

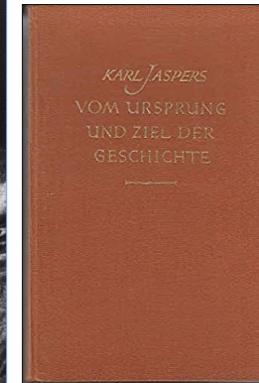
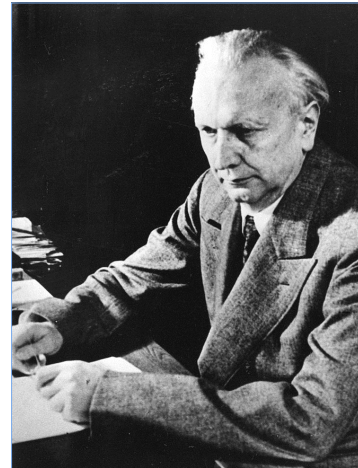
The Axial Ages

Do Religion and Spirituality Evolve?
Or do they merely change?

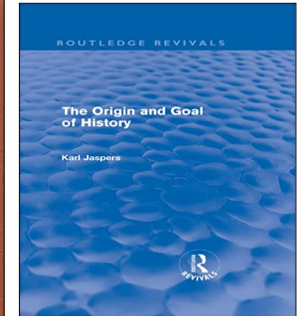


Karl Jaspers

(1883-1969)



Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte (1949)



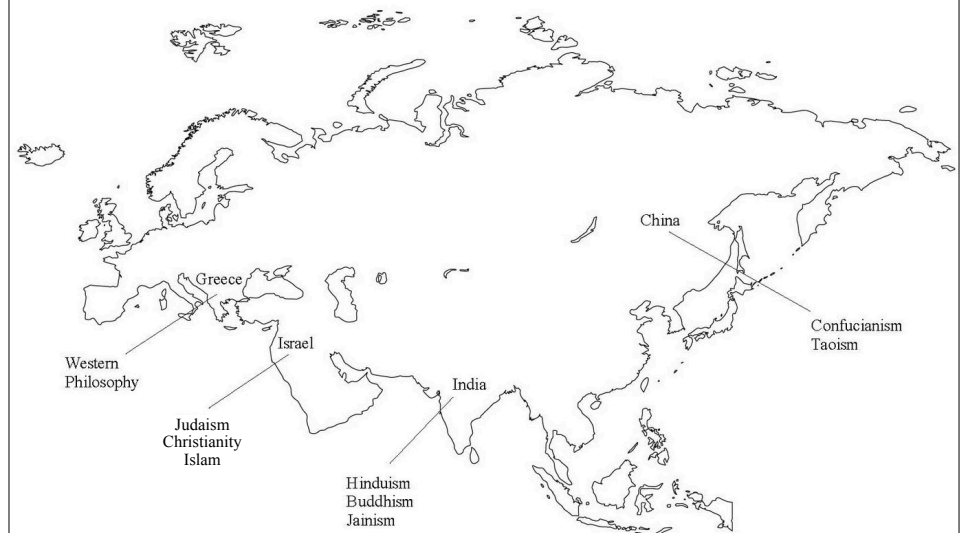
The Origin and Goal of History

The Axial Age

c. 800-200 BCE

- The Individual
- The Cosmos Entire
- Liberation
- Compassion

The Axial Age (800 – 200 B.C.E)
Centers and Religions



The Origin and Goal of History

(1) The thousands-of-years-old ancient civilizations are everywhere brought to an end by the Axial Period

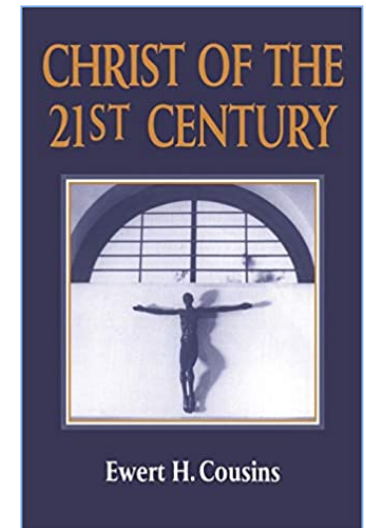
(2) Until today mankind has lived by what happened during the Axial Period, by what was thought and created during that period.

(3) The Axial Period commenced within spatial limitations, but it became historically all-embracing.

(4) Between these three realms a profound mutual comprehension was possible from the moment they met.



Dr. Ewert Cousins (1927-2009)



The Voice of the Second Axial Age

- The Axial Period ushered in a radically new form of consciousness. Whereas primal consciousness was tribal, Axial consciousness was individual.

- “Know thyself” became the watchword of Greece; the Upanishads identified the *atman*, the transcendent center of the self.

- The Buddha charted the way of individual enlightenment; the Jewish prophets awakened individual moral responsibility.

