

god

Dominik Slusarczyk

We are the gods.

Chapter 1

We live in a bacterial world. We cannot see the bacteria. We cannot hear them or touch them. They are so small we cannot sense them but they outnumber us by many orders of magnitude. There are more bacteria on Earth than there are any other type of life form; our planet is dominated by single celled organisms.

We are made out of these cells ourselves: our body is made of trillions of cells stacked on top of each other. Again we see nothing of this. We cannot see one of the trillions of cells that our body is composed of. I was wrong when I said we live in a world dominated by single celled organisms; really we live in a world dominated by cells.

All life is composed of cells. There are a huge number of single celled organisms. All life bigger than this - all of the animals, all of the insects, all of the birds - are beings constructed of cells.

It is impossible to appreciate something in isolation. If all you had ever seen was the colour blue you could not possibly have an opinion on the colour blue. If all you had ever seen was blue you wouldn't even have a name for blue. If the whole world was white we would have no word 'white' because there would be no need to ever refer to white because everything would be white.

If you live in a completely blue world you would have no opinion on blue. You would not like or dislike blue. You could not possibly think blue was good or bad because good and bad are relative terms: something can only be good in relation to something that is worse than it. If we introduce another colour into your world suddenly comparison becomes possible. If I add one green object, say a blade of grass, to your world suddenly you can have an opinion of blue. If you think this new green object is ugly then your opinion of blue is that it is beautiful because it is more beautiful than the green blade of grass. If you think the blade of grass is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen then suddenly you think blue is ugly. It is only when you have something to compare a thing to that you become able to make judgements, form opinions, about the original object.

People are gods (re. beings of immense power) because of how they compare to other things. I can say we are gods because we have immense intelligence but I am only able to say we are intelligent because of how we compare to less intelligent things. We can say humans have immense intelligence because they are smarter than dogs and cows and chickens. People become gods because of how their intrinsic characteristics become apparent when they are compared to other things.

If there was an animal that was smarter than us it would not be possible to say humans are immensely intelligent. If dolphins were ten times smarter than us we couldn't say humans were gods because of their intelligence. We do not know of any life forms that are more intelligent than us. There are strange statistics that people say 'prove' there are thousands of aliens more intelligent than us. These statistics are not evidence they are guesses. Until we find aliens we do not know that they exist. Maybe we are the smartest things in the universe. Maybe Earth is the only planet with life in the universe. Maybe there are no aliens. Nobody has ever seen any aliens so we do not know that they exist.

We can say that we are gods because we are incredibly intelligent compared to the other life forms that we know exist. This logic is flawed because I am saying that humans are only intelligent because they are the most intelligent life form.

You do not have to be the very best at something to be described as that thing. I can, for example, say that people are gods because they are very large. What about elephants, I hear you say. What about whales? The problem we are having is we want to compare something to absolutely everything else in existence. We think that people are not big because elephants are bigger. This is a logical mistake: you can be big without being the biggest. You claim that elephants prove that humans are not big but by this same logic the biggest elephant in the world 'proves' that every other elephant is actually small. The second biggest elephant in the world is still big in the same way that we are still big. We are comparing things to the wrong things: we are comparing everything to ourselves.

We say elephants are big because they are bigger than us. We say mice are small because they are smaller than us. We are not the most important thing in the universe. We are not the thing that everything else should be compared to. We are not the yard stick that the whole of the universe is measured by. We place too much importance on ourselves when there is a far better thing we can compare life to.

The basic unit of life is the cell. There are more single celled organisms than there are any other form of life. We should be comparing things to single cells.

All life forms are made out of cells. In the same way as you can say that a house is red because it is made of red bricks you can say that life forms have certain characteristics because of the cells they are made of. Because we are made out of cells we can say that we are large because we are bigger than these cells we are made of. Instead of saying elephants are big because they are bigger than us we should be saying that mice are big because they are bigger than cells. It is entirely false for us to say that mice are small because they are smaller than us because it is nonsense to compare everything to us. The most telling comparison life can be judged on is the comparison to cells.

