Introduction

The major doctrinal difference between the three main religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – is in the interpretation of the metaphysics of the divinity. Each of these religions has its own long history. Judaism can be traced to Mesopotamian and Egyptian sources, whereas Christianity arose as a mixture of Judaism, Egyptian, and Hellenistic elements; Islam, in turn, is a mixture of Judaic, Christian, and various local Near Eastern elements. Putting aside the issue of the various and diversified supernatural beings that are considered secondary to the primal supreme being, we find a strict unitarian view among the Judaic and Islamic branches of religion. This issue of how various religions view their divinity remains one of the obstacles for their unification and may be a factor deciding their future evolution.

In the sixteenth century, Michael Servetus, encouraged by the initial thrust of the Reformation movement, hoped that by restoring Christianity to its original simplicity, it could be united with Judaism and Islam. Soon, however, his hopes were dashed, for in their theistic dogmatic form religions tend to isolate themselves and oppose each other for speculative minutiae that are irrelevant in everyday life for the moral well-being of societies.[1]

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the world according to our Western ideology was considered to be static and not undergoing changes. The same was extended to the realm of ideas and especially to religious views and doctrines. With the development of new evolutionary ideas that were applied not only to the external world where the process was originally discovered but also to ideology, we came to the realization that religious ideas evolve with the rest of human endeavors. It seems that eventually religions

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[1] Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005); Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: A. Knopf, 2006); Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Viking Adult, 2006); Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

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will turn into a system of a worldview based on scientific information and
naturalistic moral premises.[2]

   There are three, it seems, major movements of thought related to Christian
religion. The *first movement* involves the issue of the critical study and
reevaluation of the written sources of various religions and their tenets. In
Christianity, in modern times it was initiated by critical studies of the Bible
during the Reformation and continues in the comparative studies of religions.
It leads to the rejection of accepted supernaturalistic dogmas and an ancient
worldview. It also leads to the formulation of nontheistic types of "religion,"
which are exemplified by the religion of the "highest values" or secular
humanism, as propounded by the prominent modern philosopher of religion
Stanisław Cieniawa. There are many confessions (i.e., the traditional theistic
religions) but only one authentic true religion, the intuition of the "highest
ethical values."[3] This religion was also discovered by Jesus himself (regardless
whether he was a historical figure or only a literary fiction). According to
Cieniawa, "The cult of the Highest Truth excludes any divagation concerning
heaven, hell, reincarnation, or any form of existence beyond the grave.… This
is the essential but regularly ignored sense of religious life.[4]

   Another variety of a "nontheistic" type of religion but with a mystical twist is
proposed by the Episcopalian bishop John Spong,[5] who asserts that Christianity
must change in order to survive. He likewise rejects all the supernaturalistic
assumptions of the old ages and ancient worldview represented by the
traditional Christianity. He argues that modern scientific understanding of the
world urges us to reject old metaphors and assumptions of faith that were used
to satisfy our fear of death and existential anxiety. He still retains the concept
of God but as a kind of process or self-consciousness, which is responsible for
our being as persons.

   In this group, we can include a movement that attempts the unification of
the natural sciences and religious speculations represented by theologically
oriented natural scientists or scientifically oriented theologians. Paul Davies,
a theoretical physicist and a representative of this group, recognizes, when
talking about various design schemes for the universe, that all the physical

[2] Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reinchenbach, and David Basinger, *Reason and
   Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York, Oxford:
   Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 9.
[3] Stanisław Cieniawa, "Let's Learn Religion from … Flowers," *Essays in the Philosophy of
   Humanism* 14 (2006): 73.
[4] Stanisław Cieniawa, "The Plurality of Confessions and One Religion," *Essays in the Philosophy
   of Humanism* 11 (2003): 16.
[5] John Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile*
   (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1999); John Spong, *A New Christianity for a New World: Why
   Traditional Faith is Dying & How a New Faith Is Being Born* (San Francisco: HarperOne,
   2002); John Spong, *Eternal Life: A New Vision: Beyond Religion, Beyond Theism, Beyond
   Heaven and Hell* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010).

systems that we see, from the biological realm right through to the galaxies, are the products of natural physical processes. When asked how he visualizes god, he answers, "First of all I try to avoid using the word 'god.' … I have in mind something like that rational ground in which the laws of physics are rooted … something beyond space and time, so this is not a god within time, not a god to whom you can pray and have something change, because this god is a timeless being…. If you want to use the laws of physics to explain how the universe came to exist, then these laws have to transcend the universe – they have to exist in some sort of timeless Platonic realm, and that is what I really do believe."[6] And he rejects religion based on the Bible, classifying it as a sort of "madness."

