



ANDY ROSS

CORAL

THE NEXT TWIST OF FATE

REVEALING THE PLOT OF WORLD HISTORY



CORAL

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By the same author

LIFEBALL

MINDWORLDS

G.O.D. IS GREAT

PHILOSOPHER

CORAL

The Next Twist of Fate

Andy Ross

R**VER**

GERMANY

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Who, What, Why

My aim in this book is to lay bare the plot of history. The story of how we humans developed from apes to our present global dominion should have a plot, and if we look carefully we should be able to see it. We should also find it strong enough to move us to action.

My first bold step, one of three leaps of logic, is to change the subject. I say history is His story. To find out who “He” is, we need to go back in time, to the ancient patriarchs who founded the traditions of monotheism.

Historians take a godlike perspective on the topics of their inquiry. They write as scribes of He who sees all and knows all about their chosen theme. He embraces female historians too, of course, since “he” is now a gender-neutral pronoun. The ancient patriarchs broke a symmetry of gender there.

If man is the measure of all things, our godlike perspective is a psychic state of great scientific interest. We should see a growth of that perspective over history, as idealistic young men dreamed of passionate union with the divine presence and imagined a man could become a god.

The example that set the tone for most of Western history was the Christ figure defining the start of the Common Era calendar. To fill in some facts, the noun “Christ” is the English form of the Greek translation of the Hebrew word we write as Messiah, meaning the anointed one. Christians used the word as an honorific title for Jesus the Nazarene, the man whose crucifixion two millennia ago made claims that he was the prophesied messiah controversial, at least among Jews.

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His given name Jesus meant “Yahweh saves”, where Yahweh meant “he who causes to fall” and appears originally to have been a tribal storm god. In Hebrew, “Yahweh” was written as the tetragrammaton YHWH.

Christians said Jesus embodied the divine state of being. By the doctrine of transubstantiation, some claimed that the body of Christ was the global body of believers. Today we can all say we’re troopers in the human storm.

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Spiral dynamics is a sketch for a theory that frames human history to date in eight colored stages. I review that eightfold way, up to the global organism, Globorg, and take the next step, into the coral cloud. My second bold leap of logic is to see the global body of Christ as a glimpse of Globorg.

Relax: This book is not a religious tract and advances no religious doctrines, unless science be called religion. It’s just a back story for how we made the move from belief in gods to living in Globorg. My ideal reader is someone who wants to understand that move and who finds it hard to give the old word “god” any meaning in the twenty-first century of the Common Era. Too many believers still misuse the word in defiance of all reason to denote a supernatural patriarch, in blithe disregard of the absurdity of that usage following the tragedy of the Holocaust (the “sacrifice by fire”) that burned down Europe in the twentieth century.

In a coral scheme, those people who need a human image for divinity may find it in any and every human spark in the storm. From this perspective, belief in a mere patriarch is a shameful affront to the majesty of Globorg.

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The immediate reason I wrote this book was to resolve a few issues I'd obsessed about for decades but finally put into the frame of spiral dynamics in 2012. I have always been a bold champion of reason, eager to fight beside such allies as the famous four horsemen of the neo-atheist apocalypse (namely Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and the late Christopher Hitchens). Discussions with German Christians have clarified my views.

I find I can readily understand how Christians feel about our world. Like believers and infidels the world over, I feel dismay at the political mess caused by pressures and tensions between the monotheist faiths. The urgency of the task of clearing up the mess goes beyond normal science.

This history presents my attempt to understand the roots of the clash of civilizations in the dynamics of a logical but strange self I call Goof, for GOOF, the God of our fathers. GOOF is my new tetragrammaton for the God of Abraham. In my third leap of logic, I take a psychophysical view of this superhuman self, in which Goof is just another step on the way to coral life on cloud nine. The story turns out to be an astonishing saga. You couldn't make it up.

(Jon) Andy Ross
Germany, 2013

To boldly go, to God

Genesis

In the beginning was the bang. An explosive surge of energy filled the void. Bright light shone forth and galaxies formed. A universe was born.

If we look into the night sky and then do some thinking and some physics, we can work out how the story goes. With telescopes we can see billions of stars and billions of galaxies, each filled with billions more stars. The galaxies are all flying away from us, as if all the stuff of all the stars were once in a dense fireball that exploded.

