

## CHAPTER 4

# THE ARGUMENT FROM POLYMORPHIC PROJECTION

*Our rabbis taught: Four entered an orchard and these are they: Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Aher and Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva said to them, 'When you reach the stones of pure marble, do not say, 'Water! Water!' For it is said, 'He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before mine eyes'. Ben Azzai gazed and died. Of him, Scripture says, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.' Ben Zoma gazed and was stricken. Of him Scripture says, 'Has thou found honey? Eat as much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.' Aher cut the roots (that is, he became an heretic). Rabbi Akiva departed in peace.*

*Hagigah 14b*

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

During the latter half of the twentieth century in particular, disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, psychology and the sociology of knowledge have demonstrated that all societies tend to mystify and repress the human origins of their own local and historically relative cultural ideologies (cf. Eliade 1979:09). The worldview of a particular group of likeminded people is viewed as something objective and somehow independent of human thought and language. Local conceptions of politics, morality and nature are often generalised and projected unto the cosmos as a whole (cf. Cupitt 1991:47).

At least since the rise of modernist (and especially post-modernist) historical consciousness, it has become apparent, however, that no act, no belief, no thought and no socio-political set-up can any longer be considered as corresponding to a universal

and objective state of affairs. Philosophers like Hegel, Nietzsche and Foucault have pointed out that everything we think, know and do can be classified as the contingent products of particular historical periods. All beliefs, views, morals, social conventions and values have histories; they are datable and relative human cultural constructs (cf. Tarmas 1991:339; Cupitt 1996:37).

According to the devil's advocate, the rise of an ultra-radical historical consciousness in the post-modern period presents a dilemma for anyone who wishes to be a realist pertaining to the ontological status of Yahweh-as-depicted in the texts of the Old Testament. In fact, of all the arguments constructed in this study, it is the argument of this chapter, the so-called argument from "polymorphic projection", that seems to be the most devastating in its ability to expose the all-too-human nature of the Old Testament god. As soon as one's eyes open to the mechanisms underlying the anthropomorphic, sociomorphic and psychomorphic elements in the discourse about the god Yahweh, realism seems to collapse under the sheer weight of its own incredibility.

In this regard, the devil's advocate cannot help but be suspicious of the fact that the god of the Old Testament believes the same superstitious things about the world as the people who worship him. He shares their misconceptions and primitive understanding of nature. His own ideas of what happened in history and what will happen in the future are as limited, misguided and informed by myth and legend as that of his human speechwriters. His predictions about what would happen in the future often go unfulfilled. The bottom line seems to be that, whether acting or speaking in the first person, Yahweh is no more clued up about the extra-textual world than his devotees.

Whenever the texts depict Yahweh as speaking in the first person, his monologues and dialogues also reveal him to possess culturally relative moral beliefs and values that never transcend the ideologies of the Old Testament people themselves. His views regarding what is right or wrong appear to be informed by the views of humans living in the Iron Age. The way in which his divine socio-cultural set-up in the heavens is constituted seems suspiciously and disconcertingly similar to that found in the monarchies and tribal governments of the ancient Near East.

These all-too-human elements in the deity's own perception of and relation to the world usually go unnoticed. In conservative scholarship, it is an embarrassing fact that has, on the one hand, been suppressed by rationalising apologetics or constructive theories of supposed divine accommodation and phenomenological discourse. Alternatively, critical scholars, their appeals to the supposed metaphorical nature of all religious discourse notwithstanding, seem to be equally oblivious to ontological implications of their acknowledgement that Yahweh-as-depicted in the text is indeed a literary construct created by humans for ideological purposes.

*According to the devil's advocate, however, it is impossible to overstate its case on this matter. It cannot be overemphasised that Yahweh's own knowledge, perceptions and values – i.e. his own ideology or worldview – never transcend that of his ignorant and culturally conditioned human speechwriters.* Because of this, the devil's advocate concludes that, Yahweh-as-depicted in the Old Testament is no more than the anthropomorphic, psychomorphic and sociomorphic projection of human authors. As a product of polymorphic projection, Yahweh exists only in the world of the text and in the minds of people but has no extra-textual and extra-psychical counterpart. Ergo, he does not really exist at all.

#### **4.2 THE ALL-TOO-HUMAN GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

In this section, the devil's advocate has reconstructed several arguments to justify the claim that Yahweh is indeed a product of polymorphic projection. These arguments probably constitute the heart of the case against realism and their effects and implications spill over to all the other chapters of this study. The basis of all the arguments to follow in this chapter is that Old Testament was written during the time when everyone, including its paramount god, held beliefs about the world, history and morality that presently no longer seem to be reflective of the way extra-textual reality is constituted.

We may not know everything about the world and yet, if anything, we have discovered some things that are demonstrably *not* the case. As a result, the deity Yahweh with his own humanly informed, culturally conditioned and historically determined beliefs stands exposed as a character of fiction and with realism pertaining

to his ontological status thoroughly deconstructed.

#### 4.2.1 Yahweh's errant beliefs about extra-textual reality

When Yahweh speaks in the first person in the Old Testament, he often makes statements that include references to alleged actual historical, cosmographical, geographical, biological, and other types of phenomena. However, according to the devil's advocate, the knowledge Yahweh exhibits about these phenomena often contain elements of error and superstition. It would seem that the god Yahweh knew about as much about the world as the people who worshipped him *and no more!*

Consider the following examples of a presumably informed Yahweh's all-too-human and apparently errant beliefs about the extra-textual world:

- Yahweh himself believes that the universe was created over a period of six days (cf. Gen 1:1-2:4a; Ex 31:17)
- Yahweh himself believes there is an ocean above stars in the skies from where rainwater falls to the earth (cf. Gen 1:6; Job 38:34).
- Yahweh himself believes that the landmass of the earth floats on water (cf. Deut 5:8; cf. also Ps 24:2).
- Yahweh himself believes that he lives in the sky just above the earth (cf. Gen 11:5-7, 18:21; Isa 14:12-14; 18:4, 40:22).
- Yahweh himself believes that the sun is a small disk traversing the skies by day and can be halted on command without any adverse effects (cf. Josh 10:12-14; Isa 38:8).
- Yahweh himself believes that the stars were created as an afterthought to the sun and moon and that they are relatively small sentient beings that constitute a divine army also existing as objective constellations with astrological potency (cf. Gen

11:14-17; Judg 5:21; Isa 14:12, 24:21; Dan 8:10; Job 38:7,31-33).

- Yahweh himself believes that the moon is a source of light rather than a reflector of light (cf. Gen 1:14-16; Isa 30:26).
- Yahweh himself believes that the earth is flat and that he could look down onto its entire surface area (cf. Dan 4:35; Isa 40:22).
- Yahweh himself believes that thunder is literally his own voice (cf. Ex 19:19, 20:18, 24:12; Deut 5:21, 33:2; Judg 5:4; Ps 18:13; 1 Sam 7:10; Isa 30:27; Am 1:2; Ps 29:3; Job 37:5; 38:34).
- Yahweh himself believes that the clouds were forms of transport for deities in the sky (cf. Pss 18:11, 104:3; Isa 19:1, 66:15).
- Yahweh himself believes that the wind is literally his breath (cf. Ex 15:8; cf. 14:21).
- Yahweh himself believes that the rainbow is literally his bow with which he could shoot arrows (cf. Gen 9:12-15; Hab 3:9a).
- Yahweh himself believes that lightning is literally his arrow (cf. Ps 18:15, 77:18; Hab 3:9, 14; Zech 9:14).
- Yahweh himself believes that hail is literally his artillery (cf. Josh 10:11; Job 38:22-23).
- Yahweh himself believes that there is literally a place underground where the dead live as shades (cf. Num 16:23-33; Deut 32:22; Job 38:16-17; Isa 7:11; Ezek 26:19-20; 32:18-32; Am 9:2).
- Yahweh himself believes that the dead continued their earthly vocation, must be buried to avoid problems in the afterlife, that they need food and that they could

even possess human bodies and speak to the living (cf. 1 Sam 28:11-19; Isa 14:10-16; Ezek 32:19-32; Lev 20:27; Deut 26:14; 2 Kgs 9:10; Isa 8:19, 29:4; Jer 8:1, 16:4).

- Yahweh himself believes in the existence of other gods and the existence of fictitious locations like the mountain of the gods in the north and the garden of the gods (cf. Ex 12:12; Ps 82; Isa 14:13; Ezek 28:13, 16; Isa 51:3).
- Yahweh himself believes in the historicity of characters like Noah, Job and Daniel (not the biblical character) (cf. Ezek 14:14; Isa 54:9-10).
- Yahweh himself believes in the existence of the mythical creatures like the Leviathan, Rahab, Behemoth, sea monsters, flying dragons, demons of the field, malevolent spirits of the night, etc. (cf. Job 40-41; Isa 30:6; Lev 17:7; Isa 34:14; Am 9:3; etc.).
- Yahweh himself believes in the existence of giants (cf. Gen 6:1-4, 14:5, 15:20; Deut 2:11, 20, 3:11; Josh 12:4, 17:15).
- Yahweh himself believes in the existence of mixomorphs (cf. Gen 3:24; Isa 6:2; Ezek 1).
- Yahweh himself believes that rabbits chew the cud and the misinformed folktales regarding the supposed fickleness of the ostrich (cf. Lev 11:6; Job 39:16-21).
- Yahweh himself believes that humans are made from dust and/or clay (cf. Gen 2-3; Ps 103:14, etc.).
- Yahweh himself believes that the force of life is in the blood and that the wind (= spirit = breath) animates human (and divine) bodies (cf. Gen 4:10; Lev 17:14; Ezek 37:9-10; cf. also Gen 2:7; Ex 14:21 vs. 15:10).
- Yahweh himself believes that thought issues from the heart and emotions from the

kidneys (cf. Jer 17:10, etc.).

