NATURAL HISTORY OF SIN

REMARKS ON THE ORIGINS OF SIN
IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

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The different approaches to the problem of sin frequently attributed to it an ethical connotation which would have assigned its role and place even in the history of religions. These approaches supposed implicitly a closer or looser connection between religion and ethics. The present author's historico-philological investigation, after having compared some basic linguistic and historical data of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, came to the conclusion that the early forms of the sin perceptions had not yet belonged to the sphere of ethics, while those forms which developed in early modern times have not become part of ethics. Evil and sin were originally associated with religion, later on, however, the judgement of sins has been taken over by the secularised law.

Key words: ethics and religion, ethics and law; sin and evil in the context of religion and law; sin perception in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; sin and free will, sin and predestination.

Sin and religion, sin and ethics

Sin and its homologous moments (the mystery of *evil,* the longing for *justness* bound up with *theodicy,* the strange twin of *free will* and *predestination* not excluding but depending on each other and the *transitoriness of human life* being rooted in history and betrothed with birth and death) are not to be separated from human beings. Although the manifestations of sin from the lamentation of the "Sumerian Job"[1] (Kramer 1988, pp. 111–115) through the history of the Biblical Job and the rather pessimistic perceptions of various ages of the world[2] running on a continuous decline to the philo-

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[1] As a characteristic example see also the remarkable piece of Akkadian literature beginning with *Ludlul bēl nemeqi* which challenged perhaps for the first time the existence of theodicy, see Pritchard, *ANET* (pp. 596–600), cf. also the following two texts there. To the former's interpretation see Gadd (1948, pp. 83–85). From Egypt we find similar texts in the First Intermediary Period, see Pritchard, *ANET* (pp. 405–407) ("A dispute over suicide").

[2] On the "ages of the world" see with full particulars Hastings, *ERE* (I, pp. 183–210); Eliade, *ER* (I, pp. 128–133) (Jonathan Z. Smith).

sophical, literary or moralising ideas of the modern times[3], is to be considered as a most controversial problem of human thinking, nonetheless the recent and earlier attempts have convincingly demonstrated that a more or less satisfying answer to the

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On the myths about Egyptian golden age see Kákosy (1964, pp. 205−216) (it is a most important point, appearing already in Egypt, that men and gods originally lived together. Although Re had put an end to Hathor's destruction and so humankind survived, yet the resigned god withdrew to the heavens, becoming a kind of *deus otiosus* and man is left to himself in an earthly world without gods). According to the much more mournful and pessimistic Mesopotamian ideas, too, in olden times there was no unbridgeable contrast between the divine and humane spheres and the cosmic order had only been threatened by the sins of humankind resulting in Chaos and one of gods' punishments was the Flood (see the description of Flood on tablet XI of the Epic of Gilgamesh: Pritchard, *ANET* (pp. 93−97). The initial coexistence of gods and men is to be found in other myths of Ancient Orient, too, see Gadd (1948, pp. 14−17). This common, divine−humane world has been replaced by the removal of the divine sphere into the heavens as well as by divine messages sent down from time to time through intermediators (angels, prophets, and dreams), see Gadd (1948, pp. 18−29). The idea of ancient Indian cosmic ages has especially been closely connected with the gradual degradation of humankind (see mainly *Bhāgavata Purāna* 3.11.6−37; *Brahmāṇḍa Purāna* 1.7.19−63; *Viṣṇu Purāna* 1.3.1−25). According to this the four *yuga*s reduced successively by one quarter are closely correlated to the decline of *dharma*: (1) the *Kṛtayuga* or *Satyayuga* was the golden age when there was no envy, hate, no worry and anxiety. At that time there existed only one God and one Law and the casts still fulfilled their duties without expecting any reward. (2) In the *Tretā-yuga* succeeding the golden age the *dharma* is reduced by one quarter and the sacrifices and rites are instituted and, by doing them, man would like to reach his selfish desires inventing the principle of *do ut des*; in this age life is more and more determined by labour and death. (3) *Dvāparayuga* started the second, more miserable, half of *mahāyuga*; the extrinsic rites are increasing, the lusts, desires and evil intentions multiplied, while the time of human life is gradually reduced. (4) Finally, in the *Kaliyuga* (begun in 3102 BC and still going on) there remained only one quarter of the original virtues, the efforts of yore almost disappeared, past knowledge is nearly falling into oblivion and the evil armed with disease, fear, despair, hate and ill-will rampages about and rules the world. It is well known that this cosmic outlook, with important modifications, has been taken over by Buddhism and Jainism and its influence may be traced also in Neo-Confucianism. The linear perception of the ages of the world appearing in the fighting between Good and Evil has most profoundly been expressed in Iranian Mazdaism, see on the tripartition of Time: Boyce (I, pp. 229−246); Duchesne-Guillemin (1973, pp. 146 sq); Hutter (1996, pp. 210−215). In the Greek thinking it was Hesiod, the Boeotian farmer rhapsodist living around 700 BC, who, being receptive to Oriental influences (see West 1999, pp. 276−333), elaborated the degradation of man in the sequence of the five ages (see *Works and Days* 109−201) which has coherently been complemented by the myths of Prometheus (*Works and Days* 50−58; *Theogony* 510−569) as well as of Pandora (*Works and Days* 59−99; *Theogony* 570−616). To the sources of Hesiod's ages of world see Reitzenstein−Schaeder (1926, pp. 38−68); Trencsényi-Waldapfel (1966, pp. 133−154) ("Der Mythos von Goldenen Zeitalter und den Inseln der Seligen"); West (1999, pp. 312−319).

[3] From the immense scholarly literature see *WPhB* (I, pp. 191−193); Hastings, *ERE* (VI, pp. 318−326) (W. D. Niven – he examined mainly the views of 18th−19th centuries with a good bibliography); *DHI* (II, pp. 161−169) (Raduslav A. Tsanoff – with further bibliography); Eliade, *ER* (V, pp. 199−208) (P. Ricoeur, here we find his views on evil which he elaborated in more detail in his *The Symbolism of Evil*, Boston, 1967). Safranski's work (1997) is an intelligent analysis of the recent perceptions of evil. However his approach to its ancient forms is unacceptable because he regards them from the point of view of the modern individual. Tengelyi's work (1992) is a more serious attempt. He examined the problem of evil from Hegel to Heidegger from the point of view of "freedom, personal identity and responsibility" and if he goes back to the "prehistory" of modern sin perceptions he is limiting himself to the Classical Greek development.

tormenting questions and contradictions has not been given so far. This is quite understandable and it is certainly a truism that such a definitive answer responding satisfactorily to every problem does not exist. For, the problem of sin is not a riddle but rather a semantic range, a peculiar comprehension of qualitatively different meanings which in the course of human history appeared in diverse forms and it comes into view in a changing shade of colour for a historian, a philosopher, a historian of religion, a lawyer or for a sociologist. The embarrassing variety of interpretations began supposedly from the so-called "axial age"[4], when beside the earlier value-system based upon the closed community and the collective liability, having an external relationship to the divine sphere worshipping it with ritualised sacrifices, appeared the Prophetic religions which stressed individual responsibility, trying to develop the ethical moments of a new religiosity. These religions renounced the "shame-society", regulated by external rules and norms and made the first steps towards the "guilt-society" built upon the internal regulation, conscience and an entirely new consciousness of guilt (see Dodds 1951, pp. 25–63; Barbu 1960, pp. 96–112). In this axial age dated by Jaspers between 800–100 BC (the far-reaching changes had taken place in the 6th–5th centuries) there came about "the most profound change of history" and "the man living with us even today" emerged. In China Confucius (Kung Qiu), Lao-tze (Laozi), Mo-tze (Mozi), in India Siddhārtha Gautama and Makkhali Gosāla (the founder of the Ājīvika doctrines), in Iran Zarathushtra, the founder of the most ethical Prophetic religion (scholars are still divided on his dating), in Palestine Jeremiah, Ezekiel and especially Deutero-Isaiah, in Greece Pythagoras, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Socrates and Plato, put similarly in the centre of their teaching the individual instead of the community. With the discovery of human consciousness they had been traversing the way from the myth to *logos*[5] and in their search they focussed, as Jaspers said, on "the reason and personality" (*Vernunft und Persönlichkeit*) (Jaspers 1955, p. 17).[6] From the point of view of history of religions and psychology it has possibly been the most far-reaching change in the history of mankind. By establishing a new status of the individual the *principium individuationis* has made the most important step towards the self-contained person having a limited autonomy. Instead of a more or less passive presence within a given community it required individual responsibility and the promise of personal punishment or salvation.[7] The "axial age" was, in-

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[4] The character and importance of the "axial age" has been grasped first by Jaspers (1955, pp. 14–80). After him see the *Daedalus* volume under the title *Wisdom, Revelation and Doubt* (Spring 1975) and the thematic volume edited by Eisenstadt (1986). This last volume endeavoured to analyse in 21 papers the Axial Age Breakthroughs from China to the Mediterraneum.

[5] To this process see Nestle's thorough work (1940) which examined the changes from the epic beginnings to Socrates; to the problem see Cassirer's brief but thoroughgoing analysis (1969, pp. 53–60).

[6] Barbu's historico-psychological analysis got to the same result (1960, pp. 74–89, 112–129).

[7] We find its most elaborated form in Zoroastrianism, see Boyce (I, 1975, pp. 236–246). It is not by chance that it influenced the later religious development: "Zoroaster's eschatological teachings, with the individual judgement, the resurrection of the body, the Last Judgement, and life everlasting, became profoundly familiar, through borrowings, to Jews, Christians and Muslims, and have exerted enormous influence on the lives and thoughts of men in many lands" (*op. cit.*, 1975,

deed, a great chance for humankind, though already in those days individualisation proved to be a possibility which might be undertaken only by an insignificant minority. As Jaspers said: "Was der Einzelne erreicht, überträgt sich keineswegs auf alle. Das Abstand zwischen den Gipfeln menschlicher Möglichkeiten und der Menge wird damals ausserordentlich" (Jaspers 1955, p. 17).

As soon as the new ideas of the "axial age", adumbrating the radically novel relationship between the individual and the community, had been put into words, practically right away the earlier ways of living were resuscitated which learned a lot from the arguments of the prophetic movements. These renewed ways of life offered convincingly those strategies of conduct which tried to relieve the individual from the troublesome ethical obligations and, at the same time, attached a greater importance to the extrinsic prescriptions of the sacrificial religion performed by priestly assistance. Let us think e.g. of the renewal of Hinduism and the popularity of *mahā-yāna* and *vajrayāna* within Buddhism or we may recall in China the formal ceremonialism of Confucianism becoming a State religion, and it is well known that in Iran already from the reign of Artaxerxes (465–425) the original Zoroastrianism, stressing the strictly ethical conduct of the individual, had been driven into the background, and the worship of the pre-Zoroastrian deities, with their sacramental cults, was again spreading. At the same time, we may refer to the very brief period of the Jewish prophetic movement, preaching individual responsibility and a deeply ethical religiosity, and to the development of Judaism, meant in a narrow sense, which laid stress again upon the (ethnical) community and the ritualised cult and prepared the way for the rabbinical Jewry of synagogue.

Thus, from the middle of the first millennium BC we may find an embarrassing abundance of perceptions bearing some relation to sin. If we think of India, we meet, at least, half a dozen ways of seeking after an individual salvation. The Upanishads propagated the priority of knowledge against faith and deed (see Basham 1954, p. 253; cf. Puskás 2000, pp. 197–214). As far as Buddhism is concerned, there are no metaphysical dimensions (the world is characterised by transitoriness and the universum is soulless), instead of them there is at its centre a paradoxical psychology according to which the cessation of suffering results from the gradual renunciation of individuality (Basham 1954, pp. 286, 270). Jainism developed a more austere redemption conception, which for a lay believer is practically unrealisable, because for its attainment a monastic way of life is needed (Basham 1954, pp. 287–296; cf.

