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Moses—from Seal to Statue





When the home of the Kansas School of Religion and the Kansas Bible Chair, Irma I. Smith Hall, was erected in 1967, its planners chose to depict the scene of Moses at the burning bush in the University's seal, from the description found in the third chapter of Exodus.

They planned that a bronze statue of the kneeling, barefoot Moses be installed in front of Smith Hall, facing the celebrated Burning Bush Window of the Hall's library.

Sculptor Eldon Tefft, a faculty member of the KU School of Fine Arts and a sculptor of some renown, has worked on the nine-foot-high wax form of Moses for some time. Because the statue is so large, Tefft planned to cast the bronze in six sections from flexible molds.

The first section will be cast on May 15 at the annual meeting of the School of Religion and banquet of the Burning Bush Society. Those who attend will watch the removal of the cast after the dinner.

Pouring of the molten bronze is planned for 3:30 p.m. at the Art and Design Building on the KU campus. The banquet will begin at 6 p.m. Transportation will be provided between the casting and the banquet. Persons interested in attending the banquet can make reservations by calling the School of Religion, (913) 843-7257.

Beginnings: Creation and Reproduction

by Oliver Phillips

"Creation" is a term loosely applied to stories about the beginnings of life.

The stories are traditional in many cultures. The contention of this paper is that the uncritical, blanket application of "creation" to all such stories blurs a valid distinction in the serious religious and cultural viewpoints that lie behind those narratives.

For this purpose, the Babylonian Enuma Elish and the Greek Theogony of Hesiod will be set against the Hebrew Genesis, which is, in the view of this argument, the only proper creation story among the three. This contention is based on the strict use of "create" as an active, transitive verb. "To form out of nothing; to cause to exist," as Dr. Johnson defined it. The sense of the verb carries over to the noun.

The first verses of Genesis present the normative, though not the only, account of creation by absolute fiat. The phrase "let there be (made)," in fact, enters our vocabulary from Jerome's rendering of the creation story in the Latin Vulgate Bible. Further, given our usual acceptance of the Masoretic pointing of Genesis 1.1-3, Biblical creation is ex nihilo, "from nothing"; the Creator employs no raw material nor does he engender the creature from himself. Such is the creationist version.

The ancient Babylonians and Greeks, the latter at least until Plato, did not give creationism equal time. The Greeks, in fact, seem only mildly interested in the beginnings of things.

The Babylonians, on the other hand, were deeply concerned about the origins of things. They entered a tale of the beginning into the start of their liturgical year, and by a fortunate accident that story has survived.

Of the two non-creationist accounts the earliest is the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, the title being the first two words in Akkadian, meaning "When on high . . ." The document, collected from seven cuneiform clay tablets of the early first millenium BC, is thought to contain a text deriving at least from the second millenium BC. The poem was for recitation on the fourth day of the Babylonian New Year festival when order was ritually reestablished out of disorder.

The Enuma Elish immediately and directly explains that something, or two things, pre-existed, Apsu and Tiamat, a pair of marine deities, male and female, "Their waters commingling as a single body." Their mingling is sexual; Apsu is called a "begetter." Lahmu and Lahamu are brought forth (perhaps silt deities, suitable children of aquatic parents), then Anshar and Kishar. The process is reproductive rather than creative.

Further, Apsu and Tiamat will come to a bad but useful end. Apsu is made over into a dwelling of the gods by Anshar's son, Ea, and Tiamat is divided by Ea's son Marduk to produce the upper, and presumably, the nether waters. Finally, Marduk kills another of the elder gods, Kingu, to create the human race.

Thus the entire physical universe, the race of gods, and all mortals are brought into being either by sexual reproduction or a sort of re-manufacture.

The process in Hesiod's *Theogony* is much the same, but more detailed and comprehensible. The poem was composed at the end of the eighth century by Hesiod of Ascra in Boeotia, an area in Greece where poets took readily to verse catalogues. In addition to Homer and the mythic traditions of his own culture, the poet may have known dimly, from afar, and through intermediaries the *Enuma Elish* or stories like the *Enuma Elish*. In any case, when we read the two, we recognize a similarity of outlook and of narrative pattern.



