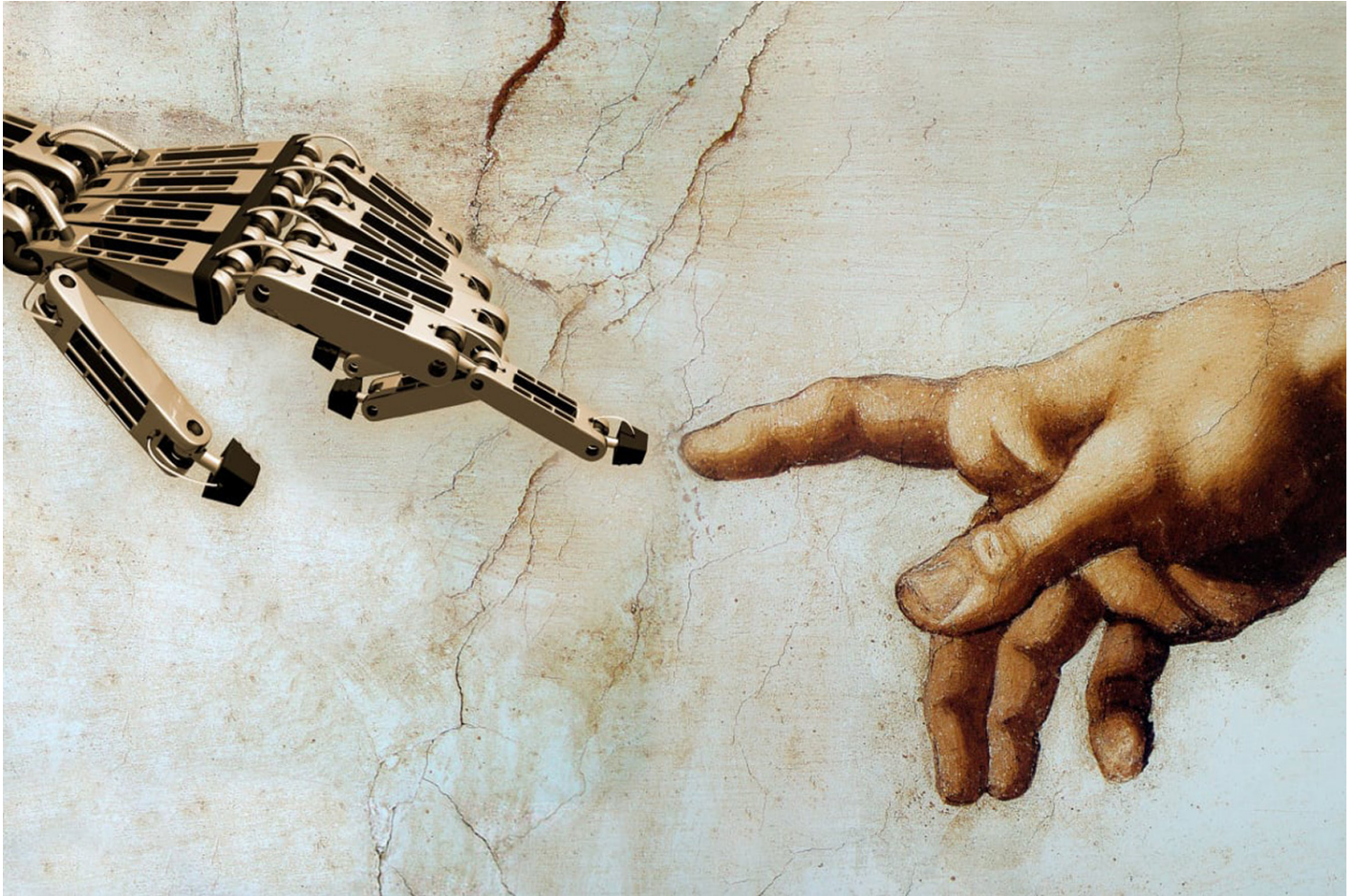


# Who Created Whom? Part 2

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## **Sin “Creates” Law and Order**

We typically think of the state of sin as being destructive—breaking down every perfect thing created by God. (When I use the term “sin” or “state of sin,” I’m referring to the *condition* of sin, not individual acts of sin.) The idea I want you to consider is that while sin is deviation from God’s design (His law), it has its own “creative” power at work in our world due to the sin state. This creative force did, in fact, lead humanity to create the false god of law and order.