- Yahweh himself actually believes that, apart from the wayward people of Israel, all the peoples of the earth worship Him and burn incense in his honour (cf. Mal 1:11-12).
- Yahweh himself believes that all droughts necessarily signified divine displeasure and is the result of some or other sin (cf. Lev 25:3-4; Deut 28:23-24; 1 Kgs 17-18).
- Yahweh himself believes that dreams are messages from the divine (cf. Gen 36-50; Dan 1-12; Job 33; Zech 1-6).
- Yahweh himself believes that curses and blessings are effectual means of bringing about a hoped for scenario (cf. Gen 49; Deut 33).
- Yahweh himself believes that knowledge of a person's name allows one control over him or her (cf. Gen 32:26-27; Ex 3:14; Judg 13:17-18).
- Yahweh himself believes that the pagan peoples worshipped idols and does not know that the idol merely symbolised a supposed transcendent reality (cf. Isa 44:9-20 and passim).
- Yahweh himself believes that social norms were dropped from heaven (cf. Ex 20-34; Deut 4-5; Ezek 20:20-25; etc.).
- Yahweh himself believes that certain metals (e.g. gold) are objectively more worth than others, rather than because humans consider it as such (cf. Gen 2:12; Ex 24:10, 25:11 and passim; Ezek 28:13; Hag 2:7; etc.).
- Etc., etc.

Negatively,

- Yahweh knows nothing about a universe consisting of galaxies where the earth is not the centre;
- Yahweh knows nothing about the nature of the natural world before the time of *Homo sapiens*;
- Yahweh knows nothing of the nature of religion before the Bronze Age;
- Yahweh knows nothing of human history from before the second millennium BC;
- Yahweh knows nothing about the Hebrew's history before the exile as reconstructed by critical scholarship;
- Yahweh does not understand basic meteorological processes;
- Yahweh does not know about human physiology (e.g. the regulative function of the brain);
- Yahweh does not know about the cause of certain medical conditions (e.g. viruses, bacteria and germs);
- Yahweh does not know what is inside the earth or about the world's continents and peoples beyond the ancient Near East;
- Etc.

In other words, Yahweh's *own* knowledge of astronomy, cosmography, physics, meteorology, zoology, biology and history is but a replica of the primitive historically and culturally relative superstitions held by the Old Testament peoples themselves. From an ontological point of view, it certainly seems suspicious that Yahweh's knowledge of the world is as imperfect as that of the primitive people who claimed to

have witnessed the actual revelation of a knowledgeable god. This problem, i.e. Yahweh's errant knowledge, is considered by the devil's advocate as irrefutable proof that the deity as depicted in the biblical texts is no more than an anthropomorphic projection of human imagination (cf. Harwood 1992:72; Cupitt 1996:37).

In response to the dilemma of Yahweh's all-too-human knowledge, there are only three options available in accounting for Yahweh's ignorance:

1. Yahweh does not really believe such things, it is the people who did and subsequently claimed that Yahweh did so too.
2. Yahweh does actually believe such things.
3. Yahweh does not exist.

All these options lead to anti-realism. First of all, contrary to what the first option claims, the texts do not present itself as being admittedly no more than fallible human perspectives projected onto the deity himself. The way the Old Testament authors present the materials shows that they intended it to be a record of what Yahweh himself considered to be the case. The errant beliefs articulated in the texts are expressed or assumed to be true by the deity himself when acting or speaking in the first person.

In other words, the first option therefore distorts what is presented in the text and represses the fact that what we know to be superstition is presented as the views of Yahweh himself. If one then denies, as the first option does, that Yahweh really expressed such views, the devil's advocate rests his case and anti-realism is vindicated. The admittance that Yahweh did not really express such views is an indirect admission that the deity depicted as expressing such views is a character of fiction with no extra-textual counterpart. Whatever God there may be, Yahweh-as-depicted with all-too-human knowledge is therefore insinuated to be non-existent.

As another version or interpretation of the first option, some might attempt to salvage realism by appealing to a theory of supposed divine "accommodation". According to

this view, it was necessary for Yahweh to speak to humans in their own primitive discourse, i.e. in ways they would understand (cf. Archer 1992:29). It is suggested that Yahweh had to speak of the world, its nature and its history according to the popular perceptions of the Iron Age in order to be able to communicate with people at all. What point, it may be asked, would there be in speaking to the people in the discourse of modern science when they would have no idea what Yahweh was talking about?

*Prima facie*, this explanation seems reasonable. On closer scrutiny however, it turns out to be a pseudo-solution based on a false dichotomy. For example, Yahweh's choice did not lie in communicating with the people either in their own primitive mythological discourse or speaking to them via the vocabulary of modern science. For realism to have a chance, all that is required was that Yahweh would not refer to non-existing entities, spaces and historical events as if they were, in fact, real. There is no good reason why Yahweh himself cannot have spoken of a round earth, the solar system, dinosaurs, and bacteria to educate the people. Why would they not be able to understand these things if he explained it to them? How did people then come to understand these phenomena when *humans* later discovered and explained it to them?

When Yahweh spoke of the Leviathan, Sheol, Noah, the covenant with Abraham, the events at Mount Sinai, etc., i.e. of entities, places and scenarios that never existed, how did his *modus operandi* make things any less difficult to understand? To be sure, when one reads Yahweh's words to Job in chapters 38-41 of the book, it seems quite obvious that the very reason Yahweh spoke of certain entities, spaces, phenomena and events was precisely because he did *not* expect Job to understand (them). It is all-too-clear that when Yahweh as thus depicted spoke of these things it was *not* for the purpose of accommodation in any sense but to baffle Job and because the deity himself actually believed in their reality and wanted to show off the extent and depth of his own knowledge.

In other words, in texts like Job 38-41 and others (i.e. the oracles of Isaiah, etc.) where Yahweh's is speaking in the first person, the deity usually wants to make a point regarding his supposed actual relation to such complex and mysterious phenomena. The fact that the phenomena Yahweh refers to often do not exist or are

either misconstrued along of pre-scientific conceptions of the world reveal that Yahweh as thus depicted was not a real god accommodating himself to limited human minds. To be sure, these scenarios in the text betrays the fact that the deity is demonstrably no more than a projection of human minds of people who themselves believed in such superstitious ideas about the world.

For the same reason, the claim that Yahweh cannot have utilised the vocabulary of modern scientific discourse, since even this modern discourse itself also represents a culturally and historically relative mindset, also misses the point. What the devil's advocate expects of Yahweh is not, as this attempt to salvage realism assumes, that he should speak in a particularly modern form of discourse or language game. Rather, the only requirement for realism to remain a possibility is that he should have referred to what was actually real and abstained from talking about fictitious people, things, places and scenarios as if these actually existed.

It did not have to be complicated. Even if it could not have been otherwise, there is no need for in-depth explanation. There is ample room left for mystery and incomprehension as long as these states of mind pertain to actual phenomena. To be sure, neither Sheol nor Leviathan, despite been part of the cultural baggage of the time seem any more comprehensible simply for being so culturally contingent. In sum, the divine accommodation theory is thus invalid in as much as it is based on a false dichotomy (and probably a few straw men as well). This apologetic response cannot lessen the devastation wreaked upon realism by the realisation that Yahweh-as-depicted is as ignorant about extra-textual history and the extra-textual universe as his speechwriters were.

The same problem arises if the first option was chosen because of the presumed metaphorical nature of the biblical discourse. As have been suggested in the previous chapters, the claim that fiction and/or contradiction are no problem because it is all metaphor anyway, stems from post-biblical embarrassment with the anthropomorphic and obviously fictitious elements in the text. It is a gross generalisation and no more than sweeping statement utilised in order to extrapolate from the frequent use of metaphor in the text to claim that all God-talk and, in this case, all God's talk was originally intended to be understood metaphorically.

It is one thing to read all biblical God-talk as metaphorical so that it may still seem credible to modern and post-modern Western minds. It is quite another thing to suggest that this is done because it was thus intended by the biblical authors themselves. It was not. The pan-metaphorisation of biblical discourse about the divine by Old Testament theologians cannot but appear as a form of repressed admittance than realism regarding the plain sense of the text is no longer possible.

The view that all discourse about Yahweh and, in this case, Yahweh's own discourse is metaphorical (or symbolical / mythical / analogical / non-cognitive, etc. – take your pick) is, according to the devil's advocate then, no more than theological doubletalk. It involves convenient strategies of evasion and repression and results from bracketing biblical theology with both the history and philosophy of religion.

If, however, one claims that, as the second options suggests, Yahweh did actually believe in primitive superstitious ideas about the nature of the world and its history, the same atheist consequences follow. Since a real god would know what his own creation consists of, the fact that Yahweh does not know any more about extra-textual reality than his speechwriters implies that the ignorant deity is obviously a projection of the human imagination with no metaphysical substance.

The third and final option then, according to the devil's advocate, represents the only consistent and valid conclusion possible. This last option is simply indicative of the belated realisation of how the fact of Yahweh's own all-too-historically relative and all-too-culturally-conditioned errant beliefs unmask him as a human projection. As such he is a character of fiction and does not exist.

#### **4.2.2 Yahweh's falsified predictions about the future**

The prophets of the Old Testament were occasionally confronted with sceptical responses claiming that their words do not come to pass. In Isaiah 5:18 and 19 we read, "Woe to those...who say: "Let him make haste, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the purpose of the holy one of Israel draw near, and let it come that we may know it."