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p. 246). It was especially a striking change which took place within Israelite religion when communal reciprocity has been replaced by individual responsibility which in its purest form characterised only the teachings of the Prophets, see Jeremiah 31.29 sq: "In those days, they shall no longer say: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on the edge.' But every one shall die for his own sin, each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edges." See similarly Ezekiel 18.2–4. A similar striking change may be observed in Muḥammad's preaching which rejected the former practice and stressed the individual responsibility. However, this standpoint, as we shall see it later, had been crossed by the insistence on Allah's omnipotence which, from the 2nd/8th century in the dispute between the *qadariya* and *jabariya* (free will and predestination) resulted in the dominance of the latter. On this question see Wensinck (1932/1979, pp. 49–57); *EI*[2] (IV, pp. 384–388) (s.v. ḳadariya – J. von Ess).

Puskás 2000, pp. 218–229). Beside them we find the Ājīvika preaching a severe determinism, the sceptics, the materialists and Hinduism, starting a counter-attack against these "heterodox" trends (Basham 1954, pp. 294–296; cf. Puskás 2000, p. 217). Yet, we meet with the same situation in the case of the Israelite religion, where there are huge differences between the sin perceptions of the early period, being under the influence of the Canaanite religions, the claims of the Prophets and the religious codification after the Babylonian Exile. This process may be grasped in the different redactions (Yahvist, Elohist, Deuteronomist as well as Priestly sources) of the Old Testament (see Rad I, 1962, pp. l54–160, 262–272, II, pp. 224, 229, 406). The Greek evolution was possibly more variegated. Here we find in the Classical period, and then especially in the Hellenistic age an embarrassing variety regarding the relationship of the individual to the cosmos.[8] Some trends of Greek mythology revealed a kind of playfulness with ironic or obviously fabulous features which raised unavoidably the question "did Greeks believe in their myths?"[9]

The ethically coloured sin perception, developing from the "axial age" and taken over by the European philosophical reflections greatly influenced the views on sin spread in Europe since the pre-modern age. In this process the conception of sin is getting more and more socialised, i.e. it became a societal category. At the end of this development it is considered as a deliberate act of the individual endowed with liberty and choice and, understandably, the law is playing an increasing role in sin perception as well as in its punishment. This conception, however, is wrong, because ethical considerations did not affect the origins of sin. Moreover, we have to emphasise, that the conception of sin as a legal problem is a modern development, and J. Assmann is, supposedly, wrong when he traced back the genealogy of sin to the oath-breaking and the violation of a contract and, in doing so, he relegated sin to the sphere of law (Assmann 1997, pp. 255–258). No doubt, the *contact* between sin and the law emerged in every ancient culture, because a major part of the crimes endangered the norms of the religiously determined human coexistence; the process of socialisation (*Vergesellschaftungsvorgang*), however, has been conceived for a long time as an imperfect imprint of the divine order of the cosmos,[10] and the developing legal systems (except Roman private law) lacked any self-reliant character. The perception of sin as a crime/felony or infraction of the law should be considered as a radically new phenomenon, which was to become an organic moment of the development of the modern (bourgeois) society. This momentous change has theoretically been thematised for the first time in the debate of great consequence, which took place between

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[8] From the immense scholarly literature we refer only to some works which make clear the simultaneity of diversity: Murray (1955); Grønbech (1965) (especially the second volume); Burkert (1985), see especially the last two chapters: pp. 276–304 ("Mysteries and Asceticism"), pp. 305–337 ("Philosophical Religion").

[9] See Veyne's ingenious and illuminating book on the problem (1988), cf. Friedell's intelligent remarks on it (1940, II, pp. 407–410).

[10] See Eliade (1958, pp. 367–387) ("Sacred Places: Temple, Palace, 'Centre of the World'"); idem (1959, pp. 20–65) ("Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred"); idem (1990, pp. 105–129) ("Sacred Architecture and Symbolism"); Corbin (1986, pp. 263–390) ("The *Imago Templi* in Confrontation with Secular Norms").

the Jesuits and the Jansenists about original sin in the second half of the 17th century. This "modernisation" process, of which this famous debate was a most remarkable part, has rightly been characterised by Max Weber as "the disenchantment of the world" (*die Entzauberung der Welt*). It resulted, among other consequences, in the secularisation of sin.[11]

For a proper study of the earliest forms of sin one must keep in mind that religion and ethics are of different origins, hence they can never been organically intertwined (the purest forms of the prophetic religions may be regarded exeptions rather than a rule, because they have never been put into practice in their original conception).

Kant in his old-age work, *Metaphysik der Sitten* (The Metaphysic of Morals), written in 1797, differentiated, in an unambiguous way, religion from ethics: "As to *the material* of religion, which means the whole of duties towards God with the services offered to Him (*ad praestandum*), all these as divine *fiat* may imply such distinct duties which are not resulting from a general Law-giving reason, i.e. they are not *a priori* for us, being knowledgeable only empirically, viz. they belong to the revealed religion… Such a religion, no matter how much substantiated, cannot be regarded as a part of the *pure philosophical morals.* Thus, religion as the doctrine of duties towards God is to be found outside of purely philosophical ethics." (Kant 1991, pp. 610 sq).[12]

The two spheres had, indeed, separate roots: religion tried to mediate the relationship between man and the universe/cosmos, while ethics endeavour to regulate man's relation to his fellow-man.[13] Of course, this latter endeavour has some chance, if the postulates of ethics are getting interiorised, that means accepted inwardly by the individual, otherwise the sphere of ethics has to yield ground to the externally

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[11] A thoroughgoing analysis of this debate has been given by Groethuysen (1978, I, pp. 194−237 [text], pp. 329−357) (an excellent documentation); cf. recently the first part of Kolakowski's illuminating book (1995), which throws light especially upon the dogmatic background of the discussion. To the background of the process (the progress of the natural sciences, the development of manufactures and the debate between philosophy and theology) it is still worth taking up two valuable books (both published in the same year): (a) the little-known work of Borkenau (published in Paris by the Institut für Sozialforschung), especially (1934, pp. 132−267) ("Die neue Moral und die neue Theologie", but also the chapter "Naturrecht und Gesellschaftsvertrag" is important, pp. 95−131); (b) Hazard's book widely used in the prewar years, *La crise de la conscience européenne (1680−1715)*, in its German version see especially (1939[5], pp. 292−307, 308−328, 328−337). Especially worth reading is his P. Bayle analysis. The latter differentiated strictly between religion and morality, which has to be considered a sort of negation of negation, since we find at the beginning of this process the religion without morality, the negation of which is the ethically coloured individual religiosity preached by the Prophets, and finally in early modern times the socially determined part of ethics, the legality has been separated from religion once for all.

[12] As a matter of fact, this separation has been substantiated in Kant's system, let us think of his letter, written in 4 May, 1793 to Städlin, where he outlined the three well-known parts of his philosophical program: "My old plan to elaborate the field of pure philosophy aims at tackling three tasks: (1) What can I know? (Metaphysics), (2) What should I do (Morals), (3) What may I hope? (Religion)" (see Kant 1974, p. 420). Vidrányi, interpreting Kant's view about the third question, rightly answered: "either nothing or the divine grace" (1974, p. 421).

[13] See similarly Dodds (1951, p. 31).

regulated legislation. Hence, originally the religious experience has been dominated by the natural character of the physical universe, the consequence of which was not only the eventual lack of rationalism (this non-rational aspect appears, in its positive meaning, in R. Otto's *numinous*), but also the absence of morals. Nature has no morals, which means that the original nature-determined conception of the religion is not so much immoral as amoral, and the religiously conceived sin perception had no ethical aspect. This latter moment commenced to become a matter of reflexion, when the social requirements came to the fore and these new demands tried to express themselves in religious terms. Originally the fate of the human beings, irrespective of their intentions and even of their works, is wholly delivered to the divine arbitrariness. From the great many texts, giving voice to defencelessness of man let us quote the words of Theognis, who lived in the second half of the sixth century BC: "No one, Cyrnus, is responsible (*aitios*) on his own for ruin or profit, but it is the gods who give both. Nor does anyone know in his heart whether his toil will turn out well or badly in the end. For often a man who thought he would fail succeeds and a man who thought he would succeed fails. No one has at hand everything he wants, since constraints or grievous helplessness hold him back. We mortals have vain thoughts, not knowledge, it is the gods who bring everything to pass according to their own intent" (*anthropoi de mataia nomizomen, eidotes ouden; theoi de kata sfeteron panta teleousi noon*).[14]

The attitude of the archaic Greek man to the gods has been worded in lapidary conciseness by Herodotus, when Solon, answering Croesus, called the divine principle as "jelous and confounding" (*to theion pan eon phthoneron te kai tarakhōdes*) and remarked that "the god often offers prosperity to man but then brings them to utter ruin" (*prorridzous anetrepse*).[15]

Sin has been considered by the ancient Oriental way of looking, too, as a part of the divine sphere. A famous Egyptian text, *The Instruction of Amenope*, taking its origin in the Ramesside period, expressed this attitude in this way:

> "God is ever in his perfection,
> Man is ever in his failure.

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[14] Translated by Douglas E. Gerb (*Greek Elegiac Poetry*, LCL, Cambridge, Mass.–London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999, p. 193). We may refer further to the poem of Simonides of Ceos (556–468 BC) (*Greek Lyric III. Stesichorus, Ibycus, Simonides and Others*, ed. and transl. by D. A. Campbell. The Loeb Classical Library 476. Cambridge, Mass.–London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1991), no. 521 (p. 417): "You are man: then never say what will happen tomorrow, nor, when you see a prosperous man, how long he will prosper." No. 527 (p. 421): "There is no evil (*kakon*) which man cannot expect; and within a brief time god turns everything upside down."

[15] Herodotus I.31. The "envy of gods" (*theōn phthonos*) appears as a *topos* in the works of other Greek authors, too, see e.g. Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, 1096 sq (*kai mē koinos agōn brotois mē tis theōn phthonos elthē* – "The mortals don't undertake a common contention, but the envy of gods come upon them"), idem, *Trojan Women*, 766–769 ("O Tyndaris, it was not Zeus who begot you, for you are a descendant of many fathers: first Vengeance, then deadly Hate, Killing, Death and a great number of Evils bred by the Earth"). The task of *Phthonos* is, among others, to prevent man from trespassing the limits ordered by the gods.

> The words man say are one thing,
> The deeds of the god are another.
> Do not say: 'I have done no wrong.'
> And then strain to seek a quarrel;
> The wrong belongs to the god,
> He seals (the verdict) with his finger.
> There is no perfection before the god,
> But there is failure before him…
> De not sheer with your tongue;
> If a man's tongue is the boat's rudder,
> The Lord of All is yet its pilot." (See Lichtheim II, 1976, pp. 157 sq)[16]

Guilt and consciousness of guilt

The attitude to sin, as being part of the divine sphere, resulted in a most interesting phenomenon. It seems that in these cultures there was no guilt conscience. According to H. Ringgren's research we find surprisingly few "negative confessions" or protestation of guiltlessness among the Egyptian and Sumerian sources (see Ringgren 1987, pp. 55, 108, cf. Eliade 1978, p. 60). The negative confession of the 125th chapter of the Egyptian Book of Dead ("I have not committed such and such a sin…:, cf. Pritchard I, pp. 34 sq) may, indeed, be regarded as a ritualised *captatio benevolentiae* to the gods which, moreover, by the magical formulas, to be found in the introduction and the closing part, can neutralise every judgement of the *maᶜat*, imposed on a given person. In these conceptions the equivalence of work and fate does not emerge. For different reason, in a number of religions (e.g. in rabbinical Judaism or in Islam) the guilt conscience does not play an important role. As opposed to these religions, we may call Christianity as *the* religion of sin and guilt conscience, albeit the consciousness of guilt (as stated convincingly by Max Weber's analysis) took an ethical form only with the Protestant sects. The discrepancy of guilt and guilt conscience as well as the backwardness of this latter in the early civilisation are in all probability correlated with a most important problem, namely that the development of a homogeneous soul conception and the conscience connected with it needed a rather long period to take shape.[17] It is well known, that the Egyptians, the Mesopotamians, and eventually the Greeks, differentiated between a number of rather varied forms of soul. Understandably, even a brief outline of this problem would need a special study, thus, we remark only that in connection with the soul-body perceptions even the responsibility for sin developed in a peculiar way in different religions. To mention but a few examples: according to the Jewish perception it is the soul which is responsible

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[16] Cf. Simpson (ed., 1972, p. 258) (he interprets the text somewhat differently); Ringgren (1987, p. 55) (his interpretation seems to be less convincing). In reality, it means that whosoever is in the hands of god, he is safe from the consequence of his work.

