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Multiple Paths to God:
Nostra Aetate, 40 Years Later

Edited by
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The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Preface

John P. Hogan

In 1960, less than 15 years after the end of World War II, human: concerns had begun to move beyond rebuilding ruined industries, cities and infrastructure, and to focus afresh on the meaning and goals of human life. A new awareness of human subjectivity was deepening the sense of the human person, and attention to the existential order brought forward a new sense of human freedom and self-responsibility. Correspondingly, structures and formal systems were being subjected to increasing question and soon would be revised.

In these circumstances Pope John XXIII could see that it was necessary to examine in-depth and to renew the Church's own self-understanding and practice. To do this he convoqued the Second Vatican Council which met from 1962-1965.

From the beginning it was intended that a statement would be made clarifying the relation of Christians and Jews with a view to warding off future persecution. In time this evolved into *Nostra Aetate* a statement of the relation of Christians to all non-Christian religions, it was the shortest of the Council Documents. Since then

- the new awareness of subjectivity has opened access to an appreciation from within of cultures and civilizations and of their religious roots,
- the new global interchange has brought the great religions into intensive interchange, upon which the peace of the world now hinges,
- the abandonment of ideologies and of hopes that humankind could save itself has brought new openness to religion and to the broad search for the spirit, and
- the various fundamentalisms have shown that all this can be done disastrously unless guided by a rich and discerning religious spirit.

Hence as we approach the 40th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* we are asked: what should be said now that could not have been said 40 years ago? It would be fruitless or worse to wait until 2005 to see what is written and than express misgivings about missed opportunities. Instead a pro-active approach is being initiated by the John Paul II Intercultural Forum in conjunction with The Center for the Study of Culture and Values (CSCV) in order to consult representatives of each of the various religious traditions regarding their heritage, to discuss this with representatives of the other religions, and to write a report and a volume which can be used in the preparation of documents for the anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* in 2005.

This weekly consultation focused upon 5 issues with regard to each of the non-Christian religious traditions, namely:

I. What is the nature of the particular religion and what are its salient characteristics?
II. What can it hope to contribute to the religious patrimony of humankind?
III. What does it expect from other religions; what form of recognition?
IV. What are its interests in dialogue with other religions, how could this best be implemented?
V. What might a revised *Nostra Aetate* say with regard to this religious tradition?

What should the Roman Catholic Church say now on the 40th anniversary of the Vatican II *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (*Nostra Aetate*) which could not have been said when that ground breaking document was originally drafted?

This volume is a report on a collaborative effort to identify elements to be taken into account in response to that question. The effort was undertaken by The Center for the Study of Culture and Values (CSCV) of The Catholic University of America (CUA) and the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, DC.

The consultation summarized here was a semester long discussion by a group of scholars brought together by the CSCV from around the world. Their purpose was not only to recognize the profound and pioneering insights that can be culled from *Nostra Aetate* (1965), but especially to revisit the contents of the document in the light of the rapidly advancing international and global context. The discussion provides many possibilities for interaction among cultures and religions.

The Center for the Study of Culture and Values is an academic institute that seeks to unfold the cultural, philosophical and theological values that shape and motivate human actions. In this, the Center works with a global network of scholarly teams formed by The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (www.crvp.org). These teams research and publish works to identify the cultural values of their people, and apply these values in response to contemporary challenges which call for cooperation among peoples.

The Pope John Paul II Cultural Center seeks to advance the rich human insights and apostolic concerns of Pope John Paul II and focuses on the importance of culture and its religious roots as the free response of peoples to the work of the Spirit in the world. Both organizations grow from and continue the Church's living traditions by applying these with new insight to present circumstances.

This consultation, in the Fall of 2003, brought together scholars from China, Indonesia, Thailand, India, Nigeria, Congo (DROC), Russia, Lithuania, Hungary, Netherlands and the United States. This report summarizes their frank but friendly weekly reflections over a two month period on: African traditional religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam, all in the context of the coming anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*. Concretely, participants were asked to respond to the following questions, from the perspective of their own traditions:

1. What is the nature of this particular religion and what are its salient characteristics?
2. What can it hope to contribute to the religious patrimony of humankind?
3. What forms of recognition does it expect from other religions?
4. What are its interests in dialogue with other religions; how could this best be implemented?
5. What might a revised and much expanded *Nostra Aetate* say today with regard to this religious tradition?

We wish to thank the following for leading the exploration of their respective religious traditions:

1. African Traditional Religions: Msgr. Théodore Mudiji, Facultés Catholique and Institute of African Religion, Kinshasa, Congo (DROC); and Dr. Chibueze C. Udeani, Nigeria, and Department of Intercultural Theology and Study of Religions, Faculty of Theology, University of Salzburg, Austria;
2. Hinduism: Dr. D.C. Rao, Washington Interfaith Forum, Washington, D.C.

3. Buddhism: Dr. Veerachart Nimanong, School of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

4. Judaism: Rabbi Leon Klenicki, Anti-Defamation League of Bnai Brith, New York

5. Islam: Imam Yahya Hendi, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

The presenters were assisted by colleagues from their religious traditions whose participation on the occasion was especially appreciated. The reports have been supplemented in this volume with a series of scholarly papers on each of the traditions. In addition, a short presentation on "The Heritage of Sikhism" by Bhajan S. Badwal is included.

The participants, in turn, are most grateful for the warm hospitality offered by The John Paul II Cultural Center. Rev. Frances Martin played a special role in helping to conceive and organize the project, and served as its key theological and spiritual resource person throughout. A note of gratitude is also extended to Msgr. William A. Kerr, Director of the John Paul II Cultural Center, Professor Joseph Donders of the Washington Theological Union, and to Msgr. Arthur Kennedy of the Office of Ecumenical Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. In addition, Ms. Karen King of the center was most supportive with logistics for the consultation sessions. The setting provided a perfect locale for critical but kind interchange – a table around which the "praxis of friendship and faith" could be lived out.

Introduction
Widening the Tent

John P. Hogan and *George F. McLean*

As we approach the fortieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, October 28,1965), we gradually realize how truly prophetic was this document of Vatican II. Though the shortest document emerging from the council it might prove to be the Church's passport to the world of globalization. This is especially clear when the document is read in tandem with *Lumen Gentium* (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*), *Gaudium et Spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern* World) and *Dignitatis Humanae* (*Declaration on Religious Freedom*). The six pages of *Nostra Aetate* (*Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian* Religions) speak to the issues of today – our fears and divisions, our hopes and our efforts toward unity. Most importantly, along with other documents of the Council, it recognizes the importance of the other great religions as multiple paths to God. The document speaks directly to our present wounded and warring world.

In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. (NA, 1 and 2)

Like the document on religious liberty that affirmed the sanctity of conscience in religious matters, the Council proceeded with the recognition that a full or even adequate theology of interreligious dialogue had not yet been worked out. That is still the case. Nonetheless, the Council signaled that the broad lines urgently needed for the progress of religion and life in our times were laid out.

Context of *Nostra Aetate*

Early on in the Council, Pope John XXIII asked the Jesuit biblical scholar Cardinal Bea to help draft a statement on Judaism. However, at the urging of the African and Asian bishops, the document quickly evolved into a treatment of all the world religions. As Bea wrote, it was the first time the church made an official pronouncement on non-Christian religions. The document moved the church further away from the exclusionary model of "extra ecclesia nulla salus" toward the possibility, at least, of non-Christian religions being vehicles of salvation. In spite of many unsolved issues, a positive tone was established and common concern sought with Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam.1

Both the positive steps forward and some of the ambiguities in *Nostra Aetate* are due to many precursors of Vatican II. From among many, three definitely deserve mention—Louis Massignon, Jean Daniélou, and Karl Rahner. Massignon was the French Catholic Islamic scholar who early on emphasized the Abrahamic roots of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He clearly placed Islam

within the context of God's plan of salvation promised by our common father, Abraham. He set up Badalija, an international organization to promote understanding between Christians and Muslims. Massignon died in 1962 but had been close to Pope Paul VI and was a strong influence on Vatican II's openness toward Islam and respect for the prophetic role of Mohammad.2

Jean Daniélou, SJ, long time professor of early Christian history and theology and later a Cardinal, was also instrumental in framing the view of non-Christian religions at Vatican II. He published widely on dialogue with non-Christians. He approached world religions from the perspective of a theology of history and within the broad spectrum of the unfolding of divinity to humanity. However, he placed religious traditions, other than Judaism and Christianity, in the "natural order". Other religious paths he saw as part of the "prehistory of salvation," part of a "cosmic convenant," but in need of supernatural fulfillment. In spite of these sharp scholastic distinctions, he accepted other religions as clear "natural" longings for the divine and deserving of deep respect. Daniélou's name is most often connected to the so-called "fulfillment" theory and had strong influence, not only on *Nostra Aetate* but also on the Vatican II document on missionary activity, *Ad Gentes Divinitatus* (*Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity*).3 The work of Henri DeLubac and Hans Urs Von Baltazar followed lines similar to that of Daniélou.

Finally, some mention must be made of perhaps the most influential precursor for the view of non-Christian religions manifested at the Council, namely, Karl Rahner, SJ. Rahner pursues an approach similar to Daniélou, but further breaks down the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. By beginning with the mystery at the core of every human being. He brings nature and grace together. For Rahner, other religions mediate the true saving grace of Christ to their followers; he recognized the saving power of God in other religions. They are vehicles of salvation, but somehow connected to salvation in Jesus Christ – therefore his term "anonymous Christians". Today this label may appear as a subtle put down, but during Vatican II it was a giant step forward as it opened the way to genuine and respectful dialogue.

Rahner's transcendental method was the key to furthering that dialogue and is manifested in the respect and openness of Nostra Aetate. This method, which brings together anthropology and theology, holds that every act of human knowledge implicitly affirms the existence of God. Joseph Donceel affirms Rahner's approach, "Humans know God somewhat in the way in which the Hudson River would know the ocean if the river were aware of its own flow, which carries it irresistably toward the Atlantic Ocean."4 This dynamism of the intellect, present in every human person, is an openness to the infinite. Rahner's "supernatural existential" opens all humans to the life of grace, to the supernatural.

This method allows Rahner to cross the great divide between nature and supernature – between Christianity and Judaism and the other religions. Moving ahead from Daniélou's perspective, other religions are not merely a pre-history or preparation for the gospel (*praeparatio evangelica*), but rather are "supernatural acts of God that make saving grace available to human beings."

Although still holding to something of the "fulfillment theory," with his perhaps unfortunate term, "anonymous Christians," Rahner's approach was a great step forward and clearly his influence can be traced through the Vatican II documents on non-Christian religions.5

In a very real sense, Rahner's approach to dialogue and understanding other religious traditions can only be understood as a call for a deeper conversation – a mystagogy in which both partners in the dialogue deepen their search for understanding God.

These are but a few of the preparatory steps that led to *Nostra Aetate*. What emerged was a constructive and optimistic opening but one coupled with an uncharted direction for future ventures into comparative theology and the theology of religions.

Current Context: Search for Unity in Diversity Among Religions

This brief look back at some of what went into *Nostra Aetate* leaves one with a sense of the great strides that have been made. The document, however, also points to the unsolved "quarrels and dissensions" over the centuries. " Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom" (NA, 3). But forgetting the past is not easy. The document concludes with a number of practical injunctions that are, only now forty years later, being put into practice and thereby to the test. Nonetheless, *Nostra Aetate*'s call for respectful dialogue is clear.

We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4, 8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. (NA, 5)

How have these injunctions and tasks been implemented over the years? The questions raised in *Nostra Aetate* have magnified and indeed been made more practical with the advent of the process of globalization and the corresponding inter-cultural dialogue since 1980. The issues of *Nostra Aetate* and the need for interfaith understanding have been transformed into issues of life and death, war and peace.

Whole new approaches to world religions have emerged, most notably comparative theology and theologies of religions. Religious pluralism and some of the questions brokered by *Nostra Aetate* have been, in a sense, the broad horizon within which theological thinking takes place today. In the west, a number of names stand out in this process, from Karl Barth to John Hick, with many more, for example, Paul Knitter, James Fredericks and Jacques Dupuis, falling somewhere in-between. In the East, Stanley Samartha, Michael Amaladoss, and Ramon Panikkar, among many others have wrestled particularly with the uniqueness and universality of Christ in the face of the growing awareness of religious pluralism

Early in the discussion, Alan Race promoted a helpful heuristic model for Christians using three categories: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.6 These served Christian theology for a number of years providing space to locate various thinkers – from fundamentalist evangelicals to Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants.

Recently, however, Paul Knitter has replaced the three categories with four that provide a more descriptive base.7 His models are: replacement, fulfillment, mutuality and acceptance. The "replacement" model, represents the view that only one true religion exists and allows for little or no value in non-Christian religions. In this exclusionary model other religions need to be replaced by the conscious saving action of Christ and the Church. This model is close to the position espoused by the great Protestant theologian Karl Barth.

In the "fulfillment" model the "one (true religion) fulfills the many other religions" as ways of salvation but in the sense that Christ and Christianity confirm or enhance what is found in them. Christ "fulfills" the other religions. This inclusive but modified inclusive perspective has many adherents, particularly in the Catholic Church including Daniélou, Rahner and Dupuis. Probably it also best describes the perspective of Pope John Paul II.

In the "mutuality" model the many true religions are called to dialogue. Knitter describes a category close to the earlier pluralist model, but with many levels: philosophical-historical, mystical and prophetic. This model calls for continued dialogue on all these levels and gradual movement toward convergence based on praxis. Knitter places a number of thinkers, both Eastern and Western, within this model. Some have crossed over various levels, e.g., Hick, Amaladoss, and Pieris. Although Knitter himself seems to advocate this model, he readily admits to criticisms of the position, including dangers of creeping imperialism, creeping relativism and the potential for a lack of fidelity to the Christian faith. In spite of these dangers, he clearly opts for the need to continue the open, honest, praxis-oriented conversation.

Lastly, Knitter posits the "acceptance" model, "meaning many true religions— so be it." In this model, religious differences are simply accepted and no common ground is sought. Emphasis is placed on differences and any attempt at superficial inclusionism is avoided. Differences are valued as something permanent. Attempts at inter-religious theology are, more or less, ended, out of respect for differences. This model seems to be a direct outcome of the frustrations reached over the impasse around the uniqueness and universality of salvation in Christ. Knitter includes in this model, George Lindbeck and Paul Griffiths, as well as Catholic theologians, Francis Clooney and James Fredericks.

Clooney and Fredericks have called for a "moratorium on theologies of religions and emphasize instead the need to develop a comparative theology." They seek to study other religions in order to deepen and understand Christian faith. Knitter has sympathy for this view but clearly is not ready to give up the struggle. He is convinced of the value of seeking commonalities among the world's religions and investigating the possibility of a "complementarity of absolutes". In short, he sees the necessity, indeed one might say, the demand of both comparative theology and theologies of religions.8

Knitter's interest in continuing the quest for a theology of religions goes beyond the theoretical. Today's practical problems of interreligious conflict, global hunger, and war and peace have clearly motivated his quest. Early on he related theologies of religions to liberation theology. The encounter with other religions does not begin with the mystery of God but rather with the mystery of salvation or liberation. This hermeneutical-praxis approach and his own study of Buddhism have suffused his Christology and Soteriology. As Aloysius Pieris states, "the common thrust remains … soteriological, the concern of most religions being liberation (*Vimukti, Moksa, Nirvana*) …" However, Knitter's position does not deny the divine-human relationship and seeks to advance the search for unity in diversity. His approach can be clearly distinguished from the anti-religious position of radical humanism (Rorty) that claims that man liberates himself and that religion distracts from this effort (Marx).

Liberation theology's preferential option for the poor clearly resonates with Knitter's view of the Savior as well as his call for a theology of religions. "If the religions of the world … can recognize poverty and oppression as a common problem, if they can share a common commitment (expressed in different terms) to remove such evils, they will have the basis for reaching across their incommensabilities and differences in order to hear and understand each other and possibly be transformed in the process."9

However, at this point in history, at least in the West, many see religion as in danger of being reduced to anthropology and God to man. It becomes crucial to remember that soteriology is not about what humans make of human life, which we find to be increasingly degrading, destructive and even genocidal, but about what humans can become in God. It is in God that we trust and God who liberates. Augustine's view is foundational; it is God who first loved man, not man who first loved God. Religion is a human virtue, but precisely as it relates the human to God.

Moreover, how can scholars be justified in running out of patience with the issue of the uniqueness and universality of Christ in less than 40 years? Many other issues of less importance have taken many centuries to resolve and even then leave us still wrestling with mystery.

But in all this and even in the attempted escapes via accepting ultimate theoretical alienation and looking only to comparative theology and/or practice, there appears to be a latent materialism and individualism. Classically the first attribute of a material substance is quantity, described as divisible into parts each of which is outside of every other. In this way of thinking each religion stands as external and in contrast to all others. This is the characteristic anglo-saxon way of thinking and its fundamentally nominalist understanding of reality as composed of single atomic entities opposed to each other.

This contrasts to a spiritual and religious vision that understands reality in terms of a unity that is translucent and joyful—in Hindu terms the Brahma is existence, consciousness and bliss. The same sense of fundamental unity is true of primitive totemic thought, in mythic thought and in the Platonic sense of participation that suffused the theology of the Fathers.10 This kind of approach is detailed in the studies below related to each of the major world religions.

What it means religiously is that just as all comes from the One, all is oriented to the One and thereby the multiple religions proceed along pathways that in principle are convergent. We now are able to read more deeply into the human consciousness of both mind and heart through phenomenology and through hermeneutics to articulate its meaning for the interpretation of, and communication with, others and their cultures. As a result we can now see more clearly that what is distinctively human is not in contrast and opposition to others, but essentially transcending the borders of oneself and in relation to all others. The distinction between humans and their religions is essentially relational, i.e. it is in the way each relates to all others. Note that Christian theologians would even say that the distinction within the Trinity between Father, Son and Holy Spirit is essentially, indeed solely, relational; all that the Father is given to the Son except Fatherhood itself, which is a relation distinct from Sonship, and vice versa.

Mutatis mutandis this provides the key to thinking about the relation between religions. It is not that they are univocous or equilvalent, but rather analogous in the sense of being one in terms of convergence on the One; they are many but in terms of their distinctive relations to one another. This is very different from saying that religions are simply many and that we should leave it at that. Indeed in these global times we see how such an abandonment to an unprocessed multiplicity leaves religion at the disposition of those who would manipulate each difference into the many current variations of crusade and jihad. On the contrary, it is rather in understanding the basic

relatedness of the religions and of the cultures and civilizations they found that the religions can guide humankind on the path of peace.

Philosophers may be of help to theology and to Knitter's quest; for them the issue of the one and the many is the perennial issue; it is when they are able to grapple with this issue that they are truly philosophizing. To eliminate one or the other, or reduce one to the other, would be the end of philosophizing. Maintaining a dynamic tension may be a better context for continuing the exploration into the relation among religions opened by Vatican II in *Nostra Aetate*. The task was never to reduce the many to the one or the one to the many.

Like its handmaid, philosophy, theology's task is to protect, preserve, and promote the multiplicity of the great religions as relations to God and to each other, and indeed so to penetrate each of them that from within one is able to ground their relation to each other in their relation to the One that exceeds all comprehension. This is the journey and goal that draws together rather than divides and it is precisely this that we must be about in our global age.

While it is clear that *Nostra Aetate* could not have predicted the state of the world at the dawn of the new millennium or the importance of interreligious dialogue in a world caught between globalization and fragmentation, the categories and models evoked by the document help us to locate its trajectory in the present.

Reports on Various Traditions

Thus, the pioneering wisdom of *Nostra Aetate* has become increasingly clear. The evolution of human experience in living out God's wondrous gifts has led to the exercise of human freedom in its highest form, namely, its response to the glory of God our maker.

Now forty years later we find that recognition of the multiple religions as rendering due honor to the creator calls them to intensive efforts to appreciate, mutually respect and cooperate among themselves. This interchange has been vastly intensified by global communication as well as by the surging economic, political and especially cultural interaction. All conspire to enable a deeper appreciation of the distinctive way each people has, with profound devotion, come to honor God by cooperating with the work of the Spirit; this is the very heart of the particular cultures. The patterns of community, social compassion and self-sacrificing love image that divine life.

Indeed the intensity of this impulse has come now to present humankind with its greatest challenge. To the degree that peoples succeed in imaging the divine life they fulfill the radical search for happiness that gives meaning to all. But where they depart from this image the resulting privation of the good constitutes the catastrophe of sin and evil. As men and women are fallible it can be expected that they will at times become confused in their search for the good. In those cases, the very intensity of the search to imitate and respond to the Absolute Good in turn provides the potential for even greater evil.

Hence at this fortieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* we find much to celebrate in the progress of relations among religions that it unleashed. However, we find also much to be concerned about when efforts to protect a faith become confused and unleash "holy" fervor that too swiftly can degenerate into inter-religious competition and conflict.

We are challenged today therefore:

- to see the distinctive and varied devotion of each of the great religions and the proper contribution each makes to the basic human endeavor of honoring our maker by living in truth and love the life received from him;

- to see how these religions can relate to one another in a positive and complementary manner; and

- to work out in the terms proper to each religion its distinctive manner of relating to God and to other religions.

Here we shall focus on the first two tasks, leaving the third to the theologians of the various faiths. As noted above, this process is ongoing and vibrant. Hence this report is not a theological treatise, but rather a summary of a consultation of religions in order to identify their present self-concepts, sensibilities and possibilities for cooperative interchange. To work on the first two challenges a team of some 15 scholars reflecting the various major religions and cultures met weekly at the John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., to review the following set of five questions in relation to each of the great religious traditions:

1. What is the nature of the particular religion and what are its salient characteristics?
2. What can it hope to contribute to the religious patrimony of humankind?
3. What forms of recognition does it expect from other religions?
4. What are its interests in dialogue with other religions; how could this best be implemented?
5. What might a revised *Nostra Aetate* say with regard to these global religious traditions?

These questions seek the lines of continuity across the religions, with special attention to each unique contribution. This allows participants to glean what the promise might be if it were possible to draw from one another in a process that would not destroy or diminish, but enrich and evolve all traditions. In this way it might be hoped that the meeting of religions would not be a search for an abstract universal remote from daily life, but rather a mutually corrective and complementary process in which each could evolve in ways adapted to, and promotive of, its concrete religious effort to become ever more fully open to the divine and reflective thereof.

What can such a survey hope to contribute with reference to *Nostra Aetate*? A number of points were particularly salient:

1. to see if some dimensions of the religious experience of the great faiths were omitted in *Nostra Aetate*. Indeed, this obviously is the case if due only to the brevity of the overall document; its one paragraph recognition, rather than treatment, of the great religions of the East; and its total omission of the traditional religions of Africa;

2. to identify central dimensions of the religious outlook of members of the various faiths which have been little recognized by others. This opportunity for each to speak for itself is an essential prerequisite for renewing and redeveloping documents on the increasingly urgent issues of the relation between peoples based in their religions;

3. to draw upon important religious resources found in the separate religious traditions and now required for the progress of all. Similar to the way the genetic resources of certain wild grains prove to be keys to agricultural resiliency, there is need to look for elements in one or another religious tradition which are particularly needed by others in facing their religious challenges of life in our times;

4. to complement one tradition by religious insights drawn from others in order to render each more integral in relation to the contemporary evolution of human life. This task was seen less as making external additions by alien elements than as the stimulation of a tradition to go more deeply

into its own religious resources in order to evolve more adapted modes of religious response to present circumstances; and

5. to see how the religions can help one another in making their indispensable contribution to the needs of our secularizing culture.

The following are the reports on the successive consultations on African traditional religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism.

Structure of the volume

The context of this volume is *Nostra Aetate* which is reprinted here as the basis for reflection and development. The document is followed by the consultations which responded to the basic question: what should be said today, 40 years after the publication of the document which could not have been said then. It specifies as well the five specific questions to which each presenter on the major religions was asked to respond. The volume includes the report from each consultation supplemented by related studies.

Professor M. Aydin, an Islamic scholar from Turkey takes up the task of describing the history of Catholic teaching on "extra ecclesia nulla salus" prior to Vatican II and the development of Catholic theology on the subject before the Council. He then states the teaching of Vatican II on non-Christian religions and in particular that of *Nostra Aetate*. This is the first chapter of his longer study *Modern Western Christian Theological Understandings of Moslems Since the Second Vatican Council* in which he carries out a detailed and balanced examination of the sequence of the subsequent documentation from the Vatican as well as from the World Council of Churches and related theologians.11 In this he shows the original leadership of the Vatican while noting the special advances by the World Council of Churches. He noted the Catholic communion's special care and concern for the implications of the divinity of Christ.

African traditional religions are not mentioned in *Nostra Aetate* but they figured prominently in the days of prayer called by Pope John Paul II at Assisi. The discussion led by Msgr. Theodore Mudiji and Prof. Chibueze Udeani is summarized in the report. This focuses on religion and on the general issue of the relation of the African cultural heritage to the global encounter of civilizations. Two additional articles examine the religious character of African life. The first is "The Totemic Way to God," by George F. McLean, examines the phenomenon of totemism basic to African thought as well as to the early culture of other peoples. McLean identifies totemism's proto-religious character in recognizing one reality in relation to which all is understood and coordinated while remaining both above all and inexhaustible by anyone. The second paper is by N.K. Dzobo once head of the Presbyterian Evangelical Church of Ghana. He describes the values of the changing African society and the way they are rooted in the divine as the creative principle, thereby establishing the fundamentally religious character of the whole of life.

The discussion of Hinduism was led by D.C. Rao and is summarized in that report. It is supported by two studies. The first, by George F. McLean, studies two basic Hindu texts. One is the Hymn of Creation (Nusadiya Sakta, *Rg Veda* X, 129). This celebrates the emergence of all from the one undifferentiated origin and thereby sets the radically religious character of all of life. The other is the *Bhagavad Gita* (Bks 1 and 2) often considered the Hindu *New Testament*. The second study is by Professor R. Balasubramanian of the University of Madras and examines the relation between traditional, religious based cultures and the more technical modern modes of knowledge.

The discussion of Buddhism was led by Professor Veerachart Nimanong. To this is appended his text on "Thai Therevada Buddhist Understanding of Non-Attachment: the Middle Way for Culture and Hermeneutics in a Global Age" which also relates these insights to recent work in hermeneutics.

The discussion of Judaism was led by Rabbi Leon Klenicki and is supported by his own article on "The Other as Person of God: From Disagreement to Recognition: A Reflection on the Interfaith Dialogue." This builds notably on the thought of Martin Buber and was published first in*Current Dialogue* (the Office of Inter-Religious Relations of the World Council of Churches). The covenanted roots of Judaism are developed substantively by David Hartnam and Elliott Yagod of Jerusalem in "God, Philosophy and Halakhah in Maimonides' Approach to Judaism." This paper was first presented, along with a commentary by the late Isaac Franck, at a Conference of the International Society for Metaphysics on "Man and God" held in Jerusalem.

Islam was discussed by Iman Yahya Hendi. This report is expanded upon in two articles. One is by George F. McLean on "The Relation between Islamic and Christian Cultures" which examines similarities but treats as well the importance of the divergence and its implication for cooperation. This theme is taken up as well by Nur Kirabaev of Kazakhstan and Moscow in his article on "Islamic and Christian Cultures: Reopening the Lost Dialogue".

Finally Bhajan S. Badwal reports on the Sikh tradition as it attempts to integrate Islam and Hinduism.

Nostra Aetate in 2005

The presentations in this volume are reflections from around the globe. They serve to point up the importance and promise of *Nostra Aetate* at this troubled juncture for humanity. Our culture and traditions, especially our religious faith, are the roots of our freedom and creativity. Indeed, while they should be a source for bringing us together they, too often, are used to divide us. Secularism, individualism and consumerism all seem to have collaborated to cajole and control the dialogue around global politics and economics. Culture and religion, to a great extent, have had minor places at the global table, yet they may well be the only remaining honest, non-commercial transnational brokers.

Religion, as Bernard Lonergan reminds us, is "being in love with God as the ultimate fulfillment of the human capacity for self-transcendence". He continues that "this view of religion is sustained when God is conceived as the supreme intelligence, truth, reality, righteousness, goodness. . . Unless religion is totally directed to what is good, to genuine love of one's neighbor and to a self-denial that is subordinated to a fuller goodness in oneself, then the cult of a God that is terrifying can slip into the demonic, into an exultant destructiveness of oneself and of others.12

Indeed, today that terrifying cult seems to have crept into every religious tradition and we all are effected by the consequences. Dialogue and openness are the only effective weapons against this narrow, and divisive interpretation. The defining metaphor for Lonergan's understanding of religion is "falling in love." Keith Egan interprets that free-fall in terms of "reaching out" and "reaching up"13 which is precisely what *Nostra Aetate* calls us to do.

As we approach the fortieth anniversary of this limited but pioneering document, we need to engineer a hermeneutical move that will allow us, indeed call us, to a revision of the text that will aid us in seeing the convergent paths of different religious traditions, great and small. This can happen only by mutual understanding: we all need to " widen our tents." The essays collected here

help us to do that. The daring message of the prophet Isaiah provides the challenge for an updated *Nostra Aetate*.14

Widen the space of your tent,
Stretch out your tent cloths unsparingly,
Lengthen your ropes, make the pegs firm;
For you will burst out to the left and right. (Is 54: 2-3).

Notes

1. Garvin D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003), pp. 101-103.

2. See, Mahmut Aydin, *Modern Western Christian Theological Understanding of Muslims Since the Second Vatican Council* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2002), pp. 16-18; and Herbert Mason, *Testimonies and Reflections: Essays of Louis Massignon* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989.)

3. See James Fredericks, "The Catholic Church and the Other Religious Paths: Rejecting Nothing that is True and Holy," *Theological Studies* (TS), 64, June 2003, 227-229. See also Jean Daniélou, *The Salvation of Nations* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1962); and *The Lord of History: Reflections on the Meaning of History* (London: Longman Green, 1958).

4. Donceel, "Rahner's Argument for God", *America*, 123 (Oct.31, 1970), 341.

5. See Fredericks, *TS*, 229-233; see also Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions," *Theological Investigations* 5 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 115-134; and "Observations on the Problem of the Anonymous Christian," *Theological Investigations* 14 (New York: Seabury, 1976), pp. 280-298.

6. Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (London: SCM, 1983; rev. ed. 1994).

7. Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).

8. See "Review Symposium," *Horizons* 30, Spring 2003, especially Peter C. Phan, 112-117; for whole symposium with reviews by Peter C. Phan, James Fredericks, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Roger Haight, SJ, see 112-135. See also, Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002) and James Fredericks, "The Catholic Church and Other Religious Paths: Rejecting Nothing that is True and Holy," *TS* 64 (June 2003), 225-254.

9. Paul F. Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralist Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), p. 187. See also Alfred J. Hennelly, S.J. *Liberation Theologies: The Pursuit of Global Justice* (Mystic, CT: Twenty Third Publishing, 1977), pp. 301-310; and Paul F. Knitter, "A Liberation Centered Theology of Religions," in *Dialogue and Liberation: Foundation for a Pluralist Theology of Religions* (Madison, NJ: Drew UP, 1988).

10. George F. McLean, *Ways to God* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999).

11. See above Note 2.

12. Bernard J.F. Lonergan, SJ, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 111.

13. Keith J. Egan, "Reaching up," *Horizons* 26 (Fall 1999), 285-289

14. See William Cenkner, "Make Wide Your Tent," *Horizons* 24 (Fall, 1999), 273-276.

Nostra Aetate

Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions

Paul, Bishop
Servant of the Servants of God
Together with the Fathers of the Sacred Council
For Everlasting Memory

1. In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her tasks of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth (1). One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men (2), until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light (3).

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgement and retribution after death? What, finally is the ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

2. From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing "ways," comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ, "the way the truth, and the life" (John 14, 6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (4).

The Church therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

3. The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself, merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth (5), who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes great pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honour Mary, His virgin mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgement when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, alms-giving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this Sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

4. As the Sacred Synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ — Abraham's sons according to faith (6) — are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well- cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles (7). Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ Our Peace reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself (8).

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "There is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 8, 4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation (9), nor did the Jews, in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading (10). Nevertheless God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues — such is the witness of the Apostle (11). In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3, 9) (12).

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this Sacred Synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as fraternal dialogues.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (13); still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new People of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the Word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

5. We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4, 8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and the man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, colour, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this Sacred Synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2, 12), and, if possible to live for their part in peace with all men (14), so that they many truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven (15).

The entire text and all the individual elements which have been set forth in this Declaration have pleased the Fathers. And by the Apostolic power conferred on us by Christ, we, together with the Venerable Fathers, in the Holy Spirit, approve, decree and enact them; and we order that what has been thus enacted in Council be promulgated, to the glory of God.

Rome, at St. Peter's, 28 October, 1965.
I, PAUL, Bishop of the Catholic Church
There follow the signatures of the Fathers.

Footnotes

(1) Cf. Acts 17, 26
(2) Cf. Wis. 8, 1; Acts 14, 17; Rom. 2, 6-7; 1 Tim 2, 4.
(3) Cf. Apoc. 21, 23f.
(4) Cf 2 Cor. 5, 18-19.
(5) Cf St. Gregory VII, Letter XXI to Anzir (Nacir), King of Mauritania (PL 148, col 450 f.)
(6) Cf. Gal. 3, 7.
(7) Cf. Rom. 11, 17-24.

(8) Cf. Eph. 2, 14-16.
(9) Cf. Luke 19, 44.
(10) Cf. Rom. 11, 28.
(11) Cf. Rom 11, 28-29; cf Dogmatic Constitution, Lumen Gentium (Light of Nations), AAS, 55 (1965), p. 20.
(12) Cf Is. 66, 23; Ps 65, 4: Rom. 11, 11-32.
(13) Cf. John 19, 6.
(14) Cf. Rom. 12, 18.
(15) Cf. Matt. 5, 45.

The Catholic Church's Teaching with Special Reference to the Second Vatican Council

Mahmut Aydin

Introduction

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council on non-Christian religions has been regarded as an important beginning and an epoch-making breakthrough in the Catholic Church's relationship with non-Christians and their religious traditions. For the first time in the history of the Catholic Church, the *magisterium* (the teaching office of the Catholic Church) has spoken about non-Christian religions as entities which the Church should respect and with which Christians should enter into dialogue. In this chapter we will examine the conciliar documents which deal with non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular in order to investigate their contribution to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding. In the light of the statements of the Second Vatican Council, we will ask how the Catholic Church theologically perceives non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular. We will also note which aspects of Muslim life and religion are emphasized, omitted or hardly mentioned in those statements.1

We believe that it is necessary to examine the text concerning Muslims in conjunction with other conciliar texts which refer to non-Christians in general, since the conciliar statements about Muslims can only be understood within the context of the Vatican II's general theological teaching concerning non-Christian religions and their followers.2

A Brief History of Catholic Teaching Until Vatican II

It is important to recall the official Catholic teaching about non-Christians up to the Second Vatican Council in order to see clearly to what extent the conciliar statements affected the Roman Catholic Church's attitude to non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular. Up to the Second Vatican Council the official Catholic teaching concerning non-Christian religions was mainly concerned with the possibility of the salvation of non-Christians. During that period the major issue discussed among Church authorities and individual theologians was the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* [there is no salvation outside the Church].3 A brief history of this axiom will highlight how it developed and applied to non-Christians in the history of the Catholic Church.

The German theologian Hans Küng traces the roots of the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* to Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen and all the Greek fathers.4 F. A. Sullivan indicates that this axiom was first offered by Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch in Syria, as follows:

Be not deceived, my brethren: if anyone follows a maker of schism, he does not inherit the Kingdom of God; if anyone walks in strange doctrine, he has no part in the passion.5

It is argued that the intention of Ignatius in this passage was only to warn Christian schismatics and heretics in order to assure the unity of the Church, and not to condemn those who belonged to other religions.6 In the third century, too, the above statement of Ignatius was formulated by Origen in the East as "Let no man deceive himself, outside the Church no one is saved", and

Cyprian in the West as "if there was one who outside the ark of Noah could escape, then also one who is outside the Church may be saved".7 Thus, it was argued that when Origen and Cyprian formulated the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* it was directed against their contemporary schismatics and not those who belonged to other religions. Concerning the application of this axiom in the first three centuries, Sullivan argues that when the early Church Fathers spoke of those who were excluded from salvation by reason of their being outside the Church, they were directing this as a warning to Christians who were considered to be guilty of committing the grave sin of heresy and schism, since there is no indication that that axiom was applied to anyone other than Christians at a time when Christians were persecuted as a minority.8 Paul Knitter stresses that during this period the early Church Fathers - Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen- acknowledged the availability of an authentic revelation and salvation for all people without making any distinction.9 These arguments imply that in the first three centuries the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* applied only to heretics and schismatics in order to keep the unity of the Church and did not apply to those who belonged to other religions. Therefore, the question arises as to how the axiom started to apply to those who were not members of the Church.

At the end of the fourth century when Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman empire, the Church Fathers widened the scope of the axiom by applying it not only to the Christian heretics but also to those who belonged to other religions.10 Especially with the influence of St. Augustine, the attitude of the Church towards those who belonged to other religions began to shift toward exclusivism, since according to Augustine, the statements of Mark 16:15-16 indicate that faith and baptism together are necessary for salvation. Further, Augustine stressed that those who had heard the message of the Gospel but had not become Christians were guilty because of their rejection of the Gospel message, and their salvation could be found only in the Church.11 Thus, the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* began to apply to anyone who was outside the Church such as pagans and Jews. Much later Muslims, referred to as Turks, were added to this list. In short, there was no longer any hope of salvation for anybody who did not accept Christ by becoming a member of the Church after hearing about him.12 Prior to Augustine, the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* applied only to those who had spoiled the unity of the Church by separating themselves from her. But, from Augustine onwards it began to be used as a delimiting means to exclude from salvation those who did not belong to the Church.

The Magisterial statements of the fourth Lateran council [1215] declared, for the first time that "there is indeed one universal Church of the faithful outside which no one at all is saved".13 In his bull *Unam Sanctam* [1302], Pope Boniface VIII moved the axiom a step further by expressing the necessity of acknowledging papal authority as well as being a member of the Church in order to reach salvation. He declared this as follows: "...outside of whom (church) there is neither salvation nor remission of sins... it is absolutely necessary for salvation of all human beings that they submit to the Roman Pontiff".14 In the Council of Florence (1442), too, for the first time in her history the Catholic Church officially declared that:

no one remaining outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans but also Jews, heretics or schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life.…No one can be saved, no matter how much alms one has given, even if shedding one's blood for the name of Christ, unless one remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.15

As we can see from the historical development of the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*, in the course of time the scope of exclusiveness of the Catholic Church was getting wider and during

the medieval period, when knowledge of the wider world was severely limited and Western Christendom threatened by the Muslim Ottoman army, there was almost nobody who questioned the implication of the above axiom. However with the discovery of America in 1492 and the voyage of Vasco da Gama around the Cape of Good Hope to India in 1497, the eyes of Western Christians were opened to the existence of whole countries and continents of people who had never had a chance to hear and respond to the message of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, attempts began to be made to rethink the Church's attitude to other religions in the light of this new and wider knowledge of other people in other continents. These changes came about in the characteristic Roman Catholic way of continuing to pay allegiance to the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* in its original form, but at the same time adding further interpretative principles which would alter the dogma as far as its practical effect was concerned.16 For instance, Pope Pius IX in his Allocution *Singulari Quadam* (1854) stated that:

It must, of course, be held as of faith that no one can be saved outside the apostolic Roman Church, that the Church is the only ark of salvation, and that whoever does not enter it will perish in the flood. Yet, on the other hand, it must likewise be held as certain that those who are in ignorance of true religion, if this ignorance is invincible, are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord.17

As can be seen from this passage, for the first time in the history of the Catholic Church an exception was made for those whose ignorance was invincible. Being a member of the church was not necessary for those who were in ignorance of the Christian faith. Although Pope Pius IX did not spell out how those people would attain salvation, his statement can be regarded as a positive development, since it implied that there would be the possibility of salvation without embracing the Christian faith.

Another Roman Catholic stratagem to get round the implications of a literal interpretation of the axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* makes use of the terms "implicit faith" and " a baptism of desire". Examples of this can be found in Pope Pius XII's encylical *Mystici Corporis* and his letter to the Archbishop of Boston in 1949. For example, in *Mystici Corporis* [1943] Pope Pius XII stated that those who have a certain unconscious desire and wish to join the Church may be related to the Mystical Body of Christ, and, thus, they may attain salvation.18 In his response to the Archbishop of Boston, concerning the Leonard Feeney case19 Pope Pius XII stated that implicit faith and baptism of desire can be enough to reach salvation.20

Thus, we may conclude that the traditional Catholic axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* went through the following stages from its advent prior to Vatican II. Firstly, the axiom was produced by the Church Fathers to fight Christian heretics and schismatics in order to re-establish the unity of the Church. Secondly, after the third century, through the influence of St. Augustine, its scope was widened to include those who did not become members of the Church, and up to the age of discovery it continued to be understood literally, i.e. in an exclusive way. Thirdly, after the age of discovery, influenced by various events and the inspiration of theologians the Church authorities started to use different expressions such as "implicit faith" or "baptism of desire" to lighten its strongly exclusivist character. These inclusive expressions can be regarded as positive developments as it seems that in the end sincere members of other religious traditions were assumed as members of the Church in some way. Because of this implication, these kinds of inclusive terms can be regarded as bridges through which the Church can go beyond her exclusive attitude toward people of other faiths. In this connection, as John Hick rightly argues the terms,

"implicit faith" and "baptism of desire" should be regarded as "epicycles" which "have served a useful purpose," in order to rescue the Church from exclusivism. But, nevertheless they can only operate as an interim measure, since they are fundamentally weak arguments, accepted for the sake of intuitively accepted conclusions until better arguments are found."21

Theological Interpretation of Non-Christian Religions

Parallel to the above official developments in the understanding of the traditional axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*, the twentieth century has witnessed the rise of individual theologians endeavouring to find theologically sound and positive interpretations of the axiom in order to develop a more positive Catholic theology of religions. After the age of discovery although a number of theologians produced fragmentary comments concerning the position of non-Christians, they were not able to have much influence on the official teaching. As a result they became marginalized, having ideas outside the official view.22 But after the second half of the twentieth century, theologians began to influence the official Catholic teaching indirectly, as we will see below. Within this context, the views of two Catholic thinkers, Louis Massignon and Karl Rahner, will be briefly considered. Massignon was a French Islamicisit and mystic who played an influential role in the developments of Christian-Muslim understanding in the twentieth century. Rahner was a dogmatic theologian who dealt with the question of the relationship of Christianity to non-Christian religions before Vatican II. Both of them have influenced the conciliar teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Louis Massignon and Karl Rahner

Louis Massignon23 was one of the leading Catholic Islamicists whose thoughts influenced the official Catholic attitude towards Muslims and led the Church to open up dialogue with the Muslim world. S. H. Nasr considers him as "a sort of guiding light for a whole later generation of Catholics interested in Christian-Muslim relations".24 Basetti-Sani states that Massignon, during his life , was actively involved in developing Christian-Muslim relations by setting up the *Badaliya*, a spiritual organisation, in order to introduce Jesus Christ to Muslims "by means of fraternal understanding and zealous charity".25 Because of the above importance of Massignon in the development of Christian-Muslim relations, we will summarize his views on Islam and highlight his contribution to the texts of the Second Vatican Council concerning Muslims.

Massignon’s most important contribution to the changing Catholic views on Islam was firstly, his inclusion of Muslims in the Abrahamic tradition by connecting them to Abraham via Ishmael. By doing this, he considered Islam within the context of God’s plan of salvation which was promised to Abraham. Secondly, he relates the three monotheistic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam, together by pointing out that Judaism is the religion of hope, Christianity is the religion of love and Islam is the religion of faith. He explained this argument as follows:

Islam is first and foremost a testimony (*shahada*) through which we express our adoration for the only and merciful God of Abraham. If Israel is rooted in hope and Christianity is devoted to charity, then Islam is centred around faith. Islamic observance is first and foremost the memorandum [the recitation] of a creed, while Jewish observance ritualises the commandments provided in the sworn covenant and Christian observance, after the truth of its creed and the obligations of its own commandments, uses the sacraments to sanctify the virtues.26

Within this context of the Abrahamic tradition, Massignon urged Christians to recognise the Qur'an as an authentic religious mystical source, since, according to him, the Qur'an is in line with the Old and New Testament confirming their truth. The Qur'anic confirmation of the virgin birth of Jesus and veneration of Jesus and his mother Mary led Massignon to reach this conclusion. What attracted Massignon in the Qur'an was its assertion that there is grace in human history and that Mary and Jesus are signs of God. In this it takes no advantage for itself. According to Massignon, the Qur'an, as a revelation transmitted to Muhammad by the angel, operates as a mediator between God and human beings.27

Concerning the Prophet Muhammad, Massignon dismissed the belief that Muhammad was the 'anti-Christ' as certain sections of the Church had presented him in the past.28 He emphasised the sincerity of Muhammad, noting the following points as proofs. In Mecca, he received revelation to preach. He behaved like a prophet and tried to explore the unity [Oneness] of God. In Medina, he established such foundations as ritual prayer. He rejected the Jewish claims concerning Jesus by confirming his virgin birth. He saved Ishmael from being excluded from the divine promise. Although Massignon acknowledged that Muhammad was a true and sincere prophet, he considered his role in this prophethood to be that of a *prophete negatif*, in the sense that he denies God being more than what he affirms him to be.29 Thus, Massignon contributed to the Copernican shift in the Christian attitude towards Islam by insisting on the need to move "from mission to dialogue" in Christian theology. 30 In this sense, he meant that "instead of viewing Islam from outside, and 'attacking it tooth and nail', one must situate oneself, 'by a Copernican revolution, at the very centre of Islam, there where that spark of truth dwells from which all the rest is invisibly and mysteriously sustained'".31

With regard to Massignon's impact on the conciliar texts regarding Muslims, Christian Troll indicates that Massignon influenced the contemporary theological developments of the Catholic Church because of his scholarly authority and his friendship with the Catholic hierarchy, such as Msgr. J.B. Montini who became Pope by taking the name Paul VI during the Second Vatican Council. Although, Massignon himself did not take part in the preparation of the conciliar texts on Muslims because of his death in 1962, Troll argues that his views on Islam became leading guidelines for those who prepared the consiliarose texts.

Troll continues his argument concerning the influence of Massignon on the conciliar texts on Muslims by insisting that if those texts are compared with Massignon's views, it is not difficult to see his effect. To show this, he points to the similarities between Massignon's views and the council statement as follows:

The Church looks with esteem on the Muslims...Abraham seen as the type and symbol of Muslim faith...The special mention of the veneration in which many Muslims hold Mary the Virgin...The special mention of Muslim prayer and fasting which had been the subject of such deep interpretations by Massignon and had been perceived and repeatedly presented by him as a precious spiritual link between Muslims and Christians.32

Troll concludes his evaluation of Massignon's influence on the Catholic Church's positive attitude towards Muslims by stressing that "Massignon has singularly contributed towards changing Christian-Muslim relations from a sterile and destructive confrontation to a fruitful dialogue and co-operation in the service of the One God of all humankind".33

Karl Rahner a prolific German Jesuit whom many consider to be the most influential Catholic theologian in the second half of the twentieth century, has developed a phrase concerning the

position of non-Christians which has become the trade mark of his views and the focus of discussions about what is generally called Catholic "inclusivism" since the 1960's.34 During the Second Vatican Council Rahner exercised enormous influence on the final shape of many conciliar documents as one of the official theologians of the Council.35

Rahner started to reflect upon the position of non-Christians and their religions in his lecture "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions"36 delivered in 1961 before the Council and continued to write about this issue after the Council.37 In our examination of Rahner's views concerning the position of non-Christians we will focus our attention on his earliest writing "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions" (1961) for two reasons: first, this essay reflects his main teaching concerning the subject; second, this essay was produced by Rahner before the Council.

Rahner's main intention in his views on non-Christians was to break down the tradition of *pessimistic* Christian exclusiveness and to speak *optimistically* of God and His saving will.38 For that reason he is regarded by Catholics as a leader of a new way of thinking in their approach to other religions by emphasising that these religions are not only reflections of man's natural cognition of God. According to Rahner, divine religions are something more than mere expressions of "natural religions", because they include the mediation of grace and thus add something to man's relation with God as creature to his Creator.39 Rahner argues that non-Christian religions "not only contain elements of natural knowledge of God but also supernatural instances of the grace which God presents to man because of Christ".40

Rahner for the first time spells out his views on Christianity's relation to non-Christian religions under four theses. Before elaborating on these theses it is appropriate to recall Rahner's main objective in developing them. He says

We simply want to try to describe a few of those basic traits of a Catholic dogmatic interpretation of the non-Christian religions which may help us to come closer to a solution of the question about the Christian position in regard to the religious pluralism in the world today.41

Within the context of this objective, Rahner develops his first thesis by announcing Christianity as the only "absolute religion". He says "Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion intended for all men, which cannot recognise any other religion beside itself as of equal right".42 He also defines Christianity as the valid and lawful religion through which God provides salvation to all people in Christ.

The question of how this Christian salvation could be available for non-Christians led Rahner to develop his second thesis as follows:

Until the moment when the gospel really enters into the historical situation of an individual, a non-Christian religion does not merely contain elements of a natural knowledge of God, elements, moreover, mixed up with human depravity which is the result of the original sin and later aberrations. It contains also supernatural elements arising out of the grace which is given to man as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ. For this reason a non-Christian religion can be recognised as a lawful religion.43

This thesis, as can be seen, is very much related to Rahner's understanding of the relation between nature and grace. For, according to him, nature and grace are not terms which describe phases conceived as entirely separate or distinct in the lives of either persons or communities.

Rather, according to him, grace is conceived as operating in a person's life prior to any conscious response to the gospel and also as operating anonymously in that person's religion. Rahner believed that it is unlikely that anyone could find salvation without being a member of a religion, since humans are by nature social beings, and since religion itself is both a social as well as an individual phenomenon.44 Because of this, Rahner regarded non-Christian religions as "lawful" religions given by God to persons in a given social and historical context to be the means through which they can be saved. Alan Race concludes that we may say Rahner regards non-Christian religions as "vehicles of salvation, available to individuals in their particular and differing historical settings, and given by God for the purposes of achieving the saving relationship".45 However Rahner in this thesis puts a time limitation for non-Christian religions by stressing that non-Christian religions were "lawful" religions which contained supernatural grace-filled elements until Christianity came into the world. This implies that they are no longer lawful religions.

This first thesis that Christianity is the absolute religion and the source of salvation, and the second thesis that non-Christians and their religions are not excluded from God's salvation, led Rahner to develop his third thesis in order to reconcile the first and second theses to determine the position of non-Christians and their religions in relation to Christianity. In this thesis, Rahner points out:

If the second thesis is correct, then Christianity does not simply confront the member of an extra-Christian religion as a mere non-Christian but as someone who can and must be regarded in this or that respect as an anonymous Christian.46

Here, Rahner is expressing his main argument concerning non-Christians by claiming that though those people are not aware of it, their religions become lawful ways of salvation through Jesus Christ, who is anonymously present within them.

In his fourth and final thesis, Rahner outlines the Church's function in the light of the logical conclusion of the previous theses. He argues that in an anonymous Christian world the Church should regard herself not:

as the exclusive community of those who have a claim to salvation, but rather as the historical tangible vanguard and the historically and socially constituted explicit expression of what the Christian hopes is present as a hidden reality even outside the visible Church.47

Because of this hiddenness, Rahner argues that the mission of the Church should be to serve non-Christians in the name of Christ with the hope that one day their implicit and hidden desire will be explicit by becoming members of the Church. So, the most significant side of this thesis is that the aim of the Church is to be an example for others, not only to make them members.

In short, according to Rahner's understanding all grace is by definition supernatural grace. On the basis of this, he succeeds in creating a foundation for a new type of theological approach to non-Christian religions. This new model reconciles and holds together the universal salvific will of God, and that salvation comes through God in Christ and in his Church.

As has been observed up to now, these two influential Catholic thinkers, Massignon and Rahner, have made many positive statements laying the foundation for a different approach in the development of a positive Catholic teaching on non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular.

The Second Vatican Council and Non-Christian Religions

In considering the teaching of the Second Vatican Council we will focus our attention mainly on its most significant document, "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions".48 (This document is known as *Nostra Aetate* because of its opening words.) In doing so, we will also refer to the related statements of the other documents especially "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,"49 which is known as *Lumen Gentium*. In our examination of these documents, our primary purpose will be to observe the teaching of the Second Vatican Council about Muslims, following its general teaching about non-Christians. A brief history of the *Nostra Aetate* records how and why the Catholic Church produced it.

As noted earlier, the Second Vatican Council was regarded as an important beginning for the Catholic Church in contacting non-Christians and their religious traditions. This Council was formally inaugurated on the 11th October, 1962, by Pope John XXIII, in accordance with his announcement on the 25th January, 1959. It went on until 8th December, 1965. There were altogether four sessions, one each year. After the first session Pope John XXIII died and his successor Paul VI was elected in his place. According to Pope John XXIII, the need for such a council was to update the Church [*aggiornamento*], since he thought that the Catholic Church was becoming outdated and less relevant in the context of modernity and of contemporary world events.50 In this council sixteen documents were agreed upon and promulgated. There is no doubt that the most important of these documents concerning non-Christian religions was *Nostra Aetate.* For, until this declaration the Catholic Church was not officially interested in establishing a dialogical relationship with non-Christians and thus had not produced any positive official document on this issue.

At the beginning of the Council, Pope John XXIII did not make any statement on non-Christian religions with the exception of Judaism. At the time he was greatly concerned about anti-Semitism within the Church. Some Jewish leaders were fearful that this Council would increase anti-Semitism. The French Jewish scholar, Jules Isaac, outlined this anxiety of Jews to the Pope in a private conversation.51 Thereupon, Pope John appointed Cardinal Bea to prepare a conciliar declaration that would be concerned with Jewish people in order to clarify who the Jews were and what the relation between Church and synagogue should be.52 The text was completed only after the death of Pope John XXXIII and introduced by Cardinal Bea to the Council as part of the document on ecumenism on 19th November in 1963.53

But it met with opposition especially from Arab and Asian bishops. A number of bishops considered the declaration to be outside the Catholic concern for ecumenism. Some bishops who came from Arab countries regarded this text as support for the political state of Israel.54 Others insisted that if the Council invited Christians to show a more positive attitude towards Jews, then a similar attitude should be encouraged towards Islam. Upon these objections, the text was postponed for further discussion and revision.55 Meanwhile, the desire of some Council Fathers, emerging positive ideas about Islam and the influence of Massignon led Pope Paul VI to ask the conciliar commission to prepare a text on Islam like the one prepared on the Jews.56 Finally, the prepared text which deals with non-Christian religions was discussed and promulgated under the title of "Declaration on the Relationship to Non-Christian-Religions" at the 7th session of the council on the 28th October, 1965.57

The Finnish theologian, Heikki Ruokanen, indicates that at the time of the promulgation of the *Nostra Aetate* there were some conservative bishops who opposed its promulgation theologically by arguing that this document would lead to indifference to the Church's missionary

activity and, even, put an end it by regarding all religions as of the same value.58 In response to this sort of criticism, Cardinal Bea expressed the main aim of the *Nostra Aetate* as follows:

The purpose of the Declaration is not a complete exposition of these religions, nor of their discrepancies among themselves and from the Catholic religion. This council rather intends through this Declaration to show that there is a bond between man and religions which is meant to be the basis of dialogue and of collaboration. Therefore, greater attention is paid to those things which unite us, and are helpful in a mutual approach.59

As has been seen in this brief history of the emergence of the *Nostra Aetate*, this most important and controversial document of the Second Vatican Council on non-Christian religions came out as a result of objections of some Council Fathers to the Council's intention to produce a document on the Jews. Now, we will move to observe how this accidental document deals with non-Christians and their religions.

Nostra Aetate

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, with the declaration of *Nostra Aetate*, non-Christian religions began to be regarded as entities that the Church should respect. Christians and non-Christians were encouraged to dialogue with each other. Within this context, this declaration insisted upon the essential unity of the human race, based on the fact that all men and women have God as their Creator and their Ultimate Goal.60 Ruokanen remarks that in this declaration the Church wanted to express common elements which unite all religions by leaving aside offensive terminology such as "pagan", "idolatry", "error" or "fallacy" terms which the Church had been using previously in her statements about non-Christians and their religions.61

The opening sentence of this declaration notes the idea of progress of humanity towards unity as follows:

In this age of ours, when men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church examines with greater care the relation which she has to non-Christian religions.62

This expression also explains the reason why the Church has to possess a more positive attitude towards non-Christians. The second sentence indicates that the Church has a special duty to promote this unity of humanity by declaring:

Ever aware of her duty to foster unity and charity among individuals, and even among nations, she [the Church] reflects at the outset on what men have in common and what tends to promote fellowship among them.63

According to this passage, the Church takes the responsibility of promoting the unity of humankind and fellowship among people and nations.

Nostra Aetate further stresses the brotherhood of all people irrespective of their race, colour, religion, and other perspectives of life by maintaining that Christians:

cannot truly pray to God if [they] treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God's image. Man's relation to God the Father and man's relation to his fellow-men are so dependent on each other that Scripture says, 'he who does not love, does not know God (Jn. 4:8). There is no basis therefore, either in theory or in practice for any discrimination between

individual and individual, or between people and people arising either from human dignity or from the rights which flow from it. Therefore, the Church reproves any discrimination against people, any harassment of them on the basis of their race, colour, condition in life or religion.64

According to this passage there are two important essential foundations of the brotherhood of all people. The first, God is Creator of all people. That is, all people have been created by the same God; the second, the dignity of the human being because of his/her creation in God's image. Because of these common elements between Christians and non-Christians, the Church urges her followers to treat others with respect and love, since their relationship to God depends on their relationship to others.65

In this declaration, the Catholic Church makes a clear examination of the religions of the world by defining what is common for all people as follows:

All men form one community. This is so, because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth, and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving design extend to all men against the day when the elect are gathered in the holy city which is illuminated by the glory of God, and in whose splendour all peoples will walk.66

By taking this common point, the *Nostra Aetate* considers all religions as expressions of the human search for truth. In this respect, it implies that the both moral and the religious aspects of any religion may be acceptable as means to reach salvation. Thus, for the first time the Roman Catholic Church acknowledged as legitimate both the search for God by those outside herself and the kernel of truth in non-Christian religions. In this respect, the *Nostra Aetate* states:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in other religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.67

In this passage the Council Fathers spell out one of the most significant points of the *Nostra Aetate*. For it implies that the Catholic Church implicitly accepts the possibility of revelation in other religions by acknowledging what is true and holy in them. But, on the other hand when we investigate this passage deeply the following questions stand out: Who will decide what is true and holy in non-Christian religions? By which criterion will it be decided? In our opinion, Ruokanen's analysis of this passage answers these questions.

Ruokanen, in his comment on the above passage, argues that "religions contain religious truth only insofar as they reflect something of the Christ-centred truth, or have some sort of reference to the truth revealed in Christianity, or at least seek that truth which became plain in Christ".68 For according to him, the Latin verb *veritas,* which is used in the original passage of the *Nostra Aetate*, expresses the Christian truth. This, also, can be seen clearly in the following conciliar expressions which declare Jesus Christ as the truth. *Ipse Christus est veritas* 'Christ himself is the embodiment of the truth'69 which is *veritas revelata.* 70 V*eritas catholica*71 or *veritas evangelica.*72

In the light of this interpretation of Ruokanen, what is true and holy in non-Christian religions depends on how much they reflect the Christian truth. In other words, the acceptability of the religious truth of non-Christian religions by the Church depends on their compatibility with the Christian truth. This, too, means that non-Christian religions do not have independent revelation apart from Christian revelation. But what they have is a partial reflection of the exhaustive

Christian revelation in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Ruokanen asks how much and what kind of religious truth the *Nostra Aetate* sees in non-Christian religions. He points out that two different answers can be given to this question. On the one hand, the Church seems to admit that there is much good in regard to common human morals in the other religions. On the other hand, she advocates that these moral goods and religious truths of other religions are to be tested by the Christian revelation and truth.73 The following passage of another conciliar document, *Lumen Gentium*, supports Ruokanen's argument: "whatever good or truth is found amongst them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the gospel and given by Him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life...".74

At this point, we may say that although the Council Fathers acknowledged the availability of goodness, truth and holiness in the life of those who belong to other religions, on the other hand they indicated that those elements are associated with evil, darkened by the absence of the light of the Gospel and restricted in their perfection by their separation from their author.75

After accepting the truth of other religions, provided that they are compatible with the Christian truth, the *Nostra Aetate* invites Christians to acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods which are found in non-Christian religions and their adherents through "collaboration with the followers of other religions".76 This declaration also suggests three guidelines to show Christians how to behave to non-Christians when they encounter them. "The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions while witnessing to their own faith and way of life".77 As we can see in this expression, the Church recommends to her adherents three ways of relating to followers of other religious traditions. The first one is to enter into discussion or dialogue [*colloquia*] with them. The second is to collaborate [*collaboratio*] with them on social issues such as justice, world peace, human welfare and social ethics. Thirdly, during the first and the second stages to tell them about one's own beliefs and way of life and enter into dialogue with them.78 In fact, not only Christians but also non-Christians would do well to follow these guidelines when they encounter followers of other religious traditions, because they can be seen to be some of the necessary conditions of a fruitful dialogue. Those who participate in that process will have the opportunity get to know his/her dialogue partner. After this stage, the participants can reach a position in which they can work together in order to solve their common problems. During the first and second stages, the participants may find opportunities to tell their own beliefs to each other not to convert them but to share their religious experiences. We turn now to examine closely the Council's statements about Muslims.

The Second Vatican Council and Muslims

As mentioned above, the Second Vatican Council, at its beginning, had no intention of making any statements concerning Muslims or the adherents of other religions except the Jews. This intention had to change following the reactions and objections of Arab and Asian bishops to the declaration about Jews, and the influence of some Orientalists, such as Massignon. As a result, a more positive attitude towards Muslims began to come out as the Council proceeded, and at the end two important passages emerged. One is in *Lumen Gentium* 16 and the other is in *Nostra Aetate* 3. We will analyse these two texts together by taking into account their main theological themes, namely, the monotheistic character of Muslim belief, Abraham as the common father, Muslim veneration of Jesus and his mother Mary, the eschatological belief of Muslims, the religious and moral life of Muslims, and the possibility of salvation for Muslims, so as to expose

their implications for Christian-Muslim dialogue. The reason we take these two texts together is that although their promulgation did not occur at the same time, they originate from the same Council context. While doing this, firstly, we will explain what the conciliar statements say; secondly, we will discuss what they accomplished; finally, we will do an assessment of those statements.

Muslim Doctrine of God

Concerning the Muslim doctrine of God, both *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium* declare:

Muslims worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to man.79

[the Muslims] acknowledge the Creator and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day.80

As can be seen from these two statements, the Council officially declares that Muslims worship God, not Muhammad or other gods as was claimed in medieval times.81 In doing so, the Roman Catholic Church acknowledges the first and most important article of Muslim faith, namely the oneness of God (*tawhid)* by using the Qur'anic terms such as Merciful, Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.82 Now, we will search out what the Council Fathers mean by these attributes of God.

God is Living and Subsistent (*al-hayy al-qayyum)*: This attribute of God was expressed by the Council Fathers in Qur'anic terms. The reason for this, Caspar remarks, was to avoid such terms that "would have no meaning for Muslims or could be misunderstood" by them.83 God is Merciful and Almighty [*al-Rahman- al-Rahim* and a*l-Qadir ala kulli shay*]: Here, the Council Fathers mention the most frequently used Qur'anic attributes of God. Muslims always repeat these attributes in their prayers and daily lives. Concerning the significance of these two attributes, Borrmans remarks that to stress that God is Merciful and Almighty "means that God's mastery over everything is tempered by His Mercy..."84

God has spoken to men: It is believed in both Islam and Christianity that God has spoken to humankind in various ways such as through the prophets, Jesus Christ and the Qur'an. While both Christians and Muslims believe that God has spoken to them through the prophets, they differ on the way this has happened. For instance, while Christians maintain that God has spoken through his son Jesus Christ, Muslims believe that He has spoken to them in the Qur'an. The Council's reference to God as Speaker or in other words Revealer can be regarded as having a very positive development, indeed. For, although it does not explicitly indicate that God has spoken to Muslims in the Qur'an through the Prophet Muhammad, one can draw this conclusion. This conclusion can mean that the Catholic Church acknowledges Islam as a prophetic religion like Judaism and Christianity, since it refers implicitly to the Islamic revelation, the Qur'an, without passing any judgement. In this respect, Borrmans points out:

the Council's intention is not to evaluate the authenticity of the revelation to which Islam appeals, but to recognize that Islam, unlike all theism which originate solely from human efforts, claims to be the fruit of a personal, divine word and therefore a revelation in the strict sense. The Muslim

believer accepts the Word of God because God reveals, and this allows Christians to regard the faith of such a believer as subjectively supernatural and therefore salvific.85

God is humankind's judge on the last day [*malik yevm-al- dinn*]: Here, the Council announces that God is the Judge on the Last Day. By doing this, it indicates that both Muslims and Christians believe there is no one who will judge mankind other than God on the Last Day.

As has been observed so far, the Council's acknowledgement of Muslims as fellow believers in God with Christians, should be regarded by Muslims as a very positive development, since it rules out any supposition that Muslims worship a God other than Christians worship.86 In other words, the Council stressed that the God of Muslims is the true God whom the Christians worship. However, besides these very positive developments, there are some shortcomings in the above conciliar statements. For example, the Council Fathers carefully chose those divine attributes which substantially conform to the attributes of God in Christianity.87 By doing this, the Council gave the impression that the Muslim and Christian doctrine of God is the same. However, as Caspar rightly remarks, "The focal point and the nature itself of the faith in God in Islam and within Christianity are radically different".88 For that reason, the Council should have expressed the difference to avoid misunderstanding by those who do not know anything about the Muslim doctrine of God. This misunderstanding can lead Christians to Christianise Islam. Some Christian scholars of Islam such as Basetti-Sani and Kenneth Cragg have been accused of doing this by their Christian colleagues.89

Another shortcoming in the conciliar statements on Muslims was the omission of the second part of the first article of the Muslim creed, namely that Muhammad is the messenger of God. Although it can be argued that the Council implicitly referred to the Prophet Muhammad, the Council Fathers preferred to be silent on this issue. In this respect, Farrugia says that "any possible reference to him which might be understood as indicative of some sort of theological appreciation of the most important prophet for the Muslims" was omitted.90 Anawati, too, indicates that the Council Fathers chose to be silent on the most sensitive issue of Muslim faith, namely, the prophethood of Muhammad. But he adds, "Once the dialogue is under way, this central point will have to be considered in more detail."91 On this issue, Muslim scholars, too, rightly maintain that there is no possibility for dialogue unless the prophethood of Muhammad is considered by Christians.92 The Swiss theologian, H. Küng, too, indicates that if the Catholic Church wants to establish a fruitful dialogue with Muslims, she must speak about Muhammad with greater respect, just as she did in the conciliar statements about Muslims.93

In short, as Anawati rightly points out this official recognition by the Catholic Church of the God of Islam as the one, living and true, merciful and almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, "is a more important step in the context of relations between Christians and Muslims"94 Farrugia, too, indicates that this positive appreciation of the Muslim doctrine of God will be accepted as common ground and a standpoint for a better dialogue between Christians and Muslims.95 Further, the Council's acknowledgement of the most important Muslim attributes of God by referring to the Qur'anic terms, indicates that in the process of dialogue Christians can benefit from the Qur'an in order to express their doctrine of God.

Our Common Father Abraham

Concerning the Islamic reverence for Abraham, the Council Fathers declared that

They[Muslims] strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own.96

...the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims: these profess to hold the faith of Abraham...97

These two passages clearly consider Muslims as being within the context of the Abrahamic faith. The Council Fathers acknowledge that Muslims strive to submit themselves to God as Abraham did. In fact, the Qur'an itself calls Muslims to do this by announcing Abraham as a model in faith and his religion as a pure and unambiguous monotheism.98 Within this context, the Council Fathers recognised Muslims as partakers of the Abrahamic faith as are Christians. However, they failed to mention whether Muslims are historically linked to Abraham. Borrmans concludes that the Council "was not concerned with certain assumptions that would make Abraham the genealogical ancestor of Arab Muslims".99 Caspar, in his comment on the above Council statement concerning the connection of Muslims with the Abrahamic faith, also maintains that Abraham

finds his true place, according to the Muslim and Christian faiths. Abraham is not the genealogical ancestor, the father according to the flesh, of Muslims; for that has no religious value at all, even if we disregard the historical aspect. But he is their father in faith, as a type and model of a heroic submission, with an active and confident faith, in the paradoxical will of God who asked him for the sacrifice of the son of the promise. It is in this sense that Abraham is the father of all believers...100

As has been observed so far, parallel to its statements on the Muslim doctrine of God, the Second Vatican Council includes Muslims in the Abrahamic faith possibly because of the influence of Massignon.101 However, there is a significant difference between the Council and Massignon in this issue. While Massignon connected Muslims to Abraham via his son Ishmael, the Council does not speak about his historical link with Muslims. Anawati in his comment on this issue maintains that the Council Fathers were "most cautions of all with regard to the question of the Moslems' historical link with Abraham and thus with true revelation".102 Perhaps, this silence should not be regarded as very important, since the Qur'an presents Abraham not as the possession of a single community but as the model in faith for all humankind.103

Briefly, in these passages the Council Fathers drew attention to the Muslims' constant search for the will of God and their continuous endeavour for whole-hearted submission to the faith of Abraham. Borrmans comments that "it was out of respect for this faith that Vatican II acknowledged the importance of the fundamental Muslim religious attitude, the total submission of the soul to God's decrees" and "fittingly recalled that Abraham was the model for the Muslims' faith and obedience".104 Thus, the Council regards Abraham "as a type and model of heroic submission the father of all believers; it is in this sense that he is the common father of Jews, Christians and Muslims".105

Muslim Veneration of Jesus and Mary

Concerning the Muslim esteem of Jesus and Mary, the Council says that

Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honour, even at times devoutly invoke.106

As has been observed above, the Council dealing with the Muslim doctrine of God, and also with Abraham as a common father of faith, highlighted common elements between Christians and Muslims. Here, however it refers to their main difference. The Council Fathers state that although Muslims regard Jesus as a prophet and praise his mother Mary, they do not recognise his divinity as Christians do. It is interesting that in presenting this great difference between Christians and Muslims concerning the person of Jesus, the Council does not criticise the Muslims' perception of Jesus as some Christian thinkers, as do Kenneth Cragg.107 Farrugia maintains that the only reason the Council Fathers remained silent on the Muslim perception of Jesus as a human prophet was for the sake of dialogue.108

The Council also appreciated the Muslims' respect for Mary. The possible reason for this appreciation is that Mary the mother of Jesus has a high status among Catholics. The above conciliar statement implies that those who esteem Mary can be appreciated by the Catholic Church. Also, as has been noted in section 1.3.1. the prolific Islamicist Massignon urged Christians to recognise the Qur'an as an authentic religious and mystical source because of its positive statements about Jesus and Mary.

Farrugia maintains that the Council appreciates the Muslims' veneration of Jesus and his mother Mary in accordance with the statement of the *Nostra Aetate* that the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in non-Christian religions. He states that by praising the Muslim perception of Jesus the Council may want to show that Islam may "reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men", although its teaching differs in many ways from the Christian teaching. Thus, he indicates that the council statement on Muslims' esteem of Jesus means that "although the eminent identity of Jesus recognised in the Christian world is absent in Islam, the historical figure of Jesus and his relevance to God's plan of salvation are not totally ignored".109 Briefly, the Council's appreciation of the Muslims' esteem of Jesus and Mary creates a common ground for better relations between Christians and Muslims.

Eschatological Beliefs of Muslims

Concerning Muslim eschatology, the Council says that "Further, they await the day of judgement and reward of God following the resurrection of the dead."110

In accordance with its acknowledgement of the Muslim God as the Master of the Day of Judgement, the Council highlights the basic eschatological beliefs of Muslims namely, the belief in the Last Day, resurrection, judgement and retribution. This text shows one of the essential beliefs in the Christian and the Muslim faith, as Troll points out by saying:

The modalities and the criteria of this judgement can differ from one theology to the other. It remains that, according to the Qur'an as well as according to the Gospel, everyone will be judged by their actions.111

Caspar too, in his comment on this text, remarks:

Eschatology is important, both in Islam and Christianity, for the meaning it gives to the world and to the lives of men; a meeting with God at the end of the time, when true values will be revealed.

It is this direction and eschatological tension which gives full meaning to human activity in this world.112

As we have observed, here, too, the Council Fathers seem to highlight only the common points of the eschatological beliefs of Christians and Muslims without speaking about their differences. In this respect, Borrmans indicates that "at this level of generalisation it may be said that Christians and Muslims are in agreement, whatever may be their differences in substance or form".113 Briefly, by highlighting the main points of convergence between the Christian and Muslim eschatological beliefs, the Council implies that Muslims, who worship the same God as Christians, do this in order to attain God's grace and salvation in the Day of Judgement.

Religious and Moral Life of Muslims

The Council makes the following statement concerning the religious and moral life of Muslims:

they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, almsdeeds and fasting.114

As we have observed so far, the Council defined Muslims as those who believe and worship God by trying to submit themselves to Him as did Abraham, and as those who believe in the Day of Judgement in which the dead will be resurrected. Here, the Council highlights how Muslims worship God. In doing so, it indicates that Muslims try to live a righteous life and worship God by way of prayer, almsgiving and fasting in order to obtain God's reward in the Hereafter.

There are two significant points here. The first is the Council's esteem of the Muslims' religious and moral lives. In this respect, Borrmans suggests that the Council Fathers reflected on their admiration for the religious and moral lives of Muslims to specify the reasons why the faith and life of the followers of Islam are worthy of the esteem of Christians. He says, "It was out of respect for this faith that Vatican II wished to stress the importance of the fundamental religious attitude, the total submission of the soul to God's decrees. The Muslims are known to be proud of being faithful and obedient servants, who extol 'God's rights' before thinking about 'human rights'".115 As we will see in the Second Chapter, the religious and moral lives of Muslims has been highlighted with great esteem by Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II in their speeches to Muslims.116

The second point is the Council's appreciation of the three main pillars of Muslim faith. However, it is well known that there are five main pillars of Muslim faith. These are: the profession of faith in the One God and in the prophethood of Muhammad [*shahada*], the observance of daily ritual prayers [*salat*], the giving of alms [*zakat*], fasting in the month of Ramadan [*sawm*], and the pilgrimage to Mecca [*hajj*]. The question, here, is why the Council just mentioned three of these articles of Muslim faith, namely *salat, zakat* and *sawm* by giving partial attention to*shahada* and totally omitting *hajj*?

Caspar who was a member of the commission which prepared the text concerning Muslims, justifies this omission by claiming that those three pillars of Muslim faith which the Council mentioned "are indeed the most important, by way of the place which they occupy in the religious life of Muslims and their religious significance".117 Caspar continues to defend the Council's omission of *hajj* by arguing that the great majority of the Muslims turn out to be unable to

participate in the pilgrimage to Mecca, and moreover, its prescription is limited to once in a Muslim's life-time.118 Farrugia, too, maintains that the reason of the Council's omission of some Muslim beliefs and devotional acts is that:

The council never intended to produce a complete exposition of the doctrinal and devotional characteristics of Islam. Its consideration of such Islamic themes as those which eventually appeared in the promulgated texts was essentially functional and subjected to its declared desire for a positive relationship with the Muslims.119

After these explanations for the Council's omission of some pillars of Muslim faith and devotional acts, we can argue that for whatever reason it does seem that the Council Fathers producing the conciliar statements concerning Muslims, only noted those doctrinal and devotional acts of Muslims which are substantially compatible with Christian doctrines and devotional acts. Caspar supports this view when he says that while the Council appreciated the moral life of Muslims, it was "more concerned with the principles of Christian morality than with the values to be found in Muslim family life as it is really lived".120 Crollius explains that the reason the Council only mentioned those Muslim elements which are compatible with the Christian elements was to proclaim "biblical monothesim in its Judeo-Christian form".121

However, in our opinion this may be explained as follows: Starting from the advent of Islam to the second half of the twentieth century, the Christian World has regarded Islam either as a heretical religion or as an extension of the Judeo- Christian tradition. While prayer, almsgiving, and fasting, which are regarded as the devotional acts in the Judeo-Christian tradition were mentioned, the second part of the *shahada* and pilgrimage to Mecca were omitted in this declaration. If the Council had mentioned these two in its document, it would have meant that the Catholic Church regarded Islam as a separate religion outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. This admission would compel the Church to re-read its own beliefs and doctrines.

Salvation of Muslims

Concerning the possibility of salvation for the Muslims, the Council declares that

...the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Moslems.122

By the promulgation of this statement, the Council clearly includes Muslims within God's plan of salvation. This is a very bold statement indeed, since it ends the traditional Catholic belief that *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*. This inclusion of Muslims in God's plan of salvation can be regarded as one of the important contributions of the Council to the development of the Catholic Church's relations with Muslims, since it implies that Muslims have a place in God's plan of salvation because they acknowledge God as their Creator. Although the Council does not mention the Muslim faith "Islam" in its statements, one can accept that the Catholic Church admits that the faith of Muslims' "Islam" has a special position in God's plan of salvation as a strict monotheistic religion by taking into account the Council's recognition of Muslims as fellow believers in God, and its appreciation of the religious and moral lives of Muslims.123

Farrugia, in his comment on this text, argues that by this statement the Council wanted to state that God's grace is available for Muslims so that they attain eternal salvation. He also says that the

acceptance of Muslims within God's salvation "puts them in relation to 'the people of God' to which 'those who have not received the Gospel are related in various ways'". He further states that the Council text does not explain the nature of these "various ways" nor does it clarify "the modality of the Muslims' inclusion in the plan of salvation".124 As has been observed in section 1.3.2., before the Second Vatican Council Rahner spelled out similar views concerning the possibility of salvation for non-Christians.

Apart from the above theological statements, there are also other declarations in the *Nostra Aetate* which provide some principles for development of Christian-Muslim understanding in practical issues:

Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.125

As can be seen from this passage, the Council, first of all, concedes that there have been many quarrels and unpleasant situations between Christians and Muslims. Then it offers the following steps in order to overcome those events. Firstly, the Council invites both Christian and Muslims to forget the past. This is a very challenging invitation, indeed. Forgetting the past is not an easy task because it involves our memory. If we were to lose our memory, we would not remember who we were. Because of this, we do not think that the Council actually wants Christians and Muslims to forget their past for the sake of better relations with each other. What the Council is asking is that both Christians and Muslims should not take the past as examples for their present and future relations with each other. Otherwise, as one Muslim thinker comments, 'forgetting the past' is "a contradiction of the Qur'anic spirit, simply because the Qur'an reminds us of the past 'in order to reconcile with the present and future'".126 In this respect, Caspar comments that the above text of the Council:

Focuses the perspectives of understanding and co-operation, present and future, between Christians and Muslims. The past of hatred and wars should not be 'forgotten', not ignored but left behind. Mutual understanding, objective and respectful, still demands a great deal of effort and progress on either side. But Muslim-Christian 'dialogue' itself must be behind it in order for it to become co-operation between believers towards the same end; together to face the challenges of modern thought and civilisation, not only to preserve faith in God, especially among the young, but also to allow genuine and committed faith to play its part in saving our civilisation from the dangers brought upon it by its neopaganism and in building a better world. This means to promote social justice, among the classes of every nation and between rich and poor countries; to uphold moral values, not only by 'moralism' but by a life in conformity with faith; to preserve or restore peace; to allow people more real freedom, in all ways which are compatible with the common good especially religious freedom.127

After overcoming the past, too, the Council encourages both Christians and Muslims to make a sincere effort for mutual understanding and to work together in protecting and promoting for the benefit of all men, social justice, good morals as well as peace and freedom.

After all the above analysis of the conciliar statements concerning Muslims and Christian-Muslim understanding, we may highlight the theology of those statements as follows. Our above

examination of the conciliar teaching on Muslims implies that the underlying attitude seems to be that the normative expression of truth is the Catholic doctrine. In this respect, where the Muslim faith, or in other words Islam, agrees with this it is right, and where it departs from it, it is wrong. This indicates that the Council dealing with non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular defends the centrality of the Roman Catholic Church.

While doing this, as has been observed so far, the Council leaves unexplored the status of Muslim faith, Islam, as a religious tradition into which the above particular elements of faith fit. Thus, we may argue that the Second Vatican Council opens the way for a more positive Christian approach towards Muslims and their faith, but it remains silent about Islam as an alternative expression of truth. This means that by producing the conciliar statements about Muslims, the Catholic Church wants to open the way of dialogue with Muslims while keeping open the door for proclamation. In other words, dialogue and proclamation are found in the conciliar teaching side by side.128

Salvation within Non-Christian Religions

As has been seen at the beginning of this chapter, the traditional Catholic axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* was preserving its strong position as an official teaching of the Catholic Church in her relation with non-Christians prior to the Second Vatican Council, although the Church authorities were using different expressions to lessen its strong implication. In the light of our examination of the conciliar teaching about non-Christians, we will consider the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the question of salvation of non-Christians. Our primary objective will be to illustrate whether the conciliar teaching went beyond the traditional Catholic axiom that *Extra Ecclesiam Null Salus*? If it did, how far?

To get a proper answer to our above questions, it is necessary to elaborate not only on the teaching of the *Nostra Aetate,* but on all other documents which deal with the question of salvation. For, as observed above *Nostra Aetate* speaks about non-Christian religions with sympathy and in a tone of goodwill. And while doing this, although it clearly recognizes the universality of God's salvation by indicating that "His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all men."129 it does not clarify how this event would be possible. For that reason, we will look at other conciliar documents which deal with this question in order to find some answers to the above questions. By so doing, we will start with the momentous statement of *Lumen Gentium* which was promulgated before *Nostra Aetate* because it brings to an end officially the status of the traditional axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus.*

In *Lumen Gentiun* on the one hand, the Church is seen as the necessary element for attaining salvation130 by stressing that Jesus Christ is active in the world in order to lead all people to her.131 On the other hand, it asserts that right behaviour is enough to be acceptable to God and to attain salvation by declaring that "at all times and in every race, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to Him(God)."132

In another passage, non-Christian religions are divided into two groups. The first group, i.e those who hear the Christian message and "know that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ but explicitly reject the Church", cannot attain salvation.133 The second group, i.e. those who do not know the Gospel and do not enter into the Church, but "seek God with sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their action to do God's will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience" can succeed in attaining salvation.134 This passage can be regarded as the most significant conciliar text concerning the issue of salvation for non-

Christians, since it gives three conditions of salvation. These are (1) not deliberately refusing to accept the Gospel or to enter into the Church; (2) seeking God, the Creator with a sincere heart and open mind; (3) carrying out God's will as they know it through their conscience.

When we compare this statement with the traditional teaching of the Church, it is obvious that the Catholic Church explicitly acknowledged the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, making a 180 degree turn on the question.135 For, this statement implies that one does not need to follow the Gospel message by being a member of the Church when one encounters it. What one needs is not to deny the Gospel message deliberately by indicating that it is not truth. In fact, this is very similar to the Islamic teaching. In Islam, when those who belong to other faiths meet the Qur'anic message , they do not need to follow it in order to get salvation. But they must not deny that it is truth from God.

