

Creation Stories

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caveat lector

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Creation Stories

1. from *Never Cry Wolf*, by Farley Mowat

In the beginning there was a Woman and a Man, and nothing else walked or swam or flew in the world until one day the Woman dug a great hole in the ground and began fishing in it. One by one she pulled out all the animals, and the last one she pulled out of the hole was the caribou. Then Kaila, who is the God of the Sky, told the woman the caribou was the greatest gift of all, for the caribou would be the sustenance of man.

The Woman set the caribou free and ordered it to go out over the land and multiply, and the caribou did as the Woman said; and in time the land was filled with caribou, so the sons of the Woman hunted well, and they were fed and clothed and had good skin tents to live in, all from the caribou.

The sons of the Woman hunted only the big, fat caribou, for they had no wish to kill the weak and the small and the sick, since these were no good to eat, nor were their skins much good. And, after a time, it happened that the sick and the weak came to outnumber the fat and the strong, and when the sons saw this they were dismayed and they complained to the Woman.

Then the Woman made magic and spoke to Kaila and said: “Your work is no good, for the caribou grow weak and sick, and if we eat them we must grow weak and sick also.”

Kaila heard, and he said, “My work is good. I shall tell Amarak (the spirit of the Wolf), and he shall tell his children, and they will eat the sick and the weak and the small caribou, so that the land will be left for the fat and the good ones.”

And this is what happened, and this is why the caribou and the wolf are one; for the caribou feeds the wolf, but it is the wolf who keeps the caribou strong.

2. from *The Once and Future King*, by T. H. White

People often ask, as an idle question, whether the process of evolution began with the chicken or the egg. Was there an egg out of which the first chicken came, or did a chicken lay the first egg? I am in a position to say that the first thing created was the egg.

When God had manufactured all the eggs out of which the fishes and the serpents and the birds and the mammals and even the duckbilled platypus would eventually emerge, he called the embryos before Him, and saw that they were good.

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Perhaps I ought to explain, added the badger, lowering his papers nervously and looking at the Wart over the top of them, that all embryos look very much the same. They are what you are before you are born — and, whether you are going to be a tadpole or a peacock or a camelopard or a man, when you are an embryo you just look like a peculiarly repulsive and helpless human being. I continue as follows:

The embryos stood in front of God, with their feeble hands clasped politely over their stomachs and their heavy heads hanging down respectfully, and God addressed them.

He said: “Now, you embryos, here you are, all looking exactly the same, and We are going to give you the choice of what you want to be. When you grow up you will get bigger anyway, but We are pleased to grant you another gift as well. You may alter any parts of yourselves into anything which you think would be useful to you in later life. For instance, at the moment you cannot dig. Anybody who would like to turn his hands into a pair of spades or garden forks is allowed to do so. Or, to put it another way, at present you can only use your mouths for eating. Anybody who would like to use his mouth as an offensive weapon, can change it by asking, and be a corkindrill or a sabre-tooth tiger. Now then, step up and choose your tools, but remember that what you choose you will grow into, and will have to stick to.”

All the embryos thought the matter over politely, and then, one by one, they stepped up before the eternal throne. They were allowed two or three specializations, so that some chose to use their arms as flying machines and their mouths as weapons, or crackers, or drillers, or spoons, while others selected to use their bodies as boats and their hands as oars. We badgers thought very hard and decided to ask three boons. We wanted to change our skins for shields, our mouths for weapons, and our arms for garden forks. These boons were granted. Everybody specialized in one way or another, and some of us in very queer ones. For instance, one of the desert lizards decided to swap his whole body for blotting-paper, and one of the toads who lived in the drouthy antipodes decided simply to be a water-bottle.

The asking and granting took up two long days — they were the fifth and sixth, so far as I remember — and at the very end of the sixth day, just before it was time to knock off for Sunday, they had got through all the little embryos except one. This embryo was Man.

“Well, Our little man,” said God. “You have waited till the last, and slept on your decision, and We are sure you have been thinking hard all the time. What can We do for you?”

“Please God,” said the embryo, “I think that You made me in the shape which I now have for reasons best known to Yourselves, and that it would be rude to change. If I am to have my choice I will stay as I am. I will not alter any of the parts which You gave me, for other and doubtless inferior tools, and I will stay a defenceless embryo all my life, doing my best to make myself a few feeble implements out of the wood, iron and the other materials which You have seen fit to put before me. If I want a boat I will try to construct it out of trees, and if I want to fly, I will put together a chariot to do it for me. Probably I have been very silly in refusing to take advantage of Your kind offer, but I have done my very best to think it over carefully, and now hope that the feeble decision of this small innocent will find favour with Yourselves.”

“Well done,” exclaimed the Creator in delighted tones. “Here, all you embryos, come here with your beaks and whatnots to look upon Our first Man. He is the only one who has guessed Our riddle, out of all of you, and We have great pleasure in conferring upon him the Order of Dominion over the Fowls of the Air, and the Beasts of the Earth, and the Fishes of the Sea. Now let the rest of you get along, and love and multiply, for it is time to knock off for the week-end. As for you, Man, you will be a naked tool all your life, though a user of tools. You will look like an embryo till they bury you, but all the others will be embryos before your might. Eternally undeveloped, you will always remain potential in Our image, able to see some of Our sorrows and to feel some of Our joys. We are partly sorry for you, Man, but partly hopeful. Run along then, and do your best. And listen, Man, before you go...”

“Well?” asked Adam, turning back from his dismissal.

“We were only going to say,” said God shyly, twisting Their hands together. “Well, We were just going to say, God bless you.”

3. from *City of Illusions*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

We of Es Toch tell a little myth, which says that in the beginning the Creator told a great lie. For there was nothing at all, but the Creator spoke, saying, It exists. And behold, in order that the lie of God might be God’s truth, the universe at once began to exist....

4. The Big Bang Theory, originally proposed by Georges Lemaître

The universe didn’t originally exist as it does now. It existed only in a state of high density and high temperature. For no particular reason, it spontaneously exploded into the presently observable universe.

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Sources and Additional Reading

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