[17] See Hastings, *ERE*, s.v. *Soul* (XI, pp. 725–755 – 15 case studies); Onians (1994); Dodds (1951, pp. 53, 179 sq); Bremmer (1983).

for a sin, while the Greeks were regarding the body responsible for committing a guilt, and within Christianity Paul, probably under the influence of the Gnostics, considered again the body, the *sarx* as the source of sin.

The problem of Creation

The problem of Creation has been in close connection with the origins of sin, since man in the cosmogonic conceptions of the mythical age is either subordinate or plays only a minor role in them. In many cases man is created by gods merely to serve them (see Gadd 1948, pp. 3 sqq; Saggs 1978, pp. 30–63; Kramer 1988, pp. 75–100).[18] It is well known that according to Mesopotamian thinking the meticulous arrangement of the next year has been made public by the gods in the New Year Festival, called *zagmuk*, "beginning of the year" in Sumerian, and *akitu* in Akkadian. It meant that originally the gods bore the responsibility for cosmic order, and man, at most, could make a mistake in keeping a rule of this order prescribed and controlled outside of his powers, but by doing different magical and other rites he could propitiate the gods. In the Egyptian cosmogonic myths the creation of man is wholly accidental, and, according to the Mesopotamian accounts, as mentioned before, the aim of man's creation is to serve the gods. In this cosmic cast even the sex of the human being is originally indifferent, showing that man is not created for himself (see Gadd 1948, pp. 9 sq). Man as the aim of the creation appears only in the religious cosmogonies succeeding the mythical cosmic order. Earlier the crafts and the order have been created by the gods for exempting themselves from burdens and, in doing this, the king became, with Gadd's appropriate wording, "the god's foreman among the labourers" (see Gadd 1948, p. 9).[19] Among the great many crafts, serving the divine order, it was city-planning, with its multifarious labour-process, which has been regarded the most important new craft and in its practice, according to the heavenly original, culture is not yet separated from the technical civilisation,[20] in the same manner as the social sphere is a part of nature, though just this process (the earthly maintenance and service of the cosmic order) sets off the possibility of the gradual emancipation of the

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[18] Some important types of man's creation may be found in Eliade's sourcebook (1967, pp. 130–138). As a general rule, it plays an insignificant role in the great cosmogonic events, see the cosmogonic stories of 19 religions in Hastings, *ERE* (pp. 94–100) (Charles H. Long). The most important cosmogonic myths are given by Spence (1994, pp. 158–194).

[19] Earlier, the subordinate gods had to carry out the necessary and humiliating toil, see Jacobsen (1976, p. 113), cf. Pritchard (I, p. 99): "Thou art the mother-womb, The one who creates mankind. Create, then, Lullu and let him bear the yoke! The yoke he shall bear,…; The work of god man shall bear."

[20] We may only refer to this rather important problem by recalling the myth of Enki (originally Eridu's Lord) and Inanna (Erekh's Goddess) of which we get to know that the Goddess from his drunken father got hold of those "goods" which take in the elements of order and rule in the same way as the indispensable preconditions of civilisation and culture, see Gadd (1948, pp. 11–13).

social sphere. The paradox of the mythical age lies hidden exactly in this movement: the accomplishment of itself may result in the possibility of going beyond and bringing it to an end (in the meaning of the Hegelian *aufheben*).

In reality, even with the creation there are a number of grave problems, the thoroughgoing analysis of which would need a bulky monograph. For the creation took place differently within polytheism or monotheism determining a different attitude to sin.[21] In polytheism the creation of man and cosmos are by different gods, which raises some problems concerning divine responsibility. Indeed, the gods regret very soon creating man. In this phase the main endeavour of the gods is to consolidate and preserve the universe. The divine and human spheres are as yet not separated (the residence of the gods is still the earth), and the paradisiac condition at this time means timelessness, no history and the repetition of this condition in the same way. Gods leave the earth when this cosmic order, conceived as lasting for ever, is jeopardised by man. At this time, committing a sin meant an unintentional or deliberate transgressing of the divine order (all the original technical terms of sin refer to this action). Punishment, however, from the very beginning, is more than a mere response to the sin, being rather commensurate to the proportion of the cosmic dimensions as compared to the human scale. For the world of the gods is the universe, and their works touch only accidentally the human sphere. This incidental contact is being felt by man getting to different situations as ill fate or fortune and interpreted as a result of a certain relationship between him and the divine sphere.

In the monotheist religions, however, the theology of creation is changing radically. Here, man and universe are not only crossing each other in a point of intersection of the creation, but their contact, relationship and importance are gradually shifted in favour of man. Within the creation man, being earlier wholly unimportant from the point of view of the universe, is coming soon to the fore, and he becomes finally the *telos* of creation. This new situation raises grave problems for the creation as well for the Creator, for, as a result, God may incur liability for the imperfections occurring in creation. Indeed, the cosmogony, theology and soteriology of the monotheist religions had later on inextricable difficulties to find acceptable answers to these problems. It is mainly the *theodicy*,[22] this *crux theologiae*, which has obstinately been grappling with these dilemmas, and as a kind of solution, different ideas aiming at redemption, have been conceived, e.g. the Last Judgement, Hell and

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[21] See the noteworthy remarks of Saggs (1978, pp. 33 sqq). As an overview of the different types of the cosmogonic myths see Eliade, *ER*, s.v. *Cosmogony* (VII, pp. 94–100 – Charles H. Long, with further bibliography). Regarding the Old Testament, see von Rad's analysis (1962, I, pp. 136–153). Within Christianity, the problem of the creation is insignificant, because in its centre Jesus' activity and his redeeming rule have been put, see *DNTT* (I, pp. 376–387), s.v. *Creation, Foundation, Creature, Maker* (H. H. Esser – it is a thoroughgoing analysis of the verbs *kataballō* and *ktizō*). To the standpoint of the Christian theology see *DHI* (I, pp. 571–577) (Peter A. Bertocci). To the problem of the Creation in Islam see *EI²* (IV, pp. 1012–1020) (R. Arnaldez).

[22] See *DHI*, s.v. *Theodicy* (IV, pp. 379–384 – Leroy E. Loemker); Eliade, *ER*, s.v. *Theodicy* (XIV, pp. 430–441 – Ronald M. Green, with excellent bibliography).

Paradise,[23] and as a homologous moment of this theoretical construction the linear eschatological Judeo-Christian scheme of history, with its three phases, has been elaborated. The first phase was the original paradisiac state, it has been followed by, from the point of view of soteriology, a meaningless human history which as an unimportant *interim* period forms a transition to the third period which is eternal bliss or damnation. Ethically coloured monotheism, connected with the only and absolute God (this was a likely alternative), in the last analysis could not cope with the contradiction of the perfect God on the one hand and, to say the least, the imperfect world and most deficient man on the other, not to speak of the real difficulty of *theodicy*, namely of the so-called Job's problem (which means the success of evil and the defeat of right). It is not for nothing, that the speculation about free will and predestination tried to solve this dilemma or rather trilemma (if we have to reckon with God's goodness, omnipotence and the human suffering as a trinity). In the different monotheisms now free will, now predestination prevailed, if not otherwise, with laying emphasis on the ritualised prescriptions.[24]

Another solution has been offered, which, though it encroached the monism of the only and omnipotent god, nonetheless proposed an almost acceptable loop-hole

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[23] There is an immense scholarly literature on this subject. We refer to two recent works: Delumeau (1992 – on Paradise); Minois (1994 – on Hell). Both of them give an exhaustive bibliography.

[24] The most stringent requirements for the individual are to be found in Zoroastrianism, and (which may be surprising at the first hearing) in Hinduism. The former is at complete variance with intention ethics, here the unity of thought, word and work is required as the touchstone of ethically appreciable behaviour (moreover, not on the Last Day, but immediately after the death). In Hinduism, the rebirth of the individual or the deliverance from it depend on his *karma* without any insertion of a divine authority whatsoever. Thus, the balance of past, present and future is theoretically calculable and is susceptible to influence. In rabbinic Judaism and Christianity the observance of ethically hardly appreciable ritualised prescriptions guarantees communal and individual salvation. In Calvinism the problem of other-wordly redemption as well as this-wordly success has been solved by the predestination deserved and earned by the individual day by day. In Islam, after some contention, the idea of Allah's predetermination became of prime importance, which has understandably been supplemented by intention ethics (we will cite later the first *ḥadīth* of Nawawī's "Forty"). It has to be stressed, however, that the different religions did not regulate this fundamental moment of the contact between human and divine spheres once for all. The religions, too, as Eliade aptly expressed, being subdued to "the terror of History", underwent several changes. Prophetic Judaism, by its very nature, had emphasised more the individual responsibility, than rabbinic Judaism and Zurvanism, compared to Zoroastrianism, appearing already in Achaemenian times and coming into power with the Sasanian clergy, stressed more, supposedly under the influence of Babylonian astrology, the inevitable determinism of "boundless Time" (*Zurvān akarāna*). In Islam, from its very outset, there is an insolvable contradiction between Allah's most active omnipotence and the free will of man, which remained a neuralgic issue of later debates (*mu'tazila, qadariya-jabariya*). Within Christianity the central role of Jesus as *Sōtēr* (Saviour) determined essentially the priority of the *Heilsgeschehen* as against the *Weltgeschichte*, which gave always a small scope to human free will. The Weberian thesis on the Protestant ethics bound up with "the spirit of capitalism" is one of the unsolvable paradoxes of History, since capitalism, realising the *contractus* as against the *status*, the *Gesellschaft* instead of *Gemeinschaft* and the *mechanical society* as opposed to the *organic society*, has been reaching its full development in the spirit of the *principium individuationis*, which required permanent and inevitable choice, supposing free will.

for the scandal of creation, resulting in the existence of evil, suffering and sin, and their most ambiguous relationship to the divine sphere. This solution was a peculiar dualism characteristic mainly, though not exclusively, of the gnostic trends. This dualism has been throwing the responsibility of evil upon a demiurge, being in close connection with God (being, as a rule, the creature of the latter or one of his aspects). This demiurge, however, as a Demon, an Archon or the Satan[25] is administering pretty independently his reign, and by this cast of play human existence and its grad- ual deterioration could somewhat be diminished. In this spirit developed the different dualist systems as by-products of no minor importance of the axial age, which tried, for the first time, to cope with the dark sides of existence and to reckon with the imperfection and finitude of life, with the incessant failure of the intentions of man thrown into History and to face the unbridgeable abyss between the material and spiritual spheres. Ethical dualism is most often combined with an open or hidden metaphysical monism of which the most profound and, probably, from the point of view of history of religion, the most important form (exerting a significant influence on Judaism and Christianity[26]) was Zoroastrianism, which tried to face sincerely the problem of evil, the responsibility of the individual, and the temporary passivity and defeat of the right. By doing this, it was Zoroastrianism, which, beside Judaism, but not without influencing it, invented the linear scheme of history which, already in its Zoroastrian form, showed up, in a carefully weighed way, the tripartition of salvation history and which could most ingeniously integrate the world-history, conceived pes- simistically, into the framework of *Heilsgeschehen*.[27] It must be stressed, that the linear conception of history excluded by no means the periods of long lasting defeats and the intervals of evil, and it should likewise be emphasised that along with divine will active human participation, i.e. the constant manifestation of good thoughts, words, and deeds is equally important. It is a remarkable and illuminating thought of Zoroastrianism that the good and the perfect are essentially passive (it marks the first

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[25] A thoroughgoing analysis of the Devil and Co. in the different religions is given by Nola's work (1997[3]), cf. also Messadié's survey (1993). Even today it is worth reading the exhaustive entry in Hastings, *ERE*, s.v. *Demons and Spirits* (IV, pp. 565–636), in which there are 20 surveys. The two overviews in Eliade, *ER* (IV, pp. 282–292) (J. Bruce Lord and Alfred Ribi) give further bibliography. We find additional material in a Jungian monograph written by Schärf (1949, pp. 153–314) and in the remarkable work of Th. Reik, one of Freud's earliest collaborators, published originally in 1923: *Der eigene und der fremde Gott* (1975, pp. 130–153) ("Gott und Teufel"). Both of them rightly stressed the original unity of the two principles as well as their later close inter- dependence.

