of religious mission. It was no mere accident that when Jesus was

asked which was the greatest law (Mark 12:30), he prefaced his answer with the “shema”, the traditional declaration, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God.” This creed-cum-prayer, remains at the heart of Judaism: it opens the synagogue service and was uttered by Jews as they were being herded to their death in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Though the idea of the ultimate reality as a big man beyond the stars seems childish to us today, the Jehovah concept has been and continues to be a powerful model of the unknowable reality that has brought the universe and each human being into existence. It is embedded in the Christian culture which has given birth to Western civilization and even when it is rejected, we are forced at some level to acknowledge it because the word “god” is used in English (and, I think, in all western languages) in conjunction with the male pronouns “he” or “him”. The model of a patriarchal divinity has been refined over the years, going from the capricious and all-powerful ruler of Hebrew imagination, based on the characteristics of the potentates they knew, to the loving father that was preached by Jesus. For all practical purposes Christianity may be said to embody the best and the worst of these mental creations, sometimes referred to loosely as “the Old Testament god” and the “god of Jesus”, and there is a general belief that the father of Jesus (if not Jesus himself) will punish sinners in the next life by condemning them to an eternity in the fires of hell, “prepared for the devil and his angels”, as Jesus, reputedly, put it (Matt 25:41). What Jesus did or did not say and do is the subject of vast scholarly debate, but we do not need to enter into that debate to make two key points. Firstly, Jehovah is a creating power who made things happen, like every ruler, simply by ordering it and created the universe “by his word”. This belief is a metaphor, and is thus not false in any absolute sense, but it stands today in opposition to science’s view of the creation of a cosmos of billions of galaxies which came into existence with the Big Bang. What preceded that moment is a subject of equal interest to both religion and science. Secondly, the softening of the old Jehovah metaphor which Jesus attempted ended up with an even more bizarre Christian myth, compounded from Greek religion, the story of a father above the clouds who by inseminating a Jewish virgin was able to create the god-man Jesus, for the purpose of sacrificing him as an atonement for the sins of humanity. Having given himself as a sacrificial victim and died upon the cross, this god-man resuscitated himself, walked the earth for forty days and then ascended through the clouds to rejoin his father. I do not mean to ridicule the Christian myth in this stark sketch, for the myth often becomes insignificant in relation to the spiritual transformation it initiates and, furthermore, there is the clear seed in Christian scriptures of a scientific theory of human evolution, in which Jesus is presented as a holotype, the first of a new species or, as Paul put it “the first born of a great new family”. The point at issue is far simpler, that until we dispense with the patriarchal model of the creating power, we are locked into a primitive mindset that makes religious, and spiritual, evolution impossible. Nor do I underestimate the challenge that this presents even the thoughtful and truth-seeking person. By way of illustration I might recount an incident of a couple of years ago when I heard a friend preaching on this very topic, emphasizing with some emotion that we must stop believing that “God is a big man in the sky”. Having finished his sermon, he descended from the pulpit and led the congregation in prayer - “Our Father, who art in heaven”

Despite the fact that in the introduction I explain how the word “Jehovah” was being used to indicate the inadequacy in a scientific age of this ancient conception of divinity, I was surprised to discover how many misunderstandings the word had generated. More than one scholar took me to task for using the old anglicised form of Jahweh, others less scholarly assumed that I was attempting to reconcile a Jehovah-style god with science, and one reader, who can hardly have got as far even as the subtitle, wrote to say how strongly she disagreed with the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses, which she thought I was promoting. There was a strange, but significant, parallelism between these misunderstandings and those which arose from the word *hyperspace*, which I had used in the title to make the point that science is now entering into a new phase in which it must enlarge its remit to redefine “reality”, and in so doing to relay in large part the foundations of science as we know it. It seemed to me unquestionable that a science which refuses to deal with the most up to date understanding of reality is, at best, a drastically limited kind of science and, at worse, a non-science. There is no logical reason why “reality” should be limited to what our human senses can reach - that is surely an anthropocentric illusion comparable to the belief that the universe is centred on planet earth. There are, by contrast, good reasons arising in science to hypothesize that there exists a domain beyond the three-dimensional world which is the “reality” both of commonsense and traditional, Cartesian science. I had not expected the term “hyperspace” to meet with misunderstanding, partly because scientists are, or should be, by definition open-minded, but also because physicists are very familiar with the notion of higher dimensions through current theories of superstrings, which are hypothesized particles with many dimensions. There is also a well accepted school of thought, following on Hugh Everett’s speculation of parallel universes, that our cosmos is only one of many possible, perhaps an infinite number. There should therefore be nothing surprising in the conjecture that our time-bound and three-dimensional universe emerged at the moment of the Big Bang from some kind of timeless and higher dimensioned universe. What did surprise me was the emotion generated among professional physicists by the essay “The Physics of Ultimate Reality”. One editorial reader took the trouble to reply to me personally, and I can honestly say that I have never received such a violent and vituperative letter, but more than one friend in the business commented with a strength of emotion and a refusal to even let me answer their objections, so much so that I could hardly avoid the conclusion that far more than science was at stake here. Hyperspace itself is by no means new, for the concept has been well known in mathematics since Riemann invented non-Euclidean geometry in the middle of the 19th century, and the notion of four-dimensional physics can even be considered mainstream since Einstein adopted a hybrid version of it with his four-dimensional time-space. The emotions that were raised by even considering the possible need for a new kind of science could be called theological, for what seemed to be at issue was the challenge to orthodoxy. However open-minded scientists may claim to be, it became clear that as in religion questioning is allowed, even welcomed, only up to clearly understood boundaries.