In similar vein, Jeremiah complains to Yahweh, “Behold, they say to me, ‘Where is the word of Yahweh? Let it come!’” (Jer 17:5) In Ezekiel 12:21, Yahweh asks the prophet, “Son of man, what kind of a proverb is this you have in the land of Israel namely, ‘The days go by and from all the visions nothing comes?’” An issue related to the non-fulfilment of the prophetic words can also be observed in the dilemma posed by Yahweh’s methodological inconsistency and the temporary cessation of revelation (cf. Judg 6:13; 1 Sam 3:1; Pss 74:9; 77:7-11; etc.)

Then, of course, there are the prophets themselves who accuse each other of imagining the words of Yahweh. Some of these accusations appear almost modern for all their critical distinctions. It is insinuated that when some of the prophets claimed that Yahweh spoke to them, it was, in fact, merely their own imaginations concocting up illusions of divine revelation (cf. Jer 23:9-40; Ezek 13:1-23; contra Deut 13:1-5; 1 Kgs 22:19-24).

Scepticism regarding the prophets’ authenticity when they claimed that Yahweh spoke to them may well be legitimate as far as the devil’s advocate is concerned. The validity of this claim will become apparent in the problematic that will now be discussed concerning the embarrassing fallibility of Yahweh’s own precognitive or predictive abilities (cf. Carroll 1979:37-40; Mckinsey 1995:217). Consider the following examples provided by the devil’s advocate of what critical scholarship has alleged as being clear examples of unfulfilled prophecies and predictions by Yahweh-as-depicted in the text:

- Yahweh said that the Promised Land would extend all the way to the Euphrates river but it never did (cf. Gen 13,17).
- In Leviticus 27 and Deuteronomy 28, Yahweh promised prosperity if Israel was to be faithful to the covenant but there were times of trouble despite their obedience (cf. Pss 44; 89).
- In Joshua 8:28 Yahweh said Ai would be destroyed and would never be rebuilt,

yet this city was still occupied after the exile (cf. Neh 7:32).

- Yahweh believed that the Davidic monarchy's dynasty would never end (cf. 2 Sam 7; Jer 33; Ps 89), but that prophecy was nullified by the exile after which there never again was a Davidic monarchy.
- According to Yahweh in 2 Kings 22, Josiah would die in peace but according to 2 Kings 23 he died in battle.
- Yahweh believed that the Israelites taken by the Assyrians into exile would return led by a descendent of David's father Jesse but this never happened (cf. Isa 11:10-11).
- In Isaiah 17, Yahweh claims that Damascus would soon be destroyed forever long ago yet it remains inhabited even today.
- According to Yahweh in Isaiah 19:24-25, also the nations of Egypt and Assyria will become his people as was the case with Israel. This never happened and can no longer happen since the nation called Assyria no longer exists.
- According to Yahweh in Isaiah 34:17, the region of Edom would forever remain desolate but this never happened and it is still inhabited.
- Yahweh believed in an eschatological scenario, the details of which can no longer be realised because of historical and cultural change (cf. Isa 65-66).
- According to the text in Jeremiah 22:18-19 and 36:29-31, Yahweh predicted that king Jehoiachin will be given the burial of an ass but according to 2 Kings 24:6 the death of this king involved no such event.
- According to Yahweh in Jeremiah 29:10 and Daniel 9:2, the exile would last/lasted 70 years when, in fact, it lasted only 48 (cf. Jer 29:10).

- Yahweh predicted that, after the exile, Assyria would make a comeback and overthrow the Babylonian empire but, once again, he was wrong (cf. Jer 50:3).
- According to Yahweh in Jeremiah 50, the end of the Babylonian empire would spell the end for the city of Babylon. However, when the empire fell, Babylon continued to be inhabited by many peoples (including the Jews) for a long time.
- According to Yahweh in Ezekiel 26, Tyre would be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, but, according to Ezekiel 32, this did not happen.
- According to Yahweh in Ezekiel 29, Egypt would lie desolate for 40 years but throughout history this has never happened.
- According to Yahweh a new temple would be built within a new united and enlarged Israelite state with waters flowing to the dead sea causing it to diminish its salt content and harbour many species of fish. This never happened. (cf. Ezek 47).
- Yahweh believed that Zerubbabel would re-establish the Davidic monarchy but, once again, this did not happen (cf. Hag 2:2-9; Zech 4:4-16).
- The eschatological scenarios in Zechariah 12-14 can no longer be realised. This is so not only because it has not yet come to pass but also due to the fact that many of the particular role players involved (i.e. House of David, Canaanites) and particular landmarks/locations referred to in the text no longer exist.
- Yahweh believed that the world would end after the Greek Empire's domination, but it did not (Dan 8,11-12).

These are but a few of the many examples of what was alleged to be *Yahweh's own* predictions but which never materialised. Given the existence of these errant predictions by the deity himself, there are only two options available in contemporary scholarship if one intends to salvage realism.

1. Conservatives will claim that the predictions should still be seen as the literal words of Yahweh. They will insist, via reinterpretation, economy with the truth, question begging, special pleading, ad hoc conjectures and a host of other fallacies that the prophecies are true after all. The devil's advocate will not be able to convince people who are not open to change their minds in the light of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.
2. Liberal scholars may think the devil's advocate to be quite naïve. They will agree with the claim that the predictions are wrong. However, they are not unduly bothered by this fact. The "word" of Yahweh was, after all, not literally the "words of Yahweh". The prophets' words are not based on an actual encounter with the deity that involved verbal communication between the parties involved. To be sure, the claim that Yahweh said x is merely another way of saying what the prophet sincerely thought was the will of the god. Apparently, these prophets also had their own agendas and perceptions of the socio-cultural scene and this influenced their ideas about what Yahweh expected to happen. Moreover, the words of Yahweh relayed by the prophetic oracles were not even literally the words of an historical prophet. Rather, when Yahweh speaks in the first person in the text, what we have here are literary constructs derived from adaptations, editing and reworking of possible oral traditions in the light of changing social circumstances. In sum, Yahweh did not really say such and so, the prophets (or rather, the biblical authors (the prophets' and the deity's speechwriters) merely pretends that he did.

If the second (i.e. the critical) view is correct – and the devil's advocate thinks it might very well be – then it rests its case. There is no need to say anything further. For, pray tell, what is the difference between claiming that Yahweh did not really say such and so and insinuating that the deity depicted as speaking these things is a character of fiction? Whatever Yahweh there may be, if a real god did not really made these erroneous predictions, then surely the god who spoke in the first person in the text is a literary and ideological construct and therefore without extra-textual counterpart.

According to the devil's advocate, then, since it is unthinkable that a real god would be so ignorant, the falsification of divine predictions constitutes irrefutable proof that there was no Yahweh who made those predictions. The deity who wrongly believed certain future scenarios would come to pass is but the product of fanciful human imagination, theo-political ideology and the Old Testament authors' (communities', interpolators', redactors', etc.) will-to-power. The admittance that these predictions were never literally those of a real extra-psychical god called Yahweh, is a tacit admittance of the fact that the deity who is depicted as making such predictions is a character of fiction. In short, Yahweh, depicted as making errant predictions, does not exist.

#### **4.2.3 Yahweh's all-too-human needs**

In the Old Testament Yahweh is depicted as the powerful creator of heaven and earth. Yet it would seem that this Master of the Universe has some strange and all-too-human needs that drive him obsessively in pursuit of their fulfilment.

On this issue, the devil's advocate agrees with the assessment of Bloom (1991) regarding the psychological profile of the Old Testament god. According to Bloom (1991:45), from the perspective of psychoanalysis,

...the god of the Hebrew Bible is like a powerful and uncanny male child, a sublime mischief-maker, impish and difficult. He resembles Lear and the Freudian Superego in being a demonic and persecuting father, entirely lacking in self-knowledge and very reluctant ever to learn anything. Like the human characters he interacts with, he has a continually changing consciousness. He manifests the pure energy and force of Becoming. He is Nietzschean will-to-power, abrupt and uncontrollable, subject to nothing and nobody.

In other words, the god Yahweh's own psychological needs seem to parallel that of an earthly monarch who has an obsession to dominate, has little self-critical analytic abilities and exhibits a desperate need to be told how wonderful he is. Hence, for the devil's advocate, realism regarding the ontological status of Yahweh-as-depicted in

the text is out of the question. The deity's psychological constitution appears just a little too similar to that of a dysfunctional Iron Age autocrat with dreams of world domination.

For example, consider the following “needs” of Yahweh which, from a perspective brainwashed with the ideology of the text, appear quite authentic. However, change the perspective slightly by becoming more aware of the all-too-culturally and historically relative nature of such needs and, presto, the jig is up.

- Yahweh *needs* to be without equals (cf. Gen 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:6; Isa 14:12-14).
- Yahweh *needs* people to rule over (cf. Ex 19:6; Deut 4:19; 32:8-9).
- Yahweh *needs* to maintain a formidable reputation based on the ancient Near Eastern conception of the values of honour and shame (cf. Deut 32:26-27; Mal 1-3).
- Yahweh *needs* to live far away and high above human society and does not want to be disturbed by mortals in his private penthouse in the skies (cf. Gen 11,18).
- Yahweh *needs* to limit his direct and personal contact with the general population and, for the most part, prefers to act through intermediaries, agents, messengers and armies (cf. Dan 9-11).
- Yahweh *needs* to show off and make dramatic entrances (cf. Ex 19; Ps 29; Hab 3).
- Yahweh *needs* to maintain proper protocol when establishing his cultic rites (cf. Ex 20-40; Lev 1-26; and passim).
- Yahweh *needs* to remain anonymous (cf. Gen 32:33; Ex 3:14).
- Yahweh *needs* to be feared (cf. Ex 20:19-20, Prov 1:7, Job 38-41 and passim).

