

THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

whole world? Has it been *created* by supernatural power, or has it been *evolved* by a natural process? What are the causes and the manner of this evolution? If we succeed in finding the correct answer to one of these questions, we have, according to our monistic conception of the world, cast a brilliant light on the solution of them all, and on the entire cosmic problem.

The current opinion as to the origin of the world in earlier ages was almost a universal belief in creation. This belief has been expressed in thousands of interesting, more or less fabulous, legends, poems, cosmogonies, and myths. A few great philosophers were devoid of it, especially those remarkable free-thinkers of classical antiquity who first conceived the idea of natural evolution. All the creation-myths, on the contrary, were of a supernatural, miraculous, and transcendental character. Incompetent, as it was, to investigate for itself the nature of the world and its origin by natural causes, the undeveloped mind naturally had recourse to the idea of miracle. In most of these creation-myths *anthropism* was blended with the belief in the miraculous. The creator was supposed to have constructed the world on a definite plan, just as man accomplishes his artificial constructions; the conception of the creator was generally completely anthropomorphic, a palpable "anthropistic creationism." The "all-mighty maker of heaven and earth," as he is called in Genesis and the Catechism, is just as humanly conceived as the modern creator of Agassiz and Reinke, or the intelligent "engineer" of other recent biologists.

Entering more fully into the notion of creation, we can distinguish as two entirely different acts the production of the universe as a whole and the partial production of its various parts, in harmony with Spinoza's