The *second movement* is diversified and tends to accommodate the natural sciences to religious doctrines or, conversely, religious doctrines to natural sciences. As initiators of this type of approach, we may consider Pierre Theilhard de Chardin, Alfred North Whitehead, and Charles Hartshorne.[7] This trend arose with the realization of the epistemological superiority of the scientific method and reason over revelation, but it still preserves the supernatural reality. This movement is based primarily on philosophical speculations, the so-called process theology or process thought.

In this model of theology, god, though he is still an absolute, immutable, independent, and infinite being, is placed in a temporal process, creative and dependent upon the free decisions of his creatures. His perfection is understood now in terms of his social relatedness, where he responds to all creatures in every event (his love). God grows with the evolving world, but he does not know the contingent events.

In the *third movement*, the key theoretical issue is the reevaluation of the traditional trinitarian dogma. Even Erasmus had feared its incendiary character. In his 1972 exhaustive study, Edmund J. Fortman, a Catholic theologian, characterized it as a "museum piece with little or no relevance to the crucial problems of contemporary life and thought."[8] This type of reformulation of Christianity and its appeal to return to the original Messianism initiated in the sixteenth century by Michael Servetus developed into a comprehensive intellectual and religious movement known as Socinianism, which survived

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[6] Paul Davies, "Traveling through Time: A Conversation with Paul Davies," *Research News & Opportunities in Science and Theology* 2, nos. 11–12 (July–August 2002): 8–11.

[7] Pierre Theilhard de Chardin, *Le Phénomène humain* (Paris: Point, 2007; first published in 1955); Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Free Press, 1985; first published in 1929); Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000); Joseph A. Bracken, ed., *World without End: Christian Eschatology from a Process Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005).

[8] Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Publishers, 1972).

in turn in the form of modern Unitarian Universalism and in its remnants of
biblical Unitarian churches.

After undergoing a significant change in the first century from a theocratic
monolithic system into a more democratic rabbinical system after the fall of
Jerusalem in 70 C.E., Judaism isolated itself from the rest of the societies in which
Jews lived. It underwent modernization to some degree in the nineteenth and
twentieth centuries and, as a result, split into several denominations. Its more
progressive factions acquired for the most part modern political and social
ideas from the surrounding cultures.[9]

Islam, on the other hand, though also split into various factions, remains
largely attached to its old authoritarian traditions, although there are some
isolated and weak voices urging its reinterpretation and modernization.[10] This
process is extremely slow and painful because of the lack of a reformation,
which was experienced by Christianity, and the prevailing, firmly indoctrinated
views among Islamic leaders. As the Islamic scholar Erkan Kurt explains,

There have been some attempts to reform Islam to "accommodate" its doctrines and
practices to the demands of modernity. Among them, some attempts aimed to create
a "universal" religion by benefiting from Islam as well as other religious traditions.
Baha'i Faith is one of them. However, since the Qur'an is grammatically structured as
a word of God and proclaims a "complete" message through the mission of Prophet
Muhammad, it is theoretically not possible to fuse Islam into an eclectic entity. Such
an attempt goes through either the claim of a new revelation from God or what is
called "natural religion," that is, speculative philosophy. Nonetheless, both inevitably
oppose the very foundation of Islam.[11]

Thus, the subject of my study is to examine how the main doctrine of Christianity
evolved and specifically to explore its philosophical foundations. I am less
concerned here with the analysis of the Christian scriptural texts. Although
they are referred to during my investigation, my interest is focused on their
textual sources and how the reading of Christian scripture evolved over time
in the clash of cultures. The textual analysis of New Testament writings is now
firmly established after hundreds of years of studies. They were initiated in
seriousness and brought to completion by Michael Servetus in the sixteenth
century in his magisterial work, *The Restoration of Christianity. The whole
Apostolic Church is summoned to return to its origin to restore the complete
knowledge of God*.[12] His studies, though complete, were periodically retraced