This positive side of this passage, as Ruokanen rightly argues, does not mention the possible contribution of non-Christian religions to provide salvation for their followers. According to this passage, their salvation comes not from their own religion but from a natural knowledge of the One God and natural moral law.136 It can be concluded, therefore, that although the Catholic Church acknowledges the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, she does not recognise that their own religions are ways of salvation for them. For what *Lumen Gentium* 16 indicates concerning the possibility of salvation of non-Christians is that the activity of God's salvific grace is not restricted to the visible boundaries of the Church, so that even those who "through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ and his Church but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart" have a real possibility of attaining salvation when, "moved by grace", they "try in their actions to do God's will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience". When we compare the teaching of this passage with the views of Rahner which he laid out before the Second Vatican Council, we realise that his views are more positive than the teaching of the Council, since Rahner included not only non-Christians but also their religious traditions in God's plan of salvation by regarding them as "lawful religions".137

In *Gaudium et Spes* [Joy and Hope], the Council asserts that all humankind is one and the same, and the Holy Spirit offers to all people the possibility of becoming partakers of the paschal mystery by declaring " since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery".138 Although this passage does not give any positive implication about the possibility of salvation through non-Christian religions and salvific value of their religions, it can be regarded as significant in regard to its reference to the universal grace of God, since, according to this passage, God calls all people to be partakers of His grace; because He created them in His image; and because all have the same origin and also the same theological destiny.139

In *Ad Gentes Divinitus* [The Universal Sacrament of Salvation], unlike the *Lumen Gentium 16*, it is asserted that those who know about the Church but refuse to be members of it cannot attain salvation. This document indicates that only those who are ignorant of the Church can attain salvation.140

As has been observed so far, the Council explicitly cancelled the age-old Catholic axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* by stating that there is salvation outside the Church. Although this is a positive development, there is ambiguity in its teaching, since it still maintains that "the Church is necessary for salvation" and that it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, with its all-embracing means of salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be found.141 In the light of this ambiguity, the question is that if there is salvation for non-Christians without being

members of the Church, what is the role of their own religious traditions? Are they ways of salvation for their followers? As has been noted above, the Council neither explicitly indicates that they are ways of salvation nor that they are not ways of salvation. For that reason, there is disagreement among Catholic theologians about the interpretation of the conciliar statements on this issue. For example, while Knitter and Stransky argue that the conciliar statements affirm not explicitly but implicitly that the non-Christian religions are ways of salvation,142 Ruokanen claims that from the conciliar statements one cannot conclude that they recognise

any divinely approved alternative ways of revelation and salvation, or any reinterpretation of the standard doctrine in Christology and soteriology. The Council did not recognize the salvific efficacy of other religions in particular; but it did recognize the general salvific presence of God's grace in all the universe God created.143

Our examination of the conciliar statements about non-Christian religions show that the Council acknowledged the possibility of salvation of non-Christians by implicitly implying that non-Christian religions are independent ways of salvation for their followers. Although, on the one hand it acknowledges that "grace and truth" are available in those religions, on the other hand it argues that they are made available in them though the mediatorship of Jesus Christ. This seems to be a negative implication of the Council's teaching, but within the broader theological context of the conciliar statements it would be more appropriate to interpret the silence of the Council positively instead of negatively in order to appreciate its contribution on this issue.144

In short, we may conclude that the documents of the Second Vatican Council accept the possibility of salvation for non-Christians provided that they follow the orders of their conscience without rejecting deliberately the Gospel message and entering into the Church. By doing this, it is emphasised that the religious tradition of those people does not play a role in the salvation of their followers because they are not included in God's plan of salvation. This implies that non-Christians can attain salvation not through their own religious traditions but in spite of them. Although the conciliar teaching maintains that the divine grace of salvation is available for all human beings, it does not attempt to clarify the actual manner by which this grace operates amongst the non-Christians and refrains from defining the measure of this grace.145

An Assessment of the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council

Our above examination of the conciliar statements indicates that they contain very positive statements concerning non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular and their religious traditions. For example, in *Nostra Aetate*, the Catholic Church "proclaims", "acknowledges", and does not reject what is true and holy in them", but "preserves and promotes" them;146 in *Ad Gentes*, she encourages her followers to "respect and love", to " know" the people among whom they live and to "prepare dialogue with non-Christians".147

Nevertheless, all those positive expressions are not enough to establish and develop fruitful dialogue between Christians and non-Christians, because there are a number of expressions which negatively affect the process of dialogue especially with Muslims. We can summarise the deficiencies of the Council's statements as follows. Firstly, there are expressions which speak about the necessity of evangelization of non-Christians. While, on the one hand, the Council acknowledged all those elements in non-Christian religions namely, the "truth and grace"148 "true and good"149 and "precious religious and human elements"150 it emphasised, on the other hand,

that Christ must be proclaimed as "the way, the truth, and the life" and "...in whom God reconciled all things to himself, men find the fullness of their religious life".151

Regarding the possibility of salvation outside Christianity, the Council indicates the necessity of mission and evangelization of non- Christians. For instance, in different places of the conciliar statements, it is spoken about the necessity of proclamation, evangelisation, and conversion to open the minds of non-Christians to hear the Gospel.152 What all these statements indicate is that there is certainly a tension between the appreciation of other religions and the call for evangelisation. Although this tension does not prevent dialogue, it makes it difficult. However, in our opinion, the difficulties should be overcome for the sake of dialogue.

Secondly, non-Christian religions are seen only as a preparation for the Gospel. According to Vatican II all good elements which are found in the life of individual non-Christians are to be regarded as *preparatio evangelica*. "Whatever good or truth is found among them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel and given by him Who enlightens all men that they may at length have life"153

Thirdly, the Council Fathers tries to patronise non-Christians by seeing their truth as a reflection of the Christian truth which illuminates all the world and by regarding the Catholic Church as the champion of the spiritual, moral social and cultural elements of other religions.154

The weak points of the conciliar text on Muslims must also be noted. Firstly, the major weakness of the Council statements is that they do not mention Islam as a religious system apart from the Judeo-Christian tradition but speak about the Muslims, their doctrines and their religious and moral lives. In other words, by referring to Muslims and not to Islam the Council puts stress on individual Muslim men and women and not on their faith. By doing this, the Council Fathers do not wish to give the impression that Islam, with all the claims it makes, is a means of salvation for their followers. Secondly, although the Council speaks about the first article of the Islamic faith, it omits the second part of this article by leaving out the prophetic mission of Muhammad through whom the Muslims profess to have access to the final revelation. The Council also leaves out the last pillar of Islamic faith, i.e. the pilgrimage, by citing prayer, alms-giving and fasting as acts of Muslim faith.

Although the conciliar teaching about non-Christians in general and Muslims in particular has many shortcomings, there are also very positive and significant points in this teaching. We will highlight these points with regard to the Christian-Muslim dialogue. As Farrugia rightly points out, Muslims must concede to the conciliar statements, for "not only is it the first time in over thirteen centuries of more or less difficult co-existence that the Church takes an official stance regarding the Islamic religion as proposed in the religious attitude of its adherents but also, in so doing, the practical and doctrinal perspectives have been openly conducive to future dialogue between Christians and Muslims".155 The Council statements provide the following epoch-making points.

Firstly, for the first time by those conciliar statements the Catholic Church officially acknowledged the presence of truly religious values in the Muslims' faith and religious beliefs. Secondly, through those statements, the Catholic Church acknowledges that both Muslims and Christians are worshipping the same God although they express their beliefs differently. Thirdly, the Catholic Church for the first time in her history officially acknowledged the Muslims' esteem and veneration of Abraham, Jesus and Mary. Fourthly, for the first time, the Catholic Church called both Christians and Muslims to come together by forgetting the past and striving sincerely for mutual understanding in order to "promote and preserve peace, liberty, social justice and moral values" for the benefit of all humankind.

Briefly, these significant points indicate that the teaching of the Second Vatican Council made tremendous progress in the way of establishing better relations with Muslims. Without these advances, it can be argued, today's dialogical relationship between Christian and Muslims would have been much more difficult.

Conclusion

It seems that the conciliar statements on Muslims imply that Islam is put on the general formula of recognition, that in it the truth of Christianity which illuminates all people can be recognised by Christians. Yet, Muslims are seen as being outside the biblical history of revelation "like all the other 'Gentiles'".156 Concerning this point, i.e. the double standard of the conciliar texts on Muslims, the German Islamicist, Hans Zirker, rightly asks, "Is it really enough for a Christian theology first to put Islam with all the other religions... and secondly, in addition, to list the individual elements which it shares with the biblical tradition?".157

When we take the Second Vatican Council's teaching as a whole, we may argue that in these Council documents the Catholic Church has moved away from exclusivism to inclusivism concerning her attitude towards non-Christians. Because, as Fitzmaurice rightly remarks, on the one hand those documents assert that salvation of humankind depends on the Christ event in one way or another; on the other hand they acknowledge that there are "real holiness and moral goodness" in the lives of those people.158

It seems that the most serious aspect of the conciliar texts on Muslims is their silence on the revelation and the prophethood of Muhammad. As we have observed above, although in these texts the Council Fathers have spoken about Muslims, their belief of One God, the Hereafter, their moral goodness, and some Islamic devotions [prayer, almsgiving, and fasting], they have not said anything about the prophethood of Muhammad and the Qur'an which are central to the faith of Muslims. In our opinion, the reason for this omission was not to regard Islam as a separate religion, through which people reach salvation. If the Council spoke of Muhammad as a Prophet of God, then the Catholic Church would have to acknowledge his prophethood, and as a consequence of that the divine origin of the Qur'an which was revealed to him from God. As a result, the Church would have to accept the presence of prophethood after Jesus, and the continuity of revelation after the New Testament. It seems that the reason for the silence of the Council Fathers on these two issues is that they did not want to acknowledge Islam as a religion apart from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

If we take the conciliar statements on Muslims as a point of departure rather than a goal for a better dialogue between Christian and Muslims, we may say that Muslims can recognise this Council as an epoch-making breakthrough in the history of Christian-Muslim relations and appreciate it by hoping that the Church authorities will continue to produce a more positive statement on Muslims by overcoming the weak points of the Council which we have indicated above. In the light of this hope , we shall analyse post-Vatican II developments in the next chapter.

In short, in our opinion, the most important contribution of the conciliar statements on Muslims is their encouragement to Christians and Muslims to forget past hostilities and to discover the deep religious character of each other's religion by doing objective research. By concluding this chapter, we would like to point out that our examination, so far, has shown us that while some people regard the conciliar statements as being too cautious, others consider them as a bold step forward. Whatever one's interpretation concerning these statements, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council did succeed in clarifying a broad theological foundation.

In the next chapter, we will examine post-conciliar developments concerning the Catholic Church's relationship with non-Christians in order to observe how far the Roman Catholic Church developed her relations with non-Christians after the Second Vatican Council.

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Notes

1. For similar questions see Mikka Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), p.10; Geoarges C. Anawati, "Excursus on Islam", in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, v. 3 (London: 1969), p.151-155; Christian Troll, "Changing Catholic Views of Islam", to be published in J. Waardenburg, ed., *Christianity and Islam: Mutual Perceptions since the Mid-20th Century* (Kampen: Kok Agora), p.2.
2. Joseph Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims: The Church's Consideration of Islam in Vatican II and its Resonance in Subsequent Christian-Muslim Relations* (Roma: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1987), p.12.
3. Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, p. 10.
4. Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1978 first published in 1968), pp. 313ff; Küng, "The World Religions in God's Plan of Salvation", in J. Neuner, ed., *Christian Revelation and World Religions* (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), p. 31; also see Molly T. Marshall, *No Salvation Outside the Church? A Critical Inquiry* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), pp. 11ff.
5. Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church: Tracing The History of the Catholic Church Response* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p. 18.
6. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, pp. 18-19.
7. Kurien Kunnumpuram, *Ways of Salvation: The Salvific Meaning of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council* (Poona: Pontifical Athenaeum, 1971), p. 13.
8. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, p. 23.
9. Knitter, *No Other Name?*, p. 121.
10. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, p. 27.
11. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, p. 35.
12. Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p.113.
13. J. Neuner & J. Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (Banglore: Theological Publication in India, 1996), p. 16.
14. Neuner & Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, p. 281.
15. Neuner & Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, pp. 383-384.
16. See Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, pp. 69ff.
17. Neuner& Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, p. 386.
18. Neuner& Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, pp. 300-301.
19. In this case, Archbishop Feeney was excommunicated by the Pope because of his insistence on a literal interpretation and application of the dogma "outside the Church there is no salvation," along the lines of the Council of Florence by defining a dogma of faith, and anyone who denies it, or waters it down, is guilty of heresy. This literal understanding of the traditional

dogma means that there is no possibility of salvation for those who do not live and die as a Roman Catholic. (Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, pp. 135-136).

20. Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, p. 306. Pope Pius XII declared that, "To gain eternal salvation it is not always required that a person be incorporated in reality *(reapse*) as a member of the Church, but it is required that one belong to it at least in desire and longing (*voto et desiderio*). It is not necessary that this desire be explicit. When one is invincibly ignorant, God also accepts an implicit desire, so called because it is contained in the good disposition of soul by which a person wants his or her will to be conformed to God's will".

21. Hick, *God and Universe of Faiths* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993 first published in 1973), p. 124.

22. See Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, p. 82ff.

23. Concerning the life of Massignon, see Giulio Basetti-Sani, *Louis Massignon (1883-1962) Christian Ecumenist; Prophet of Inter-Religious Reconciliation* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974); Herbert Mason, *Testimonies and Reflections; Essays of Louis Massignon* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1989); Bert Breiner, "Louis Massignon - An Interpretive Essay", *Newsletter*, CSIC, 14 (1985), pp. 19-26.

24. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "In Commemoration of Louis Massignon: Catholic Scholar, Islamicist and Mystic", in *Presence de Louis Massignon; Hommages et temoignages* (Paris: Editions Maisonneuve Et Larose, 1987), p. 55.

25. Basetti Sani, *Louis Massignon (1883-1962) Christian Ecumenist*, pp. 91-92.

26. Basetti Sani, *Louis Massignon (1883-1962) Christian Ecumenist*, p. 110.

27. Pierre Rocalve, *Louis Massignon et L'Islam* (Damas: Institut Francais De Damas), 1993, pp. 37-43.

28. Troll, "Changing Catholic Views of Islam", p. 10.

29. Rocalve, *Louis Massignon et L'Islam*, pp. 45-49.

30. See Karl- Josef Kuschel, *Abraham; A Symbol of Hope for Jews, Christians and Muslims* (London: SCM Press), 1995, p. 219.

31. Caspar, *Traite De Theologie Musulmane: Histoire De la Pensée Religieuse Musulmane*, Tome 1 (Rome: P.I.S.A.I, 1987), p. 80.

32. Troll, "Islam and Christianity Interacting in the Life of an Outstanding Christian Scholar of Islam: the case of Louis Massignon (1883-1962)", *IMA*, 15 (1984), pp. 163-164.

33. Troll, "Islam and Christianity Interacting in the Life of an Outstanding Christian Scholar of Islam", p. 165; also see Caspar, *Traite De Theologie Musulmane*, p. 81; Neal Robinson, "Massignon, Vatican II and Islam: As an Abrahamic Religion", *ICMR*, 2/2 (1991), pp. 182-205.

34. See Maurice Boutin, "Anonymous Christianity: A Paradigm for Interreligious Encounter", *JES*, 20 (1983), pp. 602-629.

35. See William V. Dych, Karl Rahner, *Oustanding Christian Thinkers Series* (London: Geoffrey Chapman), 1992, pp.12-13.

36. Karl Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", *Theological Investigations*, v.5 (London: Longman& Todd, 1966).

37. These writings are: Rahner, "Anonymous Christians" in *Theological Investigations*, v.6 (London: Longman & Todd, 1969), pp. 390-398; Rahner, "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church", in *Theological Investigations*, v.12 (London: Longman & Todd, 1974), pp.161-178; Rahner, "Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous Christian'" in *Theological Investigations*, v.14 (London: Longman & Todd, 1976), pp. 280-298; Rahner, "Anonymous Christianity and Explicit Faith" *in Theological Investigations*, v. 16 (London:

Longman & Todd, 1979), pp. 52-59; Rahner, "Jesus Christ in the Non-Christian Religions", in *Theological Investigations*, v. 17 (London: Longman & Todd, 1981), pp. 39-50; Rahner, "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions for Salvation", in *Theological Investigations*, v. 18 (London: Longman & Todd, 1984), pp. 288-295.

38. Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, p. 29.

39. Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 131.

40. Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 121.

41. Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 117.

42. Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 118.

43. Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 121; A lawful religion means here an institutional religion whose 'use' by man at a certain period of time can be regarded on the whole as a positive means of gaining the right relationship to God and, thus, for the attaining of salvation, a means which is therefore positively included in God's plan of salvation.(p. 125).

44. See Roger Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp.122-126.

45. Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, p. 47.

46. Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p. 131.

47. Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", p.133.

48. See "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to the Non-Christian Religions", in A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II; The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publication, 1975, pp. 738-742.

49. See "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church", in Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, pp. 350-423.

50 Thomas Stransky, "The Church and Other Religions", *IBMR*, 9 (1985), p. 154.

51 John M. Oestereicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions; Introduction and Commentary", in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, v. 3 (London: 1969), pp. 17-18; Tamara Sonn, "The Dialogue between Islam and the Judeo-Christian Tradition" in C. Wei-hsun and G. E. Spiegler, eds., *An Analysis and Sourcebook of Developments Since 1945; Religious Issues and Interreligious Dialogues* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 440.

52 Stransky, "The Church and Other Religions", p. 155; Sonn, "The Dialogue between Islam and the Judeo-Christian Tradition" pp. 440-441; also see Reinhard Neudecker, "The Catholic Church and the Jewish People", in R. Latourelle, ed., *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives Twenty Years After (1962-1987*), v.3 (New York: Paulist Press), 1989, pp. 283-323;

53 Robert Caspar, "Islam According to Vatican II: On the Tenth Anniversary of Nostra Aetate", *Encounter*, 21 (1976), p. 1.

54 Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions", pp. 122-123.

55 Caspar, "Islam According to Vatican II", p. 2.

56 Ruokanen, "Catholic Teaching on Non-Christian Religions at the Second Vatican Council", *IBMR*, 9(1985), p. 56.

57 See Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions", p. 129; Sheard, *Interreligious Dialogue in Catholic Church Since Vatican II*, p. 28.

58 Ruokanen, *Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, p. 42.

59 Stransky, "The Church and Other Religions", p. 157.

60 *Nostra Aetate* 1:1

61. Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, p. 7.

62. *Nostra Aetate* 1:1.

63. *Nostra Aetate* 1:1.

64. *Nostra Aetate* 5:1-3.

65. See Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, pp. 50-51.

66. *Nostra Aetate* 1:2; When we look at the book of "Revelation" in the New Testament, we encounter the similar passage dealing with the eschatological vision of the nations (Revelation, 21, 22). According to K. Cracknell, the expressions of this passage deal with the eschatology of nations and peoples and challenge the theologies which speak of the eschatology of a single people, and which suggest that God has but one single pattern of working in his saving action toward humankind. If God wants to save all nations and so He is at work in various ways to do this, Christians have to accept that their partners in the process of dialogue have truth in their holy books and their religious traditions are valid. (K. Cracknell, *Towards A New Relationship, Christians and People of Other Faith* (London: Epwort Press, 1987), pp. 51-52).

67. *Nostra Aetate* 2:2

68. Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, pp.59-60.

69. *Ad Gentes* 8:1.

70. *Lumen Gentium* 35:4.

71. *Lumen Gentium* 25:1.

72. *Nostra Aetate* 4:6; Ruokanen, *Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, p. 60; also see Pietro Rossano, "Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism in Roman Catholic Perspective", in G.H. Anderson & T.F. Stransky, eds., *Christ's Lordship & Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981), pp. 96-110; Paul Hacker, "The Christian Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions: Some Critical and Positive Reflections", *ZMR*, 2 (1971), pp. 81-97.

73. Ruokanen,*The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, p. 61; Ruokanen, "Catholic Teaching on Non-Christian Religions", p. 58.

74. *Lumen Gentium* 16:1.

75. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, pp. 21-22.

76. *Nostra Aetate* 2:3

77. *Nostra Aetate* 2:3.

78. See Ruokanen, *Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, pp. 86-87.

79. *Nostra Aetate* 3:1.

80. *Lumen Gentium* 16:1.

81. In the medieval age, it was claimed that Muslims were idolaters, because they did not worship one God but a false trinity which consisted of Tervagan, Muhammad, and Apollo (R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harward Unv. Press, 1962), p. 32; Albert Hourani, *Europe and Middle East* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 9; Thomas Michael, "Christianity and Islam; Reflections on Recent Teachings of the Church", *Encounter*, 112 (1985), p. 3.

82. Related Qur'anic verses see *Qur'an* 1:3; 2:255; 112:1ff; Concerning the common points of Christian and Muslim doctrine of God see Maurice Borrmans, "The Doctrinal Basis Common to Christians and Muslims and Different Areas of Convergence in Action", *JES*, 14/1 (1977).

83. Caspar, "Islam According to Vatican II; 1-7; see, Qur'an 2:255.

84. Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", *PMVB 74* (1978), p. 12.

85. Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", p. 12.

86. David Thomas, "A Christian Theology of Islam", unpublished essay, CSIC, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, p. 1-10.

87. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 40.

88. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 40.

89. See Willem Bijlefield, "The Danger of 'Christianizing' our Partners in Dialogue", *MW*, 57 (1967), pp. 172-177; Charles Adams, "Islamic Religious Tradition", in Leonard Binder, ed., *The Study of the Middle East: Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and the Social Sciences* (New York: John Wiley &Sons, 1976), pp. 29-95.

90. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 63.

91. Anawati, "*Excurcus* on Islam", pp. 151-153.

92. See Nasr, " Response to Hans Küng" in *MW*, 77 (1987), pp. 96-102.

93. Küng, *Christianity and the World religions*, p. 27

94. Anawati, "Excursus on Islam", p. 153.

95. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 41.

96. *Nostra Aetate* 3:1.

97. *Lumen Gentium* 16:1

98. See *Qur'an* 6:120-123.

99. Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", p. 12; also see Caspar, "Islam according to Vatican II", p. 5.

100. Caspar, "Islam according to Vatican II", p. 5.

101. For Massignon see section 1. 3.1.

102. Anawati, "*Excurcus* on Islam", p. 153.

103. See *Qur'an* 3: 65-67.

104. Borrmans, "The Muslim Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", p. 12.

105. Caspar, "Islam according to Vatican II", p. 5; for further information about Christian and Muslim perception of Abraham see, Kuschel, *Abraham*.

106. *Nostra Aetate* 3:1.

107. The Anglican Bishop and Islamicist, Kenneth Cragg, expresses his sadness concerning the Muslim perception of Jesus as a prophet by stating that "In conforming Christ to its own conception of the successful prophet, Islam has robbed him of himself, transformed him into an unrecognisable Jesus". (Kennth Cragg, *Call of Minaret* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 261-262).

108. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 45.

109. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 49.

110. *Nostra Aetate* 3:1.

111. Troll, "Changing Catholic Views of Islam", p. 8.

112. Caspar, "Islam according to Vatican II", p.5.

113. Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", p. 13.

114. *Nostra Aetate* 3:1.

115. Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years", pp. 12-13

116. See Chapter Two section 2.3 and 2.4.3.

117. Caspar, "La religione musulmane", p. 228 cited in Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 56.

118. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 56.

119. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 57.

120. Caspar, "Islam according to Vatican II", p. 6; also see Anawati, "An Assesment of the Christia-Islamic Dialogue", in K. C. Ellis, ed., *The Vatican, Islam, and the Middle East* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), pp. 51-68.

121. Ary A. Roest Crollius, "The Church Looks at Muslims", in Latourelle, ed., *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives Twenty Years After (1962-1987),* p. 327.

122. *Lumen Gentium* 16:1.

123. Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christians,* p. 78; Concerning this point, Crollius incorrectly argues that the Council's appreciation of Muslims' doctrinal, religious and moral elements could not be used "as arguments to prove that the plan of salvation also embrace Muslims", since it clearly contradicts the Council statement itself (Crollius, "The Church Looks at Muslims", p. 327)

124. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims,* p. 62.

125. *Nostra Aetate* 3:2.

126. Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, p. 55.

127. Caspar, *Traite de Theologie Musulmans,* p. 87.

128. As we will see in the next chapter, the relatioship between dialogue and proclamation has been discussed by the Catholic authorities in the post-conciliar period (see Chapter Two section 2.6.)

129. *Nostra Aetate* 1:2.

130. *Lumen Gentium* 14:1.

131. *Lumen Gentium* 14:2.

132. *Lumen Gentium* 9:1.

133. *Lumen Gentium* 14:1.

134. *Lumen Gentium* 16:1.

135. See Kuschel, *Abraham*, pp. 134ff.

136. Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christians,* pp. 99-100.

137. See section 1.3.1.

138. *Gaudium et spes* 22:5.

139. *Gaudium et spes*. 29:1; Ruokanen, *Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christians,* pp. 95-96.

140. *Ad Gentes Divinitus* 7:1.

141. *Lumen Gentium* 14.

142. Knitter, "Roman Catholic Approaches to Other Religions: Developments and Tensions", *IBMR*, 8(1984), pp. 50-54; also see Knitter, "Interpreting Silence: A Response To Mikka Ruokanen", *IBMR*, 14(1990), pp. 62-63; Stransky, "The Church and Other Religions", pp. 154-158; David Wright, "The Watershed of Vatican II: Catholic Attitudes towards Other Religions", in A.D. Clarke & B.W. Winter, eds., *One God One Lord; In a World of Religious Pluralism* (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1991), pp. 153-171.

143. Ruokanen, "Catholic Teaching on Non-Christian Religions", pp. 57.

144. Knitter, "Interpreting Silence: A Response to Mikka Ruokanen", p. 62.

145. Farrugia, *Vatican II and The Muslims,* p. 15; also see, Kunnumpuram, *Ways of Salvation,* p. 91; James Dupuis, "The Salvific Value of Non-Christian Religions", in M. Dhavamony, ed., *Evangelization, Dialogue and Development,* Documenta Missionalia 5 (Roma: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1972), pp. 169-194.

146. *Nostra Aetate* 2.

147. *Ad Gentes Divinitus* 11: 1; 41:5.

148. *Ad Gentes Divinitus* 9.

149. *Lumen Gentium* 16.

150. *Gaudium et spes* 92:4.

151. *Nostra Aetate* 2:2; see also J. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ Encounter at the World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), pp. 137-138; Kunnumpuram, *Ways of Salvation*, p. 65-66.

152. See *Ad Gentes Divinitus* 13:1; 15:8; 39:1; 40:2.

153. *Ad gentes Divinitus* .9; *Lumen Gentium* 17

154. *Nostra Aetate* 2:2-3.

155. Farrugia, *Vatican II and the Muslims*, p. 70.

156. Kuschel, *Abraham*, p. 216.

157. Hans Zirker, *Islam: Theologische und Gesellschaftliche Herausforderung* (Dusseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1993), p. 27 cited in Kuschel, *Abraham*, p. 217; also see Troll, "Christianity and Islam: Mutual Challenges: Hans Zirker's recent work on Islam", *OCP*, 61 (1995)., pp. 571-580.

158. Redmond Fitzmaurice, "The Roman Catholic Church and Interreligious Dialogue: Implications for Christian-Muslim Relations", *ICMR*, 3/1(1992), p. 92; Fitzmaurice, *What Will the Third Vatican Council have to say about Relations between Christians and People of other Faiths*, Occasional Paper 14, (Birmingham: Selly Oak Colleges, 1997).

Report on

African Traditional Religions

George F. McLean and *John P. Hogan*

The Nature of African Traditional Religions (ATR)

African Traditional Religions (ATR) are plural if seen in their dispersion across Africa, but singular when contrasted to non-African religions. As traditional they are originally African, whereas others such as Islam and Christianity came to Africa at a particular time.

They are not only, or even especially, cognitive, but rather are the bases of the lived daily experience. By relating people to God they set the basic terms of how one lives and treats other humans, whether unborn, living or dead, as well as nature.

ATR engage three components: God, humans and nature.

1. *God* is seen as the unique supreme and all powerful being, the sole creator and father of all who decides life or death. As the origin or destroyer of the universe in the heavens above God is masculine, but has a female tonality when seen in terms of the earth as mother. Thus God is also immanent and engaged in deciding regarding the life and the death of persons and the creation and destruction of the universe as a whole.

2. *Humans* have a relational identity, that is, they are related to God. This relation to the absolute is affirmed in the initiation rites. Humans are seen in terms of communities or faith groups. These include: (a) the unborn, whose membership in the human community is reflected in the rituals; (b) the living, who are arranged in a hierarchy according to their age, with the elder being considered to be more experienced in the encounter with the divine; and (c) the ancestors, who are seen as the living dead. The ancestors are considered to be very much present; special places are left for them in the living quarters of their children. Traditional healers are special representatives of God.

3. *Nature*, in turn, is viewed as the place of divine revelation. It is not worshiped, but is considered a manifestation, revelation or theophany. Hence there is an attitude of friendship toward nature which is full of visible and invisible beings.

The ATR bespeak between beings and alliance in the horizontal sense, first of man in the direction of other men, then toward nature. There is alliance also in the vertical sense with the Supreme Being above as the original source of the life and power, but in relation with the visible and the invisible world through the mediation of the Ancestors, the Ancients and those who are delegated for the sacred functions of observing the rites, ethical and social norms (Mulago, Kisimba, Atal).

The fact of God, human, community and harmony with the nature are normative in the ATR. These are religions of celebration in community of life; death is understood as a passage from this life to that after death (Memel-Fote, Mathias Gadou Dakouri). The celebration involves rites and symbolic languages to overcome death.

Before the major historical religions and the new spiritual movements the ATR remain in the concrete deep creed of the people, even of those converted to other religions.

The overall relationship of God, man and nature constitutes an integrated whole. It is not that God breaths life separately into each individual who then goes off by him- or herself. Rather the creative divine breath continues to flow, as it were. It comes from God, via the ancestors, and through one's parents on a continuing basis; one's parents continually give life to their children. Hence all live in a perduring religious context as sharing together in this continuing flow of life from God. This calls for continual engagement and expression, e.g., in dancing.

Thus the two basic realities are God who is mysterious and breaths life into humans; humans, in turn, are seen as both essentially related to God for the gift of life and creative with regard to nature. The continuous character of this relationship to God has some similarity to the continuous way in which Christ proceeds from His father.

What Can ATR Contribute to the Religious Patrimony of Humankind

There is a hesitation on the part of Africans to accept themselves their own imagination — as expressed in contemporary art forms. Conversely ATR has not been adequately recognized as a world religion, perhaps because religion has been looked at as a way of life directed by a book. ATR could be seen more truly as a world religion if taken as a proto religion in that they relate all to the one creator and hence among themselves. This is primary and foundational insight for all religions, even if not put down in written form. Though not articulate about the mode of transcendence of the one creator, God is seen clearly as the creator or source that unites us all.

ATR are especially characterized by a vibrant living harmony. The coming together as children of the same father is celebrated in community as its special gift of life. The emphasis is not on the I or ego, but on us as brothers and sisters. This is manifested in the strong African sense of hospitality where the other is seen as oneself. It is reflected also in a sense of morality which permeates daily life and is manifested in self-criticism and how one gets along with others.

These senses of community and of morality join in making sin a community affair which destroys the social body. This is not seen as doing something to God who is considered too great to be bothered, but it does upset the community. This contrasts to the sense of ransom found in the Church's liturgy and to the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Cross inasmuch as they stress the theological dimensions of sin.

ATR are particularly inspired by a true sense of the sacredness of life and all its elements. Hence, the gospel of John and then of Luke are preferred as stressing the gifts of life and of love. This is reflected also in, e.g., the ceremonial throwing of some bits of food or pouring a libation as one begins to eat or drink, and in the attention given to the parable of the good summaritan in the people's outlook.

The sense of community and of continuing creation are special contributions enriching and unfolding the Christian tradition on points less appreciated in the West due to its intensified individualistic outlook originating in late medieval mominalism. Also the African spirit may be more authentically spiritual in its breadth of concern for all humankind. The ATR sense of the sacred, of evil and of hospitality reflects an integrated rational system which resists being submerged by a Western cultural imperialism.

At a theoretical level understood as a level of principles and studies, the ATR recognizes God, Spirit, Ancestor, Human and material powers as realities in harmonious relationship. This major religious concept supports a universal project of peace and mutual understanding between religions and among peoples.

The ATR contain basic mystique of life in its fullness realized in ancestral communion including human beings in the world in relationship to the dead. Life as an inestimable gift, venerated from conception of the human existence as something sacred.

What Does ATR Expect from Other Religions: e.g., What Form of Recognition?

Indeed as this basic insight of all religions emerged early and has remained the constant and clear focus of ATR, then they are not only proto religious but ur-religious, the basic commitment that all religious seek to make clear and living. This is the real basis for the recognition of ATR, namely, as the key to the religious authenticity of all.

Attitudinally, in the globalizing context the ATR need new ways to relate to other religions that are not exploitive of Africa, but recognize the African personality and value its way of life. In these terms there can be a true dialogue with other religious traditions, particularly with Islam and Christianity.

Two things should be noted also. One is that projects of interaction require financial support, which in turn is an indication of the degree of seriousness with which this is taken.

The other is that the rejection of any imposition upon Africa of values from other parts of the world does not mean that African cultures do not contain negative elements or are above effective criticism. All cultures as human have not only limitations, but negative elements contrary to the proper progress of their people. These need to be subject to criticism which can lead to improvements in the life of these peoples.

This suggests, in turn, a broad dynamism of intersecting cultures. However, as this can challenge and even overwhelm the ability to change, it should not be expected that everybody will accept all of a densely integrated faith such as Christianity or Islam; that could cause very real alienation. On the other hand, as oral African culture may also be especially maliable for as it is kept in memory the archival store tends to pass away with the death of each person. This great loss to the community which needs to be restored and readapted in the minds of subsequent generations who can reconfigure it.

At the same time it must be recognized that African cultures reflect the longest experience of human living and, as noted above, possess an exceptionally strong integrative sense of all: both creator and creation. E.g. marriage is seen also as a continued flowing process in which children are an essential factor. This is in some contrast to the Western more legal-contractual view of marriage.

There is progress in recognition, but full recognition is hoped rather than only some sporadic signs. Indeed, the status of the ATR as a world religion has not yet been comfortably accepted in some quarters of the academic and Christian religious world. "For the African, religion is far more than ‘a believing way of life’ or ‘an approach to life’ directed by a book. It is a ‘way of life’ or life itself, where a distinction or separation is not made between religion and other areas of human existence" (Mbiti, 1977, Magesa, 1997, 26).

For a successful approach, the creation support and development of centers and institutes of studies on ATR are capital, with consequent exchanges collaboration assistance on such varied matters as publications, seminars, research programs, and such essential materials as museum, informatics, etc.

Finally, two reflections from other cultural contexts may be revealing. In Indonesia Christianity is numerically a small minority and somewhat alienated from the general culture. Yet, due to its educational efforts it holds a strong position in society. On the other hand, Islam though

very broadly practiced, has had less prestige in the past. Now after long suppression the resurgent Moslem identity can at times take on a more militant and fundamentalist form. From Thailand there was the suggestion of a need for more positive and optimistic attention to the values found in other traditions.

What Might a Revised *Nostra Aetate* Say with Regard to ATR?

Though ATR did not appear in *Nostra Aetate*, in any revision it must hold a respected place. In this regard it should be noted that:

1. to pass from a hidden to an explicitly recognized place would give legitimacy to the African search for God;
2. to develop a more adequate knowledge of what is specific to ATR, while at the same time rejecting what is negative in both these and in other religions; is a condition for honest dialogue;
3. to learn from the experience of life of the African peoples and to draw upon the symbols they have evolved to express meaning is an important element of inculturaltion; and
4. to work pastorally in engaging the life efforts of the people will be more effective than a more speculative approach.

This effort of returning to one's cultural roots in order to discover more of the rich meaning of one's life is being repeated not only in Africa, but among others cultures as well. Hence a polycentric approach is now possible so that together all can rise above the natural to a supernatural life.

It would be good to explore this in two directions. First with regard to the phenomenon of totemism which, though not unique to Africa, may be more lived there than elsewhere in our times. As noted above, in one sense this can be looked at as a proto religion, inasmuch as it does not elaborate the sense of transcendence, though the totem is to be treated as uniquely sacred. Yet from another point of view it does entail a very deep center for religious vision, i.e., the unity in which all else have their participated meaning. In this way it is not only proto-religious but ur-religious constituting a hierophany in which all is religious, a mystical symbol of the supernatural yet to be manifested, and the basic religious insight which all religions share and express each in their own symbol system.

In this light ATR are an etiological search for a founding human meaning. Christianity is not only inculturated as a way of living this religious content, but dialogue with ATR can uncover more of the roots of Christianity as well as of ATR. In this sense Christianity would be also – though by no means only – a point of access to the deeper meaning of ATR and thereby to a richer sense of religion as such. The invitation of ATR is that to live with us is thereby live your own religious life more fully.

The exploration of this raises in turn the issue of a properly African philosophy and theology on which immense but most promising work lies ahead. We are but at the beginning of recognition of the significance of totem and proverb. We have but begun the development of a proper hermeneutics for oral cultures that will make possible retrieval and reflection upon the workings of the Spirit in the hearts and minds of the African peoples.

Religion is a gift of God to all humanity, like a river ever flowing from generation to generation. The African religions may well have been at the headwaters of this flow and remain

most aware and focused upon it. ATR can now be seen as flowing into other great religions and providing them with their basic form and foundational orientation.

In this light a revised *Nostra Aetate* would:

1. give explicit and visible recognition to ATR as a world religion;
2. stimulate and use a large field of scientific information in order to know the non-Christian forms of African spirituality which already exist and some times are dated back to Egyptian antiquity;
3. inquire regarding different problems of society in order to determine the relevant place for the people religious etiology;
4. learn positively from the community experience of life, exploiting with discrimination African religious symbolism and all its helpful ancestral knowledge;
5. recommend to the people of God in Africa to be confident in assuming positive traditional values; and encourage them "with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life" (N.AE., 2);
6. have a general view of the studies and experiences of inculturation among the ATR area;
7. include studies of the ATR in the curriculum of religious formation and also in Catholic teaching institutions; and
8. hold sincere dialogue with neither pride nor prejudice.

African Cultural Heritage in the Global Encounter of Civilizations

Théodore Mudiji Malamba

Introduction

When we consider, on the one hand, the cultural heritage commonly called traditional and, on the other hand, the African philosophical thought which is being elaborated, we can notice that the thinking of Africa which has partially awakened in spite of it is towards an urgency and a challenge to "apprehend" a world in motion, a world which should be constructed with the participation of all human beings.

The idea "in spite of it" is important because it denotes the change of mental attitude and practice required for the actors of history – that African philosophy has to orient towards 'pointing out' from Africa. This idea is suggested by the advent of the world's historical events that has embarked traditional Africa in the train leading our planet to the age of actual globalisation. Among those historical facts are mentioned the older religions called monotheism followed by less preponderant spiritual movements, philosophy to its asserted identity of western origin, knowledge applied as a place for the elaboration and the concretisation of moral, aesthetic and technical values.

Such an advent of events often appeared under the form of the imposition by a foreign will to which Africa has had either to resist or to participate in a forced or marginal way for prioritizing foreign interests. There was on this eventual trajectory such matters as the slave trade, colonisation, the neo-colonial phenomenon, etc.

Whether it wants it or not, contemporary Africa is embarked besides other continents, cultures and peoples of the same world, with all its history and hopes. A special moment of the cultural phenomenon, philosophy has this in peculiar: it is a critical thought. It can evaluate, from a viewpoint which is proper to it, the integral cultural phenomenon and all the preponderant aspects that are implied thereby. African philosophy as such – or better, philosophy in Africa – ought to be an instance of awareness. Its task should be to provoke, in the African, required conditions of possibility in order to validly implicate the history, the tradition and the African potentialities within those of the world which is being built.

Consequently, it will require a fusion of horizons and an intercultural dialogue concerned with the originality of particular identities as audacious in the participation to the expectations and risks, for the advent of the cultural intercomprehension real-life experience. It will take creative imagination to discover and to invent well-proven principles destined to help Africa to fully participate, with discernment and realism, in the movement of thought and favourable action of a globalised world that may prove better for all.

We speak of culture in order to retrace, from the cultural African heritage, the conditions of possibility of the dialogue between cultures of our globalised world. In other words, after we have attempted to fix the notion of culture in general, and with respect to the cultural African heritage, we will present the essential sectors in the horizon of their encounter in today's world, for a mutual and real care.

Culture, Its Historical Roots and African Characteristics

The history of humanity is a march and a perpetual struggle for life. In spite of its ambiguity, Benito Mussolini's sentence "Chi si ferma è perduto" (he who stops is lost) expresses as an essential an ineluctable truth. The stakes of the struggle for the individual and collective survival are varied. But if they detect and overcome their deficiencies, they build up in common a search for total liberty from unconscious instincts, historical determinism, blind forces and various constraints that block the way of final happiness.

The aspiration for happiness is natural to man. But the step to this state is chronically hindered. Man remains prisoner of illusions and myths that frequently make him wander or die. However, this first side carpeted with disappointments should not dissipate the second, on which the same person realises a fundamental and unique experience: discovery, the acquisition and the progressive constitution of a precious heritage of material, moral and spiritual values.

The health and salvation of humanity, at the end of the confrontation between constituent forces of the two sides, resides in the triumph of the culture schematically indicated by those values. Man's better future, i.e., the human being's new coexistence, should arise from the quantitative value of the human integral cultural project.

The deep and rapid transformations, as well as the historical characteristics of the humanity of the new age demands, at all levels, recourse to cultural potential to permit human beings progress in humanity and to take away the drift into obstacles. But what is culture? Culture has numerous definitions. George F. McLean, putting back culture into the classic philosophical tradition, refers to two Latin etymologies: that of *cultura* used by Latin writers such as Cicero; and that of *civis* (a word from which derive the terms: citizens, civil society and civilisations). The Latin word *cultura* has then the meaning of *paidea* (education) for Greeks and *Bildung* (formation) for German writers. And the culture of a people, according to the first meaning, denotes virtues and values that a people comes to accumulate in their past life in the search for realisation: "Together, these values and virtues of a people set the pattern of social life through which freedom is developed and exercised. This is called a 'culture'".1

The meaning to which is referred the word "*civis*" brings out the need of a person to belong to a group. The person, in his turn, gives to his fellow-members or fellow-citizens individual resources with which they will be inspired to identify themselves and understand their existence within the group. The elements that include the group civilisation are: knowledge, beliefs, art, moral, laws, customs and all the group's attributes.2

In what consists the African culture? During the colonial period mainly, cultural African heritage was studied by social and ethnological sciences. The contents that are given support one another; make themselves clear and complete one another. They deliver a deposit of values which, considered according to the synchronic and diachronic axes, permit one to trace the definitional reference points, to bring a common idea and an essential concept of culture.

Similarly, F.M. Olbrechts understands culture as "a complex of customs and actions that allow man to lead his existence, in collaboration with other people".3 According to C. Levi-Strauss, "Every culture can be considered as a set of symbolical systems in the first range of which are language, matrimonial rules, economic relationship, art, science, religion."4

In every culture, there are elements of material nature (clothing, tools, food, housing etc) and spiritual elements (political, religious, artistic, scientific life, etc.). For R. Van Kets, the fundamental cause of a culture resigns in man's spiritual and material condition. In this global condition, the determining factor of culture is the human spirit, whereas in the elaboration of the culture, physical, material conditions of the human existence contribute to determine the progression, the structure, etc."5

But more than a mere sociological phenomenon, culture is peculiar to human being and is based upon the pole of unity and of universality of the human nature. The culture which is diffused in the diversity of cultural elements is settled in a mix of objective elements inherited at the same time from the material of history and the transcendence of the spiritual in man. Dynamic place of limitation and liberation, of richness and of poverty, the cultural is a mix of ambiguity to constantly clarify towards every evolution and with sure reflectors.

The studies to determine the characteristic elements of culture go back in history and have concerned the societies of the entire world. Their reason of being and the results in which they end vary to the rhythm of the methods used. For Africa, the first voice was the one of the "ethno" tour. Ethnographic studies were said to be free of charge descriptions – at least formally – and fundamentally directed towards the positive knowledge of the learned societies. Those of ethnographical nature aimed at a functional interpretation where the preoccupation of an analysis of cultural facts was to achieve other objectives, and not the declared ones.

The ethnographical approach is illustrated by the "*Manuel d'ethnographie*" of Marcel Mauss. This book is a classic of the saturated period of the eruption of cultural phenomena of the "societies without writings."6 As to the ethnological approach, it covers investigations and interpretations, in a given optic, that may be of philosophical, juridical, religious, etc., nature. They are generally tinted with a more or less apparent ideology but they never lack interest. They have often been the source of fruitful critical thoughts. Among the writers who were said to be or are ranged at the ethno-philosophical side, we can name Cyrille Van Overbergh, Tempels, Mulago, Kagame, Lufuluabo, and Mujinya. G. Devreux is renowned for a work entitled *Ethnopsychanalyse complémentariste*7 whereas researchers in arts of the "people without writings" like Michel Leiris, Jean Lalande, Engelbert Mveng are said to do "ethno-artistics."

"Africanity" is the appropriate word to designate the results which this range of studies aims at or achieves. It consists of a unity constituted of a set of elements peculiar to the societies of traditional Africa. It appears in the content of social and psychological similarities; it drinks to the same roots of physical and human nature, and inherits secular internal exchanges to a continent preserved along time from external trends, but which today is forced to open itself.

The common elements that weave the vast unit, or the contents of Africanity – Jacques Maquet's work, for instance – point to cultural domains:

Techniques of production (ex., to cultivate), economy (ex., to work in groups on collective fields), political (ex., taking decisions in unanimity and not in majority), kinship (ex., solidarity), family (ex., to have many wives), religion (worship of ancestors), philosophy (conceive, under the multiplicity of livings, the unity of vital force), art (to represent, in an expressionist way, a mental image of man), etc.8

If it is true to assert, without any prior judgement, that it is through a similar range of ways of being and of doing that Africanity spreads as a cultural tradition, then it is there one should read what makes particular the African tradition; and these contents should be, afterwards, submitted to the criteria of a positive evolution. Their identificatory interest does not escape any person towards the stakes exposed to the confrontation and to those promised to the dialogue of cultures in the age of globalisation.

According to sociologists – Georges Balandier, for instance – the originality of the African culture is constituted by three typical traits:

1) A vitalistic philosophy based upon the choice of life, contrary to the West where the choice of drama is cultivated;

2) A surprising political inventiveness carried by a supreme capacity of conflict- resolution, contrary to the Western rigidity of confrontation;

3) An extraordinary safeguard of its own cultural identities, with another way to engage the history.9

In previous times, many placed the sign characteristic of Negro cultures in the animism which was said to be the religion of the African Negro or again in the negritude.10 One fact admitted by all and which should be mentioned here is the centrality of religion. According to Professor Atal, commenting on Mulago, it is at the foundation and it is the foundation, at the top and the top of the cultural African edifice. It impregnates all the life of the African Negro: its individual, family, socio-political life. It has a psychological and social function of integration and of equilibrium. These fundamental elements should be placed in the unity of life and of participation, in the belief of growth, of decrease and of the interaction of beings: in the symbol, in an ethic deriving from Ontology, and in the ultimate end of man situated beyond himself.11

Cultural Sectors

By means of phenomenological reduction operating in its definitional contents, culture can be said to be constituted by what the thought and the free action of human beings produce in response to their existential problems. The major question - answers that history records through culture in connection with the African heritage - will be tackled later on, considering religion and morals, art and "management techniques," especially the therapeutic, the political, and finally, the philosophical. These points will be discussed as to lead to a pertinent response relating to intercultural dialogue in the era of globalisation.

The Religious Dimension of Culture and Religion in Black Africa

When speaking of religion, it is better to observe from the beginning that philosophy is not itself an act of faith. But man and his environment, what philosophy attempts to understand and to throw light on, involves humanity implicated into an experience that is strongly encompassed by the religious element. "Religions," G. Florival writes, "reveal to the individual and the group a dimension of hidden force which is the concern of an objective health or even of a protective desire towards the dramas of life and death."12 In fact the religious experience reveals human finitude in two aspects: one side visible to the reason and the other invisible. The ethical and spiritual reflection on anthropological reality respects, in its theological orientation, a worthwhile experience of the global human constituent. The man who is called to culturally dialogue here is not exclusively a rational human being.

Traditional African religion is centred on the mystery of life. Myths, rites and initiations, symbols and arts punctuate, narrate and celebrate that mystery of strong life or even of life-force. It is a life considered as a precious gift given by the Supreme Being, the master and the creator of the whole Universe, the Origin and the Supreme Master of life: He governs this economy by the intermediation of ancestors. Life is sacred: it requires respect, protection and promotion.

Within the African religions, what M. Eliade writes about the sacredness of the world keeps all its meaning. Taken as a whole, the cosmos is an organism: it is at the same time real, alive and

sacred, in that it is manifested at the same time with the modalities of the being and of the sacred. The world as a whole is a place where "the ontophany and the hierophany meet".13 The Universe in which the religious man moves is a universe characterised by a hierarchised organisation and solidarity among all beings.

Man is situated at the intersection of the visible and invisible dimensions of the world. He is in vertical and structural relation with the invisible world: with the Supreme Being, his delegates, the ancestors and the Spirits. Horizontally, he keeps up a special relation of similarity with other men; he possesses a structural link with nature. The latter constitutes for him the environment, which permits him to give the material to his existence. Life is lived in a relation of union with the community. L.A. Opoku, quoted by Laurent Mangesa, well expresses it by this saying: "Life is when you are together, alone you are an animal"; and "every responsible human living should obey the ethical imperative to restore union when it is broken."14

But what is the actual state of traditional religion in Africa? Have they disappeared or resisted the intrusion of foreign cultures and religions? As we can notice, the African life today is characterised by a triple phenomenon: "a rush of the Africans into sects and into imported spiritualist movements of esoteric, initiative and salvific nature; the reappearance or say the 'rebirth' of ancestral religions and of traditional secrete societies; and finally the proliferation of syncretic churches and sects founded by the Africans within the universal Christianity."15

Thus, the reappearance and the permanence in the African everyday life of traditional religions should be understood as the "there" of the sudden appearance of the epiphany and the captive seizure of the African identity and culture. There is, in fact, a resistance of those religions towards the old monotheist religions from the West or from the East. Mathias Gadou Dakouri speaks of three places of expression of this resistance: the actor of the resistance, the religious systems themselves, and the new monotheist religions."16

About the actor, there is always an increasing number of Africans, even in the intellectual and urban milieu, who continue to claim animism or, better, traditional African religions. This is to mean that far from disappearing from the life of the Africans, traditional religions still haunt many spirits and hearts. The diversity of neo-religious movements also rejoins this viewpoint. In fact, those movements, which borrow many facets, moving from messianism to independent churches, passing by prophetism and syncretism, try to recuperate and to perpetuate the African vision of the world and of man.

Anthropologists' classic theses read out, through those movements, a political will of resistance to the colonial order incarnated by the white man's religion. But we wonder if such an explanation is sufficient enough to give an account of the complexity and the recurrence of that phenomenon even after Independence. Two things seem essential to me in some cases. In fact there is, on the side the fact that this reading can still defend itself, considering the true reality of politico-economical independence of the African states – which are less a reality than a conquest, an aspiration. On the other side, the fact that those movements are said to be deeply a will of the reappropriation of the African vision of the universe as a place of deep rooted and foundational faith, or better, of African 'belief'.

In addition, traditional religions also show their vitality within monotheist religions: Christianity and Islam. For instance, to believe Mathia Gadou Dakouri, the will for the 'Africanisation' of Christianity can be seized as an attempt to reorganise the content of that religion according to a local cultural perspective. The African liturgy is an illustration. However, the example of the Congolese Mass rite is eloquent. The infatuation of the Africans for the charismatic

revival is an element that corroborates that thesis. How many of these people do not go there for search of celestial favours: recovery, fecundity, work, happiness, marriage, etc!

The ethical facet deserves a particular mention. It is an indispensable level to the religious edifice. It is a school of life, which is opened by the symbolic marking of the initiation and introduced to a qualitative modality of perception, and of being. The access and the progression in the initiative existence are a melting pot of apprenticeship and of virtuous perfection. It comprises strong periods characterised by specific initiations, common or elitist, and divided according to the sexes. Those initiations transmit and irradiate a durable behaviour in the mind of the adepts and on the entire community. They are the source of a flowering of works of culture and of art.

Without going into descriptive details of particular rites of initiation, we raise some of the following general but common points. Required conditions of place and time: a reclusion and an isolation of variable duration, often during the dry season. Generally linked to the vital cycle – initiation intervenes, for boys, between adolescence and the entrance in the adult age; and for girls, during puberty, just before the marriage. Civic (customs, genealogies, myths of origins), professional (hunting, war, techniques), and sexual instruction is received. One is submitted to strict discipline and to hard physical and psychological confrontations. The external signs belonging to the initiation are composed of symbolic mutilations that can be circumcision for boys, excision for girls, facial incisions, the removal of a phalanx, the filing or the wrenching of the incisive teeth; the change of name, the imposition of the secret to be hidden from the 'outside'– the semantic explanation of the initiation global symbolism at different levels of meaning. This implies a vision of the reality, which continues beyond the secular and immediate horizon.

Society offers itself to the youth as a global framework of functioning in which, initiated candidates are enrolled in a kind of melting-pot that socialises, homogenises, enables them to learn and to acquire techniques. This transformation establishes them in adulthood.

No gesture is fortuitous in the initiation's language. Physical mutilations are the raw expression of a will for the change of state in the entire human being. Sometimes in the founder myth, as in the case of circumcision with the Phende, the injury of organ is attributed to a natural cause, in the case of the cutting of a wild herb. People achieve the operation in the context of a rite and invent a set of facts and gestures which are the concerns of culture such as masks, dances, etc.

Initiation realises the function of integration, transposing the personality sphere from "to appear" to that of the "being". The point of departure of the Negro African's initiative project is situated in the notion of person understood as a composite and an unachieved heritage, which is structured and acquired from a cosmic and social environment, which is opened to the individual self-creation and autonomy, which is integrated through the use and the intervention of that environment. Acted and acting by the symbolic of initiation, the individual humanises himself by culturalising and socialising himself. The society gives and takes his destiny. This occurs under the real and symbolic shock of confrontations, psycho-dramatic sentences and problem resolutions as well as complex tensions that define the break between the old and the new individual and social status. It denotes the real-life experience and the body. It is addressed to the imaginary and to the representation. Death and regeneration also appear as an essential tandem for the initiation's journey, carrying along the triple revelation of the sacred, death and sexuality,17 which knows, assures and integrates the initiated into a 'new personality'

The language and the techniques that are used or learnt have as main functions to "maintain and reproduce fundamental values of the village, of the clan and of the ethnicity", "as well as to set up an established order";18 to "vivify" (by means of festive joy, patiently prepared and contained on the occasion of an initiation rite), as if to imitate and substitute the self-control had

by the child before his natural birth; to intensively unify, by means of feast and exchange games, the unifying meals, congratulations, wishes and benedictions which stress the communion and the group fraternity, publicly consecrating unions within and beyond family solidarity, to the village,19 and to the whole world and its beings, the invisible and those who populate it.

The successful initiation brings to the life of the individual additional meaning and a rich approach of its finality. Sentences of separation, of reclusion in a sacred field, of triumphant and reintegrating resurrection, replaced in a symbolic time-space, bring and develop it. Following the example of the community, the individual also reaches the main initiation dimensions that Louis-Vincent Thomas places "in the instructions and education which constitute social plenitude in sexual plenitude by possessing the procreative capacity, and in the ritual plenitude that makes man sacred".20

This plenitude will characterise the mental attitude and the behaviours of the African who is called to an intercultural dialogue in the context of the challenges of globalisation. Which chances does the African have to find facing him a true interlocutor? And for which use will the fundamental values of a religious identity and cultural heritage be marked by the sacred character of life, the union between beings, solidarity between man and the nature, the relation with the transcendent? The answers to these questions should take into account the other announced dimensions of the African culture.

Arts and "Management Techniques"

The creation of not only useful but also beautiful works of art responds, above all, to man's fundamental need in his quality as a perfect spiritual being. The artistic community heritage is a mirror and a manifestation of his interiority. It even represents a kind of model, a project of his existence in the course of history. The supports of such a model vary. They embrace various forms that shape the materials and seek internal and external sensitive faculties. When being elaborated in relation to the factual, "the aesthetic form constitutes art's autonomy in the face of the fact".21 By its form, the work of art transcends the sense and establishes an intra-trans-and inter-cultural communication.

An African work of art betrays its origins. It is neither impersonal nor 'not- belonging' to such and such a group neatly asserted by an eloquent style, by its symbols. It reflects the world's vision, the religion, the social life, the power it summarizes. It is the whole people: Dogon, Luba, Tshokwe, Bamileke, etc., that such and such of their masks represents. The influence of Negro art upon the modern European art is well attested. A well-known example is that of Picasso. He has imitated Bafuam masks (Cameroon) in the sculpture of "Têtes des femmes" of 1909, with volunteer abstraction of the "mystery" of the inspiration mask, of its full spiritual meaning" of witnesses "of that dialogue between the dead and the livings", according to Bouba Keita's words.22

Considering the totemic masks and other objects of the black world, Ph. Guimiot locates their meaning in "the reflection of the identity of the entire people, the manifestation of the regard over himself ." The writer invites his Western fellows to see "the intensive and particular life of which are charged those sculptures, the spirituality through beauty. The black man has come to capture from the world beyond and mysteriously to include in them, spirituality which amazes and attract us, especially in our today's world where inert material accumulates and the spirit disappears."23 Dogon masks reveal to Marcel Griaule a well-articulated relation to the world and man's origin; a

participation in a well-elaborated mythical vision, spread out by the morphological and stylistic elements of mask.24

Guimiot's testimony says much about the way that remains in ordinary time and more again about these periods of intercultural dialogue, dominated by the concept of globalisation. The question is to know how a people, in the example of the African people, can stand with their artistico-cultural heritage at the "rendez-vous of giving and receiving". The answer can be obtained by making a comparison between the equation of the identity of the situation and that of difference in communication.

In fact, in a universe totally in interaction and where "all is well," identical and different subjects who come into communicational relation won't succeed at this enterprise unless each subject ceases to regard himself as an "I" individual, identifying himself instead as existing in "a world where the 'I' has the power, where in spite of his dependence, he is free."25 The successful task for each in this encounter would consist of a construction of a common effort, in which the "I" subject questions, under the ontological and symbolical registers, the "you" in an indissoluble link which gives an I-you-he, or we-you-they, in the case of the group or the society. It is the real comprehension in the case of the dialogue between two persons or two instances, which take each other in a third and new situation of progress for each and for the two others. According to Hans-Georges Gadamer, "the comprehension consists (...) in the process of fusion of those horizons that are said to be independent each from other".26 Can this be sufficient? We will come back to this question later on.

Human Techniques and Social Management

By this expression, we designate art in the sense of knowing-how: – the skilfulness and the intuition by which is practised a deep knowledge of the human whose clever behaviour brings human social equilibrium. The two cases which are taken to illustrate this are therapeutical and political management.

The re-establishment of the equilibrium in man and among men, following a significant perturbation, comes from holistic wisdom putting into relief the specific contribution of the African culture at the moment of crisis or during the conflict of institutions. For the first case, L. Apostel put in evidence what Dr. Mathias Makang ma Mbog reveals in his work *Essai de compréhension de la Dynamique des psychothérapie africaines Traditionnelles.* He writes: "The fact, only becoming evident in Western psychiatry now, is that both a sick and healthy man are living in a global system that is normally but always in equilibrium. It is composed of the person, his family, the healing powers, the spirits and the trends of his society."27 Afterwards, the author gives further details upon how the health system works when transgression breaks the equilibrium by sickness. All those forces are implicated for its quick re-establishment. The knowledge of the secrets of nature to which only specialised initiated ones accede is also taken into account.

For men's behaviour, there are also "techniques" in terms of "managerial devices" to reduce the tensions, to smooth away the conflicts and put the citizens in the service of a cause, promoter of general and particular interests. The public space is a place of men's fights, of their interests and of their cultures. The desire of a struggle for death by each people and each culture for the recognition of undeniable rights and the quality of man rumbles in each of them. Francis Fukuyama sets forth the state of "struggle for recognition".28 He projects a gloomy end of history. "The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life

for a purely abstract goal, the world-wide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands".29

In the same context and towards the potential threats of civilisations, Samuel P. Huntington insists on what is unique in the European civilisation, i.e., to be at the origin of the individual liberty, political democracy, of the principle of law, of human rights and cultural liberty. The main responsibility of western leaders, he writes, "is not to attempt to reshape other civilisations in the image of the West, which is beyond their declining power, but to preserve, protect, and renew the unique qualities of western civilisation."30

For the occasion, African resources contain suitable tools and daily efficient applications, among which we can mention the "technique" of the "tree of discussion" or of management equitable *parole* in the sense of strong power, dignity, right, recognition etc. In African cultures, in fact, the *parole* is the ancestors' sacred gift, granted to all the members of the community. The "tree of discussion" is that "*agora*" where popular sovereignty is still exercised in a deliberative assembly, with argumentation. And personally or by delegation, each community member presents his rights publicly. Interpersonal and inter-clanic conflicts and shocks are regulated according to the *Pende* saying "giamona mukuta, mambo agisuga" ("they never return to what had publicly been concluded").31 Under this "tree of discussion", as in the Athenian democracy, the problem which interests everybody is settled in the centre "es to meson" at the public place, at the *agora*, and at equal distance from domestic families (homes), in order to be discussed in a civilised way, with equal and reasonable means, i.e., the arguments towards admitted principles and words.

But can this deep wisdom, which was already shared by Ancient Greeks and Africa through the ages, still preside over a real fertile encounter of cultures in this period of globalisation? How is it that the threat of a 'clash of civilisations" continues to weigh heavily, that violence cannot be moved away for ever, that the causes that generate hatred, anger, are not treated with success? Those questions make us think of the contribution of philosophy for an exit, by means of cultural commitment.

Philosophy, Culture and Humanity: A Common Future

Interrogative Thought and African Philosophy

As knowledge, philosophy differs from other scientific disciplines in that philosophy is the knowledge of foundation, an apprenticeship of wisdom and a research for truth: it inspires and mediates the cultural world. "Greek at origin," writes Ghislaine Florival, "it has itself emancipated itself from its only western context. Its universe, actually broken up, permits it, in relation to different cultures, to measure its proper reason of being"32 by providing for the cultural transformation of city life and for the builders, landmarks for a construction in the encounter.

An authorised witness of the vitality of the African philosophy, Jean Ladrière, in his preface to Nkombe Oleko's work,33 said, with reason, that the discussion upon the existence or not of the African philosophy can be considered as definitely closed. The time is, however, for "Assessment and perspectives" in the turning point of the first century of the 3rd millennium. African philosophy, which is being built, has its salient moments, which give the image of the world that it tries to serve.

Also, without wanting to go back to the discussion on the concept of African philosophy, we point out Tshiamalenga Ntumba's idea that "to speak of Bantu or African philosophy is certainly a precocious generalisation. But it is the shortening of a perfectly right expression, as in the case of Greek philosophy, German or Anglo-Saxon."34 The expression in all these cases does not look, according to him, for the unanimity that would attach members of those cultural groups to such a philosophy, but to identify the existence of certain more specific philosophical traditions within those groups. The cruel moment and really productive moment for the African philosophy should consist in the perfect development through the authentic problematic of philosophy.

In fact, born with the publication in 1945 of Placide Tempel's work *philosophie Bantu*, contemporary African philosophy has already been asserting itself as university discipline. A lot of historical studies of this philosophy make mention of it.35 Considered as a will of the negation of the western's negation of the African humanity and thus of all capacity of reflection and of philosophy, contemporary African philosophy has developed into relation with those main questions that have agitated African conscience and which more agitate it all the more in the globalised cultural context.

About this, Ngoma Binda reveals the prejudices of a settled imperialist thought which accuses successively the African thinker of theoretical incapacity, of invalidity, of epistemological confusion, of theoricism, of elitism and of westernism. The reaction to those accusations and prejudices has carried, in the supporters of African philosophy, a dynamism, which washes it out from the city's needs.36

The epistemological stake of discussion turned around the methods in African philosophy in order to scrutinise the real, in the triple sense of the absolute, of the cosmos and of man. It is of actuality. A lot of difficulties are drawn up on the way: the rarity of systematic and synthetic books, the dispersal of supports and themes, etc. Perspectives take shape towards the adequation of a valid African thought in its authenticity, which is and fully plugged into the actuality of cultures that are often in conflict, but that should be harmonised.

Three approaches are envisaged, among which the criteriology has ridden an axis of three fundamental elements: "the kind of problem studied as it betrays precise affinities and preoccupations, the producer's geographical membership and the language into which that philosophy is produced".37

Ngoma Binda sees in the African philosophy an entire philosophical reflection produced in and on Africa. Here is systematically eluded the question of geographical membership in the 'black' continent, the same as that of the African languages and material (customs, facts and problems particular to Africa).

Philosophical African production is very often classified into trends. These trends have been brought back to three: the ethno-philosophies, the ideological philosophies (nationalists or independentists), and the critical philosophies.

Although finding in this classification a successful synthesis of philosophical productions in black Africa, Dimandja qualifies it to be more restrictive and more partial, for it does not implicate the rich sectors tackled by the makers of the critical African thoughts: for instance, when they devote themselves to the studies of epistemology (questions of systems, Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms...), of Logic (referential opacity and quantification, theory of models, etc), of Metaphysics (Gabriel Marcel, Heidegger, Levinas, Michel Henri's intersubjectivity, etc.). Basing his reflection on the theoretical element and the cultural context, he proposes an alternative classification, which takes into account sectors of philosophical activities.

This approach is at the same time sectarian and regional. As sectarian, it proceeds by sectors of philosophical activities understood as a serious or better, a group of philosophical researches which are, in an organised way or not, based upon a more or less common object. The idea of philosophical activities cuts short the discussion of the existence or not of an African philosophy and makes it to be considered *de facto* according to cultural regions, this is to mean localisable and identifiable social formations as such, where are taken into account language and other cultural factors.38 On such a basis could be constructed, however, from more reliable syntheses, a new philosophical African thought, always more faithful to its native sources, and better opened to the perennial of a universal thought and its world actuality.

What to say about this brief description of the philosophical activity in Africa if not, despite its youth, that thought goes to the encounter of other cultural productions with vitality and dynamism. It has taken conscience of its task to assume its time and its space, to resolutely turn to the essential preoccupations linked to the survival of Africa in the concert of nations. More again, rich with cultural religious and artistic potentialities, an African experience that is committed to the being-together 'chance' of a new and globalised humanity is understood as a chance for the inhabitants of the continent to quest for intercomprehension with all their likes wherever they are.

Today the 'risk' of being-together goes through the resolution of the enormous questions of a globalisation where cultural differences serve as the basis of a common construction of human societies in unity, justice and peace. It is there that a great problem of actuality is made more salient but which is paradoxically more and more de-humanising because of the technological consequences and the economical vision of the globalised universe.

Cultural Base and the Observation of a Difficult Living-together

Cultural awareness and the myth of supremacy. To define themselves, the individuals and the groups speak of awareness: they spontaneously have to be different from others and to constitute a particular identity. In general, the identity-awareness prevails and seems to command that of difference by the mere fact of permanent proximity of the self next to oneself. It is the clear perception of the richness constituted by the dignity of the personal being and by the patrimony of which he is the depositor. Behind the "I" and the "we" there should always be supposed distinctive cultural traits, proper and inherited. Thanks to involuntary or methodical inattention, these same traits are, in practice, often denied to the "others" different from "I" and "we." Those others then become the "barbarians" for the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, etc., or they are designated, in many Bantu languages, by the prefix "you" (singular "ka") followed by their people's name. Because of this, they are depreciated as the diminutives of men and as of inferior culture.

There is, in this oneself's and others' evaluation, an objective vision based upon selfishness and commanded by the myth of one's own superiority. Practical consequences that entail the irrational vision can be summed up either in the refusal of the other and the anaemic folding up on oneself or within an expansionist will, aiming at the assimilation, the domination and the destruction of the other and his different identity.

Contexts change, the history develops. The prodigious expansions of science and modern technology reduced significantly the distances and facilitated communication between peoples. The widening at the same time of the field of relationships and of an adequate and well-conserved training of historical facts lengthens the memory of the humanity and improves its image. Today we should logically take account of neatly well -educated historical awareness of distressing lessons of a past ignorant or disrespectful of the other. We should accept the other as being an end

in himself, with what he is and what he has for himself and which requires a political exchange relation for the universal enrichment.

Yet, facts prove the contrary in favour of the form and the neglecting of the human dignity as can attest the conflicts, violence, exploitations and all kinds of counter-values of which our everyday world offers distressing spectacle. This is to mean that the real key of enigma always evades.

Experience and the voice of our period. There is a real progress within the universal dialogue, an improvement of treatment of notions and a fixation of strategies for the value of the cultures across the contemporary world. This is also our time's sign. It is at the same time a fundamental aspect in favour of a cultural commitment, for this awareness mobilises energies because of culture, although practically the deliberative humanity's effect is often slow. Valid and necessary in itself, this research on which depends the future order makes manifest the experiences, situations and projects of which or towards which should be drawn the prospects of all people of today.

Particular and public voices educate us about this situation, of some among which there deserves to be an inventory before the consideration of the concept of cultural commitment and its operating actuality.

Two philosophers. Shaken by the horrors of the last world wars of the late century, many philosophers tried hard to indicate the voice of dialogue, of peace and of prosperity for all. So, the humanist philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, which, fastening up with the concrete subject condition, places its authentic opening into the universal opening and into the intersubjective encounter of love with the other. Marcel recommends the relativisation of the mechanised and commercialised world for the quest of spiritual and absolute values.

Emmanuel Levinas, strongly marked by nazi persecutions, pleads for *man* in short, pleading for the culture and the ignored and despised Jews by a certain 'West'. He proposes to reconcile the peoples through the respect of the others' mystery.

For him God and Love are the only antidotes to hatred, to violence and to indifference.

The United Nations. On the international scene, there are two authorised voices, one secular and the other moral and religious: the United Nations Organisations and Pope Paul-John II. The United Nations is the institutional voice of the human and people's cultures fate. The signature of the United Nations' charter on June 26, 1945 in Jan Francisco, in the middle of the war, is an act of extreme importance. "Founded upon the sovereign equality of all the Pacific states and open to all great or small states", the international organisation that takes birth in such dreadful circumstances, represents an important founding stone for the definition of human rights and the rights of peoples, from a universal consensus. It is just what is materialised through the International Pact relating to civil and political rights, December 16, 1966. It was the occasion for all to admit a given hierarchy of human rights. Those rights are:

1) The rights which can never be violated, for instance:
- The rights to life (a.6)
- The right to inherent human dignity (a.10.7)
- Fundamental equality (a. 2.26)
- The liberty of thought, of conscience and of religion (a.17) (religious liberty and the equality of all human beings contest over 'first' place).

2) Inferior rights, though essential, such as:
- Civil, political, economical, social, cultural rights for particular persons;
3) The rights to be considered as postulates of the ideal in the sense of common property:
- The rights of concerned responsibility for common property.39

Deep divergences subsist between those who conceive human dignity in an absolute autonomy and those who found it in the relation with God's transcendence; philosophical justification, juridical interpretation and the application of human rights in political life are far from gaining universal consensus. But to all of us, the conditions of a free and dignified human life can find roots in three fundamental principles taken together and well interpreted: "Liberty, equality, participation."40

Unfortunately, this is not yet reflected in the reality of facts because when recently providing itself with an international Penal court, the United Nations Organisations can confirm that: "This century has seen the worst violence of the humanity's history. During the last fifty years, more than 250 conflicts have broken up in the world. Adding to the victims who have lost their life, more than 170 millions of persons have been deprived of their rights, of their belongings and of their dignity. Few among them have received any reparation. Those victims have merely been forgotten."41

At the same time, we recognise that in the creation of the United Nations an important step is made by human conscience upon the "way to civilisations and Peace": with Pope Paul VI (in 1965), we intend to stress its main meaning as creator of a planetary respectable status for a human and liberating culture. Those multiple specialised institutions testify to it. Thus the AID, World Health Organisation, World Labour Organisation, FAD, OMCI, etc., are the evident manifestation of a concerted will to forge a new future for all.

The United Nations' Charter, even if it is still imperfectly realised, constitutes a world cultural document, destined to hasten the overtaking of narrow particularities as well as the crushing expansions, forgetful of the identity of others' difference. The UNESCO, founded in London, on Nov 16, 1945, seems to represent a privileged office of the UN of which the mission and the activity prepared effectively the ground for the much desired future state-of-affairs.

The step marked by UNESCO is decisive, for the new definition of culture is not imposed by the egocentric side, in terms of inequality and of hierarchisation, as was the case up to then. Thus going beyond the conference of Venice (1970), the conference of Mexico (1982) on cultural policies has elaborated a more satisfactorily definition of culture which can today be considered as the set of distinctive spiritual and affective traits that characterise a society or a social group. It includes, besides arts and letters, ways of life, fundamental rights of the human beings, and systems of values.42

Other important declarations of the conference that should be mentioned assert that 43 :

- It is culture that makes we human beings specifically human, rational, critical and ethically committed. The cultures enrich one another whatever the origin of their peoples.

- The expansion and interaction of culture, science and education should consolidate peace, respect human rights, and contribute to the elimination of colonialism, of neo-colonialism, of racism, of apartheid and all forms of aggression, of domination or of intervention. Cultural co-operation should also favour the institution of a favourable international climate to the disarmament so that the human resources and the enormous sums which are devoted to armaments

can be consecrated to constructive objects such as cultural, scientific and technological development programs.

In Mexico, people also came to give a verdict on the patrimony and the cultural properties. They notably declared that cultural patrimony of a people extend over the works of its artists, of its architects, of its musicians, of its writers, of its scientists as well as to anonymous creations coming from popular heart and to the set of values that give meaning to life. It is composed of material and non-material works which express that people's creativity, its languages, rites, beliefs, historical places and monuments, literature, works of art, archives and libraries.

Recognising in every people the right and the duty to defend and to preserve his cultural patrimony, the conference pursues: "The restitution to their native countries of works, which have been retired illicitly, is a fundamental principle of cultural relations between peoples. For this purpose, the instruments, agreements and existing international resolutions could be reinforced to increase efficiency."44

Pope Paul John II. Pope Paul-John II is one of the numerous voices representing moral and spiritual authority. His extreme abundance of interventions in the domain of cultures is significant. Supreme Vicar of a Universal Church, two times a millennium old, and whose well-known experience is founded upon a God (who became a man to reconcile and save man and all the peoples in love, peace, justice), the Pope reserves a great place to culture. A humanist and philosopher from education, his is a committing and committed cooperation with all those who, as we, in this moment, are concerned with "the unique necessary" and who are convinced, as he says himself at UNESCO, on June 2, 1980, that the human's so threaded-together future depends on the culture".

The close and active collaboration of the Pope and Holy See with UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International and national organisms interested in culture, in education and in science is rich with eloquent lessons and gestures. The Pope has also founded, on May 20, 1982, the Pontifical Council for Culture, considering just from the beginning of his Pontificate that the dialogue of the church with cultures of the present time is "a vital domain the stake of which is the world's fate at this end of the 20th Century". On that occasion, however, he declared to discover in culture that grace to which man is capable to free himself and "live a life fully human."45

Culture and African personality. In practice, Africans have always given a wide place to culture. Their numerous works and traditional institutions give evidence. Realisations, discourses and programmes responsible for modern Africa confirm it. In the actual competitive circumstances, we notice a clear awareness of the necessity to make the inventory and to assert existing cultural values, to adopt them considering the new contribution and to affect them to the vital imperatives of the moment.

However, in front of man's tragic fate in the international community, the African and his world of values are found in an extreme situation of vulnerability. This is what illustrates, for example, the African condition in general, wars, material poverty, insecurity in the domains of food, sanitary, education and the fate reserved to the artistic patrimony in particular.

Concerning African personality it is important to assert that there is a true development only from a just identity of oneself. It is not here to be himself uniquely in right and in *paroles*, but also and above all upon facts. Yet from the analysis of a real-life experience and from the studies of experts, it has been proved that there are still cases where the post-colonial African is the victim

of a verbal authenticity in which he is in a state of liberation vis-à-vis his former home countries and his cultural predominance.

By the 60s, Nkrumah already defined his awareness as being, "in philosophical terms, the card of the arrangement of forces" which will permit the African society to digest western, Islamic and Euro-Christian elements in Africa to transform them so that they are harmonised with the African personality."46 When J.M. Tchaptchet examined this definition in 1985, it was also in order to arrive at the conclusion of the dependence of cultures, industries, states and global systems of Africa in a state of "limited modernisation and generator of costly importation and of debt or other things."47

Eden Kodjo did not come to different conclusions when he wrote: "Cut from its past, projected in a universe made from the exterior by a civilisation that limit his values, the helpless African is today the deformed reflection of the other's image".

For the same writer, the extroversion that reaches the cultural being of the African makes him renounce "one of the objectives of the struggle, reconciliation with oneself." Instead of moving forward, he continually takes bad roads and regresses, he denies himself instead of asserting himself. Among the harmful consequences of this situation, the former OUA's secretary General quoted the education and formation which are in retreat, the imposition of foreign morals, the geo-economical extroverted development as well as the generalised *mimetisme* that throws the African personality into dereliction physically, psychologically, intellectually, culturally and morally. Eden Kodjo thinks at last that the African will stop this dead end by transcending the national selfishness and serving the exclusive interests of the Africans and of Africa, and by defining himself as a new personality in the framework of a new and widened vision of the future.

But the ever agonising question which remains is to know where and when will come the impulse for the launching of that intelligent and efficacious operation which will save the long-dreamt-of unity, an Africa really free from within and from outside.

Nelson Mandela's dream to see the end of man's oppression on the basis of racist criteria leaves place for the attainment by all, of the pleasure of fundamental rights, within a multiracial South African society. There is a glimmer of hope, without any doubt, in the vast obscure and darkened heaven of the Southern continent, the way by which will pass the really significant light.

The works of arts and culture of a people constitute the pedestal of permanent renewal of its identity and the lasting guarantee of its construction. Very often, Africa presents itself in this regard in situation of double exile. It often underestimates and ignores the price of its own past or is found itself deprived by its former home countries. We are aware of the typical example of the African today who does not hesitate to decapitate the guardian post of his ancestor in order to sell its head - more convenient to carry- to the clandestine exporter of rare objects. The case of the famous head of bronze of the Olukun of Ife of which the original has mysteriously disappeared and of which today the Olukuni keeps only a copy is not an isolated case. 48

Meanwhile, the conservation, the preservation and the exploitation of works remaining on the spot leaves strongly a lot to be desired whereas museums and private collections of Europe and America overflow with African pieces, unique and even which can no more be found in Africa. Political decisions, congress recommendations and resolutions, declarations of intentions do not change the state of fact. That is why the task is not easy to all those who try from within and from without to resituate the cultural patrimony of each people for its proper redynamisation and for the preservation of the world's culture. All happens as if knowledge and power are two things, which are practically not reconciling, in spite of some fortunate but sporadic initiatives.

Cultural Commitment and Solidarity for the Future of Man

The sense of an "observation". At the end of the above general consideration, some major conclusions are essential. The awareness of the importance of culture and its implications as determining factor for any dignified development is a highly attested fact by all the peoples. Human genius has achieved the production of a very perfected computer but it is not useful if there is no one competent to operate it.

Thus although educated by lessons of a long past in matter of values and actually having available tools of high quality to make a common and better future, modern man remains a self-destructor, sometimes more meticulous and more clever but also always more an enemy of humanity than his ancestor of prehistory was. Primary instincts continue to increase and drive him to kill, to violate, to exploit and to oppress his like as in the first age. We think to discover in cultural commitment a rich operating concept, thanks to which the whole man and each man feels himself questioned to act according to what he knows himself to be, being animated from the interior and by making appeal to cultural resources.

Theoretical status of cultural commitment. The word commitment which comes from the expression " cultural commitment " is of a recent usage in the philosophical technique vocabulary. Lalande argues that this word of current language became ordinary in philosophy a few years ago. He even speaks of vogue. If the journal " Spirit " founded in 1932 already made notion of it, Emmanuel Mounier who, in 1935 consecrates this term in "Personalist and community Revolution", well speaks of a certain content in "Christian humanism" in 1943-1944. He speaks of " Christian Validity". Of force, he writes: "The force is at the same time virtue, solidarity and abundance of all the real. Tension of the existence, it is the space material. Patient of expectation, it is the time material. Triumph over death, it is the server of the eternal".49

According to Lalande, however, two meanings of the word commitment are understood. The first is "retrospective and factual". The second, which interests us more, is "prospective and normative". A "committed thought" – it is within this second meaning that is seriously drawn the moral and social consequences it implies, and where is recognised the obligation of being faithful to a project (very often collective) of which it has previously adopted the principle. In this regard, we can, Lalande renders precise, bring closer the idea of commitment to that of Loyalty.50

It is interesting to note down in a more careful orientation, another approach. It is that in which is inscribed the "clerical movement for cultural commitment", a very active branch of Catholic intellectuals within the "Communion and Liberation" movement. The Movement held in Rome, in February 1985, a national congress on the theme "Labour and culture in the new technological era, the appeal of the future and Man’s intelligence". The Congress intended to study economical, professional, cultural and political equilibrium of the society for the quality of life itself towards the hard foreseeable consequences. At that occasion, Pope Paul-John II recommended wisdom as the principle of cultural health, i.e., the truth-for-life and the total commitment for the advent of "new men, who possess in themselves ascetic quality, quality of hero and of mystic that should orient the new culture to the true welfare of humanity".51

As we can notice, the idea of commitment can be repugnant to the rationalist ‘s conception of philosophy because of its affective charge, of feeling. But because it aims at the comprehension and the transformation of the whole man, a worthy philosophy cannot stop by limiting itself to rational explanation. It should also be concerned with the rigour of life-reason and wisdom of the lucidity of thought and of the vigour of will from the praxis level up to the last logical

consequences. In total, cultural commitment is presented as the most mental and cognitive consequent attitude as well as the most revealing of the human vocation.

Cultural commitment is essentially the refusal of this world's evasion and at the same time "the refusal to confuse what we wish with what is, as would say Gabriel Marcel who insists, with reason, that the realism that admits in man's world 'a certain irrational commitment'"52 has for final aim the realisation and the complete happiness of man, strengthened and re-established in his fundamental rights.

The Domains and the agents of cultural commitment. The different forms of cultural commitment and practice concern every moment. They are the daily and l solemn domains of human existence.

At the psychological and mental level, appropriate awareness and knowledge of oneself should be harmonised with the acceptation and the will of a similar identity with the other. The attention given to his interests should call for reciprocity of the better giving-and-receiving of the other. This supposes, on the part of the individuals, and analogically for the societies and groups they generate, that: "assimilating powers" (intelligence, memory and nutritive instinct) and "Creative powers" (will, imagination and sexual instinct),53 should be carried and constantly maintained in mature equilibrium thanks to a dignified love, man's sensibility and sensuality. The result is that interceptive faculties or superior faculties (intelligence, love and will), sensory faculties (memory, sensuality and imagination) and instinctual forces (nutritive instinct, sensuality and sexual instinct) will be affected by the quest of real happiness of all the human beings. Thus the mutual reciprocity of liberation and promotion of oneself, the condition of those of the others, will stop the confusion of "to give" and "impose oneself", to receive and to alienate oneself.