- Yahweh *needs* to throw tantrums and express his anger in devastating ways (cf. Ex 32:10; Num 16; 2 Sam 21, 24).
- Yahweh *needs* to be jealous and will not allow others what he wants for himself (cf. Ex 20:5; Ex 34:14).
- Yahweh *needs* to keep secrets and not tell people what he is up to or how reality operates (cf. Deut 29:29; Job 28-42; Eccl 3:11; 8:16-17; 11:5; Prov 25:2).
- Yahweh *needs* to have sacrifices and smell pleasant aromas (cf. Gen 8:21; Lev 1:9,13,17).
- Yahweh needs a house where he can rest and manage his people (cf. Ps 132:13-14).
- Yahweh *needs* to be worshipped, praised, adored and have constant reminders of how wonderful, powerful and different/other/unique (i.e. holy) he is (cf. Isa 6:2-3).
- Yahweh *needs* to control people and tell them what to do (cf. Ex 20-40 and passim).
- Yahweh *needs* people to whom he can delegate some authority and who can do the menial labour he himself does not want to engage in (cf. Gen 1:26-27; 2:5).
- Yahweh *needs* to rest and take a break from his hectic and demanding work schedule (cf. Gen 2:1-3).
- Yahweh *needs* to take frequent surveys of whether his subjects still support him and must constantly test them to ascertain the extent of their loyalty (cf. Deut 2,6,13 and passim).

On discovering these all-too-human needs exhibited by the god Yahweh, a modern

atheist would probably, upon reading the Old Testament, blasphemously consider the character Yahweh to be a control freak prone to mood swings and suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder. The deity's passive reactive way of dealing with evil, his insatiable narcissism and latent irritability that usually gives way to chronic nagging and pointless destructive behaviour will seem petty to many secularised westerners. Moreover, Yahweh's perpetual negligence of 98% of the biblical world's population makes it clear that if he is not dead, he is either going through a midlife crisis, taking his symbolic monogamous marriage to Israel too seriously or, like many upper class people, just doesn't want to get involved.

The fact that Yahweh's divine needs seem suspiciously similar to the historically and culturally conditioned needs of "the powers that be" known to his worshippers leads to serious doubts regarding the validity of realism in Old Testament theology. That Yahweh's psychological profile just happens to resemble that of a nearly inaccessible Iron Age Semite ruler obsessed with honour, shame, power and glory is indeed mighty suspicious.

In fact, according to the devil's advocate, this state of affairs gives the game away and unmasks Yahweh as a psychomorphic projection of the people who imagined a King of the cosmos not very different from their own royalty. The deity is a character of fiction without a counterpart outside the minds of those who created him in their own image. In other words, he does not really exist.

#### **4.2.4 Yahweh's all-too-human appearance**

According to the devil's advocate, in the beginning, humans created Yahweh in their own image. In this it concurs with the assessments of some of the ancient Greek philosophers who had their doubts about the all-too-human appearance of some of the gods of the ancient world.

As Robertson (1957:99) notes, Xenophanes allegedly claimed that if animals could draw they would depict the gods in animal form. Protagoras noted that the Thracians had gods who are blond and blue eyed whilst the gods of the Nubians are dark skinned and snub nosed. Even theistic philosophers like Plato and Socrates considered

the gods of the Homeric pantheon rather crude. To the astute cultural critic, the immortals not only acted but also looked a little too much like the humans who worshipped them (cf. Thrower 1980:85-86).

ancient Israelite discourse about Yahweh is no exception. Though much of the text can at times appear reserved and figurative in its depictions of the deity, several passages leave no doubt that the authors (and Yahweh himself) believed that THE LORD had human form (cf. Barr 1959:32). The popular idea of the creation of humanity in the deity's image seems initially to have been understood in a very literal sense. Consider the following examples, provided courtesy of the devil's advocate:

- Yahweh has human form (cf. Gen 1:26-27 vs. 5:1-3, 9:6; Ex 24:10-11; Isa 6:2; Ezek 1:26; Dan 7:9; Zech 14:4; etc.).
- Yahweh looks like an aged man (cf. Dan 7:9).
- Yahweh has eyes (cf. Ps 11:4; 2 Kgs 19:16).
- Yahweh has ears (cf. Num 11:1; 2 Kgs 19:16).
- Yahweh has a mouth (cf. Ps 18:9).
- Yahweh has lips (cf. Isa 30:26-27)
- Yahweh has a tongue (cf. Isa 30:26-27)
- Yahweh has a face (cf. Gen 32:31; Ex 33:20; Judg 13:16).
- Yahweh has a backside (cf. Ex 33:23).
- Yahweh has a heart (cf. Isa 15:5; 16:9; 63:15; Jer 31:20; 48:35-36; Ezek 28:2).
- Yahweh has hands and fingers (cf. Ex 31:18; Deut 9:10; Ps 8:4; Jer 1:9).
- Yahweh has arms (cf. Isa 52:10).
- Yahweh has a nose (cf. Ex 15; Ps 18:9,15).
- Yahweh has feet (cf. Ex 24:10-11; Zech 14:4).
- Yahweh sits like a man (cf. Isa 6:1; Ezek 1:26; Dan 7:9).
- Yahweh stands like a man (cf. Gen 28:13; Ps 82:1; Amos 7:7; 9:1).
- Yahweh walks like a man (cf. Gen 3:8).
- Yahweh talks like a man (cf. Gen 1:1-27; 3:9-23; 11:5; 1 Kgs 22:19-22; Job 1-2; etc.).
- Yahweh thinks like a man (cf. Gen 18:17-19; Ex 13:17; Isa 63:5; Jer 3:17-19; and Old Testament passim).

- Yahweh screams (cf. Isa 42:14).
- Yahweh whistles (cf. Isa 7:18).
- Yahweh laughs (cf. Pss 2:4; 37:13; Job 12).
- Yahweh cries (cf. Isa 15:5, 16:9,11; Jer 9:10, 12:7, 48:30-32, 35-36).
- Yahweh has hair (cf. Dan 7:9).
- Yahweh smells pleasant aromas (cf. Gen 8:21; Lev 1:9,13,17; 26:31).
- Yahweh cries (cf. Isa 16:9; Jer 48:30-32; 35-36).
- Yahweh tires (cf. Gen 2; Isa 7:13).
- Yahweh sleeps (cf. Ps 44:23; Jer 7:25; 25:3; Isa 51:9).
- Yahweh wears clothes (cf. Isa 6:1; 63:1-2).

Many Old Testament scholars, apparently deeply embarrassed by such all-too-human depictions of Yahweh, distort the problematic by claiming that all God-talk in the Old Testament is actually metaphorical and use concepts like anthropomorphism and anthropopathism as euphemisms to reinterpret the meaning and reference of discourse (cf. Griffin 1997:244-245; Wolff 1974:26). As noted in the previous chapters, a closer look at the discourse of the Old Testament text itself reveals that these claims are little more than desperate half-baked apologetic strategies of people for whom realism regarding the plain sense of the texts no longer has the power to convince.

Of course, the devil's advocate is quite cognisant of the fact that some of the God-talk depicting the deity's appearance was intended to be understood as being metaphorical. When the texts speak of Yahweh as a rock, shepherd, husband or fortress or, in *some* of the references to his "face" and "hand", it is obvious that such depictions were intended to be understood as figurative and symbolic rather than as literal detail about the appearance of the deity. However, it would be a gross generalisation to claim that the nature of the Old Testament's religious language depicting Yahweh in human form was originally intended to be understood as metaphorical *en bloc*.

With regard to the passages referred to in the list of human attributes of Yahweh presented above, it is quite clear that the particular authors intended their depictions to be taken literally and not metaphorically (cf. Eichrodt 1961:210; contra Fretheim 1984:168). Even when the nature of the surrounding discourse can be seen as

symbolic (e.g. Daniel), the reference to Yahweh in human form seems to have been intended quite literally (e.g. Dan 7:9).

As was also noted in the previous chapters, the claim that all references to the human form of Yahweh are metaphorical is simply a revival of the age-old dilemma with anthropomorphic depictions that already embarrassed early translators of the texts and resulted in the rise of allegorical interpretation. The devil's advocate cannot help but wonder whether modern theology with its claim that none of the discourse was ever intended literally might actually be a repressed form of neo-allegorism.

If one is indeed deeply embarrassed by the all-too-human depictions of Yahweh in the text and considers it unlikely that the Master of the Universe, if he exists, looks like an Iron Age Semitic *Homo sapiens*, then there seems to be only one logical conclusion. Yahweh as thus depicted is a product of anthropomorphic projection. He is an entity with no counterpart outside text and imagination. In short, Yahweh as thus depicted is a character of fiction and does not exist.

#### **4.2.5 Yahweh's all-too-human morality**

Another problem with realism concerns the contents of Yahweh's own moral ideology. Analogous to the disconcerting manner in which his knowledge about the world never transcends that of his speechwriters, so too his divine ethics seems suspiciously similar to the morality of a historically contingent and culturally relative terrestrial counterpart. What Yahweh believes about right and wrong appears all-too-similar to what humans from pre-Israelite cultures worshipping non-existent deities have already declared to be normative.

In addition, it certainly seems suspicious when Yahweh's eternal moral laws are modified and altered (sometimes to the contrary of what it once was) whenever the cultural and political influences on Israel also changed. During those times when Israel was dominated by the Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Canaanite, Persian and Greek empires, their moral views, allegedly of divine origin, seem curiously reflective of the contemporary dominant cultural hegemony.