[26] From the scholarly literature of this vexed and hotly debated question we refer here only to two remarkable works: Meyer (1921, II, pp. 38–120); Cohn (1993, especially pp. 77–104, 136– 226). An assessment of the earlier research see Hastings, *ERE*, s.v. *Parsiism in Judaism* (IX, pp. 637–640 – M. Gaster).

[27] According to the orthodox tradition of Mazdaism, the 12,000 years of cosmic history can be divided into three major periods: (1) The time of the Creation (pehlevi: *bundehishn*), when Ahura Mazdā created first the spiritual world (*mēnog*), and then the material world (*gētig*); (2) Angra Mainyu, the principle of Evil launches his attack after the second Creation, defiling everything and killing the plants and men; at this time came about the age of the blending (*gumēzishn*), which is the time of corruption of the Right, the Good, and the Light; (3) The defeat of Evil (*frashokeretē*, pehl.: *frashegird*), which ushers in the period of renewal and separation (*vizarishn*).

phase of the three ages) and self-sufficient (a perfect being has no need of anything else and it aims at perpetuating its self-identity), while evil is the active and offensive principle, which strives to do away with the otherness, and in its aggressive belligerence its main associates are the *daēva*s, the demons, namely *Aēshma*, Wrath, *Āz,* Wrong-mindedness and Falseness, *Akah Manah*, the Evil Mind or Discord and *Drug* (Old Persian: *drauga*), the Lie. They are the chief adversaries of *Vohu Manah*, Good Intention and *Asha*, Righousness. Mazdaism prescribes peremptorily the requirements of individual responsibility, implying an incessant fighting and integrates, in an unparalleled way, the optimism of the *eskhaton* (exerting an influence by this peculiarity on Judaism and Christianity) with the pessimistic outlook of a given *Weltzustand* (the marks of this characteristic can be observed in the presumably unsurpassable pessimism of the Manicheism). This latter religion brought to perfection the last consequences of a religious duality, having been sincerely disposed towards its own essence, which meant the irrelevance of the physical world as compared with the human sphere (the monumental cosmogonic processes, as they were, constitute only the scene of the apocalyptic soteriological fights of the soul aiming at liberating himself from the captivity of matter), the negative perception of historical Time and the radical antagonism between soul and body. The irreconcilable dualism of Manicheism has a consequent sin perception. According to its comprehension only the body, as a part of the wholly negative material world, can commit a sin and, indeed, the three different texts of the Confessions of sin (the *Khvāstvānift*, the Uighur confession for Hearers, the communal formula of a prayer set down in Chinese and the Sogdian confession of sin used by the elite and read out at the *Bēma* feast) regarded the sins as evident yet all the more loathsome and rejectable manifestation of the body.[28] This peculiarity is especially worth mentioning, because Christianity and the Gnostic trends, though they bore an implacable hostility towards each other, at the same time influenced each other in many respects, and Augustine, the former Manicheist, though turned with a passionate hate against his sometime co-religionists, nonetheless his sin perception, stressing the original sinfulness, bears obvious witness to Manichean traits (just as Paul's doctrine of original sin is not exempt of gnostic influence). In the gnostic dualism the principle of Evil became unavoidably independent, and is on the point of becoming an equal of God. By the Christian sin perception in Paul's and Augustine's elaboration, though the role of Satan has not wholly been removed, nonetheless with Adam's and Eve's Original Sin[29] not only

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[28] See Eliade, *ER*, s.v. *Confession of Sin* (IV, pp. 6 sq – Ugo Bianchi). To Manicheism for a general orientation see op. cit., s.v. *Manicheism* (IX, pp. 161–170 – G. Gnoli), Mikkelsen (1996 – with 3606 items) and Simon (1997, pp. 118–141) (with further bibliography). To the discipline and ritual see BeDuhn (2000), with an exhaustive bibliography (pp. 338–348).

[29] See on it: *DeCha*, s.v. *Péché originel* (II, pp. 1964–1966 – A. Trapé, with a further bibliography). The *locus classicus* is to be found in Paul's Letter to the Romans (5.12–19). From the immense scholarly literature on Augustine we may refer to Brown's classical monograph on him (1968) and to *DeCha,* s.v. Augustin d'Hippone (I, pp. 299–308 – A. Trapé, with a very useful bibliographic repertory). We may mention, as an interesting information, that in Polling, the Upper-Bavarian Augustinian monastery, before its destruction, Propst Töpsel has founded a library of 30,000 volumes on Augustine. Augustine himself, while he carried on his polemics against the

the propensity for committing a sin but the sinfulness itself has been concieved as an inherent attribute of man. By Original Sin and divine grace Christianity has been made the religion of sin and repentance. Moreover, this sin perception, together with the Church, the clergy and the doctrine of the grace, had put between the individual and his sin such external institutions, which set almost unsurmountable limits to the scope of man. It is not by chance, that several trends came soon into being, which showed determination against this perception. The most important of them was possibly Pelagianism, which anticipated in many respects the offensive launched from the 18th century against Original Sin in favour of the free choice of the developing bourgeois individual. In the course of this decisive turn the earlier religious concept of sin became a secularised legal category (instead of *Sünde* called *Verbrechen*, in lieu of *péché* called *crime* etc.) (see Groethuysen 1978, I, p. 194). In the council of Carthage, in 412 AD Celestius, Pelagius' follower, formulated against Paul's non-ethical Original Sin those Pelagian "heresies" by the eventual victory of which sin could have been regarded as the ethically interpretable act of the individual, born innocent and only later in his growing state confronted with choices of vital importance.[30]

Comparisons of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sin perceptions

It has been stated before, that by the coming of the axial age and the Prophetic religions an unprecedented opportunity arose for changing the religiously determined amoral sin perception of earlier times, having a magical and mythical outlook, into an ethically coloured concept of sin, being conceived by the axial man, who demanded the blessing as well as the curse of individual responsibility, and was already able to choose consciously between right and evil. Of course, it was, in reality, only a possibility for a tiny minority which had to be gained and regained by effort. The three major religions of axial age extended by the period of the so-called "book-religions"[31] were Judaism (at least its last phase), Christianity and Islam. Although the latecomers, as everyone knows, gave no evidence of gratitude towards their beloved though hated ancestors, a number of peculiarities of their genesis and making are inconceivable without taking into account the foundation laid by the forebears. The

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Pelagians, wrote a specific work on original sin (*De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*). It must be added, that Augustine, as a great thinker, speaking of this most peculiar sin perception, has sincerely confessed, that "there is hardly anything which would be more mysterious for human mind" (*De moribus Ecclesiae et de moribus Manichaeorum,* 1.22.40).

[30] These are as follow: (1) Adam was created mortal and would have died whether he had sinned or not; (2) Adam's sin injured himself only and not the human race; (3) Children at birth are in a state in which Adam was before his sin; (4) The whole human race does not die through Adam's death and transgression, nor does the whole human race rise through Christ's resurrection; (5) The Law sends man to the Kingdom of Heaven just as the Gospel does; (6) Even before Christ's coming there were men without sin; (7) Man can be without sin and keep God's commandments easily if he will, see Hastings, *ERE* (IX, p. 704) (R. G. Parsons), cf. Eliade, *ER* (XI, pp. 226 sq) (Robert L. Wilken); *DeCha* (II, pp. 1976–1980) (V. Grossi).

[31] For a basic bibliography to the Book religions see Simon (1997, p. 126, n. 39).

believers of these religions are called "Sons of Abraham"[32] by a part of the research, they themselves, however, have done their utmost to get as far as possible from their suspicious origins. Indeed, if we have a closer look at the sin perceptions of the three "Abraham-religions", we cannot but notice the basic differences. It should also be noted that within the individual religions, too, a great many changes may be observed depending on whether the historical turning points have been influenced by the sacramental, the prophetic or the mystical tendencies.

Among the major turning points, no doubt, the origins have been playing a decisive role in the development of these religions (and, accordingly, in the metamorphoses of the different sin perceptions). By genesis that historical and social context has to be understood in which a given religion accomplished its first well-defined form, and one should in comparison with this point of origin draw up the balance of those decisive turning points which forced the religions to undergo some essential transformations (e.g. in the case of Judaism these turning points were the Babylonian Exile and the loss of political independence, in Christianity the crucial turning point was the radical change put through by Constantine in consequence of which the persecuted religion became a state church, in the case of Islam an important historical force was the first "civil war" between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya and, as a consequence of this, the appearance of those sects [Khawārij, Shīʿa and Murjiʾa] which influenced considerably the further development of the Muslim community).

Within the genesis problems from the points of view of the essential moments of a given religion (the proportion between immanence and transcendence, the relationship to history, the value or the valuelessness of human existence connected with this-wordly elements) possibly the most important circumstance is the relationship of a religious community and its institutions with the historical context. For it is a totally different situation, if a religion is born in a society, having a long historical past and an organically developed institution system, and it is wholly different, if a religion is an active party shaping its own societal ambience or, eventually, a religiously determined movement creates its own society. If we examine from this point of view the three religions of Abraham, we can detect several differences resulting in important and far-reaching consequences on the basis of which we can argue in favour of, or against the essential relationship of these religions.

Let us first take a closer look at the birth of Christianity and Islam which, compared to each other, had taken place in a wholly contrary direction, and the social conditions of their genesis heavily influenced their attitude to history and society. Christianity was born at the apex of the Roman Empire when the this-wordly conditions of the empire, rooted deeply in a glorious past, seemed to dominate indisputably not only the ideas about the past but also the dimensions of the present and the future. For this reason, when Christianity came forward, then, together with the other non-official religious tendencies (the different mystery cults with a most variegated

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[32] To this most interesting topic see Kritzeck (1965); Peters (1984), both of them give further bibliography. As if *Gen.* 15.5 had a feeling of further developments: "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him: "So shall your descendants (*zarʿe-ka*) be."