What had been mentioned at the psychological and mental level received different names but is combined with the same requirements to bring out the same effects on the plans where faculties and human power generate the order and structure of the existence.

From that moment the field of the demanding transformation extends over the micro and macro systems of practical and theoretical organisations of humanity. Economic, techno-scientific material, spiritual, socio-political, religious and moral, educational organisations, etc. will place man in the centre of the preoccupations (business) and will aim at the promotion of his dignity and of his fundamental rights.

Every man, in accordance with his humanity is obliged to be involved in the realisation of this vast program of universal 'saving'. But the global success demands that the individual efforts coincide with those of the groups and the societies, and that the perceptiveness and the efficiency support the responsibility of man, the responsibility at all the levels. The professionals of thought and that of the action are, in this connection, concerned by this. Kant writes: "we should not expect that Kings begin to philosophise, or that philosophers become Kings; it is not also desirable because to hold the power corrupts inevitably the judgement of reason".54 Pleading for the philosophers' liberty of expression, Kant thinks that their contribution is essential to throw light on common affairs.

Without exempting anyone of the duty to always think justly and act efficiently, we consider that the professional thinker should be, in the perspective of cultural commitment, someone who, according to Lyautey's motto, *knows* – knows to do and knows to make do. He should give to the culture the soul that saves man and he should live in accordance with Rabais' famous sentence "science without conscience, it is the ruin of the soul".

The question of how to save concretely today's man becomes then that of the research for ways and means to make more social justice and peace in the world. Here is, perhaps, the importance of the originality of a point of view which is still less exploited in philosophy, expressed by Pierpaolo Donati, in his contribution entitled: "Carità e solidarietà nella societa post-modern."55 The author draws the attention to what the terms of charity and solidarity recover in the philosophical context. He makes clear that the notion of solidarity, for instance, far from meaning philanthropy or charity, recalls the idea of a value, which produces what we could call "relational common goods".

And for Europe to come to an authentic solidarity, he thinks, requires the birth of a State of Social autonomies working on the basis of a culture of fraternity and family. A dream, which sums up for the peoples and world's cultures an objective which, insofar as we approach, sets down the bases of a dialogue.

In conclusion, the purpose of our work was to show that the 'saving' of man in moving towards his actual and future drama depends upon the fate and the quality of his culture. It is a culture where is realised an awareness and a clear understanding of his own identity and its peculiar values, at the same time as respecting the other's right.

We devoted a long development to the evolution and the faces of culture in the space of our time. This brought us to a distressing observation: if it is theoretically true that today man knows better than yesterday, his conditions depend on the sudden appearance of a better world of which he dreams. The same man, in reality, is far from moving away from the threat and the misdeeds of counter-values and of counter-cultures of his societies.

Cultural commitment appears as being a decisive way capable to release the situation with an interior energy, worthy of man and giving a humanising form to his systems and thoughts and action organisations. This commitment aims at the whole man and at every moment is called to promote true values, the individual's and the community's fundamental rights for the defence and the promotion of the dialogue by means of sharing acts and solidarity.

Conclusion

Today a new phenomenon characterises the world's history: the globalisation. It is characterised by a reduction of distances and a mode of perpetration, which provokes such a generalised crush within the collective space that it is practically impossible to be out of its deployment. It generates a culture towards which and in which the cultures of the world confront one another. Under the persistent threat of humanity's destruction, the research for potential and remedial causes are closely akin to each other in the domain of culture.

We attempted to identify culture, in order to put it into communication, through its various expressions, from the viewpoint of cultural African tradition.

The different steps were: Firstly, we defined culture in general and according to the African point of view, which led to the determination of Africanity as a specific cultural heritage. The second point concerned the details of the essential dimensions which are implicated: religion and ethics, arts, techniques and the know-how to do by which the culture 'blossoms'. Their accumulation constitutes a heritage destined for the internal transformation and for competitive external commerce.

Philosophy as knowledge of foundation offers to culture a triple contribution: (1) by defining itself in its historical background by taking in charge cultural African data, and (2) engaging upon significant facts in relation with instances that carry pertinent questions (3) relating to the dialogue

of cultures in a globalised world. Lastly, we dealt with the solution, i.e., elements that revolve around cultural commitment founded upon the 'will towards solidarity' between human beings – all to be done in the name of that same humanity.

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55. Pierpaolo Donati, *Carità et solidarietà nella società post moderna*, in *Acta Philosophica* 2 (2) (1999): 233 260 ; référé dans G. McLean and C.S. Luttw, *Cultural Identity, Pluralism and Globalization: Bibliography*, CUA/CRVP, 2000, p. 111. 55 George F. McLean, *Philosophical Thèmes: III. Spiritual Values, cultural Traditions and the Progress of civilizations*. "The Cumulative Exercise of Human Freedom." In Report on Activities 1998-2003 : Wahington, DC, Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2003, p. 44.

The Totemic Way to God:
The Religious Base of Thought and Culture

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In the modern, often secular, context which is now passing the foundational religious meaning of life was extensively forgotten. Instead, the rare and relatively recent phenomenon of a world view prescinding from, or neutral to, the divine was taken as the honest base line from which religious issues should be considered. For Mohammad Iqbal this was quite out of the question, for it is to define the mind on the basis of but one of its limited processes, namely, the analytic. Hence, he does not go far in the first chapter of his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* before stating as its principle what the *Vedanta Sutras* exemplified both in their text and their structure, namely, that: "It is in fact the presence of the total absolute in the movement of knowledge that makes finite thinking possible."1 The genius of Iqbal's work is its powerful and intricate elaboration of this theme.

The present work will attempt to suggest three ways in which Iqbal's thesis might be supplemented: first, from the point of view of an archeology of pre-philosophical thought in support of his conviction that thought is natively religious; second, by elements from systematic philosophy with a view to understanding the meaning this religious insight gives to human life; and third, by drawing upon a phenomenology of religious consciousness to see how assimilation of this insight opens new ways of creating human comity for the millenium which is now dawning. These constitute parts I-III of this work.

In a typically brief but pregnant aside, Iqbal notes that "to the primitive man all experience was supernatural."2 Rather than being simply a reference to dead facts from the past, this points to the cumulative human experience regarding the essential importance of religion as manifested by human life. Moreover, it suggests the common ground which the many cultures need as they begin to interact more intensely. This then seems the place to begin.

From earliest times human thought almost universally has had a sacred center. It is possible to track the evolution of this constant awareness by relating it to the three dimensions of the human mind described in Chapter I above. The first is the external senses of sight and touch by which one receives information from the surrounding world. The second is the internal senses of imagination and memory by which one assembles the received data in a manner which enables it to present the original whole from which the various senses drew their specific data, to imaginatively re-present these and other data in various combinations, or to recall this at a later time. Finally, beyond the external and internal senses there is the work of the intellect by which one knows the natures of things and judges regarding their existence.3

Not surprisingly, upon examination it appears that the actual evolution of human awareness of the sacred follows this sequence of one's natural capacities for knowledge. In all cases it is intellectual knowledge that is in play, for religious awareness concerns not the colors or shapes of sensible objects, but existence and indeed the one who gave his name as "I am Who Am". But intellectual know-ledge was articulated successively, first in terms of the external senses in the totemic stage of thought, then in terms of the internal senses in the mythic period, and finally in properly intellectual terms at the origin of philosophy (and of science as philosophy).4

To follow this evolution it should be noted that for life in any human society as a grouping of persons there is a basic need to understand oneself and one's relation to others. It should not be

thought that these are necessarily two questions, rather than one. They will be diversely formalized in the history of philosophy, but prior to any such formalization, indeed prior even to the capacity to formalize this as a speculative issue, some mode of lived empathy rather than antipathy was essential, even for bare survival. Plato later worked out, formally and in detail, that the unity of the multiple is possible only on the basis of something that is one. But the history of social life manifests that, present in the awareness of the early peoples and according to that mode of awareness, there was always some one reality in terms of which all was understood to be related.

Return to the Sources

On December 19, 1925, in Calcutta, the first All-India Philosophy Congress was held in order to rediscover and further develop the rich philosophic patrimony of the subcontinent. The direction given by its President, the great Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, was to look to the philosophy of the people.5 His words would be echoed by those of Ghandi pointing to the village and its values. In this, as in many matters, Tagore and Ghandi showed keen good sense which time is proving to be prophetic.

It was good sense, for were a person raised in a village to visit New Delhi or New York he or she would need a city dweller in order to get around and make arrangements for lodging. On a trip to the source of the Amazon, however, only a native accustomed to travelling by foot and canoe and to finding food and shelter in the forest would be of help. The more sophisticated the guide the less he or she could be of assistance; guides from Delhi or New York would be totally helpless.

There is more here than mere common sense. Horticulturalists have found that the more highly refined a strain of rice the more reduced are its capabilities for adaptation. Conversely, wild grains have great capacity for adaptation and survival. Hence, they are looked upon genetically not as deficient, but as treasuries of the capacities needed to develop grains adapted to new or more difficult environments. In archeology new findings are continually manifesting human capacities for iron work and for art long before these had been expected on the basis of earlier evolutionary theories. These and similar findings have suggested the need to reconsider the oversimplified model of an univocal and self-sufficient evolutionary process from the less to the more perfect. They call, especially, for a reassessment of views predicated thereupon regarding the origin and the nature of humankind’s foundational understanding of its nature and meaning.

This reassessment as regards the basis of human self-understanding is further urged by the combination of, on the one hand, the great antiquity of such sacred texts as the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* and, on the other hand, their unique continuing capacity to judge what is worst and to inspire what is most noble in human behaviour. "Like a rich man who knows how to bring both new and old things out of his treasure house" they bear witness to a transcendent dimension of human reason. Through the ages this has made possible the drama of life in the simplest household while relativising the accomplishments of even the greatest human empires. It transcends time, but grounds every temporal vision.

Gradually, even grudgingly, we adjust our chronology of human life lived with care and concern upon learning for example that at the time of the arrival of the Aryans, roughly between 2000 and 1800 BC, the peoples of the Indus valley already had cities such as Harappa and Mohanjodaro with urban design, drainage and public facilities often surpassing those of the present.6 C. Kunan Raja points out that, as prior to the *Vedas* there existed a great people and an advanced civilization, the hymns of the Rig Veda are not anticipations, but "a scanty remnant from an earlier date of an immense store of philosophy, grand, sublime, profound, clear and definite."

Thus, "The latter-day systems of philosophy must be traced to earlier stages through the *Upanishads* to the *Rgveda* and also to a much earlier stage of Pre-Vedic philosophy."7 If we are to choose the appropriate tools for such a task it will be important for us to know how much earlier this might be.

Everything said thus far simply pales before the realization that Harappa and Mohanjodaro existed during only the last one-half of one percent of the 200,000 years since the time men left their polished stone instruments in the Mysore areas to the south, which, in turn, is but one-tenth of the way to those in East Africa whose fossils can be traced back some 2,000,000 years.8

As the love of wisdom, philosophy and especially its metaphysics must search out the content of the comprehension which bore man up in this successful voyage across so vast a sea of time. What was the bark; what was its tiller, and by what was it guided and corrected? How did its crew hold together through the countless stormy trials, and how did they manage to emerge with such complex and elegant cultures?

For discovering this prehistoric understanding writ in the lives of countless generations it will not be sufficient to search for its echoes in the texts of hymns and myths which we can trace only to relatively recent times. Anthropology will be necessary, but it will not constitute a sufficient tool, for, as Arthur Keith has noted correctly,9 the issue is too philosophical to be decided by empirical means alone. To anthropology there must be added philosophy, especially as hermeneutics. Fortunately, recent progress in this field, following some key insights of Heidegger, make it possible to articulate more precisely the goal of our search, to elaborate a method for its discovery, and to begin to apply the method to the phenomenon of totemism in primitive societies. In this it will be our intention not simply to discover thought that is past, but to identify there that indispensable principle for human life which grounds cultures and transcends time.

Method

Heidegger's assessment of the relation between Plato and the pre- Socratics provides both a key to his articulation of the task to be undertaken and an illustration of the method he elaborated for its accomplishment. Pre-Socratic philosophy reflected in a general and unsophisticated manner the variety and powerful vitality of reality. To improve upon this vision Plato had focused on forms, natures or ideas. He elaborated all this with such great dialectical brilliance that Whitehead has termed all Western philosophy since then a set of footnotes to his writings. Unfortunately, the progress made in the conceptual clarification of the variety of nature was accompanied by a corresponding loss of sensitivity to the power and activity of nature, that is, to its existential reality. To remedy this loss Heidegger held that we must now return to the vision of the pre-Socratics in order to retrieve its dynamic existential element. Substantive forward progress in Western philosophy today, that is, the development of insight that is radically new, will depend not upon incremental conceptual development of forms, but upon reaching back prior to Plato in order to develop what he had omitted.10

This example from Heidegger's thought is replete with indications for a methodology for our project. First one needs to look at thought historically. This does not mean merely the forward direction of Hegel's search for ever more formal articulation. Like genetic strains in horticulture, these become increasingly enslaved to ever more specific conditions as they become more remote from their origins. On the contrary, what is most essential must be sought where in principle the forward process of scientific conceptualization cannot operate. It must be sought in that which is essentially unscientific according to the terminology of the "scientific interpretation that brands as

unscientific everything that transcends its limits."11 Radical newness is to be found, if anywhere, not in further elaboration of what already has been conceptualized, but in a step backward *(der Schritt zurück)* into that which was in some way present at the beginning of philosophizing and has remained unspoken throughout. "Far from having been thought or even having been thinkable, this reality has been obscured by the objectifying effect of much of the thought which has been developed thusfar."12

The task then will be not merely to restate in a more perfect manner what already has been stated less perfectly, but to open ourselves to the reality toward which our historical efforts at conceptualization and indeed the very project of conceptualization as such is not directed. Thus, one finds in the term 'metaphysics' reference to that which lies "beyond" (*meta*) the project of definition and conceptualization of the material order which Aristotle had carried to its principles in this *Physics.* The *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* states that "when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self then . . . what should one think and through what, . . . through what . . . should one know the Knower?"13 Similarly the *Brahma Sutras* state as a first principle that "(Brahman is not known from any other source) since the scriptures are the valid means of Its Knowledge."14

One method for developing a greater awareness of this foundation of thought consists in looking back as far as possible to its origins in order to rediscover what subsequently has been left unsaid because, it seems, too rich for the limited capacities of categorization. This is a return to our beginnings precisely in order to begin again in a new and more radical manner. To do this one must avoid projecting the limitations of one's own conceptualizations upon the origins. Hence, the manner of approach must not be only that of defining, which, literally, is to delimit, though systems of philosophy need this in their structured processes of reasoning. Instead, philosophy must broaden its approaches to that of enquiry, that is, of opening to what has been left unsaid.

It would appear important, therefore, to look back into human experience for the mode and content of thought which preceded not only the beginnings of philosophy in the proper sense of the term, but the forms of mythic symbolization which specify the distinctive cultures which derive from them. To do this we must employ data from anthropology regarding life in primitive societies throughout the world. This, in turn, will require the development of a philosophic hermeneutic adapted to discovering in the simplest forms of the lived experience of humankind what is foundational, and therefore common.

The term 'primitive' itself is in need of rehabilitation along etymological lines as first and hence basic for all else. It is a fundamental fallacy, notes Heidegger, to believe that history begins with the

backward, the weak and helpless. The opposite is true. The beginning is strongest and mightiest. What comes afterward is not development but flattening the results from mere spreading out; it is inability to retain the beginning . . . (which) is emasculated and exaggerated into a caricature.15

How can these beginnings be known? Because they precede not only the philosophical tradition, but even the pre-philosophical oral tradition expressed in the myths, it is necessary to invert the general hermeneutic directive to attend to the words themselves. Instead, the following special hermeneutic principles must be followed in analyzing and interpreting the philosophic significance of our origins, namely: (a) the manner of acting will be more significant than what is said; (b) the manner of thinking and feeling will not be separable from the manner of acting; and

(c) the preconditions or conditions of possibility of this manner of thought, feeling and acting will be the most significant of all.

To implement this the remainder of this chapter will take the following four steps. First, an anthropological analysis of the totem, as the means used by the primitives for social self-identification and coordination, will determine the structural characteristics of their life and thought. Second, an internal analysis of these structures and their transformations will show that they depend for their meaning upon a unity or whole. Third, further hermeneutic reflection will identify where this unity is to be sought in the life of the primitive. Finally, awareness of this unity will be located in the notion of the totem as a plenitude and in the participational vision of reality which that entails.

The Formal Structure of Primitive Thought

Anthropologists during the 19th century remarked the constant tendency of primitive peoples in the most disparate places to identify themselves and their relations with other humans and with nature in terms of a totem. This might be a bird, animal or, at times, even an inanimate object or direction. As all areas of life in these simplest societies were predicated upon the totem, their culture has come to be called totemic. Lévi-Strauss's *Totemism* is a history of the anthropological work done on this notion in the XXth century,16 and thereby a history of anthropology itself since 1910.

It begins with a severely reductionist critique of the notion of totem by positivist anthropological theory.17 The notion, however, proved to be so essential that it could not be dispensed with. Hence there followed four steps by which successive schools of anthropology progressively reconstructed the formal structure of the totem. Not surprisingly the steps are those by which one constructs a formal analogy of proper proportionality of the form A : B :: C : D.

First, A. P. Elkin identified the simple logical relation A : C between e.g., a bird and a tribe. This had both an analytic function for classifying groups so as to set rules for inter-marriage, and a synthetic function expressing continuity between man and nature. Lévi-Strauss points out that this empirical approach contributed some appreciation of the synthetic significance of the totem in expressing relatedness between man and nature and continuity between past and present. Nevertheless, this interpretation was inadequate for indicating why this entailed that ancestors have totems with animal forms and why the solidarity of the social group needed to be affirmed in a plurality of forms. In time this made it necessary to add new functional dimensions to the first empirical explanations.18

Second, Malinowski added subjective utility or pragmatic value to this relation, pointing to the biological significance of the totem as good to eat or to its psychological importance in controlling fears. (To this Radcliffe-Browne added the insight that totemism constituted an instance of the ritualization of relations between man and animals.) Malinowski interpreted this in functional terms to mean not that totems are objects of ritual and sacred because they had already been made social emblems, but that totemic societies chose animals to serve as social emblems because they already were objects of ritual and that this in turn was due to the fact that they were important material and spiritual influences in their lives: they were good to eat. In this light the social factor is primary, while the ritual and religious dimension is secondary and a function of natural interest. (When some schoolboys explained in utilitarian terms the sacred status of cows because of their milk and other useful by-products, Rabindranath Tagore has one of his characters,

an older classical Hindu remark that one can tell thereby that the boys had been educated by the British.)

However, the difficulty with utilitarian explanations is that they cannot explain sorts of totems which were not useful, edible, etc.19 Consequently, a psychological dimension was added, namely, that the totem helped to allay fears. But this explanation also confronted a daunting series of difficulties.20 (a) Anxiety cannot be the cause, but only a concomitant, for it itself is due to the way one subjectively perceives a disorder. (b) An explanation cannot be found in a con-nection of articulate modes of behavior with unknown phenomena, for what is incomprehensible cannot be the explanation, but only an indication of the need to seek the explanation elsewhere. (c) Members of a group people do not act according to their individual feelings; rather, they feel according to the way they are allowed, obliged or accustomed to feel. Customs and norms come first and give rise to internal sentiments and the circumstances in which these can be displayed. (d) It is not feelings which give rise to rites, as if religious ideas were born of effervescent social surroundings, but rites which generate feelings, i.e. religious ideas are presupposed for such emotions. Therefore emotions are not explanations, but the results of either body or mind. Lévi-Strauss concludes that the real cause must be sought either in the organism by biology or in the mind by psychology or anthropology.

However, he has already demonstrated that a biological, behaviorist or utilitarian psychological analysis of human emotions does not suffice, for these are generated in terms of circumstances beyond the self, not vice versa. Hence, he points his structuralist analysis to objective analogy. This leads to its prerequisites and thereby to the metaphysical level. Thus to explain the special use of certain types of animals anthropologists went beyond subjective utility to objective analogy.

Third, the relation of a tribe and its totem was stated by M. Fortes and R. Firth merely in terms of direct resemblance or external analogy of the members of a tribe or clan to their totem. For example, just as tribe C is similar to the eagle (A : C), so tribe D is similar to the sparrow (B : D) or A : C :: B : D.

Fourth, A.R. Radcliffe-Browne corrected this by noting that the analogy was not between sets of similarities, but between sets of differences. Just as the high-flying eagle (A) is different from, but related to, the low-flying sparrow (B), so the members of two tribes (C and D) are both distinct and related, i. e., A : B :: C : D. The totem then was not necessarily good to eat, but it was good to think.

These four steps reconstructed the essential analogy of forms in the totemic relation. But this was not yet structuralism, i. e. structure alone, for content had not yet been reduced to form. Lévi-Strauss took that step and directed attention to the logical connection between the pairs of opposites i. e. between A : B on the one hand and C : D on the other. He located the principle of the unity between the species chosen as totems and their tribes in a formal condition, namely in their having in common at least one formal characteristic which permitted them to be compared.21

If, in fact, this condition and hence the unity of such structures requires other factors beyond the order of form and structure, the investigation of such factors would require methods of analysis different from structuralism. We have begun, however, with the formal in order to be able to draw upon the extensive developments in the abstract theoretical side of the science of anthropology. With the tools of philosophical hermeneutics we can now reflect upon the formal structures in order to establish whether further meaning is to be sought in totemism fact and if so where it is to be found.

Totemic Structure and Existential Plenitude

The Principle of Form. There are, indeed, reasons to believe that more is required than can be articulated in Lévi-Strauss's purely formal structural analysis. First of all, his thought in classifying the pairs of species is categorical in nature and therefore has all the limitations of definition which concerned Heidegger. Bernard Lonergan described it as a method of determination which therefore has limited denotation and varies with cultural differences. Lévi-Strauss's condition for the totemic relation between the pairs A : B and C : D, namely that the pairs have in common at least one characteristic in terms of which they can be compared, cannot be fulfilled by categorial thought alone. Because categorial thought consists of forms which are contraries and hence limited, none of its objects could constitute the common element required for the total unity of structures. In principle the search for the basis of the unity, even of formal structures, cannot be carried out in terms of the limited denotations of abstractive knowledge. Instead it requires transcendental thought or intending which is "comprehensive in connotation, unrestricted in denotation, invariant over cultural change."22

The need for this comprehensive cognitive unity is confirmed by Jean Piaget from the nature of structuralism itself. He criticizes Lévi-Strauss for attending too exclusively to structure, form and essence, which abstract factors, he claims, can be explained psychologically by the mere permanence of the human intellect. What is more fundamental for structuralism is the fact that structures are generated by a system of operational structural transformations. These transformations require a principle which cannot be impersonal for it is the cognitive nucleus common to all subjects. Neither can it be individual for, through the series of transformations in which the structure is constituted on ever new and broader levels, this subject is progressively decentered.23 Hence, in principle it must be beyond any contrary or any concept; it must be unique and comprehensive. Much as Nicholas of Cusa's "folding together" or *complicatio*, the system of structural transformations points to a unity which is not reducible to any individual.

This first level of reflection upon the structural analysis of totemism in terms of form alone points to what Heidegger referred to above as "the unthought". He identifies a number of its characteristics. It must be one, unlimited, and spirit; it is the principle of all transformations and the basis of the unity, form and content of all structures.

A further and hermeneutic level of reflection by Paul Ricoeur in his essay, "Structure and Hermeneutics," identifies where this principle of the totemic relation is manifested. Above we questioned the self-sufficiency of the notion of a common characteristic by which the totemic species and the tribe are compared. Ricoeur continues this question noting that, while structural relations are based proximately upon semantic analogies, more fundamentally they depend upon real similarity of content.24 For this reason, the totemic relations or homologies between species in categorial terms presuppose as the conditions of their possibility a more fundamental unity of meaning; this, in turn, presupposes a corresponding unity or whole of meaning and of being. There is

no structural analysis . . . without a hermeneutic comprehension of the transfer of sense. . . . In turn, neither is there any hermeneutic comprehension without the support of an economy, of an order in which the symbol signifies . . . (for) symbols symbolize only within wholes which limit and link their significations.25

Further, this fundamental whole or plenitude of meaning is both cognitive and affective, for humans first perceive meanings through feelings. Hence, the concrete logic of the primitive will have not only cognitive, but affective aspects, and both will be essential to our search. Earlier in this century, the philosopher anthropologist, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, pointed out that the two were not yet distinguished in what he termed the "collective representations" (more about this below) by which the members of a particular tribe interpret and respond to other persons and to nature. The totemic logic of proportionality between humans and animals unfolds against the background of a general cognitive-affective sense of kinship between humans and totemic animals. It is to this collective representation of kinship that we must look in order to discover the awareness of the unity or plenitude of reality and meaning upon which the totemic relation was grounded.

The Principle of Existence. The scientific constructs and models which help to interpret life abstract from time or are synchronomous. It must be urged that they express the form only and not the content or the reality; they are not life, but only "a secondary level of expression, subordinate to the surplus of meaning found in the symbolic stratum."26 The actual appearance of this meaning takes place only in diachronous relations, that is, those in which the "disinterested, attentive, fond and affectionate love (of kinship) is acquired and transmitted through the attachments of marriage and upbringing."27 For that fundamental and foundational meaning we must look to this existential process, to the life of the family in its simplest human contexts of tribe and clan. Remaining unthought, it is the principle of all beings and meanings.

Further, the search for this principle must inquire without imposing delimiting categories. Hence, our questions must not concern individual realizations, for the "unthought" is never adequately expressed in any individual life or any combinations thereof. Instead our questions must concern the conditions of possibility for concrete life as lived within the unity of a tribe, indeed of any and all tribes. This exceeds even the diachronous succession of generations, while being pointed to by those concrete tribal lives as the condition of their possibility.

This search is the very essence of all ways to God and will be the continued concern of all that follows in this and subsequent chapters. We begin with a concrete analysis of the phenomenon of totemism.

Totemism

The Question

We direct our attention to the simplest societies, sometimes called "primitive". As noted above the word "primitive" is to be taken not in the sense of deficient or crude, but of that which is first and manifests what is fundamental or basic, and hence indispensable. Our method then will be to search for what is basic in the sense of being required or essential for human life in society.

In investigating any matter it is necessary to have a question so that the investigation can be directed to significant evidence, which then is assembled in order to provide meaningful insight. Like a searchlight, a question does not create the object, but enables it to stand out for observation and interpretation.

The basic issue might be stated in the following manner. On the one hand, the life of people who live together, whether in a tribe or clan, a village or city, or even on a global level, requires an attitude between persons and peoples which is not one of antipathy, for then cooperation would be impossible and murder would reign. Nor can it be one merely of indifference, for then we would

starve as infants or languish in isolation as adults. Rather there is need of a way to consider others in a positive manner in order to be able to establish cooperative relations and, where possible, care and concern.

On the other hand, persons are individual, distinct and irreducible one to another or to a community, party or commune. This constitutes the perennial human dilemma which was writ large in the Cold War between the extremes of the individualism of the liberal "free world" and of the collectivism of the communist world, with the "third" world basically proxy to one of the two or to the tension between them.

The overriding and perennial question is how distinct people with their proper autonomy can look upon each other not negatively or indifferently, but positively and with concern both to promote the good of the other and to see the other as good for oneself? That is, what links us together; in what terms and on what level can people think of the good both of oneself and of all?

The Response

What is striking is that throughout the world in the earliest and simplest of societies peoples answered this question in a similar way, or by a common means. Each tribe identified a totem and in terms of this understood their relations among themselves, to other peoples and to nature. We must look more closely at this phenomenon.

It is unfortunate that the work of Lévy-Bruhl which first pointed this out has been received with such anxiety in the African context for it would appear to contain basic keys precisely for appreciating the present foundational importance of African thought for all other modes of human awareness. Lévy-Bruhl was himself a specialist in positivist thought and its logic. However, in analyzing the thought patterns reported at the turn of century by persons returning to Europe from other parts of the world he identified a mode of thought which was not merely an assembling and sorting out of multiple atomic components, but was marked by a central sense of unity. To his credit, rather than dismiss this as superstitious or insignificant he opened the way to recognizing this crucial and foundational sense of reality. Compared to his positivist logic, this was something other, which he unfortunately termed pre-logical. Some took the explicit horizontal implication of the term and willfully turned it into a vertical, evaluative category. Try as he did, in his *Cahiers* and elsewhere, to correct this meaning imposed upon his thought and even to do away with the term "pre-logical" which was being misinterpreted, he was never able to do so.

Instead, the term was caught up in the important and positive assertion of the significance of African thought, but with a complex political shift. For many years in order to assert the equality of African culture with that of other regions it was denied that there was anything proper to its logic. Even after independence from colonial rule, Europe was still taken as the standard and the concern of many was to assert that African thought was no different. The situation was complicated further by the desire of many to affirm that Marxist analysis was appropriate for interpreting the African reality, which of course would be undercut were it to be recognized that Africa had a distinctive logic. A decade was lost discussing whether there was anything which could be called African philosophy. What was not appreciated was that if African culture had distinctive characteristics it might make a special contribution to world philosophy, and even, as a suggested here, to enabling other philosophies to appreciate their own foundations and consequently to appreciate more fully their own content. In this light "primitive" mind is more properly appreciated not negatively or pejoratively, but positively as meaning primary and foundational.

Lévy-Bruhl pointed out first that the mode of thinking was one of "collective representation".28 This is important to note, for since the Enlightenment Western thought has been basically analytic in nature. With Descartes we look for clear and distinct ideas regarding the minimal units of an object of reason or a problem and then seek to assemble these with equal clarity. Our mind becomes specialized in grasping limited things as divided and contrasted one against the other. We tend to lose capacities for the synthetic processes of thought and hence for attention to the unities within which the pieces have their origin, meaning and purpose, and *a fortiori* for the One "from which, in which and into which all exist", according to the opening words of the Hindu *Vedanta Sutras*.29

In contrast, in the term collective representation, "representa-tion" is used intentionally as more general and inclusive than concepts or even cognition; it includes sense as well as intellectual knowledge, affective reactions as well as knowledge, and indeed motor responses as well as knowledge and affectivity.

Further these representations are "collective" in a number of senses. First, they are socially conditioned: the same event may be a cause of fear in one tribe and of laughter in another. Second, they concern the total meaning of an event and for the whole of life. Third, they are not conceptual exclusions identifying each thing in contrast to all others after the manner of analytic compart-mentalization mentioned above, but synthetic in that they see each as participating in a whole. The importance of this synthetic or unitive character is reflected in the fact that to be ostracized is to be excluded not only from a particular community, but from human dignity itself. Literally, the evil of slavery lies not in bondage but in the loss of the bond to one's community, whereas the unity of persons or of a people is the fundamental key to one's humanity.

Further, such attitudes must be more than merely subjective. If they have promoted, rather than destroyed, human life through the aeons of so-called primitive life, they are ways in which humans cannot only feel, but be, well. They must then reflect something essential and objective regarding human reality, and this must be the more true of that which makes them possible. What then is the condition of possibility of these positive attitudes between persons or towards one another in a tribe or clan?

This question was studied by Lévy-Bruhl in his work, *How Natives Think*, on the cognitive-affective collective representations of the first and simplest societies. His investigations led him to the totem as that in terms of which these peoples saw themselves to be united according to what he termed the "law of participation". In the most disparate places and climes tribes identified an animal or thing as their totem, its specific nature being differentiated according to the locale. Their perception of their relation to this totem was not simply that of one to one's ancestors from whom one derives, to one's name by which one is externally designated, or to a later state which one will enter following death. Lévy-Bruhl notes that under questioning totemic peoples reject all such relations as inadequate. Rather, the members of the tribes insisted that quite directly they are their totem. "They give one rigidly to understand that they are araras (a bird that is the totem of this people) at the present time, just as if a caterpillar declared itself to be a butterfly." They understand their relation to the totem to be one of simple identity, which he describes as "a mystical community of substance."30

This participational mode of identity is both a way of thinking and a way of being. It is the former in that it does not work in terms merely of spatial relations. For example, no matter how far a hunter is from his camp, what his wife does or does not eat is thought to effect his success or failure. This does not mean that a spatial sensitivity is absent; indeed it is amazingly acute and some South Sea islanders are said to be able to navigate over great distances without landfalls or

navigational equipment. Rather what this indicates is that their thought processes regarding unity and related-ness are not controlled by, or reducible to, spatial considerations. Things could be caused and moved at a distance: telekinesis, which some now would call witchcraft, was considered an actual happening. Nor is this thinking held to temporal relations, for one's ancestors live now and effect our lives. Finally, it is not merely a functional relation, for they think not externally only, in terms of themselves and what others can do for them, but in terms of a real internal unity with others.31

Again this does not mean that there is no sense of time or of the sequence of events. Rather the sense of time is not simply external or of exclusion, of parts or moments outside of parts, but of inclusion. In sacred time moments perdure through time and are ritually present. This is particularly manifest in creation myths which express the basic reality of life and are formative of every facet of life. This was detailed by the Dogon sage, Ogotemmêli, and recorded by Marcel Griaule in *Dieu d'eau: entretiens avec Ogotemmêli*.32

Finally, such thinking is not in terms of functional relations in which one thing is done in order to cause another. Hence, the fact that a hoped for result does not follow in space or time, does not appear to discourage the repetition of the practice. A totemic people does not appear to base its understanding of the meaning and purpose of things on practical success or failure. Thus, as noted above, whereas some anthropologists would say that something was chosen as a totem because it was good to eat or for some other practical purpose, Lévi-Strauss noted rather that the totem was not good to eat, but good to think.

Thus, totemic people think not just in terms of themselves and others as separate, but in terms of the whole and of unity in the whole. This surpasses spatial, temporal or functional, i.e., external, relations. It is rather a unity of being. Primitive peoples are, and understand themselves to be, a unity with, in and by the totem.

Hence participation in the totem is not only a way of thinking, but also a way of being; indeed it is the former because it is the latter. This expression of one's identity in term of one's totem, such as "I am lion" or "I am araras", is not only to assume a common name as might a sports team; nor is it to indicate something past or future as if I used to be a lion, or am descended from lion, or after death will become a lion; nor is it to indicate that I am presently some part of lion such as its eye or tail; nor finally is it to state kinship with lions.33

Instead, such statements, totemic peoples insist, express an actual and essential identity which is veritably symbiotic in character. The life of the person is that of the totem. Thereby, all the members of a tribe are most profoundly one with the others from their beginning and by the very fact that they have come to exist, just a I am a brother or sister to all the other children in my family not on the basis of something I do, but by my very emergence into being.

This unity then is in no wise merely an abstract identity of essence or nature, such as would be reflected by a structuralist analysis of forms. Rather, it is a concrete, living, existential identity or participation in the totem. It is in these terms that the primitive interprets his or her entire life, determining both the real significance of the actions he or she performs and hence what he or she should and should not do.

In analyzing the most characteristic of the primitive's institutions — such as totemic relationship . . . — we have found that his mind does more than present his object to him: it possesses it and is possessed by it. It communes with it and participates in it, not only in the ideological but also in the physical and mystical sense of the word. The mind does not imagine it merely; it lives it. . . . Their participation in it is so *effectually lived* that it is not yet properly imagined.34

This insistence upon unity with the totem manifests a state of both thought and feeling prior to the dominance of objectification whereby things and persons are seen as objects over against me. Unity has not yet been dominated by multiplicity; it is a concrete identity, indistinguishably both objective and subjective.

This mode of understanding was first termed by Lévy-Bruhl, not anti-logical or a-logical, but "pre-logical."35 In this he reflected his own initial positivist bias that there could exist only a series of single and externally related units, and consequently that any logic must consist simply of such terms. In his posthumously published *carnets*, however, he retracted the term 'pre-logical', for his investigations had shown that the primitives did indeed have a consistent pattern of meaning. Apostle has analyzed this in detail in his work on African philosophy, *African Philosophy, Myth or Reality?* and concluded to the need to recognize in it a proper, if not a perfect, logic.36

Primitive societies were not held together by understanding everything as a series of units of which the totem is but one. Rather, the totem was understood to be the one in which all the others had their identity, their meaning, and their unity among themselves. Such a reality cannot be just one being among many others. As that in terms of which all members in the tribe — no matter how many — have their meaning, the totem is for that tribe the fullness or plenitude of reality and meaning in which all live or participate as a community. It is the key to the meaning of all, the intensive center of all meaning. It does not participate in the individuals; rather, the individuals participate in it. In Augustine's classic terms: I have not first loved You; it is You who first loved me. Due to this symbiosis of people with their totem, the primitive's knowledge of reality expressed in the totem is immediate, rather than inferential.

In turn, a person's relation to other members of the tribe and to nature is understood in terms of their relation to their totem. Through participation in the common totem the many members of the tribe are intimately related one to another; like brothers, they see themselves to be more deeply united than distinguished.

This is reflected in very varied forms of contact, transference, sympathy and telekinesis as, in the above example, when the success of a hunter is understood to depend more radically upon what is, or is not, eaten by his wife at home than upon any other factor. These and other examples manifest an intense understanding of the unity and relatedness of the members of the tribe in a manner not dependent upon surface spatio-temporal or empirical factors. It is not that such relationships are not also known and acted upon by the primitive. But they see the basic reality of their life as a participation in the totem and on this they base their interpretation of the nature and the reality of their relationships to all else.

Characteristics of the Totemic Way

Unity. This concept brings important insight to the question of unity and distinctiveness which have so divided the modern mind, characterized by a rationalist and analytic mode of thinking. The totem is not one in a series, but the unique reality in which each and all have their being — and, by the same token, their unity with all else.

This is the key to social unity. Each is not indifferent to all else or only externally or accidentally related to others in terms of temporal or spatial coincidence or functional service. Rather all are in principle and by their very being united to all, to whom they are naturally and mutually meaningful. Hence, one cannot totally subject anybody or indeed any thing to one's own purpose; one cannot take things merely as means in a purely functional or utilitarian manner.

Instead, all persons are brothers or sisters and hence essentially social. This extends as well to nature in an ecological sensitivity which only now is being recuperated.

What is impressive in this is that all are united but without the loss of individuality that has been the case in modern collectivisms. Instead, each individual, rather than being suppressed, has meaning in the unity of the totem. Hence, nothing one does is trivial, for every act is related to the whole. No one is subservient as a tool or instrument; all are members of the whole. As each act stands in relation to the whole whose meaning it reflects, everything is of great moment. There is justice and there are taboos, for there are standards which are not to be compromised.

Religion. What then should be said of the totem as the key to a meaning in which all participate: is it religious, is it divine? Some would answer in the affirmative and for a number of reasons:

- it is the key to the unity of persons, recalling the religious statement of the brotherhood of man in the fatherhood of God;
- it has the absolute meaning of the religious center: the one God of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism;
- it is the key to the sacred meaning and dignity of all.

In all these ways the totem is the religious center.

Perhaps, however, it might be called proto-religious, in that while this principle of unity is privileged and not reducible to humans, neither is it explicitly appreciated as being distinct from, and transcending the contents of this world.

On the other hand, the effort of the mystic at the high end of the religious spectrum is precisely to overcome separation from God. The direction is immanent, namely, to unite one's life with the divine, and to do so perhaps less by achieving transcendence than by entering more deeply into the center of one's own interiority. In this light totemic thought emerges in its true importance as something not to be escaped from, but to be recaptured and lived in new ways in the midst of our much more complex society and more technically organized world.

An a posteriori *Way*. The road we have taken has many of the characteristics of the classical *a posteriori* ways to the existence of God. (a) It began from a reality that did actually exist, namely, the successful and progressive life of peoples through the thousands of centuries which constitute almost the entirety of human experience. (b) It sought the principles of this existence, namely, the content of the understanding which made possible their successful human life. (c) It concluded in that totemic unity and fullness in which people had both their being and their unity. Thus, it established the plenitude of, and participation in, the foundational totem as principle both of the human mind and of social life.

This road differs, however, from the classical five ways of Thomas Aquinas.37 (a) Being essentially anthropological in character, it began with people in the primitive stage of their development. (b) Being essentially hermeneutic in method, it attended to the conditions of possibility for the understanding manifested in their life. (c) This combination of anthropological and hermeneutic factors concluded to the plenitude, not as it is in itself, as a cause distinct from its effect — the much later science of metaphysics will be required for that — but only as appreciated by the primitive mind in its totemic mode.

This difference should not be considered to be merely negative. The thought of the primitive is not merely a poorer form of what people in subsequent ages would do better with improved tools. Heidegger pointed to an important sense in which it is only by returning to the origins that important progress can be made. I would like to suggest three ways in which this is true of a return to the totemic vision if made through the combined tools of anthropology and philosophical hermeneutics.

Implications of the Totemic Way

Metaphysical Content. Human progress is made in part through the ability to understand in increasingly more formalized terms and systems the relationships which obtain in society, in nature, and between the two. If these scientific elaborations are not to be merely empty signs, hypothetical systems or external relations, they must draw upon the meaning of life itself, first expressed humanly in terms of the totem. This will be required not only for their certainty as noted by Descartes, but for their content and unity as pointed out by the classical realist philosophies. This will be particularly necessary if the process of development is to implement, rather than to supplant, human values and transcendent aspirations.

What has been said of the sciences should, with appropriate adaptation, be said of metaphysics as well. It is the task of metaphysics as a science to establish with rigor its processes of definition, reasoning and conclusion. The intelligibility of the entire science is dependent upon the intelligibility of its subject, being. In turn, it is the search for that intelligibility which has ever led the mind to reasoning regarding the plenitude of being of Plato's "One" or "Good",38 Aristotle's "life divine",39 Heidegger's "Being",40 or Iqbal's "total absolute".41

All are clear that this plenitude cannot be constituted by any limited instance or any combination thereof. Plato's notion of *reminiscentia* may be more helpful than is generally thought, however, if employed in terms not of the hypothesis of a prior existence of the individual in a world of ideas, but of the real experience of our totemic ancestors. The totemic peoples subjected to the acid test of time the proposition that if human life is to be lived it must be lived in terms of a unity, a whole, a Plenitude of reality in which all have their being and meaning. This was the cultural heritage they bequeathed to subsequent ages. South Asian thought reflects this in being characterized by a quest for the highest value of life, for *moksa* or spiritual freedom. The Greeks reflected this in their myths, in the context of which Plato was able to proceed from multiple instances of goodness to the one Goodness Itself which, as the sun, gives light to all in this cave of time. The so-called later Heidegger came finally to focus on this as the ground from which all beings emerged into time. Iqbal saw it as the basis for all human knowledge.

A Return to the Source. This is not only a question of the past. Gandhi has pointed out that a new nation cannot be built unless it finds its soul. Menendes y Pelago said this well: Where one does not carefully conserve the inheritance of the past, be it poor or rich, great or small, there can be no hope of giving birth to original thought or a self-possessed life. A new people can improvise all except intellectual culture, nor can an old people renounce this without extinguishing the most noble part of its life and falling into a second infancy similar to senile imbecility.

What Gandhi added was that this spirit or culture is to be found not only in books, but in family and village life. Though some have taken this as an issue of economics, in fact it is one of metaphysics.

How is such a metaphysics to be elaborated? Here the original suggestion of Heidegger assumes particular importance. He noted that philosophic traditions, in proceeding to ever more intensive analysis and clarity trade existential content in order to gain formal clarity. From within the scholastic contexts of both East and West it is protested — I believe rightly, but heretofore in vain — that the vital significance of the classical analyses is not appreciated. Meanwhile, more and more all such analyses were previously classified as at best ideological superstructures which obscure attention to the reality of life.

In response, following Heidegger's suggestion, we have stepped back to a point, prior to Plato's and Aristotle's development of selective analyses, at which life was lived in communion, rather than seen in abstractions. We have stepped back beyond myth to totem. There, a crude but robust sense of the plenitude of reality and of participation therein is to be found. It gave men who had naught else an awareness of their unity one with another and an appreciation of the importance of the actions of each. With that, and that alone, they were able, not only to traverse the vast seas of time, but to arrive with such treasures in the form of epics, myths and hymns — rightly considered sacred texts — that our several cultures have lived richly merely on the interest of such a patrimony.

Even to live wisely on the interest, however, it behooves one to be as clear as possible concerning the capital; this is especially true in philosophy. Both as a sequential process of evolving human understanding and as Heidegger's process of retrieve, it is essential to know what came before in order to plan one's next step and have the materials with which it can be fashioned. A significant body of scholarship works on the basis of a supposed evolution from polytheism to monism. Others would hold that monism is the more original and that the evolution consisted in the progressive introduction of a plurality of gods. The two suppositions are used by their proponents, not only to order chronologically the Vedic hymns and passages in the *Upanishads,* but to interpret the meaning of their key phrases and ideas. The same can be said regarding such key notions as matter and spirit, monism and pluralism.

In fact, the totem is none of these, but expresses the unity and plenitude from which subsequently some will evolve an explicit monotheism, while others will develop theories regarding the development of the physical universe. Both will have their roots in the unity which is the totem, but neither will exhaust its potential meaning. More importantly, neither will be completely deprived of the unspoken totemic context of their meaning. Hence, as we shall see, it is erroneous to interpret Vedic thought or pre-Socratic philosophy as a proto-materialism.

The Divine as Present. Precisely because this vision of unity in plenitude is foundational for human life, the steps taken in the initial phases of its clarification and articulation will be statements of what is essential in order that life be lived and lived well in a particular culture. As the*Vedas* express these conditions of possibility, Professor T.N.P. Mahadevan marked well that they can no more rightly be said to be produced than Newton can be said to have produced, rather than to have discovered, the law of gravitation. They are indeed discovered or "heard" (*Sruti*) as one bores deeply into the accumulated sediment of our long experience of living, till finally "like joyous streams bursting from the mountains" the sense of Unity comes forth as revelation of the Real.42

Theologians are in difficulty, however, if they restrict their views simply to the words of their scriptures, for faith then becomes fideism. As century succeeds century the words lose their existential content, become empty signs, and are filled with ideas which are at best ephemeral and possibly even dangerous. In times they come to be progressively less understood and then ignored.

For the active philosopher dedicated to wisdom and to comprehension these dangers are greater still. It is the philosopher's special task to work out the order of being and meaning, to clarify the significance of the steps in reasoning processes, and to test and ground their principles. We do this so that the One in all and all in One, the plenitude and the participation by which we live and breathe and have our being may pervade our minds, inspire our hearts, and guide our steps.

It is supremely wise of philosophers such as Suresvara to recognize that their reasoning processes are only preparatory, ground-clearing operations, whereas the knowledge of the One arising from Sruti or sacred text is immediate and non-relational. It is not the product of their reasoning, but is made known by Scripture through implication. Here the philosopher meets the real challenge of metaphysics and joins with the seer in concern for that which surpasses name and form.

As negative statements must be based upon positive content, the philosopher's negative statements that Brahman is "other than the unreal, the insentient, and the finite" would appear to need to be based upon positive awareness of "non-relational, non-verbal content".43 The philosopher must ask in what way such meaning is present to the awareness of the one who hears *Sruti*. The strong emphasis in Indian thought upon unity would seem to suggest or facilitate the appreciation of presence which is unveiled, that is, revealed by the words of the sacred text.

It has been the burden of this chapter to suggest that this presence can be further appreciated if we look, not to the individual alone, but to the mother-lode of human experience lived intensively in family and clan. There it is commonly found that parents, though even when relatively inarticulate, nonetheless convey to their children a vibrant and concrete, if equally inarticulate, sense of such characteristics of existence as its unity, truth, and goodness. The above analysis showed how the totem expressed in a non-verbal manner an awareness of the plenitude of being in which all are united. It indicated also the manner in which some of this meaning might now be retrieved.

If, indeed, some non-verbal awareness of unity and participation is present as the basis of all truly humane life, then:

- metaphysics may not be an esoteric concern; the realities with which it deals may be much more present than the data for which one needs telescopes, expeditions, laboratories and computers;
- *karma yoga* or the way of action may be integral to *jnana yoga* or the way of knowledge; and
- emancipation, as reflecting the true nature of man,44 may be being lived in the simplest and most familiar surroundings.

In the words of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari of Madras:

Whether the epics and songs of a nation spring from the faith and ideas of the common folk, or whether a nation's faith and ideas are produced by its literature is a question which one is free to answer as one likes. . . . Did clouds rise from the sea or was the sea filled by waters from the sky? All such inquiries take us to the feet of God transcending speech and thought.45

In sum, the totem was not simply one animal among others, but in a sense limitless: no matter how many persons were born to the tribe, the totem was never exhausted. Further, the totem was shown special respect, such as not being sold or used for food or other utilitarian purposes, which

would make it subservient to the individual members of the tribe or clan. Whereas other things might be said to be possessed and used, the totem was the subject of direct predication: one might say that one had a horse or other animal, but only of the totem would one say that one is, e.g., lion.

The totem, then, was the unique, limitless reality in terms of which all persons and things had their being and were interrelated. It was the sacred center of individual and community life in terms of which all had meaning and cohesion. It made possible both the personal dignity and interpersonal relations which are the most important aspects of human life. It did this with a sense of direct immediacy that would be echoed, but never repeated, in subsequent stages of more formally religious thought.

Whether this be seen as religious or proto-religious, it is more foundational even than a way to God, for it states the basically religious character of all human life. What is shown is that religion is not something distant which is added to a universe which humankind first experiences as basically secular, but that religion is the basic and essential insight of even the simplest forms of human community. It makes clear that the issue is not whether there be room for religion alongside public life or how to protect one from the other, but how religion functions as the root of human meaning and community.

Notes

1. (Lahore: Ashrof, 19442), p. 6

2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

3. This threefold structure of the sciences in the Aristotelian tradition is elaborated in Aquinas's *Commentary on Boethius's Work on the Trinity*, qq. 3 and 5. Descartes's procedure for placing all under doubt follows the same sequence of the three sources of knowledge. This depends as well on Aristotle's dictum that there is nothing in the intellect which is not first in the senses. For more detail see chapter I above.

4. Indeed, one might define philosophy and science precisely as knowledge of the various aspects of reality in terms proper to human reason, and hence as expressive not merely of my subjective sensations, but of the nature and existence of things themselves.

5. P.K. Mukherji, *Life of Tagore* (New Delhi: India Book Co., 1975), p. 153.

6. *The Vedic Age*, ed. R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalker (vol. I of *The History and Culture of the Indian People*; Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957), pp. 169-198.

7. C. Kunhan Raja, *Asya Vamasya Humn* (*The Riddle of the Universe*): *Rgveda I, 164* (Madras: Genesh, 1956), pp. xxvii-xxxix; and *Poet-Philosophers of the Rgveda: Vedic and Pre-Vedic* (Madras: Ganesh, 1963), pp. x-xi

8. Stephen Fuchs, *The Origin of Man and His Culture* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 47-49; G.E. Daniel, "Archaeology" in *Macropaedia, The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1977), vol. I, p. 1082.

9. Arthur B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads* (Harvard Oriental Series, vol. XXXII; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925), p. 195.

10. "Our asking of the fundamental question of metaphysics is historical, because it opens up the process of human being-there [in its essential relation — i.e., its relations to the essential as such and as a whole —] to unasked possibilities, futures, and at the same time binds it back to its past beginning, so sharpening it and giving it weight in its present. In this questioning, our being-there is summoned to [its history in the full sense of the word, called to history and to] decision in

history." Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 36-37 and 32.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

12. "The criterion of the unthought demands that the heritage of thought be liberated in respect of what still lies in reserve in its 'has been' (*Gewesenee*). It is this which holds tradition initially in its sway and is prior to it, though without being thought about expressly as the originative source." Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism", trans. by E. Lohner, in W. Barrett and H. Aiken, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 270-302.

13. *Br. Up.*, IV, v. 15.

14. *Brahma-Sutra*, I, i, 3.

15. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 130.

16. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

17. In that context earlier research into the origins of Indian thought such as that of A. Keith (*op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 195-97) tended to discount the significance of the totem, pointing, e.g., to the absence of one or another specific factor, such as ritual eating, which was in no sense essential to the notion. The subsequent anthropological work described here, by which the notion has been scientifically reconstructed, provides the basis for restating the question. This is the more true as Keith himself argues, even regarding the meaning of Brahman, from the fact that a notion such as that of a supernatural power pervading the universe is generally found in all other tribes in other parts of the world to its having been a basic factor in early Indian thought. *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 446.

18. *Totemism*, pp. 56-58.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-65.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-71.

21. *Ibid*, pp. 87-88. Cf also *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 93. In *Totemism* (p. 82) he notes that E. E. Evans-Pritchard had held that the primitives looked upon the totemic animals and the tribes as collateral lines descending from God as their common origin, which implied that their reality or content was essentially related. This would correspond to some degree to Heidegger's "unthought" which founds the meaning of all things and unites them among themselves. For the structuralist, however, content is not distinct from form.

22. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), p. 11. Sergio Moravia cites passages from Lévi-Strauss which indicate some recognition of this need. They speak of spirit as subject of the universal categories, and of the transformation of structures as the unconscious activity of the spirit. *La ragione nascosta, scienza e filosofia nel pensiero di Claude Lévi-Strauss* [Firenze: Sansoni, 1969], pp. 325ff.

23. Jean Piaget, *Structuralism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 139-142.

24. "A careful examination of *The Savage Mind* suggests that at the base of structural homologies one can always look for semantic analogies which render comparable the different levels of reality whose convertibility is assured by the "code". The "code" presupposes a correspondence, an affinity of the contents, that is, a cipher." Paul Ricoeur, "Structure and Hermeneutics" in *The Conflict of Interpretations, Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston, III.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 56. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975).

25. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 48 and 56, n. 18.

27. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, p. 37

28. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think* (Les functions mentals dans les societes inferieures; New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 62.

29. *Sutras*, I, 1, 2.

30. *How Natives Think*, p. 62.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-63.

32. Marcel Griaule, *Dieu d'Eau: Entretiens avec Ogotemmêli* (Paris: Fayad, 1966).

33. *How Natives Think*, pp. 4-7.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 324, 362.

35. *Ibid.*, ch. III.

36. L. Apostle, *African Philosophy: Myth or Reality?* (Brugges, Belgium: Story, 1980).

37. See ch. VI below.

38. Plato, *Republic*, 508.

39. *Metaphysics* XII, 7.

40. *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1962).

41. *Reconstruction of Philosophy*, p. 6.

42. T.N.P. Mahadevan, *Invitation to Indian Philosophy* (New Delhi: Heinemann, 1974), p. 14. The simile is taken from the *Vedas*.

43. R. Balasubramanian, *The Taittir§yopanisad Bh~sya-V~rtika of SureÑvara* (Madras: Center for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1974), p. 180.

44. S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banaridass, 1975), I, 58.

45. C. Rajagopalachari, *Ramayana* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1976), p. 312.

Knowledge and Truth: Ewe and Akan Conceptions

N.K. Dzobo

This study will be based upon an analysis of the epistemic conceptions found in the everyday speech and oral literature, e.g., the proverbs and wise sayings, of the Ewe and Akan of Ghana. The paper will be concerned mainly with critical remarks, clarifications and definitions of epistemic terms. Some synthesis and interpretation of the analytical findings will be attempted in the concluding sections.

Indigenous African societies consider knowledge and truth as the key factors in living a meaningful and satisfying life; the capacity to comprehend these has been used as the principal criterion for differentiating human beings from the lower animals. A human being is therefore indirectly defined by both the Ewe and the Akans as "the being that knows things." That is to say, only humans have the intellectual faculty for acquiring knowledge and for grasping reality through the medium of ideas.

Because of this understanding of the essential nature of man, one way to say that a person is stupid is to say that "he does not know things" (*Menya nu o* – Ewe; *Onnin hwee ade* – Akan), or simply to say that "he is an animal" (*Enye la* – Ewe; *Oye aboa* – Akan). The head is believed to play a very important role in knowing, and so of a person who is not intelligent it is said that "his head is dead." (*Efe ta ku* – Ewe; *Ni ti awu* – Akan). In other words "to be human is to have a live head," that is to say, to be intellectually alert or to grasp things mentally in terms of correct principles.

Thus, to be human is to know and understand things, especially the fundamental ideas and principle of life. For this reason one proverb says, "the child who goes about inquiring *to know* what is happening is never an animal (fool)." (*Vi-bia-nya-ta-se medzoa – lao.* Ewe).

The Method of Knowing

The main questions we shall address our inquiry will be:

1. What does it mean to know, or what is knowledge?
2. How do we know?
3. What are the sources of knowledge?
4. What are the categories of knowledge?
5. How is knowledge validated?

Indigenous African society is never skeptical about man's ability to know; it strongly believes that man can and does know. Therefore the question is not "Can man know?" but "How do we know"? Indigenous society is therefore concerned first and foremost with the manner of knowing.

How do we know? To answer this question we shall examine carefully the different Ewe and Akan synonyms for 'to know.' There are four very important words for this, two in Ewe – *nya* and *dze si*, and two in Akan – *nim* and *nya*.

(i) To Know as Nya. The most common Ewe word for 'to know' is nya, which has an object *nu* meaning 'a thing.' Thus, the expression *nya nu* implies the certainty of something known; it rules out any room for doubt.

Dietrich Westermann, the celebrated German authority on the Ewe language, translated the verb *nya* into English as 'to know', 'to understand' 'to be able' (Westermann, 1928). These, however, are secondary meanings of the verb *nya*. Its primary meaning can be translated as 'to observe,' 'to take a look at,' 'to note,' and 'to look.' These meanings of the verb appear in such expressions as:

a. *Nya nusi wom viwo le da* – "look at or observe what your child is doing."

b. *Nya asiwo da, efo di* – "Look at your hand, it is dirty!" This expression is similar to another perceptual expression, *See da*!: "Listen to this." The two expressions call for the use of the senses of perception. *Nya nu* then means "to gain knowledge by observation or seeing, by the use of the senses." Here observation is the means by which we come to know; what is known is therefore referred to as *nunya*, meaning 'thing observed'; the result of observation then is knowledge (*nunya*).

This basic understanding of the verb *nya* is supported by its Akan use. *Nya* is perhaps originally an Akan word or a common inheritance. In Akan it means 'to find', 'to experience', 'to gain', 'to come by' as found in such expressions as *Manya asem*: 'I have got trouble"; *Wanya sika*: "He has found (made) money"; *Wonyaa wo he*?: "Where did you find it?" The uses of *nya* in these sentences always imply that the subject of the sentences is 'doing something,' i.e., 'going through an experience and getting something from it.' Therefore, if the verb *nya* is used epistemically it implies that the subject of the verb *nya* is doing something – observing or experiencing something and then deriving something out of it. What is derived from such an experience is *nunya* (knowledge).

According to John Dewey, the process of acquiring knowledge from experience/observation has two phases: active and passive. The active phase of experience consists of trying or experimenting with something; the passive phase is undergoing the consequences of what has been done. The value of the experience lies in connecting the two phases – that of trying and that of undergoing. Dewey went on to say "when an activity is continued into the undergoing of consequences, when the change made by the action is reflected back in a change made in us, the mere flux is loaded with significance."1 The mere action then has a meaning; and thus is knowledge.

Knowledge arises when the doer is able to connect what the first phase of experience means in terms of its second phase or consequences. The ability to deduce the correct lesson from experience is highly valued in the indigenous society. One proverb emphasizes this by saying "It is only a fool who allows his sheep to break loose twice." (*Okwasea na ne guan te mprenu*. – Akan.) Another proverb making the same point says: "It is only a fool (animal) who falls down twice on the same mound." (*Ame le ye dzea anyi zi eve le ko deka dzi* – Ewe). Observation and inference then are methods of obtaining knowledge: experience is a source of knowledge.

(ii) To Know as Dze Si (Ewe); Nim (Twi). The infinitive *dze si* means 'to know', 'to note', 'to recognize'. It is used in such expressions as: *Medze sii*: "I have recognized him," or "I have seen him once"; it is equivalent to *Menyae*, meaning 'I have known him'. *Dze si* always implies the use

of the sense of sight or observation in knowing; in this sense it is equivalent to one sense of the Akan word *nim* meaning 'to know through observing an external reality'.

To sum up what has been said so far about the indigenous method of knowing: observation and inference have emerged as the relevant methods of knowing. There are two steps involved in the knowing process: first, observing an external phenomenon by the senses and receiving the necessary sense-data from it (the experiencing phase of knowing); second, the process of organizing and interpreting the sense-data into ideas which come to be referred to as knowledge (*nunya* – Ewe; *nimdee* – Akan). Knowledge then is the end-product of intellectual processes which begin in sensation. Sensations are therefore regarded as stimuli to reflection and inference; they are the beginnings of empirical knowledge.

The Passive Way of Knowing

The method of knowing discussed above was referred to as the active method of knowing. There is, however, the passive method of knowing. The two most common terms used to represent it are *le*, meaning 'to seize,' 'to grasp,' 'to encounter,' 'to grip,' and *wu*, meaning 'to kill,' i.e., 'to experience passively.' Examples of their uses appear in the following expressions:

a. *Do le lem*: "Illness has seized me" – I am sick.
b. *Do le wu yem*: "Hunger is killing me" – I am hungry.
c. *Tsiko le wu yem*: "Thirst is killing me" – I am thirsty.
d. *Tro le asii*: "The god has seized him/her to be his wife; i.e., A god has elected him/her as his priest/priestess. He has experienced/known the power and presence of a god.

In all these and similar experiences the subject knows something, not by what he does, but by what happens to him; hence this type of knowing can be described as passive and subjective. The subjective nature of such knowledge does not *ipso facto* make it invalid because such knowledge is best verified by its positive fruits.

In the indigenous society, then, knowing is the result of two different types of experiences, one active and the other passive.

Categories of Knowledge

There are four main categories of knowledge in Ewe, each traceable to sensory experience as their sources. They are *nyatsiname, susununya, nusronya,* and *sidzedze*.

1. *Nyatsiname* usually refers to knowledge that is passed down by word of mouth. This may be described as *traditional* knowledge, where traditional is used to mean that which is passed down from one person or from one generation to another. Knowledge that is passed from parents and elders to the next generation and contained in proverbs and other forms of oral literature is a good example of knowledge as *nyatsiname*.

2. *Susununya* is knowledge gained from reflection. Its nature is deductive or contemplative. This does not require an immediate experience as its source, but relies on deduction from premises that have been already established.

3. *Nusronya* is knowledge acquired through the process of learning from formal education. Its popular designation is ‘book knowledge’ (*agbalemenunya). Nusronya* is not highly valued by the traditional society because it tends to be foreign and thus is divorced from the realities of the African experience.

4. *Sidzedze* which is the knowledge that is gained as a result of acquiring a certain level of awareness or gaining a certain understanding of things, relations and situations. This knowledge is gained as a result of understanding things in terms of their fundamental principles. The Ewe term*sidzedze,* refers to insight gained through the grasping of fundamental principles. One proverb says: "Knowledge of self without *sidzedze* makes a person a slave." (*Simadzemadze ame dokui fe ablode de wodoa kluvi ame*). This is a way of saying, "The only self-knowledge that is worth having is that based upon fundamental principles." This type of knowledge makes us free.

Nyansa as Wisdom

The word *nyansa* is usually used to translate the English term ‘wisdom’, but sometimes it is used to translate knowledge. I will limit its use to wisdom in order to avoid any confusion in a philosophical discourse.

Nyansa, as wisdom, is an Akan word, made up of *nya* and *nsa* meaning ‘that which is obtained and is never exhausted’, i.e., a lesson which is learned from experience and is lasting, an important lesson from experience. *Nyansa* then is a special type of knowledge: it is drawn from experience and is cherished because of its value for one’s life. The elders are usually credited with the ability to draw appropriate lessons (*nyansa*) from the various experiences of life. For this reason one Akan proverb says: "Wisdom is something we acquire through learning; it is not something we buy" (*Nyansa vesua na vento*). This proverb implies that *nyansa* is based upon a considerable experience of life. Thus, reliable inferences of this sort are usually only associated with the elders, who in Ewe are called *ametsitsiwo* or ‘the mature ones’. One proverb sums it up this way, "You get palm-wine only from mature palm trees" (*De tsitsi me aha nona* – Ewe). The *nyansa,* that is, the lessons of wisdom are stored by the elders in the proverbs and other wise sayings of the indigenous culture.

Nyansa as careful and mature lessons derived from experience cannot be regarded as *sophia,* i.e., a complete vision integrating the various fragmented experiences of life. Some examples of such particularistic but consistent teachings about life are found in the following proverbs:

a. "Knowledge is like a garden, if it is not cultivated it cannot be harvested."

b. "You do not keep the dish in which your neighbor has sent you food, (you return it with your own food in it)," that is, reciprocity is one principle that guides successful social behaviour.

c. "Once you get hold of a snake’s head what is left is just a piece of rope," that is, the most effective way to solve a problem is to tackle it at its roots.

Having *Nyansa,* however, is not just being in possession of a series of guides to conduct; it is an attitude or fundamental disposition which shapes the behaviour of the person who has it. The wise men of the indigenous society (*nunyala* – Ewe; *anyansato* – Akan) are therefore not just knowledgeable men and women, but persons who have a consistent mode of response to life’s experiences. In this regard they can be said to be people who practice a philosophy of life informed by *nyansa*.2

Both knowledge (*nunya*) and wisdom (*nyansa*) therefore must have a practical bearing on the conduct of life. This attitude to knowledge and wisdom is made quite clear in two Akan proverbs which say: "Wisdom is not (like) money which may be kept in a safe" (*Nyansa nye sika na woakyekyere asie*); and "One does not collect wisdom in a bag, lock it up in a box and then come to say to a friend 'Teach me something'."

Nyansa is a highly valued commodity in the indigenous society. Indeed, it is maintained that the whole world is founded on wisdom. That is, the wisdom of *Mawu*, the creator, organizer and sustainer of the world, who is regarded as the source of all wisdom. An interesting aspect of the "indigenous conception of wisdom is that it is closely associated with calmness or coolness. Thus one of the praise names of God is *Fafato* which means 'The source of coolness'. This also leads to a connection between wisdom and women. Because of their characteristic cool, calm and pacific nature, women are generally said to give wise judgments in disputes. Owing to this conception of women, traditionally before a judgment is delivered at a chief's court the elders always go into council, as the saying goes, "to consult the *old lady*" (*abriwa*) for a wise judgment. In the past the elders really did consult an old lady.

Chiefs also, because of their role as decision-makers, are expected to acquire the cool nature of women or of the gods to enable them to make wise judgments. The chief's title among the people of Benin is therefore *Dada* meaning 'Mother', among other Ewe he is addressed as *Togbui*and as *Nana* among the Akan. These titles are associated with maturity, cool-headedness and wisdom.

Attitudes to Knowledge

Apart from the general attitude to knowledge discussed above there are some specific indigenous attitudes to *nunya* and *nyansa*. The first attitude to knowledge is that there is a limit to what any one individual can know, even though there is no limit to what can be known in principle. One proverb expresses this attitude thus: 'Knowledge is like a balobab tree (monkey-bread tree); no one person can embrace it with both arms' (*Nunya adidoe, asi metune o*). Since knowledge is limitless, any person who claims to know everything knows nothing: "Knows all, knows nothing" (*Nim, nnim* – Akan).3 Because of this attitude to knowledge a chief alone is not expected to give judgment in cases at his court, for wise and sound judgment is supposed to come from several heads: "One head does not go into council."

The next attitude to knowledge is figuratively expressed by the proverb, previously quoted, which says "Knowledge is like a garden, if it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested." The main point of this proverb is that the individual has an active part to play in the acquisition of knowledge, or, as another proverb puts it: "Knowledge is not the gift of the gods" (*Nunya mele aklama me o*). Man is not born with knowledge; whatever he knows is acquired through experience and through a deliberate effort on his part to know. One proverb therefore says: "The one who keeps asking never loses his way" (*Obisafo nto kwan.* – Akan). The other one says: "The child who goes about *asking to know* what is happening will never be a fool." Lack of knowledge, ignorance, on the other hand is said to make a fool of a person (*Numanya-manva de wodoa bometsila ame* – Ewe). This attitude to knowledge even though it does not completely rule out *a priori* and revealed knowledge; it nevertheless indicates a bias towards *a posteriori* or empirical knowledge.

The third specific attitude to knowledge is the conception of knowledge as light and as the source of freedom. We see this attitude in two proverbs. One says "The lamp of ignorance misleads in the night" (*Nu manyamanya fe akadi tra ame za* – Ewe). In this proverb ignorance is likened to

darkness and so its lamp cannot be expected to provide light, while knowledge is light considered especially as moral enlightenment. As enlightenment, knowledge makes the individual free and in this sense it is said to be creative of a better life. To the indigenous society therefore, "knowledge is, in the words of Dewey, "not something separate and self-sufficing, but is involved in the process by which life is sustained and evolved."4

The Concept of Truth

The examination of the concept of truth is a logical follow-up to the study of knowledge. The main question to be examined is: What makes our knowledge claims true or false? What is the indigenous concept of, and attitude to, truth? To answer these questions we shall examine some truth terms and expressions in both the Ewe and Akan languages, especially as they are found in everyday utterances and proverbs of the people.

There are six main terms for truth in Ewe, namely: *nyatefe, nyanono, nyagbagbe, nyagba, nyadzodzoe,* and *anukware*. The last term, *anukware,* is borrowed from the Akan language and the remaining terms which are Ewe in origin have the root word 'nya' which, as we have seen, plays a very important part in the conception of knowledge and wisdom and can best be translated here as 'statement', 'word', 'matter' and 'case'. In other words, to the indigenous mind truth is a knowledge-claim with a specific characteristic. We must search out this characteristic.

Truth as Nyatefe: The most common Ewe term for truth is *nyatefe,* which has been made popular by its use in Christian communication. Etymologically, it is built upon *nya*. *Tefe* means 'place' or 'spot'; it is a common suffix in Ewe language, as seen in such words as *Ametefe, nutefe, kutefe*. Thus, *nyatefe* literally means 'the statement/word that is at its place', i.e., a correct statement. A statement is said to be correct when it describes accurately the state of affairs as it is. Another way therefore to say in Ewe that a statement is true is to say *Nya la le etefe*: "The statement/word is at its place," as is usually said about the report of an eyewitness. According to the *nyatefe* conception of truth, a statement is true if it describes an object or event as it really is, and such statements are generally known to be made by eyewitnesses. Thus one proverb says: "Nobody doubts the death of the crocodile's mother if it is reported by the fish." This is another way of saying that the report of an eyewitness can be trusted to be true because such reports normally give accurate accounts of the state of things. For this reason when the elders at a court want to question the validity of a report they ask its author either '*Eno nya la tefea*,' which means literally: "Did you sit down (witness) at the place where the event occurred"? Or '*Ekpo etefea*?': "Did you see the place where the event happened"?

Nyatefe then is an on-the-spot-account of an event reported by a person who witnesses it. The belief is that there is a higher degree of reliability and accuracy in an on-the-spot statement than in hearsay. This, however, does not rule out the fact that there may be errors in the reports of an eyewitness; so the essence of the *nyatefe* concept of truth is to be found in its high degree of accuracy and reliability, not in its being a facsimile of reality. Truth as *nyatefe* then consists in a high degree of correspondence between the truth-claim and the objective state of affairs so stated; its validity also lies in its high degree of accuracy and reliability. The *nyatefe* concept of truth assumes that there are certain kinds of statements that can be made about objects, events and relations which are true because of the intrinsic nature of such realities. The truth-value of such statements is therefore determined by the nature of the realities under consideration.

Truth as Nyanono (Nyano): The second truth term is *nyanono* or *nyano* which is made up of *nya* and *no*. As *no* means 'mother' or 'female', *nyano* means literally 'mother/female statement or word.' This is a metaphorical expression in which 'mother' or 'female' is used as a symbol of life, of that which creates life and promotes growth. *Nyano* as truth, then, means 'the statement that is alive' or has a creative power, just as the woman in the indigenous thought is seen as the principle of life, creativity and growth, while man represents the principle of death and destructivness. The *Nyano* concept of truth emphasizes truth-value as a living, creative and productive principle. It has the power to create new situations, to promote growth and effect rejuvenation. This is a dynamic understanding of truth. So one way to say 'speak the truth' is '*do nyanono/nyatefe*', which literally means 'plant the truth', the understanding being that if it is the truth it will germinate, grow and bear fruit. Falsehood, which is called *nyakudu* or 'dead word/ statement' will not germinate. The *nyano* conception of truth implies its method of verification: truth is known by, and consists in, its power to create new situations and make things better.

Truth as Nyagbagbe: Nyagbagbe means the word/statement that is alive (*nya* and *gbagbe* – alive). *Gbagbe* is used in such expressions as *nu gbagbe*, meaning 'living thing'. Thus *nyagbagbe* means 'living word or statement' in contrast to falsehood, which is termed *nyakuku* – 'dead word/ statement'. Again, truth, *nyagbagbe*, is conceived as a female principle, a principle of life, creativity and growth. Thus truth can be described as the statement of life or life-statement. As such, truth is regarded as of the greatest importance.

Truth as Nyagba: The other term for truth, which derives from *nyagbagbe,* is *nyagba,* and is made up of *nya* and *gba* which means 'first,' 'distinguished,' 'genuine.' 'important.' *Gba* appears in such expressions as *nu gbae*: 'the real thing,' or *ame gba*: 'an important person.' Truth, then, is an important statement because it contains the word of life.

The last three conceptions of truth may be designated "the Creativity or *Nyano* theory of Truth." This can be said to be unique to the indigenous concept of truth. It is different from the pragmatic theory of truth in that it is not only the workability of an idea that makes it true, but its power to bring about a better human situation and continuously to improve the conditions of life. The defining characteristic of the creativity theory is its emphasis on the ameliorative nature of truth.

Truth as Nyadzodzoe: Nyadzodzoe is the fifth Ewe term for truth; it is a forensic term which is heard often in the settlement of dispute. Like the others, it is made up of two words – *nya* and *dzodzoe* which means 'straight'. Truth as *nyadzodzoe* therefore means literally 'straight statement/word;' falsehood is referred to as *nyagoglo* or *nyamadzomadzo*, meaning 'crooked statement/word.' *Nyadzodzoe* is usually pronounced as a judgment in a dispute to mean 'not guilty' or 'you have behaved correctly,' but this correctness of behavior is judged on the basis of the truth or falsehood of the statements one makes about what has happened.

The straight-statement conception of truth presupposes the existence of normative standards of truth-statement which are used to measure other truth-statements. This understanding of truth as a statement that is judged to be straight by an already accepted 'straight-statement' is brought out in the proverb: "It is only the liar who loses his teeth three times in his life time." Normally people lose their teeth twice in their life time, once in childhood and lastly in old age. Thus, the statement that corresponds to this fact of life is: "Men lose their teeth twice in their life time." Any person who says he lost his teeth three times is not making a 'straight-statement', and no behaviour emanating from such a statement will be considered straight.

The normative truth-statement is therefore what is generally known by the society, represented by the elders, to be true in speech as well as in deed. The truth of a statement is therefore in its *identity* with what has been known to be the case in such matters. The knowledge of normative truth-statements is acquired through long years of experience and is passed down from generation to generation. In non-literate societies the memory is the repository of truth as *nyadzodzoe*.

Truth as Anukware: Anukware is an Akan word for truth, where it is spelled *nokware*. This is made up of *ano* – meaning 'mouth,' and *koro* meaning 'one', hence *anokware (anukware)* means 'one mouth'. Truth as *anukware* means a statement that is made with one mouth', i.e., made with consistency and without contradiction in the description of the same reality. Internal consistency and harmony are therefore held as the marks of a true statement. Dr. K.O. Agyakwa of the Faculty of Education at the University of Cape Coast is of the view that 'speaking with one mouth' rather means several people saying the same thing about a given state of affairs, so that "truth is the sum-total or consensus of what people are saying about a given state of affairs." He concludes that consistency "becomes a test for truth" which "resides in the collective mind of the community."5

The consistency that Dr. Agyakwa referred to as the criterion of truth is an 'external' one; that is to say, the consistency is between truth-statements made by two or more people about the same reality, and not the consistency among truth-claims made by the same person about one and the same reality. This latter consistency might be called 'internal' consistency and is generally required by people in establishing the validity of statements. For this reason as soon as an individual contradicts himself (which means speaking with two mouths) he is said to be speaking a lie. An individual who corroborates what others have said is confirming and not necessarily 'speaking' the truth which is always first established by one person. Moreover, the ubiquity of an opinion cannot be used as a criterion of truth, because the voice of the people (*Vox populi*) is not always the voice of God (truth). It can be concluded then that the *anukware* conception of truth is the 'internal' consistency and harmony that exists among statements made by the same person about one and the same reality.

This conclusion is upheld by several indigenous conceptions of falsehood. To say that 'you are telling a lie' the Ewe living around Ho in Ghana say '*enyi ve*', which literally means, 'you are an alligator lizard' which has a forked (double) tongue. 'You are an alligator' is a metaphorical way of saying 'you have two tongues,' 'you speak with two tongues (mouths).' Another way of saying that 'you are telling a lie' is 'you have two heads.' As proverb puts it: "One person does not grow two heads" (*Ame deka metoa ta eve o*). This is a way of saying 'stop contradicting yourself." Other expressions are: "There are two tongues in the mouth of a liar"; "It is the liar who grows the tongue of an alligator 'His mouth is twin (two-pronged)' (*Nano ye nta* – Akan), i.e., "he is a liar." A local term for falsehood is *venyinyi (venyenye*) which means 'the state of being an alligator' which is representative of those who have 'two tongues/mouths.' All these expressions for falsehood indirectly stress consistency and harmony among the statements made by one and the same person as the criteria of truth conceived as *anukware*.

Four clear concepts of truth have emerged from the preceding examination of the indigenous truth terms. First, truth is the knowledge-claim that, to a high degree, corresponds to reality as it is. Second, truth is the identity of a new statement with other statements that have been accepted as true. Third, truth is the 'internal' consistency and harmony that exist among statements made by the same person about the same reality. Finally, truth, like knowledge and wisdom, is the statement that has the power to create new and better situations of life. Truth in this sense is a dynamic and creative property of statements.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion shows that, even though truth has a formal aspect, it is essentially dynamic and creative. Hence, one proverb says "Truth makes things good" (*Nyatefe nyoa nu* – Ewe). Also "Truth is woman," as woman has the power to bring forth new life. So, truth has creative power, while falsehood is destructive and disintegrative. Therefore, if truth is ignored the result is disaster, for only truth can settle falsehood. Truth is accordingly cherished as the greatest spiritual value. As one proverb puts it, "*Sebe*, if truth lies in your mother's vagina and you use your penis to bring it out you have not had sex with her,"6 which is a way of saying that truth stands at the very top of our values and all other values can be sacrificed if need be to get truth. Nothing can destroy truth; the person who loves truth will live long while the person who loves falsehood will die young, because truth is life while falsehood is death.

The ability to know, i.e., to grasp reality in terms of fundamental ideas, and the possession of knowledge are critical properties that makes one a *human being* in the conceptions of the indigenous society. One method of gaining knowledge of an object is through the process of observation and intellectual assimilation through the medium of ideas. The knower must detach him/herself from the reality to be known as much as possible so as to be in the position to have that knowledge of the object which can be described as *nyatefe*. The other method of knowing is that of making appropriate inferences from a passive experience in which one is acted upon by objects encountered.

Knowledge (*nunya*) then may be defined as inferences or ideas derived from experience, be they active or passive, and expressed as statements or propositions. *Nunya* becomes *nyansa* (wisdom) when it can be regarded as a complete principle of comprehension for a fairly large segment of experience. Without knowledge (*nunya*) and wisdom (*nyansa*) human life returns to animality; they are the divine creative Intelligence and Principle at work in the creation, organization and support of the universe and of life.

Notes

1. John Dewey *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 163.

2. For a somewhat different and detailed analysis of *nyansa*, see Kwame Gyekye, A*n Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Chap. 4 (Editors)

3. There is a story told of Ananse who collected all the knowledge in the world into a pot and hung the pot around his neck and was climbing a coconut tree with the intention of hanging the pot up the tree so that nobody else could have access to knowledge. Having hung the pot right in front of him he was having some difficulty in climbing the tree. His son Ntikuma was standing by, watching Ananse climb the tree with difficulty. He suggested to his father to put the pot of knowledge at his back in order to facilitate the climbing. Ananse did so and found the climbing easier. But this meant that some knowledge (intelligence here) had been left in the world and that he had not gathered all the knowledge in his pot. In anger he threw down the knowledge pot and broke it; as a result knowledge flew to all parts of the world. The point of the story: nobody can claim to know everything and so must be open and ready to acquire new knowledge.

4. *Op. cit*., p. 339.

5. K.O. Agyakwa, *The Educational Wisdom of Our Fathers* (Dept. of Educational Foundations, Cape Coast, Ghana, 1979), pp. 70-71.

6. The word "sebe" is used in Akan as polite apology for using rather delicate language. It may be translated by some such phrase as "If you would, excuse my language."

7. Some writers give other possible origins and meanings for the word *adinkra*. but it is truer to say that it is the use in this context that provides the name for the cloth.

8. For a full account of Adinkra symbols, see A.K. Quarcoo, *The Language of Adinkra Patterns* (Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Lagon, 1972) and also A. Kayper Meusah, *Sankofa—Adinkra Poems* (Ghana Publishing Corporation, Tema, 1972).

9. Baobab is a big fruit-bearing tree with a very huge base stem.

Report on

The Hindu Religious Tradition

George F. McLean and *John P. Hogan*

The Nature of the Hindu Religious Tradition

Hinduism can be viewed as both a comprehensive path of spirituality and a practical way of life.

To the question of how one can be happy most people look in the wrong place, i.e., to the acquisition of external goods rather than to proceeding within to deeper levels of self and ultimately to the experience of the absolute Self.

Here the goal is to understand and experience the divine which is beyond not only sense perception but intellectual definition. This is symbolized by the sacred symbol and sound of Om which is beyond human experience in any direct way. "Brahman" indicates "big" and omnipresence and has three transcendental properties, namely:

- existence (*sat*), the basic reality of everything through limitless changes,
- consciousness (*cit*), awareness not of some thing, but as the principle by which our organs of perception and of thought proceeds,
- bliss (*ananda*), the principle of happiness.

On the individual level this is the atmam. The great schools of Hinduism divide precisely on the issue of the relation of the atman and the Brahman. However, generally it can be said not "I am divine" but that what is essential in me as the deeper principle of my existence, consciousness and bliss is divine. Hence we need to be aware that most radically I am of the nature of bliss. It is precisely the goal of the spiritual path to make this fact part of our experience. To a pure and still mind beyond sense and intellect the divine is self evident for its very nature is consciousness.

That most people spend most of their time in pursuit of material success and the fulfillment of desire is not seen as intrinsically wrong. The danger, however, is that one forget the divine and that one's very nature is existence, consciousness and bliss. Hence, discipline is needed in order to strive toward this awareness. A number of levels have been worked out, tested and generally agreed upon over the ages. Each of the Hindu traditions has its own emphasis among these levels and approaches. Buddhism came as a reform movement for 1000 years within Hinduism in India and has spread East to Sri Lanka and to Indo China, North through China to Korea and Japan, and West to Tibet. The levels of discipline are:

(1) Dharma: which controls artha and karma emphasize, e.g., nonviolence and non acquisitiveness; it moves via ansterity to surrender to the divine.

(2) Karma Yoga: Because one with the self control of Dharma would still be poorly oriented in his action, karma yoga directs one beyond self-interest and grasping the fruit of action to focus upon action with a higher purpose. Here there is a stress on ritual to help people to think about the divine.