9 Edgar N. Bronfman and Beth Zasloff, *Hope Not Fear: A Path to Jewish Renaissance* (New
   York: St. Martin's Press, 2008).
10 Abdennour Bidar, *L'Islam sans soumission. Pour un existentialisme musulman* (Paris: Albin
   Michel, 2008).
11 Erkan Kurt, personal communication, January 1, 2011.
12 Michael Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio* (Vienne, 1553); reprint, Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva
   G.m.b.H., 1966), English translation: *The Restoration of Christianity: An English Translation
   of Christianismi restitutio (1553) by Michael Servetus (1511–1553)*, translated by Christopher

and repeated by many scholars. The title of one recent work in a line of many invokes in its title the same appeal to restoration of the original "knowledge of God": *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian: A Call to Return to the Creed of Jesus*.[13]

A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007); Michael Servetus, *Treatise on Faith and Justice of Christ's Kingdom by Michael Servetus*, selected and translated from *Christianismi restitutio* by Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Michael Servetus, *Treatise Concerning the Supernatural Regeneration and the Kingdom of the Antichrist by Michael Servetus*, selected and translated from *Christianismi restitutio* by Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Michael Servetus, *Thirty Letters to Calvin, Preacher to the Genevans & Sixty Signs of the Kingdom of the Antichrist and His Revelation Which Is Now at Hand (From the Restoration of Christianity, 1553) by Michael Servetus*, translated by Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010).
[13] Anthony Buzzard, *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian: A Call to Return to the Creed of Jesus* (Morrow, GA: Restoration Fellowship, 2007).

I

The Logos in Greek Culture

The term *logos* (λόγος) was widely used in the Greco-Roman culture and in
Judaism. Among its many meanings are word, speech, statement, discourse,
refutation, ratio, proportion, account, explanation, reason, and thought.[1] This
term, however, is not used for a "word" as used in grammar; instead, *lexis* (λέξις),
is used. Both terms derive from the Greek word *legō* (λέγω), meaning to tell, to
say, to speak, or to count. But the meanings for *logos* that have philosophical
and religious implications are basically two: as an inward *thought* or *reason*, an
intuitive *conception*; and as an outward *expression of thought* in speech. In any
theistic system, it could therefore easily be used to account for a revelation or
could be personified to designate a separate being. Throughout most schools
of Greek philosophy, this term was used to designate a rational, intelligent, and
thus vivifying principle of the universe. This principle was deduced from an
analogy to the living creature, and because the ancient Greeks understood the
universe as a living reality in accordance with their belief, it had to be vivified
by some principle, namely, the universal *logos*.

THE PRE-SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHERS

Pythagoras

Beginning with the father of Greek philosophy, Pythagoras of Samos (b. ca.
570 B.C.E.), we find already in place all the elements of future Greek schools,
of the Philonic synthesis of Hellenic philosophy with Hebrew myth and of the
so-called Christian philosophy. About 540 B.C.E. Pythagoras settled in Croton

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[1] *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, revised and
augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

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in southern Italy, where he founded a religious sect with a strict, austere moral code. The members of his school were taught to devote themselves to the cultivation of philosophy, mathematics (arithmetic and geometry), music, astronomy, and gymnastics. Their study was centered on the Muses, who were the goddesses of harmony and culture, and their guide was Apollo, whose name was interpreted later by the Pythagoreans such as Plutarch of Chaeronea (45–125 c.e.) as equal to the One (in Greek *a* = not, *pollon* = of many).[2] For Plutarch, who was himself a priest of Apollo in the temple at Delphi, Apollo was a representation of the cosmic principle of harmonic order or logos and the dialectics.[3]

Though many before Pythagoras called themselves sages or *sophoi*, Pythagoras is the first who called himself a *philosophos*,[4] a "lover of wisdom." For him philosophy was not only an intellectual endeavor but also a way of life whose aim was to reach assimilation to divinity, understood as a governing and originating cosmic principle. For Pythagoreans, liberation of the soul is achieved by contemplation of the first principles. Thus, philosophy is a form of purification, a way to immortality, for they accepted the Orphic belief in transmigration. Man was composed of all the principles constituting the cosmos and as such has reason and access to divine power. By contemplation he becomes aware of the divine, that is, of the universal principles that constitute the cosmos. We find in the Pythagorean philosophy the trinity of the cosmological principles, Monad, Dyad, and Harmony, which corresponds on the moral and intellectual level to the trinity of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. The principle of Harmony, immanent in the universe, was responsible for the proportional (*analogia*) relation (*logos*) of one thing to the other.