Gnosis) it offered an individual soteriology which, by avoiding the confrontation with the ruling social institutions, tried to shape the individual aspirations outside them and, as a consequence of this, history and society have been considered by it as something negative, temporary and inauthentic. A radically negative attitude to world history and this-wordly existence is the genuine background of Christianity, upon which the state church, developing between Constantine and Theodosius, may be regarded as an organically never integrating upper layer. The consequence of this radical change has been drawn by Augustine, taking charge of the polemics against the counter-movements called henceforward heretics (e.g. Donatists, Pelagianists etc.). He initiated a process by which Christianity developed its ecclesiastical structure, serving a this-wordly practice with its priestly hierarchy, reminding us of the Roman military organisation. This state church strived first after a cooperation with the secular power, then its aim was, from the fabrication of "Constantine's gift-deed"[33] and the Investiture Controversy, the supremacy of temporal power, which means, that the insistence on pure religious intentions must be regarded as a means used for tactical reasons. Thus, Christianity, in its shaping, had two phases: it started with Jesus Christ as a Prophetic religion, preaching the exclusiveness of transcendentalism and looking upon the earthly life as the hotbed of sins and then, it developed a second sacramental tendency, shaped after the model of the world empire of Imperial Rome, imbued with this-worldly ambitions. These two layers have never coalesced, and it is not by chance, that the fundamentalist movements, arising within Christianity (from the early heresies through the medieval revivalist attempts to the Reformation and further) rejected the sacramental, ritualised and hierarchised layer, and tried to go back to the genuine early Prophetic origins.

The birth of Islam, compared to Christianity, followed a different way, determining profoundly its relation to history and society. For early Islam, opposing the centrifugal forces of the tribal society and its powerless and half-hearted polytheistic cults, established a new society-integrating system (what has been called Islam from the Medinan period onwards). Expressed otherwise, it means that Islam itself brought into existence its own society, determining its character and scopes. Jesus Christ's Christianity could be characterised as the religion of the afterworld in which this vale of woe has no positive peculiarity. Islam, however, took another direction. Allah's attention, though He comprises with His always active energy the whole universe, is riveted on our world in which man takes a marked place. Indeed, man has been given from the beginning a positive role and, moreover, his way, being, of course, not without unforeseeable difficulties, has not been aggravated by any "original sin". His attitude to Allah has been determined by other problems. These, however, as we will see later, did not exasperate his life so much as did original sin in Christianity.

The circumstances of the genesis explain another important difference. The last two millennia convincingly demonstrated that Christianity, with its ecclesiastical structure, was ready to cooperate with every social system and was able to develop a

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[33] To the "Constantine's deed of gift" (*Constitutum* or *Donatio Constantini*) see Félegyházi (1967, pp. 376−378); *DeCha* (I, p. 715) (A. Hamman), *Lexikon des Mittelalters* (München, DTV, 2002), s.v. *Konstantinische Schenkung* (v. 1385−7 – with exhausting bibliography).

peculiar symbiosis, in which the formal rigour of a rigid dogma got on well with the compliant tolerance of the practice of any society (the former characteristic may be exemplified by the "original sin" or the Chalcedonian definition, the latter one is attested by the last 1700 years). In the case of Islam we see again just the opposite of it, for Islam is with its society in a relationship of form and content or substance and phenomenon, and when S. P. Huntington looks upon Islam as the most serious adversary of the American–European civilisation,[34] although in using basic concepts he commits unacceptable lack of precision, nonetheless he is not far from the truth. For, in the case of both of them we can talk about a society-integrating system, aiming at exclusiveness and active regulation. This is true of Islam (which is essentially a culturally determined phenomenon, accepting, however those elements of the technical civilisation, which are compatible with its elective affinity), and it holds good of the capitalism (being determined by technical civilisation, which eliminates relentlessly those societal features which are not consistent with its nature). At the same time, however, this society-integrating character does not hold good of Christianity which, by its genesis, is indifferent to both culture and civilisation, and its close intertwining with a given political system has been made possible just by this society-indifferent character. This peculiarity resulted in a twofold sin perception within Christianity: the redemption from original sin will only be brought by the grace of Jesus Christ, at the same time, however, the socially judgeable sins can be confessed and the penitent gets thereby a pardon of them by a priest.

The genesis of the Jewish people and their religion followed again a wholly different way. Here, the unequivocal and decisive beginnings, determining the further development, have been marked out by the *berīt* (the Covenant), concluded between Yahweh and the Israelites. Its historical importance has been indicated right at the start by such momentous events as God's action to deliver them from the Egyptian bondage and to lead them to the land of Promise with the conquest of Canaan. These and other actions, guided by Yahweh, determined irreversibly the humane–divine relationship, being unprecedented and unheard of in the history of other peoples. It was the permanent and continuous appearance of *berīt in history*, the conditions of which have been vouched for by Yahweh, its realisation, however, depended on the constant and collective endeavour of the religious community. The divine *berīt*, realising itself in history, has unequivocally the Present as the most important dimension of the monumental communal drama, while the Past might at most appear in the warnings of the Prophets as a thesaurus of examples, showing up the recurrent failures, and the Future became especially important, when at the nadir of their hopeless political and social existence the Jewish people, groaning under the yoke of foreign rule, only in the apocalyptic visions of the future could transcend their present with no prospect. Because of the communal character of their attitude to the divine sphere, even in the apocalyptic vision, it is not the individual who is the protagonist of the historical drama. Within Judaism up to the present it is the community which remained the depository of *berīt*. It resulted from this circumstance, to a great extent, that not only in precapitalist societies but even in modern times the so-

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[34] Huntington (1996), see *Index,* s.v. *Islam.*

called "host-peoples" maintained a relation to them as being a people and a community and not as consisting of individuals.

This unique historical consciousness underwent in the course of times an understandable metamorphosis. From the times of the Judges to David's and Salomon's rule the account of the Yahwist chronicler, putting on record the stations of the *berīt*'s formation, has been imbued with a trustful optimism. After Salomon's age the message of the Prophets, giving account of, and interpreting the more and more sinister events (division of the monarchy in 926, the conquest of the Northern State and the deportation of a large number of the Israelites in 722, the Babylonian Exile, 586–538 etc.) painted in sombre colours the fact of the break of the Covenant and its fatal consequences. In this Prophetic perception of History the responsibility for the scourges rests unequivocally with the Israelites or rather their ungodly leaders. The trials and scourges, afflicting the chosen people, are the signs of Yahweh's wrath, set off by the straying of his sinful people. The Jewish perception of history changed again after the Babylonian Exile (not so much in times of the Achaemenian rule, well-disposed towards them, but in the age of the Seleucids, forcing a common Hellenistic State cult and, by this means, a kind of assimilation on them). The Jewish people, subjugated to foreign rule, lived again uniformly the servitude, and the discrepancy between "we" and "the others" has more and more sharply been formulated in every respect, and the reponsibility for the historical trials has been transferred from the community to "the others". From the Seleucids and the Hasmonaean dynasty onwards we have to reckon with several tendencies within Judaism, which ranged from a *modus vivendi* with the existing state of affairs (this was the standpoint of the Sadducees) to the vehement xenophobia and the open military actions (see the movement of the Zealots). After the Jewish war (66–70 AD) and the destruction of the second Temple, it was rabbinic Judaism, based upon the views of the Pharisees and preaching a rigorous observance of Law, which prevailed against the other tendencies. It has determined also the attitude to sin further on. Anticipating the ensuing analysis, we can state that during this peculiar historical process sin perception has been developed in a particular negation of negation, which means, that after the Prophetic interlude, trying to stress the ethical character of the sin, the non-ethical, ritualised and formalised sin perception of the origins appeared, of course at another level, in rabbinic Judaism.

A thoroughgoing analysis of the sin perceptions of these three major religions would compulsorily prescribe a linguistic–philological as well as historical examination of the categories used by them, which, as it were, has seldom been carried out by the comprehensive surveys of the history of religions. The sin concept used by them takes no notice of historical changes and disregards the culture- and language-specific roots of these categories. The reason for this is that the modern *Weltzustand* aims at the increasingly greater units of generalisations, and for the sake of standardisation, systematisation and the requirement for generalising mathematical verification it deprived the concepts of their original peculiarities, and reduced them to rootless linguistic signs. By doing so, the many-coloured richness of earlier ages is turned into a collection of examples, which in such-and-such forms either anticipate

the categories of modernity, regarded as authoritative, or serve as a counterpoint of the European development. The problem, however, needs some further explanation. For, as Hegel explained, the modern age does something openly and unmasked, what the early societies have done *per se*, without manifesting. Earlier, too, two tendencies could be detected, which tried to assimilate "the otherness" and the former phenomena to its own peculiarity.

Some efforts have been made already in the axial age to homogenise the varieties, when, instead of the communities, being dominant earlier, the motives of the individual, becoming more and more independent, came into prominence, and with the Hellenistic empires, anticipating the *Imperium Romanum*, the universality of *oikoumenē* gained ground in every respect from the religions to the different schools of philosophy and the new ways of life (let us think of Stoicism, Gnosis, and the wandering philosophers). The other attitude to the "otherness" was, it seems, an inherent attribute of humankind from the origins of civilisations. We mean by it, that "the other", the alien and the different are little or not at all tolerated, and for this reason they must either be annihilated (this was the typical way of world-history) or they should be assimilated to our value-system, depriving them of their peculiarity. This latter was the Greek practice, the so-called *interpretatio Graeca* towards alien cultures and religions[35] and, indeed, we find until the 19th century as an exception rather than a rule such reports, which accept the peculiarity of the otherness and give an objective and unbiassed image thereof. An other source of distortion might be the wholly different structure of a culture and its language, bearing a relation to an alien one.[36] Their meeting resulted in most of the cases in a misinterpretation of the hitherto unknown cultural phenomena according to their own linguistic and mental characteristics.[37] In the following remarks we may only briefly touch upon the linguistic–philological problems and, through them, somewhat on the religious, legal and ethical context, for a proper examination of them would certainly need monographs.

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[35] About the attitude of the Greeks to the different peoples and their cultures see Momigliano (1979).

[36] Boman's remarkable work (1968[5]) demonstrates in a thought-provoking way the peculiarities of the Greek and Hebrew linguistic structures, showing up different approaches of times and space, which makes the translation understandably very problematic.

[37] The embeddedness of a language in its own culture is excellently illustrated by Kerényi's story of Sir George Grey, the Governer General of New Zealand (1958, pp. 4–6), who in 1845, when he tried to establish contacts with the native people, first communicated with them through interpreters, but he understood almost nothing of their speeches. Then, he made himself somewhat acquainted with the language of the New Zealanders, but this also proved to be quite unsufficient, because their chiefs, as he says, "frequently quoted, in explanation of their views and intentions, fragments of ancient poems or proverbs, or made allusions, which rested on an ancient system of mythology". After having realised his failure to understand them, he made up his mind to examine carefully their mythology. The result of his profound study was his work, published in 1855: *Polynesian Mythology and Ancient Traditional History of the New Zealand Race, as Furnished by their Priests and Chiefs.* The gist of this story is that the roots of the words and concepts do not appear already at a certain point of the historical development, they are like a cathedral sunken in the sea, and what is visible of them, reveals almost nothing about its past.

By illustrating the earlier train of thoughts, we may refer right away to the fact, that even in *Septuaginta*[38] there are a number of rather problematic interpretations, which tried to give back the most variegated sin perceptions of the Old Testament.[39] Though we occasionally find some other words, too, rendering the different manifestations of sin, yet the *Septuaginta* used, in reality, only two words for sins, which served later in the New Testament for a general denotation of *the* sin and, by this means, every trace of the original meanings has been deleted. These two words were the *adikia* and the *hamartia*. The former as the opposite of *dikē, dikaiosynē* and *dikaios*, used even by Plato (see e.g. *Rep.* 10.608; *Phaidōn* 82A; *Gorgias* 509c etc.), Xenophon (*Memorabilia* 2.2.3) and Aristotle (*Rhēt.* 1.10.3, 1368b; *Eth. Nic.* 5.7, 1138c24) occurred as an ethically coloured legal category which, especially in the form of *adikēma*, denoted the individual illegal act.[40] The other important word is the *hamartēma* (it is the basic denotative of sin in the New Testament). The original meaning of the verbal form (*hamartanō*) is "to miss the mark, especially of spear thrown", "to fail of one's purpose", "to go wrong" and then "do wrong, err, sin". The concept has an intellectual shade of meaning in so far as *hamartēma* or *hamartia* was originally the consequence of *agnoia*, the ignorance (its adjective derivation *hamartinoos* means "erring in mind", "distraught").[41] The two Greek words are at first glance, quite inadequate to give back the meanings of the original Hebrew concepts. Aside from the totally different connotations, it has to be stressed, that in Hellenistic times the two words assumed a more and general meaning, being, for this reason, unable to give back the peculiarities of the Hebrew original in which the divine sphere is not only preponderant but is exclusively determinant. God in his uniqueness and all-comprising character is One and undivisible, but not so the human sphere (which, according to a possible human perception of the Covenant, is His partner and, at the same time, is His revolting servant). Men in many ways *rebel* against, *resist*, *neglect* or *belittle* Him.[42] The incongruence of the Old Testament and the *Septuaginta* may properly be made perceptible by the fact that e.g. *adikia* tries to render 36 different

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[38] About the origins of the *Septuaginta* and its relation to the Old Testament see Wüsthwein (1966, pp. 50–77); Eliade, *ER* (II, p. 155) (Nahum M. Sarna). A part of the problem comes from the fact, that the three extant manuscripts (*C. Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus* and *Vaticanus*) have been copied after the fourth century AD and give evidence of unequivocal Christian influence.