There is an even better reason to compare life forms to cells: all life started as cells. Every single life form on this planet - all the chickens, the blades of grass, the people - all evolved from one cell that lived billions of years ago. This individual cell, the cell that started it all, is an entity as close as we can get to the god the religions talk about. This is not relevant at this stage because I am not using the word god with any religious connotations I am using the word god to refer to a being that has immense power.

But we are not powerful, I hear you cry. Gorillas and sharks are powerful; we are weak. Something can be strong without being the strongest thing in the world. We need a yard stick to compare life to and this yard stick should be the cell. By comparing ourselves to a single cell we get an indication of how far we have come, how far we have travelled. Because we started as a single cell every difference between us and the single cell is a difference that can be used to define us.

Imagine you have a blue wooden block. There are millions of wooden blocks like this in your world where everything is blue. One day you wake up and your wooden block is green. The dimensions of the wooden block haven't changed, the weight of the wooden block hasn't changed; this block is exactly the same as every other block in every way except colour. Because the only thing that has changed is the colour of the block it is now possible to refer to this block as 'the green block'. This object is defined based on how it has changed in relation to the other blocks. When you call this block 'the green block' nobody is in any doubt as to what you are referring.

Our differences define us. Our differences are ways we have changed since we were a single cell. The gorillas got hairy, the elephants got long noses, we got big brains. It is the specific ways we changed that can be used to define us. One of the main ways in which us and the other animals changed is we got really, really big.

You don't think people are big. You don't think people are small either. You think people are normal sized. You must dispense with this delusion. People are not the yard stick which everything is measured against; something is not big because it is bigger than us and something is not small because it is smaller than us. It is nonsense to compare everything that exists to people. We must compare things to single cells because they are the most prevalent form of life.

Trillions of bacteria live inside of you: they are born inside of you, they live inside of you, then they die inside of you. There are thousands of different species of bacteria living inside of you. One of the places that these bacteria like living is in your stomach: when they are in your stomach they have access to all the food you have eaten. These species of bacteria are in competition - the food you eat is an incredibly limited resource. If species A eats all of your food species B will have nothing to eat. The bacteria are forced to resort to what every life form resorts to when in competition with other life forms: they try to kill each other. Species A tries to kill species B so species B cannot eat the food. Species B tries to kill species A so species A cannot eat the food. Bacteria are fighting wars in your stomach.

This is the reality of life, the reality of us. We are so large that trillions of little creatures can live inside of us. We are so large that the trillions of creatures living inside of us wage wars inside our bodies. Knowing this are you still prepared to call people normal sized? Would you call a creature so large that trillions of creatures can live inside of it normal sized? Of course you wouldn't. You would call this creature exactly what it is. You would call it massive, monstrous. You would call this creature a god.

We are gods because we are incredibly large. I am not using the word god in any kind of religious context I am using the word god to refer to something which has immense power. We have immense power because of our immense size. We are so large that trillions of creatures live inside our bodies. We are so large that we don't even notice the wars being fought in our stomach. This is surely power: you would have to say a creature with trillions of little creatures living inside of it is powerful.

And now, not by accident, we are in a situation where we have to call all the other animals gods as well. Anything larger than us must be a god. The smaller animals have creatures living inside of them so they are also gods.

While it is obviously true that all animals are gods it would be a distraction for me to focus on this for too long. While elephants are surely a type of god they are nowhere near as godlike as we are. I am not going to devote any time to discussing how the other animals are gods; this book is about a very specific type of god, the type of god that we are.

We are gods to the bacteria. Trillions of bacteria live their whole life inside our bodies. We are gods to other creatures as well. Think about flies, spiders, ants. Ants are microscopic to us so we are gods to the ants because of our immense size. We are gods to the spiders. We are gods to the flies.

We are so much bigger than these smaller life forms it is hard to visualise the size difference. We are more bigger than ants than skyscrapers are bigger than us. We are huge, gigantic, monstrous. Monstrous is the right word: to the ants we are monsters. We are gods to all animals

smaller than us and there are far more animals smaller than us than there are animals bigger than us.

I feel it would be wrong to say that animals larger than us assume god status to us. Whales are clearly not gods to us. There must be more to this god thing.