(3) Gnana Yoga or path of knowledge: As the person advanced in karma yoga could still be ignorant and lethargic, one must think about God by studying the principles and understanding the scriptures.

(4) Bhakti Yoga or Path of Devotion. This engages the intuitive powers as well as the emotions to intensify the direct relation to God. This includes the many devotions which relate to the divine under its many names, to each of which corresponds a special approach to God.

(5) Raja Yoga: is a systematization of the above integrating the physical and mental power in order to come closer to the still mind.

Above all through devotion, knowledge and direct attention one comes to the pure and still mind in which the presence of the divine self is experienced as the basis of one's being, awareness and happiness and which indeed is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss itself.

In this regard the Buddha would add the "non self" at the top. Building on perception with charity to all and concentration that leads to insight he would stress wisdom that brings us to nibbana. Here all objects fall away, even self, so that via "thinking with thinking" on the impermanence of all one goes beyond self to "thinking without thinking" in that stillness of mind that is non-self.

It will be noted that Hinduism is not only a matter of the highest speculative thought, but also a positive, progressive and inviting path that can start wherever one finds oneself and asks that he or she take the next step. One moves easily from one's various experiences of suffering to prayer, which leads in turn to desire for greater awareness of the divine through meditation. The soul vibrates with the divine in one's body and even with the non-self beyond any delimitate that might be included in self.

To this corresponds the middle way or path articulated by the Buddha in his reformist attempt to restate the true essence of Hindu spirituality, namely, right understanding, right speech (which is wisdom); right action and right effort (which is precept); and right concentration and right mindfulness.

What Can Hinduism Contribute to the Religious Patrimony of Humankind?

(a) Comprehensive: Hinduism has always been known for its capacity to encounter, absorb and transform a great variety of religious inspirations and efforts while all make a contribution, Hinduism has the capacity to draw upon each to enrich both itself and them. It is conscious of their being many different ways to the divine or, as it says, many different streams and rivers all of which flow into the sea. Thus in Hinduism the ascetic, the devotee and the meditator all find their proper place. Indeed it might be noted that during the 700 years India has been under colonial rule, its religion which has managed to absorb and adjust, but through it all to maintain nonetheless its identity.

(b) Systematic: Hinduism also contributes a systematic approach to meditation, beginning from the enlivening of one's interest, passing through proper practice, and then achieving the still mind in which one's consciousness is opened fully to the divine self or Brahman at the root of one's own self or atman.

(c) Four ashramas: In the classical view one is expected to pass through the stages of student, householder and forest ascetic to come to the final state of sunyasin with enlightenment and bliss. Thus all of life, each of its own way, is oriented to the divine.

(d) Equanimity: This pervasive orientation to the divine is expressed classically in the Karma Yoga of the *Bhagavad Gita* in which Arguna is urged to act but without clinging to the fruits of the action. This detachment enables one to focus rather on what dharma directs and hence on what I am required to do as reflecting the divine *sat*, *cit* and *ananda,* which are the true sources of the self. In this way One can proceed with true equilibrium in the midst of whatever, difficulties are encountered. Thus what rules is not a set of objective commandments, but a developing formation of the self in order that all aspects of one's life might be expressive of the divine.

In Buddhism this would correspond to offering up the fruits of action and to acting, not in expectation of these fruits but without desire and to do what you do out of good will.

What Does Hinduism Expect from Other Religions, e.g., What Form of Recognition?

Hinduism may be less appreciated in the world because thusfar it has flourished only in South and Southeast Asia from India to Indonesia, and in a few places to which Indians have migrated as laborers. This may now be changing as Hindus build through education, commerce and now the technological competencies to play a more prominent role in the world.

Nevertheless old ideas persist so that karma is seen as generating fatalism, rituals are seen as superstitions and idol worship, Kali frightens in her ferociousness and the caste system is read only as a system of economic oppression and exploration. These misconceptions need to be overcome both by a hermeneutic of application which finds ways of mediating and living the ancient traditions effectively in new and ever changing time.

It may well be that with the move beyond the deeply embedded rationalism of modern times and the renewed interest in the spiritual dimensions of life Hinduism could be of special interest and assistance to those embarking on a spiritual quest or in need of coordination of their powers upon its goal.

In view of the extreme actions of fundamentalists in all directions, Hindus and especially sheikhs have taken on somber colors due simply to outward appearance. It is necessary that much greater progress be made in understanding other forms of religions, and of Hinduism and its varied forms. For in the global period into which we enter much greater interchange is not only desired and desirable, but inevitable, with its potential for lack of understanding and tension.

What are the Interests of Hinduism in Dialogue with Other Religions; How Can They Best be Implemented?

(1) *Stereotypes*: Because of the negative stereotypes that abound, and not least regarding the rituals of Hinduism, it is important for people to enter into conversation and dialogue in order to enable others to understand their religious practices and their grounding in beliefs and insights. One impediment to this is the same lack of understanding due to which people do not trust each other sufficiently to be able to take up difficult issues. It is essential then to plan ways of coordinated and in depth discussion in a more penetrating manner.

(2) *Mutual Respect*: An essential requisites for dialogue is mutual respect. We need to search out what can be done to remedy any deficiencies in this basic foundation for interaction. Here the approach should be neither biased criticism nor indifference, but a cooperative search to enrich the understanding of points of common religious concern.

What Might a Revised Nostra Aetate Say with Regard to the Hindu Tradition?

(a) The historical juncture of *Nostra Aetate* is not that of the medieval crusades, but of the decolonialization period of the 1950s and 60s: independence was attained by India in 1947 and by Nigeria in 1960. Hence it was a time of the recognition of the independence and values of the many cultures of the world. This recognition of cultures and of the importance of their religious roots has been notably deepened since that time and professionally elaborated through developments in hermeneutics. This should be incorporated into a revision of *Nostra Aetate*.

(b) The original *Nostra Aetate* when read by a Christian proclaims a great step forward in recognizing the authenticity and value of elements in the other religions. Yet read by non Christian the way in which this is said can sound rather condescending: recognizing elements that are true and good in other religions could imply that the rest is erroneous and even evil. Moreover in relating these to Christianity it takes the latter as the integral standard of truth without recognizing any contribution that can be made by other religions.

(c) In other fields governments and peoples have been at work developing rules which can render more peaceable and fruitful the interaction of peoples in the global age, e.g., the IMF, WTO, etc. It would be helpful to work out publicly a set of generally accepted norms for religious interaction which could give greater assurance to all of mutual respect and cooperation. This might begin with agreement on the language to be used, or especially to be avoided.

(d) It is a hermeneutic principle that no one comes to a conversation in a completely nuetral state, despite the efforts of Locke and others of his time to imagine the mind as a blank tablet. Rather we approach all dialogue through a language, symbol system and heritage replete with the lived experiences and choices of our forebears. In order for this not to be a limitation and bias that generates bigotry we need to recognize it and make it work for us as a principle of insight that provides leverage for yet further insight.

(e) The openness and depth of dialogue regarding how close or distant the various religious traditions might be depends notably on the sense one has of the human person. As we move ahead into more global times with its requirements for interchange of persons and peoples it can be expected that this sense of the human person must advance. Hence the development of dialogue is a matter of leadership not only in building structures of intercommunication, but in enriching the recognition of the perfection of the person in practice as well as in principle.

(f) This will mean being ready to live with real difference rooted in the reality of human freedom and creativity, for we are not automatically transferred by God to a better state, but are called to work out our salvation. Thus intransigence can be built on their recognition of the personal character of one's own religious insights and obligations. One who would enter into dialogue with others must have not only this deep respect for the human person in general, but a readiness to respect and promote the uniqueness and freedom this entails on the part of each person.

(g) This recognition of plurality entails in turn that one (religion) cannot be the other and therefore that what one says cannot be the same as what is said by the other. This limitation is not placed upon the infinity of the divine which is proclaimed in common but upon the proclamations themselves which, while true, are never exhaustive. This is recognized *ad intra* by the very existence of the history of dogma; it needs to be recognized as well *ad extra* with regard to other religions.

The Ritual Hindu Way to God as a Proto-Metaphysics

George F. Mclean

Rg Veda X, 129: Nusadiya Sâkta (*Hymn of Creation*)

The analysis in Chapter II of totemism as a proto religious phenomenon showed it to be as a way to God, not an isolated experience of the solitary individual as religion has come to be thought by many in our times. Rather it was the commonly shared experience of all peoples and the first condition of human thought.

In the last chapter we looked into the transition to the mythic way to God beyond that of totemic thought. We saw the totemic understanding of the unity of reality evolve into mythic thought as a higher and later level of development. As we looked, in particular, into Greek myth as the root of Western philosophy, it would be helpful at this point to look with a similar purpose to the *Vedas,* the corresponding root of Eastern thought.

Here my words must above all be questions concerning issues for scholars within the Eastern tradition, but both Socrates and Zen have shown questions to be at the heart of philosophizing.

Thought and Action as Ways to God

Followed Piaget's and Kohlberg's description of psychological development, there is a number of parallel tracks. The one which is generally attended to and to which Piaget himself would seem to have given priority was the cognitive: the development of improved capabilities of knowledge was seen as the basis for greater sophistication in the affective and kinetic orders. While true, that is but part of the story, for the general theory of development works on the basis of equilibrium, how it is lost creating a need, and how at times it can be regained only by developing a higher cognitive capability such as a capacity for abstract reasoning. From this point of view the higher cognitive capability becomes the effect rather than the cause in the process of development. This centers on affectivity understood as the tendency toward a good (the equilibrium in general and specific objects in particular) or toward a goal that is absent. Affectivity, in turn, is set within the pattern of existential life activities in which we are engaged. Thus the pattern of development can be traced, and perhaps more effectively, through affective concerns than though cognitive capabilities. But affectivity directs attention further to types of action that are not merely of mind or will, but of the full human person, mind and body. Such integrally human actions are the root of the more partial mental processes.

Here, one touches upon the long dialectic in the Hindu tradition between thought and action. This concerns not the commonplace that must be taught to every child, namely, to think before one acts, but rather the higher reaches of the spiritual life. It is here that the real dilemma of the human condition emerges, namely, how can the self-aware human being live his or her destiny. As a participant in God, one is less than God in one's being and hence in one's capabilities. Yet inasmuch as one is both from God and directed towards God, one can live truly and fully only by relating to that which transcends one, and which does so infinitely.

As the human person is both body and spirit two ways or paths can be taken in response. One is that of the body and rituals, the other is that of the spirit through mind and heart. Fortunately, these ways need not be mutually exclusive if the person is truly one in nature and being. Indeed,

given the limitations of the human person each way can have only partial success and will need to be complemented by the other.

In the Hindu tradition this has entailed, on the one hand, a florid set of rituals and signs all expressing the divine. These employ to the full the capabilities of the human imagination, which we saw as basic to the mythic way discussed in Chapter III. However, as one attempts to enumerate the rituals — someone has counted over forty in the morning bath — it begins to be evident that Hindu culture envisages not a secular life which is made sacred by a number of particular rituals, but that all of life is not only sacralized, but sacred. Yet as human life is essentially relative and not absolute, some argue that it is essential for the mind to enter in order to point beyond actions, even the sacred ritual actions of our life. Beyond the actions of the body, it is up to the human spirit — not merely as marked by the picturing capabilities of the imagination, but as fully spiritual and open to being — to continue on towards God, and so it must.

Nevertheless, the dialectic continues, for the spirit too is finite or limited in power; not only its concepts, but all its acts are limited. In the subsequent chapters we shall see philosophy attempting to come to terms with this in the form of negative intellectual judgements and the work of the heart rushing along mystic pathways. But one side of the Hindu experience argues inexorably that the human mind must always lag behind on any way to God and therefore that two strategies are essential. The first is to shorten, indeed eliminate, the distance by turning from transcendence, according to which God is infinitely distant, to immanence, in terms of which God is infinitely present. The second is to proceed not by mind in which we define and hence delimit the content of our thoughts, but by actions which point but do not define. Though I can point to a person, I cannot and must not attempt to define or delimit that person by my concepts. By actions we are ushered into the realm of sacred ritual, which must always be added over and above whatever can be achieved by human consciousness.

Further, among the numberless signs and rituals, sacrifices have special importance because they proceed not positively, but negatively. We can never be adequate in our attempts positively to affirm the full reality of God. But most philosophers agree that a negative statement can be more true, because less ambiguous than positive ones. In ritual the negative act by which the object of sacrifice is destroyed is decisive and definitive. It does not linger on to define and delimit that in favor of which it is made; in that sense it leaves open if more indeterminate the positive reality to which it points.

Of course, this may not be the end of the dialectic, for the meaning of the sacrifice can always be misinterpreted and this, in turn, will require prayerful reflection in order to achieve a more correct understanding of the actions and their significance. Thus, the two sides of the Hindu debate between mind and action, reflection and ritual, concept and sacrifice, or more deeply, the two ways to God go on, each needing the other.

Here we shall follow the path of sacrifice in terms not of the physical action itself, but of its significance. For this we shall look to the hymns which accompanied the acts of sacrifice and express their significance. Hence, the perspective will not be that of *a posteriori* reasoning to God as in some of the succeeding chapters, where the outlook is that of the creature looking for its self-sufficient cause. Here, by virtue of the act of sacrifice the bond of physical reality is broken and one reenters the universe, as it were, from the horizon of its source and beginnings. Such is the creation hymn, *Rg Veda* X, 129.

The *Vedas* were poetry with a purpose. They sought not to entertain, or even to guide after the manner of an ethics. Rather, pertaining to sacrificial rituals, their intent was to express in words meaning and reality as radical as that expressed symbolically in the sacrificial act itself. There, as

in a negative theology, phenomenal existences were destroyed in order to make manifest the absolute reality. The purpose of sacrifice was to transcend the realm of ordinary meaning, which in comparison is an ignorance, and to proclaim the deep origin, order and sense of this life.

Unripe in mind, in spirit undiscerning, I ask of these the Gods' established places. . . . I ask, unknowing, those who know, the sages, as one all ignorant for the sake of knowledge, what was that One who in the unborn's image hath stablished and fixed firm these worlds' six regions.1

Further, there would appear to be here a potentially significant contrast to the Greek mind. While using the language of myth and expressing realities in the personal terms of the gods, the *Vedas* also employed concrete and proper terms, e.g., for the parts of the universe; indeed, the whole of *Rg Veda X, 129*, is written in non-mythic terms. This enabled the Rishis to state content which nowhere appears in the records we possess of the early Greek mind, characterized totally by the mythic and symbolic modes of thought.

In view of what has been said in the previous chapter concerning the importance of retrieving the content of earlier thought, attention to the *Vedas* can be of special importance for a further reason. Probably they go back as oral transmissions,2 to the thirteenth century B.C. and the immigration of the Aryans from Persia during the following few centuries. Yet Keith claims that no significant progress was made during the subsequent period of the *Brahmanas* which closed about 500 B.C. Thus, "the *Rg Veda* carries us nearly as far as anything excogitated in this period"3 prior to the *Upanishads* with which philosophy proper is generally thought to have begun.

For this reason we shall now turn to the *Vedas* and in particular to the *"N~sadiya Sãkta"* or "Creation Hymn," *Rg Veda* X, I29. This hymn has been considered to be "by far the most important composition in this class in the whole *Veda*"4 — "the finest effort of the imagination of the Vedic poet, and nothing else equals it."5

Method

Here we shall look for the hymn's understanding of:

(a) that from which all derive,
(b) the origination of the universe,
(c) the resultant relation between things, and
(d) the nature of reality itself.

We shall be interested in seeing what light might be shed on this by taking into account also the earlier context of primitive thought and, comparatively, what relation there might be to the mythic process from unity to diversity developed in the alternate Greek branch of the Aryan family and reflected by Hesiod's *Theogony*.

Our project is not a simple one from first to last, and some specific hermeneutic considerations should be noted. The problems begin with the establishment of the text itself. One *mantra* may have been lost6 and the commonly used text has been accused of depending excessively upon the quantity of syllables in each verse. By failing to take account of the quality of the syllables — especially those that were accented, e.g., a short syllable or vowel which at that time was still reflected in the pronunciation — Esteller claims that unwarranted changes were made in the Sanskrit text when it was finally fixed by Panini in ancient times.7 This question must be left to

Sanskrit scholars for further study, but Esteller has published a reconstructed text taking this into account.

In reading the text a sensitivity to metaphysical issues will be indispensable. A. K. Coomaraswamy remarks:

For an understanding of the *Vedas* a knowledge of Sanskrit, however profound, is insufficient. . . . Europe also possesses a tradition founded in first principles. That mentality which in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (AD) brought into being an intellectual Christianity, would not have found the *Vedas* difficult.8

In keeping with the developmental model elaborated in the first chapter above, we shall be interested in determining the distinctive manner in which the mode of thinking in this hymn surpasses that of the primitive or totemic mind, and differs from subsequent developments.

This, of course, does not discount the value of later systematic commentaries. They drew upon the full strength of the resources available to them in order to elucidate, in a manner consistent with their own doctrines, both the issue being treated in the text and related new problems which had arisen. It is precisely in these successive commentaries that Indian philosophy has progressed through the ages. They are our richest and clearest statements of the cumulative wisdom available on the issues treated in the text. This applies to the exegesis of our text in the *Śatapatha Brāhmana*, and even more to Sāyana's commentaries on this text and in the *Taittiriya Brāhmana*.9

Nevertheless, here we are engaged in the somewhat different task, described in the second chapter, of stepping back to the content of human thought which preceded the development of philosophic systems. It is crucial that this be done in terms of the early texts themselves, both in order that they might, without circularity, provide a basis for the subsequent systems and in order to retrieve as a basis for really new progress what the philosophic systems themselves did not undertake to articulate and develop.

Another important approach, suggested by V. Agrawala draws upon M. Ojha's *Daśavāda-Rahasya*. He identifies ten "doctrines which served as nuclei for the thoughts of the Rishis when poetic statements of *Srshti-Vidyā* were being attempted in a rich variety of bold linguistic forms." They constitute ten "language games" — to use more recent terminology — which were employed in the *Sāmhitās* and *Brāhmanas*, and referred to in the first two *mantras* of the "Nasadiya Sūkta." These are: *Sdasad-Vāda*: speech in terms of existence and non-existence; *Rajo-Vāda*: the primeval material cause; *Yyoma-Vāda*: space as the ultimate substratum; *Parāpara-Vāda*: such pairs as absolute-relative, transcendent-immanent, or higher-lower; *Āvarana-Vāda*: measure or container; *Ambho-Vāda*: water; *Amrita-Mrityu-Vāda*: death and immortality, matter and energy;*Ahorāta-Vāda*: time; *Deva-Vāda*: the gods; and *Brahma-Vāda*: the transcendent reality.10

These ten nuclei provide notably more proximate contexts for interpreting the text of *Rg Veda X*, 129 than do the much later six orthodox and three heterodox systems. They can be especially useful in identifying both the implicit content of the terms and their allusions. In particular, they were the tools with which that mentality carried out its reflection upon the issues of unity and of participation contained therein. Hence, they will be particularly central to our project of determining the metaphysical content of the vision in its own terms, though from our later and hence more self-conscious standpoint.

Text of the *Hymn of Creation (Rg Veda, X, 129)*11

1. There was not the non-existent nor the existent then; there was not the air nor the heaven which is beyond. What did it contain? Where? In whose protection? Was there water, unfathomable, profound?

2. There was not death nor immortality then. There was not the beacon of night, nor of day. That one breathed, windless, by its own power. Other than that there was not anything beyond.

3. Darkness was in the beginning hidden by darkness; indistinguishable, this all was water. That which, coming into being, was covered with the void, that One arose through the power of heat.

4. Desire in the beginning came upon that, (desire) that was the first seed of mind. Sages seeking in their hearts with wisdom found out the bond of the existent in the non-existent.

5. Their cord was extended across: was there below or was there above? There were impregnators, there were powers; there was energy below, there was impulse above.

6. Who knows truly? Who shall here declare, whence it has been produced, whence is this creation? By the creation of this (universe) the gods (come) afterwards: who then knows whence it has arisen?

7. Where this creation has arisen; whether he founded it or did not: he who in the highest heaven is its surveyor, he only knows, or also he knows not.

Content Analysis

The hymn would appear to be constructed of three parts. The first (*mantras* 1-3, verse 2) treats the state prior to creation; the second (*mantra* 3, verse 3 — *mantra* 5) describes the creative process; the third (*mantras* 6-7) constitutes an epistemic reflection.

Part I: Prior to Creation. A number of things are to be noted here. First, reality in this state prior to creation repeatedly is affirmed to be undifferentiated. This is proclaimed by negating successively all that is related as contrary to anything else: there was neither air nor heaven beyond, neither death nor immortality, neither night nor day. There was no place. Some see this undifferentiated character as being stated more directly by rejecting even the principle for such distinctions: there was no beacon of night or day. Esteller would read this as stating directly that there is "no distinguishing sign of the night nor of the day"; Sāyana would say only: "There was no consciousness of night and day." Finally, that its nature is undistinguishable *(apraketam)* is pictured by stating that it was darkness hidden in darkness and that it was water: "Indistinguishable, this all was water." By pointing out that water is the stage of creation prior to earth, Sāyana substantiates that this reference to water implies undifferentiation. Together this use of proper terminology constitutes a real advance in stating the unity over the improper and symbolic language used in the totemic and mythic visions analyzed above.

There are even certain more positive indications of the nature of the undifferentiated. First, it is termed "that one" *(tad ekam).* This should be taken as a positive affirmation of being, for the text adds that "other than that there was not anything beyond" *(Mantra 2).* Secondly, it is also referred to as being of the nature of life by the statement, "that one breathed."

Thirdly and of special importance, it indicates the self-sufficiency of "that one" which "breathed by its own power" *(Mantra 2).* Radhakrishnan accepts the description "windless," and understands it as bespeaking Aristotle’s unmoved mover — a point which A. Keith rejects as anachronistic.12 Esteller reads this as "unconquerable by his inborn power." Sāyana may arrive at a similar point by holding that "breathless" implies the negation of all limiting factors, that is, all

except the self; it is that which exists depending on, or supported by, its own being. This is important lest the originating experience of the *Rg Veda* be erroneously interpreted as being no more than a proto-materialism of the Sāmkhya type — as is often said — and the Absolute merely a later superimposition for selfish purposes.

Finally, it might be asked whether in the first *mantra* the expression of undifferentiation by the words "there was not the air nor the heaven which is beyond" is not of further significance. In a threefold division of earth, air and heaven13 it is by means of the introduction of the notion of air or space *(rajo)* that heaven is differentiated from earth. If this be the case, then, as with the notion of the beacon of day and night in the second *mantra,* the statement "there was no air" negates the principle of division and differentiation of heaven from earth, and hence a differentiated condition for heaven and earth.

If there be substance to this suggestion it would have two implications. First and most important, it should mean the philosophically important introduction from the very beginning of this hymn of the principle, not only of the unity, but of the differentiation of being. This would indicate that the two were not seen to be incompatible one with the other. Secondly, it could imply some correspondence to the above-mentioned, and not unrelated, notion of chaos as space *(gap)* found in this role in Hesiod's *Theogony*.14 If this is found in widely diverse parts of the Indo-European diaspora it would be proportionately ancient and foundational for human thought.

Part II: The Creative Process (mantra 3, verse 3 - mantra 5). This is concerned with "the origin of the evolved world from the unevolved" and introduces two issues: first, in what does this origination consist; second, how is it realized?

The first issue is answered in terms of the differentiation of that which repeatedly had been described in the first part of the hymn as undifferentiated. In *mantra* 4 this is spoken of as the bond of the existent with what previously had been called non-existent. *Mantra* 5 describes the differentiations of above and below, of impregnators *(redodhà)* and powers *(mahimaná),* of energy *(svadha)* and impulse *(práyatih).* Sayana is keenly sensitive to the value implications of this differentiation; others would see these pairs as also being contrasted as male and female cosmogonic principles.15 In that case the text would not merely state an initial differentiation of what previously had been undifferentiated. In the *Theogony* heaven and earth were related as male and female and from them all else is generated. Similarly, the original pair in the *Rg Veda X,*129, if related in principle as male and female, would imply that all further plurality and differentiation can be understood fruitfully on the basis of a genetic unity. Only the main lines are traced, however, and that only in *Rg Veda X, 72.*

As with the *Theogony,* the nature of the unity which the male and female cosmogonic principles imply depends upon the degree of the unity of this original pair. Here it is most significant that the image conveyed by the hymn from beginning to end is not that these two principles are simply different and then brought together. On the contrary, what precedes or that from which their differentiation arises is a state of undifferentiation. Most fundamentally they are one rather than many. Continuity with the totemic vision and the experience it embodied could provide a basis for this vision.

On the second issue, namely, how this initial division was realized, the text is not silent, though it speaks after the manner of poetry, rather than of technical scientific prose.

First, in '*tuchyēnābhu*' the word '*tuchya*' introduces the notion of "void", or that which is not. To this is added the instrumental suffix "by it," to state "by means of the void." Finally there is the

verb '*bhů*' or "become, arise," that is, what comes into being everywhere. A. Coomaraswamy would interpret the following words, "All that existed covered *(apihitam yadāsīt)*" as veil or *āvarivah* in *mantra 1*, namely, the world as that which covers the ultimate reality. Does this mean that the void plays a role in the transition — which is creation — from the differentiated to the differentiated state? If so, it would correspond well to *mantra* 5 regarding the division of the above and the below as cosmogonic principles.

This raises the further question of whether the notion of the void here is related in any way to the notion of chaos as 'gap' or 'open space' found in the *Theogony*'s description of the origin of the universe, especially as that notion reflected a very ancient, and hence common foundational element in Aryan thought. Here in *mantra* 3 it is not merely an open space as in *mantra* 1, but the more philosophically suggestive notion of void. This suggests the notion of non-being which later will be of great systematic philosophic importance regarding these very issues. Sāyana interprets it as *Maya* which will play the major systematic role in these issues a millenium later in Shankara's *Advaita*. Here, however, it remains a poetic and imaginative statement.

Second, whatever be said of verse 3, verse 4 of *mantra* 3 and all of *mantra* 4 may contain more substantive indications of the manner of differentiation of the universe through the notions of will and mind. Heat is often used as the simile for that ardor of will with which one grasps (*kāmās*), holds to, or is attached to existence. When the reality is present this attachment is enjoyment, that is, it is one and holds itself in bliss. Verse 1 of *mantra* 4 proceeds to state that the origin was not deficient but *sam*, which Sāyana understands as meaning complete or having fullness. Further, *avartatãdhi* should be understood, not as coming upon a reality from without, but as arising from within. This would mean that from the point of view of its origin creation is seen in this hymn as taking place, not out of need, but out of the plenitude of perfection, which would imply that it is pure gift as discussed in Chapter VIII below.

But what does *Kāmas* indicate regarding the nature of reality itself and hence of created reality? It should be noted that, when the object of the ardor of the will is absent or not yet possessed, grasping or attachment has the nature of desire. We have seen that the void has a separative role in the origination of differentiation, and that the original state is one of undifferentiation in contrast to the present differentiated state. In continuity with the totemic unity, then, the differentiated parts remain most fundamentally attracted one to another. In this case the text would be suggesting that it pertains to the internal nature of reality itself to be unitive and for the differentiated realities to be positively related or attracted to one another. This is what the Greeks expressed in a relatively external manner in their mythic notion of the god, Eros. It would also be the metaphysical basis for the social life of the family or village.

Further, verse 2 proceeds to say that desire is the first seed of mind. As regards the nature of reality itself does this imply that bliss *(ānanda)* as enjoyment of being in some sense follows upon or expresses consciousness *(cit)* of existence *(sat)?* For the originating Self this would imply that the creative causality of its active will is fully conscious. This, in turn, would provide the basis for the order and intelligibility which characterize the realm of creation.

In the order of created or differentiated beings the fact that desire is the first seed of mind integrates knowledge within the overall project of unity and orients it finally toward not analysis but synthesis, as it would appear to imply a striving of one person to know the other. This, in turn, is predicated ontologically upon the fact that the mind and its object originally were an undifferentiated unity as noted in the first part of the hymn and as was inherited from totemic thought. Thus, knowledge itself is most fundamentally the effort to grasp the other in its differentiated and hence partial expression of the original and undifferentiated unity. In this light

the desire or will of one differentiated being as regards others should be not that of self-seeking, but of aiding, of serving the other, so that it might share or participate more fully in perfection.

Finally, both mind and desire may be combined in wisdom in verses 3 and 4 of *mantra 4:* "Sages seeking in their hearts with wisdom found out the bond of the existent in the nonexistent." Does this mean only that by reflecting on the problem they found the origin of the differentiated universe? This is possible, but the explicit distinction and ordering of desire and mind would suggest more, namely, the interior road to wisdom which is so characteristic of the Indian philosophers and of great interest in the West from Saint Augustine to present day phenomenologists (see Part III below).

What was said above regarding developmental modes of thought and the dependence of the poetic imagination upon the senses suggests that the answers to further questions, such as monism or pluralisms, monotheism or henotheism, and material or efficient causality will require the development of subsequent modes of thought for work in philosophy proper. This will be the concern of the chapters to follow. The human mind, however, will never be able to supplant poetry or exhaustively to articulate its meaning in scientific terms. Thus, such poetic hymns as the *Theogony* and *Rg Veda, X, 129* will ever remain inexhaustible and essential storehouses or treasuries for philosophers and for all people in their effort to find the way in which their lives can lead to God and to one another.

Part III. Epistemological Reflection. Manras 6-7. In the end the hymn steps back from the task of establishing the literal truth of the description of myth in mantras 1-5, saying: who truly knows?

On one level as it has been concerned with creation this seems to argue that no created intellect can know what preceded it as such — no created mind can know the act of creation itself upon which it depends. A fortiori it cannot know the working of the mind and heart which generated the act of creation. Only the Creator could know such truth.

But mantra 7 goes further to open the possibility that the creator too does not know. This could be read in two senses. One is that the creator is less than knowing: some impersonal force, brute and crude. This would fit the recent evolutionary paradigm in which all is read in terms of matter from which humankind but barely emerges. The other sense is that the creator of knowledge may rather be above knowledge, not a union of subject and object but subsistent truth itself. This would correspond to the body of the *Vedas* and the basic Hindu conviction that the divine is existence, consciousness and bliss. This is the truly decisive point in the constitution of a culture for it sets the parameters in terms of meaning and value: not of darkness and conflict, but of light and love. This is the basic issue of who and what we are and of what our life is about.

Implications

From the above archeology of human thought in its totemic and mythic stages it can be concluded, with Iqbal, that it has been religious insight regarding the Absolute which has made finite thinking possible. Leaving home and going deeply into the past now brings us back home to reconstruct the deep truth of our faith regarding knowledge: not only that knowledge can be also about religion, but that in essence thought itself is the religious reconstitution of all in God: this is what knowledge most fundamentally is.

There are two implications of this archeology which I would like to cite here. The first concerns the relation of a people to the message of a prophet. As the basis of the human self-understanding of the different cultures is essentially religious, a divine revelation through a great

prophet comes not as alien and conflictual, but as a special divine help to appreciate, purify and strengthen a culture. The message of the prophet evokes the divine life which lies within; it enables each people to plunge more deeply into the infinite ground of their cultural traditions and to bring out more of its meaning for their life. Indeed, confidence (etymologically rooted in "faith") and commitment to one's tradition as grounded in the infinite means precisely expecting it to have even more to say then a people has yet articulated. In this light, the Prophet's voice is a call to delve anew into one's tradition, to bring out more of its meaning for one's times and to live this more fully. This is a voice to which one can respond fully and freely.

In this sense might I be permitted to take issue with Iqbal's seemingly overly Darwinian description of the first period of religious life as:

a form of discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of the command. This attitude may be of great consequence in the social and political history of a people, but is not of much consequence in so far as the individual's inner growth and expansion are concerned.16

The archeology of human thought suggests that the response of a people to the message of a prophet, far from being without rational understanding, is more precisely a renewal and reaffirmation of their deep self-understanding. This is truly a homecoming in whose very essence lies the deep freedom of the peace one experiences in returning home after a long and confusing day. But I suspect that Iqbal would not disagree with this for in reality it is an application of what he concluded regarding thought as being made possible by the presence therein of the total infinite.17This applies first to culture and then even to the natural order. "There is no such thing as a profane world . . . all is holy ground," wrote Iqbal, citing the Prophet: "The whole of this earth is a mosque."18

A second implication can be of special importance in these times of intensifying communication and interaction between peoples. If the future is to hold not Huntington's conflict of civilizations, but their cooperation in a shrinking world, then it is important to see how the civilizations deriving from prophets and religious traditions can relate one to another. Hermeneutics can be helpful here with its suggestion that in order to delve more deeply it is important to hear not only reformulations of what we ourselves say in our own horizon, but new formulations from other traditions regarding the basically shared truths of our divine origin and goal. As Iqbal is supported by an archeology of knowledge indicating that all knowledge is grounded in the divine, we can expect that religious texts from the traditions of other great prophets will evoke new echoes from the depths of our own tradition. In this light, interchange with other traditions comes not as a threat. Rather, cultural interchange can enable one to make one's pilgrimages more unerringly along one's own path, to the one holy mountain19 — to which Iqbal refers as the total absolute. Other forms of cooperation can, and indeed must, be built upon this.

Bhagavad Gita

The first half of this chapter, in reflecting on the creation hymn, was set in the content of the ritual action of sacrifice which the hymn accompanied and expressed. There is another, indeed the most known, text which begins from the actions of daily life, but which also leads the reader to the

divine source, and hence to its meaning of life. This is the *Bhagavad Gita*, to which we shall now look.

Anyone who has travelled in India undoubtedly has received myriad times the good advice: "Do one thing: read the *Gita*." It holds a unique place in Hindu literature. The main body of this literature emerges, as noted above, from the ritual practices, especially those of sacrifice, and thus is made up of four sections. First is the *Vedas* or Vedic hymns which were used in the sacrifices and state its basic truths: *Rg Veda* X, 129, examined above, is an example of this literature. Second are the *Brahmanas* detailing how the rituals were to be carried out. Third are the*Aranyakas* or allegorical statements of the meaning of the *Vedas*. Lastly, come the *Upanishad* which were really appendices to the *Aranyakas* and provided in a more direct, non-allegorical manner the philosophy of the *Vedas*. These four correspond as well to the four ideal stages of life: student, householder, forest ascetic, and mystic contemplation.

Beyond this are two other key text. One is the *Sutras*, or "strings", which are very short, cryptic statements of the central elements of the Vedic vision. Like the *Sententiae* of Peter the Lombard in medieval Europe they served as the basis for the systematic exposition of the philosophy.

The other is the *Bhagavad Gita*. This is part of the great epic poem the *Mahabarata*, which recounts the history of the Bharata clan. Progressively this moves ineluctably toward a great battle between the Pandavas, the aggrieved party, led by Arjuna, and the Kauravas.

In the moments just prior to the battle all pretense, self deception and minor concern must fall away. As in a great Shakespearean soliloquy it is then that the deepest truths of life are revealed. Here it is Arjuna, coming from a long preparatory forest retreat and tested to the extremes, who questions; it is the Lord Krishna himself who answers. Just as in the *Theogony* and the creation Hymn ultimate wisdom was sought of the gods, so it is here. It is the beauty and deep insight into the Truth contained in Krishna's response that alone gives this its standing as the central text of the Hindu tradition. Let us listen to the text itself.

The Dilemma

Arjuna asks the Lord Krishna to be his chariot driver and they go to survey the line of the battle. He sees not only his own family and friends, but arrayed against them a set of relatives, teachers and people he loves and admires:

I.

21Drive my chariot, Krishna immortal, and place it between the two armies.

22That I may see those warriors who stand there eager for battle, with whom I must now fight at the beginning of this war.

23That I may see those who have come here eager and ready to fight, in their desire to do the will of the evil son of Dhrita-rashtra.

24When Krishna heard the words of Arjuna he drove their glorious chariot and placed it between the two armies.

25And facing Bhishma and Drona and other royal rulers he said: 'See, Arjuna, the armies of the Kurus, gathered here on this field of battle.'.

26Then Arjuna saw in both armies fathers, grandfathers,

27sons, grandsons; fathers of wives, uncles, masters,

28brothers, companions and friends. When Arjuna thus saw his kinsmen face-to-face in both lines of battle, he was overcome by grief and despair and thus he spoke with a sinking heart.

29Life goes from my limbs and they sink, and my mouth is sear and dry; a trembling overcomes my body, and my hair shudders in horror;

30My great bow Gandiva falls from my hands, and the skin of my flesh is burning; I am no longer able to stand, because my mind is whirling and wandering.

31And I see forebodings of evil, Krishna. I cannot foresee any glory if I kill my own kinsmen in the sacrifice of battle.

32Because I have no wish for victory, Krishna, nor for a kingdom, nor for its pleasures. How can we want a kingdom, Govinda, or its pleasures or even life.

33When those for whom we want a kingdom, and its pleasures, and the joys of life, are here in this field of battle about to give up their wealth and their life?

34Facing us in the field of battle are teachers, fathers and sons; grandsons, grandfathers, wives' brothers; mothers' brothers and fathers of wives.

35These I do not wish to slay, even if I myself am slain. Not even for the kingdom of the three worlds: how much less for a kingdom of the earth!

36If we kill these evil men, evil shall fall upon us: what joy in their death could we have, O Janardana, mover of souls?

37I cannot therefore kill my own kinsmen, the sons of king Dhrita-rashtra, the brother of my own father. What happiness could we ever enjoy, if we killed our own kinsmen in battle?

38Even if they, with minds overcome by greed, see no evil in the destruction of a family, see no sin in the treachery to friends;

39Shall we not, who see the evil of destruction, shall we not refrain from this terrible deed?

40The destruction of a family destroys its rituals of righteousness, and when the righteous rituals are no more, unrighteousness overcomes the whole family.

41When unrighteous disorder prevails, the women sin and are impure; and when women are not pure, Krishna, there is disorder of castes, social confusion.

42This disorder carries down to hell the family and the destroyers of the family. The spirits of their dead suffer in pain when deprived of the ritual offerings.

43Those evil deeds of the destroyers of a family, which cause this social disorder, destroy the righteousness of birth and the ancestral rituals of righteousness.

44And have we not heard that hell is waiting for those whose familiar rituals of righteousness are no more?

45O day of darkness! What evil spirit moved our minds when for the sake of an earthly kingdom we came to this field of battle ready to kill our own people?

46Better for me indeed if the sons of Dhrita-rashtra, with arms in hand, found me unarmed, unresisting, and killed me in the struggle of war.

47Thus spoke Arjuna in the field of battle, and letting fall his bow and arrows he sank down in his chariot, his soul overcome by despair and grief.

Arjuna's ethical dilemma is grave indeed. First, he does not want to kill his kinsmen (I, verse 31). Second, he does not want to have killed those who support him in the fight and for whom he is fighting (33). Third, he does not want to kill those who attack him, even though they do evil, for then there would be no one to perform the sacrifices. Above we saw how the sacrifices express the source of meaning. Here Arjuna points out that an end to the sacrifices would eliminate the appreciation of the source of meaning and hence the personal and social dignity, meaning and worth by which we approach immortality. This, in turn, would destroy the social order, just as the loss of the totem of a tribe, leads to social disorder. (38)

Hence both personal and social life would be destroyed. Therefore he concludes that it is better not to act, to stand unarmed and to be killed, than to cause such a total destruction of his people. (46)

At this point the lord Krishna begins to speak and in the 72 verses of chapter II of the *Gita* presents, succinctly but classically, the main themes of Hinduism and hence the ritual way to God with which the chapter is concerned. The passage stands out so preeminently in Hindu literature that, through part of an immense epic, it has come to be considered part of the *Sruti* or revealed texts:

II.

1Then arose the Spirit of Krishna and spoke to Arjuna, his friend, who with eyes filled with tears, thus had sunk into despair and grief.

2Whence this lifeless dejection, Arjuna, in this hour, the hour of trial? Strong men know not despair, Arjuna, for this wins neither heaven nor earth.

Fall not into degrading weakness, for this becomes not a man who is a man. Throw off this ignoble discouragement, and arise like a fire that burns all before it.

3I owe veneration to Bhishma and Drona. Shall I kill with my arrows my grandfather's brother, great Bhishma?

4Shall my arrows in battle slay Drona, my teacher?

5Shall I kill my own masters who, though greedy of my kingdom, are yet my sacred teachers? I would rather eat in this life the food of a beggar than eat royal food tasting of their blood.

6And we know not whether their victory or ours be better for us. The sons of my uncle and king, Dhrita-rashtra, are here before us: after their death, should we wish to live?

7In the dark night of my soul I feel desolation. In my self-pity I see not the way of righteousness. I am thy disciple, come to thee in supplication: be a light unto me on the path of my duty.

8For neither the kingdom of the earth, nor the kingdom of the gods in heaven, could give me peace from the fire of sorrow which thus burns my life.

9When Arjuna the great warrior had thus unburdened his heart, 'I will not fight, Krishna,' he said, and then fell silent.Krishna then begins to respond by preparing Arjuna for deeper understanding. He does this by noting: first that Arjuna is not in an enlightened state, but is dominated by concern for his people (I 31, II 6); second, that he would drop out of action due to the problems of the moment, rather than taking a longer view of life in its totality; further, that he may be under the influence of such ignoble emotions as fear and discouragement; and finally, that he gives in to grief, desolation and even to despair (II 1, 7). The reason for this would seem to be too external a sense of meaning. Thus, for example, he is preoccupied by the need to assure the continuation of sacrifices even where this might contradict their meaning. Hence, Arjuna asks the Lord, Krishna, to shed light on the path that is his duty. Krishna proceeds to do so in what certainly is one of the greatest pieces of world literature.

The Response

The Text

II.

10Krishna smiled and spoke to Arjuna — there between the two armies the voice of God spoke these words:

11Thy tears are for those beyond tears; and are thy words of wisdom? The wise grieve not for those who live; and they grieve not for those who die — for life and death shall pass away.

12Because we all have been for all time: I, and thou, and those kings of men. And we all shall be for all time, we all for ever and ever.

13As the Spirit of our mortal body wanders on in childhood, and youth and old age, the Spirit wanders on to a new body: of this the sage has no doubts.

14From the world of the senses, Arjuna, comes heat and comes cold, and pleasure and pain. They come and they go; they are transient. Arise above them, strong soul.

15The man whom these cannot move, whose soul is one, beyond pleasure and pain, is worthy of life in Eternity.

16The unreal never is: the Real never is not. This truth indeed has been seen by those who can see the true.

17Interwoven in his creation, the Spirit is beyond destruction, No one can bring to an end the Spirit which is everlasting.

18For beyond time he dwells in these bodies, though these bodies have an end in their time; but he remains immeasurable, immortal. Therefore, great warrior, carry on thy fight.

19If any man thinks he slays, and if another thinks he is slain, neither knows the ways of truth. The Eternal in man cannot kill: the Eternal in man cannot die.

20He is never born, and he never dies. He is in Eternity: he is for evermore. Never-born and eternal, beyond times gone or to come, he does not die when the body dies.

21When a man knows him as never-born, everlasting, never-changing, beyond all destruction, how can that man kill a man, or cause another to kill?

22As a man leaves an old garment and puts on one that is new, the Spirit leaves his mortal body and wanders on to one that is new.

23Weapons cannot hurt the Spirit and fire can never burn him. Untouched is he by drenching waters, untouched is he by parching winds.

24Beyond the power of sword and fire, beyond the power of waters and winds, the Spirit is everlasting, omnipresent, never-changing, never-moving, ever One.

25Invisible is he to mortal eyes, beyond thought and beyond change. Know that he is, and cease from sorrow.

26But if he were born again and again, and again and again he were to die, even then, victorious man, cease thou from sorrow.

27For all things born in truth must die, and out of death in truth comes life. Face to face with what must be, cease thou from sorrow.

28Invisible before birth are all beings and after death invisible again. They are seen between two unseens. Why in this truth find sorrow?

29One sees him in a vision of wonder, and another gives us words of his wonder. There is one who hears of his wonder; but he hears and knows him not.

30The Spirit that is in all begins is immortal in them all: for the death of what cannot die, cease thou to sorrow.

31Think thou also of thy duty and do not waver. There is no greater good for a warrior than to fight in a righteous war.

32There is a war that opens the doors of heaven, Arjuna! Happy the warriors whose fate is to fight such war.

33But to forgo this fight for righteousness is to forgo thy duty and honor: is to fall into transgression.

34Men will tell of thy dishonor both now and in times to come. And to a man who is in honor, dishonor is more than death.

35The great warriors will say that thou hast run from the battle through fear; and those who thought great things of thee will speak of thee in scorn.

36And thine enemies will speak of thee in contemptuous words of ill-will and derision, pouring scorn upon thy courage. Can there be for a warrior a more shameful fate?

37In death they glory in heaven, in victory they glory on earth. Arise therefore, Arjuna, with thy soul ready to fight.

38Prepare for war with peace in thy soul. Be in peace in pleasure and pain, in gain and in loss, in victory or in the loss of a battle. In this peace there is no sin.

39This is the wisdom of Sankhya — the vision of the Eternal. Hear now the wisdom of Yoga, path of the Eternal and freedom from bondage.

40No step is lost on this path, and no dangers are found. And even a little progress is freedom from fear.

41The follower of this path has one thought, and this is the End of his determination. But many-branched and endless are the thoughts of the man who lacks determination.

42There are men who have no vision, and yet they speak many words. They follow the letter of the *Vedas*, and they say: "There is nothing but this."

43Their soul is warped with selfish desires, and their heaven is a selfish desire. They have prayers for pleasures and power, the reward of which is earthly rebirth.

44Those who love pleasure and power hear and follow their words; they have not the determination ever to be one with the One.

45The three *Gunas* of Nature are the world of the *Vedas*. Arise beyond the three Gunas, Arjuna! Be in Truth, eternal, beyond earthly opposites. Beyond gains and possessions, possess thine own soul.

46As is the use of a well of water where water everywhere overflows, such is the use of all the *Vedas* to the seer of the Supreme.

47Set thy heart upon thy work, but never on its reward. Work not for a reward; but never cease to do thy work.

48Do thy work in the peace of *Yoga* and, free from selfish desires, be not moved in success or in failure. *Yoga* is evenness of mind — a peace that is ever the same.

49Work done for a reward is much lower than work done in the *Yoga* of wisdom. Seek salvation in the wisdom of reason. How poor those who work for a reward!

50In this wisdom a man goes beyond what is well done and what is not well done. Go thou therefore to wisdom; *Yoga* is wisdom in work.

51Sees in union with wisdom forsake the rewards of their work and free from the bonds of birth they go to the abode of salvation.

52When thy mind leaves behind its dark forest of delusion, thou shalt go beyond the scriptures of times past and still to come.

53When thy mind, that may be wavering in the contradictions of many scriptures, shall rest unshaken in divine contemplation, then the goal of Yoga is thine.

54How is the man of tranquil wisdom, who abides in divine contemplation? What are his words? What is his silence? What is his work?

55When a man surrenders all desires that come to the heart and by the grace of God finds the joy of God, then his soul has indeed found peace.

56He whose mind is untroubled by sorrows, and for pleasures he has no longings, beyond passion, and fear and anger, he is the sage of unwavering mind.

57Who everywhere is free from all ties, who neither rejoices nor sorrows if fortune is good or is ill, his is a serene wisdom.

58When in recollection he withdraws all his senses from the attractions of the pleasures of sense, even as a tortoise withdraws all its limbs, then his is a serene wisdom.

59Pleasure of sense, but not desire, disappears from the austere soul. Even desires disappear when the soul has seen the Supreme.

60The restless violence of the senses impetuously carries away the mind of even a wise man striving towards perfection.

61Bringing them all into the harmony of recollection, let him sit in devotion and union, his soul finding rest in me. For when his senses are in harmony, then his is a serene wisdom.

62When a man dwells on the pleasures of sense, attraction for them arises in him. From attraction arises desire, the lust of possession, and this leads to passion, to anger.

63From passion comes confusion of mind, then loss of remembrance, the forgetting of duty. From this loss comes the ruin of reason, and the ruin of reason leads man to destruction.

64But the soul that moves in the world of the senses and yet keeps the senses in harmony, free from attraction and aversion, finds rest in quietness.

65In this quietness falls down the burden of all her sorrows, for when the heart has found quietness, wisdom has also found peace.

66There is no wisdom for a man without harmony, and without harmony there is no contemplation. Without contemplation there cannot be peace, and without peace can there be joy?

67For when the mind becomes bound to a passion of the wandering senses, this passion carries away man's wisdom, even as the wind drives a vessel on the waves.

68The man who therefore in recollection withdraws his senses from the pleasures of sense, his is a serene wisdom.

69In the dark night of all beings awakes to Light the tranquil man. But what is day to other beings is night for the sage who sees.

70Even as all waters flow into the ocean, but the ocean never overflows, even so the sage feels desires, but he is ever one in his infinite peace.

71For the man who forsakes all desires and abandons all pride of possession and of self reaches the goal of peace supreme.

72This is the Eternal in man, O Arjuna. Reaching him all delusion is gone. Even in the last hour of his life upon earth, man can reach the Nirvana of Brahman — man can find peace in the peace of his God.

Content Analysis

The Wisdom of Sankhya — the Vision of the Eternal

The direct response of Krishna to Arjuna in his dilemma is the message of *Karma Yoga*. *Yoga* means Yoke or placing under control; *Karma* means action in the broad sense of deeds, sacrifices, duties and prayer. The nature of *Karma Yoga* is to act or to carry out one's duties without looking for the fruit of one's action, either immediately here in this life or even afterwards

in a higher life with God (II 47). To focus upon the results of one's action is to be subject to self-interest, to things or to results that we can accomplish. If instead one can proceed to doing one's duty then one can act with complete equanimity, equilibrium or balance of mind. This is a path between, on the one hand, activitism in this life or even in making sacrifices to obtain goods in the next world and, on the other hand, non-action, passivism or even rejecting all life activities in favor of contemplation. Hence, Krishna advises not renunciation of action, but renunciation in action.

But on what basis should one follow this path (II 1-38)? This must be not merely the way I feel, or the way I look upon things, but the way things really are. This is the path of the eternal, on which is based the path of wisdom, the vision of the eternal and freedom from bondage.

Its method is to move from my multiple states of experience and feeling (hot and cold, pleasure and pain) which are transient (II 1) to my self as that which continues through all these states and is their basis, to move from the many subjective states to the one self who experiences them (14-15). But then Krishna directs Arjuna to go higher still, to rise to the absolute Self (16-18) above even one's own self, which he relativises as a seen between the two unseens (28) which precede and follow after this life. Like Descartes, this is the search for what really is. The absolute or Brahman is described as *sat* or existence that is one, *cit* or consciousness, and *ananda* or bliss. This is the character of the absolute, of divine life; hence it is also the essence of our true life as deriving therefrom and directed thereto.

Existence (*sat*) is stated in terms of predurance and unity. It continues the first step noted above as being from the transient to the permanent; it identifies as goal that which is not of limited duration. Where the individual self was a limited "seen between two unseens", (28) this is definitive in existence. The real never is not; it is immortal and eternal beyond time and destruction. As with Xenophanese the one is never changing or moving, but is ever one (16-19, 24, 30).

Consciousness (*cit*) is seen as the one source of all meaning. The whole process has been one of consciousness, from feeling the varied states of hot and cold, pleasure and pain, to the self. This appears here especially as justice or the ability to make the right judgement in terms of one's duty or of doing what is right (31). It is honor as greater than death (33-26). Such right judgement is based on wisdom (39) which is the vision of the eternal. Ultimately it is founded in the all knowing Spirit or Self — like Xenophanese' God who knows all and moves all by His mind.

Bliss (*ananda*) is the ultimate Source and Goal of all. All comes from God who shows joy in sharing, indeed whose essence, as in Greek myth, is to share rather than to hide or inhibit. The ultimate aim of all then is joy in God or divine life (55); a good life gives peace on earth and glory in heaven (37).

In this broad light the particulars of life are ignored only if taken all by themselves and made into absolutes. This is particularly true of the ego or self, if taken as opposed to all others. This would be to make the ego an end in itself and reduce life to simply a matter of achieving particular pleasures. When, however, particular actions and persons are seen in and through the One then they take on great importance as manifestations of the Brahman, i.e., of existence, consciousness and bliss. Only in these terms are they truly real, just and good. Hence, the point is not to achieve some goal, but to exist or live in a way that is true and just; only this is really meaningful. Only acting in a way that is good, i.e. as a dynamic expression of joy, is really to exist: the rest is illusion.

What then of action which, concretely for Arjuna, is to enterinto battle. The response is direct, do your duty (31-33), that is, do what is true, just and righteous. Not to do so is dishonor; and seen in terms of God and eternal life dishonor is worse than death (33-36). In sum, when to battle is one's duty, then that is what one must do. It is the moral quality of the action that is important, not its outcome, for victory is glory on earth, in death is glory in heaven (37-38).

The metaphysics presented thus far has great ethical implications. The first half of this second chapter of the *Gita* distinguishes three levels of life: first, that of the various sensations such as hot and cold, pleasure and pain; second that of the individual human self; and third that of the absolute Self or Brahma.

Considering things on the first level there is only an interplay of physiological states, of the senses and of behavior. There is no question of honor: indeed, honor is pretense when taken in terms of Creon in the *Antigone*. But this is to isolate these realities from their real foundations.

On the second level, that of the individual self or *atman,* people are seen only in terms of time and place and hence as egos opposed one to the other. To be united they must be seen in terms of reality which transcends this level.

This third level is what was spoken of in the totem and myth; here it is Brahman or the absolute at the third level of reality and of awareness. This is existence; it is consciousness, truth and justice; and it is bliss or joy and love as dynamic gift. The first two levels must be seen to originate from this third, which they express; only in as much as they do so do they really exist and be matters of truth and goodness.

Evil in contrast, as was seen in the Greek myths, is suppression of this emergence from the real, from truth and goodness and hence a negation of justice and goodness. It is dishonor on earth and hell thereafter (34).

After a life lived in truth, however, death is simply the termination of the time sequence. It is negation not of reality, but only of the unreal, that is, of the self as opposed to others. Death then is affirmation of reality (37).

On this basis the text proceeds in its second part to provide particular ethical directions on how to live *karma yoga* (39-72):

- avoid thinking only of this life or state (II 42-44); these are delusions in comparison to the eternal or if thought of without the eternal (52);
- what is important is to achieve wisdom, i.e., to see all according to the eternal, which entails bringing all things together into an unity or harmony (61-66);
- this is done by ‘re-collection’, that is, by recalling the senses from the particulars (59-61); and hence
- they are truly one who practice *karma yoga* (47-49).

This is the eternal in man, O Arguna. Reaching him all delusion is gone. Even in the last hour of this life upon earth, man can reach the Nirvana of Brahman — man can find peace in the peace of his God (72).

Notes

1. C. Kunhan Raja, *Asya Vamasya Hymn* (*The Riddle of the Universe*), *Rgveda* I-164 (Madras: Ganesh, 1956), pp. 5-6; see also G. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation*; *The Unity of Man and God* (Madras: University of Madras, 1978), pp. 34-38.

2. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), I, 10.

3. Arthur B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads* (Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. XXXII; Cambridge: Harvard University, Press, 1925), II, 442.

4. Kaegi, p. 89.

5. Keith, p, 437.

6. Griffith, II, 576, n. 5.

7. A. Esteller, "The Text-critical Reconstruction of the *Rgveda*," *Indica*, XIV (1977), 1-12. See also the Bandorkar Institute of Oriental Studies Jubilee Volume, 1978.

8. *A New Approach to the Vedas: An Essay in Translation and Exegesis* (London: Luzac, 1933), p. vii.

9. Vasudeva S. Agrawala, *Hymn of Creation* (*Nāsadīya Sūkta, Rigveda X, 129*) (Varanasi: P. Prakashan, 1963), pp. 40-57. This remains true even while recognizing the value of observations by Roth and Müller: see Griffith, Vol. I, pp. x-xi. I am particularly indebted to Dr. R. Balasubramanian of the University of Madras for his extremely generous and detailed exposition of Sāyana's commentary on *Rig Veda* X, 129.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-18. Other more detailed analyses of *Rig Veda* X, 129 are found in Sampurnand, *Cosmogony in Indian Thought* (Kashi Vidyapith), pp. 61-80; C. Kunhan Raja, *Poet Philosophers*, pp. 221-31; and Coomaraswamy, pp. 52-59.

11. A.A. MacDonell, *A Vedic Reader* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1917), pp. 207-211.

12. Rhadakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1977), I, 101; Keith, p. 436 and n. 3.

13. Kaegi, p. 34.

14. See Chapter III above. Note the etymological similarity of the Sanskrit root of Brahman, 'brah', to the Old Norse, 'brag' and the close parallels between German spells and those of the *Artha Veda*.

15. MacDonell, pp. 209-210.

16. Iqbal, p. 180.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

19. *Isaias*: 27, 13.

Traditional Culture and Modernization

R. Balasubramanian

Background

This paper focuses upon three issues. First, I want to show that the perennial elements in traditional cultures like those of India and China are relevant even today as they play an important role in the achievement, on the one hand, of harmony between the individual and society at the social level, and, on the other hand, of harmony of spirit, mind, and body at the individual level. Second, we should not lose sight of the distinction between knowledge and information, between wisdom and knowledge, and more importantly between life and living. The perennial elements in the traditional culture have helped us to care for life, knowledge, and wisdom, which are essential for spiritual development. Third, modernization as interpreted by the West has a narrow connotation and is, therefore, a distorted concept. Through science, it brings in the colonial attitude, the imperialism of the West. It is possible for one to be modern without accepting all that is implied by modernization.

Culture, which comprises philosophy and religion, art and literature, science and technology, social organization and political administration, is the mirror of the theory and practice of a people. It is originated, developed and sustained by the people over a period of time. In turn, the perennial elements which constitute its core inspire and sustain the posterity to whom it is transmitted from time to time. Traditional cultures like those of China and India are undoubtedly ancient, but not antiquated; their ideals and practices, which are relevant in any situation, help the people to meet the new challenges which surface from time to time. As a result they not only survive, but are admired, adored, and accepted by the people. There cannot be a better explanation of the way a culture is able to hold the people and sustain them than the one given by Sri Aurobindo:

The culture of a people may be roughly described as the expression of a consciousness of life which formulates itself in three aspects. There is a side of thought, of ideal, of upward will and the soul's aspiration; there is a side of creative self-expression and appreciative aesthesis, intelligence, and imagination; and there is a side of practical and outward formulation. A people's philosophy and higher thinking give us its mind's purest, largest, and most general formulation of its consciousness of life and its dynamic view of existence. Its religion formulates the most intense form of its upward will and the soul's aspirations towards the fulfillment of its highest ideal and impulse. Its art, poetry, literature provide for us the creative expression and impression of its intuition, imagination, vital turn and creative intelligence. Its society and politics provide in their forms an outward frame in which the more external life works out what it can of its inspiring ideal and of its special character and nature under the difficulties of the environment. We can see how much it has taken of the crude material of living, what it has done with it, how it has shaped as much of it as possible into some reflection of its guarding consciousness and deeper spirit. None of them express the whole spirit behind, but they derive from it their main ideas and their cultural character. Together they make up its soul, mind, and body.1

Of the various components of culture the role of philosophy and religion is significant. Philosophy and religion can never be separated though they can be distinguished. It may be that in

a particular culture, philosophy is in the forefront and religion in the background. It can also be the other way with religion at the surface and philosophy in the background. The point to be noted here is that philosophy and religion interact with, and influence each other. Philosophy is made dynamic by religion, and religion is enlightened by philosophy. If it is admitted that there is the need for a unity of theory and practice, philosophy cannot remain merely as a view of life; it must also be a way of life. In other words, philosophy has to become religious if it is to mold, organize and regulate life. Religion is not an untouchable; its need for life can neither be ignored nor underestimated. It will be helpful to contrast the pursuit of philosophy in Europe with that in India and China. Unlike the Europe of the Enlightenment where philosophy did not touch life at all, there was a tremendous impact of philosophy on life both in India and China. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

Philosophy has been pursued in Europe with great and noble intellectual results by the highest minds, but very much as a pursuit apart from life, a thing high and splendid, but ineffective. It is remarkable that, while in India and China philosophy has seized hold on life, has had an enormous practical effect on the civilization and got into the very bones of current thought and action, it has never at all succeeded in achieving this importance in Europe. In the days of the Stoics and Epicureans it got a grip, but only among the highly cultured; at the present day, too, we have some renewed tendency of the kind. Nietzsche has had his influence, certain French thinkers also in France, the philosophies of James and Bergson have attracted some amount of public interest; but it is a mere nothing compared with the effective power of Asiatic philosophy.2

There is no doubt that the average European who draws his guidance not from the philosophic, but from positive and practical reason, puts "the philosophical treatises on the highest shelf in the library of civilization." The situation is entirely different in India. Sri Aurobindo says:

The Indian mind holds . . . that the *Rishi*, the thinker, the seer of spiritual truth is the best guide not only of the religious and moral, but [also of] the practical life. The seer, the *Rishi* is the natural director of society; to the *Rishis* he attributes the ideals and guiding intuitions of his civilization. Even today he is very ready to give the name to anyone who can give a spiritual truth which helps his life or a formative idea and inspiration which influences religion, ethics, society, even politics.3

The phenomenon known as modernization is a product of the one-sided pursuit of both philosophy and science — philosophy purely as an intellectual affair without any bearing on life and science as the most effective instrument for the possession of unlimited power, eliminating the sacred. I shall take up the problem of modernization later. It may be added here that what is said about the Indian mind is equally true of the Chinese mind. Confucius, Mencius, and others are the great *Rishis* of China, the seers who exhibited the most uncommon insight into men and matters, into the moral and social problems of human beings.

Drawing a distinction between two kinds of philosophers, systematic and edifying, Richard Rorty characterizes Wittgenstein as an edifying philosopher, like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and others. In a brief analysis of the spirit of Western civilization which is fully manifest in the industry, architecture, and music of our time, in its fascism and socialism, Wittgenstein openly admits that he has "no sympathy for the current of European civilization, that he does not

understand its goals, if it has any," and that "it is alien and uncongenial" to him.4 He goes on to say:

A culture is like a big organization which assigns each of its members a place where he can work in the spirit of the whole; and it is perfectly fair for his power to be measured by the contribution he succeeds in making to the whole enterprise.5

Wittgenstein's brief explanation of culture requires some elucidation. He says that culture is a whole, that every individual has a place in it, that every individual has to function as a member of the whole, and that what he does is significant socially as well as morally. The two traditional cultures, Chinese and Indian, have recognized the importance of the ideas embedded in Wittgenstein's explanation of culture. While the Indian culture appears to be predominantly spiritual and religious, the Chinese culture seems to be basically humanistic, with a clear emphasis on the moral and social dimensions of life. It must be pointed out in this connection that the difference between these two traditional cultures is only at the surface. Since the traditional culture comprehends the total life of a person, it provides a place for the different dimensions of life — spiritual, religious, moral, and social — which can be distinguished, but not separated. The spiritual and religious dimension of life presupposes the moral and social realm; and the moral and social sphere of life points to the religious and spiritual goals. That the two realms, ethico-social and religio-spiritual, are complementary, has been recognized by both these cultures, even though the Indian culture lays emphasis on the spiritual and religious side of man while the Chinese culture focusses on the ethical and social side of man. The *motif* of the two cultures is the harmony of spirit, mind, and body; and it is to achieve this harmony that they take care of both realms of life. Once again what Sri Aurobindo says in this connection is worth quoting:

A true happiness in this world is the right terrestrial aim of man, and true happiness lies in the finding and maintenance of a natural harmony of spirit, mind, and body. A culture is to be valued to the extent to which it has discovered the right key of this harmony and organized its expressive motives and movements. And a civilization must be judged by the manner in which all its principles, ideas, forms, ways of living work to bring that harmony out, manage its rhythmic play, and secure its continuance or the development of its motives.6

There is need to harmonize the eternal and the temporal, for the spirit works through mind and body, which belong to the temporal; and this is what every great culture has aimed at.

There are four components in the traditional culture associated with India and China. They are: (1) the primal Spirit which is the source and support of the universe may be viewed both as transcendent to, and as immanent in, the universe; (2) this Spirit which is immanent in all human beings can be realized by every human being; (3) it lays down a discipline which is both moral and spiritual for realizing the Spirit; and (4) it has provided an organization of the individual and collective life not only for the sake of the harmony between the individual and society, but also for the sake of the harmony of spirit, mind, and body. Each one of these components needs some explanation in the context of these two cultures.

Indian Culture

Though Indian culture as it is today is composite in character, comprising Hindu, Jaina, Buddha, Islamic, and Christian elements, it can be characterized as Vedic culture since not only Hinduism, which is predominant, but also Jainism and Buddhism, which originated in protest against Vedic ritualism, have been influenced by the *Vedas*, the basic and oldest scriptural text in the world. Islam and Christianity entered the Indian soil consequent on the invasion of India by the foreigners — by the Moghuls in the former case, and by the English, French, and Portuguese in the latter case. Though they try to retain their identity, the followers of these two religious traditions have been influenced by the Vedic culture. Kabir (1398-1518 AD), for example, who is a greatly respected personality in the religious history of India, is a product of both Hinduism and Islam. In recent times, Indian Christians talk about and practice inculturization, which is a new and growing phenomenon. The predominant Hindu culture which has a long and continuous history is the Vedic culture; and the Vedic culture, which has its beginning round about 2500 BC, may be characterized as primal culture, since it traces everything in the universe to the primal Spirit, which is variously called Brahman, *Ātman*, Being, and so on.

Spirit or Being is the primal reality. It is that from which all beings arise; being supported by it, they exist; and all of them move towards it as their destination. In the language of T.S. Eliot, the beginning is the end. The *Upanisad* says:

That, verily, from which these beings are born, that by which, when born, they live, that into which, when departing, they enter. That, seek to know. That is Brahman.7

Spirit or Brahman is primal in the sense that it is foundational. It is the sole reality; it is one and non-dual; and there is nothing else beside it. It is spoken of as the First Cause, Unmoved Mover, of the entire manifest universe. With a view to bring out the independent nature of the primal Spirit on which the manifest universe is dependent, it is referred to as the Ground. That which is independent is real; what is dependent is an appearance. The ground-grounded relation brings out the *reality* of Spirit and the *appearance* of the universe. Ordinarily we distinguish the material cause from the efficient cause; the one is different from the other. The wood from which a table is made is the material cause; and the carpenter who works on the wood and makes a table according to a certain design is the efficient cause. The carpenter is different from the wood. What makes the primal Spirit unique is that it is both the material and efficient cause of the universe, because it alone existed in the beginning and nothing else beside it.

Like wood, it is the material cause of the world; and like a carpenter, it is the efficient cause of the world. So, the Vedic culture traces all beings, living as well as non-living, to one source, viz. Spirit or Being. It may be pointed out here that in recent times quantum physics attempts to trace everything in the manifest universe to one source which is non-material or spiritual. Einstein declared:

Everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the Laws of the Universe — a Spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we, with our modest powers, must feel humble.8

That Spirit or Brahman is the source, support, and end of everything in the universe, is the major premise of the Vedic culture.

Derived from the major premise are two minor premises, one relating to living beings called *jīva* and the other, to non-living beings called *jagat*. Since Spirit or Brahman is immanent

in *jīva* and *jagat*, neither *jīva* nor *jagat* is isolated from the primal Spirit. It means that all living beings, whatever they may be — humans, animals, birds, reptiles, and so on — are spiritual or divine. Non-living beings which are material constitute the physical universe. They are the products of the five elements — ether, air, fire, water and earth — which are material. The divine principle is present not only in living beings, but also in non-living beings, and so they are also divine. Characterizing Brahman as the indwelling Spirit (*antaryāmin*), the *Brhadānrayaka Upanisad* says that Brahman is present in all beings — the sun, the moon, and the stars, the elements which constitute the physical universe, and the organs of the *jīvas*. Just as our body does not know the Spirit inside it, even so the beings, whatever they may be, do not know Brahman, the indwelling Spirit in them. The following text is relevant here:

He [Brahman or Spirit] who dwells in all beings, yet is within all beings, whom no beings know, whose body is all beings, who controls all beings from within, he is your Self, the inner controller, the immortal.9

That which dwells in material objects and controls them also dwells in all living beings and controls them. Just as all living beings are essentially divine, even so the entire physical universe is essentially divine. Whatever may be the differences among the species and within the individual members of a species, all are essentially one, because one and the same divine Spirit is present in all of them. The message conveyed by these two minor premises of the traditional culture deserves careful consideration. First of all, if the land and the water and the sky of the physical universe are divine, then we should take care of them in the same way as we take care of our body. The claim that human beings are rational, that they are superior to the physical world, and that they are, in the words of Descartes, the "masters and possessors of nature" resulted in the unscrupulous, cruel, and destructive despoliation of nature in the name of the quest for knowledge, scientific development, and technological progress. It is not nature that is red in tooth and claw, but the human being who is unabashedly selfish and blatantly aggressive and makes nature bleed and scorch. Fortunately for us, there is a global awakening to the significance of the earth and the water and the sky as sources of sustenance and nourishment. Secondly, the application of this principle of the oneness to the human realm is of great consequence. The understanding that all human beings are essentially one and that differences of color and caste, of gender and race, of sharpness and dullness of mind, and so on are due to the mind-sense-body adjunct by which the Spirit is enclosed will help us to tackle the universally rampant problem of discrimination of all kinds — social, religious, economic, and political.

Ved*ā*ntic philosophy, which is an important component of culture, tells us what a human being is, does, and should do in order to achieve the harmony of spirit, mind, and body. A human being (*jīva*) is a complex entity consisting of Spirit and matter. The term used in *Vedānta* for Spirit is the Self or *Ātman*. Matter which is totally different from the Self is referred to as not-Self, as other-than-the-Self. According to *Vedānta*, the not-Self, which is the material outfit of the human being, is made up of the mind, the senses, and the body. The Self in the human being requires a physical medium for its involvement in the day-to-day life as the subject of knowledge, the agent of action, and the enjoyer of the consequences of action. The mind and the senses are the cognitive instruments. With the help of the mind, the five senses give us knowledge of the things of the external world. The work of the mind does not stop with the cognitive support it gives to the senses. As the internal organ (*antahkaraa*), the mind generates the knowledge of the subjective states such as pleasure and pain. It also does something more, which is very important from the moral and

spiritual perspectives. It gives us knowledge of the right and the wrong, *dharma* and *adharma* as they are called. When chastened by the moral and spiritual discipline, it is the mind which helps us to realize the primal Spirit or Brahman. So the work of the mind is manifold. The mind is the most marvelous instrument that a human being possesses. The emergence of the mind has not only accelerated the evolutionary process in its upward movement, but also has given enormous powers to the human being, making him/her the crown of creation, unique among all living beings. In the course of his commentary on the scriptural account of the creation of the world, Sankara raises the question about the preeminence of the human being among all creatures and answers it by saying that the human being is preeminent because he alone is qualified for knowledge and the performance of prescribed duties (*jnāna-karma-adhikārah*).10 Why is it that he alone has this competence? Sankara justifies the supremacy of the human on three grounds. First, he has the ability for acquiring knowledge not only of the things of the world, but also of the supreme Being, the primal reality. This is because he is equipped with the mind which, being inspired by the Self or Spirit in him is capable of comprehending everything including the highest reality. Secondly, he has the distinctive quality of *desiring* certain ends as a result of discrimination, deliberation, and choice. Thirdly, when he has consciously chosen an end, he is earnest about it, finds the right means for achieving the end, and persists in it till he reaches the goal. A scriptural text which is quoted by Sankara in this connection says:

In man alone is the Self most manifest for he is the best endowed with knowledge. He speaks what he knows; he sees what he knows; he knows what will happen tomorrow; he knows the higher and the lower worlds; he aspires to achieve immortality through perishable things. He is thus endowed (with discrimination) while other beings have consciousness of hunger and thirst only.11

According to *Vedānta,* the Self in the human being is eternal, whereas his material outfit, the mind-sense-body complex, is temporal. The birth and death of a human being are connected with, and because of, the body. They are illicitly transferred to the Self with the result that we think of it as perishable and finite. The human being is caught in the cycle of birth and death because of ignorance (*avidyā*) whose beginning is not known. The empirical journey of the Self through its association with the material adjunct is due to *avidyā*. It is *avidyā* that pulls down the trans-empirical Self into the empirical realm, superimposes on it, which is non-relational, a relation with matter, and is thus responsible for the "fall" of the Self. What is above categorization is now categorized and made an object of knowledge; what transcends relation is now explained through the logic of relation; and what is beyond the scope of language is now brought within the grammar of language. Thus, just as a tree and a table are known through perception and other means of knowledge, even so Brahman or the Self, we claim, is known through the scriptural text called *Sruti*. The trans-relational reality is viewed as characterized by omniscience and other qualities and also as the cause of the world. What is trans-linguistic is now spoken of as real, knowledge, infinite, and so on. In other words, we employ the categories of substance and attribute, cause and effect, whole and parts for the purpose of understanding the highest reality. It will be of interest in this connection to refer to the views of two influential thinkers from the West — one belonging to the pre-sixth century and the other our own contemporary. Pseudo-Dionysius, who occupies an important place in the history of Western spirituality, observes:

[The supreme reality] is neither perceived nor is it perceptible. It suffers neither disorder nor disturbance and is overwhelmed by no earthly passion. . . . It endures no deprivation of light. It

passes through no change, decay, division, loss, no ebb and flow, nothing of which the senses may be aware. None of all this can either be identified with it nor attributed to it.12

Again, he says:

It falls neither within the predicate of non-being nor of being. Existing beings do not know it as it actually is and it does not know them as they are. There is no speaking of it, nor name, nor knowledge of it. Darkness and light, error and truth — it is none of these. It is beyond assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it, for it is both beyond every assertion, being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and, by virtue of its preeminently simple and absolute nature, free of every limitation, beyond every limitation; it is also beyond every denial.13

Pseudo-Dionysius conveys in the most unambiguous terms the *Vedāntic* conception of Brahman or the Self.

Instead of terms such as Brahman or the Self used by the *Vedāntin*, Wittgenstein uses terms such as the "metaphysical subject," the "I," the "philosophical 'I' " and contrasts it with the "body." The human body, he says, is a part of the world among other parts, but the Self or the philosophical "I" is not a part of the world; it is outside the space-time-cause world. In the words of Wittgenstein:

The subject does not belong to the world, but is a border of the world.14

The philosophical "I" is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the border — not a part — of the world.15

What is obvious from the foregoing account is that we have to make a distinction between two concepts, Brahman-in-itself and Brahman-in-relation-to-the-world, for the purpose of analysis. The latter concept is meaningful only on the presupposition of the fall of Brahman or the Self.

When did this fall take place? No one knows, and no one can answer. Once there is the fall, the empirical journey of the Self goes on in different forms, conditioned by the space-time-cause framework. However, the promise of *Vedānta* is that the empirical journey of the *līva* can be put an end to, that the vicious cycle of birth and death can be broken by destroying *avidyā* through knowledge of one's Self. That is why there is the scriptural instruction of "Know thy Self." Not only does scripture say that the Self should be realized or seen, but it also suggests the means for realizing it.

It will be difficult to understand the full significance of the distinction between Brahman-in-itself and Brahman-in-relation-to-the-world without a reference to the principle of standpoints which is enshrined in Indian culture. There are two sets of features, perennial and temporal, in Indian culture which contribute to its continuity as well as its change. While the basic doctrines constitute its perennial dimension, religious practices covering a wide range are temporal and transitory. Decadence sets in when the temporal and transitory features gain importance almost to the point of ignoring or sidetracking the perennial features. Historical, social, and political changes call for modification, sometimes radical, sometimes minor, in the religious practices and social norms of the people, while the basic doctrinal side remains intact. Continuity of the essentials amidst the changing flow of life helps to preserve the cultural tradition.

The essential structure which has endured through the vicissitudes of time contains the basic doctrines as stated in the major premise and the two minor premises to which reference was made earlier. The three basic doctrines are: primal Being or Spirit is the source, support, and end of

everything, sentient as well as non-sentient; all living beings are divine; also, the physical universe which has originated from the primal Spirit is spiritual.

The monistic vision, which is pervasive in the *Vedic corpus*, is a notable feature of Indian culture. The doctrine of levels or standpoints skillfully adopted by Indian culture helps to reconcile monism and polytheism as well as monism and pluralism. Though each pair contains two extremes in the religio-philosophical thinking, they have been accommodated as different standpoints at different levels. They are irreconcilable only when they are placed together at the same level. For example, one of the oft-quoted hymns of the *Rg-veda* provides a clue for reconciling the problem of one Godhead and many gods and goddesses. It says: "What is but one, wise people call by different names — as *Agni, Yama, Mātarisvan.*"16 Reference to gods, such as, Agni and Yama may be replaced by the well known gods of the Hindu pantheon such as *Siva, Visnu, Sakti*, and so on. Sankara explains the distinction between the supreme Godhead and its various forms such as *Siva, Visnu*, and so on, as the distinction between the "unconditioned" reality, what we referred to as Brahman-in-itself, and its "conditioned" forms such as *Siva* and *Visnu*, all of which can be brought under Brahman-in-relation-to-the-world. *_iva, Viu*, and other gods are conditioned beings endowed with a name and a form and other qualities, whereas the One is unconditioned, devoid of name and form, specifications and qualities and is, therefore, trans-empirical, trans-relational, and trans-linguistic.

This mode of drawing the distinction between the supreme Godhead and its many forms for the purpose of worship and other religious practices of the devotees, which is unheard of in other religious traditions of other cultures, is of great consequence in the religious practice of the people. Since it is the one reality that is worshipped in many forms such as *Agni, Siva*, and so on, one who worships *Agni* or *Siva*, should not quarrel with one who worships Yama or *Visnu*, because *Agni, Yama, Siva,* and *Visnu* are the conditioned aspects of the same reality. This significant idea of the *Rg-Vedic* hymn was accepted, fully elaborated, and further deepened by the *Upanisads*. It provides a theoretical framework for religious harmony, which is one of the characteristic features of primal culture and which has received special emphasis right from the beginning till this day.

What makes primal culture valid for all times and in all places is its *inclusiveness*. It includes everything by providing a place for it in the whole. Religious, social, economic, scientific, and political activities are necessary and meaningful; but they must be made subservient to, and must be viewed and judged in the context of the spiritual goal of life. A culture which is mainly concerned with the bare economic necessities of life, social institutions, and political organization will be neither enduring nor elevating; it may look energetic and enterprising, but it is not worth the name, if it is not geared up to the spiritual side of life. Once again, what Sri Aurobindo says is worth quoting here:

A mere intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic culture does not go back to the inmost truth of the spirit; it is still an ignorance, an incomplete, outward, and superficial knowledge. To have made the discovery of our deepest being and hidden spiritual nature is the first necessity and to have erected the living of an inmost spiritual life into the aim of existence is the characteristic sign of a spiritual culture.17

The *Vedānta* philosophy solves the problem of monism versus pluralism on the basis of the distinction between two levels or standpoints called *pāramārthika* and *vyāvahārika*, or absolute and relative respectively. The *Upanisads* make use of this distinction in the explanation of the epistemological, metaphysical, axiological, and soteriological problems. What is true at one level

may not be so at another level. A dream-lion which is accepted as real in dream experience loses its reality at the waking level. What is accepted as a value at one time may turn out to be a disvalue at another time. The pluralistic universe which is accepted as real may cease to exist in the state of liberation following the spiritual ascent. The *pāramārthika* or absolute standpoint is higher, whereas the *vyāvahārika* or the relative standpoint is lower. It must be borne in mind that the higher standpoint which transcends the lower does not invalidate it. One who has moved from the relative to the absolute standpoint knows the truth of the former; but one who is tied to the relative standpoint cannot understand the truth of the absolute standpoint. Consider the case of two persons who attempt to climb up a mountain in order to reach the highest peak. While one of them reaches the top, the other, due to some disability, is not able to proceed beyond the foothill. The person who has reached the summit knows what kind of experience is available to one at the foothill; but one who is at the foothill does not understand the kind of experience one has at the top.

We have to apply this logic to the different kinds of experience without subverting the *pāramārthika-vyāvahārika* hierarchy. The *Upanisads* describe the two levels as signifying higher wisdom and lower knowledge. Experience of plurality is quite common; it is quite natural; we have it in our daily life. No special effort or discipline is required for such an experience. But experience of oneness is uncommon. One does not get it without special effort or appropriate discipline. The transition is from the common to the uncommon. A text of the *Brhadārayaka Upanisad*describes the two levels of experience as follows:

For, where there is duality as it were, there one sees the other, one smells the other, one knows the other. . . . But, where everything has become just one's own self, by what and whom should one smell, by what and whom should one know?18

Without disregarding the pragmatic value of day-to-day empirical knowledge, primal culture emphasizes the importance of higher wisdom. It will be of interest to quote Wittgenstein in this connection. He says:

In religion every level of devoutness must have its appropriate form of expression which has no sense at a lower level. This doctrine, which means something at a higher level, is null and void for someone who is still at the lower level; he *can* only understand it *wrongly* and so these words are *not* valid for such a person.