As more details fall into place, the facts reveal a majestic drama. The Big Bang blew some fourteen billion years ago and left an afterglow, which expanded in a spray of galaxies and stars and has now cooled to a smooth microwave background. The speed of light limits what we can see to a cosmic bubble that is now some forty-two billion light years across, and as we look out we look back in time. At the edge, where the afterglow blocks a deeper view, we are back to less than a million years after the bang. All this is as near to fact as anything in the world we wake up to.

The galaxies began as swirls of hydrogen and helium gas that condensed to form stars, like raindrops in a fog. As the stars got denser they heated up, until nuclear burning began to fuse their hydrogen into helium. The bigger stars burned bright and cooked up heavier atoms in their superhot cores, then popped, or rather exploded in cataclysmic fireballs that shone far and wide, to seed the interstellar gas with the new elements. The seeded gas spawned further stars, many ringed

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by thick swirls of stardust. Those swirls of dust condensed to form families of planets orbiting the stars. Some small rocky planets settled at the right distance from their stars for oceans of water to collect on their surfaces.

One such planet was the Earth, our home. The Earth is some four and a half billion years old and has a mass of some six sextillion tons. It orbits the Sun, a vastly more massive thermonuclear fireball that has bathed it in warming photons from the start. If the Earth orbited any closer, like its sister planet Venus, it would be too hot for life. Any further out, like its smaller neighbor Mars, and it would be too cold. On Earth, the oceans stayed liquid and life evolved.

The first life evolved surprisingly fast, while the surface of the new planet was still being bombarded with a deadly hail of mountainous meteorites and cometary snowballs, but the first life forms were simple, hardly more than chemical soup. Zillions of complex molecules knitted together in chains and cycles that made repetitive patterns, which branched and budded and finally replicated. The first replicators may have grown around undersea hydrothermal vents, where today the forms that live around the hot stacks offer intriguing hints of how things used to be.

Life at this chemical level went on for long enough to let countless generations of ever better replicators evolve. The better forms ate the humbler ones, leaving no traces for us to find, until at last a giant but stable molecule emerged that replicated well enough to find a place at the heart of all the life that followed. This molecule was deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), which stored recipes for making proteins as templates made of bases that coded for the sequences of amino acids used to build up the proteins. The mechanism based on DNA became a monopoly, and we still use it.

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The logic of evolution brought forth more winners. The first life forms were microbes in the Archean era. They were single cells, very simple, and for them free oxygen was toxic. Since there was no free oxygen on Earth at the start of that era, this was fine, until after a billion years or so the microbes evolved into bacteria. Some of these bacteria evolved a way to use light to convert carbon dioxide and water into sugar and oxygen. This was photosynthesis. The sugar they liked, but the oxygen was waste and they dumped it. They kept on dumping for a billion years, until oxygen made up a good fraction of the atmosphere.

Eukaryotic bacteria evolved, and they learned about half a billion years ago to live together as big organisms with billions of cells. We call the era the Cambrian explosion, since then a riot of experimental body plans for the big organisms burst forth for natural selection to work on. The best bodies won the beauty contest, and standard genes on their DNA coded plans that again are with us still.

Here the story begins to look familiar. The eukaryotes split into plants, animals, and fungi. Some brave pioneers among them took to living on dry land. The plants flourished first and made even more oxygen. A hundred millions years later the air was like rocket fuel, and animals learned to thrive in it by burning sugar for energy. By now the Earth was a peaceful place. The worst of the volcanic turmoil was over and the continental crust had hardened. Now plate tectonics pushed the lumps of land around at a stately pace as convection deep in the planet churned the mantle rock up at oceanic ridges and down at subduction zones.

Plants and animals lived in symbiosis. Plants made oxygen and animals breathed it. Plants made sugar and animals ate it. Plants put their genes in pollen and insects spread it around.

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Soon huge beasts called dinosaurs evolved. They dominated the Earth for over a hundred million years. But then, quite suddenly, sixty-five million years ago, a rock as big as a city, with a mass of maybe a trillion tons, hit the planet at a spot that is now in Mexico. A global apocalypse followed, with firestorms, tsunamis, and dust clouds darkening the skies for years, causing a mass extinction that ended the days of the dinosaurs. In their place, mammals arose to take the pole positions in the global food chain.

Among the mammals, the big cats were dominant at first. They were carnivores and ate anything they sunk their teeth into. But the early apes, up in the trees, were smart enough to keep out of their way. Among the apes, one line branched into orangutans, gorillas, and chimpanzees. From the chimps, some six million years ago, came the first humans, in Africa. Various human groups grew bigger brains, until anatomically modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, walked out of Africa and into the wider world some hundred thousand years ago.