Yahweh's moral laws correspond to those found among pagan cultures. Despite minor deviations, similarities between, for instance Exodus 21-23 and the Laws of Hammurabi, or Proverbs 16-22 and the Instruction of Amen-em-ope, seem to falsify the ideology of the biblical texts according to which Israelite morality was based on the eternal objective moral norms of Yahweh himself. It must indeed be somewhat of an embarrassment for realists that Yahweh's own divine morality includes assumptions and beliefs that are based on all-too-human superstitions, ideology, taboos and other culturally contingent primitive beliefs.

The dilemma for realism is that all those Old Testament laws that appear odd from a modern perspective – including those regarding ritual purity, holy days, circumcision, food taboos, slavery, war and other related issues – are never presented as being based merely on a culturally and historically relative morality. Instead, biblical laws are presented as if being based on the rules and regulations operative in the heavens themselves. As above, so below and all that there. Yet Yahweh's own divine normative, objective and universal rules and regulations all have their parallels in other cultures of Israel's neighbouring environment that were on the scene long before the god Yahweh himself appeared on the list of popular human deities (cf. Barr 1984:62-66).

These facts about Old Testament morality have led many Old Testament scholars to recognise the problematic but to distort it by claiming that it is naïve to think that Israelite law was literally revealed by Yahweh through verbal communication. Instead, according to the critical view, the supposed intrusions in the text of "Yahweh says..." was never meant to be understood as anything more than a rhetorical strategy or Hebrew idiom of legitimisation that need not be taken too seriously. In other words, these scholars claim that it should be obvious to all that moral law in Israelite society came about not as a result of divine revelation but through social processes in which the laws of the surrounding cultures were adopted and adapted for local purposes (cf. Barr 1999:412-419).

In connection with the aforementioned issues – and from a modern Western perspective – the following list features some of the more obvious culturally and historically relative idiosyncrasies of Old Testament morality. Yet though these laws

are clearly the products of historically relative and culturally conditioned human minds, the Old Testament authors deceive their readers regarding the question of origins. According to the texts, the following laws were verbally endorsed by Yahweh himself. The deity is depicted as presenting them as being reflective of universal, objective and eternal normative codes built into the cosmos since time immemorial:

- The killing of animals for sacrificial purposes is the will of the deity (cf. Lev 1-7).
- Giving birth to a girl leaves the mother unclean for a period the duration which is twice as long as compared to when she gives birth to a boy (cf. Lev 12:4-5).
- Beating a slave to his or her immediate death is unacceptable, but there is nothing wrong with beating a slave so severely that he or she dies a day or two after the beating since the slave is "property" (cf. Ex 21:21).
- There is the need for purification via the ashes of a red heifer for coming into contact with the dead (cf. Num 19:1-22).
- A judicial trial to determine the possible unfaithfulness of a wife can be settled by having her drink poison (cf. Num 5:23-27).
- The sins of one justifies punishing the collective and people should suffer for the sins of their ancestors (cf. Gen 3:14-19; Josh 7:1; 2 Sam 21,24 and passim).
- During war, women and children should be killed as well, but sometimes the virgins may be taken as booty by the soldiers (cf. Num 31:17-18, 27; Josh 6:21-24).
- Garments may not be made of two different materials and fields should not be sown with two different varieties of seed (cf. Lev 19:19).
- It is forbidden to cook a kid in its mother's milk (cf. Ex 23:19; 34:26).

- It is sinful to eat pork (cf. Lev 11:7).
- Etc.

Most Old Testament scholars consider these moral concerns as the product of Israel's ancient cultural context and based on popular beliefs prevalent at the time. The text, however, presents such historically and culturally relative views as the eternal objective moral beliefs of the Creator of the Universe himself. In other words, according to the text, these commands are not presented as Israel's temporary speculation of what divine reality expects from the people – it is Yahweh's own ideas about how things are supposed to be done.

Being the culturally and historically relative ideas that these laws obviously are, the devil's advocate suggests that this fact has anti-realist implications for the ontological status of Yahweh-as-depicted in the text. If no extra-textual and extra-psychical god literally commanded the aforementioned laws and if the words of the deity doing so were merely put in the mouth of the character Yahweh by the writers of the text because they believed such and so to be his will, realism collapses.

If Yahweh did not really supply these moral regulations from the skies as the texts claim he did, it follows that Yahweh-as-depicted as doing so must be a character of fiction and therefore does not exist.

#### **4.2.6 Yahweh's all-too-human divine socio-political set-up**

Another disconcerting element in the depictions of Yahweh in the Old Testament concerns the way the deity's heavenly socio-political set-up is constructed. According to the devil's advocate, it certainly seems suspicious that the deity's eternal and timeless divine socio-political milieu is not literally "out of this world" but appears to be all-too-similar to the scenarios found in world of mortals living in the ancient Near East during the Iron Age.

In other words, as Cupitt (1996:17) observes, the way things are constituted and run in

the divine realm is a sociomorphic projection by humans who conceived of the entire cosmos as some sort of kingdom or state. They ascribed their own historically contingent and culturally relative way of social and political interaction to a supposed supernatural world in the skies (cf. also Frankfort 1946a:31-56).

To verify this claim, the devil's advocate has composed a list of all-too-historically and culturally relative phenomena found in Yahweh's extra-terrestrial domain. Consider the following example of what the devil's advocate considers as amounting to obvious examples of sociomorphic projection, as opposed to intentionally metaphorical depictions of a supposed transcendental reality or factual representations of an actual state of affairs.

- Yahweh has a kingdom whose political constitution resembles an Iron Age monarchy (cf. Deut 32:8-9; 1 Sam 8:7; Dan 6:27; etc.).
- Yahweh's abode is a palace where he sits on a throne (cf. Isa 6:1; Ps 11:4; Dan 7:13; etc.).
- A favourite form of transportation in the heavens is horse-drawn chariots (cf. 2 Kgs 2:11-12; Zech 6:1-8; etc.).
- Yahweh has an army of sword-bearing warriors (cf. Gen 32:1-2; Josh 5:13-15; 2 Sam 24:16, 27; etc.).
- Yahweh makes use of counsellors (cf. 1 Kgs 22:20-23; Isa 6:3; Jer 23:18; Ps 82:1, 89:5; Job 1:6; etc.).
- Yahweh's court features mixomorphic sentinels (cf. Gen 3:24; Ex 25:18-22, 26:1; Isa 6:2-3; Ezek 1, 41:18-19; etc.).
- Yahweh's abode has Iron Age music (cf. Job 38:6; Ps 150:1-6; etc.).
- Yahweh has sons who, amongst other things, marry, have intercourse, eat bread,

sing together and dress in linen (cf. Gen 6:1-4; Ps 78:25; Job 1-2, 38:4-7; Ezek 9:2; Dan 10:5; etc.).

- Yahweh writes on scrolls (cf. the “book” [of life] in Ex 32:32; Pss 69:29, 139:16; Dan 7:10; 10:21; etc.).
- Etc.

Consider, for example, the motif of Yahweh “hiding his face”. As Carroll (1997:55) observes, apart from the implication that Yahweh may have a face and eyes, the motif also alludes to social mores reflecting the gesture of an ancient Near Eastern monarch averting or turning the face to the petitioner. The god’s face needs to be mollified in appeasement, which is itself a practice alluding to ancient sacrificial rituals. It also has to be sought in petition and, therefore, even the act of prayer is a phenomenon assuming an all-too-historically and all-too-culturally relative set-up for its practicality, functionality and validity (cf. also Cupitt 1989:47).

Since contemporary cultures still contain the remnants of ritualised worship and because religious people in general are not very reflective when it comes to the Old Testament text, these all-too-historically and culturally relative phenomena in the divine domain are taken for granted. We look at them as ordinary, matter-of-fact and natural elements of organised religion. However, when the philosophy of religion is not bracketed by the history of religion, the sociomorphism involved in the description of the operations of heaven becomes obvious.

In other words, according to the devil’s advocate, the biblical depictions of Yahweh’s sky-kingdom are not the result of factual reportage or merely due to the supposed metaphorical nature about all discourse about alleged transcendent realities. The fact that Yahweh’s heavenly socio-political scene (and even Sheol) just happens to correspond in detail to an all-too-particular, all-too-contingent and all-too-human historical and cultural set-up gives the game away. Yahweh and his domain with its Iron Age ancient Near Eastern operations are unmasked as the product of superstition giving rise to projection characterised by sociomorphism.

Of course, it may be understandable why humans would objectify and project their own beliefs, feelings and socio-political set-up onto the cosmos as a whole. Doing so in sincerity and naïveté provide meaning and purpose in life. Sociomorphic projections make people feel that they are somehow significant in the great scheme of things and that they can relate their lives positively to it. By explaining everything that is and that happens as the result of a humanlike mind and will, people are able to feel more at home in a universe that would otherwise be perceived as wholly impersonal and indifferent to human needs, hopes, dreams and fears. But what justification is there for believing that the billions of years old universe has always been and will always be set up and run exactly according to the likes of an ancient Near Eastern monarchy from the Iron Age? (cf. Williams 1985:76)

The fact that Yahweh's own realm seems to change its nature and operations over the course of time must be disconcerting for realists. The fact that the people of Yahweh just happen to change their minds about the way heaven is constituted during those times when Egyptian, Canaanite, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian and Hellenistic politics intrude on their religious lives seems to give the game away. The very possibility of the culturally induced evolution of Yahweh's own domain seems to unmask the entire divine set-up as indubitably the product of sociomorphic projection.

To further illustrate the sheer incredibility of such a state of affairs, the devil's advocate will resort to sarcasm along the lines of Socratic questioning intended to sting people out of their naïveté.