Satan envies God’s creative power. What better strategy for Satan but to tempt humanity to move out of alignment with God’s design for life? The resulting infection of sin changed life on the earth at the deepest astrophysical, climatic, and genetic levels. Chaos and hardship took the place of harmony and happiness. Cycles of birth, survival, reproduction, and death ensued.

This creative force of sin is made of two parts:

- First, the pressure and stress from the chaos
- Second, the adaptations that occur because of the will to survive that is in every living being

We study the leopard, its beauty and its abilities, not even able to imagine what it was like pre-sin. We can see that every aspect of a leopard's physiology, instincts, and behaviors today are adapted to the harsh conditions that exist in a sin-state world. Its skeletal and muscular structures, metabolic pathways, dynamic senses, two-inch canines and retractable claws—all perfectly adapted for one purpose: to kill other animals. In that sense, the sin condition "created" this carnivore and its lethal powers, adaptations that enable the leopard to survive as a species even as its individual members perish. This sin-driven creation is the antithesis of divine creation.

While it is relatively easy for us to objectively consider the impact of the sin-state on the leopard and how sin shaped its adaptations, it is much more difficult for us to apply that same objective thought to the human condition.

As with the leopard, the sin-state has shaped human existence via adaptations in our physiology, instincts, drives, and behaviors. But many don't see the impact that this sin-state has had on our view of God. And just as adaptation has shaped collective behavior in the animal kingdom, the state of sin has shaped the collective behavior, values, and beliefs of human societies.

Satan's strategy was to set the stage for the replacement of God with the fall of man and the entry of sin into the world. After Adam sinned, everything began to change—climate, genetics, relationships, and even our perception of time, which now had a finish line, an end, and death loomed large. The sin-state of chaos and the deep fear of non-existence in human society can be characterized as a constant, unrelenting pressure-cooker, which directly produced the survival drives and instincts that became part of the human thought and behavior.

This resulted in a negative reinforcing loop in which fear and selfishness (the survival drive) generates (creates) various sinful inclinations, such as lust, greed, rage, aggression, domination, gluttony, and pride, which motivates human survival behaviors for both individuals and societies which only causes greater fear and selfishness triggering more sinful behaviors to protect and advance self. However, individual selfish (sin-based) behavior, if unchecked, leads to chaos that weakens the group, reducing the likelihood of the survival of all but the very strongest.

I believe Satan planned that, once the pressure-cooker was created, the scarcity and competition for resources to sustain life would drive a tournament pitting human against human. That tournament would lead to adaptation, experimentation, and trial and error around various forms of human governance. And the game changer in this competition between human societies was the idea of the rule of law.

Just as biological and instinctual adaptations to the sin-state have ensured that animal life goes on, the rule of law has also contributed to human survival and progress. But this human rule-of-law approach to governance is every bit a "creation" of sin as are the leopard's canines and retractable claws.

Humans quickly discovered they had better odds of survival by working together in groups than alone. Tribalism was born, in which authority combined with the rule of law became useful and even necessary. Tribal rule of law evolved into city rule of law, city-state rule of law, and eventually national rule of law. The pressure cooker of the sin-state created early forms of morality—the rule of law, which focused on deeds—and was followed quickly by the idea of law and order.

When someone is born into or joins a society, the implied social contract between the individual and the governing structure is this: I give up some measure of independence and freedom in exchange for

increasing my odds of survival and wellbeing. People born into such societies learn to either agree to abide by the rule of law and limit the ways in which they satisfy their selfish inclinations, or they suffer the consequences of inflicted punishment—isolation, banishment, or even execution. Survival is enhanced by both obeying the rule of law and forcing others to obey also.

Behavior that breaks the law is punished according to the law. And most of us instinctively believe that this is right(eous) and just(ified)—otherwise the system would break down; chaos would ensue; and our lives, our family's lives, and future generations would be less secure.

Looking back in time, we see that societies with stronger rule of law have tended to thrive and develop more effectively than cultures with weaker rule of law. The benefit of the rule of law is clear, whether attributed to a deity, a king, or a secular modern republic.

The correlation between rule-of-law status and gross domestic product (GDP), a measure of economic creation, per capita is not just linear, it is exponential. This means that in modern societies, a unit improvement (e.g., stronger property rights, less corruption) in the rule of law produces much more than a unit increase in GDP per capita, and that relationship accelerates at a higher and higher rate as the rule of law improves.