In Pythagoras's understanding of reality, the cosmic intelligible principle from which everything evolved by emanation was the Monad (μονάς) represented by the number One. Number One was seen as a principal underlying number; thus, numbers in general were seen as manifestations of the diversity in unity. Monad was the undifferentiated principle of unity of the whole of reality and the source of the world as an ordered universe. It was the principle of all things, and as the most dominant of all that is, all things emanated from it, and it emanated from nothing. It was indivisible and immutable. Everything that exists and even that which is not created yet exists in it. It is the nature of

[2] Plutarch, *Moralia*, Przełożyła oraz wstępem i przypisami opatrzyła Zofia Abramowiczówna, translation and introduction by Zofia Abramowiczówna, vols. 1 and 2 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1977, 1988), vol. 2, 388F, 393B.

[3] Ibid., 387C.

[4] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (*Vitae Philosophorum*), with introduction and translation by R. D. Hicks, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), vol. 1, prologue I.12, p. 13.

From Logos to Trinity

ideas, God himself, the soul, the beautiful, and the good. It is every intelligible essence itself, such as beauty, justice, and equality.

The next principle was the Dyad (δυάς), which represented diversity in the universe, the opposing powers, the duality of subject and object, and the beginning of the third principle, Harmony ('αρμονία). This third principle was the relation (the ratio, *logos*, in proportion, *analogia*) of one thing to another, and it was particularly represented by the proportion between numbers, geometrical figures, or tones in the musical scale. This Triad was immanent in Nature and represented the dynamic process of cosmogony: the One was the unification of the whole reality, the Two represented diversification and differentiation of the One in the process of forming the world order or ordered world (κόσμος, *kosmos*), and Harmony or Logos, by extension, was the bond uniting these two extremes.[5]

For Pythagoras, the intelligible number is the principle of order in the cosmos and life and is immanent. Thus, his philosophy is a metaphysics of immanent order in contrast to Plato's metaphysics of the transcendent. For Plato divinity is transcendent, and the number is not divinity but the transcendent Form. It follows that truth may be apprehended only through the intellect. In contrast, for Pythagoras the divine principle of Harmony can be grasped through the mind, and it also can be perceived through senses, producing intellectual apprehension.

In the cosmology of the phenomenal material world, Aristotle preserved in his *Metaphysics* the Pythagorean idea of order connected with Limit (Form), or a definite Boundary (πέρας) represented by the Monad, and the idea of diversity or multiplicity linked with the Unlimited or Indefinite (Matter) (ἄπειρον) represented by the Dyad.[6] Moreover, the Pythagoreans differentiated ten principles of contrarieties in the world. The cosmic numerical Pythagorean principles were represented by geometrical figures and were the powers that ordered the world.

The Pythagorean scheme of reality originated from an analysis of the musical scale, and by using the discovered mathematical principles of proportion and harmony, Pythagoras was able to explain the movements of the celestial bodies and to describe the universe and its dynamics. Another example of this approach was the principle of Tetraktys (Τετρακτύς), which represented the numerical pattern of the entire Pythagorean system, as displayed in the following diagram.

[5] Porphyry, *The Life of Pythagoras in The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library: An Anthology of Ancient Writings Which Relate to Pythagoras and Pythagorean Philosophy*, translated by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, introduced and edited by David R. Fideler with a foreword by Joscelyn Goodwin (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1987, 1988), p. 133.

[6] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.5.985b.23–986b, in Aristotle, *The Basic Works*, edited and with an introduction by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).
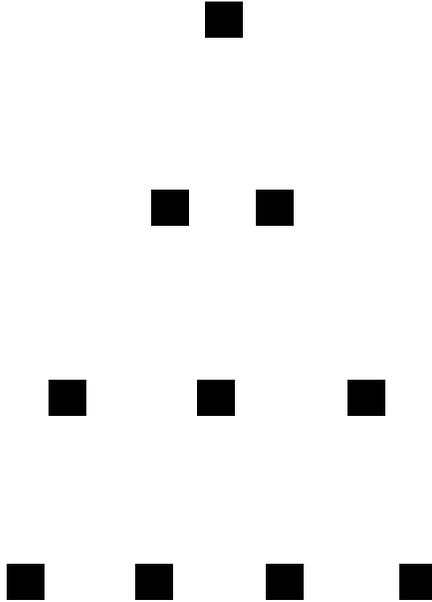
This pattern represented numbers in a geometrical fashion, for example, one was represented by a point, two by a line, three by a triangle, and four by a tetrahedron (the diagram viewed in a three dimensional projection). The whole pattern represented differentiated Unity returning back to Unity (number Ten) and was projected on the cosmic reality described previously in terms of the metaphysical principles of the Limited and the Unlimited.[7] The paradigm of this Pythagorean cosmology in which unorganized, primordial matter represented by the Unlimited or Indefinite receives shape, qualities, and differentiation by Limit or Form in order to produce the phenomenal, sensible universe was adopted by Plato with only a small modification.[8]