Hesiod's account is, with one exception noted below, directly reproductive, initially asexual, thereafter vigorously sexual. Hesiod's first-mentioned principle, "chaos," is the Greek word for "Void," as Norman O. Brown renders it faithful to the etymology. Others say "gap" or "chasm," the latter a derivative of the same Greek root. Our direct English transliteration, "chaos," has acquired a different meaning from the Stoics and is misleading.

Because of its priority in Hesiod's text, Void becomes a "first principle," which would have Hesiod coming down on the side of creatio ex nihilo, "creation from nothing." F. M. Cornford, in his book From Religion to Philosophy, defying what Hesiod's words seem to say, does not accept Void as a first principle, but as the result of the separation of Sky and Earth. Hesiod's text reads:

First of all, the Void came into being, next broad-bosomed Earth, the solid and eternal home of all, and Eros [Desire], the most beautiful of the immortal gods, who in every man and every god softens the sinews and overpowers the prudent purpose of the mind. Out of Void came Darkness and black Night, and out of Night came Light and Day, her children conceived after union in love with Darkness. Earth first produced starry Sky, equal in size with herself, to cover her on all sides.

Cornford reads this as meaning that originally Earth and Sky were joined together, and when they separated, they left Void, an empty gap, between them. This interpretation he supports by a fragment of Euripides three centuries subsequent and an Orphic cosmogony five centuries younger. Yet Hesiod's words can only mean that Earth produced Sky subsequent to her own coming into being.

Void, however, does not produce Earth, only such negative beings as Darkness and Night. Earth is the continuing productive principle, as Void, for the time being, disappears from Hesiod's narrative.



Earth brings forth Eros, Tartarus (Hell), Sky (mentioned third but called "first"), the mountains, water, and sea asexually; in union with Sky (a coupling frequent in Classical and other cultures) she is mother of Ocean; the Titans Coeus, Crius, Hyperion (either the Sun or his father), Iapetus, Thea, Rhea; the abstractions Themis (Law) and Mnemosyne (Memory); the lunar Phoebe, and Tethys, a doublet of the sea already listed. Then Cronus, an unambiguously anthropomorphic deity who will achieve a history of sorts, is born from the union. Thereafter Earth bears the Cyclopes and hundred-handed monsters. Presumably Sky is the father of these latter, but Hesiod does not say.

If we include the opaque children and luminous grandchildren of Void, what we have is the genealogy of a family of cosmic forces, a mythological place, geological features, astronomical bodies, abstract principles, monsters, and personal gods. Hesiod's universe is alive, and that life will persist not only in Greek religion and myth, but even in Greek philosophy.

Hesiod, like the Enuma Elish, has produced not only a "cosmology," a rationale of the universe, but a "cosmogony," quite literally and properly, "a birth of the universe." Despite Hesiod's limited interest in his cosmogony—he really is hurrying it through to get on to the subject of the warring generations of gods, his preferred theme. Nevertheless this concept pervades his entire epic. Barbara Sproul's comment (from her book Creating the World) is pertinent here:

Such cultures make no firm distinctions between creation myths and sociocultural ones insofar as they understand no gross separation between themselves and the rest of nature.

Hesiod's animate universe of living first principles is also the universe of warring gods, of the grubbing dirt farmer in *The Works and Days*, and of much Greek philosophy.

Incidentally, there is, as promised above, one instance of *fiat* creation in Hesiod, and exception to the genetic process operative elsewhere in his epic. Zeus has Hephestus make and Athena adorn the first woman. There are already men, their existence unaccounted for.

Thus are two modes of explaining the beginning of things: the one in the *Enuma Elish* and Hesiod, the other in Genesis. Barbara Sproul has maintained that these separate viewpoints carry into the socio-cultural myths, and socio-cultural myths surely represent, reenforce, and conserve the values of the society from which they arise.

Branislav Malinowski contends "Myth is . . . a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force." Myth should make a difference. What should be the consequence of genetic, animate cultural views compatible with those of the *Enuma Elish* and Hesiod?

