

DOES THE SUN RISE BECAUSE THE ROOSTER SOUNDS OFF?
A dissertation upon causality

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Spring ended last midnight, but the winged ones didn't know it.

The male-bird chorus began this morning, as every morning since early spring. On this I'm an authority: first bird, first light, full awake. Because of first bird or first light, do I wake up? Stupid question: no separation.

But here are two questions that only look stupid, are **scientific**:

I How long has this been going on? Eleanor Farjeon in 1931 gave this hymnic reply: "Morning has broken like the first morning, / blackbird has spoken like the first bird." The continuity assumption without which no science. What Hubble, the world's only astronomic eye in the sky, sees that's a trillion years old behaves by the same regularities we can observe on planet earth. But to finish her stanza, Ms. Farjeon looks farther, deeper, than Hubble: "Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning! / Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!" Masterfully, delicately, delightfully the poet weaves a laurel of the world & the Word. (In my early days, I was into science, the world; then, at age 16 & since, the Word became & remains my central fascination.)....Please meditate on this hymn of beginnings, imaging that all things began when you awoke this morning. "The first dewfall on the first grass." "The one light Eden saw play." "God's re-creation of the new day!" "The wet garden, sprung in completeness where his feet pass." (It's the only hymn I'm aware of that introduces the divine as "he" before identifying as [here] "God"--or, for her here, is "he" Jesus? Whichever, God.)

II This Thinksheet's title: At 4.15 this morning, did the sun rise because the rooster crowed? (I can prove that the sun does not rise because I awake: when I go to bed dog-tired, it does & I don't.)

Why was all this on my mind as I awoke this morning? Some cogitations:

1 The court, & Ann Landers, sided with the rooster. The developers had engulfed the farm with suburban homes whose owners complained to the farmer &, that failing, submitted a class action. Tough luck, said the judge: "the rooster was there before you were." Then hundreds of letters to A.L. remonstrating with her for crowing with that rooster! I love it. Enough to set me off on this dissertation upon causality. Darwin, that sort of thing. And devotion: "Praise for the morning!" Big stuff, though the rooster altercation was--was it?--little stuff (I was going to say small shit, then realized some of you would be offended).

Exercise: Make a list of all the values in play in that case of the court & the rooster. See why I love it?

2 Some ancient--was it Diodorus Siculus?--opined that sun & rooster were so interfaced-interlocked that if the rooster didn't the sun wouldn't. Much later a poet--Chaucer, was it?--turned the issue into a tale. (Yes, I'm almost sure it was Chaucer, but I'm too old, have too little time left, to look much stuff up anymore.)

Enlightenment pride in reason laughed at the opinion (which it shouldn't have) & at the tale (which everybody always should; it's good enough to have been written by James Thurber). But now the "new" everything in science--appearing, for one place, in the Gaia theory--sees "all things" as more intimately-intricately intertwined that we formerly knew enough to surmise. A latter-day scientific **humility** is beginning to cancel early-scientific arrogance & its disastrous intellectual, spiritual, & social consequences. Meanwhile, philosophers have become more **modest** about consequentiality, the theories of causality & probability. Even angels are back, & the Apr.10 TIME cover-story on miracles touched many bases. Seen from below, the postmodern mind is re-making room for God: seen from above, God is re-making room for himself in Western awareness. Triumphalistic secularism-pluralism remains vigorous--as in the 1995 2-hr. PBS/TV against theism, titled "In the Beginning--The Creationist Controversy"; but upon us now is postmodern nervousness about the Enlightenment (modernism, liberalism, accomodationism), a mood providing evangelicalism --says Alister McGrath, "Why Evangelicalism is the Future of Protestantism" (18-23, 19 June 95 CHRISTIANITY TODAY)--a window of opportunity.

3 Did you know that what causes a bunny to eat its excreta is the fact that rabbits' alimentary canal is so poorly made as to be unable to extract sufficient nutri-

ents the first time through? How can you know that fact & still believe in a creator? A creator would have done a better job on rabbits' guts. Ergo, evolution is right & theism is wrong. Can you believe that PBS would air such a nonsensical argument? Well, it happened on that antitheist program (§2). (An atheist program would leave God out; an antitheist program kicks God out.) "Scientific creationism" (e.g., $6 \times 24 = 144$ hours to create "heaven & earth") is scarcely more naive, intellectually, than the causation reasoning of that eminent biologist..... Everybody throws thoughts up from out a thicket of assumptions: list his. A creator who makes M.E. (maximally efficient) bunny guts is as "perfect" as Plato's notion of planetary orbits: they must be circular, because the Logos/Good/God is perfect, & would not make anything imperfect; & (1) a circle is perfect & (2) an ellipse is imperfect. Ergo, all planets have circular orbits. Likewise, a low-efficiency bunny tummy could not have been made by a creator, for a creator would be perfect; ergo, no creator.

On the same program, a sage of secularistic scientism said it would be OK to teach "the Judeo-Christian creation myth," but (1) not in science classes, & (2) only if, for the sake of pluralism, also teaching in parallel other creation myths. And in such teaching, it should be made clear that no origin-myth is "necessary" to explaining the world (thus deftly eliminating theism as a violation of the law of parsimony, minimum hypothesis)....In the two hours, the only relief from such drivel was a U.Cal. professor's sensible distinction between science (here, evolution) & scientism (here, evolutionism), the latter sneaking into science a philosophical pollutant, viz. naturalistic (atheist) materialism. The public-school controversy would disappear if science teachers were to cease teaching scientism. On pp.207-9 of my FLOW OF FLESH, REACH OF SPIRIT, I present such "a religion-and-philosophy-free telling of the nature story" (as I say on p.21, the end of my chapter on Darwin).

4 That farmer (§1), curious, put his rooster in a black box & didn't open it till noon, when the critter crowed. How come the sun had been up for six hours?