

Without intending to, Lem shows with what a slow, subtle, intricate style God created "the heaven and the earth."

In 1956, somebody at K.U. (Lawrence KS) came up with a gizmo we call the diode, making the Electronic Age possible. Now, every new "Age" is digested by old-Ages' juices, and any old man whose stomach cannot digest the new Age stops eating: the organism dies. By this gastronomic analogy, I raise the question *How fares biblical faith vis-a-vis the computer?* This thinksheet muses on this question in the light of pp.26-42 THE 24July78 NEW YORKER, "The Experiment," by a Polish (?) university (?) mathematician(?), "Stanislaw Lem."

1. The two easiest philosophical targets being politics and religion, Lem's article could attack both or either. As the article seems to originate in a Communist country, one can at least understand its (1) attacking religion and (2) not developing a polemic against the government, as this brilliant author obviously could have done as well as he did against religion....Now, the particular religion he attacks is (1) the biblical (2) as developed along the Greek notion of perfection. Lem shows more training in philosophy than in religion, and--as might equally be expected--in those forms of philosophy which are particularly inimical to the biblical vision. God is faulted in demanding, or even expecting, any attention from humanity, and excoriated for tailoring his punishment-reward response to us on the basis of our response to Him (*sic*) [p.42]: "fantastically shameless egotism, as a low act of irrational vengeance--in sum,...the final villainy in a situation of total dominion over innocents."

2. Note, first, the fine irony that the attack on God as inhuman is being made from within an inhuman society which has rejected God: our author, illogically (though logic is what he most prides himself on), wants to have it both ways....And while I'm on the subject of logic, I'll say that his pique-hatred against biblical religion, theism, the transcendent in general leads him time and again to violate the simplest rules of logic--e.g., the law of parsimony, twice on one p. [28: the two uses of "only"]. Again, many times he switches from logic to an ad-hominem, Vicoesque special pleading for his brand of humanism--e.g., pp.32f: God is "unworthy" us putting us in the bind of being finite with an infinite yearning; but from the angle of another value he says such binds are necessary to consciousness, which could not otherwise emerge: he is in self-contradiction, for clearly for him consciousness is a good, so how could its Creator be unworthy?....Further, he smuggles theistic language into his discourse in the form of metaphor (e.g., consciousness as "a plan"). More subtly, he violates his model by loading decision-making on the side of the computer personoids, who exist in their purely mathematical (and so non-congruent-with-our) world as bodiless souls by "adaptation," an alien notion derivative neither from the Bible nor from his electronic scifi world but from the theory of evolution, with its base in laissez-faire selfrationalization!

3. His fundamental creation, a mathematician's daydream of a displaced meta-universe [a "digital universum"], could be developed positively, instead of stopping with the attacking on religion and the spoofing of "systems creation." One underdeveloped notion is this (p.26): "A man may interpret the real world in a variety of ways." Thus my own definition of a philosophy as "a way of seeing the world," adding for religion "and living in it." One can see one's own worldview only in the mirror of some alter-or anti-view, actual-historical or (as in Tolkien's "Secondary World," or Lem) fictive. That is why I consider the teaching of "the world's great religions" so important in theological education, though there are other values attendant upon this study....But at several points he becomes positive--e.g., (p.31) our humanity's internal contradictions (e.g., emotion/reason), which set the stage for the emergence of consciousness, signal that no robot could be a humanoid: "personoids" must have discordancy built into them or they would be "bereft of" our "mysterious depth,...internal intricacies,... labyrinthine nature." [Illogically, elsewhere he rules out trust-faith / reason as one of the internal binds: that would let God in!] And p.32: "A digital machine cannot of itself ever acquire consciousness....it is psychologically and individually No One." Well, say I, neither did we humans "of ourselves," but are made in the image of God as Lem's personoids are made in the experimenter's image (p.32, "to simulate man").

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Because this piece considers itself a major attack--highly serious despite its semicomical vein and scifi myth--on biblical religion, dialog with this author could advance many causes:

1. The alienation of British-American philosophers from biblical religion is both bracing and enervating. I suspect this piece will turn out to have been written by an American university mathematician trained under Ayer et al, the British atheist logical-symbolic positivists. (And it's probably no bookreview.)

2. The "well-trained" American intellectual is more deist than atheist: God may be, but so what? Prayer is pointless, for (1) the universe is self-managing and (2) so models for us. Let's face it: we are alone (except perhaps for extraterrestrials), for all practical purposes. The obverse of this is that God also is alone--unless there are "angels," creatures cosmically created to provide him company and historically converted (in our understanding) from "false gods" and "idols." Here we come upon a fascinating internal contradiction in our author: he himself, in spinning this yarn, hoped he would not be alone, but would have reader-responders! Yet he scores the biblical God precisely for this, for wanting response from his creatures! Our author can enjoy the inauthentic luxury of doing without response from his creatures, the personoids, because he anticipates your and my response! Yet he would only laugh at the biblical God for wanting angels around for feedback and fellowship! What's with this dirty pool! One more evidence that our author was himself made *imago dei*: God and Lem are alike in wanting response, even in wanting praise (stroking)! Now, love's way of stroking has both winning, no losers; Lem's wanting stroking is at God's expense; ergo, the business Lem is about is something other than interpersonal love--call it maybe narcissistic masturbation or rape or mere seduction. I score this author not just intellectually, but also morally and spiritually....on the whole, I should think, a rather nasty creature to live with, which brings me to....

3....I wonder what sort of marriage s/he has? or whether s/he has ever sustained any profound human relationship? Now, many things can go wrong with a relationship one can't be faulted for; but it takes two to tangle, and I do wonder....This person is so cerebral, with so little communication between coils (upper-neocortical, lower-visceral). And so egoic: while he says his personoids had to be made with internal contradictions else they'd not have consciousness, is not his own self-model--his vision of his ideal self--thoroughgoingly rational, architectonically logical? What saddens me is less the quality of the humanoids he's fictively created than the quality of his own self, which he has actually created in his life-process, which includes the kind of cerebration he's doing in this article. We shape ourselves by our dreams: what gets our fantasy attention gets us. I don't like either what I see of this person's inner life, or the esofuture (the human inner future) projective from it. In the world he would create, I'd like to live less than I'm enjoying living in this one.

4. Again, what kind of response does the biblical God want? Lem is more transcendent than the biblical God, for Lem is hiding behind and within his fiction: Lem is almost certainly a pseudonym. But God, YHWH-Jesus, is right out there in historical-public view, subject to sociology-of-knowledge critiquing. And critiquing we theologians are doing....The situation of the biblical God is more radical even than our author sees: not just his creatures, but God himself-incarnate is earthbound and takes the human chances, and is killed by us (and, another story, at the heart of Christian faith, doesn't stay dead). This God is "He" under the aspect of primarily two sociomodels from the ancient NearEast, viz. King and Father, which Jesus uses but reverses in the Lord's Prayer. If one disposes of, or secondarizes, these sociomodels, one thereby has done the same to the biblical religion. Lem has not made his case that, vis-a-vis this God, we are (p.42) "innocents." The biblical moral-political sense is far more profound and comprehensive of the human reality than is Lem's. In TA terms, Lem is struggling for freedom from the "Parent script," and his "peronetics" and "experimental theogony" isn't doing it for him.