People who see their environment as living and as having a common ancestry with themselves, thus would presumably treat it with high respect. At least that is a frequent contention. Willa Cather spoke of the reverence of the Southwest Indians for their land-scape, of which they felt a part and into which they had blended rather than intruded, unlike the European, and from which they did not obtrude:

... just as it was the white man's way to assert himself in any landscape, to change it, make it over a little (at least to leave some mark or memorial of his sojourn), it was the Indian's way to pass through a country without disturbing anything; to pass and leave no trace, like fish through the water, or birds through the air. (Death Comes for the Archbishop, 1927.)

On the other hand there is God's injunction in Genesis.

Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

It can be and has been taken as a license to exploit an unrelated, subordinate natural order ruthlessly. The charge is made perhaps most passionately and eloquently, if not fairly, by Vine Deloria, who accuses Western Christianity of "ecological destruction."

In his book **God is Real** Deloria asserts, "What Western man misses is the rather logical implication of the unity of life." Moreover Deloria tentatively ex-

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India's Sacred Cow: The Symbol Behind the Metaphor

by Robert N. Minor

People who have otherwise heard very little about religion in India, have heard that the cow is sacred there. In fact the phrase "sacred cow" has come to refer to any belief or object immune to criticism.

The nature of the cow's veneration, however, has often been misunderstood. It has been sacred in ancient Egypt as well as to the Nuer of Nilotic Africa, for whom it is a possession cherished as the highest offering to the Divine Spirit, Kwoth.

Often it is said that the Indian cow is worshipped. Yet, though the medieval Indian texts, the *Puranas*, prescribe "cow worship" twice a year, the cow is actually "worshipped" only one day of the year: on *Gopastami*, the "cow holiday." On this day it is treated as a subject of veneration just as the images of the gods of India are every day. The cow is bathed and otherwise treated as one would treat a guest in one's home. At the same time prayers are offered in its name, and offerings such as flowers, moistened wheat and incense are made.

The reason the cow is sacred is a matter of debate among observers of India. In the end the question's answer is lost in obscurity. Yet a number of factors have contributed to the modern Indian understanding of the cow as a symbol to be protected. W. Norman Brown, a well-known Indologist, listed five elements which have contributed to the sanctity of the cow: (1) its importance in Vedic sacrifices in early India; (2) references to it in early Vedic literature in a figurative sense which were later taken literally; (3) the espousal of the doctrine of ahimsa, "non-injury," of any creature; (4) prohibitions in the early literature against killing the cow of the brahmin, a member of the highest class of sages and teachers; and (5) the association of the cow with the mothergoddess.

This list is incomplete. Other factors that contribute to the importance of the cow in India are its part, at least symbolically, in the sustenance of life and its use as a nationalist symbol by Indians against the Muslim invasions.

The Cow in Ancient India

The earliest literature of India, the Vedas, which date from 1500-300 B.C. and which many in India still consider sacred scripture, call the bull and the cow aghnya, "not to be killed." The bull has never been protected as the cow in historical India even though seals from the early Indus Valley Civilization (1900 B.C.) depict bulls as objects of veneration, and a later important deity, Shiva, possessed the bull Nandi as his vehicle.

Yet as a result of these early Vedic prohibitions against cow slaughter, many scholars have understood that bulls and cows were sacred in this early period.² W. Norman Brown has rightly pointed out, though, that in the Veda the epithet actually refers to a cow that is not to be slain because it is productive

and of economic value. It is used as an appositive to dhenu, "milk cow," or in passages where the cow's ability to give milk or its possibility of bearing a calf is implied or actually emphasized.

In the earliest writings of the Veda, the hymns of the Rg-veda (1500 B.C.) cattle represent wealth. The prayers offered at the sacrifices to the gods frequently request cattle along with other this-worldly gifts. The cow is also one of the most important sacrificial victims, and an early fee paid the priest for performance of the sacrifice. Not surprisingly the term "fee," dak-sina, means "a richly milking one."

The cow was probably also a regular part of the diet of the Vedic individual. To kill the cow for food in the entertainment of the guest was common. Panini, the grammarian, calls a guest goghna, "one for whom a cow is slain," and the texts which discuss ritual for householders, the *Grhya-sutras*, also regularly prescribe cowslaughter for the entertain-



ment of guests. The ceremony for such a feast is called go-arghya, "cow-offering."