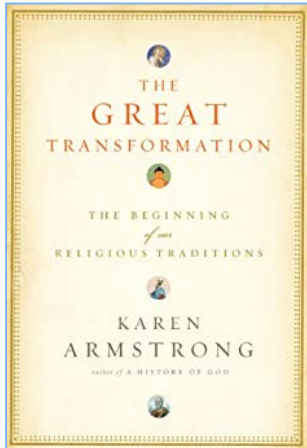
- This sense of individual identity, as distinct from the tribe and from nature, is the most characteristic mark of Axial consciousness.

- From this flow other characteristics: consciousness that is self-reflective, analytic, and that can be applied...

- to *nature* in the form of scientific theories,
- to *society* in the form of social critique,
- to *knowledge* in the form of philosophy,
- to *religion* in the form of mapping an individual spiritual journey.

Karen Armstrong

The Great Transformation (2006)



The Beginning of our Religious Traditions

A Comparative Key

<u>Pre-Axial</u>	<u>Axial</u>	<u>Second Axial</u>
Rural	Urban	Global
Tribal	Individual, Group	Communal
Group Morality	Ethics	New Wave Values
Cyclic Time	Linear Time	Time Developmental
Land of the Dead	Heaven and Earth	Here and Now

Judaism

Jeremiah and Ezechiel (6th c. BCE)

- Master Story: Exodus and Sinai
- Ritual Pattern: Seder
- Ethical Norm: Do Justice



Christianity

Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ (1st century CE)



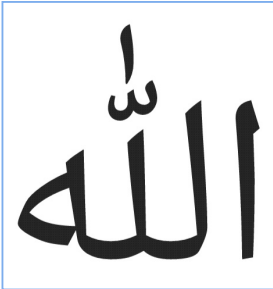
- Master Story: Death and Resurrection
- Ritual Pattern: Holy Week
- Ethical Norm: Love One Another

Later Axial (roots in Judaism)

Islam

Prophet Muhammad (570-632 CE)

- Master Story: Abraham's pilgrimage to Mecca; rebuilding the Qaaba
- Ritual Pattern: Hajj (Pilgrimage)
- Ethical Norm: Strive for Justice



Later Axial (roots in Judaism and Christianity)

Zoroastrianism

Zoroaster [Zarathustra]

(Dates uncertain: perhaps 6th century BCE)

- Master Story: Cosmic Struggle of Good v. Evil
- Ritual Pattern: The Purity of Fire
- Ethical Norms: Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds



Enormous influence on Hinduism and the Abrahamic Religions

Hinduism

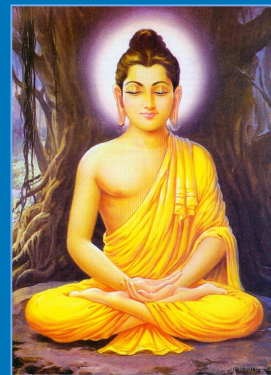
The Upanishads Emerge (c. 6th century BCE)



- Master Story: Master-Disciple
- Ritual Pattern: *Puja* (ceremony of blessing, homage, worship)
- Ethical Norm: Duty (*dharma*)

Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama Shakya (6th century BCE)



- Master Story: Enlightenment of the Buddha
- Ritual Pattern: Meditation
- Ethical Norm: Compassion

Jainism

Lord Mahavira (c. 600 BCE)



- Master Story: 24 Tirthankaras (“Stream-Crossers”)

Ritual Pattern: Meditation, Prayer

- Ethical Norm: *Ahimsa* (non-injury)

Daoism

Laozi (6th-5th c. BCE?)

道

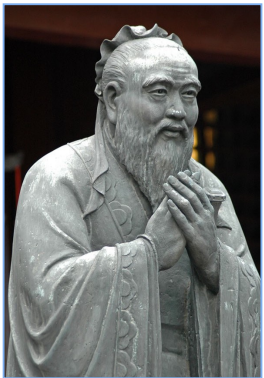
- Master Story: Laozi’s Legend
- Ritual Pattern: Fire, Water, Air, Wood, Metal
- Ethical Norms: *Wu wei* (“non-action,” i.e., no agenda)



水

Confucianism

Kung Fuzi [Confucius] (c. 551-479 BCE)



- Master Story: Ruler Sage
- Ritual Pattern: *Li* (Ritual Propriety)
- Ethical Norms: Society, Obedience and Care, Law

What is Religion?

Belief in or acknowledgement of some superhuman power or powers (esp. a god or gods), which is typically manifested in obedience, reverence, and worship; such a belief as part of a system defining a code of living, esp. as a means of achieving spiritual or material improvement.

(Oxford English Dictionary)

Better?

(JK Notebook)

The organized, social human response
(in teaching, belief, ritual, practice, law, etc.)

to the *Numinous*, to Ultimate Reality,

to the most real