If Yahweh does exist, in today's world, what would his divine socio-political set-up look like? Maybe today he will no longer be a king but a President. His underlying political philosophy will not be that of autocracy but of democracy. His messengers and armies (angels) will no longer be dressed in white robes, which, after all, reflect a very historically and culturally relative mode of dress. Instead, as befit beings living at the beginning of the third millennium AD, the angels will be wearing the latest creations in business and military fashion.

Moreover, these angels will no longer employ historically and culturally outdated

weapons such as swords and spears but will instead carry the latest guns. They will no longer ride horses and chariots, as these have also become somewhat outdated. Instead, Yahweh's army will have access to all contemporary forms of super-fast and ultra-efficient transport. Instead of horse-drawn chariots (even iron chariots), angels will be seen riding cars, tanks or planes.

Of course, Yahweh will possibly no longer bother too often with sending angels to deliver urgent messages to privileged humans. Rather, he will probably have a secretary who will communicate via telephone, e-mail and SMS voicemail. Yahweh will no longer write everything he predestines on scrolls but will have everything stored safely on his state of the art lap top computer. He will not have to descend on a mountain to make his will known but can simply fax the information through to his head office in Jerusalem. Alternatively he may desire to make use of the media and advertise his commands on television and radio.

Yahweh will no longer be an isolated deity presiding merely over such a small territory and with little concern for international politics outside the ancient Near East. Instead, maybe for the first time in eternity, he will be a member of a polytheistic "United Nations" and will have interests in previously undreamt of locations like the Americas, Australia and the Far East. He may no longer want to limit himself to converse in Classic Hebrew but will probably become fluent in contemporary dialects of English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

The music to be found in Yahweh's abode in heaven will no longer be that of shofars, or any other ancient culturally outdated instrument. Instead, since he is quite concerned to be fashionable in relation to whatever happens to dominate the world of contemporary culture, Yahweh and his court musicians will probably opt for the use of synthesisers and other modern-day instruments for a combination of classic, rock rap, metal and techno-pop.

Of course, Yahweh will also have to bite the bullet and allow women and non-Semitic angels into his cabinet. As part of a program of affirmative action, the proportion of male and female (who were never before represented in the divine abode) will have to be drastically modified. As if this is not enough stress for a male chauvinist deity,

Yahweh will also have to resign himself to the reality of short-term governance and, horror of horrors, be content to continue his rule only if re-elected.

Should he be so lucky, Yahweh will no longer need to make a covenant but could settle everything through contracts drafted up by his (probably overpaid) lawyers. Of course, he will not be so concerned with the collective or with corporate solidarity as with the rights of individuals and criminals (more than their victims). Nor will he be unduly bothered with keeping his name secret, which, after all, is a concern based on social values that are no longer as prominent today as they were during Old Testament times. Unfortunately, his theophanies will probably be restricted to his pre-election campaigning. Finally, the city in Sheol will no longer have gates or resemble an outdated pit or dungeon but will be refurbished along the lines of modern prisons.

Then again, one might inquire about the nature of Yahweh's supposed socio-political set-up before the Bronze Age? Did Yahweh, during the time of the Neanderthal people, have a cave in heaven rather than a tent or a palace? Did his angels use clubs instead of swords? Did he walk about rather than ride in a chariot? Who invented the wheel first – mortals or angels? Or is this question as mind-blowing as the "chicken or the egg" debate?

Did Yahweh, in prehistoric times, dress in animal skins instead of robes or, perish the thought, go about naked? And what language did he speak then other than the neat period Hebrew that he used in the Old Testament? Would his moral values have reflected the conventions of people who considered human sacrifice, cannibalism and sex without marriage a way of life? Was the music in heaven limited to beating the drums?

Since the city-state did not yet exist, what was the manner of his governance with regard to people and territory? Was he a tribal chief? And since Israel did not exist and most of the world worshipped a mother goddess, could Yahweh (or is that Yehuwah?) have been female?

Sarcastic rhetorical questions such as these assist in exposing the all-too-human and all-too-historically and culturally relative nature of Yahweh's own divine socio-

political set-up. The contingent nature of this set-up gives the game away and it stands unmasked as the creation of human imagination rather than the eternal unchangeable nature of ultimate reality. It shows the devastating effect on realism of the discovery that everything has a history and that all cultural phenomena are contingent and created by humans. It demonstrates that, in the beginning, even the Hebrew culture's Yahweh was created in the image of humans and not vice-versa.

In short, both Yahweh and his kingdom are products of polymorphic projection. He has no independent existence outside the texts and the minds of those who believe in him.

#### **4.2.7 Ecological anthropology, environmental psychology and the ontological status of the nature and acts of Yahweh**

In the ancient Near East during Old Testament times and before, there were many awe-inspiring natural phenomena that must have made some impression on the pre-scientific mind of the people. In fact, research done by ecological anthropologists and environmental psychologists has demonstrated that the nature of a particular people's deities often bears an uncanny resemblance to their immediate environment. Many mythologies of the ancient world seem to imply the functionality of a kind of natural theology where the people made sense of their environmental conditions by interpreting local natural processes as the result of superhuman (i.e. divine) activity (cf. Guthrie 1993:11)

When deities were associated with animals, the animals in question are always those known from the immediate vicinity and/or based on extensions or hybrids from those species. In addition, when it came to the supposed "acts" of the gods, these always appear to be connected with – and modelled on – the various processes witnessed in the local micro-climatology, geomorphology and indigenous fauna and flora.

In other words, much of ancient "theology" was based on what may be called an "anthropomorphic hermeneutic of reality" (cf. Guthrie 1993:124). It is quite obvious that there were definite attempts to make sense of environmental variables as though there was a (super) *human* mind behind it all. Even on the level of social and cultural

processes, developments were often interpreted as the actualising of a divine plan or of the will of various deities (cf. Frankfort 1946a:77).

It is therefore no surprise to find that, in Canaanite mythology, the seasonal variations in temperature and rainfall were explained as a result of the dying and rising of Baal and his containment in the domain of Mot during the summer drought (cf. Gibson 1978:19). Because thunderstorm activity occurs during the rainy season, the awe-inspiring phenomena related to it were also explained along the same lines. Thunder was said to be the voice of Baal who lived on the high mountain peak of Zaphon. The lightning was seen as his arrows and the clouds as his mode of transport (cf. Gray 1969:122).

From a certain post-Enlightenment perspective, it seems obvious that the Canaanite deities are the projections of humans who lived in a particular natural environment characterised by certain meteorological and geographical phenomena. These phenomena inspired the creation of superstitions that were quite instrumental in the provisioning of meaning and enchantment. Had the Canaanites subsequently migrated to live in a desert, in an equatorial rainforest or on polar ice wastes where the landscape is completely flat and bereft of drought, sea, earthquakes and thunderstorms, one wonders whether the gods Baal, Yam, Shapash, Mot, etc. would still seem to be “real” or relevant.

Probably not. It is no secret that different peoples living in different natural environments have different type of gods who act and reveal themselves in different ways. Can the gods of Egypt be divorced from the Nile, the desert, the local climate and the region’s indigenous fauna? Can the deities of Mesopotamia and the myths of the people there pertaining to the nature of the gods, their abode and the underworld be seen as independent of the local geography, geology, fauna, flora and socio-political scenario? Probably not.

The gods of people who live in the ice wastes of the Polar Regions are different from the gods of the people living in rainforests near the equator. In turn, both of these are different from the gods of subtropical locales or the deities of people living on the grassland planes. In short, the nature, attributes, acts and the particular modes of

revelation and intervention of a region's deities are almost always inextricably bound up with the features and processes of the immediate environment (cf. Bertholet 1926:222).

This relation between the content of local theology and the local micro-ecological set-up suggests that the "gods" might well be projections of the people living in a particular place. The ancients postulated the existence of human-like minds behind the environmental phenomena in order to relate, regulate and synchronise their survival with the local natural order. The need to see a human face behind the alien powers in nature leads to the animation of the non-human environment (cf. Tylor 1871; Guthrie 1993).

In the past, many Christians believed that, at least with regard to this example of superstitious interpretations of natural phenomena, the religion of Yahweh was different. What is known about Yahweh was "revealed" instead of originating from primitive deductions made via natural theology. Yahweh was considered to be the creator of the world and in no way to be equated with anything in the created world of nature. No image of him could be made and all idols or superstitious beliefs about what causes fertility were supposed to be taboo (cf. Eichrodt 1967:78).

However, this account of the nature of Yahweh and his religion may be based on a reinterpreted stereotype. In fact, according to the devil's advocate, quite the opposite is true; selective textual claims to the contrary notwithstanding. When one appropriates the nature of natural theology in the Old Testament, it soon becomes obvious to the unapologetic mind that even Yahweh may be no more than a construct of a primitive hermeneutic of nature.

How this claim might be substantiated can be ascertained from the ways in which the person, nature, acts, interventions, attributes, divine abode, divine servants, etc. of Yahweh are all bound up and dependent on all-too-local environmental phenomena:

- Thunderstorms occur in Palestine and thunder is the voice of Yahweh, lightning and hail his weapons and the clouds a means of transport for the deity (cf. Ex 19:19, 20:18, 24:12; Deut 5:21, 33:2; Judg 5:4; Ps 18:13; 1 Sam 7:10; Isa 30:27;

Am 1:2; Ps 29:3; Job 37:5; 38:34; etc.).