In the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* of the later Vedic period, eating beef is part of a prescription for the birth of vigorous, famous and intelligent offspring, and the great Vedic sage and philosopher Yajnavalkya declares, "I for one eat it (beef), provided that it is tender (*amsala*)."

Four hymns in the later portion of the Vedas are entirely devoted to securing protection for the possessions of the high-caste sage, the brahmin. These especially mention his cow and declare that to injure the cow of a brahmin is equal to injury of the brahmin himself. The cow is not protected because it is a cow, but because it is the possession of a member of the highest class.

Besides such literal references to the cow in the early sacred literature, the animal is referred to symbolically. The gods are called "cow-born," gojata. The cosmic waters in creation stories are characterized as coming forth like lowing cows or described as motherly cows, or cows of plenty.

The goddess Aditi, whose name means "boundlessness, freedom," and who personifies the force of change which at the beginning leads to creation, is frequently called a cow. For example: "She is called a milk cow (dhenu) who issues full streams for pious folk who make the oblation." With Aditi's identification with the earth, the cow itself became a symbol of the earth and, apparently, such epithets were taken literally, thereby serving to give the cow a status which would be reinforced by later developments.

The Advocacy of Non-injury

Though there are slight hints of the teaching in some of the earlier literature, in the fourth century B.C., the teachings of the followers of the Buddha and the Jainas emphasized the doctrine of *ahimsa*, or "non-injury," toward every living creature. *Ahimsa* did not single out the cow as its object, however, but in the literature from 400 B.C.-400 A.D., there is both the discussion of the ideal of cow protection and the fact that beef-eating was still a common and often acceptable practice.

Butchers are mentioned, designated by the term goghataka, "killers of beef," with shops in prominent places in towns, as are hunters and trappers. Though upon his conversion to the "Way of the Buddha" (260 B.C.) the emperor Asoka even appointed officers to enforce ahimsa, these merchants continued to sell their wares publicly and later dynasties reinstituted animal sacrifices which he had forbidden. Similarly the Arthasastra, a work on political theory which many trace to one of Asoka's ministers, refers to the legality of the sale of meat if it is fresh, and speaks of "cattle which are fit only for the supply of meat" because they are apparently otherwise worthless. Indian rulers as late as the twelfth century A.D. continued to attempt to enforce a ban on meat eating.

At the same time religious texts also advocate the ideal of abstinence from cow slaughter. The great Indian epic, the *Mahabharata* (400 B.C.-400 A.D.) warns that the killer of a cow will be reborn in hell for as many years as there are hairs on the body of the slain animal. The most well-known law book, the *Manudharma-sastra* (100 B.C.-100 A.D.) is inconsistent in the matter, allowing the eating of "consecrated flesh" but also including cow-slaughter in a list of crimes.

By the end of the Epic period (400 A.D.) the sanctity and inviolability of the cow are set forth in many of the terms they are today. A long and late section of the *Mahabharata* is devoted to the sanctity of the cow and its appropriate veneration. The later Puranic literature elaborates upon this Epic ideal. The heaven of the popular god Vishnu is called goloka, "world of cows," and cow dung is treated as a symbol of Vishnu's weapon, the discus.

Various wishing cows are found in the literature on which human beings could wish for the fulfillment of all desires. Kamadhenu, "cow of wishes," who in a creation story is said to have been produced at the primordial churning of the ocean by the gods, was the most famous. She symbolized the cow as Mother, the provider of needs.

In the *Bhagavata Purana*, lack of reverence for the cow is said to be one of the symptoms of the final age when morality and religion are in decay and the world is about to be destroyed. The cow was created on the same day as the god Brahma and cow slaughter is equal to killing a brahmin. The cow is here identified with another popular god, Krishna who is a cowherd.

The Products of the Cow

The Vishnu Purana reveres the cow as the giver of vegetation for the earth and today all that comes forth from the cow is held to be sacred. Social scientists, debating over both its cause and disposition, usually note the utility of the cow in India, a utility which the texts themselves declare. The gifts of the cow are said to be gifts of the great Mother to mankind, especially the pancagavya, the "five gifts": milk, ghee (clarified butter), curds, dung (which is used for fuel, etc.), and urine.