[39] To the question see Hastings, *ERE* (XI, pp. 556–560) (W. H. Bennett); *DNTT*, s.v. *Sin* (III, pp. 573–587 – W. Günther, with excellent bibliography); *DHI*, s.v. *Sin* (XIII, pp. 327–329 – A. Laluque); von Rad (1962, I, pp. 154–160); Bottéro (1992, pp. 291–309) ("La naissance du péché").

[40] Aristotle defined it in *Rhetoric* (1368b) "as injury voluntarily inflicted contrary to law" (*to blaptein hekonta para ton nomon*). The word goes back, in last analysis, to *deiknymi* "to show (the right course)" and may be related to Latin *dicare* whose meaning is "to solemnly proclaim or consecrate" (see Boisacq 1938, pp. 170 sq), which means, that the concept is the category of a deliberate individual act.

[41] Aristotle places it in *Nicomachean Ethics* (1135b18) between *adikēma* ("injustice") and *atykhēma* ("misadventure"), being the act of somebody who wrongs the long-established order but not after deliberation ("this does not imply that the doers are unjust or wicked, for the injury is not due to vice").

[42] To the primordial state and the meaning of of the words see Bottéro (1992, p. 300).

Hebrew words and expressions of which the most important are: the *qāl* form of *āshaq* (*"oppress", "wrong", "deal tyrannically"*) (see Gesenius/Robinson pp. 798 sq),[43] *sheqer* ("deception", "deceit", "fraud", "wrong", its verbum denominativum means "do or deal falsely") (see Gesenius/Robinson p. 1055),[44] *pesha^c* ("transgression", "rebellion") in the meaning of turning away from God and violation of the Covenant,[45] *^cawōn* ("iniquity", "guilt", and also "the punishment of iniquity"),[46] *awlāh* ("injustice", "wrong", "injustice of speech") (see Gesenius/Robinson pp. 732 sq; Gesenius/Trigelles p. 612),[47] *ḥāmās* ("violence" "injustice")[48] and especially *ḥāṭā* ("miss [a goal or way]", "go wrong", "sin"; its Arabic equivalent, *khaṭi'a* has the same meaning: "miss the mark", "miss the way" and then "go wrong", "sin", "commit an error") (see Gesenius/Robinson pp. 306–308; Gesenius/Trigelles p. 271)[49] and their derivatives. Beyond the *hamartia* we find, among other, especially the Hebrew *ḥaṭṭā'ṭ, ^cawôn* and *pesha^c*.

Thus, the sin peception of the Old Testament displays a fairly unique picture. As against the New Testament, in Hebrew perception there is no general sin concept, and it seems almost paradoxical to find the austere monotheism of the divine sphere on the one hand, and the still indistinct human sphere on the other, which could not yet homogenise the different acts. The first sphere is characterised by a well articulated cult, regulated by Covenant and Law, prescribing absolute obedience towards God and is supplemented by divine messages, mediated by the Prophets, while the human sphere can be circumscribed by duties, having no right, but only punishment and reward. However, if we look historically at this duality, then the background of this phenomenon becomes understandable, because the point in question is a *metaphysical immutability*, taking different shapes *in history*. Thus, the peculiar variety of the sin perception reflects truly the ebb and flow of Jewish history in which, seemingly paradoxically, the guiltless attitude towards Yahweh has not been attested in

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[43] Some examples: *Lev.*19.l3: "You shall not oppress your neighbour" (*lō ta'shōq*); *Deut.* 28.29: "and you shall be openly oppressed and robbed continually"; *Psalms* 119.29: "do not leave me to my oppressors".

[44] This word most probably may be related to the Arab *ashqar* ("blond", "faire-haired", "reddish"), see Gesenius/Trigelles (p. 849). Some examples of the Hebrew word: *Psalms* 63.l2, 119.104; *Proverbs* 6.7; *Jer.* 5.31.

[45] See Gesenius/Robinson (p. 833): the word may be connnected with the Arab verb *fasaqa* which occurs in the Qur'ān (especially as an adjective) several times (see ^cAbd al-Bāqī pp. 519 sq), cf. Gesenius/Trigelles (p. 699). Gesenius likewise calls the attention to the similar meaning of German *brechen* ("to break [an oath]").

[46] See Gesenius/Robinson (pp. 730 sq, with the respective data); Gesenius/Trigelles (p. 611). The word may be related to the Arab verb *ghawā* which means "to stray from the right way", "go astray", "err" and "to misguide". It occurs, with its derivatives 16 times in the Qur'ān, e.g. 20:121: "and Adam disobeyed his Lord, so went astray", for further examples see ^cAbd al-Bāqī (pp. 506 sq).

[47] See *Hos.* 10.13: "You have plowed iniquity, you have reaped injustice (*^cawlatā*), you have eaten the fruit of lies, because you have trusted in your chariots."

[48] See Gesenius/Robinson (p. 329); Gesenius/Trigelles (p. 288) (interestingly, its Arab equivalent, the *ḥamāsa* has a positive meaning: "enthusiasm", "ardour", "zeal").

[49] This verb also meant originally: "to miss (a shot)", "to be mistaken", "to err". The Arab *khaṭī'a* became, with the same meaning, one of the basic words of sin. Trigelles refers to the similar semantic development of the German *fehlen* and *Fehler*.

the successful periods, on the contrary, the Covenant, concluded with Him, has been *neglected*, His Commandments have been *disregarded*, their co-religionists have been *oppressed*, and Yahweh's Law has been *transgressed*. Yahweh's uniqueness should have served as a rule to the proper demeanor of the Chosen People as a theo-cratic community.[50] To this Jewish *categoricus imperativus*, however, Israel's people had a historically determined relation, which can be interpreted as their disobedience, revolt or their deviation from God's path. The vulnerable point of the cosmic order, created and brought into action by Yahweh, is the human sphere, for, man, made in God's image (*be-ṣelem Elōhīm*) and after his likeness (*Gen.* 1.26 sq), is the only crea-ture which has self-consciousness and is, within certain limits, in command of his free will or, at least, he believes this of himself and, from this situation result those problems, which now and again set him against God and give rise to a recurrent pro-cess, characteristic of Israel, the terrain of which is History. The moments of this his-torical process are: (l) a unique alliance stipulated by *berīt* whose prescribed observ-ance would guarantee the success of Israel among the peoples; (2) the Israelites, however, or rather their godless leaders do not respect the rules of the Covenant and revolt against Yahweh's prescriptions; (3) this disobedience is followed by Yahweh's more and more terrible punishment by which Israel is being made the servant of other peoples; (4) Yahweh, however, seeing a proper repentance,[51] is always ready to be appeased toward His people; He forgives them and then the conditions of recom-mencement may be established, though in more and more difficult circumstances.

This model is repeated in some paradigmatic narratives right in the first chap-ters of *Genesis* (chapters 3–14 in the Yahwist redaction). Every ominous conflict is illustrative of man's revolt and transgression, recalling sometimes the Greek *hybris*, with the punishment of the divine sphere and with the possibility of recommence-ment. The 3rd chapter deals with Adam's punishment and his expulsion from Para-dise; in the 4th chapter we find the story of Cain and Abel (with Lamech's inser-tion[52]); the 6th–7th chapters give account of the Flood, and the 11th chapter reports on the tower of Babel. These narratives suggest, in no uncertain way, that the revolt against the divine will (which means the transgression of human limits, marked out by God) can be regarded as an innate propensity of man.[53] The sin perception in the

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[50] See in a concise wording: *Psalms* 51.4: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight."

[51] The "repentance" (*teshūba*) comes from the verb *shūb* ("to return", "to come back"), expressing exactly the starting point: the sin is an act against God, and the sinner may lay a claim to His forgiveness (after deviatings from God's path) if he *returns* to Him. To the sophisticated use of the verb see Gesenius/Trigelles (pp. 807–809). The verb in similar meaning occurs in Syriac (*tōb*) and the Arab (*tāba*). This latter verb and its derivates occur in the Qur'ān more than 80 times (see ʿAbd al-Bāqī pp. 156–158) and it may equally mean the repentance of sin (the *return* to Allah) and Allah's forgiveness, see a typical example 9:104, where "Allah accepts repentance (*tawba*) from his bondman", because He is "the Relenting" (*at-tawwāb*).

[52] *Gen.* 4.23 sq: "I have slain a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

[53] We may refer to *Gen.* 6.5: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great (*raʿat-hā-ādām*) in the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continu-ally", and further *Gen.* 8.21: "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagina-

later Books of Old Testament, having an almost universal character,[54] would have been an understandable, though not unambiguous, starting point of the postulate of original sin. In any case, the consequence of sin was death and ruin, which Yahweh, in the interest of the whole theocratic community, was willing to postpone, and new beginnings will be guaranteed by renewed Covenants.[55]

Summing up the sin perceptions in the Old Testament, we can establish that the substratum (mainly the beginnings as well as the state after the Babylonian Exile) is characterised by the preponderance of the communal character and the cult.[56] In another layer (represented by some of the Latter Prophets, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the Book of Job and by some of the *Psalms*) individual responsibility is appearing. This, however, beside the communal destiny, becomes soon insignificant. Sin, in spite of *Gen.* ch. 3 has no unequivocal explanation. Though the Old Testament essentially shares the ancient Oriental perception, that man's destiny is, to some extent, the consequence of his works, nonetheless the increasing counter-examples raised the idea, that not only the right but also evil is a part of God (see *Job* 2.10).

The sin perception in the New Testament,[57] though it refers in many cases to the Old Testament, in reality, differs radically from it. Albeit apparently also the New Testament makes use of several words for sin,[58] nonetheless for denoting more and more generalised sin, to a lesser extent, *adikia*,[59] yet mainly or basically *hamartia*[60] is used.

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tion of man's heart is evil from his youth." The problem of the relative independence of man as a created being (resulting in the unexpected consequence, that he is the only creature who commits sin and, therefore, he can be punished) is one of the most perplexing theological questions. For this reason, the fountain-head of sin is not an ethical problem, but an unsolvable theological dilemma. The possibility of the later independent acting, being inherent in man's creation, is expressed in a peculiar way by the Qur'ānic word, *fiṭra*, which as a *nomen speciei* refers equally to the act of Allah's creation as well as to the potentiality of the created being, which will be actualised later, giving way to the Creation itself to influence the process of its permanent Re-Creation, which may deviate from its original intention, see my interpretation of Qur'ān 30:30 in Simon (1987, II, p. 305).

[54] See Trito-Isaiah's famed utterance (64.6): "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the winds, take us away." (Cf. l.4 sqq.)

