**monotheism/一神论(Yī Shén Lùn)**

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| Final Remarks | Jan Assmann, WU Fei | 07 Jun 2022 |

Jan Assmann: Both papers relate to Western monotheism. Therefore, there is much consent. We differ only in our understanding of dualism. Prof. Wu takes dualism – the eternal fight between Good and Evil – as the opposite of monotheism, which is, of course, correct. The Abrahamic religions do not recognize Satan, i.e. Evil, on equal rank with God, but on a clearly subordinate level.

However, there is another kind of dualism that in my view is intrinsic to Abrahamic monotheism, especially in its Christian form. This is the antagonism between the ‘kingdom of God’ and the secular world, which tends to be seen as the sphere of the devil.

In my view, the proper opposite of monotheism is cosmotheism, the worship of the world, the powers experienced as active and dominant in it. This corresponds roughly to Lord Herbert’s universal religion of ‘Nature’, for which he coined the term ‘monotheism’. Biblical monotheism, by contrast, consists in the strict separation of God and World. The earliest example of monotheism in the recorded history of mankind, the exclusive cult of the sun that the Egyptian king Akhenaten installed in place of the traditional polytheistic religion, still is a form of cosmotheism, because its god, the sun, is a concrete phenomenon belonging to this world, visible to all mankind and needing no covenant with a chosen people. In the same way, one might also argue that heaven, which is worshipped in China as the highest god, is an immanent, innerworldly power lacking the properties of abscondity and transcendence that are specific of the God of western monotheism. On the other hand, parallels have been recognized in the West since 200 years ago between the “Tao” of Laotse and the “One” (tò hén) in the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition. But there, however, the ideas of covenant and faith are missing.

WU Fei: According to Prof. Assmann, monotheism, the most influential term in religious studies, is not invented until 1663. That means, what we see as monotheistic religions do not see themselves as monotheism. That does not mean, however, monotheism is invented by the modern, but it explains the phenomenon that the so-called monotheistic religions sometimes do not seem to be so monotheistic. There are inclusive monotheism and exclusive monotheism. Usually we use the term monotheism to refer to Abrahamic religions. They are special because of the emphasis on covenant and on faithfulness. After combined with the Greek tradition of metaphysics, monotheism is also often entangled with dualism, which both have contributed a lot to the intellectual ideas of modern time. Before the introduction of Abrahamic religions into China, there is nothing similar to exclusive monotheism in Chinese history. There is, however, some idea about the highest God in the heaven, both in theory and in religious practice. The metaphysical and religious significance is quite different from the Abrahamic religions.