In addition to their practical uses, the products are used, separately or in a mixture, for purification from defilements such as those caused by breaking caste taboos or ritual restrictions. *Go-mutra*, cow urine, is prescribed as a beverage for women before and after delivery, and may be bathed in as a purificatory rite.

Cow dung is said to purify the floor and hearth of village huts, and the dust from the hoofprint (go-pada) of a cow is often an ingredient in village medicine. Though milk is an acceptable beverage, the selling of milk is a low-caste occupation in many parts of India because it is an economic transaction based on a sacrosanct product.

Somewhere between 800 and 1200 Å.D., the doctrine of non-injury, ahimsa, became a more central element of Indian ethics and the cow was singled out as its symbol. Writings after 1500 Å.D. are consistent in their proscription against eating beef and the advocacy of veneration of the cow. It was probably the Muslim invasions which finally hardened the doctrines.

Muslims not only failed to abstain from eating beef but they sacrificed the cow at the feast of Bakr Id after parading it in procession with accompanying garlands. In reaction to these invaders, cow protection, caste, and the protection of the brahmin sage became central doctrines identifying non-foreign religion. Shivaji (1627-1680), the Maratha hero and leader whose legendary exploits are still sung and otherwise remembered even in Indian comic books, declared that these three doctrines are essential to all true followers of Indian religion. At times the sacred cow has been a Hindu nationalist rallying point. It was a divisive force in the Hindu-Muslim riots during the days of partition, and has been so recently.

The Modern Period

The debate over the protection of the cow is livelier than ever. There is an on-going struggle between those who cherish the cow as a symbol of "Hindu" religion and those who emphasize perceived economic needs.⁴

One of the "Directive Principles" of the Indian Constitution (no. 48), which is not binding but indicates the concerns of the Constituent Assembly, reflects the struggle. On the one hand it proclaims the need for "animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines" and on the other it advocates "prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle."

Since the central government has failed to solve

farm, gosala, to maintain roving cattle.

One modern Indian personality, Dyanand Saraswati (1824-1883) helped found the Cow Protection Association whose goal is to eliminate all cow slaughter, and a number of contemporary political parties have supported the ban. Gandhi claimed: "Cow protection is the gift of Hinduism to the world," because the cow represents the indissolvable bond between the human and subhuman and because the cow is an example of complete sacrificial giving for

others.

In 1966 the rapidly growing Jana Sangh Hindu communal political party advocated in its Manifesto a constitutional amendment banning cow-slaughter because, "The Cow is the national point of honor." In November, 1966, 100,000 people, including some naked sadhus, marched on the Indian parliament building in New Delhi to demand a nationwide ban. The march turned violent and was dispersed by police who opened fire, killing some in the crowd. A government commission was appointed to review the issue in 1973.

The issues are far from settled, and western social scientists are a part of the debate, suggesting solutions to the cow "problem." Yet today, as one writer

puts it, during the child-rearing years:

The average Hindu in India, whether he belongs to the upper clean castes or the lower castes sanskritizing towards ritual cleanliness, is socialized to revere cows, consider them as mothers and providers possessed of divine qualities, look upon Nandi as the vehicle of Shiva, and regard killing cows tantamount to Brahmicide and abhor beef-eating as a heinous sin and any one who eats beef as unclean.⁵

He is taught, then, that it ranks with murder and incest as one of the central prohibitions of "Hinduism," accompanied by "innumerable proscriptions, rites, ceremonies, attitudes and values." Yet, because of the cow's sacredness, India dare not help or care for her. That would mix the profane with the sacred. Thus, the sacred cow is not treated like a god on earth. Former Prime Minister Nehru addressing cow worshippers in 1954 noted:

The condition of the cows in foreign countries like America, England and Russia was far better than in India. Even granting that an overall law was passed banning the slaughter of the cows, it would lead to greater starvation and

more deaths among cows.7

The cow in India is far from divine, yet it is not merely a symbol of the Mother-goddess, or non-injury. For many it symbolizes the nation of India (often called the Mother, too), as well as the very existence of that recently reified tradition: Hinduism.