Jehovah and Hyperspace gained some positive reviews. One reviewer said of it that it “provided mankind with a new and deeper vision of its own destiny”, and another that it offered “a wider framework of understanding” of the issues arising from Big Bang cosmology. Some individual readers were enthusiastic, but the

general response, even among sympathetic readers, seemed to be puzzlement rather than enlightenment, and this gave me food for thought, as well as some disappointment. Without doubt, the reason for misunderstanding lay in the book itself and the way it had been structured. Its theme was human evolution on the grandest scale, and I had attempted to communicate my thoughts, and feelings, in an impressionistic way, hoping that the reader would be left with a few stimulating thoughts that would function rather like the points in a join-the-dots drawing, leaving the connections to be made later. The impressions I had hoped to create were encapsulated in various pieces - lectures, articles, books reviews and poems - which I had brought together in a loosely structured compilation. Most of the items had already appeared in print, but a few were specially written for the book. Of these by far the most important was a long essay, almost a book in itself, entitled "The Physics of Ultimate Reality", which broke new ground not only in physics but in defining a new kind of science that was coming to birth. In retrospect it seems naive in the extreme to have simply added this very difficult and controversial piece to a collection of other items which could be understood, for the most part, by the non-specialist reader. Far from being the keystone in a thematic arch, which was the original intention, it had proved to be a source of confusion about what the book was about.

Reluctant as I was to undertake such a challenge, demanding not only an incalculable time but a knowledge which I did not then possess, nor had any certainty that I would ever possess, it became obvious that each of the three themes demanded a full-length treatment. This short paper is notice that the project is under way. It will serve as a kind of prospectus for three separate volumes, as intended, which I have called "the Noval Trilogy". The vastness of the theme presents exceptional difficulties in treating it, for we live in an age of soundbites, yet to simply state the aim of the trilogy as a heading or even a paragraph would be to miss its significance. This can only be built up from the details, and this approach presents author and reader with a Catch 22, for dealing in detail with each piece would be to risk missing the point of the whole. Yet the overarching theme is so revolutionary and controversial that without the detailed justification it can hardly appear realistic.

It concerns an act of evolutionary faith, and that seems to be a natural place to begin, risking misunderstandings and immediate objections that not only could be made but must be made if the thinking person is to be convinced. In a sense, the trilogy could be seen as a chain of acts of faith, which could snap at its weakest link. The first of them is the easiest, and it is belief that the human species has evolved from lower animals and lower forms of life. The theory of biological evolution is fraught with difficulties, not least the exclusive positions that science and religion tend to take up. That is to say, biologists exclude any evidence for "intelligent design" as merely "apparent evidence", and tar all who wish to examine it with the brush of "Creationism", implying that they are pushing the agenda of religious fundamentalism. By the same token, biblical fundamentalists reject the overwhelming evidence for biological evolution in order to keep the literal account of the Bible intact, and make themselves a legitimate target for missionary atheists like Richard Dawkins to ridicule. In this confrontation, those who seek to assess the evidence and not distort theory to accommodate unwelcome facts tend to be squeezed out of the middle, but it is to these that the Noval Trilogy will be addressed.

The second act of faith is that the evolution of our species is not yet finished, although the honest person looking at the state of humankind today may be tempted to believe that are witnessing into evolutionary regression. This is almost certainly the case, but a setback of even a couple of centuries does not destroy the thesis that human evolution is from a lower to higher form of consciousness. History shows that progress is less like a rocket than a rising tide, with each wave receding before resumes its forward direction.

The third act of faith, which follows from this, is that the human type which lies ahead of us, however far in the distance, will be “abnormal” in terms of what we consider normally human today. We cannot imagine in depth what future human consciousness will be like, yet in order to move towards it we must have some ideal mental picture. Four brief points must serve here to convince of the problems involved here. Going back to prehuman times, we can see through the rear view mirror of history that our ape ancestors could not have evolved into humans without coming down from the trees, walking on their hind legs and freeing up their hands. Yet when this actually happened (doubtless over a very long period) bipedalism did nothing except make our ancestors less skilful as tree-dwelling apes. A visiting Martian could hardly have guessed that these clumsy, stumbling creatures would ever evolve into concert pianists, ballet dancers or watchmakers. Such step changes, when what once was unnatural becomes natural can be found throughout our history on different scales, when seems impossible at one stage in human evolution is adopted at the margin and eventually becomes a new and higher norm.

From this logic we can conclude that a higher kind of human being lies ahead of us, but one which will seem to us, at our stage of development, abnormal and unattainable. Just as we can look back at *Homo erectus* and *Homo habilis*, who were are ancestors, we can look forward to something beyond *Homo sapiens* (the smart ape) and *Homo sapiens sapiens* (the very smart ape), and I am arguing that there is a new kind of human being is in the making, which I have called *Homo novus* (the new man). I am well aware that this will seem illogical, for, as the saying goes, human nature never changes.

In choosing the title *The Noval Trilogy*, I am expressing belief that human nature has changed and will continue to change, and that the forces of scientific, religious and socio-economic evolution will result in a type of human, and of human organisation, so different from what we know by history and experience that we can only do justice to its importance by inventing a new label *Homo novus* to describe it. Certainly, there is a core element of present and past humanity that will continue, just as we bear within - and continually experience - our ape ancestry, but just as we do not define being human by the way our ancestors in the trees behaved and felt and thought, at some point in the future we shall not define being human by the way in which the vast majority of humans behave, feel and think today.

Is this just crazy optimism? In what essential way could our descendents conceivably differ from us? The trilogy will be devoted to answering this question, but first it must be emphasized that there can be no difference until we have started on the road to individual transformation. So the noval trilogy is no mere futuristic speculation, for it must include, albeit in sketched form, a programme for individual development. We cannot build a better world without better people.