For instance, at my level the Pauline doctrine of predestination is ugly, nonsense, irreligiousness. Hence it is not suitable for me, since the only use I could make of the picture I am offered would be a wrong one. If it is a good and godly picture, then it is so for someone at a quite different level, who must use it in his life in a way completely different from anything that would be possible for me.19

The teaching of the *Vedānta* philosophy is positive. According to it, life in this world is meaningful and purposive — meaningful for the reason that it serves as the training ground for one's spiritual uplifting through the proper use of the objects of the world by the mind-sense-body equipment of which one is in possession, and purposive as one has to achieve freedom or liberation by overcoming the existential predicament. Freedom or liberation which is projected as the goal must be understood in the spiritual sense. It is true that human life is made difficult by economic constraints, political oppression, social hierarchy, and religious discrimination; and a situation of this kind points to, and calls for, freedom of different kinds so that a person can exist and function as a moral agent enjoying economic, political, social and religious freedom. However, the goal of life remains unfulfilled in spite of these different kinds of freedom. Though they are necessary,

they are not sufficient. The highest freedom which is eternal and totally satisfying is spiritual freedom, which is called *moksa* in Indian culture. A socio-political system may ensure political freedom, social justice, economic satisfaction, and unrestricted religious practice; but still there is no guarantee of harmony of spirit, mind, and body which one can achieve only through the teaching of philosophy and religion. The socio-political machinery cannot be a substitute for religion and philosophy, though it can and should maintain a system of rights and obligations in which alone a human being can lead a moral life as formulated in religion and can pursue the goal of liberation as projected by philosophy. Sri Aurobindo says:

The whole aim of a great culture is to lift man up to something which at first he is not, to lead him to knowledge though he starts from an unfathomable ignorance, to teach him to live by reason, though actually he lives much more by his unreason, by the law of good and unity, though he is now full of evil and discord, by a law of beauty and harmony, though his actual life is a repulsive muddle of ugliness and jarring barbarisms, by some law of his spirit, though at present he is egoistic, material, unspiritual, engrossed by the needs and desires of his physical being. If a civilization has not any of these aims, it can hardly at all be said to have a culture and certainly in no sense a great and noble culture. But the last of these aims, as conceived by ancient India, is the highest of all because it includes and surpasses all the others. To have made this attempt is to have ennobled the life of the race; to have failed in it is better than if it had never at all been attempted; to have achieved even a partial success is a great contribution to the future possibilities of the human being.20

Excepting the *Cārvāka*, which advocates a thoroughgoing materialism, all other philosophical systems in India accept the ideal of *moksa*. The Indian mind, right from the beginning, has accepted a hierarchy of values, ranging from the bodily and economic values at the bottom to the spiritual values of which liberation is at the top. The human being leads his life at two levels — organic and hyper-organic. Bodily and economic values which he pursues belong to the organic level. In so far as the pursuit of the organic values is concerned — values which are necessary for life preservation — his life and activities are in no way different from those of animals; at this level, hunger and sleep, shelter and sex are common to man and animals. Endowed as he is not only with the body, but also with the mind, he also lives at another level, pursuing higher values such as truth, beauty, goodness. The life-activity of man which is fully reflective of his cognition, desire, deliberation, and choice cannot stop short of the highest value called *moksa*. It is not necessary here to discuss the broad scheme of values accepted in the Indian tradition. Suffice it to say that, though *artha* and *kāma*, which emphasize the importance of the material and hedonistic side of life, have been accommodated in the scheme of values, the moral and spiritual side of life has received special attention in Indian culture. That is why it has accepted two higher values, *dharma* and *moksa*, the former functioning as a moral guide, and also as a regulative principle of *artha* and *kāma* pursued in our secular life, for the realization of the latter. All the philosophical systems, Vedic as well as non-Vedic, hold the view that *moksa* as the highest value is both ultimate and all-satisfying — ultimate since there is nothing else to which it can be the means, and all-satisfying since it comprehends all the higher values. Sankara says that one gets the feeling of the fulfillment of all values when one attains *moksa*.21

There are three questions that we have to consider in connection with the ultimate value. The first one is whether it can be realized at all. There is the view that the ultimate value is only an ideal to inspire and regulate our conduct and that it can never be attained. We can regulate our life

so as to come nearer to it from time to time, from stage to stage; but we can never reach it. Such a view is untenable. Also, it goes against the spirit of Indian culture. Realization of one's true nature is liberation. We have already pointed out that the human being is a complex entity consisting of Spirit and matter. Spirit by its very nature is ever free and never bound. But it appears to be bound because of the material adjunct with which it is associated in the empirical life. Overwhelmed by ignorance, the human being does not realize that he is essentially Spirit and therefore free. When he attains the right knowledge and knows his real nature, he is no more under the limitation or bondage of the psycho-physical material outfit, because ignorance which conceals his real nature is removed by knowledge. It means that the ideal of *moksa* has a basis in the very constitution of the human being; also, the human being, not being satisfied with the material achievements, what the *Upanisad* calls *preyas*, longs for spiritual freedom, which is called *Sreyas*. The *Upanisad* says:

Both the good and the pleasant approach a man. The wise man, pondering over them, discriminates. The wise chooses the good in preference to the pleasant. The simple-minded, for the sake of worldly well-being, prefers the pleasant.22

One cannot have both *Sreyas* and *preyas*. The pursuit of the former requires the renunciation of the latter. Spiritual illumination follows purgation. Speaking about the importance of the ideal and its close relation to human nature, Hiriyanna observes:

Ideals are rooted in needs inherent in human nature. It is their reality that constitutes their true charm. Take this charm from them, and they reduce themselves but to pleasant fantasy. The reality of such a value may not be vouched for by common reasoning. But we should remember that neither is there any adequate proof for denying it. Not to admit the ideal would therefore be to be dogmatic in the sense that we deny it without adequate proof for the denial.23

The second question is whether the ideal of *moksa* can be realized by all. Here also the great philosophical traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, are unanimous in their affirmative answer. There is nothing in human nature which either disqualifies or incapacitates him from attaining this ideal. Whatever may be the differences among human beings at the bodily, vital, and mental levels, everyone has the right and duty to aspire for the highest value by virtue of what he/she is. As every human being is endowed with the mind, the most precious and unequalled instrument through which one can look before and after, know the things given to him, and choose from them after discrimination and deliberation, he is not in any way incapacitated from pursuing the ultimate value. Indian culture looks down on the doctrine of the chosen few. Since ignorance is the obstacle that stands in the way of realizing one's divine nature, realizing one's Spirit, which is liberation, it can be removed by knowledge which anyone can acquire through moral and spiritual discipline. The philosophy of *Vedānta*, according to which every human being is divine, is opposed to the theory of privilege — of birth, intellect, spirituality, etc. It is anti-hierarchical. In everyone there is a sleeping Buddha, a hidden Brahman, to which everyone can have access. That the doors to the spiritual realm do not remain closed to anyone is conveyed in a forthright manner by Sri Aurobindo:

A wider spiritual culture must recognize that the Spirit is not only the highest and inmost thing, but all is manifestation and creation of the Spirit. It must have a wider outlook, a more embracing range of applicability and, even, a more aspiring and ambitious aim of its endeavor. Its aim must be not only to raise to inaccessible heights the few elect, but to draw all men and all life and the whole human being upward, to spiritualize life and in the end to divinize human nature. Not only must it be able to lay hold on his deepest individual being, but to inspire, too, his

communal existence. It must turn, by a spiritual change, all the members of his ignorance into members of the knowledge; it must transmute all the instruments of the human into instruments of a divine living. The total movement of Indian spirituality is towards this aim.24

The third question, whether the ultimate value can be realized here in this life or only hereafter, is answered in two different ways. Some philosophical systems maintain that the proper preparation that a person undertakes for achieving this end will help him to realize it only after death, whereas some other systems hold the view that it can be realized in this life itself, if one follows the prescribed moral and spiritual discipline. The former view is called the eschatological conception of *moksa* while the latter is known as *līvan-mukti*. "*Līvan-mukti*" means liberation-in-life. The person who has attained enlightenment or wisdom is free even while he is in the embodied condition. It is not necessary to discuss these two views of *moksa* in detail. It may be pointed out here that the view that it is possible to overcome bondage and attain liberation here and now deepens the significance of the present life. A *līvan-mukta* does not run away from society. He lives in society for the benefit of others; when he is engaged in activities, he has no sense of "I" and "mine"; his activities, that is to say, are impersonal. Also, he imparts spiritual instruction to others, for, having realized the truth, he alone is competent to do this. The life of a *līvan-mukta*, as portrayed in the Hindu tradition, is comparable to that of a *Bodhi-sattva* as explained in the *Mahāyāna* tradition. The ideal of life goes beyond self-perfection; it also includes work for the universal good.

According to the Indian tradition, knowledge is different from information, and wisdom is different from knowledge. We may say that information, knowledge, and wisdom constitute a hierarchy. To know a thing is to know it in a determinate way, as such-and-such — as a substance possessing qualities, as a whole consisting of parts, as the cause or effect of something, and so on. Every object has two kinds of relations, internal and external. A lump of clay, for example, is internally related to its color, its parts of which it is made. It is also externally related to the ground on which it is placed, its immediate surroundings, and so on. No object remains isolated from other things; on the contrary, it has a network of relations with other things in such a way that it is what it is because of other things. When the poet says that, to know a flower seen in a crannied wall, one must know the plant, root and all, and also the wall, its location, and so on, he draws our attention to the fact that every object is an integral part of the cosmic system and that, to get an insight into the nature of a thing, one must know the whole of which it is an integral part. Bits of information do not constitute knowledge. Piecemeal information about the roots, the trunk, and the branches of a tree cannot be viewed as the knowledge of a tree.

Just as knowledge is different from information, even so wisdom is different from knowledge. Though knowledge is superior to information, it cannot be a substitute for wisdom. The Vedic tradition draws a distinction between two kinds of knowledge, higher (*parā*) and lower (*aparā*). Saunaka, the great householder, requested A_giras to teach him the supreme reality by knowing which everything is known. To him Angiras said: "Two kinds of knowledge are to be known, as indeed the knowers of Brahman declare — the higher as well as the lower."25 The higher knowledge, otherwise known as wisdom, is the knowledge of the eternal Brahman or Spirit, the source or ground of everything. The lower knowledge deals with things perishable, with everything other than Brahman, with the disciplines relating to instrumental values. It should not be thought that the lower knowledge is of no value. It may be noted that scripture insists on the acquisition of the lower knowledge; but one should not stop with it. One should acquire the lower knowledge, which is undoubtedly helpful to the attainment of spiritual wisdom. However useful and important the lower knowledge may be, it cannot liberate a person from the bondage of empirical life.

The *Upanisad* narrates an episode in the life of Nārada, who approached Sanatkumāra and requested him to teach the higher knowledge. Nārada was learned. He was proficient in the scriptural lore; he knew the *Vedas* and the epics, logic, ethics, and politics, etc. After giving a long list of the subjects he knew, he confessed to Sanakumāra:

Sir, I am only the knower of the text (*mantra-vit*), but not the knower of the Self (*ātma-vit*). I have heard from those like you that a person who knows the Self crosses over sorrow. Such a sorrowing person I am. Venerable Sir, please help me to cross over to the other side of sorrow.26

What the *Upanisad* conveys through this story of Nārada is that wisdom alone can save a person from the existential predicament and not mere knowledge, however profound and extensive it may be.

The hierarchy among information, knowledge, and wisdom suggests that we have to make a distinction between life and living. The life that a human being leads should reflect the level he has reached in the evolutionary scheme. As stated earlier, because what is distinctive of the human being is the mind one possesses one's life-activity should take place at the mental level and not merely at the bodily and sensuous level. According to the Greeks, "What a thing is when its growth is completed, that is what we call its nature."27 Only when what is potential in a thing becomes actual can we say that its nature (*svabhāva*) is fully manifest. It is well known that the nature of a seed, e.g. that of the banyan tree, can be known only when the seed is allowed to grow into a mighty tree with its hanging roots from the branches scattered far and wide. What is potential in a seed becomes actual, revealing its nature. The same principle holds good in the case of the human being. What is potential in the human being must be allowed to become actual through the full and proper exercise of the mind. The purpose of the moral and spiritual discipline which fully utilizes the mind is to help man realize the hidden divinity in him. Life is judged by its quality, whereas living is commonly understood in terms of the basic organic needs, such as food, water, clothes, shelter, and sex. The fulfillment of the basic needs takes place at the bodily and sensuous level. But the harmony of spirit, mind, and body can be achieved only at the mental level, through reason and will, through knowledge and purposive action. Sri Aurobindo in his own characteristic way, brings out the distinction between life and living. To the question, "What is meant after all by life, and when is it that we most fully and greatly live?" his answer is:

Life is surely nothing but the creation and active self-expression of man's spirit, powers, capacities, his will to be and think and create and love and do and achieve. When that is wanting or, since it cannot be absolutely wanting, depressed, held under, discouraged or inert, whether by internal or external causes, then we may say that there is a lack of life.28

He points out that religion, philosophy, and science, art, drama, and song, war and peace, the thoughts, emotions, words, deeds, joys, and sorrows which make up the existence of man — all these constitute life in its largest sense. What, then, is mere living? It is restricted to the day-to-day things required for survival. One who does not rise above the "ordinary materials and circumstances of mere living" does not live at all as a human being. Sri Aurobindo observes:

If life is not uplifted by great hopes, aspirations, and ideals, then we may well say that the community does not really live; it is defective in the characteristic greatness of the human spirit.29

When T.S. Eliot asks,
Where is the life we have lost in living
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

he is concerned about the importance of life, whose quality and worth must be judged in terms of knowledge and wisdom.

It is impossible to realize the ideal of liberation without a rigorous pursuit of discipline, moral as well as spiritual. A few remarks about the background of this discipline will be helpful to understand it in the correct perspective. First, this discipline will not be meaningful to one who is satisfied with the fulfillment of the bodily needs without any thought of the higher side of life. One who is interested in living and not in life will not come anywhere near this discipline. Second, it takes into consideration the differences among the spiritual aspirants in their abilities and aptitudes. Third, there is a built-in order, as well as freedom, in the scheme of discipline. It is the same, age-old discipline that every spiritual aspirant desirous of liberation should follow. If we examine the content of the discipline as formulated in the different religio-philosophical traditions, we find that it is substantively the same. At the same time, taking into consideration the attainments and attitudes of the individuals, the discipline has provided variations in the practices to suit the individual needs; it recognizes what the tradition calls *adhikāri-bheda*. The "firm spiritual order as well as the untrammeled spiritual freedom" has contributed, on the one hand, to the continuity of the cultural tradition and, on the other hand, to additions and modifications in the practices without any detriment to the essentials of the discipline. Fourth, there is a sequence, chronological as well as logical, in the discipline. Moral discipline is the *sine qua non* for spiritual discipline; one should, that is to say, start with the moral discipline and then proceed to the spiritual discipline in order to reap the benefit of the discipline. It is said that no one who has not studied geometry could get into Plato's Academy; the curriculum and academic set up were such that knowledge of geometry was considered to be a prerequisite for entry into the Academy. Spiritual discipline will not be fruitful for one who has not successfully completed the moral discipline. Indian culture has always emphasized the need for a gradual ascent from the lower to the higher stages accommodating diversity of paths and practices all leading to the same goal. To quote Sri Aurobindo:

At first he [the spiritual aspirant] needs lower supports and stages of ascent; he asks for some scaffolding of dogma, worship, image, sign, form, symbol, some indulgence and permission of mixed half-natural motive on which he can stand while he builds up in him the temple of the spirit. Only when the temple is completed can the supports be removed, the scaffolding disappear. The religious culture which now goes by the name of Hinduism not only fulfilled this purpose, but, unlike certain other credal religions, it knew its purpose. It gave itself no name, because it set itself no sectarian limits; it claimed no universal adhesion, asserted no sole infallible dogma, set up no single narrow path or gate of salvation; it was less a creed or cult than a continuously enlarging tradition of the Godward endeavor of the human spirit. An immense many-sided and many-staged provision for a spiritual self-building and self-finding, it had some right to speak of itself by the only name it knew, the eternal religion, *san_tana dharma*. It is only if we have a just and right appreciation of this sense and spirit of Indian religion that we can come to an understanding of the true sense and spirit of Indian culture.30

The moral discipline, which is preliminary, consists of four stages or steps known as *sādhana-catustaya*. They are: discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral, non-attachment to the enjoyment of fruits, here in this life and hereafter, possession of virtues like control of the senses, control of the mind, etc., and an intense longing for liberation. The entire discipline is progressive in character. A person who is capable of discriminating the eternal from the ephemeral develops dispassion or non-attachment towards the things of the world. This again will help him to acquire control of the mind and the senses and to cultivate certain virtues such as endurance. Having acquired these qualifications, he develops an intense longing for liberation. Thus we can see how the preceding step in the discipline is the cause of the succeeding one. The successful completion of the moral discipline makes a person eligible for the spiritual discipline consisting of the study of the scriptural text (*sravana*) under the guidance of a competent teacher, rational reflection on the teaching (*manana*), and contemplation (*nididhyāsana*) on it.

Hinduism adopts a comprehensive view of man's life in such a way that the individual, social, and spiritual aspects of his life are taken care of, and his entire life is a preparation for the attainment of the final goal of liberation. Consider, for example, the detailed instruction regarding the duties to be performed when a student completes his formal education. Besides learning and teaching, one should practice righteousness, austerity, control of the senses, one's own duty, entertaining guests, socially good conduct, and begetting children after marriage. These duties are comprehensive. They are, according to Sankara, contributory to the attainment of human goals.31

The four stages of a man's life as envisaged by Hinduism must also be taken into account in understanding the life-activity of man. Hinduism divides the ideal life of a man into four successive stages (*āsramas*) — the stage of a student, that of a householder, that of a recluse, and finally that of a monk. It is not necessary to go into the details regarding the duties as well as the values assigned to man at each of these four stages of life. However, a few observations about the nature and purpose of this scheme are relevant in this context. First of all, this scheme of the four stages of life shows that "the way to a higher life is normally through the world." The stage of a householder which follows that of a student is considered to be the mainstay of social life. Man's life at one stage is necessarily this-worldly. Family, which is not only the earliest but also the most important of all the social institutions, provides opportunities for the pursuit of pleasure and wealth, for the development of social and communal life, and above all for the development of the spiritual side of man through a gradual and progressive conquest of spirit over flesh. Secondly, it affirms the Hindu belief in the principle of spiritual progression. Thirdly, it should not be thought that one has to go to the last stage of life by passing through the stages of a householder and a recluse. Hinduism provides the option to become a monk even from the state of a student. The *Upanisad* says: "After completing the life of a recluse, let one renounce; otherwise, let one renounce even from the state of a student."32 It all depends upon one's mental frame and spiritual maturity. Also, one can even remain a life-long student. Fourthly, this scheme of the four stages of life is only an ideal for the guidance of man. It does not mean that everyone goes through all the four stages of life.

The Hindu ethics lays emphasis on the system of duties rather than on the system of rights of man. The reason for this is not far to seek. Ethics is ultimately concerned with social harmony. The needs and claims of one person have to be adjusted and reconciled with those of others in society. Certain types of conduct which would contribute to the harmony and solidarity of society have to be enforced, and those which would endanger them have to be forbidden. It is for this reason that in every society there are moral codes and principles, the system of duties, which must

be carried out with moral earnestness. Duty is that which, when properly discharged, upholds society, sustains it, and nourishes it. That is why it is called *dharma* in Hinduism.

The classification of the duties of man, which are ethico-social, has a bearing on the value system, as well as on the *vara-āsrama* system. These duties are intended to help man achieve three kinds of integration — self-integration, social integration, and integration with God. The classification of duties comprises common duties (*sādhārana-dharmas*), which everyone has to perform, irrespective of the class (*vara*) he belongs to and the stage of life (*āsrama*) he is in, and special duties (*visea-dharmas*), which are relative to the social class and the stage of life. The list of common duties prescribed by Manu includes the following: (i) steadfastness, (ii) forgiveness, (iii) application, (iv) non-appropriation (v) cleanliness, (vi) control over the appetites, (vii) wisdom, (viii) learning, (ix) veracity, and (x) restraint of anger. The common and special duties, which are both self-regarding and other-regarding, are intended to help man achieve self-integration and social integration. Practices which are designed to achieve self-control are conducive to self-integration; and conduct which calls forth the cultivation of virtues such as compassion, practice of charity, and social service, contributes to social integration. What is called integration or communion with God must follow self-integration and social integration. It means that one cannot attain God-realization without achieving self-integration and helping social-integration. Love of God is possible only for a person who has achieved harmony in his life-in-society. In the language of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, a person who has achieved this harmony is one "by whom the world is not afflicted and who is not afflicted by the world."33

Chinese Culture

Chinese philosophy is concerned with human beings on the one hand and the universe which they encounter on the other. It is impossible to think of humans outside the universe; the universe in its turn is enriched by the humans. The humans and the universe cannot be separated because they are parts of a spiritual whole. A passage which is attributed to Wang Shou-Jen is worth quoting here:

In Heaven and Earth there is one spirituality or consciousness. But because of his bodily form, man has separated himself from the whole. My spirituality or consciousness is the ruler of Heaven and Earth, spirits and things. . . . If Heaven, Earth, spirits, and things are separated from my spirituality or consciousness, they cease to be. And if my spirituality or consciousness is separated from them, it ceases to be also. Thus, they are all actually one body, so how can they be separated?34

So, the Chinese way of thinking is both anthropocentric and cosmocentric.

Unlike scientific/naturalistic humanism, Chinese humanism is ethico-spiritualistic. Its moralistic orientation is supported by its spiritualistic basis. Whatever be the role that a human being plays in society — that of an artisan or an agriculturist, that of a scholar or a politician — he/she must function as a human being. In every specialized role that a human being plays, he/she aims at the best — the best as an artisan, as an agriculturist, as a statesman, and so on. In the same way he/she must aim at the best as a human being. Confucius' doctrine of the "rectification of names" is relevant in this context. According to this doctrine, every name stands for the essence of the class of things to which it refers. For example, the name "ruler" suggests an *ideal* "ruler," what the ruler ideally ought to be. The situation connected with a ruler, i.e. what a "ruler" does,

should accord with what is implied by the name "ruler." We must extend this logic to other cases such as father, son, and so on. That is why Confucius said, "Let the ruler be ruler, the minister, minister, the father, father, and the son, son."35 If there is accord between the name and the situation connected with it, then we can say that a ruler, for example, is a ruler in fact as well as in name. Applying the same reasoning, we have to say that a human being, true to the name, must be a human being in name as well as in fact. If so, what is it that is expected of a human being? The answer is *jen*, which means human-heartedness. Confucius has provided a simple guidance for the practice of *jen*:

The man of *jen* is one who, desiring to sustain himself, sustains others, and desiring to develop himself develops others. To be able from one's own self to draw a parallel for the treatment of others, that may be called the way to practice *jen.*36

According to Confucianism, one should regulate one's conduct by using oneself as a standard, as "a measuring square." This regulatory principle of applying a measuring square can be stated in two ways. Positively it says: "Do to others what you wish yourself." When negatively stated, it will be: "Do not do to others what you do not wish yourself." The principle of *chung* and *shu*, the positive and negative formulation of the principle of applying a measuring square, is the way to practice *jen*.

The basis of moral life for the Chinese, as in the case of the Indians, is spirituality. The *Tao*, which is eternal and unnameable, is not only the way, but also the source of life. That is why it is spoken of as the beginning of Heaven and earth.

According to Maritain, scientific or naturalistic humanism has paved the way for the triple tragedy that has overtaken the West. They are the tragedy of man, the tragedy of culture, and the tragedy of God. In the present context it is enough to consider the first two tragedies. Maritain is of the view that the tragedy of man is the result of three forces that have dominated the West in the wake of the Enlightenment. Science which makes use of knowledge and power for the purpose of controlling and conquering nature views reason as an instrument. The scientific conception of humans treats them as mere agents, making use of reason as the instrument for acquiring power and attaining progress. The scientific conception of the human being is backed by two other forces — Freudian psychology and the emergence of the collective man. Freudian psychology, with its emphasis on the *libido* and the unconscious, has reduced humans to the level of animals. Rapid industrialization, which has created a technological society, is responsible for the emergence of the "collective man." Humans have become rootless, homeless, and alienated from the world because of technology. In the words of Martin Heidegger:

The essence of technology only comes slowly to light. This day is the world-night turned into a merely technological day. This day is the shortest day. . . . Now not only is man denied a shelter, but the safety of all beings remains in darkness. The wholeness [*das Heile*] is withdrawn. The world has become unwhole [*heil-los*]. Thereby not only does the holy remain hidden as the sign of divinity, but even the sign of the holy, namely wholeness, seems to be obliterated.37

The tragedy of culture, according to Maritain, has been brought about by three factors — the reversal of the value system, the ruthless subjugation of nature, and the subordination of humans to material forces. Chinese humanism has escaped these two tragedies because of its emphasis on

the role of human beings as human beings in society and the preservation of a value system which accords a higher status to moral and super-moral values.

Ethics of human-heartedness is not wanting in the Hindu tradition. One of the *Upanisads* gives an account of Prajāpati's instruction to his threefold offspring — gods, men, and demons.38 It highlights the importance of loving others by regulating one's conduct. At the conclusion of his teaching to them, Prajāpati uttered the syllable "*da*," which was understood in three different ways by them, reflecting their own nature. The gods who are naturally unruly understood it as "*dama*" which means self-control. Since humans are by nature avaricious, they thought that "*da*" means "*dāna*" and that they were advised to be charitable. The demons who are normally cruel understood it in the sense of "*dayā*" (compassion) and thought that they were instructed to be compassionate to others. Sankara, in the course of his commentary on the text, remarks that Prajāpati's instruction is relevant to us even today; and we must practice what Prajāpati taught his threefold offspring. Sankara remarks that the whole episode may be understood in another way.39 There are no gods or demons other than humans. There are gods as well as demons among humans. Those among humans who are wanting in self-control, but who are otherwise endowed with many good qualities, are the gods; those who are particularly greedy are men; and those who are cruel and harm others are the demons. Hence, humans should follow all the three instructions, for they are unruly, greedy, and cruel.

It is not possible to discuss elaborately the various characteristics of Chinese humanism in this paper; and I am, therefore, selective in the choice of my concepts/theories. Three concepts/theories associated with three great masters deserve special attention — Confucius's concept of "doing for nothing," the principle of extension of graded love enunciated by Mencius, and the theory of transcendence formulated by Lao Tzu. I will also bring in parallels to them from the Hindu tradition.

Confucius makes a distinction between duty-prompted action and profit-motivated action. The former is called *yi* and the latter, *li*. All of us are members of the family system and also of society. Five kinds of relationship are identified by Confucius — relationship between the ruler and the ruled, between father and son, between brothers, between husband and wife, and between friends. Of these, three are family relationships. Whatever be the relationship, a person, when placed in a moral situation, must act with a sense of duty or righteousness (*yi*). One must do one's duty because it is a duty and not because of any other consideration. If he/she has some other consideration in performing an action, then it is done for (the sake of) something and not for nothing; it is not, then, following a categorical imperative. According to Confucius, it is the sense of duty or righteousness that should regulate a person's relations with others. It must be borne in mind that *yi* and *jen* are closely connected with each other. Their relation is like that between form and matter. As stated earlier, *jen* is human-heartedness, loving others. The principle that one must do one's duty is formal like the categorical imperative. However, it becomes concrete in the context of relationship. According to Confucius, one who is guided by *yi* rather than by *li* is a superior man. Confucius says, "The superior man comprehends *yi*; the small man comprehends*li*."40

The concept of doing for nothing is comparable to the justly famous concept of *nikāma-karma* (disinterested action) of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. It will be helpful to quote the relevant text:

To work alone you have a right and not at all to its fruits. Let not the fruits of work be your motive. Nor should you be tempted to withdraw from work.41

It is significant that the text enjoins not only disinterested action, but also forbids inaction (*akarma*) as the alternative to it, which one will be tempted to think of in the context of doing duty without aiming at the results of one's action.

The success or failure of an action which one performs with the consciousness of duty depends upon the Will of Heaven which is called *Ming*. According to Confucius, *Ming* is the purposeful force that controls the whole situation in which a person functions. It is beyond our control; and we have to submit to it. To acknowledge *Ming* as the supreme force which makes the situation what it is, is to know *Ming*. In the words of Confucius, "If my principles are to prevail in the world, it is *Ming*. If they are to fall to the ground, it is also *Ming*."42 Confucius holds that one who knows *Ming* is a superior man.

The Hindu tradition identifies five factors involved in the production of an act. Of these five factors, four are human and the fifth one non-human. The *Bhagavad-gītā* mentions the five factors as follows:

The seat of action and likewise the agent, the various organs, the many kinds of efforts and the divinity (providence) also being the fifth.

Whatever action a person does by the body, speech, and mind, whether it is right or wrong, these five are its causes.43

The body is the seat of the manifestation of desire, hatred, happiness, and so on. The embodied self is the agent possessing the sense of "I." The visual sense, the auditory sense, etc. are the various organs required for performing an action. Again, there is the involvement of various functions performed by the vital breath. Finally, there is the non-human factor, viz. divinity or providence (*daivam*). The first four factors may be explained in terms of the concept of sheath (*kosa*). The sheath of food (*annamaya*) is the seat (*adhisthāna*); the sheath of vitality (*prānamaya*) is the source of the vital functions; the sheath of mind (*manomaya*) is the complex of organs; and the sheath of intellect (*vijnāmaya*) is the agent. All these four factors are part of the *lîva*. The fifth one, which is the non-human factor, is called *daivam* which means divinity or providence. It is this which is comparable to *Ming*. Commenting on the nature and role of *daivam*, Radhakrishnan observes:

[It] represents the non-human factor that interferes and disposes of human effort. It is the wise, all-seeing will that is at work in the world. In all human actions, there is an unaccountable element which is called luck, destiny, fate, or the force accumulated by the acts of one's past lives. It is called here *daiva*. . . . *Daiva* or the superpersonal fate is the general cosmic necessity, the resultant of all that has happened in the past, which rules unnoticed. It works in the individual for its own incalculable purposes.44

There is an important question one may raise with regard to the theory of human-heartedness (*jen*) advocated by Confucius. Why should a human being, one may ask, practice *jen*? Confucius did not consider this question at all. It was Mencius who answered this question. According to Mencius, who represents the idealistic side of Confucianism, it is the very nature of a human being to be human-hearted. A brief explanation of Mencius's view of human nature will be helpful. As against the view that human nature is neither good nor bad, a view associated with Lao Tzu, Mencius holds that human nature is *essentially* good and that whatever is bad or undesirable in human beings belongs to the "animal" side in them. He identifies four components in human nature

— feeling of commiseration, feeling of shame and dislike, sense of modesty and yielding, and sense of right and wrong.45 All these four are distinctly *human*; they differentiate humans from animals. These four aspects, which may be called human-heartedness, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, are inherent in human nature; and they have to be developed. A person who does not develop these aspects is no better than an animal.

If human nature is such that it is capable of loving others, then is it possible to love everyone in the same way? There is a difference of opinion on this issue. While the Mohists hold the theory of equality in loving others, Mencius, following Confucius, argues for degrees in love or graded love. The distance from oneself to others decides the gradation in love. The love for one's family members is stronger than the love for one's neighbors; the love for one's neighbors is stronger than the love for one's villagers, and so on; and the love for living beings is stronger than the love for non-living beings. In the words of Mencius:

The superior man, in his relation to things, loves them, but has no feeling of human-heartedness. In his relation to people, he has human-heartedness, but no deep feeling of family affection. One should have feelings of family affection for the members of one's family, but human-heartedness for people; human-heartedness for people, but love for things.46

What Mencius says is based on our day-to-day experience. The principle of graded love has been formulated by him in a realistic way, with a remarkable insight into human nature. But he does not stop with this. Since the ideal is to love everyone, he suggests extension of the principle of graded love to include others. Taking his stand on what human nature is capable of, he supplements his realism by idealism. To quote Mencius:

Treat the aged in your family as they should be treated, and extend this treatment to the aged of other people's families. Treat the young in your family as they should be treated, and extend this treatment to the young of other people's families.47

His idealistic principle of extension of graded love, which is rooted in human nature, is a valuable contribution to the philosophy of humanism.

The spiritualistic philosophy of the *Upanisads* justifies the principle that one should extend oneself so as to include others on the basis of the oneness of all beings which originated from the same sources, viz. primal Being or Spirit. The *Upanisads* maintain that, though there is a plurality of beings, all of them are *essentially* the same. The primal Spirit includes everything; it in-dwells in everything; and all beings, though apparently different from it, are indeed identical with it. The three ideas of inclusion, indwelling, and identity which are inbuilt in the philosophy of oneness are set forth in the following texts of the *Upanisad*:

He who sees all beings in the very Self and the Self in all beings feels no hatred by virtue of that realization.

When to one who knows, all beings have, verily, become one with his own Self, then what delusion and what sorrow can be to him who has seen the oneness?48

The Self in me which I love is the same in every other person I encounter; and if I realize this, I cannot but love the other person. _a_kara remarks in his commentary on the text:

One [who realizes the unconditioned Self in all beings] does not hate. This is only a restatement of a known fact. It is a matter of common experience that hatred comes to one who sees something as bad and different from oneself, but for one who sees only the absolutely pure Self as a continuous entity, there is no object to be hated.49

Chinese humanism, which is based on primal spirituality, has a metaphysical dimension. Primal spirituality holds, as stated earlier, that primal Being or Spirit is the source and support of all beings. The central metaphysical problem of the relation between the primal Spirit and the things of the world has been discussed by Taoism. The Taoists have been described as "recluses," as persons "who despised the world," as individualists "who desired to maintain their personal purity," and so on. They systematized a rigorous philosophy in justification of their way of life. To them, the *Tao* is the source of everything; it is also the way of life. Chuang Tzu, who represents the third phase of Taoism, speaks of "Fundamentals for the Cultivation of Life." He says:

When you do something good, beware of reputation; when you do something evil, beware of punishment. Follow the middle way and take this to be your constant principle. Then you can guard your person, nourish your parents, and complete your natural term of years.50

The way of life one leads must reflect one's understanding of the *Tao*, that is to say, the way one understands the relation between the *Tao* and the things of the world.

Lao Tzu, who represents the second phase of Taoism, has discussed at length the nature of the *Tao vis-à-vis* the nature of the things of the world. According to Lao Tzu, first of all, the things of the world have shapes and features and so they can be named. Normally there is no difficulty in understanding an object which has a shape and possesses qualities. The real difficulty arises only when we try to find out the reality of things characterized by forms and features. Secondly, the things of the world are subject to change; and so they are not eternal. The eternal is what lies behind the ephemeral. If the empirical things can be named and if they are also not eternal, then that which is their source must be both unnameable and eternal; and that "entity" is called the *Tao*. Using the imagery of a block of wood from which objects such as table, chair, etc. are carved, Lao Tzu characterizes the *Tao* as the Uncarved Block. Once a block of wood is carved there are objects which are named table, chair, and so on. In the same way, from the Uncarved Block the things of the world are carved; and each one of them having a shape and qualities, has a name. Thus, the things of the world are nameables, whereas their primal source, which is called the *Tao*, is the Unnameable. It may appear that, when the primal source is called the *Tao*, we are using a name "*Tao*." Strictly speaking, it is not a name at all. When we call table "table," the object we are talking about has a shape and possesses qualities; and so it is identified as such-and-such by means of a conventional name, viz. "table." When we call the primal source "Tao," we are not using a name at all because the primal source, the Uncarved Block, has no form and features; consequently, it cannot be identified by a name. Everything has a name; but the *Tao* is not a thing. So it is nameless. It is, for this reason, said to be the Unnameable. What is sought to be conveyed by Taoism is the contrast between the empirical and the trans-empirical, the relational and the trans-relational, the linguistic and the trans-linguistic; the *Tao* is just the opposite in all these three respects.

Lao Tzu analyses the problem of the origination of the things of the world from the *Tao* in another way. Every object of our experience, which is nameable, is a being. If every object which exists is a being, then the existence of beings implies that there must, first of all, be Being. We

have already said that the *Tao* is not a thing, i.e. it is not nameable. It is, therefore, Non-being. If the *Tao* is the source of all beings, then the *Tao* as Non-being is the source of Being from which all beings have come into existence. In the words of Lao Tzu: "All things in the world come into being from Being; and Being comes into being from Non-being."51 How beings which we experience in our day-to-day life came into existence from Non-being (the *Tao*) is a mystery; and no metaphysics in its explanation of the origin of becoming, which characterizes all objects, from Being can escape this unavoidable entry of mystery.

It may be stated here that Taoism does not deny the existence of the world of becoming. On the contrary, it insists on the need to transcend it by one who is desirous of attaining absolute happiness. "The happy excursion"52 into the infinite, as Chuang Tzu would put it, calls for overcoming the distinction between myself and others, the distinction among things.

Just as the *Upanisads* make the distinction between lower knowledge (*aparā vidyā*) and higher knowledge (*parā vidyā*), even so Chuang Tzu draws a distinction between two levels of knowledge, lower and higher — the former accommodating all kinds of distinctions and the latter transcending the distinctions. The things of the world, which are finite, have a dependent existence. A depends on B, B depends on C, C on D, and so on. One can derive only relative happiness by depending on things which are finite and which have dependent existence. Narrating the story of how a person was able to ride on the wind without resorting to walking as others do, Chuang Tzu remarks that, though the achievement of this man was great, still he had to depend upon something and that his happiness was, therefore, relative. Then, he poses the question:

But suppose there is one who chariots on the normality of the universe, rides on the transformation of the six elements, and thus makes excursion into the infinite, what has he to depend upon? Therefore it is said that the perfect man has no self; the spiritual man has no achievement; and the true sage has no name.53

To see things in the light of Heaven, i.e. to see things in the light of the *Tao*, is to transcend the finite, the lower point of view. It is to be with the *Tao*, the nameless. A perfect man who has become one with the *Tao* is also nameless: he has nothing to achieve, having overcome the distinction between the me and the non-me. In the language of *Vedānta*, he is a *līvanmukta.* It will be appropriate in this connection to refer to Sanatkumāra's instruction to Nārada which occurs in the seventh chapter of the *C*hāndog*ya Upanisad*. He tells Nārada that finite objects have a dependent existence and that they do not give us happiness. If finite objects have dependent existence, then what about the infinite? To this question asked by Nārada, Sanatkumāra replies: "On its own greatness" (*sve mahimni*).54 He also explains in this context the difference between finite experience and the experience of the infinite. He says:

Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else, that is the infinite. But where one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else, that is the finite.55

His final teaching is: "The infinite is happiness. There is no happiness in anything finite."56 Chuang Tzu is in the company of Sanatkum_ra.

Modernization

The term "modernization" does not admit of a simple and straight definition. Everyone seems to understand what it means, though no one would agree with any definition of it. People generally welcome modernization as an antidote to traditionalism, conservatism, backwardness, and so on. Whenever we say that someone is modern, we seem to suggest that he is not traditional, or conservative, or backward; and for many people what is modern has a value preference, as against what is traditional. Modernization seems to provide a new hope against old ways of thinking and doing; and it is a continuing process; there can be, strictly speaking, no end to it; and from time to time it will always be needed. The process of modernization will be meaningful, purposive, and fruitful only when it functions in the context of tradition. As stated earlier, a traditional culture has two sides, perennial and temporal. While the former cannot be changed, the latter admits of change in accordance with the changes in the socio-political reality. It must be borne in mind that the changes in the temporal structure of culture do not in any way damage the perennial elements. The traditional culture of India, which has spanned nearly four millennia, is still relevant today because of the perennial elements in it. What is true of the Indian culture is equally true of the Chinese culture. What preserves a culture is the combination of the perennial and the temporal. A culture which is rigid and unchanging cannot survive; also, a culture which does not have an in-built perennial structure will become a thing of the past. In other words, there must be scope for conservation as well as change in a culture. Emphasizing the need for both conservation and change, A.N. Whitehead said:

Mere change without conservation is a passage from nothing to nothing. Its final integration yields mere transient non-entity. Mere conservation without change cannot conserve. For, after all, there is a flux of circumstances and the freshness of being evaporates under mere repetition.57

Modernization as understood in the West has most unfortunately a narrow connotation, and is, therefore, a distorted concept. Both philosophy and science paved the way for the emergence of the phenomenon of modernization in the seventeenth century. The part played by two philosophers, Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes, to usher in this phenomenon was significant. To them, knowledge is not an end in itself, but a means to power. Bacon thought that "the propagator of man’s empire over the universe" would be the benefactor of the human race. Descartes suggested that men should become "the masters and possessors of nature." The scientific-empirical method advocated by Bacon and the analytical-rational method of inquiry formulated by Descartes were useful not only in philosophy, but also in science.

The scientific method, which tests hypothesis through observation, and experiment, which reduces a complex object to its simple components, which insists on the repeatability of an experiment, and which swears by objectivity, separated science from religion by formulating its new cosmology and provided man with powerful tools of engineering and technology for asserting his supremacy over nature. It shaped the development of science in a particular direction for more than two centuries till the quantum physics gave a new direction to science. Scientists today speak of "quantum integration" which has put an end to the four-hundred-year split between science and spirituality.58 Though the achievements of science during the last four hundred years are numerous and remarkable, its concepts and theories have undermined everything connected with the spiritual order.

The story of the development of science, which has ended up in the present crisis, is frightening. Science, which started as the pursuit of knowledge in search of truth, was a noble intellectual enterprise worthy of human beings. When there was persecution of scientists, e.g.

Bruno, Galileo, for the revolutionary views advocated by them, science became an ideology. When Galileo was on trial, science, it is said, was on trial. To quote Skolimowski:

Science was at that time undercutting the foundations of a decaying civilization. The medieval civilization was coming to an end, unable to sustain itself through its own means. Science was helping man to evolve a new civilization. Science was at that time the torch of light, the agent of progress and liberation. It was put on trial by the agents of the dying epoch.59

Then, science became an integral part of Western civilization. It was no more a body of pure ideas, but became a mighty social phenomenon, influencing and controlling the social institutions by formulating ideals and setting up goals which it sought to realize through the support of state and other agencies. Space program, missile agenda, militarism, institutions of learning — all these, inspired and supported by science, strengthen and support, in their turn, science. The scientific *Weltanschauung* determines the nature of the world around us. Once again what Skolimowski says is worth quoting:

The nature of knowledge determines the nature of the world around us. We perceive and understand what we are made to perceive and understand through the knowledge we acquire. The dominant position of science in our system of learning assures a further perpetuation of what is called the scientific outlook and what is tantamount to a vision of the world through the spectacles of science. . . . Seen in this context, science does control people; it does control people subtly and indirectly because it furnishes them with the categories of understanding. It acts as a series of filters through which we view reality.60

In the next stage of its growth, science becomes technology.61 Drawing a distinction between science and technology, it is very often argued that it is technology, not science, that is responsible for the present crisis of society. This argument is untenable. Technology is only an extension of science; and the separation of the one from the other in the present context cannot be justified, because both of them are the promoters of the Western civilization, both of them serve the same purpose — that of perpetuating material progress, and both of them are committed to the preservation of the *status quo*. The religious-spiritual view and way of life has been replaced by technological consciousness. Skolimowski enumerates the characteristics of technological consciousness — objectivization, atomization, alienation, power domination, de-sacralization, and consumerism. He observes:

When we interact with the world via technology, we never think how to be benign and compassionate and loving, but always how to be efficient, controlling, assertive. This attitude of controlling and manipulating is now a part of the mental make-up of the Western people.62

Contrasting ecological consciousness with technological consciousness, Skolimowski pleads for concerted efforts for strengthening and supporting the former. Ecological consciousness is wholistic in its outlook; it cares for the quality of life; it emphasizes the importance of spiritual quest; it promotes a reverential attitude to life; it accepts the evolutionary process; and finally it insists on the duty of participation by every individual as a member of the whole. It may be noted that the characteristics of ecological consciousness mentioned above co-define each other. He presents the ecological consciousness with its six characteristics in a *mandala* as follows:63

Human beings are both corporeal and spiritual, both rational and mystical. They are rational and moral agents. The universe we live in is transphysical and transbiological; it is, that is to say, spiritual.

Modernization is equated with Westernization, though the term "modernization" does not carry such a connotation. The identification of modernization with Westernization is purely contextual. We have referred to the development of science in the West from the beginning of the seventeenth century and the new consciousness it was able to generate as it moved from stage to stage. It was able to bring about many changes in the modes of thinking and ways of life of the people: in short, since science modernized the people in the West, modernization is equated with Westernization. This identification has a tremendous impact on the outlook of the people in the East. The majority of the people in the East and the South, whose many countries were conquered, controlled, and coerced by Western nations, such as England and France, think that to be "modern" is to be "Western," and the easy way to be "Western" is to imitate the life-style of the Westerners. This kind of mentality and mode of life is most unfortunate, calamitous, and deplorable.

My approach to the problem of modernization is both negative and positive. Let me, first of all, remove some of the wrong notions about modernization by explaining what it is not. Modernization should not be confused with industrialization, urbanization, technocracy, and so on, though it is true that all these bring about changes in the existing socio-economic-political order affecting the life-style of the people. Secondly, modernization should not be confused with the changing economic process at the material level. Thirdly, modernization does not mean Westernization. To dress like the Westerner, to speak English or any other "modern language," i.e. European language, to have the facility to live like a Westerner — these are not the real index of modernism. Fourthly, modernization does not mean a higher standard of living symbolized by automobiles, television sets, sophisticated instruments of information technology, and so on. One who possesses these "status symbols" is certainly not modern, if one’s thinking is primitive and behavior, barbarous.

Very often we hear political leaders talking about improving the standard of living. In the case of those who do not have food, clothing, and shelter, to improve their standard of living is to provide them with all these, in the absence of which they cannot function as human beings. But in the case of those who are already in possession of them, what does it mean to talk about improving their standard of living? Is it, for example, to help a family which has just one automobile to have more than one — one for the husband and one for the wife? Improving the standard of living does not necessarily mean improving the quality of life.

Modernization, as I understand it, consists in modifying the existing institutions which have proved inadequate to meet the demands of life in the context of industrialization and urbanization. It is not the cancellation of everything old. The attempt to modify the existing institutions or to create new institutions and values should not result in a condition where people become "rootless." It is neither desirable nor possible for a community to run away from, or to disown, its past. There

is an organic relation between the past and the present, as well as between the present and the future. It is worth remembering, in this context, Edmund Burke's conception of society: "Society is a contract. . . . It is a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born." So far, the core of Hinduism remains unchallenged, though the traditional social institutions have been questioned and modified, and some of them have even been replaced by new ones. It is worth quoting Radhakrishnan in this context. He says:

The great ideals of our culture cannot be discarded; but their embodiment in forms and institutions we must get beyond. There is no reversing history. We must steer clear of a radical revolution as well as of a return to the past.64

While it is possible to think of conflict between institutions and modernization, we need not think of any conflict or incompatibility between traditional doctrines and modernization. This means that institutions may change without affecting the essential doctrines of a tradition. If rationality, freedom of expression and conduct, human dignity and creativity are considered to be the criteria of a modern society, then there is no conflict between the universal and eternal doctrines of the Hindu tradition and modernization. The basic principles of the humanism of Confucius, of the mysticism of Mencius, and of the metaphysics of Taoism have not become outmoded. Taken together, they constitute the spiritual culture of China. They are compatible with, and provide room for, modernization.

Notes

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, sixth impression, 1988), pp. 51-52.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, tr. Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, reprinted 1980), p. 6 e.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Sri Aurobindo, *op.cit*., p. 2.
7. *Taittirīya Upanisad*, 3.1.1.
8. Quoted by Denis Kenny, "Science, Creativity and Morality," in *Holistic Science and Human Values* (Madras: Theosophical Society, 1995), p. 41.
9. *Brhadārayaka Upanisad*, 3.7.15.
10. See his commentary on the *Taittirīya Upanisad*, 2.1.1.
11. *Aitareya Ārayaka*, 2.3.2.5.
12. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, tr. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem (New York: Paulst Press, 1987), p. 141.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 5.632.
15. *Ibid.*, 5.641.
16. *g-veda*, 1.164.46.
17. Sri Aurobindo, *op.cit*., p. 139.
18. 4.5.15.

19. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p. 32 e.
20. Sri Aurobindo, *op.cit*., pp. 172-173.
21. See his commentary on the *Brahma-s_tra*, 4.3.14.
22. *Kaha Upanisad*, 1.2.2.
23. M. Hiriyanna, *Indian Conception of Values* (Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishers, 1975), p. 244.
24. Sri Aurobindo, *op.cit*., pp. 140-141.
25. *Mundaka Upanisad*, 1.1.4.
26. *Chāndogya Upanisad*, 7.1.3.
27. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.1.
28. Sri Aurobindo, *op.cit*., p. 183.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
31. Sankara's commentary on the *Taittirīya Upanisad*, 1.9.1.
32. *Jābāla Upanisad*, 4.
33. 12.15.
34. Quoted by Fung Yu-Lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1958 4th printing), op. 309.
35. *Confucian Analects*, XII. 11.
36. *Ibid.*, 6-28.
37. Quoted by John R. Williams, *Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion*, SR Supplements/2 (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), p. 118.
38. *Brhadārayaka Upanisad*, 5.2.
39. *Ibid.*, Sankara's commentary.
40. *Confucian Analects*, IV.16.
41. 2.47.
42. *Confucian Analects*, XIV. 38.
43. 18.14-15
44. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad-gītā* (Bombay: Blackie India Ltd., 6th edn., reprint 1977), p. 356.
45. *Mencius*, II a.6.
46. *Ibid.*, VII a. 45.
47. *Ibid.*, I a. 7.
48. *Īavāsya Upanisad*, 6-7.
49. *Ibid.*, Sankara's commentary.
50. See *Chuang-tzu*, chapter 40.
51. See *Lao-tzu*, chapter 3.
52. The first chapter of the *Chuang-tzu* is entitled "The Happy Excursion."
53. See *Chuang-tzu*, chapter 1.
54. *Chāndogya Upanisad*, 7.24.1.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*
57. A.N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (Cambridge: CUP, 1953), p. 250.
58. See Amit Goswami and Maggie Goswami, *Science and Spirituality: A Quantum Integration* (Delhi: PHISPC, A-15, Nirman Vihar, 1997).
59. See Henryk Skolimowski, *Dancing Shiva in the Ecological Age* (New Delhi: Clarion Books, 1991), p. 18.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-1.
61. *Ibid.*, see chapter 2 for a detailed and fascinating account of the development of science.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
64. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), p. 138.

Report on

The Sikh Religious Tradition

Bhajan S. Badwal

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the five seminal issues pertinent to the preparation of documents for the anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* in 2005, regarding the non-Christian tradition of Sikhism.

What Is the Nature of Sikhism and What Are Its Salient Characteristics?

The word *Sikh*, meaning disciple, or learner, is the Punjabi form of the Sanskrit, *Shishya*. Therefore, the Sikhs are disciples or followers of the *Gurus*, or teachers, from Nanak to Gobind Singh, ten in all. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in the state of Punjab, India (near what is now Lahore, Pakistan, following the Partition of India). He was born in April 1469. The Sikh religion began with the revelation of the *Divine Essence and Love for Mankind* enshrined in the teaching of Guru Nanak Dev. It is essentially humanitarian and democratic, both in its metaphysical basis and historically, adhering firmly to these goals.

Guru Nanak's creed was that God alone was to be worshipped in spirit by constantly meditating on His Name (Noumenon) and by feeling His Presence in every place and all the time. Therefore, Guru Nanak firmly rejected idolatry in all its forms, strictly adhering to monotheism, the first principle of Sikhism. The second principle of Sikhism is God's Name is Truth. The third principle is that God is the Creator of All. Nanak's principles of Sikhism may be reduced to a single formula: The Unity and Fatherhood of God and the Equality, Fraternity, and Brotherhood of Man as the foundation of All Truth.

Guru Nanak stressed that there was only One God for everyone. For Nanak, there was no such thing as a God for Hindus, a God for Mohammedans, a God for Christians, and for others: there was but One God, One Soul, indivisible, self-existent, incomprehensible, timeless, all-pervading, and indescribable. According to Sikhism, God is the Fountain of All Truth and His works and creation are founded upon His Truth. Guru Nanak's idea of *Creator* and *Creation* abrogated all petty distinctions of creed and sect, dogma and ceremony. He believed in the principle of One Truth, and that truth triumphs throughout all of creation. Based upon God as the *Creator* of all, including mankind, Guru Nanak brought about a new consciousness which refused to recognize the distinctions between man and man. He attacked the citadel of the caste system. He believed that salvation could be achieved not by virtue of birth, but by devotion and noble deeds. In addition, he proclaimed that women were also equal in the eyes of God. Therefore, women are greatly respected in the Sikh community, and all men are regarded as brothers.

However, Guru Nanak believed that the real cause of dissension and misery of the people was their disunity born of diversity of belief. He sought, therefore, through Truth, to bring them together in both thought and deed, inculcating a common mode of worship and a common social organization, based upon the equality of mankind. He laid the foundation of the *Sangat*, or mixed congregation, where his disciples met as brothers-in-faith, sang the hymns of the Guru, and derived inspiration for remolding their lives. He also established a free community-kitchen, *Guru ka Langer*, where all sat and ate together in the same row (*Pangat*) regardless of distinctions of caste, creed, or status in life. Thus, the Hindus, Muslims, Brahmins, and Sudras were brought by Guru

Nanak to a common social level. Therefore, his institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat*(mixed congregation and communal sitting together to share the meal or *Langar*) brought before the people the vision of a classless democratic society where all could claim equal status.

Guru Nanak based this new social order upon three truths:

1. to earn through the sweat of one's brow; that "work is worship"
2. to share one's earnings with the needy or charity
3. to recite God's Name.

By the first precept, Guru Nanak meant that man should not be lazy, but do an honest days work for an honest days earning. In addition, a man should not have to beg or steal for a living. The second precept illustrates Guru Nanak's concept of charity, to share and not be selfish, and to give to those less fortunate. The third precept, to exercise one's faith by reciting God's Name, is to be practiced through the recitation of the phrase, "*Wahe Guru*," meaning "ineffable teacher." Another common phrase is spoken as a greeting between Sikhs upon meeting: "*Sat Shri Akal*," meaning "God's name is Truth."

In his book of revelatory hymns, the *Japji*, written in poetic metaphor, Guru Nanak emphatically states in his introductory scripture, "*Ek Onkar, A Sat Nam, Kurta Purkh*" which means "God is One, His Name is Truth, He is the Creator." These three precepts form the basis of the Sikh religion, along with the concept that equality is an innate quality of mankind as recipients of life from God, the *Creator*. The Sikhs are a unique community which instills the concept of the brotherhood of mankind, both spiritually and pragmatically.

What Can Sikhism Hope to Contribute to the Religious Patrimony of Humankind?

Guru Nanak espoused the doctrine that God Is One, the *Supreme Creator*, and therefore, the Father of all mankind. Therefore, Sikhism exemplifies the creed of brotherhood and equality by abolishing the caste system and elevating women to equal status. Guru Nanak instituted great changes in the minds of his disciples which had far-reaching effects on human rights as well as the rights of women. By establishing the foundation for the concept of a universal *Creator* of a universal brotherhood of mankind, based upon the fundamental precept of Truth, Sikhism raises an ensign to the world for Equality and Fraternity for all. This is a fitting contribution to the patrimony of humankind.

What Does Sikhism Expect from Other Religions-What Form of Recognition?

Primarily, Sikhism seeks to be acknowledged by other world religions as being a unique manifestation of God's revelation of the Divine Essence and Love as the *Supreme Creator* of the Universe and mankind. Secondarily, Sikhism would aspire to be and ensign for human rights and the universal brotherhood of mankind, espousing the ideal of equality for all. Thirdly, Sikhism would like to be an emblem of God's Truth for all humanity to recognize that God and Truth are One.

What Are the Interests of Sikhism in Dialogue with Other Religions and How Could They Best Be Implemented?

Sikhism would seek to dialogue with other religions concerning a universal definition, mutually understandable, of God: Who He is; What is His Truth; What are His Purposes; What is His Purpose for mankind; How can mankind cooperate to accomplish these purposes in the conduct of his life and how can mankind help to further the establishment of equality, brotherhood and human rights for all as components of an ideal society. These ideals also encompass the goals of the temporal well being of mankind, that is providing for the welfare and basic needs of all (men, women, and especially children). They also include the spiritual salvation of all mankind irrespective of race, creed, or country of origin, and respect for all religions even if they exhibit differences from our own. It is important for an enlightened society to establish Truth and Justice for all.

Sikhs deem it wise to enlist the assistance of all religions of the world to establish Truth and Justice in their respective spheres of influence and are, thereby, open to all dialogue concerning the same. Interfaith communication is the predominant means to that end. However, cooperation of world governments must be enlisted by the various religions to help insure equality, justice, and human rights for all by enacting laws for the protection of these ideals. Concomitantly, the various respective religions of the world should encourage society, in general, to respect and sustain these ideals for the good of mankind.

What Might a Revised Nostra Aetate Say with Regard to Sikhism?

A revised *Nostra Aetate* might include the following ideas concerning Sikhism:

1. That Sikhism is its own discrete religion with its own revelation through Guru Nanak of the *Divine Essence and Love*. It is a fallacy to think of Sikhism as a sect or faction of Hinduism. Sikhism believes in the integrity of one God-God is One. Sikhism rejects idolatry in any form. Another misconception about Sikhism is that it is an offshoot of Islam. It is not. Sikhism does not follow the teachings of Mohammed nor the Koran. Sikhism follows the teachings of Guru Nanak an the other nine *Gurus* and their own unique revelations concerning the *Divine Essence and Love* as set forth in their Holy Book, *The Guru Granth Sahib*.

2. That Sikhism upholds and sustains God's Truth everywhere and at all times and believes that God's Name is Truth and that His Name should be meditated upon at all times and in all circumstances.

3. That as *Creator*, the Fatherhood of God is established, and through that Fatherhood all mankind is bound by a sacred fraternal relationship, the brotherhood of mankind. All men are, therefore, created equal under God, irrespective of race, creed, or nationality. All men are entitled to Equality, Justice, and Human Rights.

4. Sikhism respects the right of all other religions to exist and claims the right of existence for itself, also. Sikhism, therefore, proclaims respect for all religions and expects that respect to be reciprocated.

Report on Buddhism

George F. McLean and *John P. Hogan*

Introduction

Buddhism is the English term for the teaching of the Buddha or the religion found by him. In its original name it is known as dhamma-Vinaya or Buddha-Sasana in Thailand. The word 'Buddha' is not his name, but a title meaning the Enlightened or Awakened One, the bearer of Nibbana which is the highest goal in Buddhism. He was given that name by his disciple and the people when he attained or discovered the Four Noble Truths. His personal name was Siddhattha and his clan name was Godtama, born as a prince in North India in 623 BC. After six years wandering as an ascetic to find a way for the extinction of suffering he realized that asceticism did not lead to wisdom and decided to go on the Middle Way applying reflective thought through conscious meditation. At present Buddhism is spread across the world in two broad traditions:1

1. The first one is *Theravada* (Elders' words) Buddhism, which is also known as 'southern' Buddhism or Hinayana (small vehicle in the sense of being a conservative school) followed by over 100 million in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Its canonical scriptures are preserved in Pali, an ancient Indian language closely related to Sanskrit. The school exemplifies a certain conservatism.

2. The second is *Acariyavada* (later teachers' words) Buddhism, which is known as Mahayana (great vehicle in the sense of being a liberal school) Buddhism. This is further divided into 2 lines as follows:

(1) 'Eastern' Buddhism followed by 500 million to one billion people in the East Asian tradition of China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Its scriptures are preserved in Sanskrit and Chinese; it has coexisted with Confucianism, Taoism and Shintoism.

(2) 'Northern' Buddhism or Tibetan Buddhism is followed by over 20 million in the Tibetan tradition. Its scriptures are preserved in Tibetan and its outlook is broadly that of the eastern Mahayana; its more specific orientation is that of the 'Vehicle of the Diamond Thunderbolt' (*vajra-yana*), also known as Tantric Buddhism.

What Is the Nature and Salient Characteristics of Buddhism?

The Spirit of Buddhism and the Buddha as a religion has a number of different aspects such as truth, art, culture, philosophy and so on, just as the same mountain when viewed from different directions presents different appearances. But the only one to which Buddhists should pay more attention is "Buddhism as a religion," which is concerned essentially with all the human problems and their solutions. It is a religion of action and not of mere belief; it can be measured only by experience and not by argument. The chief purpose of Buddhism is to know things as they are. This essentially implies the fact that the Buddha is purified and perfected with what is called the 'Three Trainings' (*tisikkhas*) of 'morality' (*sila*), 'concentration' (*samadhi*), and 'wisdom' (*panna*), and the 'Three Buddha's Conducts'(*Buddhacariya*) of the 'well-being of the world', 'the benefit of his kith and kin,' and 'the beneficial conduct as duty of the Buddha,'(DhA.III,441). It is

not a system of metaphysics, but rather a collection of truths about life discovered by the Buddha; his enlightenment is not a kind of mystic experience, but a gradual mode of action and conduct."

The salient characteristics of Buddhism include:

A Religion of Enlightenment: In contrast to other world religions, Buddhism does not accept the concept of a Creator God but holds that the world originates in accordance with the law of causation.2 There is a fixed order or nature of phenomena, a regular pattern of phenomena or conditionality (paticcasamupada) (S.II.25). The Buddha realizes the Four Noble Truth not by God's revelation, but by his own effort and wisdom (D.I.22).

A Religion of Wisdom: According to Buddhism, faith is necessary but not sufficient for the realization of Nibbana; it is to be balanced with wisdom. Faith without wisdom is blind and misleading (*sumangalavilasini*, II, 403). Wisdom is reckoned chief for attaining Nibbana," (S.V.231).

A Religion of Rationality: According to Buddhism, everything in this world functions under five natural laws, namely 'physical law concerned with change of temperature, seasons and other physical events' (*utu-niyama*), 'biological law concerned with heredity' (*bija-niyama*), 'psychological law concerned with the work of mind' (*citta-niyama*), 'law of cause and effect' (*kamma-niyama*) and 'law of cause and conditions' (*dhamma-niyama*), (DA.II.432). The first four laws are essentially included in the fifth or dhammic law. The dhammic law can be analytically both conditional and non-conditional: the former is subject to change and cannot be controlled. But both conditional and non-conditional laws are non-self (A.I.285).

The Buddha once asked the *Kalamas* not to accept anything by mere reports, traditions, authority of religious texts, logic, inference, appearances, agreement with a considered and approved theory, or seeming possibilities, and so on, but to examine it for themselves whether it is right or wrong, wholesome or unwholesome, and accept it or give up it when they had themselves known it. The Buddha went even further to tell the monks that he himself should be examined by them, in order to be convinced about the value of his teachings, but the Buddha never wanted the Order of Monks (*sangha*) to depend on him forever.

A Religion of Balanced Development: As Buddhism preaches the middle way of development, ideal persons are those who achieve four kinds of developments, i.e. 1) physical,emphasizing on the development of body as well as its material environment; 2) social, with an emphasis on good relationship with other people, done by observing precepts; 3) mental, with an emphasis on having good mental qualities such as love, compassion and so on, done by practicing meditation; and 4) intellectual, with an emphasis on insight meditation.

A Religion of Democracy: In Buddhism, one has freedom to judge by oneself whether one's own views are right or wrong. We must tread the Path to liberation ourselves. Buddhism places its emphasis on three democratic principles, namely liberty, equality and fraternity of the democracy system.,First, the principle of liberty is emphasized by Buddhism through the freedom of thought, speech and enquiry. Secondly, the Buddha was the first teacher to raise a voice against the caste system and preach social equality for all. The principle of fraternity is clearly stated by the Buddha when he advises people to cultivate loving kindness and compassion towards their fellow-beings.

A Religion of Peace: Peace is the main teaching of the Buddha "There is no higher happiness than peace (*natthi santi param sukham*)," (Dh.202). The meaning of peace here is Nibbana. The Buddha always instructs his followers to be patient towards others and not to turn to violent means

to solve conflicts: "Conquer anger with love; conquer evil with good; conquer the miser with generosity; and conquer the liar with truth," (Dh. 223). Cultivate and spread unlimited loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity towards others (D.II.196).

Although there are some differences in their external practices such as rituals and ceremonies, both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism maintain the following main teachings of the Buddha:

1. belief in the Triple Gem: The Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha or Disciples.
2. belief in the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self.
3. belief in Doctrine of Dependent Origination and Nibbana.
4. belief in the Doctrine of Kamma and Rebirth.
5. belief in the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Noble Paths.
6. analysis of Man into the Five Aggregates and Twelve Bases.

What Can Buddhism Hope to Contribute to hhe Religious Patrimony of Humankind?

The teachings peculiar to Buddhism are the concepts of 'non-self' (*anatta*) and 'insight meditation' (*vipassana*).

Non-self (Anatta): Usually people cling to beauty, feelings, perceptions, thinking, planning and consciousness. By analyzing this we see that the person is a conscious continuity in this flux. Meditating on this the Buddha could not find a self.

In contrast to Hinduism's central concentration upon the self, Buddhism is the only religion that preaches the doctrine of 'non-self' (*anatta*) in Theravada Buddhism or 'emptiness' (*sunyata*) in Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddha's reasons for denying the self are centred on the analysis of nature of man.

The true idea of man in Buddhism is that of'a psycho- physical complex' (*nama-rupa*) conditioned and determined by what is called an antecedent state in the process of 'becoming' (*bhava*) in which both action (*karma*) and reaction (*karmaphala*) play an essential part in the development of personality. On the other hand, man as perceived from within and without, is analyzed into a collection of 'five aggregates' (*pancakkhandha*) of changing elements, namely, the group of his looks , sentiments, perceptional outfit, mental pre-dispositions, and acts of consciousness such as remembering, thinking and so on. The first group is called 'matter', as named earlier, but the last four are together termed 'mind', and they are collectively called *nama-rupa*. Another classification of man distinguishes cognitive faculties and the different categories of the objects.

Buddhism regards man's life in its reality as composed of the constituent "five aggregates", which when combined we speak of as the 'chariot' or 'car'; e.g. when, these five aggregates are present, we use the designation 'man' or 'being', (SN,I,135). Generally speaking, the purpose of analysis is to enrich the understanding of man about what he is not, technically called non-self.

Of the Four Noble Truths, the first which is called suffering is the nucleus around which the remaining truths assemble. The first truth includes all the problems of life comprising birth, old age, disease, death, despair and so on; life is a burden; to be is to suffer and the way out would consist in going out of the existence. Suffering is thus the essence as well as the destiny of man. Its most important factor is the inherent 'impermanence' (*anicca*) of man and things; there is only Becoming (*bhava*). This replacement of the Upanisadic idea of Being by that of Becoming and the

view of the universe as an uninterrupted and ununified stream of momentary particulars is the distinct contribution of Buddhism to Indian thought.

The second truth is that the cause of suffering is ignorance (*avijja*) that makes man cling to the sense of his ego and through it to the world. This truth includes the law of cause and effect (*paticcasamuppada*) and the immutable law of *karma* and rebirth.

The third truth is that by stopping the operation of the cause of suffering, it is possible to uproot suffering. This is Dependent Cessation, otherwise called *Nirvana*.

The fourth truth is that to achieve complete freedom from suffering ignorance must be uprooted, and one becomes a perfected person or *Arahant*. This truth suggests the Middle Way (*Majjhimapatipada*), comprising the eight constituents of the Noble Path, further organized into the 'Threefold Training' (*tisikkha*) as a short practical way.

The Anti-Speculative Attitude**:** the Buddha is an ethical teacher, a reformist, a revolutionary and a reconstructionist, but not a metaphysician. The message of his enlightenment reveals to man the way of life that leads beyond suffering. When the Buddha was asked about the metaphysical questions (*avyakatapanhas*), (DN,I,187-188), as to 'whether the world is eternal' (*sasato loko*), 'whether the soul is identical with the body' (*tam jivam tam sariram*), and so on, he avoided discussing them as entangling one in the net of the theories he himself has woven (DN,I,44). All these metaphysical problems can be understood by analysing the doctrine of *Paticcasamuppada* or the Four Noble Truths; the Buddha analysed only the things that are realistic and not merely apparent.

Human Nature3 According To Buddhism: Buddhism regards the human being as superior to all and entirely different from other animals in respect of mentality, according to Buddhim, there are three 'immoral roots' *(akasalamula),* namely, lust (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), which are regarded as the original cause of ignorance (*avijja*). The real nature of an ordinary man is always entangled with the impurities (*kilesas*) and worldly pleasures and he is always guided by ignorance.

In support of doing good, avoiding evil and purifying one's mind (DN,II,49), the Buddha preached the Middle Path as the criterion of the best man. His five characteristics are: being not credulous, knowing the uncreated, having severed all ties, having put an end to opportunity and having removed all desires. In short, man is defined by his actions – what he did, what he is doing, and what he will do; so his nature is conditioned by his own action or *kamma*. The main purpose of the Buddha's denial of the self is to enable his disciples to shed the grasping of the self. So long as grasping of the self in any form persists, there can be no real liberation.

Insight Meditation: There is both similarity and difference here in Christian mystics such as John of the Cross. They would agree heartily with the need to eliminate clinging. That reflects an illusory self made up of feelings, desires, and the multiple distractions, such as TV and the continual flow of the passing phenomena or new happenings called "news".

Under these ephemeral illusions and the illusory self they constitute, however, there is a person who in contrast to the illusory self could be called a "nonself," but who in relation to God's creative grace is made truly to be or to exist in this image. The Christian might also speak of "non self" in the sense that God is the self in me, and what I interpose between me and Him must ultimately be non real: "I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me" wrote the Apostle Paul. Insight meditated is needed in order to recognize this.

The thrust of Buddhism as of Hinduism is to recognize the illusory character of all that stands in the way of the deeper awareness. Buddhism would extend this even to disputes over the nature

of God, nirvana, etc. as modes of attachment. Only insight meditation can enable one to be aware of the non-self. This implies that the proper path is not one of high theory leading to speculative understanding in which we grasp the truth, but one of practice opening to living non attachment and emptying oneself.

An Orthodox Christian noted that all religions have this as they see the person as an hypostasis and as spiritual which cannot be defined, but nirvana is a negation of any self. The teaching of non self is beyond self as body or mind or any combination of the two. This is required in order to let God be God, in which light there is no difference between denial and affirmation of the divine self. In as much as self has any inherent delimitating or differentiating character these must be denied in order to open the mind and heart to the divine which is all in all.

An African noted that the mind of his people is strongly sensible to being part of a whole, but has difficulty in speaking of non-self. What is characteristically African is to be an active self. Yet there is in this some similarity to the constantly changing Buddhist pattern of the five aggregates. African culture has perhaps a sense of the non self in its awareness of God as beyond the empirical self or atman. This forgetfulness of self (samsara) becomes nirvana Theravada Buddhism would strongly emphasize the ephemeral character of all the components of the world, each of which is not ultimately different but only a different proportion of the same 5 elements. Our ultimate witnesses to this is silence.

African approaches to this lie in its sense of community and its rejection of sin and evil as assertions of the self which are disruptive of the community and of the value placed on retaining one's equanimity in the face of adversity, e.g., should one's possessions be lost or stolen.

A Chinese participant saw similarities to Daoism in the Buddhist elements of detachment, overcoming of self, compassion and loving kindness, and in the way God, nature and man are integrated in a way that enhances the quality of life.

A number noted that death is a major issue for all religions each of which responds in its own way. Buddhism would respond by insight meditation which takes one beyond the conventional sense of self as body and mind which is subject to death and opens upon the non-self which is not effected by death. The proper practice of three domains leads one to the extinction of wheel of life and to the state of noble man:

1. Morality: The virtuous person must refrain from killing, stealing, committing adultery, telling a lie and taking intoxicating drinks. Malpractice in these exterminates the roots of one's humanity.

2. Concentration: This means single-pointedness of mind; it is bliss, peace and the power of mind. Concentration meditation will lead one to tranquility of mind only.

3. Wisdom: Wisdom or understanding means knowledge and insight of the real nature of things. It is the understanding of things as they really are. This is the final step of *Buddhism*, for only wisdom can penetrate and eliminate the root cause of desire and ignorance and the more subtle types of defilement. Therefore, wisdom is regarded as penetrative knowledge, i.e. to penetrate into suffering, its origination, its extinction and the path leading to its extinction. The two main kinds of insight meditation are: 1. Tranquillity Leading to Insight, according to which process the mind becomes single-pointed at the outset with the potentiality of some objects of meditation; and 2. Insight Leading to Tranquillity, according to which the meditator depending on wisdom first considers the nature of things in respect of imperamanence and so on, and then his mind, released from the mental-objects, his mind becomes single-pointed providing an insight into the Noble Path.

In conclusion we may say that the Buddha's teachings can be classified into three phases, viz.: Reformation or reinterpretation, revolution and reconstruction.

1. In the phase of *reformation***,** the Buddha rejected the caste-system, immolation-sacrifice austerity, self-mortification and so on. Being moved by human suffering he recounced the world Buddhism eradicated inequalities and established human dignity; its purpose was not to destroy the old social order, but to reform it.

The Buddha did not deny that there were Brahmins in the world, but held that a person could be called 'Brahmin' only because of his virtue (*Dharma* or *karma*) and not because of his birth (*jati*). Women's emancipation had an important place in Buddhism. Women were admitted to the*Sangha* on an equal basis along with men. Both men and women have equal rights.

He rejected an immolation- sacrifice in which many kinds of animals were killed. But he was in favour of a sacrifice in which the blood was not shed and taught people to perform non-violent sacrifices such as regular charity, observing five precepts, and so on. Self- sacrifice is more powerful than all ritualistic sacrifices.

2. In the *revolutionary* phase, the Buddha brought about a total and radical change in some respect in the traditional beliefs. The doctrine of 'permanent self' (*Atman*), for example, was rejected and replaced by the doctrine of 'non-self' (*Anatta*), the Hindu yoga by Insight meditation, and sensual indulgence and self-mortification by the Middle Path.

The Buddha strongly condemned the religious austerity which was a common practice among the Brahmanas and the Jains and recommended the simple life and strict self-restraint. The Buddha found virtue in the 'Middle Way' (*Majjhimapatipada*). By avoiding the two extremes the Buddha has gained perfect knowledge of the Middle Path to *Nirvana*. Buddhism denies all kinds of permanent souls (*atman*), but accepts the doctrine of *Anatta*, which is based on the analysis of the five *khandhas* in the *Anattalakkhana-Sutta*, (DN,II,100). The denial of the soul is said to be opposed to the doctrine of *Atta*, which is propounded by the Upanisadic thinkers, who believe that the soul is "autonomous", that it is the "inner controller of name and form." The Buddha asserts that what is apprehended as "self" or "*Atman*" is only an illusion. When man is mentioned by the terms *ayatana* 'sense-fields' and *dhatu* 'elements,' he is to be analysed on the basis of his physical and mental environment. The doctrine of *Atman* is, therefore, superseded by the doctrine of *Anatta.*

3. For *reconstruction*, which is the most important phase, the Buddha discovers a new 'truth' (*sacca*) called the Four Noble Truths, the Dependent Origination, 24 relations and so on. The doctrine of the Four Noble Truths enumerated by the Buddha in his first sermon is the most basic, profound and original, for which he deserves to be called the Buddha. It is apparent that the Four Noble Truths are nothing but the gradual self-development with the aim of breaking away from the *karma* and *samsara* to the state of *Nirvana*.

Buddhism is a religion of reason as well as of salvation. Whatever is found in reason and is in accordance with objective truth, no matter who stated it, was never rejected by the Buddha.

What Buddhists Expect from Other Religions, What Form of Recognition?

The above mentioned salient features of Buddhism should be recognized properly for the purpose of mutual understanding, collaboration, and peaceful co-existence with each other.\

Normally in Thailand, all Thai Buddhists observe the custom of offering food to monks and attending the *Uposatha* service.This is not something that Christianity could replicate as it might the two great rites of ordination and the funeral ceremony. Everywhere one is expected to live in accordance with the five precepts, revere the monks, and mark the annual cycle through the four festivals of Songkran, Visakha Puja, Vassa and Kathin.

Other important ceremonies proper to Buddhists are:

1. Morning Alms Round: Monks on their early alms round are not "begging", but rather an occasion for common folks to merit in the only way they can afford to.

2. Thot Pha Pa: It is a tradition which dates back to the times of the Buddha when monks were expected to use cast-off cloth. To help the monks in their search for usable cloth, devotees would present saffron robes and other essential commodities to the monks.

The ceremony may be organized at any time of the year to raise much needed funds for the poorer monasteries in remote areas of the country.

3. Thot Kathin: In this ceremony the assembly of monks elects a deserving and respected colleague to receive the robes. This ceremony be done by lay people supports monks, who have spent three months in a particular residence to concentrate on meditation and practice the dhamma studies.

4. In Thailand, the word ‘Sanghraja’ (Supreme Patriarch) is used to address the highest position of all senior monks and should not be applied to the Christian priests.

What Are Its Interests in Dialogue with Other Religions; How Could They Best Be Implemented?

Buddhism is ready to open for dialogue to any world religions. This activity is known in the Buddhist context as dhamma discussion and in the Buddha’s time all were encouraged to engage in it with both Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

Buddhists can collaborate with Christian in various types of dialogue done sincerely.4 The spirit of dialogue which included the principles of reverence, tolerance, understanding, and freedom, is evident in the dialogue of the Buddha and King Asoka’s attitude to other religions. In the Asoka’s time, one finds a happy combination of openness to other faiths and commitment of one’s own faith; a willingness to promote what is the best in other faiths and a passion to propagate one’s own faith. As it is written his Rock Edict XII thus: "King Piyadarsi honors men of all faiths….The faith of others all deserved to be honored for one reason and another. By honoring them, on exalts one’s own faith and at the same time performs a service to the faith of others. …For if a man extols his own faith and disparages another because of devotion to his own and because he wants to glorify it, he seriously injures his own faith. Therefore, concord alone is commendable, for through condcord men may learn and respect the conception of dhamma accepted by others."

The dialogue of life and action are most desirable in a situation of religious pluralism for mutual understanding, and enrichment, for dispelling suspicion and prejudices, for harnessing moral and spiritual values to eradicate social evil, and for promoting social justice.5

What Might a Revised *Nostra Aetate* Say with Regard to the Buddhist Tradition?

a. Some attitudes and policies for collaborations as set forth by the Second Vatican Council should be revised, for example: "The most profitable collaboration will be the work which our experts will carry out with the texts and with the Buddhist book so as to absorb the good elements into the local Christian culture."6 This can lead to misunderstanding between the two religions if "absorb" is taken as stealing from Buddhism or as an adjustment of Christianity in order to attract converts.

b. It is difficult for non-Christians to accept the wording of the Second Vatican Council that: "Those who through no fault of their own are still ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church yet sincerely seek God and, with the help of divine grace, strive to do his will as known to them through the voice of their conscience, those men can attain to eternal salvation."7 This would appear to dismiss the significance of Buddhism or other religions if salvation is possible despite, rather than with, them.

c. Clarifications are needed from the author of the book entitled *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (edited by Vittorio Messori, New York; Alfred A Knopf, 1994) in order for a future *Nostra Aetate* to be a guideline for interfaith dialogue.

d. Continued participation by Christians in the Thai traditions as in the past decades will help create mutual understanding between followers of two religions.

One significant issue might be interpreted as a matter of clinging proper to interchange between religions. "Leader" is a relational term that depends on "followers." It has been the pitfall of some religions that they actively seek to enlist disciples or followers. Yet at the same time it is proper to share with others one's awareness of the good and of how to attain it: the "good news". This suggests the importance of shifting the focus from works of conversion to those of enablement centered on enabling people to overcome selfish feelings, to understand true happiness i.e. true life, and to develop this quality of life.

If this is the project then the intent of the Buddha and Christ are far from alien: indeed Christ said his father had sent him so that all might have life and have it more abundantly. Future teaching and documents should be concerned to assure that this convergence is recognized and built upon for the proper enrichment of all in order that the quality of the life of humankind be enhanced.

Correspondingly Buddhist would say that dharma belongs to everyone not only to Buddhists and that dharma can be lived only with sincerity. Hence we need to overcome the grasping and clinging whereby we try to protect ourselves against others by our knowledge, or by belief that we are more intelligent, and that we belong to God. We need to instead to let go, to avoid contrasting ourselves to others, and to seek how we can help each other to a deeper spiritual awareness.

For this it was suggested that H.G. Gadamer's notion of a fusion of horizons could be helpful. One suggested that, from his own non-religious perspective, all religions appeared to be the same and to be bent upon the same high minded mission. Gadamer's suggestion of a fusion of horizon is not at all to abstract from difference as unimportant but rather to recognize that we all begin in our own religious and cultural traditions, and that it is in meeting others we are enabled by them to delve afresh and more deeply into our tradition to bring forth more of its truth. In coordination with a similar dynamic on the part of the others all can move forward in what will be a richer fusion of horizons.

With any claim by a tradition to be complete must go a radical obligation to mine its potentialities and bring forth treasures that are both old and new. Any tradition that speaks of the ultimate self must realize the superhuman epistemological task of overcoming the delimitations by which we frame our concepts, just as any tradition that would speak in terms of non-self must face

the metaphysical task of unveiling the meaning essential to the quality of life. The fusion of horizons somewhere beyond self and non-self may be a goal to which we can point but never express, and hence before this we must stand in a silence which is not dumbness. Fortunately to live with others is essential to our nature as humans and to dialogue with others in this global context can point to eternal light and happiness.

But if now we must attend to living, we know also that as Heidegger noted, our temporal being is characteristically toward death. Hence, we must live more deeply than our temporal life, so that in dying to self we resurrect in life eternal. The question perhaps is how to exchange and enrich this language of death and resurrection which is the essential imprint of the Christian mind in a fusion of horizon with Hindus who can speak and live so deeply the sense of self and with Buddhists who live equally richly a sense of the non-self. The utter disaster for humankind would be for any of these to lose their unique religious sensibility; the great prize newly possible in our global age is a fusion of horizons in which each might have life and that more fully.

In conclusion, the Second Vatical Council on the Nostra Aetate is a kind of an initial affirmation of the importance of dialogue and of positive regard for other religions. It shows the state of broad-mindedness of Christianity to help human beings of different faiths and the world to exist with each other peacefully. This truth is also proved by the preamble of UNESCO: "…since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

Buddadasa Bhikkhu, who is recognized as the Nagarjuna of Thailand and the Socrates of Asia, said it well: "If, however, a person has penetrated to the fundamental nature (dhamma) of religion, he will regard all religions as essentially similar. Although he may say there is Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on, he will also say that essentially they are all the same. If he should go to a deeper understanding of dhamma until finally he realizes the absolute truth, he would discover that there is no such thing called religion, that there is no Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam." (Me and Mine,1989, p.146).

Whatever be said of silence regarding this absolute truth, today we find ourselves on the road (*in via*) thereto. In this global age it is newly possible and an urgent requisite for peace to be able to be conscious of the fact that the pathways of other pilgrim peoples are convergent, to resonate with the sacredness in their holy chants, and to value the holy wisdom of their sacred texts in a dialogue that leads toward true liberation and perpetual peace.

Notes

1. Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 1. He divided Buddhism into 3 lines, namely Theravada, Mahayana and Tibetan.

2. This causal law can be expressed by a formula : "when this is, that is; this arising, that arises. When this is not, that is not; this ceasing, that ceases." Its general principle can be illustrated by a series of twelve factors: "Conditioned by ignorance are mental and kammic formations…. Conditioned by birth are old age, death, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair…. Through the cessation of ignorance, mental and kammic formation cease….Through the cessation birth, old age, death, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair cease," (M.III.63).

3. For the sake of comparison and comprehension, the nature of man according to other philosophers, whose philosophical ideas regarding man are quite acceptable, should be brought into consideration in order to grasp that of the Buddha clearly. Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher, whose thought is negative about man, speaks of man’s nature as selfish. He is

interested only in justifying the selfish temperaments of human beings. John Locke (1632-1704 A.D) believes that man by nature is a rational and social creature, and as such he is capable of recognizing and living in a moral order. He feels sympathy, humanitarianism, and tenderness towards his fellow beings. Unlike Hobbes, Locke did not take a dark picture of human nature because in his time, the situations were peaceful and excellent. Rousseau (1712-1778) agrees with Plato in believing that human nature is essentially good. Nature has endowed man with two primal instincts, of which one is the instinct of self-love, and the other is the instinct of sympathy or mutual help. William Godwin believed that all minds at the time of birth represent a *tabula rasa*, but all men are born endowed with reason. Man stands, in the words of Julian Huxley, at the cross-roads of evolution, men are animals with a difference, that they are capable of reasoning and conceptual thought, creative imagination and communication by speech symbols. According to Dawin's gradualism, man is a product of evolution. In conclusion, these philosophers picture the nature of man in a positive manner in the light of good will, and give a better picture of man than Hobbes, Freud, Marx and Machavelli, who were of the view that men by nature were ungrateful, feeble, deceitful, cowardly and avaricious, fond of wealth; and ambition and envy are powerful emotions of human actions.

4. There are 10 basic ground rules of inter-religious dialogue as follows: 1) the primary purpose of dialogue is to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality and then to act accordingly; 2) inter-religious dialogue must be a two-sided project within each religious community and between religious community; 3) each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity; 4) each participant must assume a similar complete honest and sincerity in the other partners; 5) each participant must define oneself, say for example, the Buddhist can define from the inside what is means to be a Buddhist; 6) each participant must come to the dialogue with no fast assumptions as to where the points of disagreement are; 7) dialogue can take place only between equals, for example, each side should not view each other as superior or inferior; 8) dialogue can take place only on the basis of mutual trust; 9) person entering into inter-religious dialogue must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves and one own tradition; and 10) each participant eventually must attempt to experience the partner's religion from within. John Dunne speaks of 'passing over' into another's religious experience and then coming back broadened and deepended. See Jutakarn Yothasamuthr, *Inter-Religious Relations: A Comparative Study of Buddhism and Islam in Bangkok, Thailand* (Bangkok: Midol University, 2002), p.74. See also Whalen Lai & Michael Von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001).

