

The Rise and Fall Beginnings Anna Mendelssohn

Here we are – at the beginning. A scary place. A dark, uncertain, scary place. Will something be asked of us? Why did we come here? Was it out of curiosity? An obligation maybe? Some strange urge? Was it outer force or inner hope? Were we hoping to enjoy ourselves? What do we know of the beginning? Where shall we begin? Begin at the beginning.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

No. God comes early but before god? Before the beginning, when we were nothing, when nothing was, before the word, before the number and the chapter, before the separation, before the unity, before the incoherence, before the narrator, before the narrative, before the story, before all motivation to explain? Before he, she and us, before I am that I am, before I will be what I will be – when nothing was? What was?

That what we call ultimate purpose, destiny, principle, or nature is something inner, as true as it might be, it is not wholly real. Purposes, basic principles and so on exist in thoughts, in inner intentions but not yet in reality. What is – is a possibility, a capability, it has not emerged from its own inner into existence. A second momentum is required for reality, and this is activity, realisation and its principle is the will, the action.

An action? Out of nothingness? From the blankness? The void? The utter formlessness and emptiness?

Yes, it is here that the situation is excellent.

From small beginnings come great things. Listen closely.

Moments before the explosion, the universe was very small. It had the shape of a small rock, a small fist. It was pressed. The whole universe as big as it is now and maybe endless, we don't know, it once had this kind of shape, compressed, and twisted.

(dark!)

Around us there's nothing. There's not even time or space. Imagine the darkest, emptiest thing you can and cube it a gazillion times and that's where we are. Where nothing was, in the blankness, in the hovering, haunting swell of vacuity.

And then suddenly, bang! (light!) A universe appears, an entire universe. And we have crossed our first

threshold. This universe is tiny; it's smaller than an atom. And its incredibly hot. It is light, an eruption of light. And it contains everything that is in today's universe, so you can imagine, it's busting, and it's expanding at incredible speed. And at first it's just a blur, but very quickly distinct things begin to appear in that blur. Within the first second, energy itself shatters into distinct forces including electromagnetism and gravity. And energy does something else quite magical, it congeals to form matter -- quarks that will create protons and leptons that include electrons. And all of that happens in the first second.

Where did the fist come from? Whose idea was it? Using my own mind can I ever understand the mind of the universe? Does it even make sense to think of the universe as having a mind?

All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments; no it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which our arguments have their life.

So arguing from my own point of view, I can know the universe?

In knowing the knowledge and goal of the universe our individual goal to be reached is the mind's insight into what knowing is. Impatience asks for the impossible, wants to reach the goal without the means of getting there. But the length of the journey has to be borne with, for every moment is necessary. The universal mind at work in the world (the Weltgeist), has had the patience to go through it's forms in the long stretch of time's extent, and to take upon itself the prodigious labour of the world's history, where it bodied forth in each form the entire content of itself. Because by nothing less could that all-pervading mind ever manage to become conscious of what itself is — for that reason, the individual mind, cannot expect by less toil to grasp what its own substance contains.

I contain the universe? The universe contains me. But if each form bodies forth the entire content of itself then I body forth, I contain, the universe, do I not?

And so it is. In each of us and everywhere around us we find nothing but the content of the universe. And this comes so: after the birth of the universe the stars came forward. And stars don't live forever, they have a birth, they have a middle life and they have a death. A star if its large enough will go through a process in its core of developing all of the elements. A star starts off as hydrogen and helium, then it creates carbon in its core, then it creates oxygen and then its creates phosphorus, all of these are being built up over billions of years and finally it gets to iron. Iron itself cannot burn. The star is then no longer able to hold back the gravitational collapse and in a short moment an entire star collapses down to a point. In just over a second. This

collapse and the explosive rebound is called a supernova. These high mass stars exploded, scattered and dispersed their enriched contents across the galaxy, sprinkled into gas clouds, that then collapsed again, and formed into new stars and planets and life. So the molecules in our bodies are traceable to a phenomenon in the cosmos. It is literally true that we are stardust. In the highest exulted way that we can use that phrase. The iron in our blood, the iron in meteorites, they have common origins in the core of a star! We are born out of the death of a star. To die is to become.