- Volcanoes occur in the region and the appearance of Yahweh on many occasions has volcanic activity as part of the theophany (cf. Ex 19, Deut 4; Dan 7; Mic 1:3-4; Hab 3; etc.).
- Earthquakes occur in the region and were often perceived to be part of Yahweh's theophany or a mode of wrath when he was angered and ready to judge the people (cf. Num 16; Pss 68:8-9; 106:17; Isa 24:19-20; Am 1:1-2; Zech 14:4-5; etc.).
- Droughts occur in the region and these are interpreted as being a result of the sins of the people while good harvests resulting from sufficient rainfall are associated with Yahweh's blessing (cf. Lev 26:19-20; Deut 28:22-24; 1 Kgs 17-18; etc.).
- The country is flanked by the sea in the west and so there are stories about the way Yahweh keeps this force of chaos within its preordained limits (cf. Gen 1:9; Job 38:8-11; Pss 89:10, 93:4; 106:9; etc.).
- To the south and east there are the desert regions where howling winds blow and wild animals sojourn. Not surprisingly, both the people and Yahweh thinks of these locales as the haunts of demons (cf. Lev 17:17; Isa 13:12, 34:14, etc.).
- In the far south of the Arabian Peninsula, to the east in Midian, and to the north in Syria, there are high mountains, many of which were once volcanically active and often the locales for dazzling snow capped peaks and awe-inspiring thunderstorm activities. Curiously, these are the "mountains of Yahweh" from where he is said to come to the people (cf. Ex 3:1;17-24; Deut 4:10-12; Judg 5:4; 1 Kgs 19:8-13; Hab 3:3-4).
- Much of the area is dry land and oases in the deserts are conceived of as being "gardens of the gods" (cf. Gen 13:10; cf. Ezek 28:13-16; Isa 51:3).
- Certain types of animals live in the region and the *cherubim* and *seraphim* of

Yahweh bear a striking resemblance to these animals or hybrid versions/mixomorphs derived from them (cf. Gen 3:24; Ex 25:18-22, 26:1; Isa 6:2-3; Ezek 1, 41:18-19; etc.).

- The region is at the centre of international economical and political developments and therefore most of the time merely a vassal to one of the superpowers in the south-west (Egypt) or north-east (Babylonia and Assyria) The socio-political developments of the region are interpreted as being a result of divine judgements on either Israel and Judah or on its enemies (cf. Lev 26; Deut 28; Judg-2 Kgs:passim; Isa-Mal:passim).
- The main religion of the region was Canaanite polytheism and, not surprisingly, depictions of Yahweh have a lot in common with those of Canaanite deities such as Baal, El and Shemesh (cf. next chapter).
- The people of the region lived in tents, houses and, if royalty, in a palace. It is therefore not too surprising that Yahweh too is depicted as living in a tent, a house or a palace (cf. Ps 132 and OT passim).
- Iron and Bronze Age ancient Near Eastern cities have gates, were often located near rivers and the prisons were dark and damp places. Is it really a coincidence that Sheol, the netherworld where the deceased went to since the beginning of time just happened to contain these very same structural elements and geographical features? (cf. Job 38:17; cf. also Tromp 1969:117-119).

From this perspective, one might indeed begin to wonder whether Yahweh, like Baal or any other ancient Near Eastern deity, is not merely the projection of primitive superstitious people. It is as if the Hebrew people, just like all others, attempted to make sense of and animate nature as found in their local environment and tried to relate to it by postulating a human-type mind behind it all and directing the whole scene.

In the same way one might wonder if Baal could have been conceived of by people

living in the Polar Regions or in the Amazon, one might also wonder whether Yahweh can "exist" outside his natural habitat in Palestine. For instance, if the Israelites were suddenly transported to a certain polar region where there were no mountains, no thunderstorms or earthquakes, no rough seas, and very different fauna, flora and other meteorological and geographical phenomena, what would happen to Yahweh, his acts and his world?

- Would he spell out, in detail, how his "igloo" (instead of his tent) is to be furnished?
- Would he be served not by hybrid beings that are part lion, part eagle and part bull (i.e. cherubim and seraphim) but maybe by sentinels that are a combination of polar bear, seal and penguin?
- If there are no seasonal droughts and no other hostile enemy people wanting control of their territory, how can Yahweh judge his people and become active in their socio-political life?
- What would happen to the sacrifices to Yahweh in a place where the specific animals and ingredients for the particular offerings are not available?
- Would Yahweh's promise to Noah and his covenant with day and night (and the seasons) be applicable in a place where sowing time and harvest time is not an issue and where day and night can last for months on end, depending on whether it is summer or winter?

Alternatively, suppose the Israelites lived on a tropical island in the South Pacific where there are no mountains, droughts, lack of food, wild animals, thunderstorm activity or hostile neighbours:

- The cursing of the earth in Genesis 3 would seem to be not applicable to such a "garden of the gods" if the place has no thorns and thistles and where there might not even be any snakes.

- Now there are no other nations to act as “rods” of Yahweh’s anger.
- Now there are no wild animals or famine or drought as modes of Yahweh’s judgement.
- Now Yahweh no longer speaks and appears since there is no thunder and the sky is often overcast.
- Now Yahweh has no place to live since there is no mountain available.
- What form would Yahweh’s sentinels and court servants take here (maybe a mixture of lizard, mosquito, and monkey)?

These observations in the form of rhetorical questions are inserted to show the all-too-local, all-too-regional, all-too-particular, all-too-animistic, all-too-historically, culturally and environmentally conditioned nature of not only the Israelite beliefs about the world but also of their construction of Yahweh. From this perspective, it hardly seems plausible that Yahweh could be the God of onto-theology who is an eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omnipotent, transcendent, superhuman and universal creator of all, existing independently of human perceptions of him.

Instead, the Hebrew deity appears to be, amongst other things, a creation/projection of humans who, in their attempt to control, understand, make sense of and relate to their local natural, social and cultural environment made a deity to fit all the specifications supplied by the local and regional natural and social phenomena. They see the processes of nature, culture and politics as the outcome of a superhuman will-to-power and its apparent need to be served and worshipped. If they had lived in another region with different meteorological, geological, social, political and cultural phenomena, Yahweh – in the way he acts, reveals himself and relates to humans – would become obsolete and a non-entity.

#### 4.2.8 Devastating questions regarding the divine methodology

Another element of the Old Testament discourse about Yahweh that might lead to a sneaking suspicion that it is all nothing more than all-too-human myth and superstition concerns what may be called Yahweh's suspicious methodology. Once one stands back and begins to ask those tormenting "why?"-questions, the whole meta-narrative presented in the Old Testament suddenly seems just too peculiar to be real.

Contemplating the actions of Yahweh, his motives, his method and alternative possibilities open to him during his intervention in the created world, leads the devil's advocate to suspect that all is not as it seems. There is something "fishy", something suspicious and indeed something "mighty peculiar" about the ways in which Yahweh goes about being a god and doing stuff. When the divine methodology of Yahweh is closely scrutinised, it seems that, in several instances, Yahweh appears as the stereotypical "god of the gaps". He seems to have been invoked in an all-too-human albeit unconvincing attempt by the biblical authors to explain reality and make animistic sense of the historical process.

If it can be shown that the divine methodology is indeed suspect in terms of it being too incredible, particular, peculiar, human, unlikely and resulting in more questions than it answers, then realism regarding the deity's ontological status also becomes problematic. If it can be demonstrated that Yahweh's supposed relation to the world is constituted by an erroneous hermeneutics of historical, natural, social and psychological reality on the part of the Old Testament authors, one begins to suspect that Yahweh-as-depicted is little more than a fictitious construct.

Below are some "readerly questions" as part of the devil's advocate's hermeneutics of suspicion. In order to appreciate the deconstructive rhetorical effect of these questions, it is very important not to rush through them. According to the devil's advocate, the devastating potential of the questions can only be appreciated if the reader meditates on and ponders each one for its weirdness, the possibly anti-realist implications, and how the all-too-fantastical and incredible nature of the whole Old Testament meta-narrative is exposed.

1. Why did Yahweh create anything at all?
2. What did Yahweh do before he created the heavens and the earth?
3. Why did he create the heavens and the earth at this point in eternity and not sooner or later?
4. Why did Yahweh create *these* particular creatures, features and types of phenomena rather than something else?
5. Why does Yahweh create weak, feeble, ignorant, imperfect, contingent and fallible beings instead of some more perfect and omnibenevolent immortals?
6. Why does Yahweh punish people for their sins via collective ambiguous phenomena such as natural disasters, biological dysfunction and chaotic social processes (all of which happen anyway)?
7. Why does Yahweh appear to a few select people and mostly in “dreams” and “visions” rather than being directly accessible and visible to everyone, everywhere, and all the time?
8. Why does Yahweh not want images of himself, especially since he has been seen more than once and therefore cannot be thinking of supposed inconceivability?
9. Why would Yahweh create animals he considers abominations?
10. Why would Yahweh endow humans with physiological processes he finds offensive or unclean?
11. Why does Yahweh appear in natural phenomena (earthquakes, volcanoes, thunder storms) which can be interpreted in wholly natural ways without postulating a divinity behind it?
12. Why would Yahweh as creator of the universe concern himself mostly with a

single small nation and why does he know nothing of other ancient peoples outside the Levant and they nothing of him?

13. Why are ambiguous and tedious ways of divination (lots, the Ephod, the Urim and Thummim, dream incubation, etc.) needed when Yahweh could just tell people directly, plainly and quickly what is the case in any given situation?
14. Why does Yahweh give so many laws for how to punish the guilty instead of always preventing any evil act from occurring in the first place like he sometimes does?
15. Why is Yahweh so inconsistent and arbitrary in the way he treats individuals and deal with their sin and in what he allows them with regard to access to him, prosperity in life, forgiveness of their sins, etc.?
16. Why are both Yahweh and his heavenly court all of the *male* gender?
17. Why does Yahweh so often merely denounce atrocities *after* they happen and then through human spokesmen (i.e. prophetic judgement) rather than intervening proactively to prevent the evil in from occurring in the first place (as he sometimes does) or coming down himself to tell everyone what is what?
18. Why does Yahweh so often promise remote future bliss, peace and prosperity rather than having actualised it all long ago?
19. Why is it usually the case that when the people mix with foreigners they begin to serve the other gods and forsake Yahweh? Why does the reverse never happen, i.e. that the foreigners forsake their gods and convert to Yahwism?
20. Why does Yahweh not appear today and end atheism?