5. Jutakarn Yothasamuthr, op.cit., p. 40.

6. S. Lokuang, "Buddhism on the Road to Renewal," *Bulletin of the Secretarius pro non Christianis*, No. 10, March 1969, pp. 20-27, quoted in PhraRajavaramuni (Prayudh Payutto), *Thai Buddhism In the Buddhist World*, (Bangkok: Mahachula Buddhist University), p. 91.

7. John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, (4th Edition), (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1990), p.116.

Appendix

There are systematic principles of insight meditation mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga*. The *Visuddhimagga* follows the way of the Three Trainings in general, but expands it in the light of seven *Visuddhis, (*MN.I,149; Vism.1-710).

The seven successive steps of the *Visuddhi* (purification) are;

(i) the 'purification of virtue' (*silavisuddhi*),

(ii) the 'purification of consciousness' (*cittavisuddhi*). These two have already been explained earlier in the context of *sila* and *samadhi*, respectively.

(iii) The 'purification of view' (*ditthivisuddhi*): here the meditator analyses his body consisting of the five *khandhas*, being the state of flux; he then discovers this truth of the human body.

(iv) The 'purification through crossing over doubts' (*kankhavitaranavisuddhi*) helps him to realize the 'cause of suffering' (*samudaya*).

(v) The purity of knowledge and vision regarding 'path and not-path' (*magga-maggananadassana-visuddhi*), helps him to know the disinction between 'mundane' (*lokiya*) and 'Supramundane' (*lokuttara*) form of the Noble Eightfold Path.

(vi) The 'purification by knowledge and vision of the way' (*patipadananadasanavisuddhi*): here he continues his practice of contemplation on the Three Common Characteristics with clarified vision,

(vii) The 'purity of knowledge and vision' (*nanadassanavisuddhi*), or the 'knowledge of adaptation' (*anulomanana*), or the vision of four paths connected with the four holy stages, gives rise to 'maturity-knowledge' (*gotra-bhunana*).

But the *Abhidhamma* expands the principles of insight meditation into sixteen steps, the essence of which is the same as the seven kinds of purity as mentioned above. The 16 kinds of knowledge (insight attainment) are as follows:

(i) Knowledge of the delimitation of mentality-materiality (*namarupa-pariccheda-nana*)

(ii) Knowledge of discerning the conditions of mentality-materiality (*paccayapariggaha-nana*)

(iii) Knowledge of comprehending mentality-materiality as impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self (*sammasananana*)

(iv) Knowledge of contemplation on rise and fall (*udayabbayanana*)

(v) Knowledge of contemplation on dissolution (*bhanganana*)

(vi) Knowledge of the appearance as terror (*bhayanana*)

(vii) Knowledge of contemplation on disadvantages (*adinavanana*)

(viii) Knowledge of contemplation on dispassion (nibbidanana)

(ix) Knowledge of the desire for deliverance (*muncitukamyatanana*)

(x) Knowledge of reflective contemplation (*patisanikhanana*)

(xi) Knowledge of equanimity regarding all formations (*sankharupekkhanana*)

(xii) Conformity-knowledge or adaptation-knowledge (*anulomanana*)

(xiii) Knowledge at the moment of the 'change-of-lineage' (*gotrabhu-nana*)

(xiv) Knowledge of the Path (*Magganana*)

(xv) Knowledge of Fruition (*Phalanana*) (The Stream-Enterer, Once-Returner or Non-Returner)

(xvi) Knowledge of reviewing (*paccavekkhana-nana*) (Except for an Arahant)

N.B.: Nos. 1-13 and 16 are mundane ones; nos. 14 and 15 are supra-mundane ones, (Ps.1, Vism. 587-678); nos. 4-12 are the nine insight knowledges.

Then he becomes a Noble Man (*ariya*); he gradually frees himself from the three lowest fetters, and qualifies himself to enter the stream. He is said to have become *Sotapanna*. If he wants to attain the higher holy stages of the once-returner (*sakadagami*) and so on, he has to repeat the process of practice from the beginning in the same manner as discussed above. Thus after destroying all the fetters, he attains the state of Arahanthood, which is the final goal of life; it is the state of eternal bliss of the perfect and Noble Man.

Thai Theravada Buddhist Understanding of Non-Attachment: The Middle Way for Culture and Hermeneutics in a Global Age

Veerachart Nimanong

Introduction

This paper is to investigate a new alternative mode of thinking to supplement the most advanced philosophical hermeneutics, the "Fusion of Horizons", which H.G. Gadamer developed on phenomenological and existential bases. My thesis is that the culture and civilization derived from the fusion of horizon based on an emphasis on substance may not be enough to cope with the present world problems. They likely have arisen from attachment, resulting in an unsustainable development of freedom, because, they possess elements of competition or relations with adversarial, minimal redress, with affront and confrontation, and finally with conflict. I will propose the Theravada Buddhist concept of 'non-attachment' (*annupadana*), based on an emphasis on non-self (*anatta*) intended to go beyond the two concepts of existence and non-existence in order to constitute an alternative mode of thinking as dialogical hermeneutics across cultures for self-realization in a globalization age. The terms 'non-attachment', 'non-self' and, 'the middle way as the way beyond' will be intentionally used in this mode to characterize the Buddhist context and to supplement, but not deny the conventional self. Non-attachment is regarded as a 'gradual path' (*anupuppamagga*) and 'skillful method' (*upayakosala*) to cultivate the conventional self and to realize the non-self. The non-self theory is a dialogue of doctrine and religious experience, which will eventually lead to, respectively, cooperation, freedom, maximal cooperation, understanding and harmony, respectively.

It is believed that the idea of non-attachment can be discovered in all religions and thus the idea of 'non-attachment' can serve as a necessary basis for religious pluralism or to use Gyekye's terminology "cultural universalism" as opposed to "cultural relativism". Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, a Thai Buddhist scholar monk would use the term "no religion" in order to understand religions. My objective is to investigate the Theravada Buddhist Hermeneutics of Non-Attachment in general and that of Thai Theravada Buddhism in particular and to elucidate and propose that a hermeneutics of Non-Attachment, already existent in all cultures and faiths as an alternative communication or dialogue to create mutual understanding among different cultures. At first I would talk about how Buddhists understand the concept of non-attachment (*annuppadana*).

The (Thai) Theravada Buddhist Understanding of Non-Attachment

What Is Non-Attachment?

It is possible to understand non-attachment in relation to attachment. Generally speaking, attachment to someone or something is a feeling of affection that one has for them. In other words, attachment to a particular cause or ideal is a strong feeling of belief in and loyalty to it. Particularly in Buddhism the idea of attachment means clinging to or grasping after, and is classified as of four kinds, namely (1) attachment to sensuality or sense desire, (2) to views or dogmatic opinions, (3) to mere rule and ritual or belief in the efficacy of rites and rituals, and (4) to ego-belief (D.III. 230). The last is more essential than the first three aspects. Therefore, non-attachment can be best

understood under the rejection of a permanent self or the ego-belief through an analysis of the psycho-physical combination of human life. According to Buddhism, everything in this world functions under five natural laws, namely physical law (*utu-niyama*), biological law (*bija-niyama*), psychical law (*citta-niyama*), the law of cause and effect (*kamma-niyama*) and the law of cause and conditions (*dhamma-niyama*), (DA.II.432). The first four laws are essentially included in the fifth one, the dhammic law, which analytically can be both conditional and non-conditional. The conditional law is subject to change and cannot be controlled, but both conditional and non-conditional laws are non-self (A.I.285).

Buddhism does not accept the autonomous self of Hinduism or the Upanisadic thinkers, who say that the self is the inner controller of mind and body or in totality a person (Brh. Up. III, 7. 16-22). According to Buddhism, the concept of person, when analyzed, is found to consist of five aggregates of materiality, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness, which are changing, subject to suffering and not able to be grasped as a self (S. XXII. 59). Hence the so-called person is a mere collection of the five aggregates or in short known as the psycho-physical combination. This can be explained in the following metaphorical form: "just as it is by the condition precedent of the co-existence of its various parts that the word chariot is used, just so is it that when the five aggregates are there we talk of a 'living-being' (*jivatman*)," (Vism. Ch.XVIII. p. 593-94). What is analyzed by Buddhists is akin to what David Hume also said: "For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure, I never can catch myself at any time without a perception. The rest of humankind are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement," (Hume, 1975, p. 252).

For Buddhism, everything is empty of self-reality. Nothing exists in itself, for each existence is conditioned by some causes outside itself. The phenomenal world is in the state of continuous flux. All things, without exception, are nothing but chains of momentary events, instantaneous 'bits' of existence. "There is no Being, there is only a Becoming", said Rhys Davids (1976, p. 56). Precisely, we can say that, the Upanisadic notion of being (*sat*), the Husserlian transcendental ego and the Sartrean conception of being-in-itself are not acceptable to the Buddhist (Mererk, 1988, p. 111). According to Buddhism, all phenomena are subject to the laws of causation.1 There is nothing haphazard or predetermined. Every element, though appearing only for a single moment, is a dependently-originating-ceasing element because it depends for its arising and ceasing on what has gone before it. "Dependent Origination-cessation (causation) is said to have the characteristics of objectivity, necessity, invariability and conditionality," (S.XII.20). Therefore, the doctrine of dependent origination-cessation or causation and the analysis of the five aggregates gives support to the non-self doctrine.

According to Buddhism, the idea of self is a mental construct produced by unwise attention, in which one fails to see things as they really are. The selflessness of things is difficult to detect because it is hidden by compactness. According to the Buddhist analysis of the psycho-physical combination, "the selflessness of body and mind is hidden by its compactness, likewise its impermanence is hidden by continuity and its suffering or unsatisfactory state is hidden by posture" (Vism.XXI. 640). The idea of self is considered as the manifestation of the strongest form of grasping, which is similar to what William James, the Western psychologist calls "self-love", which is the center of all desires and actions (1950, p. 317). According to Buddhism, human beings have a tendency to cling to the five aggregates, namely matter, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness; and the five sensual pleasures, namely visible object, sound, smell,

taste and touch (M.I.85). The Buddhist thinks that the grasping of the self is the main origin of suffering. To bring suffering to an end one must get rid of its cause, i.e., the grasping of the self. It is said that the grasping man will intend to do unwholesome actions, the results of which will lead him to an unwholesome state of rebirth. According to Buddhism, man is the creator of himself through both his good and bad deeds done in the past and the present lives. The Buddhists believe in the wheel of life; man can be born as a god, an animal and a hellish creature due to his intentional actions. To rid oneself of kammic results and detect the selflessness of things and the body-mind combination, Buddhists are suggested to practice meditation. This meditation is divided into two kinds: tranquility meditation and insight meditation in order to see things as they really are, that is, as emptiness or non-self. The Buddhists can realize the emptiness of life and things through insight meditation, which is a phenomenological investigation of physical and mental phenomena (D.Sutta No. 22).

It is worth mentioning that the emptiness of the psycho-physical combination in Buddhism should not be understood as nothingness for the reason that it is what it is at the present moment, because it is part of dependent origination-cessation. The psycho-physical combination is empty because it is "empty of a self or anything belonging to a self," (S.xxxv. 85). As the most venerable Nagarjuna (150-250 AD), the founder of Madhyamika school of Mahayana Buddhism, has pointed out: "Since there is no element (*dhamma*), which comes into existence without conditions, there is no element which is not empty,"(MK. xxiv.19). In this case, emptiness simply means conditionality or dependent origination-cessation of all phenomena.

Moreover, the Buddhist has a practical purpose in rejecting the self-theory. Like the other teachings of the Buddha, the non-self doctrine has Nibbana (Skt: Nirvana) or the cessation of sufferings as its purpose. In relation to the doctrines of kamma and Nibbana, three questions may be asked: The first question is that if there is no self as agent, what is it that performs action, accumulates and experiences the result of action? According to Buddhism, intentional consciousness performs action and also accumulates the result of action. When action produces result, it is consciousness that experiences it, but consciousness, which performs an action, is not identical with consciousness, which experiences the result. In fact they are neither the same nor different due to the law of conditionality. To say that the doer of action and the experiencer of the result are absolutely the same is to hold the eternalistic view, and to say that the two are entirely different is to hold the annihilationistic view (S. XII. 2. 18).

Who Realizes Non-attachment?

The second question is that if the mind-body combination is not self, then who realizes Nibbana? According to Buddhism, there is no self as a thinker behind the thought; it is the thought that thinks. In like manner, there is no self behind the realization of Nibbana; it is wisdom that realizes Nibbana. When wisdom, which is one of mental formations, is developed by means of Insight Meditation it sees the reality of things as impermanent, suffering and non-self. When the reality is seen, the concept of the phenomenal world is destroyed (M.III.244). Ignorance, desire and attachment are eradicated and in their places arises wisdom. Then all forces that produce the series of rebirths in ignorance are calmed down and unable to generate kammic energy, because there is no more attachment and desire for existence. As such, Nibbana is regarded as the realization of things as they are: "Not constituting, not thinking out for being or for non-being, man grasps after nothing in the world; not grasping, he is not troubled; being untroubled, he himself

atttains Nibbana," (M.III.244). This is the doctrine of non-attachment, which is the mode of Buddhist thinking.

Is Nibbana Annihilation?

The third question may be asked: "Since Nibbana is regarded as the 'authentic cessation of existence, Is Nibbana viewed as Annihilation or not',"? Nibbana is not self-annihilation, for there is no self to annihilate. If at all, it is the annihilation of the ignorance, desire and attachment of self. As the Buddha said: "In this respect one may rightly say of me that I teach annihilation. For certainly I do teach annihilation of greed, hatred, and delusion, as well as of the manifold evil and unwholesome things," (A.III.12). All schools of Buddhism apparently deny the ontology of all phenomena, but they differ from each other in the aspect of the ontology of Nibbana. As Ven. Phramaha Prayoon Mererk2 said, "the followers of the Buddha, however, hold different views on the ontological status of Nirvana," (Mererk, 1988, pp. 160-163). The Sautrantika, for example, holds that Nirvana does not have a positive reality; it is nothingness. Just as space is the absence of a solid body or anything tangible, so also Nirvana is the absence of causes that are responsible for rebirth. Unlike the Sautrantika, the Yogacara maintains that Nirvana has a positive reality; it is not nothingness. The realization of Nirvana eliminates the unreality of the phenomenal world, but at the same time it is a discovery of store-consciousness (Lankavatara-Sutra, p. 62; Mererk, 1988, p.160). Yogacara's idea of store-house is identical to the Upanisadic conception of Atman. Rejecting both different ideas, Theravada Buddhism maintains that Nibbana is not non-existence, but it is a transcendental entity, independently existent. It is an external, unchangeable state which exists by itself. Buddhaghosa of Srilanka rejects the view that Nibbana is non-existent. According to him, a mere fact that Nibbana is not apprehended by an ordinary man does not prove that Nibbana does not exist. Nibbana can be seen by the right means (the way of morality, concentration and wisdom) (Vism. XVI. 508). Nibbana is not non-existence; rather it is positive, permanent reality. To substantiate his view, Buddhaghosa quotes the Buddha's words:

Monks, there is an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an unconditioned. If that unborn, unbecome, unmade, unconditioned were not, an escape from what is born, become, made, conditioned would not be apparent. But, since, monks, there is an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unconditioned, therefore, the escape from what is born, become, made, conditioned is apparent. (Ud. 80-81).

Thus, Nibbana as conceived in early Buddhism is not non-existence or utter annihilation. It is the realm of being, which transcends the phenomenal world (Mererk, 1988, p. 162).

What is the meaning of Buddha's silence? This question can be understood through two discourses, concerned with the questions, and later coined as undetermined questions. In Buddhism, not only is the reality of Nibbana indescribable, but also the destiny of the liberated person (*arahant*), i.e., one who attains Nibbana. In the time of the Buddha, a Brahmin came to ask the Buddha the following four questions:

1. The liberated one exists after death?
2. The liberated one does not exist after death?
3. The liberated one exists and does not exist after death?
4. The liberated one neither exists nor does not exist after death? (M.I.484)

The Buddha did not give a specific answer to any of these questions. One of the reasons for the ‘silence’ of the Buddha is that the phrases ‘exists’, ‘does not exist’, etc., are misleading, because they have a spatio-temporal connotation and hence are inapplicable to Nibbana, which is beyond space and time and cannot be located. The mystery of the liberated person lies in the fact that he is no longer identified with any of the five aggregates by which the ordinary person is known. The descriptions of his destiny in terms of the four alternatives mentioned above are out of place (Mererk, 1988, p. 163).

Another set of the undetermined questions was asked by another Brahmin: "Is the world eternal, or is it not? Is it finite, or is it not? Is life in the body, or in the soul? Do beings continue after death, or do they not? The Buddha explained that if he did not speak of them, it was because they did not come within the ambit of his primary concern. His primary concern was limited to a more urgent need for humanity. Then the Buddha narrated an example: ‘Imagine that a man is going through a jungle. Halfway through he is shot by a poisoned arrow. If the poisoned arrow remains in his body, he will die. The injured man say: "I will not pull out this arrow until I know who shot it, whether he is tall or short, fat or lean, young or old, of a high caste or a low caste." The man will die before he knows the right answers," (M.I.427). "Gautama viewed human suffering, and the liberation from it, exactly as modern psychologists and physician would look at mental or bodily patients in their clinics," (Fernando and Swidler, 1986, p. 105).

Thai Buddhist Understanding of Non-Attachment

Thailand is the land of the yellow robe, because in 2002 A.D. Thailand had 36,117 Buddhist temples and 405,476 monks and novices. Buddhism in Thailand is known as Theravada Buddhism,3 "which can be traced back to the eighteen schools of early Buddhism in the time of the Emperor Asoka, who supported the third Buddhist Council in India," (Bapat, 1987, p. 98). Thailand, known in the past as Siam, is a small country with an area of approximately 200,000 square miles and a population of 63,000,000 million, out of which the Buddhists are 95 percent. The King, although a protector of all religions, namely Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism, is a Buddhist, and he is the ultimate reference in administrative matters pertaining to the Buddhist Monastic Order. In 1956 His Majesty King Phumipol Adulyadet resided at Bovoranives temple as a monk for a period of two weeks, and by this action gave royal support to the observance of the Buddhist 2500th jubilee year (Nimanong, 2002, pp. 361-364).

At present in Thailand, there are two prominent Buddhist scholar monks, whom Thai Buddhists revere and listen to. One is Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu4 or in short Buddhadasa and the other monk is the most venerable Payutto Bhikkhu5 or Payutto only. Payutto said that the history of the Thai nation is also the history of Buddhism. The Thai nation originated over 2,300 years ago. Also in that same period Buddhism came and has played an important part in the Thai history ever since (1990, p. 11-13). Samuel P. Huntington is right in saying that a Theravada civilization does exist in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia (1997, pp. 47-48). But he might be wrong for two reasons in saying that, "Buddhism, although a major religion, has not been the basis of a major civilization," (1997, p.48). One reason is that Buddhism actually still remains in India, its birth place, especially the Madhyamika School of Buddhism, which was found by Nagarjuna (Bapat, 1909, pp. 106-108). Another reason is that if it is true that Buddhism no longer exists in India, its birthplace, and no one in India identify themselves as part of a Buddhist civilization, the truth of dependent origination-cessation as the nature of things is there (*dhammathiti*) in the nature.

Payutto sees the danger of attachment to views or dogmatic opinions (*ditthuppadana*) as the priority to escape from in this global age. According to him, ideology is based on the dogmatic opinions or wrong view. He commented: "In the preceding decades we experienced problems with ideologies. There were two major schools, which had split the world into camps. Now the contention between these ideologies has petered out, but we have not resolved the problems of nationalism, racism and sectarianism. So we come back to the problem of dogmatic opinion or ideology to find a solution," (1993, p.7). According to him, three dogmatic opinions or wrong views have controlled modern civilization. The first is the wrong perception towards nature that humankind is separated from nature and must control nature according to its desires. The second is the wrong perception denying that there are fellow human beings: to be a human being is to have desire, reason, and self-esteem (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 165). The last wrong perception concerns the objective of life, namely, that happiness is dependent on an abundance of material possessions (1993, p. 7). He said thus: "Being held under the power of these three wrong perceptions, their resulting actions become kamma on the social level," (1993, p. 8). This is the new understanding of kamma in the global age. According to Payutto, in the past decades, natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities were influenced by the afore-mentioned wrong views, therefore humankind at present is encountering many problems of nature and environment, conflicts and competition. According to him, when right view is incorporated into the mind of people and even into sciences and branches of learning, all those people' minds and branches of learning will be well-based. For example, the physical sciences, applied sciences and technology would have a relationship with nature that is characterized by a pure desire for knowledge, rather than an impure desire to exploit nature. Like Payutto, Heisenberg wrote that natural science always implies the presence of man. The object of study in natural science is not nature itself, but nature as the object of human problems (Jurate Morkuniene, 2003, p2). M. Wertheimer also said that man finds himself in the centre of the world. He is no longer considered the ruler, conqueror or master of the world (or nature), but only the main actor or worker (quoted in Jurate Morkuniene, op.cit.).

Let us turn our attention to Buddhadasa's understanding of non-attachment. According to Buddhadasa, the fundamental problem of human existence is attachment, which leads to pride, selfishness, and egoism. Since religions' basic concern is with human existence, it must aim to solve the problem of human attachment. Buddhadasa is convinced that it is necessary to dismantle the gap between the layman life and the monastic life. According to him, monkhood can be cultivated while one remains in his life as layman. Buddhadasa sees kamma, merit, rebirth, Nibbana as things of the present, as concrete not abstract. Moreover, because of his unsatisfaction with the traditional interpretation of the scripture, he developed an alternative hermeneutics or interpretative approach to the canonical scriptures, which was called by him 'everyday language-dhamma language' (*phasakhon-phasatham*). Human language is used and understood by a worldly person, but dhamma language is used and understood by a religious person. The real Buddhist is the one who can empty his mind, or in Thai "*cit-wang*." The theoretical pivot of Buddhadasa's reinterpretation or understanding of Theravada doctrine is the notion of *cit-wang*, "voided-mind" or "freed-mind" of the self-centeredness that leads to attachment, craving and suffering. *Cit-wang* denoted a state of mind, being detached or free from moral impurities and being in a state of peace and equanimity, the foundation of Nibbana. For Buddhadasa, *cit-wang* is the key to understanding the religious goal of Buddhism and is the basis of the practice to attain that goal both in individual and in social life. He wrote a dhammic poem, which is still in the minds of Thai people:

Do work of all kinds with a mind that is void,
And then to the voidness give all of the fruits,
Take food of the voidness as do Holy Saints:
And lo! You are dead to yourself from the very beginning. (*Toward the Truth*. p. 95)

In placing *cit-wang* at the centre of his presentation of Theravada doctrine Buddhadasa has in fact drawn heavily on the concept "emptiness" (*sunyata*) of Mahayana and Zen Buddhist teachings. Surprisingly, Buddhadasa studied all schools of Buddhism as well as the major religious traditions. He wanted to unite all genuinely religious people in order to work together to help free humanity by destroying selfishness. He reminded the Buddhists that we should not think that the teaching of non-attachment is found only in Buddhism. In fact, it can be found in every religion, although many people do not notice because it is expressed in dhamma language. Its meaning is profound, difficult to see, and usually misunderstood. He further said thus:

In the Christian Bible, St. Paul advises us: 'Let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those that buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it" (Cor. 7:29-31). It should be understood in the same way as our basic theme of Buddhists non-attachment. That is if you have a wife, do not attach to having her; if you have a husband, do not cling to having him. If you have painful or sorrowful experiences, do not cling to them as "I" or "mine" and it will be as if they never happened. That is, do not be sad about them. Do not attach to joy, goods, and worldly dealings, either. (*No Religion*, 1979, p. 12 or *Toward the Truth*, n.d., p.97)

Thus, for Buddhadasa, the key to religious harmony is that each religion's doctrines should be interpreted correctly according to dhamma language. According to Buddhadasa, the real enemy of any religion is not other religions, but materialism that feeds on and cultivates the human instinct of selfishness for the sake of material development. Runaway materialism is what all religions should join hands against, for it has been the most powerful force in turning people away from spiritualism of all forms. The ultimate mission in Buddhadasa's life can be summed up in his Three Resolutions, posted at the entrance of Forest Meditation Center. They are: (1) to help everyone to realize the essence of their own religion; (2) to help develop mutual understanding between all religions; and (3) to help to lift the world out of materialism. Indeed, this is an authentic dialogue in a global age.

Non-Attachment as the Middle Way of Culture and Hermeneutics in a Global Age

Non-Attachment as the Middle Way beyond Existence and Non-Existence

The middle way of non-attachment is a critical thinking way or the way beyond. Let us first consider the legacy of the Buddhist middle way. The belief in either an absolute being or in absolute nothingness is considered to be an extreme view. The Buddhist's theoretical aim in rejecting the self theory is to dissociate oneself from the two extreme views, namely, annihilationism and eternalism, which are regarded by the Buddhist as wrong views (Kvu. 62). For the annihilationist the self is perishable, whereas for the eternalist it is imperishable. The Buddha claims thus: "All dhammas are non-self" (S.IV.1). With this statement the Buddhist rejects

all substantial and non-substantial views of the world, maintaining that everything is dependently originated or becoming. In this, the Buddhist standpoint is close to process philosophy.

According to the Buddhist context, the Middle Way is dialectic of negation as propounded by Nagarjuna. It goes beyond all these four propositions, namely: "it is the existence; it is non-existence; it is both existence and non-existence; and it is neither existence nor non-existence." According to Nagarjuna, the emptiness can be stated by eight negatives, namely "there is neither origination nor cessation, neither permanence nor impermanence, neither unity nor diversity, neither coming-in nor going-out, in the law of dependent origination-and-cessation or emptiness (Bapat, 1987, p. 107). Essentially, there is only non-origination, which is equated with emptiness. Hence, emptiness, referring as it does to non-origination, is in reality the middle path, which avoids the two basic views of existence and non-existence. To negate everything or all theories is to go beyond them. Moreover, Nagarjuna takes one more step to silence. The silence is said to be emptiness of the emptiness or non-origination. By this way, Nagarjuna's dialectic of negation cannot be taken as a theory, because it also negates itself. Therefore, to be called as non-attachment according to Buddhism, it must be without the bases of all identities. It should not be attached to any concepts at all. It should be free from egocentric thought.

Like the Nagarjuna's dialectic of negation, the position adopted by Buddhadasa is middle way for the conflicting truth claims of existence and non-existence.

The ordinary, ignorant worldling is under the impression that there are many religions and that they are all different to the extent of being hostile and opposed. Thus one considers Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism as incompatible and even bitter enemies. Such is the conception of the common person who speaks according to the impressions held by common people. If, however, a person has penetrated to the fundamental nature (dhamma) of religion, he will regard all religions as essentially similar. Although he may say there is Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on, he will also say that essentially they are all the same. If he should go to a deeper understanding of dhamma until finally he realizes the absolute truth, he would discover that there is no such thing called religion, that there is no Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam. (Me and Mine,1989, p.146)

From the above quotation, we can see that three levels of conflicting truth claims are outlined by Buddhadasa, namely: (1) conventional distinctions; (2) shared essence; and (3) emptiness. The traditional Buddhist hermeneutics of non-attachment rooted deeply on non-self eliminates the conflicting truth claims by going beyond religions, as in the Buddhadasa's third point. What separates Buddhadasa from those non-dualists is the second level that Buddhadasa proposes, namely, a lower level of dhamma language that moves beyond conventional distinctions, but which is not yet at the highest level that proclaims "No Religion". The full significance of Buddhadasa's three levels of religious truth can be properly understood by applying a metaphor of water: First there are many kinds of water: rainwater, ditch water, sewer water, which ordinary people can distinguish. At another level, however, when the pollutants are removed, these waters have fundamentally the same substance. Nevertheless, there is yet a third level of perception in which water itself disappears when we divide it into hydrogen and oxygen (Sharma, 1997, p. 152). If we want to apply the theory of non-attachment as the middle way in order to understand different cultures in a global age, we have to go beyond the many and the one. We can say in other words, it is neither the many nor the one. Likewise the task of the contemporary philosophy must go beyond simplicity and complexity, static and dynamics, rationality and irrationality, determinism and dialogue with reality, closeness and openness, and objectivity and subjectivity (Morkuniene, 2003).

Thai Buddhist Culture

According to Buddhism, the Middle Way is actually taken as the foundation of Buddhist culture and values and it is taken as a sustainable path for all activities. The middle way consists of eight principles of practice called the Eightfold Noble Way (D.III.312). The eight ways or paths are numbered as right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right concentration and right mindfulness. They can be classified into three groups, namely the group of moral conduct, the group of meditation and the group of wisdom. According to Piyasilo Bhikkhu, the middle way is expressed in contemporary language as ecoculture, autoculture and metaculture. They are explained as follows: (1) ecoculture is moral conduct, consisting of right speech, right action and right livelihood; (2) autoculture is meditation, consisting of right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration; and (3) metaculture is wisdom, consisting of right understanding and right thought, (1988, p. 12). Ecoculture is to preserve the nature, autoculture is to strengthen one's mind, and metaculture is to cultivate one's wisdom and co-exist with others peacefully.

Eventually, Theravada Buddhist culture must be cultivated step by step, known as the gradual path of Buddhism. Nibbana is attainable not only in theory, but also in practice, to attain which, one has to follow the way of life conducive to the cessation of suffering. This way of life is governed by the standards of moral conducts generally regarded as Buddhist ethics. This is known as the 'Middle Way' (*Majjhima-patipada*) because it avoids two extremes: one being indulgence in sensual pleasure, the other being self-mortification (S.LVI.11). Moral conduct should be perfected first, for morality is a mode of intention present in one who abstains from killing, stealing, etc., or in one who fulfils the practice of duties (Vism.1.6). Having acquired the moral habit, one is capable of practicing meditation, three factors form parts of the Buddhist method known as 'tranquillity meditation' (*samatha-bhavana*). After that preparation, one is capable of practicing the group of wisdom practice known as 'insight meditation' (*vipassana-bhavana*). Heinrich Dumoulin notes that, "the ethics of Buddhism has stressed the universal norms, which are constant and applicable to everyone. They should not conflict with human nature. The doctrine of the middle way that the Buddha proclaimed is a humanistic ethic," (1976, p. 25).

G.F. McLean6 remarked: "Today the horizon is no longer particular, but universal and all encompassing, due in part to the development beyond the cold war of a unipolar and all-inclusive economy, to the emergence of a series of interlocking regional and world wide organizations such as the United Nations, to the promotion of world wide standards and cooperation in the fields of the environment, health and education. And perhaps most of all is due to the present flow of information. All of these constitute a new global whole in which the issue of culture of how to cultivate the soul becomes the basic human issue," (2003a, p. 119). Buddhists also need to cultivate their minds to attain the final truth and live their lives peacefully with others in the global age. The Buddhist monks nowadays are working hard to cope with contemporary problems in a global age that often accompany technology and information development. Buddhist culture and education are centered on the gradual path of mental perfection through moral conduct, meditation and wisdom. This cultural aspect of Buddhism has had deep influence in the Thai arts, traditions, learning and on the character of the people, whose manner of thinking and acting it has molded. In short, it has become an integral part of Thai life. The charm that has caused Thailand to be called the Land of Smiles undoubtedly comes from the influence of Buddhism over her people (Payutto, 1990, p.11). They celebrate New Years day not only on January 1, but also on April 13 and 14.

The April 14 is specially regarded as an Elders' Day. Thai society attaches great importance to older persons. The concept of gratefulness towards elderly persons and nature is well ingrained in Thai society (http://www.thaimain.org/cgi-bin/newsdesk_perspect.cgi).

Hence the Buddhist culture is in conformity with the meaning of culture as defined by Prof. McLean: "Culture is derived from values and virtues of a people that set the pattern of social life through which freedom is developed and exercised towards the realization of civil society," (2003, p.15).7 This term is further explained by Professor Kwame Gyekye,8 according to whom, "culture is an enactment of a community of people, not of an individual, created in the attempt to negotiate the problems that arise in the context of a people's particular situation" (1999, p. 20). It is a value conducive to the well-being of humans: "all other values are reducible ultimately to the value of well-being," (Gyekye, 1999, p. 26).

Gyekye encourages the people in any society to step beyond the wall of culture through "common human understanding,"9 which corresponds to the idea of 'right understanding' (*sammaditthi*) in Buddhism (D. II. 312). Common human understanding can be obtained through reflection upon what Gyekye called value and disvalue in the course of daily life experience. The value and disvalue experiences of human beings, which are known in Buddhism as 'worldly conditions' (*lokadhamma*)10 generate common human understanding or right understanding in the Buddhist context. There are two levels of common human understanding, one concerns a specific human society, and plays its role at the very base of an organized and functioning human society and culture; the other is transcultural or intercultural conversations beyond cultures.

Transcultural or intercultural conversations help human beings in different societies or followers from different religions to understand each other. At this stage the transformation of cultures or what is called by Gyekye cultural borrowing or cultural appropriation with mutual understanding is possible. Sir Isaiah Berlin states: "Intercommunication between cultures in time and space is only possible because what makes men human is common to them, and acts as a bridge between them."11 In order to attain the stage of beyond-culture, Gyekye proposed many approaches, such as a critical approach against cultural relativism, the incommensurability thesis and ethnocentrism in support of cultural universalism, the common good, cultural borrowing and real options in order to achieve humanistic morality and globalization.

William J. Klausner, born in New York City in 1929, went to Thailand in 1955 to undertake his post-graduate ethnographic research in a small village in Northeast Thailand focusing on cultural barriers to modernization. He spent more than half of his life, i.e. forty years, in this second home, where he himself immersed in a social and cultural environment of Thailand (*Thai Culture in Transition*, 1998, pp.1-15). He takes the following features proper to modernization: the dramatic development of transportation and communication networks, globalization of the economy, increased industrialization, and the growth of the service sector. To these he adds educational opportunities, increased geographical mobility, and rural electrification, coupled with the seemingly irresistible invasion of egalitarian and individualistic values, as well as Western food, music, entertainment, dress and language, all of which have influenced Thai culture. This transformation of Thai culture inevitably has brought about social, economic and political changes, some quite revolutionary in their impact. To match the economic changes in the rural areas, urban Thailand, and particularly its capital have witnessed a revision of traditional Thai corporate culture. Family control, personal favors in recruitment, and consensus building are slowly giving away to professional management, quality control, performance reviews and merit promotions, with an emphasis on creativity, initiative, and more aggressive and confrontational decision-making, in which profit is the bottom line. This cultural transformation is in line with Gyekye's conception

of cultural transformation that "cultural borrowing is a historical phenomenon; through encounters between peoples, cultures have borrowed from one another, appropriating values, ideas, and institutions from other cultures," (1999, p.39). Klausner further remarks: "while Eastern traditional values are undergoing dramatic change, in the West, many have increasingly come to appreciate the healing properties of non-judicial conflict resolution and consensus, communal and family solidarity, and avoidance of confrontation so often associated with the East … a core element of Thai culture is the avoidance of confrontation. Expressions of antisocial emotions such as anger, displeasure, annoyance are to be avoided at all costs. Another core element of traditional Thai culture is emotional distance. One should not become too attached, too committed (Ibid., p.4-5). These are the Buddhist elements of Thai culture rooted in the concept of non-attachment.

These unique characteristics of Thai cultures can be traced back to cultural Buddhism, in other words, to popular Buddhism, which is different from genuine, doctrinal or intellectual Buddhism. Cultural Buddhism is usually associated with some basic moral rules, observance of rituals and participation in religious ceremonies and worship. But Buddhism of the intellectuals offers a unique system of psychology and philosophy (Payutto, 1990, p. 13). The Buddhists nowadays will have to admit mindfully the cultural aspect of Buddhism as a way leading to liberation.

Thai Buddhist Hermeneutics

As has already mentioned, there are two kinds of religion in Thailand, namely genuine or intellectual or doctrinal Buddhism and popular or cultural Buddhism. The cultural Buddhism is eventually a sort of hermeneutics for doctrinal Buddhism and vice versa. In Buddhism there are two levels of dhamma, called the dependent origination (*samsara*) and dependent cessation (*nibbana*) (S.II.1). In the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, there is an interpretative principle based on advice given by the Buddha on his deathbed on how to deal with statements on the doctrine which are disputed:

Then, monks, you should study well those (disputed) paragraphs and words, and investigate whether they occur in the discourse (*sutta*), and compare them with the discipline (vinaya). If having investigated the *sutta* and compared with the *vinaya* they can neither (be found) in the *sutta* nor (found to be) comparable with the (teachings in the) *vinaya* then you should reach agreement on these points that they are certainly not the words of the Bhagava (the Buddha), and that the bhikkhu in question (who made the disputed statement) has incorrectly remembered (the Buddha's teaching). You should discard those statements completely. (S.II.1)

The principle of interpretation laid down here is that disputed statements on the doctrine should be compared with the recorded words of the Buddha, the book of discourse (*sutta*), and with the ethical principles recorded in the book of discipline (*vinaya*), to gauge whether they are accurate and in accord with Buddhist ethical principles. The Buddha gave this strict and literal interpretative method at a time when Buddhism was an oral tradition. The Buddha's statement in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta is thus meant as an injunction to monks to adhere closely to the actual teachings of the Buddha, which they had committed to memory.

The tradition that there are two levels of the Buddha's discourses has been systematically expressed in the Abhidhammapitaka (the deep and profound teachings) as the Buddhist theory of two truths, namely 'conventional truth' (*sammatisacca*) and 'ultimate truth' (*paramatthasacca*).

The conventional truth denotes the everyday level of knowledge, while the ultimate truth denotes a form of knowledge based directly on underlying truth or reality (AA.I.95).12

However, once the Buddhist scriptures were written down, the interpretative principle laid down in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta was considerably revised. One of the most important methodological texts of the literary period of traditional Theravada Buddhism is the *Netti-Pakarana*13 as leading to the 'right construction' of the words of the Buddha: 'These terms and phrasing (in question) must be placed beside the *sutta*, compared with the *vinaya* and patterned after the essential nature of dhamma."14 The principle that interpretations of doctrine should 'be patterned after the essential nature of the dhamma' is more general than that put forward by the Buddha, proposing that a view or opinion should be theoretically consistent with the doctrinal basics of the religion, rather than being a literal restatement of the Buddha's words, as required by the Mahaparinibbana Sutta.

The *Nettipakarana* develops the canonical interpretative principle into a form more appropriate to a literary tradition in which the demands of simple memorization have been lifted and detailed textual analysis can be undertaken. The principle that, scriptural interpretations should be patterned after the dhamma, amounts to a recognition that in a literary tradition faithfulness to the Buddha's teaching no longer necessitates a strictly literal adherence to his actual words, but may also be based upon views, which follow the spirit of the Buddha's teachings.

The *Netti-Pakarana* teaches that the scriptures can be interpreted at two levels: at the level of understanding the literal meaning of statements and terms, and at the level of understanding how those terms and statements point towards or are suggestive of Nibbana. Bond opined that the *Nettipakarana* developed the notion of the gradual path to Nibbana and employed it as a hermeneutic strategy for explaining the Dhamma. According to Bond, the *Nettipakarana* represents the social facts of ancient India, which generated two kinds of religious traditions. One was called the "disciplines of salvation," which were applicable to the renouncer, and the other one was "religious", which were characterized by the provisions they made to meet the needs of the people living in the society (in Lopez, 1988, pp. 33-35). To delineate the structure of the gradual path, the *Nettipakarana* set forth classifications of types of persons to whom the Buddha addressed his teachings and types of discourses that the Buddha employed to reach these persons (see appendix II.). In the Saddasaratthajalini, two types of textual interpretation are mentioned. What is said by the Buddha has to be understood either as meaning still to be determined (indirect meaning) such as the term 'self' (*atta*) or as meaning already determined (direct meaning) such as the term 'impermanence' (*anicca*), (quoted in Khemananda, 1993, p. 97).

Thai Theravada Buddhist Hermeneutical Theory of Human Language–Dhamma Language (Phasakhon – Phasatham). Buddhadasa distinguishes two hermeneutic levels of the Buddha's words in 'the Buddha's discourses' (Suttapitaka), calling these two levels "human language-dhamma language". He gives the following definitions: Everyday language is worldly language, the language of people who do not know dhamma. Dhamma language is the language spoken by people who have gained a deep insight into the truth or dhamma (1974, p. 1). On the level of what Buddhadasa calls 'language of truth' (*phasatham*) there are many similarities among all religious adherents. Once Buddhadasa remarks:

The problem with most people who profess to be religious is their limited degree of real understanding; hence they think and talk on the level of 'language of people' (*phasakhon*), which never go beyond appearances to the higher truth of faith. Christians, for example, must understand that the idea of God is a concept essentially beyond the understanding of men and, therefore,

transcends our usual distinctions between good and evil, personal and impersonal. (Buddhadasa, 1967, pp. 35-37)

The human language interpretation of a term is then simply its conventional or literal meaning while the same term's dhamma language rendering is its spiritual or symbolic sense. Buddhadasa used the distinction to argue that many of the traditional readings and interpretations of the Buddhist scriptures in Thailand remain at the literal or human language level. In his work Buddhdasa places more emphasis on the notion of dhamma language.

Let us consider some examples of his interpretations of the Buddha's teachings in the book known as human language-dhamma language as follows:

Nos. Terms Human Language Dhamma Language

1. Buddha Gotama Truth or Dhamma
2. Dhamma Books Truth or The Buddha
3. Sangha Monks Their mental virtues
4. Religion Temple Dhamma
5. Work Earning of a living Mind training
6. Nibbana Place, city Extinction of defilement
7. Devil Monster Defilement
8. Birth Physical birth Mental birth
9. Death Physical death Mental death
10. World Earth Worldly mental stage
11. God A celestial being The natural law
12. Man A creature with Certain high mental a body of a so-called qualities human form
13. Life Anything that is The truly deathless not yet dead state
14. Hell A region under Anyone who burns the earth himself with anxiety

It must be noted that Buddhdasa does not in fact completely deny the cosmological reality of heaven and hell. He says: "True enough, the heaven and hell of everyday language are realms outside – though don't ask me where – and they are attained after death. But the heaven and hell of dhamma language are to be found in the mind and may be attained anytime depending on one's mental make up," (2525/1982, p. 61). Taken as a whole, Buddhadasa's dhamma-language reinterpretation represents a systematic demythologization of the Buddhist scriptures whereby cosmological realms become psychological states and deities and demons are interpreted as individuals experiencing those states. Whenever a concept or term is traditionally interpreted in a way, which is at odds with a modernist or scientific worldview then that term or concept is demythologized and subjected to a dhamma-language reinterpretation. Buddhadasa's method of dhamma language is similar to Bultmann's method of demythologization, the purpose of which is to recover a meaning that is covered over by the garb of a physical cosmos, in which modern man no longer believes, i.e. the three-level universe of heaven earth, and hell (Palmer, 1981, p. 468). Buddhadasa's two kinds of interpretation can be traced back to the *Nettipakarana* and the *Saddasaratthajalini* as mention earlier.

To assist people especially the younger generation to understand dhamma language, Buddhadasa utilizes such various methods as books, painting, poetry, radio broadcasting, television and so on. We can observe that nowadays television and radio are taken as powerful and appropriate tools to communicate between religions and cultures in this global age. "Human

communication is authored on one hand and interpreted on the other. Media technology links authorship with hermeneutics, often tacitly and even covertly. A certain quality of voice may be said to 'convey authority' and thereby enhance the credibility of a message" (Cosmos, 2003, p. 5).

Thai monks and people understand dhamma language through poems, because the poem is one of hermeneutic ways to make truth as Rosemary Winslow also said: Poetry does not operate to reproduce existing personal, social, and cultural constructs, but rather to remake them (2003, p.2). King Rama V of Thailand wrote a poem based on the non-attachment to the self thus: "Born men are we all and one; brown, black by the sun cultured; knowledge can be won alike, but the heart differs from man to man". This poetry creates an impression that we are all called as human by birth. The worldly knowledge can be acquired by all of us at any time irrespective of race, culture or color of skin, but not the religious virtue or pure knowledge like love, compassion and so on. We differ from each other in heart or virtue, but not in brain or worldly knowledge.

Buddhist Beyond-Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue. Actually Buddhism does manifest a pluralistic view by proposing that all religions are equal in respect of making common reference to one single ultimate truth, which the Buddha had discovered. The Buddha as the discoverer of the truth, has opened the possibility for others to discover the truth for themselves. Because the Buddha as one who discovers the truth, rather than as one who has a monopoly of the truth, is clearly a source of tolerance. This leaves open the possibility for others to discover aspects of the truth, or even the whole truth, for themselves. The Buddhist acceptance of Individual Buddhas or Pacceka Buddhas, who discover the truth by themselves, is a clear admission of this claim. Thus other religions are equal in respect of offering means to truth, liberation or salvation. This idea paves the way for religious pluralism. Peter Byrne in his book entitled "Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism: Reference and Realism in Religion" lists the standard viewpoints of religious pluralism as follows:

(1) All major religions are equal in respect of making common reference to single transcendent,

(2) all major religions are likewise equal in respect of offering some means to human salvation and liberation; and

(3) all religions are to be seen as containing limited accounts of the nature of the sacred; none is certain enough in its particular dogmatic formulations to provide the norm for interpreting others. (Byrne, 1995, p. 12)

Pluralism15 is the middle way beyond exlusivism and inclusivism. Hick, the eminent pluralist, considers exclusive and inclusive ways of regarding religions as no longer practical and indeed impossible. He supports pluralism. According to him all religions accept "the Ultimate Reality", as one, (Hick, 1990, p.115). To say this is to accept the unity in diversity. But, for the Buddhist, to see unity in diversity is not sufficient to solve the conflicting religious truth claims. To put in dhamma language theory, we have to step beyond the one and many. That is to say we have to go beyond Hick's theory of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. To go beyond is the middle way of pluralism. This distinction between human language and dhamma language provides an interesting approach to inter-religious understanding or interfaith dialogue.

The primary objective of dialogue is to remove barriers of differences among religions and exchange ideas. Dialogue is an unending patience. The process of dialogue is that of learning how to coexist peacefully with each other. "By dialogue, each culture presents its variety and difference,

on the dialogue, a new idea of human being's co-existence and also a new humankind culture mode are coming into being," (Shipeng, 2003, p. 5). The spirit of tolerance, charity and freedom is characteristic of the "dialogue of the Buddha" and is especially evident in the Kalama Sutta (A.I.189). The Kalama people approached the Buddha with the following issues. Different religious teachers come to our city. They speak very highly of their own theories but oppose, condemn and ridicule the theories of one another. We are now in a state of doubt as to which of these recluses speaks falsehood. Then the Buddha said:

Kalamas, you have a right to feel uncertain for you have raised a doubt in a situation in which you ought to suspend your judgement. Come now, Kalamas, do not accept anything only on the grounds of tradition or report or because it is a product reasoning or because it is true from a standpoint or because of a superficial assessment of the facts or because it conforms with one's preconceived notions or because it is authoritative or because of the prestige of your teacher. When you, Kalamas, realize for yourself that these doctrines are evil and unjustified, that they are condemned by the wise and that when they are accepted and lived by, they conduce to ill and sorrow, then you should reject them.

From Kalama Sutta, one may conclude that there were varieties of religious beliefs in the Buddha's days. People have a great opportunity to examine and verify the teachings of many religious scholars in order to find out which was suitable for them and which was the road to the ultimate truth. When the different religious beliefs clashed, dialogue is the most desirable in situation for religious pluralism, for the purpose of mutual understanding and enrichment, for dispelling suspicion and prejudices, and for harnessing moral and spiritual values and so on.

A close reading of Buddhadasa's works reveals the operation of some implicit criteria. These are sociological in that he bases judgements of the inaccuracy of traditional readings of the scriptures and of the accuracy of his dhamma language readings on the social and religious consequences of those respective interpretations. He is concerned to end social problems that hinder improvements in human well-being as fundamentally a religious matter, saying that:

The true objective of the founders of all religions with regard to the completion or perfection of what is most useful and needful for humanity is not being achieved, because the followers of the respective religions interpret the languages of dhamma wrongly, having preserved wrong interpretations and preached wrongly to such an extent that the world has been facing turmoil and problems created by the conflicts among religions.

According to Buddhadasa, the anthropomorphized concept of God in Christianity is only one rendering of ultimate reality on the level of human language. In the Dhamma language, God transcends our usual distinctions between good and evil, personal and impersonal. To know God is to know things as they really are or from the perspective of the divine (1967, p.63). In Buddhadasa's view, Jesus like the Buddha, was in favour of the middle way, he lived it and taught or persuaded his followers to live it in order to avoid the extreme of being too loose or too strict in attitude and conduct. For example, such a middle way can be seen in the Bible: "Bend your necks to my yoke, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and your souls will find relief. For my yoke is good to bear, my load is light," (Matthew 11/29-30 in Buddhadasa, 1967, p. 53).

The sense of non-attachment as the middle way of dialogue can be seen through the speech of Dalai Lama. Regarding the conflict between China and Tibet with reference to Tibet's independence, The Dalai Lama has made clear that he no longer seeks independence for Tibet, and that he is committed to "the Middle Way." He has also said that the concerns of the Tibetan people could be addressed within the framework of the People's Republic of China (Craig, 2003, p. A23).

Discussion and Comparison

Hermeneutics as a Mode of Thinking

Principally speaking, to philosophize is to argue for or to argue against any particular philosophical view one wants to defend or refute by using argument or reasoning. In contrast, as said George McLean, to use hermeneutics is "to speak of the importance of dialogue as the interchange between persons and peoples. This is not at all the same as argument. In an argument, one looks for the weakness in the position of the other in order to be able to reject it as a threat to one's own position. In contrast, in hermeneutics one looks for the element of truth in the other's position in order to be able to take account of it" (2003, p. 34). However, when we deal with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, do we mean to accomplish both argumentation and dialogue or not? To use the middle way as the dhamma language is to go beyond both, that is, carefully to practice the dialogical argumentation. Eventually, learning to listen to others' opinions is more difficult than learning to speak because "by listening to someone from another tradition one is enabled to go more deeply into the resources of one's own tradition and draw on it in new ways for new times," (McLean, 2003, p. 35). Such an idea is a great example of non-attachment.

The purpose of this study on "communication across culture" is to exchange ideas and experiences on the existential or cultural dimension of life through hermeneutics and dialogue, to seek or indeed to exercise our mutual understanding and collaboration among different people from different part of the world. That has to be appropriately accumulated through Heidegger's philosophy of existentialism and Gadamer's hermeneutics of universalism. Both are key figures in ontological hermeneutics. Martin Heidegger laid out his famous analytic of Dasein, the structure of human existence. He stressed the central importance of "understanding" as the essential forward-looking of human beings (*Being and Time*, [tr.], 1962, pp. 183-193). His successor, Hans-Georg Gadamer has taken to the task to uncover human existence and culture through history or what he calls pre-understanding, which lived consciously with its issues of human dignity, values and cultural dialogue (1991, pp. 258-261).

Phenomenological and ontological hermeneutics are appropriate for this global age because it can preserve the essential standpoint of the new subjectivity and opens the opportunity for dialogue and understanding in a global society. Phenomenology helps one comprehend ontology as an existential life-world. The point of emergence is that the ontology of the existential life-world can be best understood through the Buddhist doctrine of Dependent Origination or Inter-relation. But the divergence is that while theistic religions, like Christianity employ phenomenological techniques to grasp the ontologically existential feature of life, the atheistic religion, like Buddhism, does this so as to comprehend ontologically the non-existential element of psycho-physical combination. For Theism, failure to understand being as existence or to use Husserl's terminology 'Lebenswelt' is taken as 'a learned ignorance' to use Cusa's terminology, and on the contrary, for Atheism, failure to understand being as being-of-non being or non-existence is a 'learned ignorance'. Eventually, the 'Lebenswelt' turn (Sugiharto, 2003, p.2) is the hermeneutic turn, as said Gadamer: "Being that can be understood is language" (1991, p. 474). Hermeneutic work is based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness of experiences in terms of a story or language or forms of life or comparatively of the text. Thus Gadamer said, "the true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between", i.e. between the traditional text's strangeness and familiarity to us, between being a historically intended, distanciated object and our belonging to a tradition

(1991, p. 295). The basic tenet of ontological hermeneutics is established on the amalgamations of historical consciousness and temporal distance. According to Gadamer, "to have a horizon means not being limited to what is near but being able to see beyond it. A person who has a horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, whether it is near or far, great or small. Similarly, working out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition" (1991, p. 302). Gadamer continued: "To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand, not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion (1991, p. 305).

Gadamer's concept of "fusion of horizons" of knowledge or experience as human understanding of life and world is comparable to the Buddhist theory of knowledge or insight meditation, which focuses on an awareness of the contact between internal organs and external objects, resulting in feeling, desire and attachment. The contact in-between internal organs and their corresponding external objects is the true locus of Buddhist hermeneutics to use the Gadamer's terminology. To be properly aware of the horizon, Buddhists are advised to control feelings, which can be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Michael S. Drummond is right in saying that, "the texts of the Pali canon of Theravada Buddhism identify the attachment to feelings at the normally preconscious level of sense impression, as a primary link for the arising of tension (*dukkha*), while arguing therein for non-attachment. This is because they (feelings) facilitate the arising of unwholesome mental states" (2002, p. 51). Moreover, Gadamer's fusion of horizon theory is in uniformity with the Buddhist ten principles of belief in the Kalama discourse in the sense that both theories emphasize awareness in making decisions. The fusion of horizon is a sort of dialectic, which consists of the principles of the hermeneutical circle and question-answer to render their support to the dialogue of cultural experiences. Precisely speaking, according to Gadamer, the dialectic of horizons consists of three interrelated steps, namely understanding or interpretation, explanation and application.

It is worth noting that Heidegger took the model of interpreting a text as the basic model for all human understanding and experiencing. Heidegger saw human being as essentially or ontologically hermeneutical, but Gadamer saw human's understanding as hermeneutical (Stiver, 1996, p. 92). Both disagreed with Schleiermacher's "authorial intent" as a useful method to understand the text. "Not just occasionally but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well" (1991, p. 296). Hence, Understanding for Gadamer is a constructive activity. Simply to repeat a text is not to understand it; "To say that we understand in a different way, if we understand at all" (*Ibid*., p.297). Buddhists do not contradict this idea, but would say in different way. The Buddhists, to use dhamma language theory and St. Thomas Aquinas's proportional analogy, would say, "to understand is to understand in neither the same nor different way, if we understand at all". Because the reader of the book will have to take both the author's intention and the text into consideration in order to gain the proper meaning. More precisely, the past (authorial intent, culture, history) plays one part, but is not the whole. The present cannot escape bringing its new questions and traditions have evolved since their distant. When we interpret a text we have to fuse the past tradition or horizon with the present tradition or horizon. We cannot simply leap into past meanings in themselves nor can we impose our meanings on the text. We both forward and create a freshly fused meaning. Interpreting a text is very much like a cultural festival process. In a festival celebrating some past event, we neither merely duplicate the original event as it happened, nor celebrate it subjectively, each in his own consciousness. It includes parts of both of these and something more creative. A festival fuses the past and present into a new creative moment over

and above both past and present. The fusion of horizon of tradition or culture is possible through the dialectic of understanding, explanation and application as said earlier. In this way, the dialogues of life, action or multi-lateral dialogue, doctrine or academic dialogue and religious experience or spiritual dialogue automatically become possible among different religions and cultures. Gadamer's theory of the fusion of horizon is critical in its nature, which is identical to the Buddhist middle dhamma, so it cannot be alleged categorically as subjectivism, relativism, dogmatism or relative idealism (Bilen, 2000, p.101).

The most important point to be kept in mind is that Theravada Buddhism can go hand in hand with the Existentialism of Heidegger in the light of the ontology of Ultimate Reality. Buddhism has no objection to the term 'existential', which relates to human experience. As we have already discussed, the state of Nibbana and the liberated one is not non-existence; rather it is positive, permanent reality, and here and now in human life. This is comparable to the Heidegger's Authentic Dasein. Heidegger accepts the humanization of death and defines Dasein as being-towards-death. Death reveals itself as that possibility which is most deeply one's own. Death is for Dasein the capital possibility from which all other possibilities derive their status (Heidegger, 1962, p. 277). The way Heidegger uses phenomenology to analyze Dasein and its death is similar to that of the Buddhist contemplation on death. Death is said to be the main feature of insight meditation practice. In Buddhism, it is said that one who realizes the nature of death is dead before death. The Authentic Dasein or 'conscious human life' is called Nibbana in the present life of a liberated one (*arahant*). Heidegger's philosophy of life culminates in Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy. Karl Rahner and the Second Vatican Council have articulated the religious implications of this newly sensitive philosophy (McLean, 2003, p.6).

Once Arwind Sharma put his observation thus: "While Aquinas could find a middle way between the univocal and the equivocal through the analogy, Buddhism could only find the middle way between affirmation and negation in Buddha's 'roaring silence'," (1997, p. 112). The Buddha's silence is similar to that of Wittgenstein who ends his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* with this famous statement, "what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence," (1961, 6.54). Regarding the mystical and religious experience, Wittgenstein is silent in the *Tractatus* but he is not mute in the *Philosophical Investigations*, which makes new subjectivity possible both in the Western and Eastern thoughts as already said above. As notes Prof. McLean, "it could be understood in analogy to the replacement of a tooth in childhood, the more important phenomenon is not the old tooth that is falling out, but the strength of the new tooth that is replacing it," (2003, p. 6).

The unique characteristic of Buddhist hermeneutics is known as "general hermeneutics,"16 the effort of which is to form a general and universal methodology based on a coherent and correspondent philosophy of understanding. The well-known book 'the Guide' or *Nettipakarana* serves as a set of 'canons' for interpretation.17 Buddhist hermeneutics can accommodate both Schleiermacher's theory of the author's intention and Gadamer's theory of the fusion of horizon, because the former is identical to the Theravada Buddhist theory of "gradual path" and the latter is to the Mahayana's theory of "skillful means." The Buddhist hermeneutics does not ignore the author's intention, because the Buddha is there as a human being. At the same time, the Buddhist hermeneutics opens the opportunity for the fusion of horizon, because the non-self or emptiness is there as a process of becoming. Therefore, the Buddhist hermeneutics starts from the author's intention to emptiness (Lopez, 1988, p. 65).

Hermeneutics as Cultural Understanding

The way Gyekye divided cultures into two levels of reality corresponds to that of Buddhism. In Thailand, Buddhism is divided into two kinds, namely cultural and doctrinal Buddhism just like the Buddha's discourses or dhammas, which also are divided into two levels, as discussed above. This is comparable to the hermeneutic circle, in which knowledge of the whole depends upon knowledge of the parts, and vice versa. The relationship between morality and culture could be understood better in the hermeneutics of "Beyond Cultures": "our shared humanity would prescribe a morality that stresses responsibilities and obligations towards others, whether as members of our own local community, or as members of the extensive human family," (Gyekye, 1999, p. 57). We need to apply the ethics of shared humanity, which is a base of civilization, not only within our family, but globally. Factually speaking, this ethics of shared responsibility must prevail in every culture in the world, and notably in Arab culture as well. It appears that, "although a united Arab world no longer exist, the system of Arab nations still behaves like a family even without a supernational authority," (Qing, 2003, p.7). In supporting cultural universalism, Gyekye encourages us to challenge the theses of normative cultural relativism, cultural incommensurability, and ethnocentrism. The sense of non-attachment is intelligible in Gyekye's 'aspectual character of cultural achievement' thus, "Recognizing the limitations of human culture can be a way to overcoming ethnocentrism," (Gyekye, 1999, p. 43). The concept of mutual understanding and collaboration and all could be perceived from Gyekye's theory of aspectuality and cultural whole, (Ibid., p.46).

According to the cultural aspectuality, real options are not one-to-one. If C1 borrows or adopts a dance form from C2, it does not at all follow that C2 will also borrow some dance form from C1. It may borrow some other cultural product from C1, any of C1's cultural creations or features that it (C2) considers worthwhile for the development of its own cultural life (Ibid.). In this manner, there will not be any clash of civilization and any end of history, because everything is dependent in origination. An example of non-egological treatment according to the Buddhist principle of non-attachment is exemplified by Warayuth Sriwarakuel18 : "Being a Christian does not make me in trouble with my personal and Thai identity because I adopt the Buddhist way of thinking. With the principle of non-attachment I have no attachment to identity at all because I am conscious that we are new persons every moment…. So if someone happens to ask me, "Who are you?" In terms of religion, I would say, " I am a Catholic in baptism and tradition, Protestant in spirit, and Buddhist in the way of thinking," (2000, p.21). Therefore, Gadamer's hermeneutics of openness, extension of understanding, transformation into a communion is really a global philosophy.

Non-attachment is applicable to the case of Fukuyama's *End of History* (1992) and Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). Fukuyama was understood to be saying that humankind's ages-long global conflict was over because everyone would seek to become liberal democratic capitalists. In contrast, Huntington was understood to say that certain societies (or civilizations) would never evolve into such modern Western states (http://www.brothersjudd.com). In short, both thinkers tried to posit the idea of existence and non-existence behind their assumption. The end of Fukuyama's idea of political history is the rise of Huntington's idea of the history of civilizations. But Payutto, whose mode of thinking is grounded in "non-attachment to the dogmatic opinion theory", would go beyond the assumption of these. He remarked that, "the collapse of communist socialism does not spell the soundness of capitalism. On the contrary, it implies that, of the two predominant forms of materialism, as the failure of one has been witnessed, that of the other can be expected" (1993, p. 24). According to Payutto, liberal democracy will be sustainable only when it no longer consists of the three wrong views mentioned

earlier. Liberal democracy must be strengthened by the development of human being, nature and environment, and inner freedom; otherwise it cannot survive. Moreover, with regard to the role of the present system of democracy, Buddhadasa remarked more interestingly that actually democracy, like communism can hardly resist human defilement or desire; both could be a means of taking advantage of, and destroying, others. Eventually, both democracy and communism can be an instrument to create peace only when they consist of dhamma or morality, and not only of freedom and liberty. The ideal form of politics is according to him, *dhammic socialist democracy*, in which dictatorial means are used to expedite moral solutions to social problems (1989, p.183).

According to Payutto, for human beings to live happily there must be freedom on three levels as antidotes to the three wrong views. The first freedom is called 'physical freedom', which means the freedom to live with nature and the environment. Secondly, in our relationship with fellow humans we must have 'social freedom'. To have the social freedom is to be able to live safely together without being exploited by others. The third one is 'inner freedom', which is freedom on personal level. This is the freedom from the internal enemies, greed, hatred and delusion; internal freedom is the foundation on which social and physical freedom can be grounded. The inner freedom of Payutto is in line with the Absolute Unity of Cusa, i.e. the One, God or Being (McLean, 2003, p. 29; Deleonardis, 1998, pp. 48-50). Payutto's concept of inner freedom is in conformity with McLean's "Existential Freedom as Self-Constitution and Self-Determination." This existential sense of freedom emerges as the dynamic center of our life. It is self-affirmation towards full perfection, which is the very root of the development of values, virtues, and cultural traditions. This sets in motion positive processes of concrete peaceful and harmonious collaboration (McLean, 2003, pp. 9-11). Existential freedom, beyond attachment and accompanied with right views, will strengthen liberal democracy and unite human civilization to the infinity.

Buddhism accepts both the social self (everyday ritual) and the social non-self (beyond everyday ritual); there are two sorts of truth in Buddhism, namely conventional truth (indirect meaning) and ultimate truth (direct meaning) with special emphasis on the latter. To say that Buddhism pays more attention to the ultimate truth or social non-self is not to mean that Buddhists ignore the social self. The social self can be understood in terms of 'deference', which means acknowledging the values of the other person as well as of our own selves. Deference means also supportive interchange or a situation of social interaction, such as greetings, offers of help, remedial interchange and so on (Goffman, 1959, pp. 240). This social self is known in Buddhism as a social ethic elucidated in the Buddhist text (Sn. 259-268). For example, one of 38 highest blessings is reverence, respect or appreciative action, which is grasped in the context of the social self. But in addition to the social self, the Buddha teaches social non-self, which means forgiveness or non-attachment to the social self. Whenever the social self disappoints one, then the social non-self can help release such a disappointment. The social non-self is a sense of forgiveness, love, non-attachment, which transcend any expectation of the consequences of our actions. Self-identity in the light of right understanding through self awareness or heedfulness must be cultivated in order to solve the problem of conflict occurring all over the world. McLean's sense of Heidegger's Dasein or Buddhism's Heedfulness (*appamada*) is that, "Done well this can be a historic step ahead for humanity; done poorly it can produce a new round of human conflict and misery".

Conclusion

The highest aim of Buddhism is peace as the Buddha said: "Not any other bliss higher than peace (*natthi santi param sukham*)." Likewise peace is the highest aim of all religions and

philosophical theories, so religions and philosophies are for peace; that is the implication of "diversity in unity" (see appendix III). To present the idea of non-attachment as based on the doctrine of non-self does not mean intentionally to object the idea of detachment as based on new subjectivity, but to supplement it. Rather, both perspectives depend on and supplement one another; self is non-self and non-self is self. In the terminology of the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination-cessation, it is because of self that the non-self arises and because of the cessation of self that non-self arises and vice versa. The doctrine of dependent origination-and-cessation or interrelatedness in Buddhism is comparable to both the dialectic of horizons or the hermeneutical circle and question-and-answer in the hermeneutical philosophy of Heidegger and Gadamer, and to the dialectic of "thick and thin", and "sacred and the profane" of Michael Walzer and Mircea Eliade respectively.

Buddhism teaches its followers to discover themselves and to cultivate unlimited wisdom, purity and compassion in order to have great respect for human beings and nature for the purpose of their harmonious and peaceful coexistence with each other. Such a friendly attitude toward others and nature is well expressed by Ven. PhraThepsophon (Prayoon Mererk), the present Rector of the Buddhist University of Thailand in his book entitled *Buddhist Propagation for World Peace* (2002, p.98) as follows. When asked, "what will you do if your cuckoo doesn't sing?" Three men answered in different ways. The first man says, "The cuckoo doesn't sing? All right, kill it at once." The second man says, "The cuckoo doesn't sing? All right, I will make it sing." The third man says, "The cuckoo doesn't sing? All right, I will wait till it sings." The first man in this story is very aggressive because his mind is full of hatred, whereas the second man's mind is full of greed or desire for mastery over nature. The third man, cultivating wisdom and purity of mind, holds respect for, and compassion towards, the bird. The third man's position represents the Buddhist attitude towards nature and other human beings; it also suggests Heidegger's 'new intentionality' and the emergence of self-awareness of the human person in time (Dasein) towards human freedom and social progress.

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Notes

1. This causal law can be expressed by a formula : "when this is, that is; this arising, that arises. When this is not, that is not; this ceasing, that ceases." Its general principle can be illustrated by a series of twelve factors: "Conditioned by ignorance are mental and kammic formations…. Conditioned by birth are old age, death, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair…. Through the cessation of ignorance, mental and kammic formation cease….Through the cessation birth, old age, death, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair cease," (M.III.63).

2. His Royal Ecclesiastic Name is PhraThepsopon (Prayoon Dhammacitto [Mererk]) and he is now appointed as the Rector of Mahachula Buddhist University, Bangkok ,Thailand, which has 14 University Branches over Thailand. He was born in 1955, became a novice at the age of 12. While being a novice he graduated with the highest degree of the Thai traditional Pali studies IX and the King sponsored his higher ordination in the Chapel Royal. He got his M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. from Delhi University, India. He is a monk of learning and administration.

3. Buddhism originated in India in 623 B.C. The Buddha (Enlightened One), whose personal name is Siddharta Gautama, was the founder. After he discovered his dhamma and preached it for 45 years, he died peacefully at the age of 80 years. Living Buddhism is divided into 2 broad traditions: the first one is called *Theravada* (Elders' words) Buddhism, which is also known as 'southern' Buddhism or Hinayana (small vehicle in the sense of being a conservative school) followed by over 100 million of people in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. And the second one is called *Acariyavada* (later teachers' words) Buddhism, which is known as Mahayana (great vehicle in the sense of being a liberal school) Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism is further divided into 2 lines, (1) one is known also as 'eastern' Buddhism and followed by 500 to 1,000 million of people in the East Asian tradition of China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam; and (2) the other one is known as 'northern' Buddhism and followed by over 20 million in the Tibetan tradition (Gethin, 1998, p. 1).

4. Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's Royal Ecclesiastical name is Dhammaghosacariya and he was born in 1906 in the Southern Province of Thailand and he went forth as a monk in 1926. He established the Forest Dhamma Center in order to practice Insight Meditation in 1932 and passed away in 1989.

5. Ven. Payutto Bhikkhu's Royal Ecclesiastical name at present is PhraDhammapidok (Prayudh Payutto Bhikkhu), who is now the most accepted Thai Buddhist scholar monk in Thailand. He was born in 1939 in Thailand. He became a novice at the age of 13 and while still a novice completed the highest grade of Pali examination. He wrote more than 200 books, and one of those is entitled *A Buddhist Solution for the Twenty-first Century*, which earbed the 1994 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education.

6. George F. McLean is Professor Emeritus, School of Philosophy and Director, Center for the Study of Culture and Values, the Catholic University of America, Washington,D.C., Secretary, Council for Research in values and Philosophy (RVP), USA. McLean, as a global teacher following the footsteps of Gadamer, is concerned to help students, coming from different countries, develop the art of understanding and of contributing something meaningful for others.

7. On the other hand, the term is derived from the Latin word for tilling or cultivating the land. Cicero and other Latin authors used it for the cultivation of the soul or mind.

8. Kwame Gyekye is an erudite African philosopher at the University of Ghana, who belonged to Ghana Academy of Arts and Academy established nearly forty years ago on the initiative of the then Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah, its first Chairman.

9. According to Gyekye, this is what Immanuel Kant called *sensus communis* (1999, p. 31).

10. The worldly conditions according to Buddhism are 8 factors in number, namely, gain and loss, fame and obscurity, blame and praise, and happiness and suffering (A. IV. 157).

11. Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, p. 11 (quoted in Kwame Gyekye, 1999, p. 31).

12. More terms are further elaborated in the Abhidhamma, such as, the *conditioned* and the *unconditioned*, *lokiya* dhamma or *cariya* dhamma for the layperson, which promotes well-being but does not end the process of rebirth, and the *lokuttara* dhamma or *sacca* dhamma for the renunciate, which leads directly to the cessation of rebirth and to liberation from suffering (Dhs., 193, 245).

13. The *Netti-Pakarana* is attributed to Mahakaccayana, an immediate disciple of the Buddha. It is not regarded as canonical by the Sinhalese and is not part of the Thai Tipitaka, but is included in the Burmese canon.

14. George D. Bond, "The *Netti-Pakarana*: A Theravada Method of Interpretation," in Somaratna Balasooriya (ed.), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula,* Gordon Fraser, London, 1980, p. 20, quoted by Jackson, 1988, p.103.

15. Pluralism is the view that the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality centeredness is taking place in different ways within the contexts of all the great religious traditions (Whaling, 1986, p. 153).

16. Palmer divides hermeneutics into three fairly distinct categories: regional hermeneutics, general hermeneutics, and philosophical hermeneutics (1981, pp. 461-2).

17. In the *Nettipakarana*, every discourse contains two aspects, namely, verbal content (*byanjana*) and meaning (*attha*). Of them words consist of letters, verbal content, etymology, presentation (*nidesa*) and manner (*akara*). Meaning consists of the following six: explaining (*sankasana*), displaying (*pakasana*), divulging (*vivarana*), analysing (*vibhajana*), exhibiting (*uttanikamma*), and sesignating (*pannatti*). These six are called threads. Modes of conveying the meaning are sixteen: Conveying teaching (*desanahara*), investigation (*vicayahara*) and so on.

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Appendices

Buddhist Technical Terms Used in The Paper

1. Abhidhamma/Abhidharma 'higher teaching'; one of the three main divisions of the ancient Buddhist canon.
2. Aggregate the five aggregates(physical form feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness) that together constitute a living being.
3. *Anatta* 'non-self'; the Buddhist denial of a permanent and substantial self.
4. *Arhanta* an awakened Buddhist saint.
5. *Atman*/atta self; belief the permanent self opposite to anatta/anatman.
6. *Bhavana* 'mental/ spiritual development' Buddhist meditation.
7. *Bhikkhu* a Buddhist monk.
8. *Bodhisattva*/*bodhisatta* one on the path to Buddhahood.
9. *Brahmin* a person who believes in Hinduism; a Hindu priest.
10. Dependent Origination-Cessation (*paticcasamuppada*) the Buddhist doctrine of causality.
11. *Dhamma*/*Dharma* the underlying law of reality; the teaching of the Buddha.
12. *Dukkha* 'pain'; the unease or unsatisfactoriness which characterizes existence.
13. *Karma*/*kamma* good and bad actions of body, speech, and mind whose pleasant and unpleasant results are experienced in this and subsequent lives.
14. *Madhyamaka* 'the middle'; alongside *Yogacara*, one of the two principal schools of Mahayana Buddhism.
15. Mahayana 'great vehicle' ; a broad school of Buddhism.
16. Nagarjuna 2nd century Buddhist monk and thinker, the founder of Madhyamaka school of thought.
17. Nikaya a division of the Sutta Pitaka, section of the Buddhist canon; the school of Buddhist thought.
18. Nibbana/Nirvana the 'bowing out' of the fires of greed, hatred, and delusion; the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice; the unconditioned.
19. *Parinibbana* the final death of a Buddha or arhant; or another term for Nibbana/Nirvana.
20. *Pacceka-Buddha* a solitary Buddha , who could discover the dhamma, but could not convey his dhamma to the people. This category of Buddha will be born only in between the present Buddha and the Next Buddha. This paccakabuddha is different from the Sammasambhuddha, who discovers the dhamma and could teach people.
21. Sangha the Buddhist monastic order of monks and nuns.
22. *Samadhi* 'concentration' or 'meditation'.
23. *Samsara* the Buddhist belief in round of birth or the wheel of life.

24. *Sautrantika* ‘a follower of the Sutra or Suttapitaka, which is one of the three Buddhist main scriptures or canon.

25. *Sunyata* ‘’emptiness’ ; a Buddhist spiritual term used to characterize the ultimate nature of things.

26. Sutra/Sutta ‘discourse of the Buddha’; one of the three Buddhist main scriptures or canon.

27. *Tathagata* ‘the thus gone/ thus come’; an epithet of the Buddha.

28. *Theravadin* a follower of the Theravada or ‘teaching of the elders’; a Buddhist school, which is taken as an Early Buddhism.

29. *Tripitaka*/*Tipitaka* ‘three baskets’; the three basic divisions of Buddhist canon.

30. Upanisads a set of sacred Brahmanical texts included in the Veda.

31. Vipassana ‘insight’ ,one of two main type of Buddhist meditation, namely ‘tranquillity meditation or mental calmness’ (*samathakammatthana*), and ‘insight meditation’ (*vipassanakammatthana*).

32. *Yogacara* ‘yoga practice’ ; alongside *Madhyamaka*; it is also known as *vijnanavada*.

The Gradual Path to Nibbana

Nibbana
Fruition-Knowledge Path-Knowledge Insight-Knowledge
1. Right View
2. Right Thought
3.WISDOM-FACTORS
III. Purification of View —
VII. Purification of Knowledge and Vision
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration
2. CONCENTRATION-FACTORS
II. Purification of Mind
3. Right Speech 4. Right Bodily Action 5. Right Livelihood
1. MORALITY FACTORS
I. Purification of Morality

Those following and realizing the Middle Path, i.e. The Eightfold Noble Path, summarized in the Threefold Training, (namely, morality Factors, Concentration Factors and Wisdom Factors), should perpetually observe first the Morality Factors, then the Foundations of Mindfulness, which causes the Concentration Factors, followed by the Wisdom Factors, consisting of Purification and Insight Knowledge by graduation, in themselves. Finally they will attain to the Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge, as well as the Extinction of all Defilements and Sufferings, that is, NIBBANA.

Report on

The Jewish Religious Tradition

What Is the Nature of Judaism and What Are Its Salient Characteristics?

A particular concern at the present time is that Jews be looked upon not as objects (i.e. merely in terms of category of Christian or Jew), but as persons of faith, as subjects or as persons. This has been developed extensively by John Paul II in his *The Acting Person* and by Joseph Soloveitchik in his writings on person and community. The rationalist powers of conceptualization are not adequate to appreciate this. There is need for a richer experience of self in relation to the other and of my neighbor to me, not merely as sharing in humanity, but as another unique I. Here one experiences and indeed participates in the humanity of the other. This can be seen through the changed experience of a person when, feeling lonely and alienated in a crowd, he or she is recognized by another; this is not a matter of mere physical identification, but brings forward the existential import of a quite unique and irreplaceable person. In this existential light it is particularly important to appreciate Judaism not as an object, but as a people proceeding through history along their special path to God.

Unfortunately, the word "pharisee" has taken on a negative connotation, probably due to the critique found in the New Testament. It reflects, however, the effort of one of some seven groups during the first century to implement the Torah in everyday life. Their concern was not only the law, but how to act so us to implement the law in the life of the community (*Hilaha*). To be religious is not only adhesion to "a belief system," but a way of "being and going," a journey or special way of life – or, perhaps even better, life as a way, a path, a pilgrimage in the context of a divine covenant.

What Can Judaism Hope to Contribute to the Religious Patrimony of Humankind

The Jewish sense of specialness may have deeper roots, however, and be more revealing. Overwhelmingly most Jews live in Christian lands and hence tend to think of themselves especially vis a vis Christianity. Yet this is true also of Islam which has always thought of itself in relation to – or competition with – Christianity. Thus the relationship to Christians rather than with other peoples takes up disproportionate attention and concern.

The fact that today we live in a global world makes attention to, and concern for, others especially important. It is widely appreciated that Jewish people are philanthropic and importantly concerned for the welfare not only for their own community, but for the poor and needy. This is true not only on the local level but on the international level as well, as witness organizations similar to "Doctors without Borders".

Yet it is striking that this is done not with a formal religious intent, but rather on a more secular basis. The sense is not so much that of doing God’s work, as it is that being of service to the poor and suffering is what a Jew does precisely as a member of the Jewish people. The religious motivation may be more in the background than in the foreground. Religion is not absent here because the Jewish people consider themselves to be a people precisely through their relation to God which they live according to the covenant. That is, though Jews serve others on the basis of being part of this people rather than by divine command, this people is ultimately conscious of being formed by God’s special providence.

Fundamentally, this may relate the fact that while a person is a Christian by conversion, one is a Jew by physical generation. Hence the charity of a Jew is community based and in observance of its rituals, rather than a direct matter of belief in God. As a result dialogue can be more a matter of political interaction between communities than of theological concern.

This has immense implications for the relations between Jews and non Jews. Failure to understand this has generated throughout history a persistent perception of Judaism as not only a closed community but poorly related to others. If interpreted only in political terms, the reinstitution of a Jewish state then forces extremely important decisions regarding its identity and role in the world along a whole spectrum from medical service at one end to international strategy at the other. In contrast, Jewish exceptionalism is founded on the covenant of God with His special people. To reduce the interpretation of its meaning to politics can generate its profound misreading, vastly complemented when implemented through the coercive power of a state, rather than by the power of charity. The success of the theophany to Moses in negotiating the increasingly perilous path of global times must be a matter of the gravest concern to all.

What Does the Jewish Community Expect from Other Religions: What Form of Recognition?

What Jews expect of others is recognition not as objects, but precisely as subjects of faith. In this emerges a sense also of the other as a unique person for whom I have responsibility. Martin Buber noted that it is only in such a recognition of the other as a "thou", rather than as an "it," that one comes alive; one then exists no longer as a thing or an object, but as a person. In recognizing the other as a "thou" rather than as an "it," I too become a "thou". In religious terms this is recognition of the other as a believer who lives this belief in everyday life. It is the first stage of recognition.

Indeed, this may be broader than we think. For it is not only the call by Jews that they be seen as persons of faith, but a call for recognition from others as well. Often those of other faiths sense in both Christianity and Judaism an attitude of superiority. E.g. stress upon the uniqueness of the holocaust can generate in other Eastern European a sense that their sufferings in the Second World War are not adequately appreciated by Jews.

The second stage of recognition is theological dialogue. For historical reasons such as was manifested, e.g., in the Inquisition, there has been some hesitation regarding theological discussion among the Jewish population. Moses "Maimonides" treated the particular characteristics of such discussion in the context of persecution. This has been transmitted to contemporary political thought through the writings of Leo Strauss on Moses Maimonides, e.g. his "Persecution and the Art of Writing."

More recent discussion has turned especially to the clarification of language. This includes two special foci: One is the discussion of evil in our times. In response, e.g., to the killing of 30,000 in Argentina, as well as in Peru, Central America, South Africa, etc., reconciliation commissions have been at work on evercoming these negative memories through solidarity with others. The attention of the Jewish population to the holocaust is struggling in this regard with how to remember without remaining forever entangled in this evil.

Second, we are confronted with the difficult challenge of the inability of science and the economy to solve the problem of hunger. Here the testimony of the people of God is needed by service without ideological overlay.

The third stage of recognition is religion as lived in daily life. This is not only the rituals at formal points of transition, but pervades all circumstances and consists in the search for inner purification and for truth. This builds on the previous stages of recognition of the other's faith commitment, and follows with a meditative dimension in response to God's special call to proceed in depth into a shared search for God's presence marked by hope.

This is not a syncretism or mixing of symbols which produces a third that obscures the path of each and leads to confusion. Nor is it a sporadic engagement with others. Rather, it is a recognition that God is beyond all. Here what is important is belief in God and action in terms of this belief. This underscores the importance of the ethical and the ritual in perceiving the presence of God and seeing both self and other as persons of faith.

In dialogue it is certain that the negative, even tragic, experiences of the past will emerge. It is important not to forget these realities and to be warned on the many ways in which people can be turned into objects. Yet history is above all a movement into the future which will call for all the positive powers of faith.

In this light one begins to see today renewed attention to the covenant which entails the lasting assurance of God's goodness, protection and providence. It is upon the stability of this relationship that one can build hope. This, rather than dwelling upon past tragedies, promises to provide the supportive narrative for the coming generation. It was suggested that if the European memory is too powerfully impacted by the tragic history of the holocaust, the American Jewish community might be better positioned to take this turn to hope.

But dialogue may call us further still. For it requires that we not only avoid considering the other as an object, but find him or her to be a friend. It is this deep personal relationship that opens dialogue for only friends can truly enter into dialogue.

In the past one difficulty has been that Christians looked at themselves as a more faithful continuation of Judaism, which thereby is placed in an inferior position. It was suggested that a more proper perspective would be not to look upon Christianity as a branch of Judaism, but to see two branches of Judaism, namely, one, Rabbinic Judaism predicted upon commenting on the Talmud; the other, Christianity understood in terms of Jesus as linking God to humanity.

In this light mutual influence can be expected between Christianity and Judaism. Indeed it would appear that not only have Jewish customs been inherited and integrated into Christianity, but that Christian elements are found in contemporary Jewish practice as well.

Each then should feel free to express their convictions and commitments in the presence of the other without this being taken as an offence. Thus, e.g., Christians should feel able to pray in the name of Christ when sharing prayer with their sister Judaic branch.