For instance, moving from the Wild West with gunslingers doing as they please (the strongest individuals surviving), to U.S. Marshals, circuit judges, and then to community sheriffs and local judges with consistent enforcement of the rule of law, resulted in societal gains—improved economy, health care, education, infrastructure, housing, personal wealth, and, thus, not mere survival but an improved standard of living.

Societies vary over time in terms of the strength of the rule of law. We see this play out in the tension between individual rights (freedom) and what those in power believe is for the good of everyone (rule of law). If externally imposed laws become too restrictive on human autonomy and liberty, then society also begins to suffer; consider, for example, the overly restricted rule of law in communist countries. So there is a tension between our desire for individual liberty and our drive to survive. Total individual freedom—the “law of the jungle”—reduces individual survival as does too much rule. Going too far either way weakens a society, both socially and economically.

The tension, disgust, and fear we feel as we watch the chaos of riots today validate the existence of this useful and powerful human instinct. The rule of law not only protects us, it strengthens us as a group. Without it, we are weakened and become vulnerable to the chaos of the sin-state world. But too much law restricts liberty and stifles growth. Consider, for instance, the impact on the economy through governmental restrictions on business and personal liberty during COVID.

Even in a society as meek and altruistic as a church organization, we see the utility of the rule of law. Members abide by the code of behavior and testify to the official beliefs. We see a hierarchy of power that deals with deviations by individuals and struggles with societal forces that exert pressure on its traditional norms and beliefs. This rule-of-law governance system of the church exists for the survival of the group, not for the ultimate wellbeing of the individual. Ironically, through evangelistic outreach, the message is one of individual eternal wellbeing. But even underneath this outreach is a strategy for survival of the group.

Back in the 1970's, I attended a private Christian academy where it was “against the law” to go to the movie theater. Faculty would cruise theater parking lots to enforce “law and order.” We students were

confused. The reason for enforced codes of conduct were murky. Were our teachers so concerned about our characters that they would spend their evenings on a dragnet? Were the norms really about morality and character? Or was something else going on?

If our principal had just been truthful and explained the real reason for group norms, a lot of grief could have been avoided and a certain level of respect established: "Students. We have rules against certain behaviors—theater attendance is one of them. I don't really care personally if you go to the movies or not. However, the wealthy people who support this organization have certain expectations of me. Our academy has an image that is important to our survival. If I and the administration are viewed as permissive, that brand is compromised and we will lose revenue. So, your choice. Abide by the rules or leave; I don't care what you choose. I do care about this organization and my job though."

My point with this example is that the confusion of real morality and the condition of the individual character with the rule of law, which protects groups, organizations, and societies, and is not actually ever concerned with the individual, is rampant. And such confusion feeds this idea of a god of law and order presiding over the ultimate court scene in heaven.

Hammurabi of Babylon is credited with the first extensive and codified rule of law, circa 1754 BC. There were codes of law previously in this region of the world and elsewhere (e.g., China), but his code was a significant step forward in the development in the rule of law. It even included some aspects of the presumption of innocence. The code included laws addressing slander, fraud, slavery, labor, theft, trade, liability, divorce, adultery, and perjury. Later codes include the Hittite, Assyrian, and Mosaic variants.

The people of the Fertile Crescent tended to view their kings as divine. As such, Hammurabi was thought of as a god-king on earth, and he is still honored to this day even in secular governments. A marble relief portrait of his depiction as *the lawgiver* is displayed over the gallery doors of the House Chamber in the U.S. Capitol Building. The rule of law has always been connected to the governing role and power of authority—whether democratically elected, or by birth as in a monarchy, or by violence as in the case of despots.

Uniting the rule of law with the belief in God (whether the true God or a pagan god) meant better group cohesion and odds of survival. Think of the progression. Authority used the rule of law to protect, bring justice, strengthen cooperation, and create stability—and such authority is equated with divinity. A god-king's reign was most effective when it compelled right behavior through the execution of force, power, and coercion. Citizens complied because of the visceral fear of non-existence caused by the sinful state.

Not only does the rule of law offer adaptive advantages to groups, it gives the individual a sense of control and power, reducing their own sense of fear and helplessness. Rule-keeping makes individuals feel safe and even righteous, which offsets the fear of punishment that sin instills. Thus, the rule of law appeals to the selfish heart as a means of protecting self through personal obedience and performance. It even provides a sense of control over the lawgiver, who is restrained from using power against a citizen who keeps the law. It is no wonder this rule of law construct has entered into every religion of the world.