[55] See the new *berīt*, concluded after the Flood with Noah: "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you" (*Gen.* 9.9). Cf. *Jer.* 31.31 sqq ("Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with their fathers…"), *Ezekiel* 37.

[56] The communal character may be characterised by Ākān's guilt (*Joshua* 7); we find many traces of early cultic prescriptions in Old Testament, e.g. 2*Sam* 2.12−17, 6.19; 2*Mos.* 30.38; 3*Mos.* 7.25; 1*Sam* 14.24−45.

[57] See the bibliography given in no. 39, add to it *DeCha* (pp. 1961−1966) (D. F. Beatrice and A. Trapé, with further bibliography).

[58] See *DNTT*, s.v. *Sin*. Beside the *hamartia* and *adikia* there is the *agnoēma* ("Ignorance" and its consequence, "the error"); *aitia* ("cause" and "accusation"); *kakos* ("evil"); *parabasis* ("transgression", "deviation from an original and right direction"); *ponēria* ("wickedness").

[59] See *DNTT* (III, pp. 575 sq); *UszSz* (p. 14) (it occurs 27 times).

[60] See *DNTT* (III, pp. 579−583); *UszSz* (pp. 30 sq) (the word occurs 170 times in New Testament).

In the case of the development of Christian sin perception, as with almost every religious tenet, we have to distinguish between Jesus Christ's teaching and the doctrinal changes, which took place from Paul to Augustine.

Jesus had no systematised sin perception (the *Evangiles*, apart from John, mention sin only a few times). Jesus used the concept of sin mostly according to the contemporary parlance in the context of forgiveness of sins. His advent has principally served the deliverance from sins: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (*Mt* 9.13).[61] The contemporary Pharisean standpoint, centred on the strict observance of the Law, has been replaced by his new teaching, preached, among others, in the Sermon on the Mount (*Mt* 5.1−7, cf. *Lk* 6.20−49). It was the faith and the hope brought by Him to the sinners, which constitutes its centre. This new message, focussed on Jesus, has soon been deepened by His Passion and Resurrection. The new Covenant, concluded by Jesus' first advent has been formulated by Peter in the *Acts of Apostles*: "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2.38).

In the wake of Jesus, preaching the forgiveness of sins, it was Paul who made Christianity the religion of sin, intertwined indissolubly with man's essence. According to his teaching man can be saved from the state of sinfulness only by an external power, i.e. by Jesus and the divine grace. Paul, the Jew and Roman citizen, imbued as much with Hellenistic culture as with traditional Jewish religion, changed the Jesus-movement, coming to life within Judaism, into a universal religion in the centre of which Jesus, the Saviour God has been put. The fundamental principle of his message is a peculiar soteriology, which rests on two theoretical presuppositions.[62] The first, being similar to the astral ideas of the Gnosticism and Hermetism, sets out from the postulate, that humankind is suffering from an excessively corrupted state, which is determined by "the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away".[63] His train of thought reminds us of the Gnostics, when he interprets the mission of Jesus, "the Lord of glory" (*ton kyrion tēs doxēs*), who imparted "a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification" (v. 7). The evil archons, however, did not understand his wisdom and crucified Him.[64] The second presupposition can be characterised in terms of philosophy of history. According to this idea humankind before Christ's coming would have been divided into pagans and Jews, but neither of them has kept the Law, prescribed by God to them, "because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie".[65] For this reason, none of them can bring up their Law, "for there is no distinction, since all of them sinned (*pantes gar hēmarten*) and fall short of the glory of God" and after this they can be justified only "through the redemption, which is in Christ" and by "God's righteousness".[66] Both

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[61] See also *Mt* 18.15; *Lk* 17.3 sq etc.
[62] Cf. *DHI* (IV, p. 229) (S. G. F. Brendon).
[63] *1Cor.* 2.6.
[64] See *1Cor* 2.8.
[65] See *Rom* 1.16 sqq (pagans), 2.17 sqq (Jews).
[66] *Rom* 3.22−24.

the ideas were meant to elaborate the exclusive role of Jesus, the Saviour, and a decisive element of this soteriology was the doctrine of humankind's sinfulness. In this respect we refer to two of his thoughts, influencing essentially the further development of Christianity. One of them was (and by considering it he could still rely, to some extent, on Jesus' teaching) the negative and rejecting perception of Law. According to him the Law and its keeping can lead only to a certain knowledge of sin and it does not result *per se* in salvation. His sin perception has been expressed, in a most pregnant way, in his Letter to the Romans (5.12–21), where he exhibited very impressively the trinity of Law–Sin–Death from which only the faith in Jesus Christ and God's grace can save us. This idea has been deepened by the connection of the body (*sarx*)[67] with sin (*hamartia*) and death (*thanatos*): "your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness" (8.10, cf. 8.13). The other idea was the postulate of "original sin", originating with Adam (5.12: "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned"). This dogma among the articles of faith has been for the great masses of the people inacceptable and it proved to be wholly incomprehensible. In the early patristics this gloomy and pessimistic Pauline thought (Adam is equal with sin and death, Jesus means life and faith) has been supplemented with the confrontation of Eve with Maria and with the problem of baptism. Then, after a short transition period, it was Augustine, who responding to the standpoint of the Pelagians, elaborated in detail the idea of original sin (*vitium originis*), mainly in his work, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione.* After having had his sanction, the different councils (from the council of Diopolis in 415 to the council of Orange in 529) dogmatised this tenet. Indeed, we could earlier state, that Christianity became the religion of sin, reminding us of the Gnostic perception of life. This dogma excluded, by its very nature, the development of an ethically conceived sin concept, for the individual had no relationship to his own sinfulness (being an inherited *condition humaine*), and the salvation from sin is in Jesus Christ's hand.

The Islamic sin perception[68] though it differs essentially from its predecessors, nonetheless is as difficult to be judged ethically as those of Judaism and Christianity, albeit some sectarian, theological, and philosophical tendencies of Islam are not devoid of some elements of free will and human freedom.

In the Qur'ān, too, there are a number of words for sin, which meant originally different intended and unintentional sins, faults, transgression and carelessness toward Allah. The sometimes essential differences in their meaning, in most of the European Qur'ān translations are not properly given back. Among them, four words are especially worth mentioning. There is the *khaṭī'a*, well-known by its Old Testamental parallel, which (in its substantival and adjectival forms alike)[69], similar to the

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[67] See the concordance given by *UszSz* (p. 527, no. 4460, cf. no. 4483).

[68] See on it Hastings, *ERE*, s.v. *Sin* (Muslim, XI, pp. 567–569 – E. Sell); *EI*, s.v. *Khaṭī'a* (II, pp. 925–927 – A. J. Wensinck); Wensinck (1932/1979, pp. 136–157); *OEMIW*, s.v. *Sin* (IV, pp. 72–75 – Mustansir Mir). For a Muslim, Abdur Rahman Shad's compilation (1986) is a useful *vademecum* in the jungle of the "do not's" (*ḥarām*) and "do's" (*ḥalāl*).

[69] See the data in: ʿAbd al-Bāqī (pp. 234 sq).

Hebrew *ḥēṭ'*, meant originally "to miss the mark or fail of hitting", thus its original Qur'ānic meaning must have been: "to deviate from Allah's way". Then, there is the *ithm* (Hebrew *āshām*, see Gesenius/Trigelles, p. 86), its meaning in the Qur'ān is generally the "grave sin".[70] A third word, the *dhanb* (*op. cit.*, p. 276) is essentially a synonym of *khaṭī'a* of which we do not know the semantic background (its fourth verbal form means "to commit a sin", "to be guilty", but the *dhanb* cannot be its *nomen actionis*). The fourth word, the *saiyi'a* means only "an evil action" (*op. cit.*, pp. 367–370),[71] and its frequent use would suggest some germs of a generalised sin concept. In reality, however, Muḥammad had not any sin conception at all, and we find in the Qur'ān only vague attempts at a systematisation of sins. This is quite understandable, if we take into account the Qur'ānic perception of man together with Allah's omnipotence, and that not so much the sin itself (except the *ishrāk*, "to associate with or to give companion to God") as Allah's forgiveness or His punishment matters, though there is a kind of distinction between the "grave sins" (*kabā'ir*) and "lesser sins" (*ṣaghā'ir*), the exact definition of which, however, has not been given. Let us see the problems one after the other.

The anthropology of Qur'ān differs profoundly from the Christian perception of man, tainted by "original sin", and this difference appears very plastically in Adam's history (Qur'ān, 2:35–39; 7:19–25; 20:111–122). Adam has been put by Allah as His vicegerent on the earth (2:30), though Allah had been warned by the angels, that man is a creature "who will do corruption there and shed blood" (2:30). Then, Adam commits an offence against Allah's behest, but being driven out from Paradise (2:36), he repents his sin and, at this point, "Allah relented towards him; verily He is the Relentant, the Compassionate" (2:37). As a closing of the narrative, the Qur'ān adumbrates, in no uncertain terms, the rhythm of the sacred world-history and the relationship between Allah and man: henceforward, Allah sends down guidance for man and whosoever follows it "no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow, but they who disbelieve and deny Our revelation, those shall be the inhabitants of the Fire" (2:38 sq). The lessons of this story are evident: (a) man, though he is Allah's creature, nonetheless he is predisposed to yield to Satan's temptation and to commit a sin (according to the Qur'ān, human soul has a part, the *nafs ammāra*, which "incites to evil"[72]); (b) at the same time, however, man, being Allah's creature, has a natural turn for distinguishing evil from right (see 75:2, where we find *an-nafs al-lawwāma*, "the reproachful soul") and, by doing this, he is able to repent and atone for his guilt; (c) after man's repentance (*tawba*) Allah is forgiving, without having recourse to any intermediation (showing by this, too, that Allah does not require any priesthood and church); (d) it results from the former, that in Islam there is no "original sin".

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[70] See ᶜAbd al-Bāqī (p. 12) (it occurs, with its derivatives, 48 times). The original meaning of the word may possibly have been "lie", "falsehood" (the adjective *āthim* means "a slow or tardy camel").

[71] With its derivatives, it is the most used word for "misdeed", "wrongful act".

[72] See the famous verse in Sūra Yūsuf": "The (human) soul urges to evil, except in so far as my Lord has mercy" (12:53).

The problem of human freedom and free will, connected with individual responsibility, on the one hand and the question of divine predestination, ensuing from Allah's omnipotence, on the other, is a veritable conandrum of Islamic sin perception, the rather different dogmatic interpretations of which have played an important role in the development of early Islam. The position taken up on this issue by the Islamic orthodoxy has lastingly traced out the limits of the individuality and the ethical conduct of a Muslim, living within the theocratical community. This later development has greatly been influenced by the ambivalent attitude of the Qur'ān towards the issue of free will and predestination. Muḥammad's ambivalent standpoint is wholly understandable from historical perspective. His austere monotheism, demanding an unconditional obedience and accountability as compared with the slack polytheism of the tribal society, had self-evidently prescribed Allah's uniqueness, omnipotence and omniscience, which permeated every nook and corner of the universe, in every point of Space and in every dimension of Time. The rigorous and consequent enforcement of this standpoint resulted in the, first implicit and later explicit, postulate of Allah's all-determining character which, taken *ad absurdum*, had fixed not only the right but also the evil, because this unfathomable arbitrariness fits Him. This austere though consequent monotheism has been counterpoised by another tendency of the Qur'ān, directed against the warlike spirit of the tribal aristocracy, the *murū'a*, which excluded individual responsibility and, for this reason, it was incompatible with divine providence, judging everybody according to his merits (cf. Weber 1987, I/2, p. 177). Individual responsibility has been formulated against the *murū'a*, and it was connected, for obvious reasons, with the thought of (limited) free will as well as the reward and punishment in the world to come. The contrast between the value-systems is paradigmatically demonstrated by the closing part of the *Sūra al-jāthiya* (v. 24–35): "They say, 'there is nothing, but our present life; we die, and we live, and nothing but Time (*ad-dahru*)[73] destroys us.' Of that they have no knowledge; they merely conjecture. And when our signs are recited to them, clear signs, their only argument is that they say: 'Bring us our fathers, if you speak truly" (v. 24 sq). It is against these religious ideas, that Muḥammad preached Allah's omnipotence and the individual judgement of man: "And for those who have believed and done deeds of righteousness, their Lord shall admit them into His mercy; that is the merciful triumph. But as for those who have disbelieved: 'Were not My signs recited to you, and you waxed proud, and were a sinful people?'" (v. 30 sq – A. Arberry's translation).