What are the Interests of Judaism in Dialogue and How might These Best be Implemented?

Interest in dialogue would appear to be very recent, since 1945 in Europe. Previous history had emphasized contrast and deep opposition between faiths, each defending itself through negative characterizations of the other. After *Nostra Aetate* this has shifted to a recognition of the good that is in all faiths and their positive characteristics. Indeed the difficulty now may be rather in preserving room for positive proclamation of one's own tradition and creative critique of other religions and of the broad cultures they entail.

It may be too simplistic to search for the basis of this relatively sudden change of almost 180 degrees in any one fact or factor. It could be that the weaknesses of modernity emerged in step with its power. After four centuries, in 1930s the modern ideologies of fascism, communism and

colonialism had achieved power universally to oppress the person which the Enlightenment initially had placed on a somewhat unrealistic pedestal. Or was it the emerging awareness of human subjectivity that made the various empires no longer sufferable by mid 20th century? At any rate, if there is a line of continuity in the history of the last half century it is the inexorable step by step affirmation of the person over each of the above ideologies. If so then it is perspicacious to think of the opening of dialogue as built on friendship for others in their basic pathways of faith. This was a point of special attention by John Paul II even before his Pontificate. It could provide the key to construction of a positive new pattern of cooperation between faiths and the persons and peoples who profess them.

What Might a Revised *Nostra Aetate* Say with Regard to Judaism?

1. As noted above, it should focus on the recognition of people in other religious traditions not as objects, but as persons of faith and children of God.
2. It should provide guidance similar to the document of the U.S. Bishops on how to present the passion and death of Christ in a manner that does not incite enmity against the Jews.
3. It would be appropriate to invite the Jewish community to write its own *Nostra Aetate* vis a vis Christianity. This would not be a document of Jewish theology, but an understanding of how Christianity and Judaism are part of the unfolding of God's plan.

This is not to suppress the differences between the religious communities, but to suggest that we must remain ourselves while focusing precisely upon members of other religious communities as persons of faith proceeding along their own path to the Holy Mountain after the image of Isaias. Here the emphasis is not on opposing theological imperialisms, but upon each religion as an experience of God that inspires all facets of daily life.

The Other as Person of God: From Disdain to Recognition: A Reflection on the Interfaith Dialogue

Leon Klenicki

Words have their own existence, their own mystery and are open to understanding as well as misunderstanding. Words may be employed for clarification in democracies as well as abused ideologically by totalitarian states. Words present a constant challenge to creative adaption under changing circumstances. Meaning and interpretation of words are ever questioned by history and the human condition.

One word we are wont to use extensively, though without a general consensus of its meaning, is the term *dialogue.* I plan to propose a definition in close relationship with the interfaith encounter: Dialogue is a meeting of two or more persons entailing a meaningful meeting: It basically involves communication which derives from the Latin *communicare*, meaning "to make common", to make and share a common ground. That sharing implies certain existential elements such as anxiety, defensiveness, as well as a sense of purpose.

Dialogue is a meeting of meaningful entities, both physical and spiritual recognition. Physically, a person in dialogue apprehends another in acknowledged similarities and dissimilarities. We see, perceive, react to, affirm or deny a person within a certain situation, society or culture. Dialogue always occurs within a historical context. Spiritual recognition is the perception and acceptance of another person as a subject of faith, not as an object which generally implies conscious or unconscious contempt.

The Encounter of Meaning

The encounter of meaning is a meeting of real people within a special context. It is an 'I' meeting a 'You'. Meaning cannot be realized in loneliness and alienation. The very text of the book of Genesis points out the need for company. Adam and Eve are created as two human beings to fulfil God's design, but they are also two persons in a spiritual relationship to fulfil themselves. They go beyond the loneliness, and exclusiveness to an existential all-inclusiveness. Adam and Eve achieve a meaningful dialogue in the recognition of their existence in the Garden of Eden, and later on in the world. They create a community of faith. This unique experience is described by Joseph B. Soloveitchik: "a community is established the very moment I recognize the Thou and extend greetings to the Thou. One individual extends the 'shalom' greeting to another individual; and in so doing he creates a community … recognition means sacrificial action: the individual who withdraws in order to make room for the thou."1 Rabbi Soloveitchik clarifies the significance of recognition in an essential manner that defines the very value of the partners of a dialogue encounter:

Quite often a man finds himself in a crowd amongst strangers. He feels lonely. No one knows him, no one cares for him, no one is concerned with him. It is again an existential experience. He begins to doubt his ontological worth. This leads to alienation from the crowd surrounding him. Suddenly someone taps him on the shoulder and says: "Aren't you Mr. So-and-So? I have heard so much about you." In a fraction of a second his awareness changes. An alien being turns into a fellow member of an existential community (the crowd). What brought about the change? The recognition

by somebody, the word! To recognize a person is not just to identify him physically. It is more than that. It is an act of identifying him existentially, as a person who has a job to do, that only he can do properly. To recognize a person means to affirm that he is irreplaceable. To hurt a person means to tell him that he's expendable, that there is no need for him.2

Recognition implies a sense of responsibility as Soloveitchik points out:

Once I have recognized the thou, I invited him to join the community, I ipso facto assumed responsibility for the thou. Recognition is identical with commitment.

Here again we walk in the ways of our Maker. God created man; God did not abandon him; God showed concern for him. God cared for Adam; God said: it is not good for man to be alone. He provided him with a mate; he placed him in Paradise, and allowed him to enjoy the fruit of the Garden. Even after man sinned and was exiled from the Garden, the Almighty did not desert him. Of course, he punished him. In a word, God assumed responsibility for whatever and whoever he created: "He gives bread to all flesh for his loving kindness and is everlasting." (Psalm 136:25) As we have said above, the same relationship should prevail between me and the thou whom I have recognized, and with whom I have formed a community. I assume responsibility for each member of the community to whom I have granted recognition and whom I have found worthy of being my companion. In other words, the I is responsible for the physical and mental welfare of the thou).3

The dialogical responsibility is for a subject, a person, and not for an object. We are to be responsive to the other as a spiritual entity, a subject of faith, a child of God. A perception of mutuality for a fellow thou, respectful of the other's integrity establishes distance and a process of relationship, simultaneously. Distancing as Martin Buber defined it, is a "primal distancing" in which "I confirm and further the Thou in the right of his existence and the goal of his becoming, in all his otherness."4 Dialogue is to recognize the other as a person with a meaning, a person of God. Buber will state this as basic in the human relationship:

Once one ceases to regard the other as merely an object of observation and begins to regard the other as an independent other standing over against him, then we have the beginning of the I-Thou relation.5

Dialogue and Relationship

A second stage of the dialogue is to enter into a direct relationship, an act whose fullest expression is personal mutual confirmation. In such an act of acceptance or inclusion (*Umfassung*) as Buber describes it, one experiences the other side of the relationship, or more precisely, one experiences the relationship from the other side. One life opens up to another without one incorporating the other. This is "peculiarly characteristic of the human worth". As the overagainstness remains, and necessarily so, there is, as Buber says, a "door swinging into the life of the other". Other times he speaks of this as "imagining the real", that is "perceiving and thinking what is occurring in the mind and body of another individual". Receiving such "an intimation of the being of the other"6 through inclusion or embracing is a special process. This is explained by

Maurice Friedman in his introduction to Buber's early work "Daniel", in which the term "inclusion", an accepting embrace (*Umfassung*) is used in a significant way:

"Experiencing the other side" means to feel an event from the side of the person one meets as well as from one's own side. It is an inclusiveness which realizes the other person in the actuality of his being, but it must not be identified with "empathy", which means transposing oneself into the dynamic structure of an object, hence, as Buber says, "the exclusion of one's own concreteness, the extinguishing of the actual situation of life, its absorption in pure aestheticism of the reality in which one participates". Inclusion is the opposite of this. "It is the extension of one's own concreteness, the fulfilment of the actual situation of life, the complete presence of the reality in which one participates." In inclusion one person, "without fulfilling anything of the felt reality of this activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other."7

Dialogue is the acceptance of the other as the other, the other in God, a particular being. Dialogue is a meeting with another person with its own rights and its own commitments. We deal with persons, not objects. It is a communion of the spirit, not a physical relationship as we may have with an object. It is a process of the heart: from disdain to recognition, from alienation to creative proximity, an evolution from confrontation to a challenging relationship of equals. This is in essence the mystery and summons to the Christian-Jewish encounter of faith.

Towards an Encounter of Faith Commitments

A meaningful encounter between Christians and Jews does not lead to syncretism, i.e., two parties combining or reconciling different beliefs, or even an attempt to effect such compromise. Syncretism destroys the essence of each participating community. Dialogue is the very opposite of syncretism. This was clearly defined in a Vatican II document on Catholic-Jewish dialogue. The 1975 *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate IV*, stresses that,

To tell the truth, such relations as there have been between Jews and Christians have scarcely ever risen above the level of monologue. From now on, real dialogue must be established. Dialogue presupposes that each side wishes to know the other, and wishes to increase and deepen its knowledge of the other. It constitutes a particularly suitable means of favouring a better mutual knowledge and, especially in the case of dialogue between Jews and Christians, of probing the riches of one's own tradition. Dialogue demands respect for the other as he is; above all, respect for his faith and his religious convictions.8

This definition clarifies the meaning of interfaith recognition. It is the acceptance of the other as a "thou" or as a subject of faith. Personal relationships illustrate this reality in our daily experience at work, at school or in the city. Specifically, it is the relationship of Jews and Christians that has existed for two millennia and is in our days experiencing a painful transformation of the heart. The present situation is not a perfect stage but the beginning of an encounter whose essence and purpose belong to God's intimate design.

Centuries of Mutual Contempt

Judaism and Christianity have co-existed for nearly two thousand years, contemporaries, but alienated from one another, in a relationship of monologues. Christianity is rooted in Judaism and originated in that unique stage of First Century, C.E. spirituality. "First Century" as a historical datum was coined by Christian theologians referring to the birth of Christianity. It is a term seldom used by Jews, though the era of two thousand years ago was in many respects a "First" also for Judaism. I am inclined to use the term since it is a landmark, a moment of incisive change for Judaism, from biblical theology to a Rabbinic expounding of the meaning of God's Word. It was a time marked by national catastrophe namely, the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans in the year 70 C.E., a turning point in the history of God's people. It marked a renewal of spirituality despite history, the loss of political freedom, but a loss redeemed by a spirituality expressing new dimensions of religious experience expressed and God's Call.

The physical structure of the Temple in Jerusalem was replaced by an Inner Temple. The sacrificial offering, a spirituality of prayer and ritual, came to an end for all time. Daily life became a temple of communion for Israel: the God-to-person, person-to-God, and person-to-person relationship, in prayer and daily observance.

First Century Judaism was a pluralistic society. Many different social and religious groups thrived, such as the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Esenes and the Zealots. The Pharisees were one of the two religious movements that continued their preaching and activities, after the destruction of the temple, the other being the Nazarenes, or Christians. Pharisaism was a unique movement that renewed Jewish spiritual life by expounding to the people the meaning of the biblical word in regard to the specifics of history. Pharisees were the foremost Rabbinic thinkers of the Jews, giving guidance and a vital sense of God's Presence to the community. Rabbinic Judaism upholds us even now despite such sufferings and spiritual crises as Roman persecution, medieval isolation due to Christian triumphalism, expulsion from Spain in 1492, and in our century the agony of the Holocaust.

The Pharisees turned their interest to a deepened inner life, strengthening the God-Israel covenantal relationship and applying God's command to daily life. Their avowed purpose was to teach, expound and preach God's Torah, His Word. Pharisaic concern over religious values was so central that religion prevailed over political matters. For that reason the rabbis were willing to submit to, though not accept, foreign domination as long as it did not interfere with the life of *Halakah*, the life of implementing God's commands in the life of Israel.

Christianity developed alongside the Pharisaic First Century revolution, becoming a political power by the Roman Emperor Constantine's choice of Christianity as the Empire's official religion. From that moment on, the differences in missions of Jews and Christians became apparent, and a subsequent source of suffering for the Jewish people. The political domination of Christianity led to a denigration of the Jewish community. Jewish subjugation was considered by many Christian theologians and rulers a part of God's design. Restrictive measures were imposed such as ghettos, or special areas of habitation in a city or a nation. Dialogue became an impossible endeavour. For centuries, Christians looked upon Jews with contempt, objects of discrimination and persecution. On the other side, Christianity became an object of spiritual contempt to Jews, denying any religious purpose to Christianity. Christian theology was experienced as merely a tyrannic force that wanted to destroy the religious vocation and purpose of the Jewish people.

Only in our time have Jews and Christians begun to relate to each other beyond a sense of superiority or the desire to demean the other. The Jewish-Christian dialogue entails a change of heart and mind in order to overcome two thousand years of history. Prejudice and the heavy burden of memories must be approached with an open mind. Christians must learn that it is wrong, even

a sin, to deny Judaism a place in God's plan of redemption, a view portrayed by medieval theologians and even by Christian thinkers in our own days. It is a contempt that resulted in the former cultural segregation of Jews in Europe and prepared the way for contemporary anti-Semitism. Such contempt was reflected in European painting and sculptures as well as in common language. Hypocrite, usurer or Christ-killer became synonyms for Pharisee or Jew. For generations such messages made Jews objects of contempt and Christian hatred. The relationship was that of a subject to an object. A Christian saw before him a second class person called Jew, even before the Nazi time, who has to wear on his clothing, a sign identifying him as a member of the people of Israel.

This contempt has left memories that are hard to overcome. Jews must deal with two thousand years of contempt expressed in Christian European art, with memories of social alienation and spiritual denigration.

Toward a Reckoning

In order to achieve a meaningful dialogue between Jews and Christians, we have to overcome the disdain of centuries. We must recognize the other as a person of faith, a person of God. Christians need to acknowledge that the covenant of Israel did not end with the destruction of the Temple or the death of Jesus but developed into different spiritual dimensions, following the advice of Jeremiah 31:3 1. That is, the generational obligation of Jews is to re-establish and ever renew the Sinai Covenant, the God-Israel relationship. God's call has to be expressed in a faith commitment that expresses our present experiences, the eternal search for meaning and, specially today, our thirst for God after Auschwitz.

Christianity on the other hand, has to overcome triumphalism: the idea that theirs is the only way of salvation or meaning. God has many ways of sharing his essence and existence. God is a mystery inviting to a meaningful exploration making that mystery a reality by particular faith commitments. In the process of establishing a creative dialogue with Christians, Jews must try to understand Jesus: Jesus as a person of God whose life and vocation exemplified the task to bring pagan humanity, or not believing humanity to God. Jesus is not considered a messiah or the fulfilment of Judaism, as Christian theologians have maintained over the centuries. For us, Jesus is a fulfilled person of God, not the fulfilment of God's design. In our understanding of Christianity we must understand Jesus as a man of faith and not consider him with the memory of past deeds done in his name. That is not an easy task. We still harbour images of what was done against us in the name of Jesus in times past and present.

But in our attempt to establish a dialogical relationship, we must try to overcome those memories. Essentially, we must understand Christianity as a mission to the world, to bring the nations of the world to God, and not a missionary movement to convert Jews to Christianity. Jews have been with the Father from the very beginning, from Genesis 12 when Abram and Sarai were called by God and entrusted with a special witnessing vocation to the world. Gentiles need Jesus, the Son, to reach the Father and be with God. Neither way is superior to the other. Both are covenantal vocations that require to be fulfilled. Together, Judaism and Christianity must testify to the meaning of God in a pagan world, and particularly at the end of the 20th century.

Martin Buber in his book, *Two types of Faith*, rightly pointed out the importance of both mission:

The faith of Judaism and the faith of Christendom are by nature different in kind, each in conformity with its human basis, and they will indeed remain different, until mankind is gathered in from the exiles of the 'religions' into a kingship of God. But Israel's striving after the renewal of its faith through the rebirth of the person and Christianity's striving for the renewal of its faith through the rebirth of nations will have something as yet unsaid to say to each other and help to give to one another - hardly to be conceived at the present time.9

I will be more hopeful than Buber in reference to the last words of his quotation. We have made a beginning in theological terms on our different missions and the need to stand together in testifying to God. The great challenge, however, is to bring this joint intuition of God to the pews, at the popular level, in the streets. That requires a process of re-education and understanding, a task that should be our joint obligation at the present time. Despite the evidence of the most terrible human evil, Auschwitz and the Gulag, ours is also a time of hope, of great scientific discoveries, of cultural advances that have changed the very meaning of this century. Ours is a time of despair, but simultaneously, for us Jews and Christians a time of hope. Again I refer to Martin Buber:

In order to really understand the relation of Judaism to the appearance of Jesus, one must descend into the depths of this faith which is not condensed in any creed but can be shown from the testimonies. Whatever the appearance of Jesus means to the Gentile world (its significance for the Gentile world remains to me the true seriousness of Western history), seen from the standpoint of Judaism he is the first in the series of men who, stepping out of hiddenness of the servant of the Lord, the real 'messianic mystery', acknowledged their messiahship in their souls and in their words. That this first one in the series was incomparably the purest, the most legitimate, the most endowed with real messianic power - as I experience ever again when those personal words that ring true to me merge for me into a unity whose speaker becomes visible to me - alters nothing in the fact of the firstness; indeed it undoubtedly belongs just to it, to the fearfully penetrating reality that has characterized the whole automessianic series.10

Dialogue: From Disdain to Recognition

Our dialogue must lead from disdain to recognition. Dialogue is both a process of inner purification and a search for truth. The inner purification is an attempt to see the other as a creature and part of God's special design for mankind. A respectful relationship which at this point we call dialogue until a more precise word can describe this unique process is not a confrontational encounter, but an undertaking in a common fervour of God, mindful of the different vocations. Real dialogue calls a person into being, his/her own being, by mindfully acknowledging the partner as a person with a spiritual way and a commitment. Religious dialogue recognizes the other as person of God, and God as the common ground of being.

Dialogue is a process of growth in depth, a growth in truth. The first stage requires a basic knowledge of the other's faith commitment beyond prejudice and false images. There is a second stage which expresses maturation; it involves looking into ourselves to determine the real dimension of the meeting of our two faiths. The temptation at this point is to prophecy, to develop eschatological dreams that essentially are dreams of the moment or part of a conversionary tendency.

Dialogue requires search and patience. We need a period of meditation and reflection in order to consider the future. Patience is required to resolve doubts, to prevent the repetition of former situations, to prevent excessive dreams as a result of unreserved enthusiasm. Carefully committed

reflection and critical consideration are indispensable in the search for our joint goal. The search into the meaning of God's special call is a search for the meaning of our faith encounter beyond syncretism and sporadic sympathies.

Dialogue also requires action, namely a joint effort to reduce prejudice on all levels. We have the joint task to denounce anti-Semitism in all its forms, as well as anti-Christianity as expressed in films or jokes, or political persecution. We want to alert the community at large to the horror of burning a Torah in a synagogue, or the desecration of a church. Dialogue should make us aware that any attack on God's communities is an attack on God's Essence and Existence.

The interfaith Christian-Jewish dialogue is a search for the mystery of a new dimension: the possibility to witness God together, not unified, but standing together in a time of general unbelief and ideological ignorance. Ours is a search for God's Presence and Call, a search that includes other vocations such as Islam or Oriental religions.

Our dialogue is hope as described by Martin Buber:

We live in an unredeemed world. But out of each human life that is unarbitrary and bound to the world, a seed of redemption falls into the world, and the harvest is God's.11

Let us hope that we, Christians and Jews and other religious people, are that seed of redemption.

Notes

1. Joseph B. Soioveitchik, *Tradition*, The "Community", (New York, Spring, 1978), p. 15.
2. Ibid, p. 16.
3. Ibid. pp. 18-19.
4. "Interrogation of Martin Buber," *Philosophical Interrogations*, Sidney Rome and Beatrice Rome, eds. (New York, Harper TorchBooks, 1970), p. 114.
5. Pedro C. Sevilla, *God As Person in the Writings of Martin Buber* (Manila, Ateneo de Manila University, 1970), p. 57.
6. Donald L. Berry, *Mutuality: The Vision of Martin Buber* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 43.
7. Martin Buber, *Daniel* (New York, McGraw-Hill Paperbacks, 1 965), p.33.
8. Helga Croner, ed. *Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations* (London, New York: Stimulus Books, 1977), p.12.
9. Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki, eds. *In Our Time: The Flowering of Jewish-Catholic Dialogue* (New York, Stimulus Books, 1990).
10. Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith* (New York: Harper TorchBooks, 1951), pp. 173-174.
11. Martin Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hassidism* (New York, Harper TorchBooks, 1960), pp. 109-110.

God, Philosophy and Halakhah in Maimonides' Approach to Judaism

David Hartman and *Elliott Yagod*

Introduction

This paper on the absolute in the Jewish metaphysical tradition does not pretend to do justice to the variety of approaches, both mystic and rationalistic, found in the Jewish tradition. Although Judaism has generally revolved around a common normative tradition, there has never been an officially recognized Jewish theological or philosophical approach to God. One finds, then, parallel movements of diversity of views on theological issues, on the one hand, and attempts at gaining consensus of behaviour regarding the legal patterns of Jewish spirituality, on the other. Leibovitch appeals to this important historical fact in order to deny that theology has significance in Judaism and to argue that law alone constitutes the essence of Judaism.1 While sharing his concern with neutralizing the importance of factual judgments in Judaism, we nevertheless believe that the relationship between empirical and metaphysical assertions, on the one hand, and the Halakhah (Jewish law), on the other, is considerably more complex than the position he expounds. In this paper, we shall attempt to focus on a strand within the Jewish metaphysical tradition, namely that which emerges out of the Maimonidian tradition.

To understand why we chose Maimonides, it must be noted that striving for consensus of practice regarding the law was a vital feature of the Jewish tradition. One may even claim that theology entered the Jewish tradition via its influence on practice. Scholem has argued that the esoteric teachings of the mystics were able to capture the minds of the broad community because this theology offered one a symbolic approach to practice. Mystic theology transmuted the meaning of practice and turned halakhic practice into symbolic mystical experience.2 In other words, theology entered into Jewish spirituality only if it could transform, in some way, the nature of practice. It is the law which mediates the theological in the Jewish tradition.

Maimonides was a rare figure who was a recognized master in both Halakhah (Jewish law) and philosophy. Maimonides is the great codifier of Jewish law. While his influence on the development of Halakhah was unique and outstanding, he was, also, one of the great teachers of philosophy and metaphysics in the Jewish tradition. His work, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, influenced the development of Jewish philosophy. There were other serious Jewish philosophers who did not threaten the anti-philosophic strand in the Jewish tradition because they did not command the enormous respect, halakhically speaking, which Maimonides had in the community. Maimonides' great talmudic erudition made him a threat in philosophy. You had to confront Maimonides' philosophic views because you could not ignore his halakhic views.

Secondly, what makes Maimonides important in our study is that as an individual he was an archetype of the halakhic mind who embodied the entire scope of the halakhic discipline. No facet of the law was unknown to him. One can not claim that he was not a legalist; yet, on the other hand, he was seriously engaged in philosophy. Pines claims that, in contrast to many other Jewish philosophers, Maimonides' approach to philosophy was not apologetic. There was a genuine openness and commitment to the philosophic tradition. His concern with philosophy was a concern with truth and not simply with demonstrating the merits of the Jewish tradition.3

Professor Efraim Urback in his recent work on rabbinic thought repeatedly emphasizes that in the rabbinic tradition the primary concern was practice.4 In attempting to formulate theological notions or a metaphysics of history, the rabbinic mind always asks the important question, "How does this theory relate to practice, how does it affect practice?' Urbach states that the rabbis were not interested in a coherent metaphysical tradition per se. Their major question was with what view of the universe and God would inspire one to observe the commandments with greater devotion. The emphasis was upon love and fear of God; theoretical speculation was introduced as a way to motivate practice. This view is shared by many rabbinic scholars as well as by students of the biblical tradition. The Jews are anchored to practice. Both the biblical and rabbinic traditions relate man to God, not via a metaphysical philosophic system, but through forms of practice embodied in the life of the committed person: not the mind, but the will; not thought, but action.

This practical tendency in the biblical and the rabbinic traditions led Spinoza to criticize Maimonides' placing philosophy within the biblical tradition.5 Spinoza was critical of Maimonides' claim that the prophet must necessarily be a philosopher. For Spinoza, Moses had a gifted imagination but did not ground his teachings on universally valid principles. The Bible is a book of laws and Spinoza goes so far as to claim that universal morality is beyond the scope of the Bible. The Bible is shot through with legal particularism so that to maintain that one finds in the Bible a philosophic conception of God is to distort both the spirit and the content of the Bible. The major figure of whom Spinoza was most critical was Maimonides, because if Maimonides were right then philosophy and revealed law could merge. If Spinoza were right then the primacy of law in the Jewish tradition would displace any tendency towards metaphysical speculation.

The Spinozistic criticism of Maimonides was continued by the contemporary historian of philosophy, Isaac Husik, who claimed that Maimonides was unaware of the enormous gap separating the tradition that emerged from Athens and the tradition that emerged from Jerusalem. The Bible was concerned with morality, the Greeks were concerned with theoretical truth. This polarity between theoretical and practical perfections also influenced Leo Strauss' approach to Maimonides.6 The major critique of Maimonides, then, focuses on his being a master halakhic legalist who maintained that the metaphysical tradition was intrinsically rooted in the Jewish tradition. The task of this paper is to show how Maimonides was able to integrate what appeared to Spinoza, Husik and others to be two incompatible traditions.

Let us now examine some of Maimonides' statements which characterize his approach to the relationship of practice and theory in the Jewish tradition. Maimonides, in the *Guide*, III, 27, states:

The law as a whole, aims at two things: the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body. As for the welfare of the soul, it consists in the multitude's acquiring correct opinions corresponding to their respective capacity. . . . The second thing consists in the acquisition by every human individual of moral qualities that are useful for life in society so that the affairs of the city may be ordered. . . . Know that as between these two aims, one is indubitably greater in nobility, namely, the welfare of the soul—I mean the procuring of correct opinions—while the second aim—I mean the welfare of the body—is prior in nature and time.

To Maimonides, the uniqueness of Torah as distinct from other legal systems is that whereas nomos is concerned solely with social well being, Torah is also concerned with knowledge of God, i.e., with imparting correct beliefs.7 The primacy of metaphysics is mentioned not only in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, but also in his codification of Jewish law, the Mishneh Torah. In "The

Laws of the Foundations of the Torah" IV, 13, Maimonides states that the study of the law is "a small thing" and the study of physics and metaphysics is "a great thing":

Although these last subjects were called by the sages "a small thing" (when they say "A great thing, Maaseh Mercabah; a small thing, the discussion of Abaye and Rava"), still they should have the precedence. For the knowledge of these things gives primarily composure to the mind. They are the precious boon bestowed by God, to promote social well-being on earth, and enable men to obtain bliss in the life hereafter. Moreover, the knowledge of them is within the reach of all, young and old, men and women; those gifted with great intellectual capacity as well as those whose intelligence is limited.

Although the study of metaphysics is primary and of greater value (we shall soon indicate in what sense), nevertheless the study of the law is prior in time because practice of the law leads to social well-being and thus creates the social and political conditions necessary for enabling many people to engage in the study of metaphysics.8 Placing study of metaphysics above study of the law upset the religious sensibilities of many halakhists.9 They were far more perturbed by this statement in the Mishneh Torah than by *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Placing the study of philosophy above the study of talmud was perceived as undermining the very primacy of the legal tradition. Yet, this statement was made by the great master of the legal tradition. The primacy of philosophy is mentioned again in the Mishneh Torah at the end of "The Laws of Repentance" as well as in Chapter 2 of "The Laws of the Foundations of the Torah." There the claim is made that only through metaphysical knowledge of God can one arrive at the goal of love of God. Worshipping God out of love is made possible only by philosophy. The law does not create love, it creates social well-being. Metaphysical knowledge of God, i.e., following the path of the study of physics and metaphysics, creates in man the capacity to love God.

In the *Guide*, III, 52, Maimonides repeats the claim which pervades his total philosophic world view: practice creates reverence for God whereas knowledge creates love:

For these two ends, namely love and fear, are achieved through two things: love through the opinions taught by the Law, which include the apprehension of His being as He, may He be exalted, is in truth; while fear is achieved by means of all actions prescribed by the Law, as we have explained.

The critique of Maimonides for having elevated philosophy to so high a level had two features. First, it appeared to be a distortion of the tradition since the tradition emphasized practice. The tradition's concern with study always had as its goal the study of law. Guttman and Scholem, who relate the contemplative tradition in Maimonides to the talmudic emphasis upon study, are only partially correct since when the talmudic tradition spoke of the importance of study it always had in mind the study of the law.10 It did not refer to metaphysical contemplation of God. Therefore, Maimonides appears to undermine the basic Jewish emphasis on the primacy of practice and on the primacy of the study of the legal tradition. This was typical of medieval critiques of Maimonides.

Secondly, Maimonides seems to be indifferent to the centrality of history. Maimonides' attempt at understanding God in ontological terms, as the perfect necessary being and not as the God who freely reveals Himself in events in history, appears to negate the God of the Jewish tradition. The primacy of an- event-based theology, of open-textured events, and of the spontaneity

and the radical freedom of God to reveal Himself in events stand in utter contrast to a theology of the God of metaphysics, the absolute, self-sufficient God who draws man to worship Him in virtue of His perfection. It is in great historical events that one finds the living God of the Bible. In Maimonides' thought, history appears to play a very limited role in mediating the religious passion for God. Maimonides, therefore, is alien to the Jewish tradition because his approach a) undercuts the centrality of legal study and b) neutralizes the centrality of events and of history in one's relationship to the absolute.11 We shall cite examples of how Maimonides completely turns around certain obvious currents within the Jewish tradition.

1) In the creation story in Genesis the obvious direction of the story is that of days leading up to the creation of man and of the Sabbath. Man's being created last points to an anthropocentric creation. God's creation of nature is meant to serve His unique creation, i.e., man. In fact, one of the most popular classical commentaries on the Bible quotes a midrash which asks why the Bible began with the account of creation since the Bible is essentially a book of law. The answer given is that the creation story has a didactic point, namely, to teach that since God is the creator of the world, He has the right to give the land to whomever He pleases. Therefore, Israel's justification for the land of Canaan comes from the story of the creation of the world. According to the spirit of this midrash, were it not for a moral-practical justification, the account of creation would appear pointless. Maimonides, however, does not see in the account of the creation of nature (and in reflecting on the God of nature) the centrality of man. He sees rather a theocentric universe in which man is insignificant in comparison with the intelligences and with the richness of the infinite Being, who creates a universe as a consequence of the overflow of His infinite power and perfection.12

2) The story of the encounter between Moses and God, where Moses asks for the divine name, also reveals Maimonides metaphysical perspective. The midrashic approach to 'Ehyeh-Asher Ehyeh' (I will be who I will be) [Exodus III, 14] reflects a God who announces to Moses and to the people that He will be present in their struggle. He is a God who can be relied upon to be responsive in history.15 Buber remarks in his essay, 'The Faith of Judaism':

Not "I am that I am" as alleged by the metaphysicians —God does not make theological statements—but the answer which his creatures need, and which benefits them: "I shall be there as I there shall be" [Exod. 3:14]. That is: you need not conjure me, for I am here, I am with you; but you cannot conjure me, for I am with you time and again in the form in which I choose to be with you time and again; I myself do not anticipate any of my manifestations; you cannot learn to meet me; you meet me, when you meet me: . . . 14

Buber's approach is similar in spirit to that of the midrash. Maimonides, however, in the *Guide*, I, 63, writes:

Accordingly when God, may He be held sublime and magnified, revealed himself to Moses our Master and ordered him to address a call to people and to convey to them his prophetic mission, [Moses] said: the first thing that they will ask of me is that I should make them acquire true knowledge that there exists a god with reference to the world; after that I shall make the claim that He has sent me. For at that time all the people except a few were not aware of the existence of the deity, and the utmost limits of their speculation did not transcend the sphere, its faculties, and its

actions, for they did not separate themselves from things perceived by the senses and had not obtained intellectual perfection. Accordingly God made known to [Moses] the knowledge that he was to convey to them and through which they would acquire a true notion of the existence of God, this knowledge being: I am that I am. This is a name deriving from the verb to be [hayah], which signifies existence, for hayah, indicates the notion: he was. And in Hebrew, there is no difference between your saying: he was, and he existed. The whole secret consists in the repetition in a predicative position of the very word indicative of existence. For the word that [in the phrase "I am that I am"] requires the mention of an attribute immediately connected with it. For it is a deficient word requiring a connection with something else. . . . Accordingly Scripture makes, as it were, a clear statement that the subject is identical with the predicate. This makes it clear that He is existent not through existence. This notion may be summarized and interpreted in the following way: the existent that is the existent, or the necessarily existent. This is what demonstration necessarily leads to: namely, to the view that there is a necessarily existent thing that has never been, or ever will be, non-existent.

To the midrash and to Buber, Israel requires the knowledge that God will be present with them in their suffering. To Maimonides the slave people, who are beginning their pilgrimage to become a holy covenant people, must know that the God of being is a necessary existent and that the predicate, I am, is identical with the subject, I am. What a change in spiritual climate! How could Maimonides take a dramatic statement rooted in history, a promise to be ever present—"I shall be there"—to be a statement of the proposition that God is the necessary existent?15

3) In the first commandment, 'I am the Lord thy God who brought Thee out of the land of Egypt', where the central focus is the liberating power of God in history, Maimonides' interpretation is that God is a necessary being not dependent on anything other than Himself. Divine self-sufficiency, perfection, and autonomy, are the content of the first commandment. To Maimonides, the first half of the sentence is intelligible without the second half. One can understand the meaning of 'I am the Lord they God' independent of the description 'who brought thee out of the land of Egypt.' For Yehuda Halevi, as for the Mekhiltah, the liberating experience of the exodus from Egypt and reflection on God's power in history confirm the reality of God for Israel.16

4) What characterizes Jewish prayer is the feeling of divine presence and responsiveness to man's suffering condition. The Halakhah gives expression to this vital element in the structures of the amidah prayer: three blessings of adoration, followed by thirteen petitional requests, concluded by three blessings of thanksgiving. Fundamental to this experience is the feeling that man can pour out his needs to God, that man can bring his needs to a God who is called Our Father, Our King. The God to whom one prays is the God who is with me in my suffering, the God whose shekhinah (indwelling) suffers with Israel during their entire galut (exile). In contrast to the profound intimacy and expressiveness felt by the praying Jew before God, one ought to consider the religious atmosphere and the tone of Maimonides' treatment of negative theology (*Guide* I, 50-60), where the fundamental point is that there is no comparison between God and man. In these chapters of the *Guide* one discovers that language is necessarily deficient regarding God. One can never talk about God's essence, one can only talk about God's action. Any statement which aims at asserting anything about God must be transformed into a negative statement. God is existent becomes He is not non-existent. God is alive becomes God is not dead. God knows becomes God is not ignorant.

Statements describing God's compassion, feeling, and mercy are but human projections in no way attributing affect to God:

God, may He be exalted, is said to be merciful, just as it is said, "Like as a father is merciful to his children," and it says, "And I will pity them, as a man pitieth his own son." It is not that He, may He be exalted, is affected and has compassion. But an action similar to that which proceeds from a father in respect to his child and that is attached to compassion, pity, and an absolute passion, proceeds from Him, may He be exalted, in reference to His holy ones, not because of a passion or a change. [*Guide*, I, 54].

The gap between a religious world view coming out of the Bible and the midrash, and Maimonides' world view is obvious in Maimonides' treatment of negative theology, and, above all, in his statement that true prayer consists in silent reflection. Language is a compromise and the ultimate religious ideal is to express adoration not through poetic description of God but through contemplative silence:

The most apt phrase concerning this subject is the dictum occurring in the Psalms, "Silence is praise to Thee" [Ps. 65:2], which interpreted signifies: Silence with regard to You is praise. This is a most perfectly put phrase regarding the matter. For of whatever we say intending to magnify and exalt, on the one hand we find that it can have some application to Him, may He be exalted, and on the other we perceive in it some deficiency. Accordingly, silence and limiting oneself to the apprehensions of the intellect are more appropriate—just as the perfect ones have enjoined when they said: "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah" (Ps. 4:5). [*Guide*, I, 59].17

Maimonides, the great master of the Jewish halakhic tradition, was an honest and coherent thinker. How could he have missed so obvious a difference in emphasis and in outlook between the religious experience of the absolute which comes through in his legal and his philosophic writings and that of the Jewish tradition? Our concern is not to discover the historical philosophic influences on Maimonides' world view. This has been done by Professor Pines in his introduction to The *Guide* of the Perplexed. Our concern will be to indicate internal religious concepts emanating from the Jewish tradition which may have influenced Maimonides' philosophic religious outlook.

The Metaphysical and the Jewish Traditions

The two internal principles which may have led Maimonides to his profound embrace of the metaphysical tradition were a) the principle of idolatry and b) the notion of love of God. These two central categories of the Jewish legal tradition may account for Maimonides' metaphysically oriented descriptions of God, the insistence on negative theology, and his statement that Moses taught the notion of God as necessary existent to the Jewish community immediately after their departure from Egypt.

Maimonides, both in the Mishneh Torah and in the *Guide*, claims that "the foundation of the whole of our Law and the pivot around which it turns, consists in the effacement of these opinions from the minds and of these monuments from existence" (*Guide* III, 29). Maimonides has in mind

the idolatrous opinions of the Sabians. Likewise, in the Mishneh Torah, "Laws of Idolatry," II, 4, Maimonides writes:

The precept relating to idolatry is equal in importance to all the other precepts put together, as it is said, "And when ye shall err and not observe all these commandments" (Num. 15:22). This text has traditionally been interpreted as alluding to idolatry; hence the inference that acceptance of idolatry is tantamount to repudiating the whole Torah, the prophets and everything that they were commanded, from Adam to the end of time. . . . And whoever denies idolatry confesses his faith in the whole Torah, in all the prophets and all that the prophets were commanded, from Adam till the end of time. And this is the fundamental principle of all of the commandments.

Maimonides codifies the halakhah that the prophet has the right to temporarily suspend any norms of Jewish law. There is only one case where suspension, even temporarily, is not permitted and that is with regard to the laws of idolatry.18 The uncompromising demand to reject idolatry is the central concern of the law. Toleration of anything that may lead, in any way whatsoever, to one's embracing idolatry undermines the essential purpose of the law. Maimonides, therefore, codifies the laws of idolatry in the first book of the Mishneh Torah, the Book of Knowledge. In his introduction to the Mishneh Torah Maimonides explains the purpose of the first book:

I include in it all the precepts which constitute the very essence and principle of the faith taught by Moses, our teacher and which it is necessary for one to know at the outset; as for example, acceptance of the unity of God and the prohibition of idolatry.

In "The laws of Repentance," III, 15, Maimonides wrote regarding the definition of the heretic:

Five classes are termed Heretics; he who says that there is no God and the world has no ruler; he who says that there is a ruling power but that it is vested in two or more persons; he who says that there is one ruler, but that He is a body and has form; he who denies that He alone is the First Cause and Rock of the Universe; likewise, he who renders worship to anyone beside Him, to serve as a mediator between the human being and the Lord of the Universe. Whoever belongs to any of these five classes is termed a heretic.

Maimonides classifies together in the same law one who claims that there is no God, one who believes in polytheism, and one who believes that God has a body and a form. This decision evoked the rage of the Rabad:

Why has he called such a person an heretic? There are many people greater than and superior to him who adhere to such a belief on the basis of what they have seen in verses of Scripture and even more the words of those aggadot which corrupt right opinion about religious matters.19

The gist of the disagreement is that the Rabad cannot understand Maimonides' insistence on calling an otherwise pious, halakhic person a heretic. How can one who lives sincerely by the law, who follows all the commandments and who is committed passionately to every detail of the discipline of Halakhah, be classified together with one who is an idolater? How can the great enemy of Jewish spirituality, idolatry, be found in the heart of one who is totally loyal to the Halakhah?

Maimonides was undoubtedly aware of the likelihood of such objections, yet his opposition to false notions of God was uncompromising. Essential to understanding Maimonides' metaphysical treatment of God in the sections on negative theology in the *Guide,* are chapters 35 and 36 in part one. Maimonides claims there that although he realizes that the study of physics and metaphysics are esoteric disciplines requiring great preparation and great maturity and are not disciplines capable of being studied by the masses, nevertheless one should not withhold from the multitude knowledge of the fact that God is incorporeal and that He is not subject to affection. Maimonides writes:

For just as it behooves to bring up children in the belief, and to proclaim to the multitude, that God may He be magnified and honored is one and that none but He ought to be worshipped, so it behooves that they should be made to accept on traditional authority the belief that God is not a body; and that there is absolutely no likeness in any respect whatever between Him and the things created by Him; that His existence has no likeness to theirs; nor His life to the life of those among them who are alive; nor again His knowledge to the knowledge of those among them who are endowed with knowledge. They should be made to accept the belief that the difference between Him and them is not merely a difference of more and less, but one concerning the species of existence. I mean to say that it should be established in everybody's mind that our knowledge of our power does not differ from His knowledge or His power in the later being greater and stronger, the former less and weaker, or in other similar respects, inasmuch as the strong and the weak are necessarily alike with respect to their species and one definition comprehends both of them. . . . Now everything that can be ascribed to God, may He be exalted, differs in every respect from our attributes, so that no definition can comprehend the one thing and the other. (*Guide* I, 35)

A central motif in Maimonides' writings are his repeated arguments for teaching the masses about God's incorporeality. In the same chapter, Maimonides writes:

For there is no profession of unity unless the doctrine of God's corporeality is denied. For a body cannot be one, but is composed of matter and form which by definition are two; it also is divisible, subject to partition.

Maimonides concludes the chapter with the same principle he used in the Mishneh Torah to categorize the different forms of heresy:

But it is not meet that belief in the corporeality of God or in His being provided with any concomitant of the bodies should be permitted to establish itself in anyone's mind any more than it is meet that belief should be established in the nonexistence of the deity, in the association of other gods with Him, or in the worship of other than He.

Maimonides was philosophically convinced that false belief regarding the nature of God is idolatry.20 Hence he had to face the halakhic implication of this claim. Idolatry is not only mistaken forms of worship, but is, as well, a mistaken conception of the object of worship. Idolatry is constituted not only by how I worship but, more importantly, by whom I worship. False belief, e.g., belief in divine corporeality, entails idolatry in that instead of worshipping God, one is worshipping a figment of human imagination. Hence, correct belief (philosophy) is crucial in order to correctly identify and describe God and thus avoid worshipping false gods.21

The purpose of the law, however, is to correct mistaken forms of worship:

The essential principle in the precepts concerning idolatry is that we are not to worship any thing created—neither angel, sphere, star, none of the four elements, nor whatever has been formed from them. Even if the worshipper is aware that the Eternal is God, and worships the created thing in the sense in which Enoch and his contemporaries did, he is an idolater. ("Laws of Idolatry," II, 1)

The law protects Israel from the mistake idol worshippers made in developing intermediary worship. The Halakhah provides a correct way of worship which will not lead to removing God from the consciousness of man through mistaken forms. Essential idolatry, however, involves not only mistaken forms of worship but mistaken conceptions of God. This is only corrected by understanding how unity and corporeality are contradictory. Only by understanding physics, the nature of change, the relationship between potentiality and actuality, the structure of nature, etc., can one root out an idolatry based, not upon wrong practice, but upon mistaken belief.22

Maimonides considered mistaken practice to be a lesser sin than belief in corporeality. In *Guide* I, 36, Maimonides writes:

Now the idolaters thought that this prerogative [being worshipped] belonged to that which was other than God; and this led to the disappearance of the belief in His existence. . . . For the multitude grasp only the actions of worship, not their meanings or the true reality of the Being worshipped through them. . . . What then should be the state of him whose infidelity bears upon His essence . . . and consists in believing Him to be different from what He really is? . . . Know accordingly, you who are that man, that when you believe in the doctrine of the corporeality of God or believe that one of the states of the body belongs to Him, you "provoke His jealousy and anger, kindle the fire of His wrath," and are "a hater, an enemy, and an adversary," of God, much more so than "an idolater."

In other words, Maimonides says to the Jewish community, who have a defined way of worshipping God which distinguishes them from pagans, that, if they lack a philosophic understanding of God's otherness, idolatry will reappear in the house of Jewish Halakhah. Paganism will grow in Jewish soil if man does not understand how unity and incorporeality entail one another.

Maimonides then argues that, if you want to excuse Jews of this mistaken notion because the Bible itself may be responsible for teaching men that God has a body and that He is subject to affections, you ought to hold a similar attitude with regard to a gentile idolater, for he worships idols only because of his ignorance and because of his upbringing. Maimonides does not allow a double standard. He does not allow the tradition's rage against idolatry to be turned outward and not inward. The philosophic knowledge that Maimonides gained from the Greek philosophic tradition was of central importance for his understanding of the Jewish belief in the oneness and uniqueness of God. Wolfson correctly points out that the Bible taught only that God was other than the world. The notion of divine simplicity and the notion that corporeality is a negation of the concept of unity are not biblical, but rather philosophic.23 Maimonides' knowledge of philosophy gave him a new understanding of idolatry.

Maimonides, however, was not only a philosopher. As a committed halakhic Jew he could not keep this knowledge from the community. He knew that the law did not allow any compromise regarding idolatry. He did not follow the path of many medieval philosophers, like Averroes and

those within the Jewish tradition, in allowing the masses to believe that God was corporeal .24 Were Maimonides only a philosopher and not a halakhist, he would surely have refrained from evoking the wrath of the Jewish community by claiming that pious halakhic Jews with incorrect theological beliefs were idol worshippers. If, as Leo Strauss claims Maimonides only sought a justification for philosophy but not an interpenetration of philosophy and law, he should never have codified the principle that he who believes that God has a body is an idolater and an heretic. His insistence that the whole community accept certain basic truths of metaphysics even if only on the basis of authority is grounded in his "halakhic" commitment to the community and to the halakhic principle of not allowing any compromise regarding idolatry.

Metaphysics, then, for Maimonides is a complement to the law. Philosophy continues the battle of the law to uproot the last vestiges of idolatry in the world. Moses, therefore, had to teach the community about the nature of God in order to uproot idolatry from within the Jewish people. It is not arid philosophical rationalism that inspires Maimonides. The motivation is not that of the esoteric elitist intellectual, but that of the observant Jew committed to the principle that "he who rejects idolatry accepts the entire Torah."25

The goal of Torah which makes it unique among legal systems, is its concern with developing love of God. Love of God, according to Maimonides, is nurtured only by philosophical knowledge. Even though Maimonides recognized the limitations of the intellect and restricted the scope and nature of knowledge of God, he still believed that only knowledge, comprised of the intellectual discipline of physics and metaphysics, would lead man to love of God.

This God, honoured and revered, it is our duty to love and fear; as it is said "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God" (Deut. 6:35), and it is further said "Thou shalt fear the Lord, thy God" (Deut. 6:13).

2. And what is the way that will lead to the love of Him and the fear of Him? When a person contemplates His great and wondrous works and creatures and from them obtains a glimpse of His wisdom which is incomparable and infinite, he will straightway love Him, praise Him, glorify Him, and long with an exceeding longing to know His great Name; even as David said "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Ps. 42:3). And when he ponders these matters, he will recoil affrighted, and realize that he is a small creature, lowly and obscure, endowed with slight and slender intelligence, standing in the presence of Him who is perfect in knowledge. And so David said "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers—what is man that Thou art mindful of Him?" (Ps. 8:4-5). In harmony with these sentiments, I shall explain some large, general aspects of the Works of the Sovereign of the Universe, that they may serve the intelligent individual as a door to the love of God, even as our sages have remarked in connection with the theme of the love of God, "Observe the Universe and hence, you will realize Him who spake and the world was." (M.T., Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah, II, 1-2).

In chapter ten of "The Laws of Repentance," chapter four of Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah, chapter fifty-two in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, part three and throughout the *Guide*, Maimonides expressed his conviction that theoretical knowledge and opinions make possible the love of God.26

Why are the disciplines of physics and metaphysics unique in enabling a person to achieve love of God? Why are the practice and the study of the law only necessary and not sufficient conditions for achieving love of God? In order to comprehend philosophy's unique contribution in producing love of God, one must compare Maimonides' understanding of creation with his approach to revelation. Creation, to Maimonides, reflects the overflow of God's perfection. Olam hesed yebaneh, the world is an expression of God's love and power. Central to Maimonides' understanding of God's revelation in nature and of man's relationship to the universe is the

realization that man is not the center of God's creation. The world does not exist for man; God's creative power and wisdom were not exclusively focused on the creation of man. Hence, a most important function of metaphysical reflection is to heal man from feelings of grandiosity. Man realizes, when reflecting on the cosmos, that he is insignificant in the light of the hierarchy of beings. Metaphysics and philosophy, then, from a religious perspective, create humanity. Philosophy heals human egocentricity. Philosophy locates man in a theocentric universe where he cannot but realize his modest and humbling place in being.27

Maimonides' treatment of Job in the *Guide* III, 22-24, is placed after he established clearly man's place in the hierarchy of being. One can tolerate suffering if one gains a proper understanding of one's significance in being. Reorienting one's place in being is Maimonides' explanation of the conclusion of the book of Job. Job did not receive an answer to the problem of evil; he received a different perception of being and of himself which enabled him to continue living despite his suffering:

This is the object of the Book of Job as a whole: I refer to the establishing of this foundation for the belief and the drawing attention to the inference to be drawn from natural matters, so that you should not fall into error and seek to affirm in your imagination that His knowledge is like our knowledge or that His purpose and His providence and His governance are like our purpose and our providence and our governance. If man knows this, every misfortune will be borne lightly by him. (*Guide* III, 24)

Maimonides was not referring to theodicy, but, rather, to a way of transcending suffering by gaining another perspective on being. Philosophy's presentation of an objective world independent of man, where man occupies a most modest position in a hierarchy of perfections culminating in the awesome, ineffable perfection of God, transports man from an anthropocentric to a theocentric universe and thereby gives man the strength to cope with human suffering.

This insight is also present in Maimonides' treatment of the akedah, the binding of Isaac. Maimonides analyses the story of Abraham only after treating of the human implications of the study of physics and metaphysics (Job). Abraham, the founder of belief in the God of history is asked in the command to sacrifice his only son Isaac (history), to express a relationship to God which, in fact, negates the significance of history:

As for the story of Abraham at the binding, it contains two great notions that are fundamental principles of the Law. One of these notions consists in our being informed of the limit of love for God, may He be exalted, and fear of Him—that is, up to what limit they must reach. For in this story he was ordered to do something that bears no comparison either with sacrifice of property or with sacrifice of life. In truth it is the most extraordinary thing that could happen in the world, such a thing that one would not imagine that human nature was capable of it. Here there is a sterile man having an exceeding desire for a son, possessed of great property and commanding respect, and having the wish that his progeny should become a religious community. When a son comes to him after his having lost hope, how great will be his attachment to him and love for him! However, because of his fear of Him, who should be exalted, and because of his love to carry out his command, he holds this beloved son as little, gives up all his hopes regarding him, and hastens to slaughter him after a journey of days. (*Guide* III, 24, pp. 500-501)

Abraham's going through the experience of the akedah symbolically demonstrated that the ultimate goal of Torah lies beyond history. The archetypal act of love of God is constituted by the ability to abandon history. Maimonides' treatment of Abraham and of Job reveal his belief in the liberating power of philosophy to direct man to live in history, after having discovered meaning beyond history.28 In chapters eight through twenty-four of the third part of the *Guide,* Maimonides elaborates the practical implications of negative theology. Job and Abraham dramatically represent the radical implications of divine otherness which is the central notion of the theory of negative theology.

Maimonides attributed a liberating function to philosophy. For disinterested love to be possible, man's understanding of himself, the world and the essential purpose and meaning of life must undergo radical transformations. So long as man is anchored solely in history and is concerned exclusively with human needs, he cannot recognize and therefore love a God who does not exist for the sake of man. Philosophy creates the conditions for love because it enables man to appreciate an objective reality independent of human needs.

As mentioned above with regard to idolatry, a central biblical motif is God's otherness and difference from the world. Philosophy, e.g., the analysis of unity, non-corporeality and negative attributes, offers a more exact and rigorous understanding of God's otherness. This movement to revealing the implications of divine otherness is the movement of the one seeking love of God. Love is expressed in the confirmation of the independent worth of the beloved. It is only philosophy which gives meaning to man's affirmation of God's independent existence. In Maimonides' writings, the yearning quality of love finds expression in knowing how the universe reveals the actions of God. Love becomes passionate when the universe is perceived from a theocentric perspective. Knowing what God is not and how He is radically other than and separate from the world provides man with the intellectual tools for self-transcending relational love.29

While philosophy points to divine perfection and to divine manifestations which are indifferent to and independent of human needs, the revelation of the law is substantially different. In the *Guide* III, 32, Maimonides explains how to interpret the meaning of many laws in the Torah. Reminiscent of Hegel's notion of the cunning of reason, Maimonides argues that God utilizes the given conditions of history to further His purpose. God does not ignore the given context of history. The revealed law is not indifferent to the limited capacities of people. The law reflects the patience of the divine teacher who works with the actual materials of history. Although, logically speaking, God could change the nature of man to accord with the practices of a perfect law, God, argues Maimonides, chose not to. God chose to adopt the role of the teacher patiently seeking to overcome the limitations and shortcomings of the people of Israel.

For example, at the time of the giving of the Torah, animal sacrifices constituted the accepted form of worship. No one, claims Maimonides, thought it reasonable to worship a god other than by offering animal sacrifice. God accepted this pattern of worship, even though this pattern of worship was characteristic of paganism, and He permitted its use in Jewish worship. Because, Maimonides argues, man cannot be expected to change suddenly or to completely give up patterns of behaviour to which he has become accustomed, He restricted animal sacrifices to specific places and to be administered only by certain people, i.e., priests. Prayer, a higher form of worship, was permitted by anyone and in all places.

In other words, there is a hierarchy of forms of worship. While legitimizing sacrifices, the law's intention was that man will eventually transcend this form, and will adopt a higher form of worship. Similarly verbal prayer is a stage meant to be superceded by the highest form of worship, i.e., contemplative silence. Silent prayer reflects man's ability to be moved by God's perfection

independent of His responding to human needs. There are, then, three stages of worship in history: 1) the stage of eradication of idolatry by limiting animal sacrifices; 2) worship grounded in God's responsiveness to human needs, i.e., verbal petitional prayer; and 3) silent adoration of God because he is God.

Revelation of God's wisdom in the law, as distinct from His revelation in nature, is a response to an imperfect human condition. Study of the law reveals God's legislative involvement with men. The study of the law reconfirms for historical man his central importance in the divine scheme. "The Torah spoke in the language of man." God is perceived in the law from the perspective of human needs. Maimonides was very comfortable claiming that there are human purposes for the commandments. In contrast to a mystical approach, to Maimonides, commandments reflect what is good for man.30 They have no meta-historical significance. The cosmic significance that mystics attributed to the commandments is alien to Maimonides' attempt to make the law totally earth bound.31

Besides focusing on divine absolute perfection, philosophy leads to love of God by healing of the imagination. To Maimonides, imagination is the great enemy of religious development.32 Human imagination is both the source of idolatry and of inauthentic love. At the end of the *Guide*, III, 51, Maimonides proclaims that individuals whose knowledge of God is based on imagination, and not on knowledge of objective reality, are outside the palace of the king. Only the philosopher enters into the palace of the king, i.e., is able to love God, because only the philosopher has some grasp of the reality of God independent of human imagination:

As for someone who thinks and frequently mentions God, without knowledge, following a mere imagining or following a belief adopted because of his reliance on the authority of somebody else, he is to my mind outside the habitation and far away from it and does not in true reality mention or think about God. For that thing which is in his imagination and which he mentions in his speech does not correspond to any being at all and has merely been invented by his imagination, as we have explained in our discourse concerning the attributes. (*Guide* III, 51.)

For love to be real, the object of one's love must be recognized in itself. Imagination creates a narcissistic love, a love of one's own creation and not of an independent reality. Man is liberated to love only when the passion of love emerges in response to an objective reality and not to a subjective projection of what one imagines God to be. One loves another human being only if one can respond to another as another and not as a projection of one's needs and imagination.

Philosophy, the Halakhah and Disinterested Love of God

The central question which will be dealt with now is whether the disinterested love of God which results from the study of philosophy can be legitimately identified with the highest goal of the Halakhah. Martyrdom was traditionally considered to be the purest expression of love of God.33 How can disinterested love of the absolute become the paradigm of the most valued achievement of this religious way of life? Is this not simply a hellenization and hence a distortion of Judaism? In the biblical and rabbinic traditions, one confronts the primacy of history and law. God, in the Bible, is fundamentally the lord of history. His autonomy consists in his freedom to break into history miraculously and spontaneously. Scholem correctly observed that Maimonides neutralized the pathos of the messianic yearning, for, in principle, messianism is unnecessary in Maimonides' thought.34 Contemplative love of God is possible, though rare, without redemption

in history. To Maimonides, messianism is merely a shift in political conditions. Human nature remains the same. There is no rupture or new creation in history.35

Guttman claims that Maimonides ignored the important difference between contemplative communion and moral communion.36 Husik says that Maimonides was deceived in not realizing that the Bible is fundamentally practical and not theoretical. Were we to accept the implications of the aforementioned views, we would be compelled to conclude that Maimonides, the great teacher of the law, was unaware of the fact that his profound religious passion to become a lover of God was essentially foreign to and a gross distortion of the Jewish tradition.

Scholars have argued that this is the great puzzle of Maimonides. This, however, is not the only possible orientation to Maimonides. Maimonides' neutralization of the religious significance of history and of divine miraculous interference in the fixed structures of reality, and his emphasis on cultivating a passionate love for a God who draws men in virtue of His perfection, and not in virtue of His ability to satisfy human needs and requests, may have their roots in various features of talmudic Judaism. While Judaism's preoccupation with abolishing idolatry justifies and explains Maimonides' interest in philosophy, this does not imply that the ethos and the religious orientation of philosophy ought to become dominant for the Jew. In identifying the disinterested love of God of philosophy with love of God of the Halakhah, Maimonides was giving expression to certain features of talmudic Judaism which, we believe, both explain and justify his radical move.

Our use of the terms "certain features of talmudic Judaism" is due to the fact that the aspects of talmudic thought chosen for discussion do not constitute the dominant orientation of rabbinic Judaism. As Professor Urbach has shown, there are many diverse schools of thought in rabbinic Judaism. In this paper, we present a particular strand that is characteristic of an important aspect of the talmudic tradition. This strand provides the grounds for the development of a spiritual orientation which enables one to live with the gap between the biblical world of divine immediacy and the post-biblical world, which is silent and unresponsive to man's moral condition. Nature becomes neutralized and, so to speak, demythologized, and the biblical passion is reinterpreted so that men's relationship to God is no longer sustained by the visible and public interference of a moral God in the processes of nature and history.

The following passages in the Talmud exemplify this spirit:

Our Rabbis taught: Philosophers asked the elders in Rome, "If your God has no desire for idolatry, why does He not abolish it?" They replied, "If it was something of which the world has no need that it was worshipped, He would abolish it; but people worship the sun, moon, stars and planets; should He destroy the Universe on account of fools! The world pursues its natural course, and as for the fools who act wrongly, they will have to render an account. Another illustration: Suppose a man stole a measure of wheat and went and sowed it in the ground; it is right that it should not grow, but the world pursues its natural course and as for the fools who act wrongly, they will have to render an account. Another illustration: Suppose a man has intercourse with his neighbor's wife; it is right that she should not conceive, but the world pursues its natural course and as for the fools who act wrongly, they will have to render an account." This is similar to what R. Simeon b. Lakish said: The Holy One, blessed be He, declared, not enough that the wicked put My coinage to vulgar use, but they trouble Me and compel Me to set My seal thereon! (T.B., Abodah Zarah, 54B)

To fully appreciate the radical shift in sensibility from biblical thought, compare this with several biblical passages:

To Adam He said, "Because you did as your wife
said and ate of the tree about which I commanded
you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’
Cursed be the ground because of you;
By toil shall you eat of it
All the days of your life:
Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you.
But your food shall be the grasses of the field;
By the sweat of your brow
Shall you get bread to eat,
Until you return to the ground—
For from it you were taken.
For dust you are,
And to dust you shall return."
(Genesis III, 17-19)
Do not defile yourselves in any of those ways,
for it is by such that the nations which I
am casting out before you defiled themselves.
Thus the land became defiled; and I called it
to account for its iniquity, and the land
spewed out its inhabitants. But you must keep
My laws and My rules, and you must not do
any of those abhorrent things, neither the
citizen nor the stranger who resides
among you; for all those abhorrent things
were done by the people who were in the land
before you, and the land became defiled.
So let not the land spew you out for
defiling it, as it spewed out the nation
that came before you.
(Lev. XVIII, 24-28)
If, then, you obey the commandments that
I enjoin upon you this day, loving the
Lord your God and serving Him with all
your heart and soul, I will grant the rain
for your land in season, the early rain
and the late. You shall gather in your
new grain and wine and oil—I will also
provide grass in the fields for your
cattle—and thus you shall eat your fill.
Take care not to be lured away to serve
other gods and bow to them. For the Lord’s
anger will flare up against you, and He
will shut up the skies so that there will
be no rain and the ground will not yield
its products; and you will soon perish

from the good land that the Lord is
giving you.
(Deut. II, 1-17)

A key expression in the talmudic passage quoted above, is "did hu shelo titzmah" (it is right that it should not grow). Stolen wheat or grain ought not grow; a raped woman ought not become pregnant. Nature ought not respond and give of its strength and bounty to the consequences of evil. In other words, the expectations that nature and morality are organically related, and that the lord of history and the lord of nature are one are legitimate and worthwhile expectations. Yet, although the talmudic author legitimizes this biblical sensibility, he realizes that it does not accord with what in fact happens. This is another form of the generalization, "olam ke-minhago noheg" (the world maintains its natural course). There is a natural minhag, literally a custom. (Strauss remarks that the term used is minhag, custom, and not tevah, nature).37 One cannot live expecting nature to reflect the moral law. One is trained to have an organic sensibility in the sense of believing that the world should" express moral distinctions, yet, one is taught to accept the non-realization of this organic relationship. This demythologization, this learning to live in a universe that is strange and unresponsive to my deepest moral yearnings is very definitely a characteristic of talmudic Judaism.

There are other texts which also reveal this sensibility:

Raba said: This latter agrees with R. Jacob,who said: There is no reward for precepts in this world. For it was taught: R. Jacob said: There is not a single precept in the Torah whose reward is (stated) at its side which is not dependent on the resurrection of the dead. (Thus:) in connection with honouring parents it is written, that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee. In reference to the dismissal of the nest it is written, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days. Now, if one's father said to him,"Ascend to the loft and bring me young birds," and he ascends to the loft, dismisses the dam and takes the young, and on his return falls and is killed—where is this man's happiness and where is this man's prolonging of days? But "in order that it may be well with thee", means on the day that is wholly good; and 'in order that thy days may be long', on the day that is wholly long.

Yet perhaps there was no such happening?—R. Jacob saw an actual occurrence. Then perhaps he was meditating upon a transgression?—The Holy One, blessed be He, does not combine an evil thought with an (evil) act. Yet perhaps he was meditating idolatry, and it is written, that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart?—That too was precisely his point: should you think that precepts are rewarding in this world, why did the (fulfillment of these) precepts not shield him from being led to (such) meditation?" T.B., Kiddushim, 39B)

The struggle with acknowledging the discrepancy between the biblical promise and the given reality finds expression in the talmud's asking "Perhaps there was no such happening?" How do we know that a child who listened to his father and sent away the mother bird really died? The text then simply says: "Rabbi Jacob saw an actual occurrence." The text, however, continues to ask, "Perhaps he sinned?" Perhaps he sinned in his thoughts? How can one ever know if a person is truly righteous? How can one know that the person who died really didn't deserve his death? What we notice, then, is an attempt in the text not to give in too easily to an empirical reality which falsifies religious expectations. Yet, in the end, one cannot ignore the evidence Rabbi Jacob brings which negates biblically-inspired expectations. Rabbi Jacob, however, doesn't conclude that there

is no God. Rather than claim there is no reward, he concludes, "sekhar Mitzvah behai aimah lekah" (there is no reward for precepts in this world). While biblical anticipation remains, it is transferred to another time. In the present reality, one must live with the gap between what the bible promises and what one actually experiences:

In the West (Palestine) they taught it thus: R. Giddal said: (And Ezra praised . . . the) great (God): i.e., he magnified Him by pronouncing the Ineffable Name. R. Mattena said: He said: The great, the mighty, and the awful God. The interpretation of R. Mattena seems to agree with what R. Joshua b. Levi said: For R. Joshua b. Levi said: "Why were they called men of the Great Synod? Because they restored the crown of the divine attributes to its ancient completeness." (For) Moses had come and said: The great God, the mighty, and the awful. Then Jeremiah came and said: Aliens are destroying His Temple. Where are, then, His awful deeds? Hence he omitted (the attribute) the 'awful'. Daniel came and said: Aliens are enslaving his sons. Where are His mighty deeds? Hence, he omitted the word 'mighty'. But they came and said: On the contrary! Therein lie His might deeds that He suppresses His wrath,that He extends long-suffering to the wicked. Therein lie His awful powers: For but for the fear of Him, how could one (single) nation persist among the (many) nations! But how could (the earlier) Rabbis abolish something established by Moses?—R. Eleazar said: Since they knew that the Holy One, blessed be He, insists on truth, they would not ascribe false (things) to Him. (T.B., Yoma 69B)

This text also reflects the difference between the historical reality of the talmudic period, i.e., the destruction of the temple and the exile, and the reality depicted in the Bible. In the prayer of Moses, God is great, mighty and awful. This is accepted as a correct description of God. Moses is the highest authority for halakhic jurisprudence. His authority embraces not only normative behaviour but also what is to count as correct descriptions of God. The crisis of religious language begins during the time of Daniel and of Jeremiah. Descriptions of divine power appear at odds with a reality where the children of Israel are enslaved by foreign nations. "God is awesome" does not accord with the Temple being destroyed and pagans fornicating in the holy of holies.

One could have said, "I do not fully understand Moses' prayer because I'm not a Moses. Moses' language is correct and I shall use it even though my own reality offers disconfirming evidence. Who am I to Judge?" There were (and are) those who continued to believe in reward in this world. Perhaps the righteous are "rewarded" by suffering and the wicked "punished" by prosperity so that in the world to come each one will fully receive his due, i.e., the righteous only rewards, the wicked only punishments.38

In the above text, however, the author did not negate his own perception of reality, but he did not claim that Moses' language was false. The biblical description as reflected in Moses' prayer is placed in suspension. A new response to the gap between my reality and the authoritative normative reality is adopted, i.e., silence. You continue praying but you do not utilize that language which is disconfirmed by reality. The men of the great assembly widen the range of the meaning of language, by widening the range of experience relevant for confirming this language.39The word "mighty" in the biblical context refers to God's victorious power in history. Prophets defeat kings, pharoahs submit to the overwhelming might of God. The reality of the talmudic writers did not confirm a God who was powerful and victorious and, therefore, they were compelled to reconsider the meaning of divine power.40 The men of the great assembly interpret power to mean the compassion and the long-suffering mercy of God. Self-control in the face of blasphemous provocation constitutes the new meaning of power:

Vespasian sent Titus who said, Where is their God, the rock in whom they trusted? This was the wicked Titus who blasphemed and insulted Heaven. What did he do? He took a harlot by the hand and entered the Holy of Holies and spread out a scroll of the Law and committed a sin on it. He then took a sword and slashed the curtain. Miraculously blood spurted out, and he thought that he had slain himself, as it says, Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thine assembly, they have set up their ensigns for signs. Abba Hanan said: Who is a mighty one like unto thee, O Jah? Who is like thee, mighty in self-restraint, that Thou didst hear the blaspheming and insults of that wicked man and kept silent? (T.B., Gittin, 56b)

In God's self-control, Israel, in exile, finds a way of continuing to use biblical language. Biblical divine power continues to be present, but in a neutralized form.

A most important statement in the text, besides the shift in meaning of biblical language, is the question how did Daniel and Jeremiah have the right to remain silent and not submit to Moses' authoritative and hence correct description of God? The short and simple answer was that God loves the truth and therefore they would not lie. Believing that God insists on truth enabled them to be honest to their own experience, and not to allow Moses' language to define their altered reality.

The three examples discussed above reveal the tension in talmudic thought between the organic mythic consciousness of the Bible and the sober realism of talmudic Judaism. In talmudic Judaism, one encounters the world of divine responsiveness and mutuality ("If you will hearken to my command, I will . . . ") not in everyday reality but in institutionalized memories, e.g., the biblical readings and the ambience of the Sabbath and the festivals.41 The talmudic Jew inhabits two worlds: one where history and nature reflect God's power and judgments and another world where violence and corruption yield wealth and prosperity. Titus enters the holy of holies with a prostitute and mockingly challenges God to dare strike him down. In response to this event, the talmud points out that Titus failed to realize that divine power often takes the form of divine silence.

The talmudic age testified to divine silence and to the tragic dimension of Jewish approaches to history. A major concern of talmudic Judaism was how to continue as a spiritual people in a world that does not confirm biblical expectations. The talmudic sages never give up the biblical organic consciousness. They retained the belief in God's power to reveal Himself openly in history, but tried to restrict and to confine it to past memories and to eschatological hopes. The crucial question facing any analyst of talmudic Judaism is how effective was this attempt at restricting the biblical mythic consciousness? Was it successfully neutralized? Did it cease being, in Jamesian terms, a live option? Or did it remain constantly just below the surface threatening to explode in the face of rabbinic sobriety and realism? This is a difficult but inescapable problem to resolve. One must examine currents in Jewish mystical and philosophic thought to discover the various forms that the interrelationship of biblical and rabbinic thought assumed in Jewish history.42

One thing, however, is clear. One who internalizes talmudic suppression of biblical consciousness can build a spiritual life in the absence of responsive historical events. The everyday spiri-tual existence of the talmudic Jew is characterized by loyalty to the law. To rabbinic man, God is present in history because His law is present. Because the Torah and the covenant are eternally binding, God's presence for man is confirmed. The law, and not events in history, mediates divine concern. Instead of seeking instances of God breaking into history, the rabbinic

teachers expand and elaborate biblical law to cover enormously wide ranges of experience. As more of reality falls under the authority of the law, God's will and influence become more deeply felt.

The receiving of the Torah was not perceived as an event of the historical past, but as an ever-present challenge. "When you study My words of Torah, they are not to seem antiquated to you, but as fresh as though the Torah were given this day" (Psikta d'Rab Kahana, piska 12, sec. 12). The written law was not perceived as a closed system of law. Elaboration and expansion of the Torah made the revelation at Sinai a contemporaneous event for students of Torah.43 The passion of the encounter with the living God of the Bible is retained but is expressed in uncovering new layers of meaning in Torah.

Though he is silent regarding the tragic dimension of history, talmudic man is extremely articulate and confident about his ability to understand the range of meanings contained in the revelation of the law:

Rab Judah said in the name of Rab, When Moses ascended on high he found the Holy One, blessed be He, engaged in affixing coronets to the letters. Said Moses, "Lord of the Universe, Who stays Thy hand?" He answered, "There will arise a man, at the end of many generations, Akiba b. Joseph by name, who will expound upon each Tittle heaps and heaps of laws". "Lord of the Universe," said Moses; "permit me to see him." He replied, "Turn thee round". Moses went and sat down behind eight rows (and listened to the discourses upon the law). Not being able to follow their arguments he was ill at ease, but when they came to a certain subject and the disciples said to the master "Whence do you know it?" and the latter replied "It is a law given unto Moses at Sinai" he was comforted. Thereupon he returned to the Holy One, blessed be He, and said, "Lord of the Universe, Thou hast such a man and Thou givest the Torah by me!" He replied, "Be silent, for such is My decree." (T.B., Menabot 29b)

The student of Moses, Akiba, uncovers dimensions in Moses' Torah which Moses himself does not understand. Yet it is Moses' Torah that is the basis of Akiba's legal inferences. Akiba is dignified and articulate; he has mastered the complexities of divine speech coming out of the Torah. Nevertheless, though articulate in the realm of the law, halakhic man lapses into utter silence when trying to understand the Lord of history:

Then said Moses, "Lord of the Universe, Thou hast shown me his Torah, show me his reward." "Turn thee round", said He; and Moses turned, round and saw them weighing out his flesh at the market-stalls. "Lord of the Universe," cried Moses, "such Torah, and such a reward!" He replied, "Be silent, for such is My decree."

To the questions, "Why choose Moses and not Akiba to stand at Sinai?" and "Why does Akiba, the illustrious genius of Halakhah, end his life in so horrifying and shocking a manner?" the answer given is, "Be silent, for such is My decree."

Rabbinic halakhic man, however, feels dignified and confident in the academy of learning:

We learnt elsewhere: If he cut it into separate tiles, placing sand between each tile: R. Elisezer declared it clean, and the Sages declared it unclean; and this was the oven of 'Aknai. Why (the oven of) 'Aknai?—Said Rab Judah in Samuel's name: (it means) that they encompass it with arguments as a snake, and proved it unclean. It has been taught: On that day R. Eliezer brought

forward every imaginable argument, but they did not accept them. Said he to them: "If the halachah agrees with me, let this carob-tree prove it!" Thereupon the carob-tree was torn a hundred cubits out of its place—others affirm, four hundred cubits. "No proof can be brought from a carob-tree," they retorted. Again he said to them: "If the halachah agrees with me, let the stream of water prove it!" Whereupon the stream of water flowed backwards. "No proof can be brought from a stream of water," they rejoined. Again he urged: "If the halachah agrees with me, let the walls of the schoolhouse prove it," whereupon the walls inclined to fall. But R. Joshua rebuked them, saying: "When scholars are engaged in a halachic dispute, what have ye to interfere?" Hence they did not fall, in honour of R. Eliezer; and they are still standing thus inclined. Again he said to them: "If the halachah agrees with me, let it be proved from Heaven!" Whereupon a Heavenly Voice cried out: "Why do ye dispute with R. Eliezer, seeing that in all matters the halachah agrees with him!" But R. Joshua arose and exclaimed: "It is not in heaven." What did he mean by this?—Said R. Jeremiah: That the Torah had already been given at Mount Sinai; we pay no attention to a Heavenly Voice, because Thou hast long since written in the Torah at Mount Sinai, after the majority must one incline.

R. Nathan met Elijah and asked him: What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do in that hour?—He laughed (with joy), he replied saying, "My sons have defeated Me. My sons have defeated Me." (T.B., Baba Mezia 59 A.B.)

Prophecy may not decide a problem of Jewish law. "Heaven" may not interfere in the development of Torah. In order to sustain the emergence of the halakhic process talmudic man proclaims the priority of human reason before the intrusions of revelation in his use of the biblical phrase "(Torah) is not in heaven." (Deut. XXX, 12) God gave the Torah to man, and man, with the use of reasoning and argumentation, is autonomous in guiding its development.

In a text reminiscent of Spinoza's comparison of the prophet with the philosopher, the midrash compares the scribe, i.e., the scholar of Torah, with the prophets:

They (the scribes and prophets) are like two agents whom a king sent to a province. With regard to one he wrote: If he shows you my signature and seal, trust him, but otherwise do not trust him. With regard to the other he wrote: Even if he does not show you my signature and seal, trust him. So of the words of prophecy it is written, If there arise in the midst of thee a prophet . . . and he gives thee a sign (Deut. XIII, 2), but of the words of the Scribes it is written, According to the law which they shall teach thee (Deut. XVII, 11). (Midrash Rabbah, The Song of Songs, I, 2)

In the talmudic development of the law, one does not need prophecy or the intervention of God to confirm the legitimacy of a legal argument. In supplanting the prophet as leader of the community, the scholar presents the credentials of intellectual competence to reason and argues persuasively about the law.44

These features of rabbinic Judaism, i.e., the preeminence of human legal reasoning above prophecy, the neutralization of the mythic-organic passion of the Bible, and the attempt at curbing the expectation of divine confirmation in history, create the conditions for the emergence of a spiritual outlook in which one's relationship to God is not spiritually nurtured by the miraculous presence of God in History. The God of the Halakhah is similar, mutatis mutandis, to the perfect God of Aristotle. For the Halakhah, God is perfect and his wisdom is reflected in the structure of the law; for Aristotle God is perfect, and His wisdom is reflected in the structures of reality. In the former case, human reason is adequate to uncover divine wisdom in the Torah, in the latter case,

human wisdom can understand God's wisdom in nature. One is drawn to God through the development of His Torah without the aid of revelation or other non-rational intrusions in history. The passion of the talmid hakham (the talmudic scholar), like the passion of the philosopher, involves a movement from man to God, i.e., the passion of eros. Aristotle's God, who attracts man in virtue of his perfection, can be loved by rabbinic Jews insofar as eros and the neutralization of dramatic historical events have become part of their religious sensibilities. Yehuda Halevy clearly understood the profound difference between a tradition grounded in revelation and one grounded in reason.45 The battle between philosophy and revealed religion was not only a question of competing truths; it involved, as well, questions of human adequacy and the legitimacy of human reasoning. Eros and agape characterize the poles of the profound conflict between a tradition grounded in revelation and one nurtured by human initiative and creativity. The talmudic tradition that we have isolated is a tradition which neutralized the religious need for grace, for miracles and for the idea of a God who breaks into history. This particular tradition may have influenced Maimonides to assimilate the Greek metaphysical tradition into rabbinic Judaism.46

Maimonides did not regard history as being the principal location of the relationship of man and God. As Urbach has shown, Maimonides went very far in banishing the prophet from having any relationship to the development of the law.47 Maimonides was personally averse to magnifying the place of miracles in the tradition.48 He did not believe that history will ever offer a permanent solution to the human condition.49 The law will be present and needed in (his conception of) the messianic world. Human freedom and susceptibility to sin are unchanging features of life. "Olam ke-minhago noheg" (the world maintains its natural course) is the quintessence of Maimonides' theory of history. He rejects the eschatology of a new creation and only insists on belief in creation. Eternity a parte ante is rejected in order to introduce a theology of will, which, in turn, makes possible the giving of the Torah.50 Maimonides did not require a theology of history where history would end supernaturally or otherwise. He, therefore, accepted eternity a parte post and rejected eternity a parte ante:

I have already made it clear to you that the belief in the production of the world is necessarily the foundation of the entire law. However, the belief in its passing-away after it has come into being and been generated is not, in our opinion, in any respect, a foundation of the Law and none of our beliefs would be hurt through the belief in its permanent duration. (*Guide* II, 27)

Maimonides' philosophical orientation did not seek to restore God's miraculous interference in history in the messianic world. He required the notion of God's will to justify the authority of Halakhah. Yet, after introducing a theology of will and hence making sense of the revelation of the Torah, Maimonides undermines the prophetic, eschatological passion by accepting eternity a parte post. Maimonides, like his talmudic predecessors, sought to cultivate a passion for God grounded in disinterested love of God.

No doubt the above is not the only way to make sense of the rabbinic tradition. Many great masters of the mystic tradition were talmudic scholars. The movement from the talmudic tradition to the Greek metaphysical tradition is certainly not a logically inevitable one. Yet, one ought to be very cautious when analyzing the notion of the absolute in the Jewish tradition. The problematic and interesting nature of this theme results from the fact that the Jewish tradition considered the biblical and the rabbinic traditions to be one tradition. The written Torah (Bible) and the oral Torah (Mishnah, Talmud, etc.) are one. Once the Jewish spirit united both traditions into one single revelation, it became possible and intelligible to interpret Ehyeh asher Ehyeh as "I am that I am"—

I am the necessary being—and not as "I will be with you in your suffering." Because Maimonides was the great master of talmud, he was bold enough to introduce his legal codification, the Mishneh Torah, with four chapters dealing with the primacy of the metaphysical tradition and to claim, in Hilkhot Talmud Torah, that the discipline of "talmud" included both the study of law and of philosophy.51 Surprising and unpredictable spiritual orientations and sensibilities emerge in a tradition where one of its respected teachers, R. Johanan, can say:

God made a covenant with Israel only for the sake of that which was transmitted orally, as it says, "For by the mouth of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel."52 (T.B., Gittin, 60B)

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Notes

Quotations from *The Guide of the Perplexed* are from the Shlomo Pines translation (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963.

Quotations from the *Mishneh Torah* are from the Hyamson translation (Jerusalem, 1965).

Quotations from the Bible are from *The Torah: The Five Books of Moses* (Philadelphia: J.P.S., 1962).

Quotations from the Talmud are from The Soncino Talmud.

1. See Y. Leibowitz, Yahadut Am Yehudi U'medinat Yisrael (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1975), p. 15.

2. Gershom G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. by R. Manheim (New York: Schocken, 1965), pp. 94-100, 122-130.

3. Shlomo Pines, "The Philosophic Source of The Guide of the Perplexed," in *The Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. CXXXIII-CXXXIV.

4. Emphraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, translated by I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1975), pp. 17, 18, 36, 65, 284-5. See Julius Guttman, Philosophies of Judaism, trans. by David Silverman (New York: Anchor, 1966), pp. 30-43.

5. B. Spinoza, *A Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. by R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), chaps. 1, 2, 7 (pp. 115-119). See S. Pines, "Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Maimonides, and Kannt," *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, xx (1968), pp. 3-54; Leo Strausns, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, trans. by Elsa M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken, 1965), chap. 6; D. Hartmann, *Maimonides: Torah and Philosophic* Quest (Philadelphia: J.P.S., 1976), p. 237, n. 6.

6. Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1952), pp. 78-94; D. Hartman, Maimonides, introduction and chap. V.

7. *Guide* II, 40.

8. Ibid. III, 27, *Mishneh Torah*, "Laws of Repentance," chap. IX.

9. See comments of the Kesef Mishneh to Hilkhot Yesodei HaTorah, IV, l3; Isadore Twersky, "Some Non-Halakhic Aspects of the Mishneh Torah" in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967).

10. See D. Hartman, *Maimonides*, pp. 44-45; J. Guttman, *op. cit*., p. 177; G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), p. 25; T.B., Kiddushin 40b, Baba Kama 17A.

11. See the passionate yearning for Olam Haba (an ahistorical relationship to God) in Maimonides' introduction to Helek, M.T., "Laws of Repentance," VIII, and in *Guide* III, 51.

12. See Rashi's commentary to Genesis I, 1 and Midrash Tanhuma, Berashit II. See *Guide* III, 13-14; Leo Strauss, "Jerusalem and Athens," *The City College Papers*, VI (New York: 1967), pp. 8-10, 20, for an analysis of the differences between the place of man in the hierarchy of being in Greek and in Biblical thought.

13. "Ehyeh-Asher Ehyeh. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Go and say to Israel: I was with you in this servitude, and I shall be with you in the servitude of (other) kingdoms." (T.B., Berakhot 9b). See *Midrash Raba*, Exodus III, 6.

14. Martin Buber, *Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crises* (New York: Schocken, 1948), p. 23; see M. Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Convenant* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), pp. 39-55; *Kingship of God*, trans. R. Scheimann (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 103-106; Emil L. Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History* (New York: N.Y.U., 1970), pp. 3-34, for a serious attempt at making sense of God's presence in history in the modern world.

15. See Strauss, "Jerusalem and Athens," p. 17. For earlier interpretations of Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh as making a metaphysical and not a historical statement, see H.A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1929), vol. 1, pp. 19, 210: C.H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), p. 4. For critical textural analysis, see B.S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 60-77 and Moshe Greenberg, Understanding Exodus (New York: Behrman House, 1969), pp. 78-84.