The star's end is my beginning. But why must the star die for me to live?

The bud must disappear as the blossom bursts forth, and one could say that the former is refuted by the latter. In the same way, the fruit declares the blossom to be a false existence of the plant. These forms do not only differ, they also displace each other because they are incompatible. Their fluid nature, however, makes them, at the same time, elements of an organic unity in which they not only do not conflict, but in which one is as necessary as the other; and it is only this equal necessity that constitutes the life of the whole.

So am I the fruit, as the exploding star is the blossom and the small fist the twisted bud about to explode? If this is so what is the tree that brought forth the bud?

In such a chain, each part is caused by that which preceded it, and causes that which succeeds it. Where then is the difficulty? But the whole, you say, wants a cause. Look at the grammar, one of the troubles is that we take a substantive to correspond to the thing. The words cause and beginning have been used as though they have stood for a thing. What is the beginning is a misleading question.

I ought to be content with this answer you say. But I ask what was the answer, I did not understand.

The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is and everything happens as it does happen, in it no value exists. Feeling the world as a limited whole. It is this that is mystical. We feel that even if all possible scientific questions have been answered the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left and this itself is the answer. The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem.

Is it not a contradiction to say the sense of the world must lie outside of the world? If the universe contains the world and I contain the universe, where may such an outside exist?

A rabbi is holding court in his village. Schmuel stands up and pleads his case, saying, "Rabbi, Itzak runs his sheep across my land every day and it is ruining my crops. It's my land. It's not fair."

The Rabbi says "you are right!"

Then Itzak stands up and says "but rabbi, going across his land is the only way my sheep can drink water from the pond. Without it they'll die. For centuries, every shepherd has had the right of way on the land surrounding the pond, so I should too."

The rabbi says "you are right!"

The cleaning lady who has overheard all this says to the rabbi "but rabbi, they cant both be right!"

And the rabbi replies "you are right!"

Let us just suppose that I have understood, because indeed I have not, the highest. Now is it not so that almost at the same moment something new must rush upon me – that the highest of all is not too understand the highest but to act on it? As we have said there is a second momentum, which is required for reality to come into existence, and that this is activity, realisation and its principle is the will, the action. I might continue to try to understand life backwards. But I will in any case have to live life forwards. So then, what prompts my actions? To act, in its most general sense, means to take initiative, to begin to set something in motion. But where will the initiative come from? Am I free in this decision?

We do not so much possess freedom as we, or better our coming into the world, is equated with the appearance of freedom in the universe; we are free because we are a beginning... It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started. And so intrinsic to our capacity for action is the introduction of genuine novelty, the unexpected, unanticipated and unpredictable into the world:

The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle.

A miracle? A miracle of destructive force then is it not? For the new we said must kill the old?

Revolutionaries do not make revolutions. Armed uprising by itself has never yet led to revolution. The revolutionaries are those who know when power is lying in the street and when they can pick it up. A revolutionary process is not a rash nor a gradual progress but a repetitive movement, a movement of repeating the beginning, again and again.

If I were to want to create such a miracle, a genuine novelty, a revolution, where would I begin? A violent explosion of light is needed no? Or would I have to begin before? In the dark unknown? Within the hovering haunting swell of nothingness?

This very real world of ours with all its suns and galaxies is nothing. All things return eternally and so do we with them, we have been here countless times and all things with us. There is a great year of becoming, a monster of a great year: which must, like an hourglass, turn itself over perpetually, to drain and expire anew.:-

So that all these years equal themselves, in the largest as in the smallest, – so that we ourselves in each big year equal ourselves in the largest as in the smallest.

Were you to want to die now, we know what you would tell yourself:

“now I die and dwindle, you would say, and in an instant I am nothing. But the knot of causes, in which I am tied up, will return, – it will create me afresh! I myself belong to the causes of the eternal return.

I will return with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this snake not to a new life or a better life or a similar life:

I will return eternally to this same and equal life, in the largest and in the smallest, to die again.

All great deeds and all great thoughts have a ridiculous beginning.

Is this the final answer?

This is not a final end. It is not the beginning of the end. But it is perhaps the end of the beginning.