BIRTH AND CREATION

Falling
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A fall is typically defined in two general ways: coming down from an upright position, or, to sin. The idea of falling has existed since the beginning of time. If one has confidence in the Bible, there are arguments made for the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis, or, in scientific nature, there is a case for the collapse of the dinosaur era. In the Biblical version, God created the human form in perfection, His image. He instilled within man freewill, emotions, and soul which are the foundation human nature. Each character trait possesses qualities of the other two, and when together, comprise the essence of being. To illustrate instances of being, one may look to literary and visual representations of the creation of humanity. Exploring these mediums gives insight into the human condition.

The Bible gives an account of creation in the first book of the Old Testament, Genesis. In a conflation of the Yahwist and J authors of the first few chapters, the highest being, God, created man, Adam, in his image and gave him the responsibility of naming all of the other creatures in Eden. Adam was able to do this because of freewill. He
used his own creativity and thinking capacity to name the animals as he felt they ought to be identified. Adam lived in the Garden of Eden with the other creatures but somehow felt very much alone. He requested a companion, someone to live with him, whom he could share life with. Such a request is an example of his soul. Adam possessed the presence of mind to realize that having everything in the world with no one to share it with was truly heartrending. God created another human in his image, Eve, so that Adam might not be lonely. Eve and Adam were consumed with one another, being the only humans and very full of raw, unbridled emotions. Things were peaceful until Eve was tempted by the foul serpent God had placed in the Garden and succumbed to his persuasive tongue. She and Adam both ate of the forbidden fruit and were damned by God. This damnation incurred a sense of embarrassment and fear between them. These emotions created an air of enmity within the Garden, and Adam and Eve exiled to a new area. After this fall, according to Genesis 6:6, God began to question His motives for creating human form in the first place. Adam and Eve are often called the original sinners. To delve more into the emotional and physical characteristics of the Creation story, it is useful to look at more than one illustration.

Merely reading a text is rarely satisfactory in fully
representing a story and providing the reader with a complete understanding. Over time, humans have demonstrated a unique tendency to learn by active methods, rather than passive. In other words, to fully understand a concept such as creation, a visual depiction is beneficial.

For a modern human’s elucidation of the Creation story, we turn to Fred Nagelbach. Nagelbach is a sculptor who expresses his ideas and thoughts through carvings of wood. Three of his sculptures are entitled Adam and Eve I, Adam and Eve II, and Adam and Eve III*. The following explanations are not Nagelbach’s own implications but rather a culmination of several persons’ ideas on the works. Such interpretations reach far beyond the textual version, and are not inherent from the book of Genesis.

*Adam and Eve I is a carving of two human heads kissing. The kiss appears to be much more than your average kiss: the faces seem to be consuming one another, and such passion can only come from personal desire, or freewill. Such infatuation can not be forced upon a human. The enthusiasm of the kiss parallels the “honeymoon stage” of a newlywed couple. This concept of consummation is emphasized by the sturdy base of the sculpture and its metal overhang, or “roof”. The base and roof seem to emulate God and his acceptance and support for the relationship between Adam and Eve.
As we move to *Adam and Eve II*, the art is still on a base, though not as sturdy and much closer to the ground with a slightly smaller covering. The carving is of a single head on its side with two human expressions facing opposite directions. This is Nagelbach’s rendition of *The Fall* in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. The faces share a head—or on a deeper level—a soul, symbolizing they were both at fault and neither one could claim innocence over the other. Because the faces are not opposite one another, the observant viewer realizes the connection between the directional faces and the concept of embarrassment found in the Garden after the Fall.

*Adam and Eve III* depicts two sweeping figures connected from head to toe: one of the figures is upside down and again facing the opposite direction which represents the shame and peril that existed in Eden after *The Fall*. This statue is on a wrought-iron, inverted cone base, and rests on the point approximately four feet into the air. This precarious mounting of the sculpture, combined with a lack of covering, represents God’s unhappiness with Adam and Eve after they disobeyed him and succumbed to the temptations of the serpent. The embarrassment of nakedness is revealed, and Adam and Eve are unable to face one another. Humiliation is shared by both of the humans. Such a feeling can only be described through the channels of
emotions—a defining characteristic of human nature.

Through the means of literature and art, we have been able to explore the Creation story in different ways. The literature explores creation through words while art works through physical objects. Nagelbach simply took the images and underlying impressions from Genesis and presented them visually. Nothing important from Genesis was left without representation in Nagelbach’s Adam and Eve collection. Such clarity provides the viewer (reader) with a coherent understanding of the events that took place in the Garden of Eden. Humans have a need to know their roots and the reason for their existence. Through the Creation story, we find a beginning to life. Such information is vital for human existence. Many humans find solace in the Creation story of Genesis. The ancient texts describing the miraculous events of creation are all the evidence many people need to substantiate their faith in a higher being, God. We praise Him for his perfection and for creating us, but we also attend church for repentance of that original sin. That is a debt we will never pay because the first temptation by the serpent initiated the downward spiral that we are continually sliding on. We are guilty beings. God has since forgiven us for all of our collapses in judgment; however, such forgiveness comes at an unseen price—human’s unease of conscience. While this Christian
and humanitarian position is somewhat surprisingly well-received by people all over the world, many different religions have similar versions of the Creation story. To study and learn from every aspect of the humanities is necessary to acquire this kind of knowledge, and the book of Genesis and Fred Nagelbach’s visual interpretation aid us in this quest.

*These sculptures may be viewed on the lawn in front of the Valparaiso University Center for the Arts (VUCA), Valparaiso, IN.