16. "'I am the Lord thy God': (Ex. 20:2), Why were the Ten Commandments not said at the beginning of the Torah? They give a parable. To what may this be compared? To the following: A king who entered a province said to the people: May I be your king? But the people said to him: Have you done anything good for us that you should rule over us? What did he do then? He built the city wall for them, he brought in the water supply for them, and he fought their battles. Then when he said to them: May I be your king? They said to Him: Yes, yes. Likewise, God. He brought the Israelites out of Egypt, divided the sea for them, sent down the manna for them, brought up the well for them, brought the quails for them. He fought for them the battle with Amalek. Then He said to them: I am to be your king. And they said to Him: Yes, yes" (Mekhilta). Trans. J.Z. Lauterbach (Philadelphia: J.P.S., 1933), tractate *Bahodesh*, V. See Yehuda Halevi, *Kuzari*, I, 11, 25, 83-89; IV, 3.

17. *Guide* I, 64, p. 157; II, 5, p. 260; III, 32, p. 526, 51, p. 623. See F. Heiler, *Prayer: A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion*, trans. S. McComb (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1932), chap. IV.

18. M.T., Hilkhot Yesodei HaTorah, IX, 3, 5.

19. Isodore Twersky, *Rabad of Posquieres* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 282-6.

20. See Leo Strauss, "How to Begin to Study the *Guide* of the Perplexed," in The *Guide* of the Perplexed, op. cit., pp. 20-24. Wolfson claims that declaring openly, as opposed to simply accepting "in one's heart," belief in divine corporeality constitutes idolatry. See his interesting discussion in "Maimonides on the Unity and Incorporeality of God," *JQR*, 56 (1965), pp. 112-36.

21. "Hilkhot Abodah Zarah" deals with practices that were prohibited in order to protect the community from pagan and idolatrous influences. The laws of idolatry, therefore, begin with an account of how mistaken forms of worship were responsible for the growth of idolatry and the disappearance of monotheism. In chap. I of "Hilkhot Yesodei HaTorah," Maimonides deals with idolatry based upon a false understanding of the notion of the unity of God.

22. *Guide*, I, 55.

23. H. Wolfson, "Maimonides on the Unity and Incorporeality of God," and *Philo*, II, pp. 94-101.

24. See D. Hartman, *Maimonides*, p. 294, n. 92.

25. See Guttman, *op. cit*., p. 159.

26. *Guide* I, 39; III, 28; see D. Hartman, *Maimonides*, p. 265, n. 6l. See Pines' introduction to *The Guide of the Perplexed*, pp. xcv-xcviii, cxi, cxv; "Spinoza's tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Maimonides and Kant," p. 26, and his forward to D. Hartman, Maimonides, for the changes in Pines' approach to Maimonides' understanding of knowledge of God. Pines' present position is that Maimonides seriously doubted the possibility of metaphysical knowledge of God.

27. See M.T., Hilkhot Yesodei HaTorah, IV, 12.

28. The description of Abraham of the akedah should be balanced by other texts describing his efforts to establish an historical community dedicated to the belief in the unity of God: Book of the Commandments, positive commandment III: M.T., Laws of Idolatry, I; and *Guide* III, 51, p. 624.

29. See *Guide*, III, 51, pp. 620-623; I, 59, p. 139.

30. See *Guide*, III, 26, 28, 31.

31. See G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1941), pp. 25-37; *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1965), pp. 95, 127, 130.

32. *Guide*, I, 52; II, 12.

33. Mishnah Berakhot IX, 5. See Urbach, *op. cit*., chap. XIV, and p. 443.

34. "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea" in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, p. 30.

35. M.T., The Book of Judges, "Kings and Wars," chaps. XI, XII.

36. Guttman, *op. cit*., pp. 177-8. See I. Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Meridian and Philadelphia: J.P.S., 1958), p. 300.

37. "Notes on Maimonides' Book of Knowledge," in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1967), p. 273 and *Natural Right and History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 81-3. See Maimonides' Eight Chapters, VIII; Notes by Prof. Louis Ginzberg to I. Efros, *Philosophical Terms in the Moreh Nebukim* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1924), pp. 134-5.

38. T.B. Kiddushin, 39b. See Urback, *op. cit* p. 268-271; 436-444.

39. See different versions of this midrash in T.J., Megillah, III, 7. In the Babylonian version, the prophets, Daniel and Jeremiah, initiate the problem. The men of the great assembly offer a solution by reinterpreting the categories. In the Jerusalem version, the prophets themselves indicate the direction of the solution.

40. See Mekhilta VIII, for examples of the wide range of uses of notions of divine power. Rather than offering a strict definition of divine power, the Mekhilta collects a variety of correct uses of the concept.

41. See G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, pp. 95, 120-1, 132-3, 130-135.

42. See G. Scholem, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea," especially, pp. 17-24.

43. See Gerson D. Cohen, "The Talmudic Age," in *Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People*, edited by Leo W. Schwarz (New York: Random House, 1956), pp. 143-212.

44. See D. Hartman, *Maimonides*, pp. 102-126.

45. *Kuzari*, I, 1-13, 98, 99.

46. See Urbach, *op. cit*., pp. 303-4, for a discussion of the relationship of grace (hesed) and law. Our exposition supports Urbach's interpretation of the bold statement in T.B., Pesahim 118a: "To what do these twenty-six (verses of) "Give thanks" correspond? To the twenty-six generations that the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world, and did not give them the Torah, but sustained them by His grace." "There was need of grace," comments Urbach, "so long as the Torah had not been given." For a different approach which emphasizes the need for grace in Maimonides' quest for knowledge of God, see Simon Rawidowicz, *Studies in Jewish Thought*, edited by Nahum N. Glatzer, chapter 7, Philadelphia, J.P.S. 1974.

47. E. Urbach, "Halakhah u-Nevuah," *Tarbiz*, 18 (1946), pp. 1-27. See D. Hartman, Maimonides, pp. 116-122. In contrast to Maimonides' approach, see Yehudah Halevi III, 41. This difference is not unrelated to differences of their overall philosophic world views.

48. See D. Hartman, *Maimonides*, IV. See Maimonides' "Treatise on Resurrection" and "Eight Chapters," chap. VIII; D. Hartman, *Maimonides*, chap. IV.

49. M.T., "Laws of Repentance," IX, and "Kings and Wars," XII.

50. *Guide*, II, 25.

51. M.T., Hilkhot Talmud Torah, I, 11-12. See I. Twersky, "Some Non-Halaklic Aspects of the Mishneh Torah," pp. 111-118.

52. Urbach, *The Sages*, chap. XII.

Comment on
David Hartman and Elliott Yagod's

God, Philosophy and Halakhah in Maimonides' Approach to Judaism

Isaac Franck

Dr. Hartman devotes a very substantial part of his paper to an exposition of the dialectical tension in the millennial mainstream of Jewish theological and metaphysical thought, between the two ideas of God: on the one hand the Biblical - Halakhic - liturgical - psychosocial - anthropocentric - emotive - personal - mitzvah oriented idea of the God of human history and of the history of Israel; and on the other hand the contemplative - speculative - conceptual - theoretical - analytico-logico-philosophical - abstract idea of a "wholly other," distant, imperturbable God, Whom one loves disinterestedly, with a metaphysical and intellectual love akin to Spinoza's *amor dei intellectualis*. Where I would be inclined to question Dr. Hartman is:

First, on his philosophical claim that this dialectical tension can be resolved and that a disjunction between these two God-ideas can be avoided.

Second, on his historical claim that a critical analysis of the post-Biblical Rabbinic, mitzvah-oriented tradition shows this tradition to have successfully accommodated within itself the idea of God as the "wholly other"—the purely intellectual, non-anthropocentric idea of the God of the philosophers—and thus to have reduced the tension and eliminated the disjunction between the two.

Third, his claim that Moses Maimonides in particular believed that he had succeeded in his own writings, and that he had in fact succeeded in resolving that tension completely and in having incorporated the philosophical idea of a non-anthropocentric God into his philosophy of Judaism, for the mainstream of the tradition.

The fact of course is that the tension between these two God-ideas has persevered throughout the centuries, and is very much a dynamic focus in the thought and writings of such 20th century philosophers of Judaism as Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Abraham J. Heschel, Mordecai M. Kaplan, Emil Fackenheim, Louis Jacobs, and in Israel, Yeshayahu Leibovitz and others. But perhaps the most cogent evidence of the continuing tension is conspicuously discernible (l) in the spirited and ever self-renewing controversies around the philosophical views of Maimonides that have punctuated without abatement the history of Jewish thought from the l3th century to our own day; and (2) in Maimonides' own assessments of his philosophical idea of God. It was not only Isaac Husik1 and Julius Guttman,2 preeminent historians of medieval Jewish thought, who saw the disjunction between Maimonides the philosopher in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, and Maimonides the Halakhist in his *Code* (the *Mishneh Torah*) and his other works in Halakhic Judaism. Maimonides' contemporaries and those commentators who wrote about his work during the two centuries immediately following him—men like Shem Tov Falaquera,3 Kaspi,4 Narboni,5 Shem Tov,6 Anatoli,7 Ephodi,8 and others—had many ambivalences and evidenced many dialectical tensions about the Maimonidean doctrine of God. They perceived in the idea of a remote, wholly other God—who is totally unaffected by human feelings and conduct, who does not respond with anger or joy to human transgression or worship, and whom the philosopher truly

worships only through detached contemplation—a threat to the received idea of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Jewish people's traditional God of history, Giver of the Commandments, and Dispenser of reward and punishment, and to civil and political tranquility. One of these very early commentators, J. Kaspi, wrote: "If the people were to find out about this doctrine, they would not be able to tolerate this truth, and would grow wild and uncontrollable in their conduct."9 It is thus not to be wondered that in some Jewish communities the study of *The Guide of the Perplexed* was banned, and in many of the Yeshivot, the Talmudic Academies in Eastern Europe, the study of *The Guide* was forbidden.

As for Maimonides himself, it seems clear to me—and in this I follow the interpretation of the late very great scholar, Leo Strauss,10 and also of a short and neglected work, in Hebrew, by an Israeli scholar, Yaacov Becker11—that Maimonides had in mind two distinct, though over lapping, audiences for the *Code* (i.e., the *Mishneh Torah*) and for *The Guide*, respectively. He wrote the Mishneh Torah principally for the masses and teachers of the Jewish community with the objective of strengthening, elevating, deepening, enriching their commitment to Torah Judaism, their faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their dedication to a life of inspired ethical rectitude and nobility, and to a society of justice and mercy. For that audience, the fulfillment of the commandments and a sense of reciprocal personal relationship and involvement with the God who was the source of these commandments were the methodologies for the pursuit of these goals.

The Guide was written for a select audience of religiously committed Jews who had been exposed to philosophical and scientific ideas, analyses and speculations. They were struggling with doubts and perplexities which science and philosophy raised in their minds about aspects of their faith, and were in search of a cogent philosophical frame of reference for their Judaism. In *The Guide* Maimonides hoped to provide answers to those troubled by these doubts and perplexities, erect for them a firm philosophical foundation for Judaism, and thus strengthen their commitment to it. He hoped that there could be a steady and even accelerated increase in the overlap of the two groups, facilitated in part by exposing the small number of the philosophically-minded intellectual elite to a searching analysis of "the reasons for the commandments" - ta'amei hamitzvet - in relation to the Maimonidean philosophical God-idea.

Contained in *The Guide*, at times explicitly pointed to and at other times hinted by indirection, was what Maimonides preferred to have remain a secret doctrine, not to be revealed to the community, a doctrine of a distant, totally different, imperturbable God, true worship of Whom takes the form of intellectual love and contemplation. Maimonides distinguishes in several places in *The Guide* between "true belief" and "necessary belief," "*Emunah Amitit*" and "*Emunah Hekhrahit*." True belief is the philosopher's belief in the philosophers' God, a God Who does not need customary worship, Who is totally unaffected by whether or not the Halakhah or the Commandments are fulfilled, Who does not get angry and does not rejoice (these are only anthropomorphic metaphors). On the other hand, belief in the God of traditional Halakhah, the God of the Commandments, Maimonides calls necessary belief, necessary for the people, for the maintenance of social tranquility, for a civilized social order, and for humane conduct toward each other on the part of humans. The careful reader of The Guide will note how often Maimonides refers to the "*Ormah elohit*," i.e., "God's shrewdness" in having ordained the ritual laws and observances, not because God has any need for them, but as a "ruse" (Shlomo Pines' translation), a kind of trick in order to reduce cruelty and injustice and achieve just and humane relationships among humans. For example, the cult of animal sacrifices was ordained in order to wean away the people of Israel from human sacrifices, a barbaric cult that was widespread among the pagan idol

worshippers who surrounded Israel at that time.12 Other such "Divine Ruses" are referred to in*The Guide*.

The obvious question that confronts us is, why should this Maimonidean, detached, wholly other, imperturbable God be sufficiently perturbed to have any concern for the justice and tranquility of the social order among humans, or for the fulfillment of Commandments generally? And why should the philosopher, who understands the true belief and the passion for the intellectual contemplation and love of God, be concerned with fulfilling the Commandments? In the text of *The Guide*, using an example, the question takes this form: "For God, and for the philosopher, what difference does it make whether the animal to be eaten is slaughtered by the prescribed, ritual, humane method, or whether its meat is simply cut from the flank of the living animal13—(again a widespread practice among the pagans of the time)?" Permit me to defer the answer to this question while I turn to a very brief consideration of the second theme in this commentary.

In characterizing the Philosophical God-Idea of Maimonides, Dr. Hartman quite properly and vigorously stressed the Anti-Idolatry motif constantly reiterated throughout Jewish teaching about God, and especially the forceful and aggressive Anti-Idolatry of Maimonides. One surpassingly important element in the Philosophical God-Idea developed at length in Maimonides' *Guide* is the utter unknowability of God by the human mind.14 God's essence is completely unknown to man; only His existence is known. No affirmative attributes can be attributed to God. God is completely, utterly unknown and unknowable. "Our knowledge of God," says Maimonides, "consists in our knowledge that we are unable to comprehend Him."15 *The Guide'*s theology is a radical Negative Theology. What is known to man is necessarily known to him in terms of human knowledge, as he knows the world of his existence. Now, God can not be known to man because essential knowledge of God is available only to God himself. According to Maimonides, for man to try to know God is as if man tried to be God.16 This doctrine is summarized in a sort of precept: "*Ilu y'dativ, he-yitiv*," "If I knew Him, I would be He," a precept found in Joseph Albo's "Ikkarim."17

The doctrine of the utter unknowability of God is ancient in Jewish Philosophy. It was well developed by Philo,18 reiterated by Saadia19 in the l0th century, and by Maimonides, Albo, and later philosophers of Judaism. But Maimonides espoused a radical negative theology. He formulated the vigorous warning that ". . . he who affirms that God has positive attributes . . . has abandoned his belief in the existence of God without being aware of it."20 No wonder then that Maimonides admonished the reader of *The Guide* that the doctrine of God's unknowability "Should not be divulged (or revealed) to the masses,"21 and that Leo Strauss suggested that this teaching ". . . contradicts the teaching of the law . . . and is even subversive."22

But this doctrine, though apparently heterodox, is of even more ancient vintage. The prophet Isaiah is quoted by Maimonides in the course of his exposition of the unknowability of God, and in support of this doctrine. Isaiah declared, in the name of God: "*Lo mahshvotai mahshvoteikhem, v'lo darkeikhem d'rakhai* . . . ." "My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways . . . ."23 However, my own interpretation is, though I believe it to be hinted by Maimonides, that this doctrine of God's unknowability dates back even further, to Moses. When Moses inquired of God, "Who shall I say sent me?" the reply Moses heard was the incomprehensible and awesome words, "*Ehyeh asher ehyeh* . . . ,"24 generally translated as "I am who I am,' or "I will be who I will be," the words confronted him with a double incomprehensibility. First, the meaning of the words, simply as words, was incomprehensible. Second, the Being to Whom the words ostensibly referred was incomprehensible. Moses later pursued the enigma by asking God to show him His (God's) nature. In the reply that Moses received to this later question are provided implicitly the

unravelling and separation from each other of the two earlier enigmas. For in hearing God's reply, "*Ki lo yir'ani ha'adam vahai . . .*," ". . . for man cannot see me and live . . . ,"25 Moses learned that the Entity or Being to which "*Ehyeh*" refers is indeed, and must forever remain, incomprehensible. But he also learned that the linguistic problem is resolved, and that the meaning of the words "*ehyeh asher ehyeh*" perhaps ceases to be impenetrable. Though God gives it as the answer to the question about His identity, the locution "*ehyeh*" is not substantival, it is not the equivalent of a noun; it is not a name of anything; least of all is it a proper name, like Socrates. The locution is an admonition, a directive, which says "Do not inquire into what I am, because I am incomprehensible. I am what I am, ask no further. Man cannot know me, I am wholly different."

This doctrine of God's utter unknowability is the ultimate anti-idolatry. It is possible for us to know only what God is not, and what is not God. "Only God is God."26 Anything known or knowable is not God. God is utterly different and unique. To worship anything known or knowable is idolatry. To give one's ultimate and absolute allegiance or loyalty to anything but God, to any known or knowable thing, to any person, or aggregate of persons, or to any human institution, is idolatry. It is only that wholly other, utterly unknowable God of Philosophy that is worthy of contemplation and of pure, disinterested, intellectual love.

Now, you may ask, isn't this radical Negative Theology barren of consequences, morally vacuous, tantamount to a vague mysticism, and destructive of any Rational Theology? I think not. It is not Mysticism, because it does not itself claim to have, and radically rejects all claims to the possession of, any access to some intuitive mystical insight into the essential nature of God. The fact that God is unknown is a mystery, but this does not make the doctrine of God's unknowability a doctrine of Mysticism. The doctrine is not destructive of Rational Theology, because it is not a Theology of silence, akin to the Wittgensteinian precept: "Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent." On the contrary, this Theology imposes on the theologian who espouses it the duty to do a lot of talking, by way of "unsaying,"27 morning, noon, and night, all the many things that humans have said and will continue to be saying in their talk about God, even when they claim that God is unknowable. It is not an ethically vacuous doctrine. It does have ethical consequences.

Which leads me to my third and final theme, namely the answer to the question I mentioned earlier, as to why the Imperturbable God, and the philosopher who contemplates and disinterestedly loves Him, should be at all concerned about the traditional commandments. Here I complete the circle, and come around to an agreement with one aspect of Professor Hartman's thesis, though I arrive at it from another direction. It is perhaps paradoxical, but in Judaism even the non-anthropocentric, philosophical, idea of an utterly different God converges toward the Halakhic, socio-ethical, Commandment-oriented traditional mandates for social existence.

l) For Maimonides, the highest, most noble pursuit of the philosophical Jew is indeed the contemplative love of God. However, a necessary condition, that may make possible this kind of contemplative life for an increasing number of philosophically minded persons, is a Torah-society. Its norms and adherence to Commandments will assure the tranquil, just, and civilized order that maintains the conditions for a philosophical life.

2) If only the unknowable God of Radical Negative Theology is worthy of worship—of the highest, ultimate, absolute loyalty and allegiance—this has consequences for social ethics, for norms and prescriptions by which to govern interhuman relationships. In all human societies there is an unavoidable, inescapable need for the exercise of authority, for superordinate and subordinate relationships and positions of humans in the social order. A traffic light system is an exercise of

the authority, and a police system enforces this authority. What are the limits of authority of humans and human institutions in a society?

Therefore, in the perspective of Radical Negative Theology, what are the limits of the authority of humans and human institutions when they perform necessary superordinate roles in relation to other human beings? It seems to me immediately and most obviously entailed by this doctrine that no human being(s), no human institution, no human law, may demand or expect or coerce the supreme, ultimate, and total allegiance, loyalty, or obedience on the part of any other human being. No human being(s) or institutions may "play God" toward, or "Lord it over" any other human being. No human(s) may exercise any absolute authority over any other person. The exercise of such absolute authority over other humans is self-idolization; it is the "absolutization of the relative;" and it also coerces the victim who accepts such absolute authority to in fact practice idolatry: ". . . for unto Me are the children of Israel servants, not servants to servants."28

Thus, the otherness and unknowability of God in the Maimonidean, philosophical God-idea, the true God-idea which Maimonides wished to keep secret from the masses, does entail a system of social ethics. But the masses were not prepared to understand and accept the true beliefs about God and live by them. Indeed, these true beliefs would be likely to lead the masses to violent and disorderly conduct. They need the necessary beliefs, e.g., that God is a dispenser of reward and punishment, not because they are true, but rather as a means to an end, in order to maintain a civilized society.

Maimonides does not provide a traditionalist resolution between these two divergent God-ideas, nor does he claim to have done so. The disjunction between these two God-ideas seems to me irresolvable in traditionalist terms, and while the attempt so to resolve it is an interesting exercise, its product strikes me as only an addition to almost 800 years of tension and confusion, rather than as a contribution to clarity. This tension will continue, and, not withstanding the tension, the spiritual and intellectual vocation of Judaism will struggle on as heretofore. Philosophically, what is important is not resolution, but rather clarification, a very modest adumbration of which I have tried to contribute in this brief commentary.

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Notes

1. Isaac Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1941).

2. Julius Guttmann, *Philosohies of Judaism: The History of Jewish Philosophy from Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964).

3. Shem Tov Falaquera (1225-1290), *Commentary on the Guide of the Perplexed* (Moreh Hamoreh).

4. Joseph Kaspi (1279-ca.1340), *Commentary on the Guide of the Perplexed*, and Amudei Hakessef Umaskiyot Hakessef.

5. Moses Narbeni (R. Moses Yosef of Narbonne) (died after 1362), *Commentary on the Guide of the Perplexed*, Goldenthal, ed. (Vienna, 1852) (See Husik, Fn. 1 above, p. 449.)

6. Shem Tov Ben Joseph (ca. 1461-1489), *Commentary on the Guide of the Perplexed*.

7. Joseph Anateli (ca. 1194-1256), Malmad Hatalmidim.

8. Ephodi (a Hebrew acronym for Profiat Duran) (died ca. 1414), *Commentary on the Guide of the Perplexed*.

9. Joseph Kaspi Amudei Hakessef Umaskiyot Hakessef, p. 8.

10. Leo Strauss, "The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1952), pp. 38-94.

11. Yaacov Becker, Mishnato Haphilosophit Shel Rabbenu Moshe Ben Maimon (Tel Aviv: J. Shimoni Publishing House, 1955).

12. Moses Maimonidos, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Shlomo Pines, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), III, 32 (pp. 526, 530-531 in Pines' translation) and III, 47 (p. 593 in Pines' translation). On the "Divine ruse," see e.g., Guide III, 32, especially pp. 526-529 in Pines' translation.

13. *Guide*, III, 26, pp. 508-509 in Pines' translation.

14. *Ibid.*, I, 51-60.

15. *Ibid*., I, 59, p. 139.

16. *Ibid*., I, 60, and III, 21, p. 485 in Pines' translation.

17. Joseph Albo, *Sefer Ha-Ikarim* (The Book of Principles), Isaac Husik, trans. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1946). Volume II, p. 206.

18. Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), Vol. II, Chap. 11, pp. 94-164.

19. Gaon Saadia, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, Samuel Rosenblatt, trans., (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1948).

20. *Guide*, I, 60, p. 145 in Pines' translation.

21. *Ibid.*, I, 59, p. 142 in Pines' translation.

22. Leo Strauss, "How to Begin to Study the Guide of the Perplexed," in Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Shelmo Pines, trans., pp. xlviii ff.

23. Isaiah, LV, 8-9.

24. Exodus, III, 14.

25. Ibid., XXXIII, 21.

26. Elliott E. Cohen, in an article in the early 40's.

27. Anton C. Pegis, "Penitus Manet Ignotum," in Mediaeval Studies, XXVII (1965), pp. 212-226, especially pp. 219 ff.

28. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Kiddushin, 22b.

Report on Islam

George F. McLean and *John P. Hogan*

As present times are marked by violence and hatred that destroy the lives of thousands and millions, the religions need to contribute to peace by directing mind and heart to the One who is the principle of unity and the motivation of justice and charity. This is the foundation for battling against poverty, racism and prejudice across the world; it is the urgent context of the following questions.

What Is the Nature of Islam and What Are Its Salient Characteristics?

Islam is the faith of over one billion people spread along the middle latitudes from Morocco and Senegal on the Atlantic, across North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, to Malaysia and Indonesia in South East Asia. Proclaimed by the Prophet Mohammed in Mecca and Medina in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century, in less that 100 years it had spread across the world.

Its teaching is based on the Koran as the word of God dictated to The Prophet over some decades and arranged according to the descending length of the Suras or chapters. Also given great attention are the Hadiths or words of the Prophet and his close companions, as well as the pattern of life of the early community.

Indeed Islam is best understood not as a set of beliefs or a religion as is Christianity, but as a way of life that shapes both thought and action. It is the interior or depth dimension, the spirit in which life is carried out, whether in homes, civil society or national and international politics. But the focus has been less on the spirit than on the law or fiqh which spells out how one is to relate to others; following the Shariah or Islamic law is considered to be the secure path both in this world and to the next.

In this manner the spirituality of Moslems is institutionalized through universal patterns of pilgrimage, prayer, charity and fast. This process of interpretation is guided by the Koran as the word of God and by the sayings and practices of the Prophet, his companions and the early community. Some of its modalities are culture specific and schools of interpretation dispute over what is of the essence. Thus, rules set to clarify a point in one place can cause trouble elsewhere. Intense debate goes on with regard to such points of the law as the implications of the command of truthfulness in situations of endangerment and to the roles of the various prophets, including Jesus who is most highly respected.

In the Middle Ages a major and highly rewarding effort was made to translate the classics of Greek philosophy as tools for evolving the Islamic vision. The effort is marked by such great luminaries in philosophy as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and al-Ghazali in Damascus, Baghdad and Khurasan and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in Spain. Their work in the 10th and 11th century laid the foundation for the subsequent revival of Latin thought in the West that constituted the so-called "High Middle Ages" of the 12th and 13th centuries. The Islamic literary and scientific production of the age, as well as its religious and political achievements, were so outstanding that Marshall Hodgson in his *The Venture of Islam* suggests that world history cannot be understood unless one shifts the focus of one’s understanding of this period from Europe to the land stretching from the

Nile to the Oxus, with such fabled cities as Damascus, Baghdad, Buhara and Samarkand. After al-Ghazali shifted from the philosophical to the more mystical path of the Sufis this intense theoretical intellectual effort did not cease as witnessed by Sohravardi and Mulla Sadra, but invasions from without and desertification from within made it impossible to continue the sophisticated earlier level of learning and culture.

But the combination of an exalted religious vision and its close integration with the socio-political order has tended to open the way for a series of reform movements repeatedly calling the Islamic communities back to the difficultly high standards of the idealized communities formed by the Holy Prophet, Mohammed himself, in Mecca and Medina. This has led to a history of political turbulence of which the present is not really an exception – one might recall that al-Ghazali's two protectors, the Sultan's Wazir, Nizam al-Mulk and his son, Fakhr al-Mulk, were assassinated. Moreover, at present the external socio-political pressures of a hegemonic Enlightenment liberalism, joined with the sudden development of the oil riches at the traditional heart of Islam, has generated a new period of instability.

As a result, Islam now seeks to find its place in the newly global context in which it meets many other visions of life not only at its periphery, but at its core. In the past Islam has succeeded in bringing its religiously rooted way of life to peoples of many different cultures, but perhaps never has it been so directly challenged as a way of life by other cultures, some of which are themselves religiously based. Certainly the great task of the religions of our times is to interchange their deep insights about human meaning in order to appreciate the interrelatedness of the many peoples and to inspire the generosity of spirit required so that they might be able mutually to complement, cooperate and enable each other.

Thus Islam is challenged not only to defend itself against the militant secularism of Western liberalism, but also to help Christianity today to revive its own religious awareness and the devotion it needs in order to be able to inspire Western capabilities to attend to the welfare of all. Conversely Christianity, which has grown up with the Enlightenment – it is even considered by some to be a Christian heresy – is called upon to help other religions specifically to be able to progress without becoming secularized or, to use the terms of Emile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade, without losing its sense of the sacred and being reduced to the merely profane.

This is the urgent contemporary need for cooperation between religions.

What Can Islam Hope to Contribute to the Religious Patrimony of Humankind?

1. *Family*: There is a special focus on family values and structures, i.e., on relations between members of a family, which is much needed everywhere in these times of decline in family life.

2. *The Sharia* or *Koranic law*: This is concerned:
(a) to preserve the right to believe,
(b) to practice the integrity of each human being,
(c) to protect the right of human beings to think and to express themselves,
(d) to affirm the right to earn a living, and
(e) to protect the land God gave, along with its resources

3. *Justice*: This is a special focus for Islamic thought and teaching. It calls all to do justice even if it is to their personal or their family's disadvantage. Islam's attention to justice is little appreciated outside of Islam, but can be a major contribution to the concern for justice and peace

in the Catholic Church since Vatican II. It focuses upon central issues of human life which can and should be shared by all religions, each in their own way. These include:

a. the value of all human beings, which has extended to strong support for family life,

b. freedom of the spirit to worship God along with others in a way that strongly knits the family together, and

c. fair distribution of wealth and resources.

In this struggle for justice Islam strongly opposes poverty, racism and militarism. This was the agenda as well of Martin Luther King, a Christian minister, and one on which all can willingly cooperate.

There are here, however, two special problems. On the one hand, some note that in the West the change from the classical order focused upon God to the modern order focused upon man was led, not by the Church, but by atheists who rejected God, by secularists who ignored God, or by deists who excluded God from all involvement in matters of the world. They supposed that this separation of the sacred and the profane, of Church and state, is the only path worthy of human dignity. Hence they consider it necessary to suppress Islam's intense religious focus upon Allah in order to refocus upon man. However, it is characteristic of Islam not to be separated from daily life in order to worship God, but rather for fidelity to God and his message to pervade all of life – economic, social and political. To remove this Islamic attention to God in order to shift its focus to man would be foundationally disruptive and destructive of the very mode of human life for this one fifth of humanity.

On the other hand, some express the concern that its stress upon justice could be a source for insistence by various groups on what is their due, in opposition to what others see from their own point of view. They fear that this could be a source of fundamentalism. This, however, supposes that the Islamic perspective would be that of the atomic individual in competition with all others. This is characteristic of the nominalist and enlightenment traditions of the West.

But in the case of Islam it is quite the opposite. The source of its concern for justice, as for all else, is its sense of fidelity to God who has created and wisely disposed all. This is the needed antidote to the West's selfishly egoistic individualism. Of itself Islam is one of the world's most powerful forces for justice which its enroots deep within the spirit of persons and peoples. It is rather when unjustly attacked from without by colonialism or military force that it exercises its right and duty as defined in the Koran to defend its faith and way of life in order to promote justice in this world.

It is the myopia of Western individualism that it sees democracy as a tool for political participation only in the sense of allowing each to struggle for justice in the sense of what is one's own. It is not lost on the Islamic and other peoples that the leading colonial exploiters in modern times have been the world's democracies. If it is essential to strive for justice Islam must be able to explore alternate paths, and its discoveries can be its most precious gift to the world in this time of globalization.

Yet the practice of justice requires a broader context still. If justice as the call for what is due can lead to different interpretations when evaluated from the diverse perspectives of the multiple parties involved, there is a basic need to be able to look, not only for one's own welfare, but for that of others and for the relation of each thereto. In Christianity this the essential companion to justice, namely, the virtue of charity. It is patterned both specifically on Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of all and on the shared religious vision of the origin of all in the one Creator of whom we are the stewards and vicegerents for the welfare of all. Though the former is proper to

Christianity, the latter is common to both Islam and Christianity. Indeed Jesus is a uniquely highly honored prophet in Islam which sees Jesus and his mother as alone untouched by evil.

4. *God*: Islam's strong focus on God is especially important in these secular times. Islam can help to bring God and religion back into the lives of people and, as has just been seen, by that fact support justice as well.

5. *Zakar*: almsgiving emphasizes the importance of responding to the needs of the poor. This perfects justice by taking it clearly beyond the search for what is exclusively one's own and hence for self and thereby instituting instead the norm of charity.

What Does Islam Expect from Other Religions: What Form of Recognition?

1. That Allah be recognized as denoting the same God as that worshiped by the other great religion. Islam stresses God's compassion, love and forgiveness.
2. That the Koran be recognized as legitimate holy Scripture and message of peace, against accusations that it promotes violence.
3. That Moslems have the right to protect themselves when attacked. The satisfaction of human concerns which is essential to world peace entails the need to resolve conflicts and injustices.

Sharia is the special law of Islam. This must be located within its general religious context that stresses upon submission and fidelity to Allah, the compassionate and merciful. As with the Jewish Talmudic tradition, intensive study of the sacred texts and traditions is looked to for the guidance needed for living faithfully. This guidance is worked up in legal form so that in both traditions the study of the law, or of "fiqh" in Islam, predominates over what in Christianity would be the study of theology, both dogmatic and moral. Its content reflects the long experience of the community or "umma" in attempting to live in a faithful manner the message of the Prophet.

This has two implications. On the one hand, the Islamic community encounters the legal system of the Western colonial powers. As this is based on the individual and on the rights or claims of the atomic person upon the community. Moslems find this to be corrosive of the family and of the social bonds of community. Thus many call for the reinstitution of the sharia as the legal frame under which they wish to live.

On the other hand, the koranic sharia law is objected to by some liberal Western elements which attempt to impose upon Islam the post Reformation Western historical choices. But any new pluralism which would result in the isolation of the sacred from the profane would be quite subversive of Islam as a way of life.

Moreover, the stress on fidelity and the long defensive posture of Islam *vis a vis* the Enlightenment leaves Islam with serious hermeneutic problems as to how to interpret its texts and traditions in a way that is both fully faithful and also effective for living its faith in our advancing times. This requires work not only on hermeneutics, but on a whole series of issues in epistemology, in being and believing, and in ethics. In response the Council for Research in Value and Philosophy (RVP) has formed three corresponding research teams in Qom and Tehran as well as publishing some 17 volumes by teams across the Islamic world. It will not do simply to adopt the Western family ethic or lack thereof: e.g., on abortion, divorce, the definition of roles between husband and wife and the education of children, which are common in the West and codified in its

legal system. Progress for Islam cannot, and should not, be in such term. Yet its work of legal interpretation must be informed by a professional awareness of modern economic, social and political structures and hence sciences. In this light the great traditions of the medieval Islamic philosophy and science must be revived to serve in new ways in the face of new issues.

Jihad is another issue of general concern. This has two dimensions as reflected in Mohammed's words on the way back from a military encounter. He is reported to have referred to that battle as the small jihad, observing that ahead lay the great jihad i.e., the struggle to build a holy community and the interior spiritual transformation that this would require. Its seems unhelpful to focus only on the small jihad. But neither is it helpful to deny it or its legitimation in terms of justice when Islam is attacked or threatened with subversion. The two are linked: the great jihad supports the small or military jihad in the face of injustice and the small jihad defends the right and ability of the people for the great jihad of making their faith a vibrant way of life.

The danger is that this will be oversimplified and that too much energy of too many Moslems will be directed into the small defensive jihad. If this were happening only among the uneducated then education might be the cure; this is the interpretation of those who are sure that their liberal ideology is the sole correct one. Similarly, if this were happening only among the poor then economic development might be the cure; this is the interpretation for the materialists for whom the economy is the sole purpose of life. But the fact is that today fundamentalism comes notably from the well educated and well off, even the wealthy.

Consequently the problem of jihad would appear to call on the part of Islam for education that is neither simply the transmission of ancient knowledge already acquired nor simply modern learning from the West, but the discovery of new understanding of how to live faithfully an integral Islam in the contemporary world. The same is true of the Sharia in a world that is increasingly pluralistic due to migration and communication. Only Islam can work out how it is to live today, though others can help. Christianity has had a center in Peter and his successor in the Vatican to make clear how it can be lived today; Islam has no central authority. Hence, it must be engaged in philosophical and interreligious dialogue across the board at all of its institutes and centers of learning and with the corresponding institutes and centers of learning of other religions and their cultures. Such an open network is possible today given the modern modes of communication, travel and publication on the web as well as in print. For example, the 17 volumes from Islamic centers published by the RVP are sent to 350 libraries across the world as are the other 100 volumes written thusfar by research teams in those other cultures in its series "Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change"; all are constantly available on the web in complete text and without charge (www.crvp.org).

What is the Interest of Islam in Dialogue with other Religions: How Could This Be Implemented?

1. There is a call to dialogue in the Koran.

2. From a legalistic point of view the peoples who have a covenant with the one God, i.e., Moslems, Jews and Christians, are by that very fact mutually engaged. As humans they need to give voice to their shared relation to God.

3. Today the socio-economic challenges are global or are involved with the interaction of peoples on a broad scale. Thus, whether it be poverty in Africa or domestic violence in other places there is need in response for cooperation and hence for dialogue between civilizations and cultures

and especially between the religious traditions in which they are grounded. Moreover, dialogue is a matter not only of word, but of action. Thus, one might consider a council or coalition with the power to implement shared projects. One should also consider the feasibility of an international campus for the in-depth comparative study of religions in order to help form leaders for all religions over a 4-5 years course of study.

4. It is essential to work on points of conflict, such as the Arab-Israeli, the Kashmir and the Sudan conflicts. As religions have been used in order to generate conflict often they are seen as proseletizing and divisive; now they must bring forward their own properly religious resources to work for peace.

While some other religions might want to think of dialogue as an especially intellectual endeavor and the importance of such an effort is stressed above, it must be remembered also that Islam is perhaps above all a religious way of life. If so then dialogue with and by Islam must give greater attention to practice or action. Also, as dialogue, this must be cooperative or collaborative. Some would stress the functional dimension and learn by experimenting and seeing what works. This is very important provided it is not allowed to slip into a 'functionalism' after the contemporary mode whereby all is judged on a utilitarian basis in terms of what produces the greater material or empirical good for the largest number. Rather, it must be judged in terms of what contributes to the formation of a holy community as is central in Islam.

Yet for cooperation and collaboration it is important to know what is the proper contribution of each religion and how this relates to that of others, i.e., what are the complementarities of the different religions in dialogue. This can be learned from practice only if one has a deep spiritual awareness of the religious values engaged. The issue then is not only a theoretical issue, but pertains to the deep meaning of life and hence of religion.

This is the great paradox for the modern mind, namely, that as one grows in holiness one opens beyond oneself to God and hence to all his creatures. One listens not only to oneself for oneself, but to others as children of God who reflect more of His love and purpose. That is, as one goes more deeply into the life of the spirit within one's own horizon one transcend oneself to all of creation. The other is no longer alien or opposed as an 'it,' but a 'thou'. On religious bases, precisely as 'we,' it is possible to expand the sense of the *umma* and for all to join in its earthy pilgrimage.

The Relation between Islamic and Christian Cultures

George F. McLean

The Challenge of Globalization: Unity in Diversity

We come together to face a momentous choice, namely, the pathways to the taken by two extensive portions of humankind in the millennium which is about to begin: must they be conflictual; can they be cooperative? In this the task of philosophy is not to make that choice by constructing a determining ideology, for that would destroy rather than promote the responsible freedom in which the special dignity of humankind consists. Rather, the task of philosophy is to search for understanding in depth of the present juncture, to clarify the values involved and to envisage creatively possible ways for their realization.

See philosophically, this turn of the millennium is not then a matter of mere numbers or even of chronology, but truly an historic juncture for civilizations and cultures. The totemic and mythic stages of the great cultures were essentially religious. These were formulated in the great religious traditions -- earlier in the East, and in the first millennium by Christianity and Islam. In the second millennium Western culture focused on human reason, beginning with the reintroduction of Aristotelian logic and its concomitant scientific capabilities. this was radicalized in the rationalism of the Enlightenment, whose denouement was the pogroms and holocaust of World War II followed by the Cold War and its threat of mutual annihilation. the millennium has come to a spectacular end in the implosion of communism ten years ago and the questioning of an uncontrolled market in these last months. Such a total end necessitates a new beginning. What then is to follow: which are the pathways into the future?

Two major formative factors stand out. The first is horizontal -- globalization. With the sudden end of the bipolar world system, we are not in a rapid reorganization without borders. This is driven by economic opportunity grounded in the needs of a burgeoning population; it is implemented by rapidly advancing technology and communications.

The second formative factor is vertical -- the opening to deeper dimensions of the human person. Negatively this appeared in the overthrowing of the totalitarian and colonial structures which had ruled in the 1930s. At a positive philosophical level it consisted in recapturing human subjectivity through the development of existential and phenomenological insight which has made manifest the uniqueness of the exercise of freedom. socially this has meant a renewed sense not only of the universality of human rights, but of respect for the affective dimensions of human life, for the uniqueness of cultures and their religious foundations. Today there is an emerging sense of the distinctive character of cultures and of the diversity this entails among civilizations.

In this lies the present challenge, namely, how to relate both the increasing unity of globalization and the increasing appreciation of the uniqueness and diversity of peoples and cultures with their religious roots. Indeed, the domination of either unity or diversity, here at the cost of the other, would lead to a great impoverishment of human life both materially and spiritually. Economic and cultural globalization at the expense of the diversity of persons and cultures entails a spiritual reduction and blandness to human life; diversity at the expense of effective interchange leads to physical impoverishment and cultural conflict.

Cooperation between Religions as Convergent

A response to this challenge must not flee the economic order of human interchange. Hegel and Marx were correct in underlining this as fundamental; any response must begin there. Globalization consists really (though by no means exclusively) in the intensification of economic interchange to unheard of degrees. Such goods, however, can be traded, but are not truly shared: what one possesses, the other does not. This mutual exclusivity of physical goods bases competition which, left to itself, leads to conflict. in the past, land and its resources had been the basis for wars whose outcome was the physical expropriation of the losers in favor of the victors. It is important to look for ways of cooperating on physical resources, but the willingness to do so is part of a broader set of concerns and must be inspired by higher values. It must be enabled by an imagination which is not enslaved to material goods, but capable of ordering and reordering these goods for higher human purposes.

The political is a second level and is concerned with the exercise of power. This, too, is a major realm of human competition. Indeed, while the physical, technical and economic issues, e.g., of oil exploration and transportation, are daunting, they have been soluble. It is the political concerns which raise the greatest difficulties. Here the divergent interests of peoples enter and constitute broader patterns of overall national concerns and of the international power by which these are advanced or thwarted.

Whether these can be related harmoniously depends upon the bases upon which power is exercised. If this be the economic goods involved, then political will becomes hostage to the mutually exclusive competition of expropriation and appropriation noted above. as has been said classically, politics then becomes war by other means. Hence, the challenge here is to set these political concerns in the service of peoples by developing a cooperative pattern in which all share. But if power be exercised only for power's sake, then again the result will be a pattern of dominance and subordination which can only lay the basis for economic and physical conflict or war.

To break beyond this it is necessary to reach for principles of coordination at a third level, beyond the physical and the political. These must be goods which are not marked by exclusive possession, as is the economic order, or by competition, as is the political order, but which can be shared, as are the spiritual goods of the mind and heart. Knowledge, for example, can be shared without thereby being lost. Indeed, it is in discussion that ideas are cross-pollinated, bear fruit and unfold their full potential.

This is mirrored in the overall sequence of the work of Kant. His first critique provided an understanding of the universal and necessary laws which rule the physical sciences. His second critique articulated the nature of the laws which rule the exercise of freedom. Then only did he recognize the need for a third critique, that of aesthetic reason, in order that both might be lived in harmony. This suggests that in an analogous manner at this time of conjoined globalization (corresponding to the first critique) and personalization (corresponding to the second critique) -- that is, of universalization and diversification -- we must look for a third religious sphere in which both dimensions can be harmonized. This third awareness is not superstructure but infrastructure; it has been present in all the cultures since their totemic origins. It needs to be brought out from behind Enlightenment hubris as the ground for creative relationships in the new millennium.

This, indeed, is the thrust of the recent encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*.1 This is an extended disquisition on the dialectic of faith in evoking reason, of reason in guiding faith, and of the synthesis of the two in inspiring and mobilizing human action. The philosophical level

alone responds only speculatively to the present challenge; it would not inspire people with a living vision or mobilize them to act accordingly.

Here Muhammad Iqbal provides important orientation. Iqbal does not proceed far in his classic *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*2 before coming to the heart of the matter, namely, that human consciousness consists of multiple levels, all of which are rooted in an awareness of the total Infinite3 in which they find their possibility as well as their meaning.

He analyses deeply the nature of the scientific disciplines and their ability to serve humankind as instruments of our engagement in our environment. But the human issue is how people can rise above merely being a part of that order and subject to being manipulated and exploited, in order to become truly the masters of their work. He locates this in the ability of the human mind to transcend the physical order, like climbing above the trees of a forest in order to be able to see it as a whole and thereby to engage it with creative freedom. This, in turn, he bases upon the fact that the human spirit is created by and grounded in a total Absolute Being which frees the human person from being a slave of nature and installs him as Vice Regent of the world.

But even this awareness may not be sufficient, for it might still be conceived in terms of possession and control. For this it would be sufficient simply to develop a system of management. But where the interests involved are so deeply human that they carry the hopes and fears of a people, much more is involved and must be addressed. Thus, Iqbal speaks of the need to recognize not only the physical and social realities and their corresponding sciences, or even philosophy as a matter of understanding. It is necessary to go beyond to the religious bases where the meaning of life, human values and personal and social commitment are anchored.

The aspiration of religion soars higher than that of philosophy. Philosophy is an intellectual view of things, and as such, does not care to go beyond a concept which can reduce all the rich variety of experience to a system. It sees Reality from a distance as it were. Religion seeks a closer contact with Reality. The one is theory; the other is living experience, association, intimacy. In order to achieve this intimacy, thought must rise higher than itself and find its fulfillment in an attitude of mind which religion describes as prayer -- one of the last words on the lips of the Prophet of Islam.4

Metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the ultimate reality. It is here that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of law within the depths of his own consciousness.5

This has a twofold implication. First, religion is a matter of personal commitment on the part of persons and peoples. It engages not only their minds, but their freedom and moral sentiment, which are the great mobilizers of human action. Second, it does so in terms of the divine life expressed by such names of God as Just and Loving, Provident, and Caring. It contributes to orienting the great technical projects of our day in ways that constitute a world that is marked by these same characteristics.

Here Islam's devotion to the prophet is its unique strength. The human mind left to itself seeks clarity and control by a process of simplification. In contrast, the role of the prophet is to give voice in time to the Absolute ground of our being. It thereby reminds us that all of life, if it is to be understood and lived properly, must express in time the divine justice and love. The prophet

does not leave this to surmise or indirect reasoning, but proclaims it with a voice that echoes through time -- not to mention through the neighborhoods of a city such as Cairo today.

The Human as Participation in the Divine

When now we turn to the human, it is crucial to retain this total response to the Absolute, without which human life loses its meaning and value. In order to uncover the real meaning of human history, it is essential to see how the divine, as source of being and meaning, is expressed in and through creation. This is a matter not merely of the beginnings of the universe, but of the creative exercise of human life through history, today and into the future.

This is the forgotten essence of the issue of peace for all humankind. Where rocks and plants just happen and animals live by instinct, humans are challenged by the need to shape their lives according to their self-understanding. In this they face a choice among three basic paths.

Forgetfulness of the Divine. The first path is to forget or to prescind from the divine ground of human life and to proceed as if humans were self-sufficient. In 1700 J. B. Vico foresaw that this emerging modern attitude would lead to a new barbarism of conflict, meaninglessness and despair which has turned the 20th century into the bloodiest of them all. Islam has rightly rejected such enlightenment.

For this, however, Islam has suffered a considerable, if largely unintended, penalty. According to Enlightenment theory, as elaborated, e.g., by John Rawls in his *Political Liberalism*,6 where there exist multiple integrating visions of life, one draws before these a "veil of ignorance." They are simply excluded from the public sphere which is thereby constituted as a neutral forum where all can interact indifferently. From this interaction there emerge patterns of agreements regarding human interchange. Those will be similar to the formal set of principles which Rawls himself worked out earlier in his *Theory of Justice*.7 In the title, *Political Liberalism*, the word political opens some possibilities of adjustment of these formal patterns to particular circumstances of place and time.

In this approach, though a person may be religious in private life, as regards all public interchange the Islamic, Christian or any religious person prescinds from his or her religious vision and becomes effectively secular. This privatization of religion and secularization of public life is, of course, itself the theology described in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.8 Only from that position does such a secularization of public life appear neutral, rather than neutering. This fundamentalism -- unrecognized and hence unwitting in much of the West -- has been the basis for the well-founded suspicions that liberal values will prove corrosive to Islam and destructive of its society. Indeed, Thomas Bridges describes this as its historically inevitable derivative.9 Religious cultures, including Moslem societies, could never accept this without ceasing to be themselves, indeed, without ceasing to be. It is essential that the West desist from desiring and expecting Islamic societies to do so.

Forgetfulness of the Human. There is a second path, opposite to the first, namely, not to exclude religion in order to proceed with the work of history, but to reject history in order to preserve the religious meaning of life. This is the path of another fundamentalism, equally as radical as the first. All that was not found at the time of a Buddha or a Christ, or explicit in the text of the Bible or other sacred scriptures is seen as contrary and unfaithful thereto. In this way, the

attempt to protect the religious meaning of life contradicts the development of such human institutions as legislatures and courts by which that meaning is lived concretely.

Chief Justice Muhammad Said al-Ashmawy of Egypt has written *Islam and Political Order*10 in order to defend such institutions from the charge of being incompatible with Islam. But perhaps more important still, a number of younger Islamic scholars from Iran and Turkey have been working on this through the hermeneutic branch of philosophy. Swyed Musa Dibadj in the *Authenticity of the Text in Hermeneutics*11 and Burhanettin Tatar in *Interpretation and the Problem of the Intention of the Author*12 have shown how the text and the unfolding circumstances of human life, and inspire religiously creative responses thereto. This is to be faithful, indeed.

Participation of the Human in the Divine. The damage done by the two exclusive paths, focused, respectively, upon the secular to the exclusion of the religious and upon the religious to the exclusion of the human, points to a third path. This sees the human as an expression of the divine, which in turn promotes, gudes and norms human development. This is the basic insight of Islamic as well as of Christian cultures, not to mention the Hindu and Buddhist cultures of the East and the totemic basis of African, and, indeed, all cultures. The articulation of this vision in Islamic culture I would leave to those who have lived it with devotion, but I have included a chapter on al-Ghazali in mya recent work on these matters, *Ways to God*.13

This sense of the divine pervaded the totemic and mythic periods when all, even nature, was expressed in terms of gods. Later, at the very beginnings of Western philosophical reflection, Parmenides elaborately developed what would become the basic insight for Iqbal. Parmenides showed that to choose the path of life over death (of being over nothingness) is to see its source and goal not as a mixture of the two but as being or life itself. This transcends the world of multiple and changing things available to our senses; it is more perfect than could be appreciated in the graphic figures of the imagination which defined human thinking in its mythic stage. Thus, at the very beginning of philosophy Parmenides immediately discerned the necessity of an Absolute, Eternal, Self-sufficient Being as the creative source of all else.14 Without this all limited beings would be radically compromised -- especially human beings. It is not surprising, therefore, that Aristotle would conclude the search in his *Metaphysics* for the nature of being with a description of divine life.15

The issue then is not whether the notion of the divine is concilable with human thought and life; both emerge from and depend upon the divine. Without that which is absolute and hence one, humans and nature would be at odds, and humankind would lack social cohesion; without that which is self-sufficient, thinking would be the same as not thinking, and being would be the same as nonbeing.

The real issue is how effectively to open this recognition of the divine to the full range of human history. In short, there is a need to enable the divine source and goal to provide the basis for the human search for meaning and to inspire a vigorous itinerary of the human heart.

To understand this Plato developed the notion of participation, expressing the many as deriving their being from the One which they manifest and toward which they are oriented and directed. This operates on all levels because it is the mode of being itself. Hence, participating in the divine is not something beings do; it is what they are. The self-sufficient and infinite One or Good is that in which all things share or participate for their being and identity, truth and goodness.

This is truly a third way. It does not prescind from God -- the forumate of *Paradise Lost* -- nor does it prescind from humankind and human history. Instead, God is affirmed in the creativity

of His creation and the human is affirmed through creation by its divine source and goal. Thus, the religious basis of cultures inspires their processes of human exploration and creativity.

In sum, instead of considering the religious basis of culture to be inimical to human life, this suggests recognizing that the religious view is an essential and necessary foundation of human life and meaning. This implies searching out how this view can be enabled to fulfill its task of finding truth and inspiring efforts toward the good in all aspects of life.

The Convergence of Islam and Christianity

In these terms there is a great convergence between Islam and Christianity. One can see how this convergence is perceived and responded to by Christianity in the text of the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church. The time was the early 1960s when the new sense of the person was emerging after World War II. At that point rather than simply fighting the new in order to repeat the past, this largest Christian body convoked its 3000 Bishops from all parts of the globe in a most solemn three-year sesion. Its significance can be gauged from the fact that a Council has been held only at points of high crisis which generally emerge only once in two centuries. In order to work out the implications of the new interior sense of the life of the person for religion in the modern times the assembled Bishops reviewed all phases of the life of the Church. Over 700 pages of official conclusions were drafted, deeply discussed, amended and adopted. It was a magnificent example of the structural strength of the Church to respond positively, creatively and with authority to the developments of the times. Hence, its statement on Islam can be taken as a uniquely authentic religious appreciation of Islam in our times.

The statement begins with the statement that the Church looks upon the Moslems with esteem and with appreciation of their high value. It proceeds to give the reason for this esteem, namely, that

--they adore God who is one;
--they adore God who is living;
--they adore God who is enduring;
--they adore God who is merciful;
--they adore God who is all powerful;
--they adore God who is the maker of heaven and earth;
--they adore God who is speaker to men when they submit to His decrees, even when inscrutable after the example of our father Abraham;
--they honor Christ and Mary, his virgin mother;
--they await the day of judgement which will bring the resurrection and reward of each according to is or her due; and finally,
--they worship God in prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Moreover, this esteem of Vatican II for Islam was not only notional, but practical. Thus, it noted the fact of past quarrels and hostilities, which it would not be realistic to ignore. But the Council then drew itself up to its full stature to declare that: "This most Sacred Synod urges all to forget this and to strive rather for mutual understanding."

On this basis the Council looked forward to cooperation in safeguarding and fostering those virtues which are shared by all religions and exemplified in Islam, namely social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.

In view of the above, we can conclude the that there is a shared religious base to all cultures, that this envisages all creation as participation in a unique, unlimited and absolute source and goal; and that this entails a radical compatibility, though not homogeneity, of cultures and their religious bases.

This is important to remember precisely because there is no lack of misunderstanding and fear. It has been said well that whatever humans can do, they can do broadly. This is true also of religion as a virtue and work of humans. The exercising of this virtue inevitably is affected by all the human pressures from within and without, not least of which can be an ardent, if less wise or balanced, desire to serve God in one's own manner. This has led some groups, even acting in good faith, to ways that seem to impose undely upon others in proposing their faith or even in suppressing the freedom of others to express or exercise their belief.

Vatican II devoted a whole document to this issue of religious liberty as an acquisition of our times and called upon all to recognize, protect and promote it. If a small minority of unenlightened but ardent Christians or Moslems lack adequate respect for the beliefs of others, it is important that this not be allowed to hide the tolerance long revered by Moslems or the freedom newly proclaimed by Christians. Extreme minorities, precisely as such, do not reflect the deep truth and convergence of these two religious cultures. It is important that they not be allowed to cloud the issue, and that other religions not take them as expressing the authentic meaning and thrust of a culture or a people.

Moreover, it can be said with the highest and broadest authority that this applies to practice as well as to principle; that the beliefs of Islam are shared by Christians; that Moslems are admired and appreciated for professing their beliefs and for the intensity and completeness with which they dedicate themselves thereto; and that Christains, individually and corporately, in living their beliefs need and wish to learn from the deep faith of Islam.

This unity of vision makes it possible and urgent for Christianity to take up common cause on behalf of all humankind in safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom. But it is important to see that this can happen not only on the basis of the ways in which they are similar, but also or the basis of the ways in which they differ.

Cooperation between Religions as Diverse

External Cooperation

By external cooperation we mean ways in which religious cultures can cooperate in facing challenges from outside of both. Today, we have a new reality. In earlier centuries the meeting of cultures was carried out on the frontiers where the relations were often external, military and violent. There was the long combat with Byzantium, the Crusades, the wars of the Balkans. Now commerce brings materials, notably oil, from afar and makes it an indispensable part of everyday life; the new technology of communication brings distant realities into our homes; the development of education makes them part of our growth and learning; the emerging sense of human subjectivity encourages us to interiorize these elements in our hearts and minds. We meet these phenomena inescapably in every facet of our lives. Consequently, we can cooperate and we must learn to do so. But in doing so we must not destry what is distinctive of each cause. This can be done through learning from each other.

Islam with its rich sense of faithfulness to God, based on its sense of His unity and primacy, can contribute to the religious life of the West what is most essential, namely, the sense of God.

In return, the Church in the West has struggled for many centuries with the threats that Islam most fears, namely, reductivism, rationalism and materialism. It has learned by its failures as well as its successes how to live religiously in a culture that is distracted by possessions and inundated by images. These are projected by techniques drawn from sophisticated psychological research and generally are at the service of commercial and ideological interests, often contrary to religion. It could be expected that Christianity, which has grown with these challenges in the West, might have insights which could be helpful in protecting and promoting religious life in Islam in these times of change.

To recount these lessons would be a long study in its own right. They would include the need to distinguish the multiple order of human awareness and to locate that which is proper to the religious; the process of relating religion in each of these modes with the levels of theoretical and practical consciousness to the mutual benefit of both; and, ont least, the Vatican II document on religious liberty, affirming as a modern accomplishment the need to recognize the rights of conscience of every person with regard to his or her religious belief. This is considered less a deductive than an inductive insight drawing from human experience.

In his book *Seize the Moment*, 16 Richard Nixon suggests a principle for such mutual Islamic-Christain exchange, namely, that it is not one's business to determine what others will be or do, but only to help them become what they will to be. This reflects well the new sense of the person and the new respect for the interiority of the spirit and hence for human freedom. It echoes the classical sense of the love of benevolence in which the good is willed for the other without seeking what it will do for us. We have all experienced this in our families where we first came to experience God's creative benevolence in our lives.

This is the suggestion of Vatican II, namely, that we have much to share and we have the ability to cooperate in facing challenges from outside both Christianity and Islam, e.g., in safeguarding and fostering social justice and moral virtues. It is essential for religions to cooperate creatively in developing for the next millennium a broader world civilization which prospers through projective interchange, shared benevolence and peace.

Internal Cooperation

There is also a need for internal cooperation, that is, in helping one another to be able effectively to withstand contemporary challenges and even to draw more richly on our own resources.

In the introduction, the challenge was stated to consist not only in globalization in which one reaches out to others and discovers points of convergent principle of experience, but in personalization in which there emerges a greater consciousness of the differences between peoples. Were dialogue and cooperation to result only from the ways we are the same then the road to peace would lie in suppressing that which is distinctive of persons and their cultures or rendering it inoperative in the public square. This has been a strong factor in the liberal approach. If, instead, personal life is appreciated as creative and hence as differentiating the pattern of one's life and culture, then it is necessary to find ways in which even the differences in human and cultural formation can be principles of cooperation, indeed even a means for the internal enrichment of traditions from their proper resources. Only this will make it possible truly to turn swords into plowshares for the task of the new millennium.

To understand how this can be so it is necessary first to see how cultures are constituted of the cumulative exercise of that human freedom. If for a living being to be is to live, then for a

human being to be is to live consciously, creatively and responsibly. Inevitably this creates the uniqueness and, hence, the diversity of our lives as we respond to different physical and social challenges with distinctive resources, each in our own manner. Further, as this is identically to live out our participation in the divine which is the the essence of religion, we can expect that not only our cultures will be diverse, but also the religious roots of these cultures.

As seen above, relation to the divine as shared by all peoples provides the basis for cooperation between the many peoples in their efforts at development. But, this is not a matter of theory separated from life or of practice separated from vision. It is in fact the wisdom core of the distinctive cultural tradition into which we are born and through which we interpret and respond to the challenges of development in cooperation with others in an ever more interconnected world.

In order then to look for the bases of peace in the process of development, we must search not only for possible convergences of interests, but for the distinctive cultural contexts in terms of which these interests are defined; we must look also for the possibility of one culture contributing to the internal and self-consistent growth of their roots in the religious commitment of each people; and the way in which peoples with diverse cultural and religious commitments can contribute positively one to another, not only through that in which they concur, as was noted above, but through their cultural divergences as well.

The Distinctness of Cultural Traditions

Culture. A culture can be understood as that complex of values and virtues by which a people lives. The term value was derived from the economic sphere where it meant the amount of a commodity required in order to bring a certain price. This is reflected also in the term axiology, the root of which means weighing as much or worth as much. This has objective content, for the good must really weigh in -- it must make a real difference.17

Value expresses this good especially as related to persons who actually acknowledge it as a good and respond to it as desirable. Thus, different individuals or groups, or possibly the same group but at different periods, may have distinct sets of values as they become sensitive to, and prize, alternate sets of goods. More generally, over time a subtle shift takes place in the distinctive ranking of the degree to which various goods are prized.

By so doing, among objective moral goods a certain pattern of values is delineated which in a more stable fashion mirrors the corporate free choices of a people. Further, the exercise of these choices develops special capabilities or virtues, as it is in these ways of acting and reacting that we are practiced. These capabilities constitute the basic topology of a culture; as repeatedly reaffirmed through time, they build a tradition or heritage.

By giving shape to the culture, values and virtues constitute the prime pattern and gradation of goods experienced from their earlier years by persons born into that heritage. In these terms they interpret and shape the development of their relations with other persons and groups. Thus, young persons, as it were, peer out at the world through cultural lenses which were formed by their family and ancestors and which reflect the pattern of choices made by their community through its long history -- often in its most trying circumstances. Like a pair of glasses, values do not create the object, but reveal and focus attention upon certain goods and patterns of goods, rather than upon others.

In this way values and virtues become the basic orienting factor for one's intellectual, affective and emotional life. Over time, they encourage certain patterns of action -- and even of physical growth -- which, in turn, reinforce the pattern of values and virtues. Through this process we

constitute our universe of moral concern in which we struggle to achieve, mourn our failures and celebrate our successes. This is our world of hopes and fears in terms of which, as Plato wrote in the *Laches*, our lives have moral meaning18 and we can speak properly of values. It is of this that the Prophet speaks the words of God.

Cultural Traditions. To relate culture to tradition John Caputo in *Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development* notes that from the very beginning one's life is lived with others. Even before birth, one's consciousness emerges as awareness of the biological rhythms of one's mother. Upon birth there follows a progressively broader sharing in the life of parents and siblings. In this context one is fully at peace and thus most open to personal growth and social development. Hence, from its beginning one's life is social and historical: one learns from one's family which had learned from earlier generations. This is the universal condition of each person, and consequently of the development of human awareness and of knowledge.

Interpersonal dependence is then not unnatural -- quite the contrary -- we depend for our being upon our creator, we are conceived in dependence upon our parents, and we are nurtured by them with care and concern. Through the years we depend continually upon our family and peers, schools and community.

We turn to other persons whom we recognize as superior in terms not of their will, both of their insights and judgment -- and precisely in those matters where truth, reason and balanced judgement are required. The preeminence or authority of wise persons in the community is not something they usurp or with which they are arbitrarily endowed. It is based upon their capabilities and acknowledged in our free and reasoned response. Thus, the burden of Plato's *Republic* is precisely the education of the future leader to be able to exercise authority.

From this notion of authority in a cultural community, it is possible to construct that of tradition by taking account of the preceding generations with their accumulation of human insight, predicated upon the wealth of their human experience through time. As a process of trial and error, or continual correction and addition, history constitutes a type of learning and testing laboratory in which the strengths of various insights can be identified and reinforced, while their deficiencies are corrected and complemented. We learn from experience what promotes and what destroys life, and accordingly we make pragmatic adjustments. The cumulative results of this extended process of learning and testing constitute tradition.

But even this language remains too abstract, too limited to method or technique, too unidimensional. While tradition can be described in terms of feedback mechanisms and might seem merely to concern how to cope in daily life, what is being spoken about are free acts. These express passionate human commitment and personal sacrifice in responding to concrete dangers, building and rebuilding family alliances, and constructing and defending one's nation.

This wisdom is not a matter of mere tactical adjustments to temporary concerns. It concerns rather the meaning we are able to envision for life and which we desire to achieve through all such adjustments over a period of generations: it is what is truly worth striving for.

This points us beyond the horizontal plane of the various ages of history and directs our attention vertically to its ground and, hence, to the religious bases of the values we seek to realize in concrete circumstances. The history of Abraham, our common father in faith, is a concrete account of the process through history of deep wisdom in interaction with the divine.

The content of a tradition serves as a model and exemplar, not because of personal inertia, but because of the corporate character of learning. This was built out of experience, consisting of the free and wise acts of the successive generations of a people in reevaluating, reaffirming, preserving

and passing on what has been learned. The content of any long tradition has passed the text of countless generations. Standing, as it were, on the shoulders of our forebears, those who come later are able to discover possibilities and evaluate situations with the help of their vision of the elders because of the sensitivity they developed and communicated to us. Without this we could not even choose the topics to be investigated or awaken within ourselves the desire to study those problems.

Cultural traditions, then, are not simply everything that ever happened, but only what has appeared significant to a particular distinctive people, been judged as life giving, and actively transmitted to their next generation. It is by definition the good as humanely appreciated by a people; its presentation by different voices draws out its many aspects. Thus, a cultural tradition is not an object in itself, but a rich and flowing river from which multiple themes can be drawn according to the motivation and interest of the inquirer. It needs to be accepted and embraced, affirmed and cultivated. Here the emphasis is neither upon the past nor the present, but upon a people living through time.

Tradition is not a passive storehouse of materials to be drawn upon and shaped at the arbitrary will of the present inquirer. Rather, it presentes insight and wisdom that is normative for life in the present and future, for its harmony of measure and fullness suggest a way for the mature and perfect formation of the members of this people.20 Such a vision is both historical and normative: historical, because it arises in time and presents the characteristic manner in which a people preserves and promotes human life through time; and normative, because it presents a basis upon which to judge past ages, present actions and options for the future. The fact of human striving manifests that every humanism, far from being indifferent, is committed to the realization of some such classical and perduring model of perfection.

Relations between Religious Cultures

The danger is whether the combination of the deep immersion in, and commitment to, one's cultural tradition thereby traps one in insuperable opposition to the interests and srivings of those in other traditions. Can we overcome such opposition? Indeed, can the commitments we have to our own cultural tradition become a means for other peoples to look into their own traditions? If so, this would provide the key to effective cooperation between religious cultures.

It should be understood that cultural tradition will be multiple, according to the historical groupings of people, the diverse circumstances in which they shape their lives and the specific challenges to which they respond and, in so doing, ever more profoundly shape themselves. More foundationally, they reflect the specific mode in which God chooses to speak to his peoples and the message he conveys through his prophets to help people find their way on their pilgrimages.

Contemporary attention to the person enables us to be more conscious of the distinctive formative pattern of our proper culture and its religious foundations. This can enable us to appreciate it as uniquely different from others. However, being situated among one's own people and hearing the same stories told in the same way, one's appreciation of the rich content of one's tradition could remain limited.

The way to break out of this limitation of the human condition is to encounter other peoples with other experiences in order to check one's bearings. This is not to copy the other or to graft alien elements onto one's culture. It is rather to be stimulated by the experience of others and thus enabled to go more deeply into one's own cultural heritage and sacred books. Here the aim is to

draw out meaning which had always been there in the infinite ground of my culture, but which thusfar had not been sounded.

Rather than abandoning or lessening allegiance to one's cultural tradition, this is a higher fidelity thereto. It is built on the conviction that my tradition, as grounded in the infinite divine, is richer than I or my people have thusfar been able to sound, that it has more to say to me, and hence that I need to be open to new dimensions of its meaning.

This is the special opportunity of our time of globalization, communication and mutual interaction. Rather than looking upon the other as a threat, communication with other cultures as they plumb their own religious tradition can enable one to draw more fully upon one's own. This enables one to cooperate with others in the development of their own cultures from the resources of their own religious tradition. In this way all religious cultures are promoted, each in its unique character. This is more than a dialogue between differences; it is cooperation in developing distinct but convergent pathways for coming millennium.

Notes

1. John Paul II, "The Encyclical Letter: Fides et Ratio."
2. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, ed. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore: Iqbal Academy of Pakistan and the Institute of Islamic Culture, 1986).
3. Ibid., pp. 4-5.
4. Ibid., p. 49.
5. Ibid., p 143.
6. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
7. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1971).
8. (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994).
9. (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998).
10. *The Culture of Citizenship: Inventing Postmodern Civil Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), chap. 1.
11. (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998).
12. (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999).
13. (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999).
14. Parmenides, Fragment 8, see G. F. McLean and P. Aspell, *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, NY: Prentice Hall, 1990).
15. Ibid., pp. 39-44. Neither being nor thought makes sense if being is the same as nonbeing, for then to do, say or be anything would be the same as not doing, not saying or not being. But the real must be irreducible to nothing and being to nonbeing if there is any thing or any meaning whatsoever. Hence, being must have about it the self-sufficiency expressed by Parmenides' notion of the absolute One.
16. Richard Nixon, *Seize the Moment* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).
17. Ivor Leclerc, "The Metaphysics of the Good," *Review of Metaphysics*, 35 (1981), 3-5. See also *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, ed. Andre Lalande (Paris: PUF, 1956), pp. 1182-1186.
18. J. Mehta, *Martin Heideger: The Way and the Vision* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), pp. 90-91.
19. R. Carnap, *Vienna Manifesto*, trans. A. Blumberg in G. Kreyche and J. Mann, *Perspectives on Reality* (New York: Harcourt, Barce and World, 1966), p. 485.

20. H.G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1975), pp. 240, 246-247, 305-310.

Islamic and Christian Cultures: Reopening the Lost Dialogue

Nur Kirabaev

A major task faces philosophical sciences in these modern times — the task of studying the unity of world history, not only through revealing the similar and coinciding traits of different civilizations (diversity in unity), but also through comprehending the fact that each one of them is a distinct form of development of definite human facets as a cultural-historical entity (unity in diversity).

In this approach, an important role belongs to the task of disclosing the paradigm of Islamic civilization and comprehension of its worldwide historical role, which not only reveals but also determines its sociocultural closeness to other civilizations in their all-human dimension. Analyzing a large variety of diverse cultural and ideological phenomena reveal this spiritual paradigm, first of all, of that historical period during which the paradigm acquired its complete, consistent form. Thus, philosophical reconstruction and description of the Islamic culture presupposes knowledge of, *what* (in the Heideggerian sense) determined the vision of the world and humankind. The comprehension of this "being what" presupposes a historical-philosophical consideration of the cultural phenomena and ideological images of an epoch. Consequently, both the philosophy of history and culture and the history of philosophy and culture should be considered as two sides of one uniform cognitive process.

In speaking about the values of Islamic, it is important to indicate the subject content of the generalized perception of concrete-historical types of people in relation to aims and norms of their behavior, which is embodied in a concentrated expression of the historical experience and meaning of culture in the Islamic civilization as well as in the world. The question is the spiritual orientations, with which the representatives of Islamic civilization, as individuals and social groups, correlate their actions and way of life. The values of Islamic culture and cultures of other civilizations are largely determined by so-called substantial values which constitute the basis of value-consciousness in their wholeness. The substantial values of Islamic culture are, to a large extent, determined by the specifics of the formation and development of the Arabic caliphate.

The characteristic features of classical Islamic culture as a paradigm of Islamic culture are largely determined by certain circumstances: (a) it was formed as an inalienable part of the single Mediterranean culture and civilization; (b) it has saved and enriched the cultural, scientific and philosophical traditions of Antiquity; (c) it developed the humanistic character of the Mediterranean culture, albeit, in different historical conditions.

By classical Islamic culture we mean the culture which is connected with the birth and strengthening of the Arabic caliphate; that which under the aegis of the new monotheistic religion of Islam, proclaimed by Muhammed in the 7th century, spread its authority and influence to a vast territory from Gibraltar to the banks of the Indus; and that which became the new center of interaction and mutual enrichment of diverse cultural traditions. The "Golden Age" which developed on the basis of Islamic culture occurred from the 9th to the 12th centuries precisely when the Islamic culture began to influence the world's material and spiritual cultures.

One of the major characteristics of classical Islamic culture is the fact value-ideological trends more than Western European science play the role of structural elements, which define the character of cognition, interpretation and the sphere of the admissible understanding of the

epistemological image of the world. Value-ideological trends have a common paradigm, in which are based a definite totality of evaluations and perceptions and which relate to the utmost basis of human existence in the world, in his/her own nature and in connection with the Cosmos, as reflected by the Islamic-world outlook. Precisely, within this problem field of knowledge — the ideal of knowledge in Islam — the thinkers of medieval Islam solved each and every problem of culture and politics, ethics and aesthetics, philosophy or law. All the major philosophical and sociopolitical trends of medieval Islamic society, although not limited only to specific subjects of cognition in relation to political problems, acted as political theory, to theories of philosophy - as philosophical, of law - as legal, and of morals - as ethical, etc.

The specifics of the ideal of knowledge in Islamic culture are defined by *Shariat*, in accordance with the fact that faith and reason not only contradict each other, but are complementary to each other in the problem field of knowledge. Thus, medieval Islamic culture developed to such an ideal of knowledge, which can be described as united, integral and even complex. For example, the work of the famous thinker al-Ghazali (1058 -1111), *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, can be equally regarded as a philosophical, legal, religious, linguistic and a cultural work, i.e., an interdisciplinary study, in the modern sense of this term. Moreover, the famous Averroes spoke about al-Ghazali, saying that with philosophers, he is a philosopher; with Sufists, he is a Sufi; with the Mutakallims, he is a Mutakallim. Many representatives of Kalam wrote their works not only on religious, but also on philosophical and natural science problems. The writings focused less on the weak differentiation of sciences and more on the specific, spiritual atmosphere of the Islamic culture, based on the famous dictum of Prophet Muhammed: "Go for knowledge, even to China."

In the medieval Arab-Islamic civilization, "knowledge" gained an all-embracing importance and status, which has no equivalence in other civilizations. The "knowledge" of which we speak is both secular and religious. However, its high status in the system of values of medieval Islamicsociety is by itself a significant indicator: it tells us, at least, that there were many educated people in that society. Even specialists, so far, cannot fathom the actual scale of Arab book publications: even the few manuscripts of that immense literature, which reached us more or less safely, number more than hundreds of thousands.

One can infer the character of value orientations from the behavior of the educated stratum of medieval Islamic society which was imitated by the majority of the educated. That group was the true embodiment of traits, which were obligatory for every cultured, educated person. This was the famous group, Adibs, who embodied the cultured and educated image. *Adab*, comprised an aggregation of the norms of being educated and well-mannered and presupposed both secular and religious knowledge, partially including philosophy, astronomy and mathematics as well as a definite model of behavior.

Factors which are important in understanding the paradigm of Islamic culture are the non-existence of church as an institution, and, accordingly, the lack of orthodoxy and heresy, in the sense understood in Christianity, and, especially, the widespread religious and legal pluralism within the framework of a uniform Islamic world view.

In describing the paradigm of Islamic culture and civilization, it is advisable to separate two dominant component parts: Islam and Hellenism. In its history, this culture has exhibited and continues to exhibit both its "Western features," i.e., elements of Judaism, Christianity and Hellenism, and its "Eastern features." Considering the latter circumstance of departing from the essence of its component parts allows us to understand the humanistic character of Islamic culture,

with its attempts to make man/woman more human and to facilitate the fulfillment of his/her desire for grandeur.

There are three aspects of humanism in medieval Islamic culture:

1. religious humanism, which proclaimed the human being as the highest of all of God's creatures;

2. *adab* humanism, whose ideal — *Adab*, which was formed in the 9th century — corresponds to the characteristic European 16th-century ideal of *humanitas*, i.e., the ideal of developing the physical, mental and moral capacities of every person, in the name of common good;

3. philosophical humanism, being more conceptualized, the essence of which Abu Haiyan at-Tawhidi shortly and sharply expressed in this dictum: "Man has become a problem for man."

With respect for and recognition of the existence of universal traits and principles of humanism, it is a fact that every culture and civilization, at its peak of development and prosperity, works out its own model of humanism. Within the framework of Islamic culture, humanism reveals itself in different forms. This phenomenon appeared for the first time in the East during the rule of Khosrov Anushirvan and was represented by Barzue Pavel Pers and Salman Pak. This form was followed by another form of humanism, which developed under the influence of Hellenistic gnosticism, hermetism and neo-Platonism; this humanistic quest, which was concentrated around the theme of a "perfect human being" was represented by Ibn Arabi, Abd al-Karim al-Jili, al-Khallaja and Sukhrawardi. The last form of humanism directed its attention to the greatness of human reason, as in the Hadiths, where the Prophet, Muhammed, is ascribed to have said: "Anybody who cognizes God will cognize me," and "The first thing created by God is reason." A major representative of this humanism is Muhammed Ibn Zakaria ar-Razi, who rejected the Revelation and affirmed the autonomy of human reason in the spirit of European Enlightenment.

The ambivalence of Islamic culture, grounded in the principles of *Shariat* and on the historical existence of the Arabic caliphate, is considered from the point of view of the correlation within it of the temporal and sacral, as well as of the exoteric and esoteric character of its "being what." Taking into account the great role of *Shariat* in temporal affairs and the prevalence of earthly purposes in human behavior and thinking, it is necessary to point out that Islamic culture kept and keeps a consistent link between perceptions about the cosmos and ethics. this circumstance precisely allowed, in its time, "alien science" to be considered as philosophy, oriented on ancient tradition and established as an inalienable part and parcel of its Islamic culture. It, also, allows even today the door to be kept open for modern European science and culture.

The correlation of the exoteric and esoteric in the context of problems of reason and faith is noted the characteristic along with of their complementariness. An analysis — on the theological-philosophical level of solving the problem of the correlation of reason and prescriptions of faith — exhibits, in spite of the differences of various thinkers on this question, the majority of them belonged to the exoteric tradition, which gives priority to reason instead of faith. More so, they prepared the ground for Sufistic esoteric knowledge and its intellectual attempts to harmonize *Shariat* and *Tarikat* for the substantiation of their own Sufistic approach to the given problem. Sufism has not considered the correlation of reason and faith as "by itself a real problem," but added it into the general system of Prescriptions of Faith, Ways and Truth (*Shariat-Tarikat-Hakikat*). Meanwhile, it is necessary to note that the *Shariat-Tarikat-Hakikat* system organized the "logical form" of action of the knowing subject in quest of his/her own absolute, thereby facilitating the emergence of many variations, one of which is the doctrine of al-Ghazali. Sufism

is an historical and an integral phenomenon, and its study is thought to be important with due regard to the archetypes of Sufist culture.

A philosophical analysis of Islamic culture and the search for a philosophical basis of Islamic culture necessarily demand exposition in its paradigm of the stable and the changing in the course of historical development. A due regard to this problem is important in analyzing all conceptions oriented towards reforming or modernizing Islam. As a rule, all tasks undertaken hitherto in creating Western models of Islamic development have failed, owing to the fact that the traditional, fundamental principles, which constitute the spirit of the Islamic culture, were taken as historically surmountable and transient phenomena.

The sociohistorical and political realities inevitably show that the comprehension of the essence of traditional and modern are closely interconnected with the fundamental principles of the political-legal culture of Islam and the dominant ideological-cultural movements within the framework of developing Islam. an analysis of the classical theories of the state in Islamic political thought, conducted by such famous authors as al-Mawardi, al-Juweyni, al-Ghazali, shows that the *Shariat* principles, never obviated the historical realities of the Arabic caliphate, but largely fixed themselves as a lever on historical precedents. The doctrine that the state is but a conductor of the principles of *Shariat* is a permanent constituting part of these conceptions. But the whole issue comes down to three questions: who holds real political power? in what ways are power and authority understood? and what are the consolidating element and moral-spiritual basis of the civil Islamic society? The idea of the unity of religion and state is rooted not only in religious feelings of solidarity, but also in the necessity of understanding that Islam is expected to establish equality and justice in socio-political and economic relations. The recognition of the fact that Islam is a way of life and a definite type of modern world outlook allows us to understand the essence of the idea of the Islamic state. A good example of this is the analysis undertaken in the study of the state ideology of Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism. An analysis of Wahhabism shows how the traditionalistic doctrine of Abd al-Wahab, based on Islamic traditionalism from Ibn Hanbal to Ibn Taymiya, maintains the spirit of Islamic culture and tries to provide answers to the challenges of the 20th century.

modernity is usually regarded as the completeness of being, but history shows this is not entirely so. Research of Islamic culture and philosophy shows us not only a surface knowledge of it, but also frequently even a distorted image of it. In speaking about the problem of stereotypes, it is imperative to recognize that mistaken cultural-philosophical and political-ideological stereotypes of the Islamic civilization predominate even in different researches and in the consciousness of the masses. This is indicated by the widespread usage in the mass media of the term Islamic fundamentalism whose content is interpreted widely and arbitrarily and is misunderstood as religious extremism. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish Islamic fundamentalism from Islamic extremism. In general, stereotypes result from either insufficient knowledge or inadequate methodology and may be formed in accordance with the ideological and sociocultural purposes of the cognizing subject. In this work a critical examination is made of the European stereotypes in relation to Islamic culture; special attention is given to the critique of the methodology of European civilizational, Russian historiosophical and Marxist formational approaches towards Islamic society and its culture. The categories and methodology of studying Islamic culture have been worked out and have specified new alternative approaches to correct the commonly held stereotypes.

In examining the general cultural stereotypes, one can identify, for example, the attempts to portray Islam and Islamic culture according to the concepts and categories of the Christian

tradition. As a rule, something analogous to Christian orthodoxy, theology, ideology, etc. is sought in Islam, but these phenomena simply do not exist in the Islamic culture. However, on the basis of such stereotypes, a stable image has been formed in the research tradition of so-called Eurocentrism. This image and similar perceptions, for example, regard Kalam as the orthodox and dominant theology in Islamic philosophy and culture. It is inappropriate to abstractly discuss Islam and Islamic culture without considering the fact that Islam and Islamic culture have their own specific features in different historical epochs and in different countries. More than this, attempts are undertaken to negate the humanistic character of Islamic culture and, for example, to regard the Sufism of Ibn Arabi as the single existing variant of Sufism as such. Sufism is no less multifarious in its manifestations, than Islam itself. The European civilizational, Russian historiosophical and Marxist formational approaches to Islamic society and its culture have much in common. For example, they commonly share the so-called missionary approach which views Western or Russian missions to the Islamic world as both progressive and emancipatory.

The specific features of Islamic culture and civilization, in general, should not be examined within the context of contrasting the so-called East and the so-called West, the old and the new, past and present, tradition and renewal, religious and national; but, on the basis of their mutual connections and mutual cooperation. The thrust of this study is devoted to an analysis of different points of views about how to compare, using the philosophical-value dimension, the classical Arab-Islamic culture, which was open to mutual cooperation with other cultures, and the modern Islamic culture, which, though not in confrontation, apparently is not receptive to the modern inter-civilizational dialogue. In the present world of Islamic culture, the singular, significant problem is to define, what is unchangeable and what should be retained in the solution to the question about the correlation of Islam, as a civilizational phenomenon, and nationalism, as a national-state dimension, within the context of the transition of the Islamic society of the East to an industrial and post-industrial stage of development.