Human beings developed civilization and oral traditions of culture. The first languages were simple, good for little more than the transactions of everyday life, and the first cultures were haunted by magic, demons, and gods. These spirits dominated the lives of the man-apes and led them to create religious cults and myths to celebrate their place in nature. Then philosophers arose to scorn the old cults and myths. They started wisdom traditions and began to prize logic and evidence. Confused ideas became clear ideas, magic became mathematics, and new tools and trades encouraged pioneers to invent new machines. As the centuries passed, the best philosophers became scientists, whose work built up into an edifice of knowledge solid enough to serve as the foundation for the true story of creation.

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This, or something like it, is our modern creation myth. It is the highly refined result of prodigious efforts by countless generations of people, from preliterate agricultural workers to highly educated scientists. But it leaves a profound mystery. Who are we, and why are we here? Is there a deeper plan or purpose behind our lives?

Religious people say yes, we are children of the gods, who confound us with their schemes, or of God, the One, who weaves us into a cosmic plan. But why do we think this could help us, or even make sense? For rolling out such gods and plans is just begging the question: Who are these gods, why are they there? Who is God, and how does He or She help? As for plans, who can say they mean more than the words that air them? What gives a life meaning? What is meaning anyway? What's what? What?

We need to be methodical. The questions dissolve before the facts. In fact, here and now, we are entangled in a daily life that has its rhythms independently of our musings. Life goes on, and we regularly put aside our questions for long enough to make lunch, make a buck or two, or a million, or make love or war, or whatever else is on our agenda.

The deep questions remain unanswered, but even in daily life they pop up again and again. Who was never amazed that the food we eat is so good? Or that the institution of money works at all? And what is love, or war, anyway? The serendipities behind everything we do are so cool. Things work together in a zillion ways to support us in all our endeavors. Lunch could poison us, the bucks could lose their value, love and war could merge in a mess, but they don't, or at least they don't for long enough, or often enough, for life to go on. We expect things to work out. We nurse the faith that what we do will come out right in the end.

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Faith is proceeding in the hope or the expectation that things will work out, even if we don't know how or why. We can't live without it. If we're intellectually honest enough, we can't live with it either, so we try to build walls around our acts of faith to limit the damage if they fail. Faith is believing that the sun will rise tomorrow as it did yesterday and the day before. All the science you like can do no more than disguise that basic vulnerability behind probabilities. For a chicken, faith is also believing that the farmer who fed you yesterday won't cut off your head today. All of us are just as vulnerable. We make myths to stay cool in the face of facts.

This is where gods come in, or where God comes in. The human intellect is a pitifully limited instrument, and when all else fails we appeal to an idealized state of mind or being that transcends our feeble glimmer of consciousness. God knows, we say when asked a tough question, and thus leave open the possibility that somewhere out there in the realm of mind beyond our own the question admits an answer. That easy appeal to an oceanic spirit in which our personal drop of mind dissolves to nothing carries a cost. People begin to spin a myth around it. They imagine one or more cosmic entities watching over them, perhaps like a gang of superheroes, or perhaps like a heavenly father. And then they worry that their guardians may abandon them unless they worship them and follow what they take to be their orders. Soon they're caught in a net of obsessions and compulsions.

To see how this might work, imagine living in one of the earliest human tribes. Human beings are apes with a veneer of civilization. The ape self is a creature of appetite, obsessed with food, shelter, respect, obedience, and getting anything it wants. The inner life of such a self tops out in obsessions or fetishes relating to those goods. Let us color these fetishes

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beige or nude or tan, following a completely arbitrary color code. Taming apes with primal appetites to live together in peace is tough. Our tribal ancestors domesticated each other by inventing gods. Shamans invoked purple gods to bind their tribes together, drive out evil spirits, honor the dead, and so on. The next step in our evolution came when men saw heroes or leaders as gods, some of whom led their tribes in wars or great migrations. These red gods left traces in our earliest written histories. One such god, probably much like the others, was the Yahweh of the early Hebrews.

The blue gods came next, and they represented a big step forward. These gods anchored a social order, with written laws and a hierarchy of priests and kings. Some blue gods grew cults of great size and historical importance. One such was the Yahweh of Mosaic and later Judaic tradition, another was the God of the early and medieval Christian tradition, and yet another was the Allah of Arabian and other peoples in the golden years of Islam.