Following the Pythagoras example, one of his disciples, Alcmaeon of Croton,[9] applied this worldview to the study of medicine, that is, the

[7] Anonymous preserved by Photius, in *The Pythagorean Sourcebook*, p.137.
[8] Plato, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1956–1960), Tomes 1–13, texte établi et traduit par Albert Rivaud, Tome 10, *Timée – Critias*, pp. 49–55; English edition: Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, translated with an introduction and appendix on Atlantis by Desmond Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971).
[9] *Doxographi graeci*, collegit recensuit prolegomenis indicibusque instruxit Hermannus Diels, editio quarta (Berolini: apud Walter de Gruyter et Socios, 1965). See Aëtius V.30.1, Italian translation of the texts: *I Doxografi greci a cura di e tradotti da Luigi Torraca* (Padova: Casa Editrice Dott. Antonio Milano, 1961).

phenomena underlying the condition of health and disease, and developed a concept that health is "the harmonious mixture of qualities," which became for centuries, until modern times, the foundation of the Hippocratic school of medicine. We find in these Pythagorean concepts also the first representation of a metaphysical trinity as the cosmic unity in the whole reality of the *three principles*, Monad, Dyad, and Harmony. This cosmic metaphysical trinity corresponds on the moral and intellectual level to the trinity of Truth (grasped through the intellect, but also through the senses), Goodness (moral principle achieved by harmony between the psychic and somatic faculties), and Beauty (art or order at the psychological and social level).

Heraclitus of Ephesus and Anaxagoras

Next, the term Logos seems to be employed in its special philosophical metaphysical meaning by Heraclitus of Ephesus (540–480 B.C.E.),[10] who claimed that all things in the world happen according to the Logos.[11] He meant by this statement that the world and phenomena are a collection of unified things and an orderly structure (*kosmos*) regulated and arranged by the Logos.

But the whole concept of reason in natural phenomena can be found in most pre-Socratic philosophers with the exception of the atomists, who claimed that all phenomena that occur in nature are a result of inherent properties and interactions between the structures constituting nature.[12] Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (500–428 B.C.E.) is considered to be the first philosopher who assumed Mind (Νοῦς) to be another term closely related to the Logos, thus a rational principle, as the first cause of all things.[13] He believed that every substance or "stuff" was eternal and nonparticulate. In the beginning everything was a gaseous chaos, and the cosmos originated through separation produced by the cosmic force, Mind. When Mind began to move, all things were separating

[10] Jonathan Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 100–126; Heraclitus, *Fragments*, texts and translation with commentary by T. M. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); Heraclitus, *The Cosmic Fragments*, edited with an introduction and commentary by G. S. Kirk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954); Héraclite d'Éphèse, *Les "Fragments"* (Paris: Éditions Comp'Act, 1995); G. T. W. Patrick, *The Fragments of Heraclitus of Ephesus "On Nature"* (Baltimore: N. Murray, 1889); Maurice Solovine, *Héraclite d'Éphèse. Doctrines philosophiques produites intégralement et précédées d'une introduction* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1931); Heraklit, *Worte Tönen durch Jahrtausende*, Griechisch und Deutsch (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1959); Hermann von Diels, *Heraklitos von Ephesos*, Griechisch und Deutsch (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1901).

[11] Ed. Kirk, frags. 1, 2.

[12] Most texts of pre-Socratic philosophers are compiled in *Doxographi graeci*; Italian translation of the texts in *I Doxografi greci*. Good analysis of pre-Socratic philosophy can be found in W. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962, 1987).

[13] Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, pp. 226–239.