As to the development of the two conceptions (Allah's foreordination on the one hand and limited free will on the other[74]) some scholars suppose a shifting of ac-

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[73] "Time" can be interpreted here as "Fate" in its equally concrete and abstract substance, see Hastings, *ERE* (I, p. 661) (T. Nöldeke); *EI²*, s.v. *dahr* (II, pp. 96 sq – W. Montgomery-Watt); Ringgren (1955, pp. 86 sq).

[74] To the duality of Muḥammad's perception on free will and determination see Grimme (1895, II, pp. 105–109); Nagel (1985, pp. 263–281). On the later debates see Goldziher (1912, pp. 79–101); Wensinck (1932/1979, pp. 50 sqq); *EI²*, s.v. *al-ḳaḍā-wa'l-ḳadar* (IV, pp. 380–383 – L. Gardet); it is still worth reading the articles in *EI* written by D. B. MacDonald. In the *ḥadīth*

cent within the nascent Islam. It was Hubert Grimme, who worded first the hypothesis[75] that Muḥammad in the early Meccan period posited first the free will of man and his responsibility, but when he saw that the great majority of his tribe, the Quraysh, including the members of his clan, respected also by him, remained stubborn in the false faith, then, already in Medina, he changed his opinion and he had no alternative explanation for human blindness and disbelief than as being caused by Allah Himself. For giving an idea of the two standpoints, here are some examples, first for stressing free will: "Have we not given him two eyes, and a tongue, and two lips, and guided him on the two paths, but he has not attempted the steep!" (9:8–11). On The Last Judgement "every soul will be paid in full what it has earned and they will not be wronged" (3:25, cf. 103:2 sq, 99:6–8 etc.). "Man is led astray by his "Lustful desire" or "caprice" (hawan) from Allah's way" (38:26). Man's heart may be sick (fī-qulūbi-him maraḍ) for disbelief (47:20) or may be hardened "and became as rocks, or worse than rocks, for hardness" (2:74). According to this conception Allah's creation does not preclude the independent ill-nature of man: "We indeed created man and we know what his soul whispers to him" (50:16). Although, similar to the Old Testament's perception, in a number of Qur'ānic verses man is seduced by Satan to committing sin (see e.g. 6:71, 121; 7:27; 19:83; 22:3; 26:221), in 50:27 (according to Zamakhsharī's interpretation) Satan refuses to accept this role and says: "Our Lord! I did not cause him to rebel but he was in far error." Even earlier peoples, destroyed for their disbelief, could choose between right and evil: "As for Thamūd, we gave them guidance, but they preferred blindness to the guidance, so the thunderbolt of the doom of humiliation seized them for what they were earning" (41:17). However, if we take into consideration the weight of the two standpoints and their role, influencing the further development, then, compared to the former perception (which considered Allah as a benevolent and forgiving Creator as well as a just judge, and man, having the chance of free choice and being responsible for his action) it must be stated, that the omnipotent and austere Allah, acting according to his planning on the one hand, and his creature, man, wholly subdued to Him on the other, was to become one of the basic messages of Muḥammadan Islam. Let us see some examples for this standpoint: "Whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam, whomsoever He desires to lead astray (yuḍillu-hum)[76], He makes his

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collections (see mainly al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's material) we find the respective Prophetic traditions in the chapter of Kitāb al-īmān.

[75] Grimme (1895, II, pp. 105 sq); his opinion has been accepted by Goldziher (1912, pp. 94 sq). The applicability of this standpoint depends on the dating of the first revelations of the Qur'ān and its leading ideas. In order to render perceptible the problem, we refer to some different opinions: Chr. Snouck Hurgronje in 1886 assumed the viewpoint, that in the first Meccan period the most important Qur'ānic message was the insistence on Allah as the Lord of the Last Day. According to Richard Bell, however, the first revelations did not concern the imminent doomsday, but instead of it they emphasised Allah's role as a compassionate and merciful Creator. A similar opinion has been expressed in Harris Birkeland's important work (1956), in which the Norvegian scholar analysed five short sūrahs, revealed in the first Meccan period.

[76] Goldziher (1912, pp. 92 sq) made an important comment on the term aḍalla, occurring often in the Qur'ān. According to him (and he is most probably right) its meaning is not "to lead astray" (which would mean a deliberate and direct misguiding) but that "Allah lets him to err, or

breast narrow, tight, as if he were climbing to heaven" (6:125). Or: "If Allah helps you, none can overcome you; but if He forsakes you, who then can help you after Him? Therefore in Allah let the believers put all their trust" (3:160). Or: "Say: Naught shall visit us but what Allah has prescribed for us; He is our Protector, in Allah let the believers put all their trust" (9:51 – A. Arberry's translation).

Later on, as it is well known, first the *Khārijites,* and then in the 2nd–8th century the *Muᶜtazilites*, elaborating the rationalist theology of Islam, have stood for the necessity of free will as a homologous equivalent of divine justice. The Islamic orthodoxy elaborated its position just against this view, which was essentially based on the acceptance of predestination. In the development of the latter al-Ashᶜarī's "half-way" proposal has played an important role. It was his ingenious "occasionalistic" thought experiment which, by accepting the primariness of divine almightiness, admitted, however, that the individual may acquire (*kasb*) the divine decision in each case. Allah's omnipotence and the perception of human existence as Fate was to became one of the pillars of Classical Islam's worldview, the foremost protagonists of which became, not by chance, the scholars of religious sciences (*ᶜulamāʾ*) and the specialists in religious Law (*fuqahāʾ*). In their characteristic features individual personality and social role successfully met and, by achieving their task, they subordinated first the individual to the theocratic community, and then they submitted the latter to Allah's unrestricted power. Muḥammad, after some early other experiences, had already named the religion, preached by him, Islam, which means "the act of resignation to Allah", "submission, a total surrendering to Allah's will". As Goldziher characterised it exactly: Allah is *ar-Rabb* ("the omnipotent Lord"), men are *ᶜibād* ("slaves"), the virtue is *ṭāᶜa* ("obedience") and the sin is called *maᶜṣiya* ("disobedience", "insubordination", "sedition") (Goldziher 1913, p. 100).

Compared to this, the third problem, i.e. the nature and classification of sins, though it played an important role in early Islam, in the Khārijite movement as well as in the development of Islamic dogmatics, actually, its place and importance depended on the former issue, and it is not by chance that it had not been elaborated in the Qurʾān. Though Muḥammad in some revelations (4:31; 42:37; 53:32) among different guilts laid a particular emphasis on some "grave sins" (*kabāʾir al-ithm*), their classification, as a matter of fact, remained rather sketchy. The gravest sin against Allah is understandably "the association", "the giving of partners to God" (*shirk, ishrāk*), i.e. polytheism, next to it were the (unjustified) killing and adultery (see 5:32; 25:68 sq). The smaller sins, however, are not specified in the Qurʾān and the Prophetic traditions and, for this reason, we find no uniform standpoint in the *sharīᶜa* on them. In reality, in the history of Muslim sin perception the real importance of this problem has been given by its two bearings. First, it was its relation to

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neglects him, or He does not show any way out to him." Indeed, in 6:110 this attitude has been expressed as follows: "We let them wander blindly on in their contumacy." It means, says Goldziher, "that He let the wrongdoer to err, He surrenders him to his fate, deprives him of His mercy, and He does not stretch out to him His guiding hand, but nonetheless He does not lead him astray by any means. For this reason, if the Qurʾān speaks of the sinners, it uses the image of *blindness* and *fumbling in the dark* metonymically. They do not see, therefore they err without aim and purpose."

the membership of the community and secondly, but not independently of the former, it was the importance of action and/or the faith from the point of view of belonging to Islam and individual salvation. As to the first problem, it is well known, that the *Khārijite* standpoint, appearing in the conflict between ᶜAlī and Muᶜāwiya, attached great importance to the sins in respect to the membership of Muslim community. The *Azāriqa*, an extremist branch of this sect, beside the faith, attributed an important role to the works and, according to their opinion, a major sin forfeited salvation and the condition of the believer, making him an apostate, and the sinner might be excommunicated and even killed. Their implacable and extreme standpoint has not been accepted by the majority of the Muslim community. The *Murji'a*, being the predecessors of later orthodoxy, manifested their view even by their appellation. They believed that grave sins are offset by faith, and the judgement and condemnation of sinners *have to be postponed* till doomsday. According to them, the measure of the faith and religious conviction of a Muslim is not his work and as long as he believes in Allah, he has to be accepted by his co-religionists. In this early controversy, too, has been formulated the standpoint of Islamic orthodoxy in the question of faith and work, which has rightly been called as *intention ethics*. It has been expressed in a condensed form by the first of an-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīth: *innamā'l-aᶜmāl bi'n-niyāt wa-innamā li-kulli mar'in mā nawā* ("works are but by intentions and every man shall have but which he intended").

We may close our brief survey on the early forms of sin perceptions with the statement, that these forms did *not* belong *yet* to the sphere of ethics, those forms, however, which developed in early modern times, were *already not* part of ethics. Evil and sin belonged to the competence of religion, later on, however, its judgement has been taken over by the secularised Law. It would be important to examine whether ethics have an authentic and authorised sin perception and how it looks like?

Abbreviations

Boisacq = Boisacq, É. (1938³): *Dictionnaire étimologique de la langue grecque*. Heidelberg, C. Winter's–Paris, Libr. C. Klicksieck.

DeCha = Dictionnaire encyclopédique du Christianisme ancien, I–II, sous la direction de Angelo di Bernardino. Paris, Cerf, 1983.

DHI = Wiener, Ph. P. (ed. in chief) (1973): *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, I–IV. New York, Ch. Scribner's Sons.

DNTT = Brown, C. (general editor) (1971): *The International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, I–III. Exeter, The Paternoster Press.

EI² = *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition. Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1954–.

Eliade, *ER* = Eliade, M. (ed. in chief) (1995): *The Encyclopaedia of Religion,* 16 vols. New York, Simon and Schuster–Macmillan.

GBL = *Das grosse Bibellexikon*, hrsg. v. V. H. Burkhardt–F. Grünzweig–F. Laubach–G. Maier. Wuppertal, R. Brockhaus Verlag–Giessen, Brunnen Verlag, 1989.

Gesenius/Robinson = *A Hebrew and English Lexicon to the Old Testament*, based on the Lexicon of W. Gesenius and transl. by S. Robinson, ed. by F. Brown with the co-operation of S. R. Driver and Ch. A. Briggs. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1951.

Gesenius/Trigelles = *Gesenius' Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, transl. by S. P. Tri-
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Hastings, *ERE* = Hastings, J. (ed.) (1994): *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,* 13 vols. Edin-
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Liddell–Scott = Liddell, H. G.–Scott, R. (1968): *A Greek–English Lexicon*. Oxford, Clarendon
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OEMIW = Esposito, J. L. (ed.) (1995): *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World*,
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Pritchard, *ANET = Ancient Near East Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. by J. Pritchard.
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UszSz = Balázs, K. (1998): *Újszövetségi Szómutató Szótár* [Word Register to the New Testament].
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WPhB = *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe*, historisch-quellenmässig bearbeitet von R. Eis-
    ler, I–III. Berlin, E. S. Mittler u. Sohn, 1910.

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