Notes

 W. Norman Brown, "The Sanctity of the Cow in Hinduism," The Economic Weekly XVI (February, 1964), 245-55.

 For example in classic works by A. A. Macdonell, Vedic Mythology (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1963 rpt), 150-151; and A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith, Vedic Index of Names and Subjects (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967 rpt), II. 146-147.

 For example see the discussion and debate on this matter in Current Anthropology XII, No. 2 (April, 1971), pp. 191-209.

4. For example see a special issue on the debate in Seminar (New Delhi) No. 93 (May, 1967), 10-39, entitled "The Cow." The economic benefits of cow-slaughter are questioned by some non-Hindus such as: Marvin Harris, Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches (New York: Vantage Books, 1974), 11-32.

5. Seminar, pp. 21-22.

6. Ibid., 22.

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 Quoted in Tadeusz Margul, "Present-day Worship of the Cow in India," Numen XV (1968), 68.

The last issue of Religion carried Robert Minor's definitive scholarship on "Cow Veneration in India," which will appear in the forthcoming Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions. Here he gives the topic a broader, more popular treatment.

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tends this unity of life to "plants, rocks, and natural features."

Yet the tradition of Genesis has its argument, too. A wholly animate universe does not accord with a thorough scientific analysis of the natural order. The scientist's dissection of nature has not revealed the supernatural in the natural order nor the animate in a vast portion of it. In the terms of Genesis, this is to be expected and should occasion no alarm.

It is Hesiod and the poet of *Enuma Elish* to whom this is alien. The debate between what is generally called "creationism" and biology is perverse. Science is as much the logical consequence of Genesis as it is

of Greek speculation.

Finally, there is a curious misnomer, perhaps regrettable, in the name of the first book of the Bible. The proper Hebrew title Bere'shith, "In the Beginning," was displaced by the Septuagint translators who produced the Greek Bible. As Hellenized Jews of Alexandria, they allowed their Hellenism to impose a touch of cultural imperialism on their work, calling the first book of the Bible by the Greek "Genesis" with its close relation in etymology and meaning to "genetics," precisely the mode of thought of the Theogony ("Birth of the Gods) but inappropriate for the work they translated.

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TRAVERSE LOG

When we talk about values each of us is a fundamentalist. We just hold different fundamentals.

A discussion of values in general, or values for "American life," or teaching values in public schools

easily generates heat. So here we rush in where angels fear to tread.

What gives us butterflies is somebody's attempt to make a particular set of values general—to make his structures dominant on a group. We get more nervous when somebody tries to legislate morals. And a step further: we begin to get really fearful when sincere and beautiful people think their way of running the world is divinely mandated. While doing a Lincoln Memorial impersonation, they marshal scripture.

So I modify an old proverb:

"When the righteous rule, the people rejoice; when the unrighteous rule, the people mourn."

When the self-righteous rule—watch out.

Worldly power in religious hands can cause a lot of pain, to wit: the Crusades, parts of the inquisition, the Salem witch trials. But interesting as finger pointing can be, an essential question still remains: can a pluralistic society establish any comprehensive ethical code? The great heterogeneous American circus takes place under a large inclusive top. There must be room in here; and we must keep the tent up,

David Barr blows away some cobwebs for us with his observation that values come in two kinds: 1) consensus (to which everybody subscribes), and 2) contested (those held by some and questioned by others). Of course the second list is longer. The first kind is more important, and whatever it is, it holds up the great American tent. What we are trying to define are those few precious predilections upon which the

survival of society depends. Some values just have to bel

Various reasons keep me from trying to compose a general list now on this little corner of Religionville. But to illustrate, some things are assumed: we do not burn down the school house or shoot the principal, or laugh at the judge in court or do some certain other things with impunity. Beyond these things, however, we can disagree and still keep school. There is room here for Amish men who don't wear buttons and Adventists who won't eat meat, devoted folks who do not travel on Saturday and equally devoted people who won't work on Sunday, for people who won't dance and for people who can't. That kind of room is one of the poles of the tent.

The real genius of our society is that, with differences we go on together somehow. One of the great phrases Americans use is, "I'll go along with that," "I don't see it that way but I'll go along with you."

There's a value!



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