Next came the orange gods of reason, individuality, liberty, and enlightenment. These goods or goals pulled people away from the thrall of traditional religion and toward a new age of science and progress. The orange age brought us industry, democracy, capitalism, and socialism. After the orange phase came a green phase of political turmoil through relativism and pragmatic or instrumental ideologies. Later green politics became multicultural and environmentalist.

The green wave brought on a yellow wave of hard and even racist self-awareness, which mellowed into mysticism. Then came a turquoise or cyan world of global networking and holistic integration of individual selves in the terrestrial ecosystem that represents our latest worldview. The old word “god” and its cognates are all but gone.

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This color-coded anthropology is part of a scheme called spiral dynamics, which arose from the work of psychologists in the late twentieth century. To summarize:

1. Tan: Uncivilized humans apes live in a world of instincts dominated by survival imperatives.
2. Purple: Magical and animistic thinking leads to tribal gods mediated by shamans and voodoo-like traditions.
3. Red: Heroes and leaders are seen as gods, and some lead their tribes on mass migrations or wars of conquest.
4. Blue: A founding myth finds expression in fundamentalist religion and confers absolute value on a specific social order.
5. Orange: The individual self finds expression in a rational order where science flourishes and politics is democratic.
6. Green: A relativistic political scene blooms into ideologies first of revolution and then of multiculturalism.
7. Yellow: A new round of individualism puts a sharp focus on self, first in racist terms and then in mystic ideas.
8. Cyan: All the previous levels are taken up and superseded in a global network where high technology and new media flourish in a managed natural environment.
9. Coral: Will we go bionic and live in the cloud?

This psychological development has a spiral dynamics in the sense that higher levels or colors revisit old ideas in new ways. The development is an evolution of more complex mental organization from primitive beginnings. The spiral is not only a cultural history of our species but also a psychic trajectory for a person from infancy onward.

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Gods are nowhere to be seen in the world spun into being via spiral dynamics. Science has updated the creation myth almost beyond recognition. Modern science has brought us not only lots of cool stuff, from cosmic enlightenment to fast cars and washing machines, but also humility. To the best of our knowledge, we're just smart apes with a knack for survival in natural environments. Meaning has retreated from the realm of transcendent purpose, which so greatly exceeds our grasp that we grope in psychic fog for God's cosmic plan, to the realm of everyday function, at the mundane level where the meaning of the gas pedal is that when I press it the car goes faster. Science has taught us to accept hard facts. We can send spaceships to Mars, sure, but we only want to do so because we feel the urge to plant our seed in its virgin soil, in blind obedience to our genes. We see no higher purpose than that. We just do what we have to do.

We have science to thank, or blame, for our tranquility in the face of the facts. We breathe, we eat, we drive, and we fly without freaking out daily in mad horror. We all have our pet theories and wacky ideas, but most of us don't let them stop us living most of our lives in line with sound common sense. Our ideas go before us to shape our futures even before we inhabit them, so that we step out daily, on good days at least, into a preconfigured reality where the sun is in the sky, the food is on the table, the funds are in the bank, the gas is in the tank, and so on. All this proves the power of the faith we have already invested in sorting out our reality.

For us, God is a light or shadow from our past that may or may not throw light or shade on our future. Armed with the clear insights that scientists provide, we know too well that we often have only ourselves to praise or blame for the state of the world we live in. We're fairly sure that our conscious

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minds are the best tools we have as we journey into an unknown future. Our minds are tools that we ourselves deploy. Wait – our selves? What are they?

We now say our selves are virtual artifacts constructed by our brains. They're like computer models. To be more exact, they're avatars in the virtual worlds our brains build up from input delivered by our senses. To us, the virtual worlds look like the real world, but that's only because we're inside them. The imperatives of survival forced the generations that went before us to make their models realistic in all the ways that count for success in the school of hard knocks. But around the edges, where the model comes unstuck from reality, our ancestors could add any frills and follies and spandrels and spooks they liked to the picture. And they did. Some of them they called gods.

On this view of the mind as a modeling tool, the gods of our ancestors were parts of a package that worked. We know it worked because we're alive and kicking. But the package may include a lot of junk, or stuff that once seemed helpful but now seems useless. Almost all the gods that ever played a role in the mental dramas our ancestors spun out in their heads are now obsolete, false gods. Perhaps all of them are, but that suggestion awaits a sanity check. Can we move on and leave all gods behind? One way to tackle that question is to review the history of our gods.

We can sneak a peek at the short answer, or rather a hint: God helps those who help themselves.

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