Religion isn’t about the physical world. It’s not a quick fix to the question of where we came from or how the world works. It’s about the metaphysical world, good and evil. You can’t put good and evil into scientific terms the same way you can describe the functions of silicon gates in transistors. Scientific thought was hardly conceived back then, it wasn’t until the likes of Newton, Descartes, and Bacon in the 15th century that we started to really explore the inner machinations of the physical world once we had learned to survive in it.

Take the story of Adam and Eve, for example. Living in the Garden of Eden, innocent to the world around them. That is, until they ate the apple from the tree of life. Then they gained consciousness. They gained the knowledge of (a) God, knowledge of the future, but also with the stress and anxiety that comes with it, things only (a) God could bear (and consequently we can’t). Adam gets angry and blames Eve and God, everyone but himself as man does. And as always, women are responsible for the “fall”. After all, if female humans weren’t so picky (they place 80%+ of males below average) and didn’t make us work so hard to please them, males wouldn’t work as hard as they do. Again, the story doesn’t explicitly state that, because it is a representation of the progression of mankind.

They become aware that they are vulnerable and understand the nature of human vulnerability. Two things: knowledge of the future and knowledge of good and evil.

They have become awakened to our vulnerability of death and disease, then work to protect ourselves as long as possible. Once we see the future, we must prepare for it, or live in denial and terror.

Sacrifice is also a representation of the delay of gratification that makes humans the way we are. Maybe what started out as extra food from the large animals we killed (mammoths) to the realization that “if I save this meat for later, I won’t go hungry” to “neither will those I love” to “if I give others food now, they can give me food later” and the idea of both trade and sacrifice emerge. Sacrificing the present for gain in the future. A wolf doesn’t understand that, they down all the meat in one go. Humans know to preserve it. A sacrifice.

And our ancestors acted it all out in a drama. Personifying the force that governs the world as something that can be bargained with as if it were another human being. And the amazing thing is that it worked.

They also learn what is Good and Evil. They understand what it is like to be fearful and angry, and they understand how to produce those emotions in others, and thus the capability to torment others.

Later we see the story of Cain and Abel. Cain tries so hard to please God and makes sacrifices to him, but the sacrifices go without reward. Unlike his brother Abel, who God seems to love. God says it is Cain’s fault (insult to injury), and so Cain becomes resentful and kills Abel out of spite. It’s understandable to be angry if you sacrificed nothing of the present and got nothing in return in the future. But if you sacrifice without reward, you lose the present and the future. Then the world darkens and the soul rebels.

Disasters, poverty, cancer are all terrible things in life, but we are tough enough to handle that. But human evil adds a whole new dimension of misery to the world. Conscious human malevolence can break the spirit. No other animal knows how to torture like man.

The hard life magnified by the consequence of continually rejected sacrifices will bend people into monsters who then consciously work evil on others. It becomes a downward spiral for all of humanity. (However, the fact that humanity is not in the totally abyss is testament to our good nature, as more good people emerge than bad)

Socrates believed, as portrayed by his acceptance of poison, that if you live properly, fully, you can discover meaning so profound that it protects you even from the fear of death.

While we became conscious to evil, we also became conscious to good. Religion is an irrational motivation to do good in an irrationally evil world.

The story of Moses setting laws into stone. Before, everyone took every problem between each other to Moses to sort out and he got tired of it. But he notices they are all similar problems and sets in stone (literally) rules for which to live by. That brings stability into the world.

Christianity asked the impossible. It opposed infanticide, prostitution, or slavery. Women were to be as valuable as men, society’s enemies be regarded as human, and a separation of church from state so emperors couldn’t claim veneration due to gods. It asked the impossible, but it happened.

However, as the revolution progressed, the impossible problems disappeared from view. Even the fact that the problems existed in the first place disappeared from view. Only then could the problems less apparent be addressed. The development of science, aimed at resolving the suffering that was all too apparent in even successfully Christianized societies.

Christianity helped solve the metaphysical problems. Now the physical, scientific problems emerged.

Nietzsche’s problems with Christianity:

devaluation of the significance of earthly life as only the hereafter mattered

passive acceptance of the status quo, because salvation could not be earned in any case through effort in this life.

the right of the believer to reject any real moral burden because the Son of God had already done all the important work.