Many far more specific questions like these could be asked regarding certain details in the Old Testament text. For example:

1. Why does Yahweh speak a particular dialect of period Hebrew when he creates the universe especially since this language and the particular dialect in which he spoke would only develop in a particular religious community during the first millennium BC? (cf. Gen 1)
2. Why did Yahweh make Adam from dust and create Eve from his rib, rather than in another fashion (i.e. creation by word, thought, etc.)? (cf. Gen 2:7,22)
3. Why did Yahweh destroy the people via a *flood* rather than by some other means (i.e. make them all disappear, cause the earth to swallow them, etc.)? (cf. Gen 6-9)
4. Why did Yahweh go to all the trouble to get Joseph to become the prince of Egypt to save people from the famine when he could just have prevented the famine in the first place? (cf. Gen 38-50)
5. Why did Moses want Jethro to show them where all the good camping places in the desert were located if the pillar of cloud and fire already indicated this to them? (cf. Num 10:29-34)
6. Why did Yahweh want Moses to count the people when surely he could just tell him how many there were? (cf. Num 1; 2 Sam 24:1; etc.)
7. Why would a god feel the need to specify such precise, elaborate and peculiar prescriptions for the service in his sanctuary? (cf. Ex 25-30)
8. Why should the leaders of a city have to vow that they did not kill someone found mysteriously murdered in a nearby field when Yahweh could simply show them who committed the crime? (cf. Deut 21:1-9)
9. Why should a woman accused of adultery need to engage in a trial by ordeal to determine her innocence when Yahweh could just tell the judges what the facts are? (cf. Num 5:11-31)
10. Why is Yahweh so insistent that the people tell their children about his acts in

olden times rather making the effort to reveal himself to them directly, personally and one on one? (cf. Ex 12:26; Deut 6:6-7; etc.)

11. Why should lots be drawn to reveal a guilty or chosen individual when, once again, Yahweh could simply tell everyone what's what? (cf. Josh 7:10-19; 1 Sam 10:19-24; 14:37-43)
12. Why does Yahweh consider the possible proliferation of wild animals a good reason for not vanquishing the enemies of his people sooner? (cf. Deut 7:22)
13. Why does Yahweh fear that if the people take the root of the Philistines they will be too scared to fight and want to go back to Egypt – especially since this happens anyway on the route Yahweh himself had chosen (cf. Ex 13:17 vs. Num 14:1-4)
14. Why did the people need to send spies to scout Canaan instead of Yahweh simply telling them how it looks there? (cf. Num 13:1-33)
15. Why did the people in the desert need to buy food from the population of Seir if Yahweh was already feeding them with bread and meat from the skies? (cf. Deut 2:1-29 vs. Ex 16-17; Ps 78:23-25)
16. How could an evil spirit sent by Yahweh to plague Saul be exorcised merely by having the depressed king listen to pleasant music? (cf. 1 Sam 16:14-23)
17. Why did Yahweh not prevent David from adultery with Bathsheba like he prevented the Pharaoh and Abimelech from performing the same sins with the matriarchs? (cf. Gen 12,20,26 vs. 2 Sam 11)
18. If Yahweh knows the future in detail, how can *the deity himself* be considered as having free will? (cf. Gen 15:16,18:17-19; Isa 40-55; Ps 139; Dan 2-12)
19. Why should Yahweh want to write up everything that happens, and should happen, on scrolls? (cf. Ex 32:32; Ps 69:29, 139:16; Dan 7:10; 10:21)

20. Why does Yahweh himself believe that certain fictitious characters really existed and that certain fictitious scenarios actually happened (cf. Isa 54:9; Jer 34:13-14; Ezek 14:14,20; Mal 4:5; etc.)

As Augustine realised long ago, one cannot merely dismiss a question such as the one pertaining to what God did before he created the heavens and the earth, with the retort, “Preparing hell for pryors into mysteries”. The author of Psalm 131 may have confessed that he did not bother with things that were too high for his mind and Deuteronomy 29:29 may insist that the things that have not been revealed belong to Yahweh. Apologists have a plethora of rationalisations, conjectures, speculation and even hermeneutical and theological objections to the asking of such questions. In stark contrast, however, the devil’s advocate’s answer to all such questions is bluntly, “because Yahweh is a character of fiction and does not really exist”.

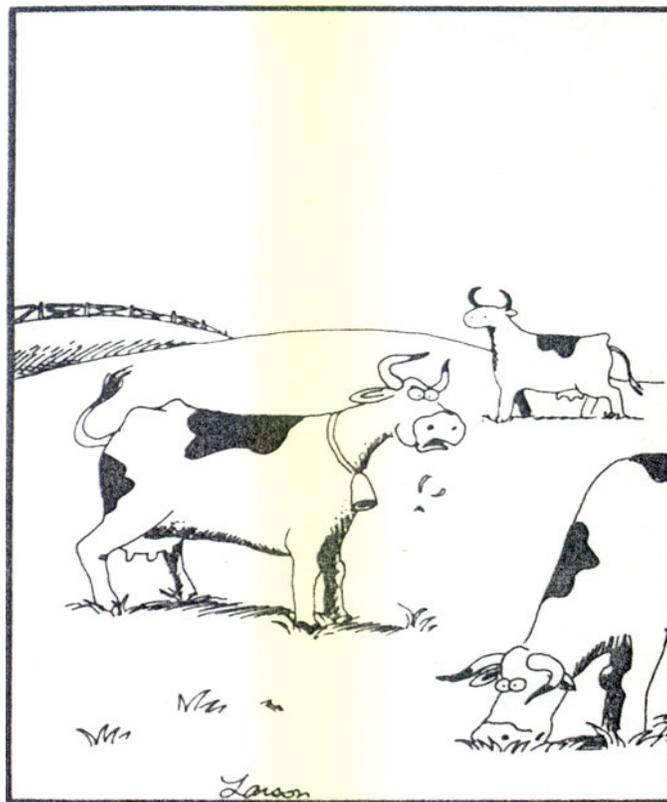
These and many other similar possible questions leave one with a sneaking suspicion that the whole cult of Yahweh is based on little more than projection, pretence and make-belief in the face of life’s mysteries, dangers and hassles. Of course, it might be claimed that the texts were never meant to satisfy such blasphemous and philosophically minded curiosity. However, simply because the Old Testament authors did not ask or answer the questions does not mean it is illegitimate to ask them.

If consistently applied, such an objection would prohibit any linguistic, literary, historical, sociological and various other types of questions being put to the text since these issues were not also not catered for. Just because the Old Testament did not intend to answer all the linguistic, historical, sociological, etc. type questions does not prevent scholars from asking them. What valid and unbiased a priory objection can there then possibly be against asking *philosophical* questions? Is it not the fear of what the obvious answers (or lack of them) might imply for the validity and veracity of realism in all biblically based forms of theism?

To be sure, when someone like the devil’s advocate approaches the text with a certain objectivity and disinterestedness and begins to contemplate these “why?”-questions pertaining to Yahweh’s methodology, a soul-shattering possibility is born within the

sceptic imagination. Could it be that the whole grand meta-narrative roughly discernible from the texts is pure fantasy? Might the entire worldview of the Old Testament discourse be no more reflective of actual reality than the overarching mythologies of other ancient pagan cultures whose beliefs no longer command anyone's allegiance?

According to the devil's advocate, therefore, when asking "why?"-questions like those presented above, an "answer" is not really expected from the text. This is the case because it may very well be that no satisfactory way of salvaging realism can be forthcoming. The devil's advocate concurs with Gertrude Stein who, in another context, insisted that apart from the atheist response noted above, "there ain't no answer; there has never been an answer; there ain't going to be any answer – that's the answer!"



"Hey, wait a minute! This is grass! We've been eating grass!"

Of course, some people just don't get it. Most probably never will. But for those who had the scales fell from their eyes, asking "why?"-questions can reveal that the whole

set-up depicted in the world of the text is simply too peculiar, incredible, extraordinary, superficial, contrived and unrealistic. The perspective provided by these questions makes the uninhibited critical reader realise that there are simply too many more meaningful alternative possible plots that could have been actualised. Asking “why” questions suggests the possibility that the obvious answer to such interrogatives may indeed be what not everyone may want to hear – that Yahweh-as-depicted in the texts does not exist.

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

According to the devil’s advocate, the implications of the creation of Yahweh in the image of humans, rather than vice-versa, are as follows:

1. What Yahweh knows, believes and does seem suspiciously similar to the views and ways of humans from the ancient Near East during the first millennium BC.
2. It seems clear that this gives the game away and unmasks Yahweh as the product of Iron Age ancient Near Eastern anthropomorphic, psychomorphic and sociomorphic projection.
3. It would thus appear that Yahweh-as-depicted is a construct of polymorphic projection and has no counterpart outside the texts and imaginations of the people who worship him.
4. If this is the case then Yahweh-as-depicted is a character of fiction.
5. Ergo, Yahweh-as-depicted does not really exist.

The argument from anthropomorphic projection is the third argument in the case against realism. Since, however, the case against realism itself constitutes a cumulative argument against the existence of Yahweh, the particular argument reconstructed in this chapter should not be appropriated in isolation. Its credibility and rhetorical strength are enhanced when viewed in relation to all the other arguments in the devil’s advocate’s justification of Yahwistic atheism.